CORA Cork Open Research Archive
Cartlann Taighde Oscailte Chorcaí

Title	The insular reception of the Eusebian canon tables: exegesis and iconography
Authors	Mullins, Elizabeth
Publication date	2001-06-30
Original Citation	Mullins, E. 2001. The insular reception of the Eusebian canon tables: exegesis and iconography. PhD Thesis, University College Cork.
Type of publication	Doctoral thesis
Rights	© 2001, Elizabeth Mullins. - https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/
Download date	2026-09-22 18:56:33
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/18810

UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

DP2001 MULL V.1

The Insular Reception of the Eusebian Canon Tables:

Exegesis and Iconography

2 Volumes: Volume 1

A thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy to the
Department of History, University College Cork
by Elizabeth Mullins

Dr. Jennifer O'Reilly
Department of History
August 2001

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
Library
CORK

To my parents

Table of Contents

Volume 1

List of plates i

Acknowledgements vii

Abbreviations ix

Introduction 1

Part I

The Eusebian Canon Tables in their Late Antique Context: Origins, Transmission and the Patristic Tradition of Harmony Exegesis

Introduction to Part I 4

Chapter 1 - Eusebius' *Letter to Carpianus* 7

Chapter 2 – The Transmission of the Eusebian Canons to the West 24

Chapter 3 - The Scriptural Tradition of Harmony Exegesis 42

Conclusion to Part I 60

Part II

The Treatment of the Eusebian Canon Tables in Hiberno-Latin Commentary Literature

Chapter 4 - Introduction and Background 62

Chapter 5- On Ailerán's *Canon Evangeliorum* 79

Chapter 6- The Treatment of the Eusebian Canon Tables in Hiberno-Latin Prefatory Texts 103

Chapter 7 - References to the Eusebian Canons in Vienna 940's (*Commentarius in Mattheum*). 130

Chapter 8 - Difference and Harmony in the *Historica inuestigatio euangelii secundum Lucam* 147

Conclusion to Part II 167

Part III

The Iconography of the Eusebian Canon Tables in Insular Gospel Books

Chapter 9 - The Iconography of the Eusebian Canon Tables in Insular Gospel Books 170

Some Final Comments 211

Volume 2

Prefatory Note to Appendices 214

Appendix A: Eusebius' *Letter to Carpianus* 215

Appendix B: Sample Parallel from Canon III 220

Appendix C: *Nouum Opus* 221

Appendix D: The Treatment of the Canons in Isidore's *Etymologiae* 226

Appendix E: Victor of Capua's Preface to his *Diatessaron* 227

Appendix F: *Plures Fuisse* 229

Appendix G: Layout of Clm. 6235 / Paris B.N. lat. 1841 235

Appendix H: The Prefatory Material in Vienna 940 240

Appendix I: Ailerán's *Canon Evangeliorum* 254

Appendix J: The Treatment of the Canons in *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum in euangelia excerpta* 258

Appendix K: The Treatment of the Canons in the *Praefacio secundum Marcum* 260

Appendix L: The Treatment of the Canons in the *Expositio euangelii secundum Marcum* 261

Appendix M: The Treatment of the Canons in Preface to Vienna 940's (*Commentarius in Mattheum*). 262

Appendix N: The Treatment of the Canons in the Preface to the Irish Reference Bible 264

Appendix O: Insular Gospel Books with Canon Tables 269

Appendix P: Synopsis of Carl Nordenfalk's *Die Spätantiken Kanontafeln* 272

Bibliography 284

Plates

List of Plates

Plate 1: Beginning of Alexander's Letter to Aristotle about India. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 1841, fol. 168v.

Plate 2: Final Page of Alexander's Letter to Aristotle about India. Paris Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 1841, fol. 170v.

Plate 3: Canon IIII-V. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 940, fol. 6v.

Plate 4: Luke Hebrew Names. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 940, fol.12v.

Plate 5: John Hebrew Names. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 940, fol. 13r.

Plate 6: First Uncial Title relating to the Canons. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 940, fol. 30v.

Plate 7: Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 940, fol. 124v.

Plate 8: Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 940, fol. 46v.

Plate 9: Ailerán's *Canon Evangeliorum* and the *Evangelia veritatis* page. The Augsburg Gospels, olim Schloss Harburg, Fürstlich Öttingen-Wallerstein'sche Bibliothek, Cod. I. 2. 4°. 2, fols. 1v-2r.

Plate 10:Hrabanus Maurus, *De Laudibus Sanctae Crucis*, Figura XXI. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 911, fol. 23v.

Plate 11: The *Alea Evangelii*. Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS. 122, fol. 5v.

Plate 12: Nordenfalk's Greek Archetype. Etschmiadzin, Patriarchal Library, cod. 229, fol 3r: Canon II (4)-III.

Plate 13: Sanctuarium Representation. Etschmiadzin, Patriarchal Library, cod. 229, fol. 5v.

Plate 14a: Nordenfalk's First Latin Archetype. Cologne, Dombibliothek, cod. 12, fol. 13r, Canon III.

Plate 14b: Nordenfalk's Second Latin Archetype. Aachen, Domschatz, Evangeliar, fol. 8v, Canon I.

Plate 15: Nordenfalk's Syrian Archetype. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, syr. 33, fol. 3v, Canon II (2).

Plate 16: 'M-n' Arch Form. Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Vat. Lat. 3806, fol. 2r, Canon I.

Plate 17: Framed Prologue Page. London, British Library, Add. 5111, fol. 10r.

Plate 18: Canon VII, IX, X (Mt). London, British Library, Add. 5111, fol. 11r.

Plate 19: Framed Prologue Page. The Rabbula Gospels. Florence, Biblioteca Medicea-Laurentiana, Plut. I. 56, fol. 3r.

Plate 20: Canon I (3). The Rabbula Gospels. Florence, Biblioteca Medicea-Laurentiana, Plut. I. 56, fol. 4v.

Plate 21: Canon VII. The Rabbula Gospels. Florence, Biblioteca Medicea-Laurentiana, Plut. I. 56, fol. 9v.

Plate 22: Frontispiece to the Canons. Rossano, Cathedral Treasury, Codex Purpureus, fol. 5r.

Plate 23: Contents Page. The Ashburnham Penateuch. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, nouv. acq. lat. 2334, fol. 2r

Plate 24: Chapter List to Numbers. The Ashburnham Pentateuch. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, nouv. acq. lat. 2334, fol. 115v.

Plate 25a: St. Luke Portrait. St. Augustine Gospels. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 286, fol. 129v.

Plate 25b: St. Luke Portrait. London, British Library, Royal, I. E. vi, fol. 43r.

Plate 26: Cross-Carpet and Four-Symbols Pages. The Book of Durrow. Dublin, Trinity College Library 57 (A. 4. 5), fols. 1v-2r.

Plate 27: Spirals Carpet page and *Novum Opus*. The Book of Durrow. Dublin, Trinity College Library 57 (A. 4. 5), fols. 3v-4r.

Plate 28: Canon II. The Book of Durrow. Dublin, Trinity College Library 57 (A. 4. 5), fol. 8v.

Plate 29: Canon II, III, IV. The Book of Durrow. Dublin, Trinity College Library 57 (A. 4. 5), fol. 9r.

Plate 30: Canon X Mk, Lk, Jn (1). The Echternach Gospels. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 9389, fol. 12v-13r.

Plate 31: Canon X, Jn. London, British Library, Royal 7, C. xii, fol. 3r.

Plate 32: Cross-Carpet Page and *Novum Opus*. The Lindisfarne Gospels. London, British Library, Cotton Nero, D. IV, fols. 2v-3r.

Plate 33: Canon I (3). The Lindisfarne Gospels. London, British Library, Cotton Nero, D. IV, fol. 11r.

Plate 34: The Divisions of Scripture according to Jerome, Hilary and Augustine. The Codex Amiatinus. Florence, Biblioteca Medicea-Laurentiana, Amiatinus I, fols. VIr, VIIr, 8r.

Plate 35: *Maiestas Domini*. The Codex Amiatinus. Florence, Biblioteca Medicea-Laurentiana, Amiatinus I, fol. 796v.

Plate 36: Frontispiece to the Four Gospels. Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliothek, 32, fol. 101v.

Plate 37: Canon X, Jn and Matthew's Opening. London, British Library, Royal I. B. vii, fols. 14v-15r.

Plate 38: Canon I (1). Leningrad, Public Library, Cod. F. v. I. 8, fol 12r.

Plate 39: Canon II (4)-III. The Augsburg Gospels, olim Schloss Harburg, Fürstlich Öttingen-Wallerstein'sche Bibliothek, Cod. I. 2. 4°. 2, fol. 9v.

Plate 40: Carpet page before John's Gospel. The Augsburg Gospels, olim Schloss Harburg, Fürstlich Öttingen-Wallerstein'sche Bibliothek, Cod. I. 2. 4°. 2, fol. 126v.

Plate 41: Four-Symbols Page and *Plures Fuisse*. The Trier Gospels. Trier, Domschatz, Cod. 61 (134), fols. 1v-2r.

Plate 42: Tetramorph and *Novum Opus*. The Trier Gospels. Trier, Domschatz, Cod. 61 (134), fols. 5v-6r.

Plate 43: Canon I (1). The Trier Gospels. Trier, Domschatz, Cod. 61 (134), fol. 11r.

Plate 44: Canon II (1). The Trier Gospels. Trier, Domschatz, Cod. 61 (134), fol. 12r.

Plate 45a: Marginal Eusebian Entry. The Trier Gospels. Trier, Domschatz, Cod. 61 (134), fol. 186v.

Plate 45b: Marginal Eusebian Entry. Codex Bigotianus. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 281 +298, fol. 86r.

Plate 46: Canon III. The Maeseyck Fragment. Maeseyck, Church of St. Catherine, Trésor, s.n. 22, fol. 2r,

Plate 47: Canon IV. The Maeseyck Fragment. Maeseyck, Church of St. Catherine, Trésor, s.n. 22, fol 5r.

Plate 48: Canon I (1). The Maeseyck Gospels. Maeseyck, Church of St. Catherine, Trésor, s.n. 23, fol. 6v.

Plate 49: Canon VI-X. The Maeseyck Gospels. Maeseyck, Church of St. Catherine, Trésor, s.n 23, fol. 10r-11v.

Plate 50: Matthew Portrait and Canon I (1). The Cutbercht Gospels. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 1224, fols. 17v-18r.

Plate 51: Canon I (1). The Barberini Gospels. Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica, Barb. lat. 570, fol. 1r.

Plate 52: Canon II (2). The Stockholm Codex Aureus. Stockholm, Royal Library, A. 135, fol. 6v.

Plate 53: Canon I. London, British Library, Royal I. E. vi, fol. 4r.

Plate 54: Canon X. London, British Library, Royal I. E. vi, fol. 6r.

Plate 55: Matthew Hebrew Names and Four-Symbols Representation. The Book of Kells. Dublin, Trinity College Library, 58 (A. I. 6), fol. 1r.

Plate 56: Canon I (1). The Book of Kells. Dublin, Trinity College Library, 58 (A. I. 6), fol. 1v.

Plate 57: Canon I (2). The Book of Kells. Dublin, Trinity College Library, 58 (A. I. 6), fol. 2r.

Plate 58: Canon II (1). The Book of Kells. Dublin, Trinity College Library, 58 (A. I. 6), fol. 2v.

Plate 59: Canon II (2). The Book of Kells. Dublin, Trinity College Library, 58 (A. I. 6), fol. 3r.

Plate 60: Canon II (3)-III. The Book of Kells. Dublin, Trinity College Library, 58 (A. I. 6), fol. 3v.

Plate 61: Canon IV. The Book of Kells. Dublin, Trinity College Library, 58 (A. I. 6), fol. 4r.

Plate 62: Canon V. The Book of Kells. Dublin, Trinity College Library, 58 (A. I. 6), fol. 4v.

Plate 63: CanonVI, VII, VIII. The Book of Kells. Dublin, Trinity College Library, 58 (A. I. 6), fol. 5r.

Plate 64: Canon IX, X Mt, Mk. The Book of Kells. Dublin, Trinity College Library, 58 (A. I. 6), fol. 5v.

Plate 65: Virgin and Child Page. The Book of Kells. Dublin, Trinity College Library, 58 (A. I. 6), fol. 7v.

Plate 66: Matthew *Incipit* Page. The Book of Kells. Dublin, Trinity College Library, 58 (A. I. 6), fol 29r.

Plate 67: Four-Symbols Page. The Book of Kells. Dublin, Trinity College Library, 58 (A. I. 6), fol 290v.

Plate 68: John Portrait Page. The Book of Kells. Dublin, Trinity College Library, 58 (A. I. 6), fol. 291v.

Plate 69: John *Incipit* Page. The Book of Kells. Dublin, Trinity College Library, 58 (A. I. 6), fol. 292r.

Plate 70: The Ascension. Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale, Cod. O. IV. 20, I a/v.

Plate 71: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, gr. 70, fol. 7v, Canon VIII, IX.

Plate 72: Ihs Initial. The Book of Kells. Dublin, Trinity College Library, 58 (A. I. 6), fol. 203r.

Plate 73: Canon II. Berlin, Preussische Staatsbibliothek, Ham. 246, fol. 2r.

Plate 74: Canon II. Vienna, Biblioteca Marciana, gr. I. 8, fol. 5r.

Plate 75: Canon VI. The Rabbula Gospels. Florence, Biblioteca Medicea-Laurentiana, Plut. I. 56, fol. 9r.

Plate 76: Canon I (1), The Flavigny Gospels. Autun, Municipal Library MS. 4, fol. 8r.

Plate 77: Canon V. The Soissons Gospels. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. lat. 8859, fol. 10v.

Plate 78: Canon VI, VII, VIII. The Soissons Gospels. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. lat. 8859, fol. 11r.

Plate 79: *Maiestas Domini* and Canon I (1). Codex Aureus of St. Emmeram. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 14000, fols. 6v-7r.

Plate 80: Crucifixion and Canon I. The Arenberg Gospels. New York, Pierpoint Morgan Library, M 869, fols. 9v-10r.

Plate 81: Canon II. The Arenberg Gospels. New York, Pierpoint Morgan Library, M 869, fol. 10v.

Plate 82: Canon I (1-2). The Eadui Codex. Hannover, Kestner Museum, WM XXIa, 36, fol. 9v-10r.

Plate 83: Canon II (2). London, British Library, Harley 76, fol. 8v.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Fr. Míceál O' Regan and Sr. Geraldine Smith who encouraged me to begin postgraduate work. Míceál's death in September 1997 has meant that he is not here to celebrate this work's conclusion, but I hope he would be pleased with the result.

My first year of postgraduate research was spent at Universität Konstanz. This was funded by a place on the Cork-Konstanz exchange programme. I am grateful to the German Department at University College Cork and especially Dr. Joachim Beug, who gave me encouragement and advice. In Konstanz, sincere thanks are due to Dr. Michael Richter for his kindness and support.

I returned to Germany in Spring 2000 on a research scholarship funded by the Deutsches Akademisches Austauschdienst. I am grateful to Dr. Konrad Vollmann of the Seminar für lateinische Philologie des Mittelalters, Ludwig-Maximilians Universität, who sponsored my application. Special thanks are due to Professor Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, National University of Ireland, Galway, who showed me much kindness during my stay in Munich. I am grateful, in addition, to Raphaela Diel and Alexandra Meder for their friendship and hospitality throughout my time in Germany.

Most of this thesis has been written in Cork. I would like to thank the staff of the Boole Library Inter-Library Loans and Special Collections for their assistance at all times. I am grateful to Dr. John Carey, Dr. Dagmar Ó Riain-Raedel and Professor Terence O'Reilly, who have given me advice and encouragement. I would also like to thank Dr. Olivier Szerwiniack, who made many helpful suggestions concerning the thesis' section on the Hebrew Name lists in Vienna 940. Sincere thanks are due to Mr. John Barry to whom I often turned for help with my Latin. I am especially grateful to Dr. Damian Bracken for his advice on Hiberno-Latin material.

I owe much to my friends Brian Butler, Emma Connolly, Nuala O'Halloran and Malgorzata Krasnodebska-D'Aughton, who have supported me over the past

number of years. Special thanks are due to Diarmuid Scully for his assistance and advice.

I have been lucky to have written this thesis under the supervision of Dr. Jennifer O'Reilly. I would like to thank her for the advice and encouragement she has given me since I began to study medieval history. While my debt to her published work is evident on many of the following pages, I would be glad if this thesis reflected in some way her skills as a wonderful teacher.

I am, above all, grateful to my family. I would like to thank my grandfather, Thomas Mullins, for his interest and encouragement. I am grateful to my sisters, Julie, Ruth and Jane, and my brother, Andrew, who have kept me going at the most difficult times. The thesis is dedicated to my parents, Tom and Helen, without whose encouragement and support it could not have been written.

Abbreviations

ANF	*Ante-Nicene Fathers*
CCCM	*Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Medievalis*
CCSL	*Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*
CLA	*Codices Latinae Antiquiores*
CSEL	*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*
FC	*Fathers of the Church, New Series*
NPNF	*Nicence and Post-Nicence Fathers*
PG	*Patrologia Graeca*
PL	*Patrologia Latina*
PRIA	*Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*
SC	*Sources Chrétiennes*
TTH	*Translated Texts for Historians*

Introduction

This thesis examines the Insular reception of the Eusebian canon tables before 800 AD. The tables, devised in Caesarea in the early fourth century, represent one of the most successful patristic attempts to demonstrate the harmony of the quadriform Gospel. Their success is reflected in the series' rapid and widespread transmission. As well as the Insular examples discussed in this work, the canons appear as a preface in medieval Greek, Armenian, Georgian, Syrian, Coptic, Ethiopian and Gothic Gospel books.

While Carl Nordenfalk's *Die Spätantiken Kanontafeln* provided the essential technical and art historical framework for the tables' discussion, the canons' symbolic and exegetical roles have received little attention in previous research.[1] Comments relating to the tables' symbolism appear in a number of Nordenfalk's later articles. In 'The Beginning of Book Decoration' he emphasizes the significance of the canons' number as an expression of perfection.[2] In 'The Apostolic Canon Tables' he describes the series as forming 'an impressive atrium at the entrance of the sacred text'.[3] This idea is reiterated in 'Canon Tables on Papyrus', where the tables are seen to function 'as a propyleum through which we approach the sancta sanctorum of Holy Writ'.[4]

These comments formed the starting point of the present discussion of the Eusebian series. The thesis divides into three parts. As each part is preceded by a detailed introduction, only some brief comments will be made here. The first part sets the Eusebian tables in their Late Antique context. It examines the understanding of Gospel harmony which informed the series' construction and highlights the significance of this exegesis in the tables' Western transmission.

---

[1] Carl Nordenfalk, *Die Spätantiken Kanontafeln* (Goteborg 1938). An English synopsis of this text is contained in Appendix P, 272-83.
[2] Carl Nordenfalk, 'The Beginnings of Book Decoration' in O. Goetz (ed), *Essays in Honour of Georg Swarzenski* (Berlin / Chicago 1951) 9-20, 16.
[3] Carl Nordenfalk, 'The Apostolic Canon Tables', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 6: 62 (1963) 17-34, 18.
[4] Carl Nordenfalk, 'Canon Tables on Papyrus', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 36 (1982) 29-39, 30.

The second part focuses on the reception of the Eusebian canons by Hiberno-Latin exegetes. This discussion is inspired by the work of Bernhard Bischoff. In 'Wendepunkte in der Geschichte der lateinischen Exegese im Frühmittelalter', Bischoff mentions interest in the canons as symptomatic of a Hiberno-Latin text, but does not give any further attention to the Eusebian series.[5] Part II's discussion of the manuscripts included in his catalogue reveals the significance that Hiberno-Latin authors attached to the tables as a means of demonstrating evangelical and scriptural harmony.

The final part of the thesis examines the iconography of the Eusebian series in Insular Gospel books. The tables' decoration provides a visual exegesis which complements the attention the series receives in contemporary commentary literature. The way in which the canons are illustrated shows how they functioned as a significant representation of the harmony of the Gospels and as a Christ-bearing image.

An underlying theme of the following discussion is how an examination of the Eusebian tables sheds light on the dynamics of cultural transmission in the early medieval era. While the Insular reception of the series draws on patristic tradition, it also shows an independence of thought and a willingness to innovate. Above all, the thesis demonstrates how the Eusebian canons, often seen by modern commentators as the most prosaic of subjects, were viewed quite differently in the Insular world, where they functioned as an integral means of reading the Gospels and as a potent image of the diversity and unity of the evangelical texts.

---

[5] Bernhard Bischoff, 'Wendepunkte in der Geschichte der lateinischen Exegese im Frühmittelalter', revised edition, *Mittelalterliche Studien* I (Stuttgart 1966) 218; Colm O' Grady (trans) in M. MacNamara (ed), *Biblical Studies: the Medieval Irish Contribution* (Dublin 1976) 74-164, 84. See Chapter 4, 62-3 for discussion of this point.

Part I

The Eusebian Canon Tables in their Late Antique Context: Origins, Transmission and the Patristic Tradition of Harmony Exegesis

Introduction to Part I

The first part of this thesis consists of three chapters. Chapter 1 focuses on the origins of Eusebius' canon tables. It considers Eusebius' introduction to the tables in his *Letter to Carpianus*. The chapter explores how the canons were understood by their author and it examines the dynamics of their make-up and the extent to which they reflect contemporary exegesis on evangelical harmony.

Chapter 2 describes the transmission of the Eusebian series to the West. It first discusses *Novum Opus*, Jerome's preface to the Vulgate Gospels. In this Jerome includes a defence for his revision of the Gospels and a Latin description of the canons, drawing on the *Letter to Carpianus*. The discussion of this text focuses on the Hieronymian perception of the Eusebian series. The initial section devoted to the principles of evangelical revision is also considered, with the aim of determining what these principles reveal of Jerome's understanding of the inspired nature of the fourfold Gospel.

The second section of Chapter 2 briefly catalogues other Late Antique references to canon tables. These occur in the works of Cassiodorus, Isidore and Victor of Capua. While they depend mainly on the Eusebian and Hieronymian texts, both the context in which the series is mentioned and the content of these entries underline the significance attached to the canons in the patristic era.

Chapter 3 examines the patristic tradition of harmony exegesis in a more general sense. It discusses the preface to Jerome's *Commentariorum in Mattheum*, which begins with the words *Plures Fuisse*. This preface does not mention the canons. It explains the nature of the fourfold Gospels with reference to other scriptural quaternities. The carrying rings of the Ark of the Covenant, the rivers of Paradise and the beasts of Ezechiel and Revelations are all cited in defence of the evangelical texts.

The *Plures Fuisse* text, with its reference only to scriptural fours, clearly represents one way of viewing the harmony of the Gospels. Jennifer O' Reilly

has recently highlighted a second tradition which must be taken into account.[6] This is based on the exegesis of Wisdom 11: 21 and draws on Platonic philosophy. It sees the Gospels as part of a larger cosmological harmony. Their measure, number and weight have been divinely determined and reflect the ordering of all of Creation.[7]

The significance of this second tradition as part of the background to the patristic conception of the canons is unquestionable. Although aware of the tradition of scriptural harmony, Eusebius seems to have been more influenced by concepts of divine number and measure in the creation of the canon series. *Novum Opus* draws on traditional scriptural images to describe the creation of the new edition of the Gospels, but also emphasizes the idea of the divine measure of the evangelical text. Finally, Victor of Capua's treatment of the tables highlights the significance of their number and measure as a reflection of divine harmony.

This second approach based on the idea of divine order is not accorded its own section in Part I. This is due mainly to the form in which it was transmitted. Unlike *Plures Fuisse*, which offers a very condensed version of the scriptural tradition, the exegesis based on Wisdom 11: 21 was transmitted more variously. Augustine, one of the most influential figures in this tradition, included reference to Wis. 11: 21 in works ranging from *De Civitate Dei* and the *Confessio* to biblical commentaries, apologetic tracts and the section on number in *De doctrina christiana*.[8]

Part I, which sets the Eusebian canons in their patristic context, provides a necessary base and starting point for the subsequent discussion of the role of the series in Hiberno-Latin exegesis and in Insular illumination. Almost all the

---

[6] Jennifer O' Reilly, 'The Hiberno-Latin tradition of the Evangelists and the Gospels of Mael Brigte', *Peritia* 9 (1995) 290-309, 291-2 and *idem*. 'Patristic and Insular traditions of the Evangelists: exegesis and iconography', in A. M. Luiselli Fadda and E. Ó Carragáin (ed), *Le Isole Britanniche e Roma in Età Romanobarbarica* (Rome 1998) 49-94, 53-8.

[7] This tradition is discussed by Harry Bober, '*In principio*: creation before time', in M. Meiss (ed), *De artibus opuscula XL: essays in honour of Erwin Panofsky* (New York 1961) 13-28 and James McEvoy, 'Biblical and Platonic measure in John Scottus Eriugena', in B. McGinn and W. Otten (ed), *Eriugena: East and West* (Notre Dame 1994) 153-77.

harmony images mentioned in the following pages are returned to in later chapters. There is clear evidence that many of the texts discussed in Part I enjoyed widespread transmission after the patristic era. This is especially true of Eusebius' *Letter to Carpianus* and Jerome's *Novum Opus* and *Plures Fuisse* texts, which were included as prefaces in early medieval Gospel books.[9]

[8] For Augustine's role in the transmission of this tradition see Vincent Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism* (New York 1938, repr. 1969) 78-82, Christopher Butler, *Number Symbolism* (London 1970) 24-29 and J. McEvoy (1994) 164-166.

[9] See Appendix O, 269-71, for the layout of prefatory material in Insular Gospel books.

Chapter 1

Eusebius' *Letter to Carpianus*

Introduction

This chapter is devoted to a discussion of Eusebius' *Letter to Carpianus*. The letter served as an introduction to this writer's canon tables. In it Eusebius explains how the work of Ammonius inspired him to create an evangelical concordance. He lists the contents of each canon and describes their practical use.[10] The letter and accompanying tables are normally dated to between 314, when Eusebius became bishop of Caesarea, and his death in 339 / 340 AD.[11] Nordenfalk has suggested that the Eusebian concordance was devised before 331, supposing it to be included in the manuscripts Constantine ordered from Caesarea in this year.[12] No information has survived on Carpianus, to whom the letter is addressed.

The following discussion takes the letter's structure as its own: Ammonius and the tradition of the textual representation of Gospel harmony will initially be considered. This is followed by an examination of Eusebius' use of the tabular form - his numerical harmony representation. The final section explores Eusebius' understanding of evangelical harmony with reference to a parallel from Canon III. This discussion sets the *Letter to Carpianus* in its fourth century context. Two of Eusebius' own works, the *History of the Church* and the

---

[10] Appendix A, 215-19 contains Greek, Latin and English versions of Eusebius' *Letter to Carpianus*.

[11] Timothy Barnes disagrees with this however. He suggests the concordance 'may belong to Eusebius' youth, for the canons boldly omitted the spurious last twelve verses of Mark'. See Timothy Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge MA and London 1981) 122. Earlier discussion of this question is found in John W. Burgon, *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel according to S. Mark* (Oxford and London 1871) 44-9. Burgon (295) dates the Eusebian canons to 320AD without providing any supporting evidence.

[12] Carl Nordenfalk, *Die Spätantiken Kanontafeln* (Göteborg 1938) 49-51. Patrick McGurk has recently restated this view in 'The Canon Tables in the Book of Kells', in P. Binski and W. Noel (ed), *New Offerings, Ancient Treasures, Studies in Medieval Art for George Henderson* (Cambridge 2001) 40-60, 40.

Oration in Praise of Constantine, form the main frame of reference.[13] The exegetical principles which guided the construction of the tables become clear in the following pages. Eusebius seems to have been influenced both by contemporary apologetic concerns and by the conception of the Gospels' divine measure, number and weight.

'Ammonius the Alexandrian': The Tradition of the Textual Representation of Gospel Harmony.

The *Letter to Carpianus* opens by referring to 'Ammonius the Alexandrian'. The historical identification of this figure is difficult. In *H.E.*VI.19, Eusebius mentions an Ammonius, the composer of a *Harmony of Moses and Jesus.*[14] He mistakenly identifies him with Ammonius Saccas, the Neoplatonist, whom Origen heard teach. Following Quasten, it is plausible, after recognising Eusebius' error, to see the former Ammonius as the figure referred to in *ad Carpianum.*[15] Indeed, Jerome makes this link in *De viris inlustribus*, writing,

> Ammonius [flourished 220], a talented man of great philosophical learning was distinguished at Alexandria at the same time [as Origen]. Among the many and distinguished monuments to his genius is the elaborate work which he composed on the harmony of Moses and Jesus, and the Gospel canons, which he worked out and which Eusebius of Caesarea afterwards followed.[16]

While Jerome correctly identifies Ammonius in this citation, he misunderstands this figure's role. In the *Letter to Carpianus* Eusebius makes it quite clear that the Ammonian *Diatessaron* has only inspired him to create his own concordance. He is responsible for the sectioning of the Gospels, which is at the basis of the canons, and for the tables themselves.[17]

---

[13] Reference is to *Eusebius The History of the Church*, G. A. Williamson (trans), (London 1989) and to the *Oration in Praise of Constantine*, E. Richardson (trans), NPNF 1, 2nd series (repr. Grand Rapids 1991) 581-610.

[14] *H.E.*VI, 19, 196.

[15] Johannes Quasten, *Patrology 3, The Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature* (Utrecht 1960) 101.

[16] Jerome, *De viris inlustribus* Chapter55, J.P. Migne (ed), PL 23 (Paris 1845) 667; E. Richardson (trans), NPNF 3, 2nd series (repr. Grand Rapids 1989) 374.

[17] J. Burgon (1871) 127-8, was one of the first people to clearly argue this point. Working directly from the Greek, he speaks of the 'hint' the Ammonian system gave to Eusebius in the creation of his canons. In his work's Appendix G, entitled 'On the so-called 'Ammonian Sections' and 'Eusebian Canons'', Burgon demonstrates how the Eusebian sections cannot be identified with those Ammonius employed. In spite of this, some continued to misunderstand this relationship. See for example G. H. Gwilliam, 'The Ammonian Sections, Eusebian Canons and Harmonizing Tables in the Syriac Tetra-Evangelium', *Studia Biblia et Ecclesiastica* 2 (1890)

More can be said about the significance Eusebius attaches to his predecessor. In the *Letter* Eusebius states firstly that Ammonius, 'having displayed much industry and effort (as was proper) has left us the fourfold Gospel' (lines 1-2). Oliver translated Barnes' 'industry and effort' with 'industry and zeal' and the Greek word *σπουδήν* makes it clear that the description of Ammonius connotes a certain zeal or enthusiasm.[18] This connotation allows the description to be read more easily in the light of the *History*. In *H.E.*VI, 3 Origen's enthusiasm makes him the target of plotters, sustains his ascetic lifestyle and inspires others to share his faith. Eusebius comments, 'By setting such an example of the philosophic life to those who saw him, he naturally kindled in his pupils a similar enthusiasm'.[19] The description of the Ammonian labour as one of zealous industry thus shows, how it has received Eusebius' stamp of approval. Eusebius, by taking this work as his departure point, sets himself in an established tradition and avoids accusations of any heretical 'passion for innovation'.[20]

What is clear however is that Eusebius follows Ammonius only with regard to his general theme. He informs us that Ammonius has left behind 'a fourfold Gospel placing the corresponding passages of the other Evangelists beside the Gospel of Matthew' (lines 2-3). The use here in the original Greek of the word *diatessaron* to describe this harmony immediately puts Tatian into mind. But Eusebius himself seems very certain of the distinction between the two textual harmonies, the one orthodox, the other heretical, which he knew about. In *H.E.*IV, 29, he writes that Tatian, 'produced a composite work by somehow combining the Gospels and calling it a *Diatessaron*: some people still possess copies. It is said that he was bold enough to alter some of the Apostle's (Paul's) expressions as though trying to rectify their phraseology'.[21] There is no

---

241-72. Modern scholars have also stressed Eusebius' responsibility for the entire system. T. Barnes (1981) 122 states, 'His [Eusebius'] remarks about Ammonius… are carefully chosen and deserve to be believed: the term *Ammonian sections*, which has conventionally been employed, does Eusebius a grave injustice, for the division of the Gospels into numbered sections is his idea'.

[18] Harold H. Oliver, 'The Epistle of Eusebius to Carpianus, Textual Tradition and Translation', *Novum Testamentum* 111 (1959) 138-145, 144.

[19] *H.E.* VI, 3, 183.

[20] *H.E.* I, 1, 1.

[21] H.E. IV, 29, 136. Tatian's *Diatessaron* is discussed by Helmut Merkel, *Die Widersprüche zwischen den Evangelien* (Tübingen 1971) 68-91 and by Bruce Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament* (Oxford 1988) 114-117.

suggestion that the Ammonian *diatessaron* interfered with the text's actual language.

There were, moreover, fundamental structural differences between the two harmonies. Unlike Tatian, Ammonius did not produce one volume for the four, but merely set out his text in four columns, which paralleled the continuous account of Matthew with corresponding sections in the other Evangelists. It is thus in the area of structure that the harmonies' different pedigrees lie. Eusebius himself will represent evangelical harmony by a different method, one which avoids the structural problems inherent even in the orthodox Ammonian method. Eusebius' specific aim is, 'that you may know the individual passages of each Evangelist, in which they were led to speak truthfully on the same subject, with the whole context and order of the other three still preserved…' (lines 6-8).

It is worth pausing at this point to examine some of the assumptions about the Evangelists and their Gospels which have already become clear. The most basic of these is that of evangelical harmony itself. This contrasts with the discord of heretical texts, something explicitly commented on in the *History*. In *H.E.*V, 28 Eusebius quotes from a contemporary of Irenaeus about the propagators of Artemon's heresy:

> If anyone will take the trouble to collect their several copies and compare them, he will discern the frequent divergences, for example Asclepiades' copies do not agree with Theodotus'…Nor do these agree with Hermophilus' copies. As for Appolloniades, his cannot even be harmonized with each other….[22]

This discord is contrasted in the *History* not only with the harmony of the New Testament texts, but also, for example, with accounts of the translation of the Septuagint. In *H.E.*V, 8, Eusebius includes Irenaeus' tale of this:

> When they reassembled before Ptolemy and compared their respective versions, God was glorified and the Scriptures were recognized as truly divine; they all said the same things in the same phrases and the same words from beginning to end, so that even the heathen who were present knew that the Scriptures had been translated by the inspiration of God.[23]

Eusebius' *Letter to Carpianus* underlines not only the harmony but also the fourfold nature of Gospels. In the *History* he often refers to the Gospels simply

---

[22] *H.E.* V, 28, 177-8.
[23] *H.E.*V, 8, 156.

as the 'holy tetrad'.[24] Such emphasis was traditionally used to contrast the definite number of the Gospels with the varying number of heretical tracts. It is linked to the tradition of divine order based on Wis. 11, 21. In *Adversus Haereses* Irenaeus writes

> But that these Gospels alone are true and reliable, and admit neither an increase nor diminution of the aforesaid number I have proved by many and such [arguments]. For since God made all things in due proportion and adaptation, it was fit also that the outward aspect of the Gospel should be well arranged and harmonized.[25]

In *De Principiis* Origen writes more broadly on this theme saying,

> For it is not to be imagined...that creatures have not a limit [a definite number] because where there is no limit there can neither be any comprehension or limitation. Moreover as Scripture says, 'God has arranged all things in number and measure' and therefore number will be correctly applied to all rational creatures or understandings, that they may be so numerous as to admit of being arranged, governed and controlled by God.[26]

Eusebius' underlying conception of the divinely inspired nature and order of the evangelical text also determined the structure of his concordance. The *History* reveals that the work of Tatian and others would have made Eusebius avoid breaking up the Gospel text or interfering in any way with Scriptural language in the creation of a *diatessaron*. With regard to the latter, Eusebius informs us that the Evangelists' linguistic simplicity reveals the inspired nature of the Gospels. In *H.E.* III, 24, he writes,

> The divine wonder working power bestowed on them [the apostles and Evangelists] by their Saviour filled them with confidence; and having neither the ability nor the desire to present the teachings of our Master with rhetorical subtlety or literary skill, they relied only on demonstrating the divine wonder-working power of the Spirit fully operative in them.[27]

It is also clear that Eusebius will not disturb the Gospels' form or divine measure. The tables preserve the context and order of all the Gospels. The significance of this is expressed in the *History* in the words Eusebius quotes from

---

[24] See Philip Sellew, 'Eusebius and the Gospels', in H. Attridge and G. Hata (ed), *Eusebius, Christianity and Judaism* (Detroit 1992) 110-134, 111.

[25] Irenaeus *Adversus Haereses* III, 11, W. H. Rambaut (trans), ANF 1 (repr. Grand Rapids 1987) 427.

[26] Origen *De Principiis* II, 9, F. Crombie (trans), ANF 4 (repr. Grand Rapids 1989) 289. There is evidence that this tradition had ancient origins. Christopher Butler, *Number Symbolism* (London 1970) 10, cites Philolaus (c 460 BC), 'Falsehood can in no way breathe on Number; for falsehood is inimical and hostile to its nature, whereas Truth is related and in close natural union with the race of Number'. Later Christian writers link all that is innumerable to sin and the devil. On this see for example Cassiodorus' treatment of Ps.39, 13, 'Evils without number have surrounded me' in his *Expositio Psalmorum*, M. Adriaen (ed), CCSL 97 (Turnhout 1958) 368-9.

[27] *H.E.* III, 24, 86.

a contemporary of Appolloniarus, who has delayed writing of the Phrygian heresy,

> Not from any inability to refute falsehood and witness to the truth, but as a precaution against the danger that some people might think that I was adding another paragraph or clause to the wording of the New Covenant of the Gospel, to which nothing can be added, from which nothing can be taken away, by anyone who had determined to live by the Gospel itself.[28]

Previously Irenaeus had written of those who try to destroy the form of the Gospel as 'vain, unlearned and also audacious'.[29] The idea of the Gospel's divine measure was also expressed by Origen, who wrote that 'the wisdom of God has penetrated to all inspired Scripture even as far as the slightest letter'.[30] This concept is returned to in Chapter 2's discussion of *Novum Opus* and in the second part of the thesis when Insular commentators link the idea of the canons' divine measure with the image of the *iota*, the slightest letter of the alphabet, which expresses all of Scripture's wholeness and perfection.[31]

'Canons, ten in number'-The Numerical Representation of Gospel Harmony

From the above paragraphs it is clear that Eusebius' figurative representation of Gospel harmony avoided many of the dangers of its textual predecessors. The second section of the *Letter to Carpianus*, which runs from lines 10-20, describes 'The underlying purpose of the [following] canons'. The harmony's tabular structure will be considered first.

Eusebius' use of a series of tables to represent evangelical concord has been described by one commentator as showing 'true originality'.[32] This method may have been suggested to Eusebius by the columnar layout of the Ammonian *Diatessaron* and/or that of Origen's *Hexapla*, a work we know he was acquainted with. Nordenfalk has, furthermore, likened the guiding network of all Greek canon tables and hence those of their original Eusebian archetype to that of

---

[28] *H.E.* V, 16, 160. This and the following references to the complete measure of Scripture are cited by Jennifer O'Reilly, 'The Wisdom of the Scribe and the Fear of the Lord' in D. Broun and T. Clancy (ed), *Spes Scotorum Hope of Scots St. Columba, Iona and Scotland* (Edinburgh 1999) 159-211, 180-81. O' Reilly also refers to the discussion of this theme by Frances Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge 1997) 21-4.
[29] Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* III, 11, ANF 1, 429.
[30] Origen, *Commentary on Psalm 1*, J. P. Migne (ed), PG 12 (Paris 1857) 1681-2.
[31] See Chapter 2, 27-8, Chapter 7, 139-45.

Classical astronomic tables.[33] These tables, expressing the harmony of the heavenly spheres, may also have offered a thematic parallel to the evangelical concord. Patristic commentators attached huge significance to the description of God in Psalm 146: 4 as he 'who telleth the number of the stars and calleth them all by name', linking it with Wis. 11: 21.[34] That Eusebius shared in their admiration of the Divine Artificer of the Heavens is evident in the *Oration in Praise of Constantine*. An example occurs in Chapter I:

> The beauteous mechanism of the heavens, glittering with the hosts of stars moving in luminous order, and preventing the measure of each several orbit, proclaims Him the giver of all light: yea all the heavenly luminaries, maintaining at his will and word a grand and perfect unity of motion, pursue the track of their ethereal course and complete in the lapse of revolving ages their different course.[35]

In his own work, Eusebius also used tables or canons to represent temporal order and harmony. The *Canons* which accompany his *Chronicle* synchronise sacred and world history. Beginning with Abraham, they weave together the histories of all the various peoples into a single chronological framework and show 'the continuity and pattern of general providence throughout time'.[36]

The content of the evangelical canons will now be discussed. At either end of the series is a table which refers to all four Evangelists: Canon I 'contains the numbers in which the four, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John have said similar things'; Canon X is that, 'in which each of them wrote about something in an individual manner'. Eusebius has sought, clearly, to represent the whole

---

[32] T. Barnes (1981) 122.

[33] Carl Nordenfalk, 'Canon Tables on Papyrus', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 36 (1982) 29-39, 33. Bruce Metzger has also commented on how the word κανόν has a similar meaning when used to describe astronomic and the Eusebian tables. In both cases κανόν describes, 'a list, index or table – terms that carry the suggestion of something fixed and established, by which one can orientate oneself'. See B. Metzger (1987) 289-93, 291 and Chapter 6, 114-15 for further discussion of the interpretation of this word in the Insular world.

[34] See *Origenes Secundum Translationem Rufini In Numeros Homiliae XV*, PG 12, 688. Later examples are in Augustine, *Enarationes in Psalmos*, D. E. Dekkers and I. Fraipont (ed), CCSL 40 (Turnhout 1956) 2127-8 and Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmorum*, M. Adriaen (ed), CCSL 98 (Turnhout 1958) 1305-6.

[35] *Oration in Praise of Constantine*, Chapter1, NPNF 1, 582.

[36] This is a citation from Faith Wallis' Introduction to her translation of Bede's *De Temporum Ratione,* TTH 29 (Liverpool 1999) lxix-lxx. For the use of the tabular form to represent the harmony of the Christian year see also Faith Wallis, 'Images of Order in the Medieval Computus' in W. Ginsberg (ed), *Ideas of Order in the Middle Ages*, *Acta* 15 (1988) 45-68. Eusebius' *Canons* and *Chronicle* can be found in J. P. Migne (ed), PG 19 (Paris 1857) 99-598. Further discussion of the *Chronography* is provided by T. Barnes (1981) 111-20.

evangelical epitome.[37] The inclusion of the tenth table, illustrating passages unique to each, requires some further discussion. It reveals something of Eusebius' conception of harmony as a concord of four distinct elements. That this awareness was significant is emphasized by the table's tenth position, this number being especially important for the author. Eusebius opens Book Ten of the *History of the Church* by saying, 'This I shall dedicate to you, my most worshipful Paulinus, calling on you to set the seal on the entire work; and it is appropriate that in a perfect number I should have set out the perfect account in celebration of the re-establishment of the churches…'.[38]

One must also refer to numerology when considering Tables II-IX. The first three of these contain the parallel sections of three Evangelists, the next five tables contain parallels of two. A number of commentators have pointed out the fact that Eusebius' series does not exhaust all possible combinations. The three-way parallel of Mark, Luke and John and the parallel of Mark and John do not feature according to McArthur because 'in the judgement of Eusebius there were no sections which [they] had in common'.[39] Nordenfalk has argued against this however. He supplies a number of examples of 'at least a few episodes which are told in the last three Gospels but not in the first'. From this observation he argues,

> The hidden reason for limiting the number of the canons to ten must have been the particular significance attached in ancient numerology to that figure. Just as according to St. Irenaeus there had to be four Gospels, neither more nor less, because the number four conformed to the cardinal points of the universe, so the canon tables attained a similar degree of perfection by being ten. Since Pythagorus the numbers four and ten had been considered to be mutually connected by mathematical laws.[40]

---

[37] Carl Nordenfalk, 'The Eusebian Canon Tables: Some Textual Problems', *Journal of Theological Studies* N.S. 35 (1984) 96-104, writes (104): 'No doubt he added Canon X because he wanted his harmony to be a full epitome of the Holy Writ'. There may also be an apologetic aspect to the inclusion of the final table. Helmut Merkel (1971) 21 has noted how opponents of the Church, such as Porphyry and his followers, questioned the historicity of sections included by only one Evangelist. Eusebius by including Canon X, may be underlining the importance of these sections in differentiating one Gospel from another.

[38] *H.E.* X, 1, 303.

[39] Harvey K. McArthur, 'The Eusebian Sections and Canons', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 27 (1965) 250-56, 251.

[40] C. Nordenfalk (1982) 29. Nordenfalk first makes this point in 'The Beginning of Book Decoration', O. Goetz (ed), *Essays in Honour of Georg Swarzenski* (Berlin / Chicago 1951) 9-20, 16. He mentioned the omission of the Mk, Lk, Jn and Mk, Jn parallels in *Die Spätantiken Kanontafeln* (1938) 47-8, but did not see this as having a symbolic function.

Nordenfalk supports this argument with reference to comments on the mystic significance of the number ten made in the *Oration in Praise of Constantine*, e.g. 'Again the number four produces the number ten for the aggregate of the numbers one and two and three and four is ten' and 'Again, the number ten, which contains the end of all numbers and terminates them in itself, may truly be called a full and perfect number, as comprehending every species and measure of numbers, proportions, concords and harmonies'.[41]

These citations from the *Oration* clearly show Eusebius to be influenced by Neoplatonic ideas of the sacred tetraktys, the sum of the first four numbers.[42] Hopper has written,

> There must have been many who, following the lead of Plato and possibly Pythagorus himself, continued to see in the decad the archetypal pattern of the universe and in the members of the decad the expression of divine ideas. Such at any rate is the doctrine of the so-called Neo-Pythagoreans, who flourishing from the first century B.C to the fifth century AD, built upon a tradition which had apparently been preserved and amplified in the now vanished writings of their predecessors.[43]

The concept of the decad containing the archetypal pattern of the universe links the number of the tables, as Nordenfalk remarked, with Irenaeus' justification of the Gospels with reference to the 'four principal zones of the world in which we live and the four principal winds'.[44] Again one gets a sense of the larger cosmological order, which is seen to underlie and inform all things.

It is likely that the Eusebius' admiration for the number 10 was influenced by a combination of Neoplatonic and Biblical traditions. Christian exegetes both before and after the Caesarean stressed the significance of ten as an image of harmony, the great type of this number in Christian usage being the Ten Commandments.[45] In his final homily on Genesis, Origen writes thus of the tithes the Israelites offer to their priests:

> ...The Israelite people honour ten, the number of perfection; for they received the ten words of the Law, and, held together by the power of the Decalogue, they entered upon,

---

[41] *Oration in Praise of Constantine*, Chapter 6, NPNF 1, 587, 589. This is quite similar to Porphyry's description of ten as 'comprehension', 'comprehending all differences of number, species and proportions', cited by V. Hopper (1969) 45.
[42] The tetraktys has been described as 'one of the most imaginatively compelling aspects of Pythagorianism' by C. Butler (1970) 8/9.
[43] V. Hopper (1969) 37-8.
[44] Irenaeus *Adversus Haereses* III, 11, ANF 1,428.
[45] V. Hopper (1969) 85 and Heinz Meyer and Rudolf Suntrup, *Lexikon der Mittelalterlichen Zahlenbedeutungen* (Munich 1987) 591-615.

> by bestowing, divine mysteries unknown to this world. But also in the New Testament likewise ten is venerable as both the fruit of the Spirit is explained to sprout forth in ten virtues, and the faithful servant offers his lord ten pounds in profit from his business dealings and receives authority over ten cities.[46]

The continuance of such ideas into the sixth century is clear in Cassiodorus' *Expositio Psalmorum*. Commenting on Psalm 91: 4, 'Upon an instrument of ten strings upon the psaltery: with a complete canticle upon the harp', Cassiodorus writes

> Clearly the ten stringed psaltery denotes the ten commandments of the Law, for they are strings which if we strum with the character of goodly deeds will play the tune of salvation and lead to the kingdom of heaven. But we should be aware why this number is seen to be attached to so important a theme; it is the number which the Pythagoreans call the tetraktys or the divine group of four, for it embraces in brief what is capable of infinite extension .....[47]

The idea of the New Testament *denarius* as an image of harmony is considered in the second part of the next chapter in the discussion of Victor of Capua.[48] Later, Hiberno-Latin exegetes also emphasised the significance of the canons' number as an expression of perfection.[49]

In the *Oration in Praise of Constantine* Eusebius is aware of other harmonies, besides those of number and of the cosmos, which are of relevance to this discussion. The representation of musical harmony will be first considered. In the *Oration*, the lyre is used as an image of both the cosmos and of the action of the Divine Word. It is worth quoting in full the following passage from Chapter XII:

> And as the many stringed lyre is composed of different chords, both sharp and flat, some slightly, others tensely strained, and others of intermediate between the two extremes, yet all attuned according to the rules of harmonic art; even so this material world, compounded as it is of many elements, containing opposite and antagonistic principles as moisture and dryness, cold and heat, yet blended into one harmonious whole, may justly be termed a mighty instrument on which the Divine Word, himself not composed of parts or opposing principles but indivisible and uncompounded, performs with perfect skill and produces a melody at once accordant with the will of the Father and Supreme Lord of all and glorious to himself.[50]

---

[46] Origen *Homily XVI on Genesis*, R. E. Heine (trans), *The Fathers of the Church* 71 (Washington 1982) 223.
[47] Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmorum*, CCSL 98, 837; P. G. Walsh (trans), *Ancient Christian Writers* 51 (New York 1990) 388-9.
[48] Chapter 2, 36-8.
[49] See Chapter 5, 81-2, Chapter 6,115-117. Hiberno-Latin exegetes also linked the number of the canons with the image of the iota and apex. See Chapter 7, 139-45.
[50] *Oration in Praise of Constantine*, Ch. 12, NPNF 1, 599.

There may be some allusion in the *Letter to Carpianus* to 'the rules of harmonic art' referred to in this citation. Paul Underwood has shown how the word '*diatessaron*', which we have seen Eusebius sets out to represent, was originally used to designate the musical interval of the fourth, that based on the ratio 3:4.[51] In Platonic thought such musical proportions were significant not only in themselves, but also because they were supposed to be the same as those which underlay the structure of the cosmos as a whole. While evidence from the *Oration* supports a Eusebian awareness of the musical, numerical and cosmological connotations of the term '*diatessaron*', it is difficult to gauge how precise his knowledge was of the theories he was drawing on. His acquaintance with the work of Justin Martyr appears one quite plausible path of investigation.[52]

A final harmony referred to in the *Oration,* which aids the interpretation of the *Letter to Carpianus*, is the harmony of the temple structure and of church building. In Chapter IX especially, we read that the 'crowning point' of Constantine's reign was his "commanding all to unite in constructing the sacred houses of prayer".[53] It is in these, following Chapter X, that Christ's praise is sung by all the nations. One of the Churches given special attention is the Holy Sepulchre. Eusebius writes,

> Again in the province of Palestine, in that city which was once the seat of Hebrew sovereignty on the very site of the Lord's sepulchre, he has raised a church of noble dimensions, and adorned a temple sacred to the salutary cross with rich and lavish magnificence.....[54]

---

[51] Paul Underwood, 'The Fountain of Life in Manuscripts of the Gospels', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 5 (1950) 43-138, 118-122. Platonic relations of number and music are discussed by C. Butler (1970) 4-8.

[52] Eusebius' admiration for the figure of Justin Martyr is clear from the *History* e.g. H.E. IV, 16-18. Underwood has seen the latter's Platonic training as influential on his disciple Tatian in the creation and naming of his *Diatessaron*. A similar influence may, perhaps, be suggested for Eusebius. Indeed, in the disputed *Hortatory Address to the Greeks*, attributed to Justin, there is an attractive parallel to the lines from the *Oration* quoted above: 'For neither by nature nor by human conception is it possible for men to know things great and divine, but by the gift, which descended on them from above upon the holy men, who had no need of rhetorical art, nor of uttering anything in a contentious or quarrelsome manner, but to present themselves pure to the energy of the Divine Spirit, in order that the divine plectrum itself descending from heaven, and using righteous men as an instrument like a harp or lyre, might reveal to us the knowledge of things heavenly...', M. Dods (trans), ANF 1 (repr. Grand Rapids 1987) 276. In the second book of his Commentary on Matthew, Origen uses the image of the lyre to explain scriptural harmony. See Origen, *Commentary on Matthew*, J. Patrick (trans), ANF 10 (repr. Grand Rapids 1986) 413 and F. Young (1997) 22-3.

[53] *Oration in Praise of Constantine*, Ch. 9, NPNF 1, 595.

[54] Ibid. Ch. 10, 595.

To set the *Letter to Carpianus* in the context of temple harmony requires reference to Book Ten of the *History of the Church*, previously cited in the discussion of numbers. In this book, Eusebius makes clear that the temple structure is to be understood as an image both of Christ's body and of the whole Church – each human soul, as well as being itself an individual temple, is also a living stone in the greater ecclesiastical structure.[55] Eusebius systematically discusses each area of the temple building and reveals how they represent symbolically members of the faithful. The underprops to the four pillars in the temple's outer quadrangular courtyard, in which stand symbols of purification, signify those who are being brought 'for the first time into touch with the letter of the four Gospels'.[56] Eusebius makes clear that once the understanding this quadrangular area represents has been grasped, i.e. elementary instruction in the letter of the Gospel and baptism, one can proceed further into the temple structure, into the 'innermost mystic teaching of Holy Writ'.[57]

Book Ten of the *History of the Church* seems, thus, to open up a further way of interpreting the canon tables. In his exposition on the temple, Eusebius equates an image of the area created by the letter of the four Gospels with a space of understanding. It is interesting to ask if he may have perceived the canon table(s) as a similar space. The iconography of later canon table illumination seems to support this, e.g. the placement of the canon table underneath the columnar *tholos* structure associated with the baptismal font.[58] This exposition raises questions also as to the canon tables' sequence. Is it possible to set the ever-more refined understanding of the nature of Gospel harmony, required in the progression from Canon I to Canon X, in the context of the move from the outer courtyard to the inner sanctum of mystic understanding?

---

[55] Christ was also seen to be represented in each measure of the temple structure. For further discussion of this point see Chapter 5, 82.
[56] *H.E.* X, 3, 320.
[57] *H.E.* X, 3, 320. One should note the remarkable similarity between Eusebius' comments here and those of Bede writing in *De Templo* some 400 years later, both drawing potentially on Josephus' additional information on the temple in Antiquities 8.3.9. *De Templo* II.17.1 reads 'Outside of this temple he built another court in the quadrangular form erecting very large wide porticoes in it and setting up the high spacious gates at the four quarters of the globe, each facing one of the quarters from the four corners where he put the golden doors…Into this sacred precinct would enter all the people who had fulfilled the requirements of ritual purity and observance of the prescriptions of the law', S.Connolly (trans), TTH 21 (Liverpool 1995) 65; D. Hurst (ed), CCSL 119A (Turnhout 1969) 192.

In relation to this question, it is worth citing a theory put forward by Nordenfalk in relation to the canon tables in the Etschmiadzin Gospels, the book which he saw as the most faithful reflection of the Eusebian archetype. Nordenfalk wrote as follows: 'Extended over seven pages and ending on the last verso with a colophon page in the form of a tholos alluding to the Holy Sepulchre – another way of emphasizing the symbolic value of the tables - they function as a *propylaeum* through which we approach the Sancta Sanctorum of Holy Writ'.[59] This idea will be returned to in the discussion of Hiberno-Latin texts, which view the canons as offering an entrance to understanding the evangelical text.[60]

'Similar Things' – The Application of the Gospel Canon Tables

Lines 21-35 of the *Letter to Carpianus* describe the canon tables' 'clear application'. Eusebius explains the division of the Gospel text into numbered sections, which are accompanied by their appropriate table number. The instructions continue,

> Hence if you were to open any one of the four Gospels and wish to light upon any chapter whatever, to know who has said similar things and find the relevant passages in each, in which they treated of the same things, then find the number marked against the passage, which you have before you, look for it in the canon, which the note in red has suggested and you will immediately learn from the headings at the start of the canon how many and which have said similar things....

It is clear, reading these lines, that further consideration of Eusebian 'similarity' is required.

This topic has been given some attention by modern commentators. In an important article in 1965, Harvey McArthur provided what he believed to be 'convincing evidence that Eusebius did not limit his system to the identifying of alternative versions of the same incidents in the various Gospels. He linked together passages which could not conceivably be identical but which expressed some common concept or activity'.[61] McArthur believed Eusebius to have had a broader intention than just presenting a harmony or synopsis of the Gospels and

---

[58] See P. Underwood (1950) 43-138.
[59] C. Nordenfalk (1982) 30.
[60] See Chapter 6, 108-09 and Chapter 8, 163-66 for discussion of this point in relation to Hiberno-Latin material.
[61] H. McArthur (1965) 254.

thought his system represented a primitive form of marginal reference. He draws attention to the ambiguous term, *ta paraplēsia*, which Eusebius uses to describe the relationship between the linked passages. This ties in with Nordenfalk's point about the canons containing, 'a wide range of precise and less precise parallels'. In addition Nordenfalk claims 'The way the Gospel synopsis of Eusebius is conceived, it is both something less and something more than a concordance in the normal sense of the term'.[62]

In the following paragraphs Eusebian 'similarity' is measured not against the modern conception of a synopsis but in the light of its fourth century background. Some comments have already been made on the extent to which this background informed the nature of the tables. Bishop Lightfoot writing in 1880 also noticed the significance of Eusebius' Apologism for the construction of the tables. He commented: 'If he employs himself on a task so essentially technical as the division of the Gospels into sections his underlying motif is the desire to supply materials for a harmony and thus to vindicate the essential unity of the evangelical narrative against gainsayers'.[63] The tabular form may also mask a broader theological meaning. Faith Wallis' remark that 'like computus, chronicles conceal theological meaning beneath a utilitarian surface' may perhaps be also applied to some of the parallels contained in the evangelical canons.[64]

The first three parallels from Canon III, which correlate the genealogies of Matthew and Luke with sections from the opening of John, seem to illustrate this point (Appendix B). The 'strained' nature of this parallel has received comment both in Eusebius' time and in the tables' modern historiography.[65] While both McArthur and Nordenfalk have recognised that the basis of this parallel is Eusebius' desire to show how the Evangelists present different elements of Christ's ancestry, this has not been considered significant in explaining the nature of the concordance as a whole.

---

[62] C. Nordenfalk (1984) 103,104.
[63] J. B. Lightfoot's entry on 'Eusebius' in W. Smith and H. Wace (ed), *A Dictionary of Christian Biography*, Vol. II (London 1880) 308-48, 346.
[64] F. Wallis (1999) lxx.
[65] C. Nordenfalk (1982) 37, H. McArthur (1965) 253.

The apologetic significance acquired by the harmonization of accounts of Christ's beginnings is evident from the amount of attention Eusebius himself devotes to it in his own work. Discussion of the Matthean and Lucan genealogies takes up I, 7 of the *History of the Church,* Eusebius' later exegetical *Questions to Stephanus* treats systematically of the genealogies' various details and, finally, part of the now lost apologetic *Against Porphyry* seems also to have been concerned with the refutation of the genealogies' alleged discrepancy.[66]

Eusebius in his defence of this evangelical concordance draws heavily on the work of Julius Africanus. Indeed *H.E.* I, 7 consists almost entirely of Africanus' letter to Aristiades on this subject. Reference to Old Testament law provides the basis for the explanation of the different course the genealogies take through Nathan/Solomon. It is shown, to quote from Africanus, that, 'Neither of the Gospels is in error, since they take account of both nature and law…both accounts are perfectly true, bringing the line down to Joseph in a manner complex perhaps, but certainly accurate'.[67] This explanation illustrates how the Gospels are perceived as complementary accounts of Christ's life on earth. Their similarity lies in the different aspects they reveal of the Redeemer.

The addition, in this parallel from Canon III, of sections from the opening of John's Gospel further deepens the believer's understanding of Christ's beginnings. This comes across clearly in *H.E.* III, 24, where Eusebius refutes two objections to the harmonization of John's Gospel with the synoptic ones. The first of these objections is general and concerns the Gospels' differing timescales. Eusebius writes, 'The three Gospels already written were in general circulation and copies had come into John's hands. He welcomed them, we are told, and confirmed their accuracy, but remarked that the narrative only lacked the story of what Christ had done first at the beginning of this mission'.[68] John's Gospel is thus presented by Eusebius as completing the account of Christ's life, which had been recorded by the other Evangelists.

---

[66] Eusebius, *Quaestionum ad Stephanum*, J. P. Migne (ed), PG 22 (Paris 1857) 891-927. For comment on this and *Against Porphyry* see Lightfoot (1880) 308-48, T. Barnes (1981) 122-4 and especially H. Merkel (1971) 130-6.
[67] *H.E.* 1, 7, 20 and Question IV of the *Quaestionum ad Stephanum*, PG 22, 899-902.
[68] *H.E.* III, 24, 87.

The Johannine incipit forms the second more specific objection to Gospel harmony which Eusebius takes up. He explains the *incipit* in the light of his former observations: 'It seems natural that as the genealogy of our Saviour as a man had already been set out by Matthew and Luke, John should pass it over in silence and begin with the proclamation of His divinity since the Holy Spirit had reserved this for him, as the greatest of the four'.[69] The different nature of the Gospels is shown here as divinely determined. This offers another reason, apart from the apologetic one mentioned previously, why Eusebius is loath to break up the reading of the continual thread of the accounts by the textual illustration of Gospel harmony. Part of the expression of evangelical inspiration is shown to have been the presentation of different aspects of Christ's nature in the varying texts.

These parallels from Canon III clearly illustrate how at least one of the tables' correlations was theologically based. Later, Hiberno-Latin exegetes explore this point. In the preface to the Irish Reference Bible a large section is devoted to a discussion of the modes of agreement between the various parallels.[70] Similarly, the author of the *Historical Commentary on Luke* criticizes a number of parallels as being based on only on apparent similarity. He suggests some alternative placements based on the spiritual understanding of particular passages.[71]

The opening of Canon III illustrates how a particular understanding of Gospel harmony was involved in both the tables' construction and in their use. This links back to the questions asked at the close of the previous section. These suggested viewing the canons as a space of understanding and instruction. The use of the tables can be seen itself as proof of an orthodox faith. This again is something returned to later on in the thesis, where the canons are seen to be the rules for understanding the harmony of the Gospels. [72]

---

[69] *H.E.* III, 24, 87-8.
[70] See Chapter 6, 125-27.
[71] See Chapter 8, 156-58.
[72] See Chapter 6, 114-15.

Conclusion

This discussion set the *Letter to Carpianus* in its original context. Its first section showed how the form of the Eusebian series reflected contemporary exegesis on the divine ordering of the Gospels. Eusebius' numerical synopsis preserved the measure and order of each evangelical text. The Gospels' number was also significant. It seems likely that Eusebius limited the number of the canons to ten because of his understanding of this number as an image of perfection. To cite Nordenfalk, 'The ten canons of the Eusebian harmony not only emphasized the intrinsic unity of the four Gospels by demonstrating their manifold agreements, they also raised them to a new sphere of mathematical perfection'.[73] The second section of the discussion focused on the *Oration in Praise of Constantine*. This text revealed Eusebius' awareness of a range of harmonies, cosmological, musical and architectural, which form the background to the construction of the tables. Again following Nordenfalk, it was suggested that the tables represent a *propylaeum* or atrium before the sacred text. The final part of the discussion treated of the Eusebian conception of 'similarity'. A parallel from the beginning of Canon III exemplified how Eusebius' exegetical concerns played a part in the invention of the tables. The canons' construction and their use seem thus to imply a particular understanding of the harmony of the quadriform Gospel.

[73] C. Nordenfalk (1951) 16.

Chapter 2

The Transmission of the Eusebian Canons to the West

Jerome's *Novum Opus* Preface

While two literal Latin translations of the *Letter to Carpianus* have been identified, the most significant step in the Eusebian series' Western history came with its inclusion as a preface to the Vulgate Gospels.[74] Jerome's letter to Pope Damasus, which accompanies this edition, contains an explanation of the canons drawing on the *Letter to Carpianus*. Jerome's letter, commonly referred to by its opening words, *Novum Opus*, will be discussed in the following pages.[75] The discussion divides into two parts. The first part considers Jerome's explanation for his revision of the Gospel text and the principles on which this will be based. The second part discusses the Hieronymian explanation of the canons. The idea of the Gospels' divine number, measure and weight is referred to on a number of occasions. It played a role both in Jerome's editing process and in his conception of the Eusebian series.

Lines 1-47 – The Textual Transmission of the Gospels

The first half of *Novum Opus* outlines the plan of work for the revision of the Old Latin translation of the Gospels. Jerome makes it clear that his comments on poor textual transmission do not refer to the Old Testament. At this point, he still accepts the Latin translation of the Septuagint, writing, 'I am willing to let that be

---

[74] The Lindisfarne Gospels 8r-9r is the oldest manuscript to contain a full Latin translation of Eusebius' *Letter to Carpianus*. This is reproduced on Appendix A, 216-17. Donatien de Bruyne identified a second translation of the letter, which is cited by Victor of Capua in the preface to his *Diatessaron* and preserved in full in Poitiers MS 17. See Donatien de Bruyne, 'La Préface du *Diatessaron* Latin avant Victor de Capoue', *Revue Bénédictine* 39 (1927) 5-11; Pierre Minard, 'L'évangéliaire oncial de l'Abbaye de Sainte-Croix de Poitiers', *Revue Mabillon* 33 (1943) 1-22 and Patrick McGurk 'The Canon Tables in the Book of Lindisfarne and the Codex Fuldensis of St.Victor of Capua', *Journal of Theological Studies* N.S.6 (1955) 192-8. The Letter's Western transmission is also discussed by H.Oliver (1959) 140-1.

[75] Appendix C, 221-25 contains Latin and English versions of this text.

the true translation, which had apostolic approval'.[76] This remark strengthens the position of his new version of the Gospels. Lines 1 and 15 inform us that it had been made with papal involvement. The Vulgate has thus the approval of the Roman apostolic see.[77] Jerome had previously written to Damasus using such terms: 'I implore your blessedness...as you hold an apostolic office to give an apostolic decision'.[78]

The described scope of the project also seems to draw on features of the papal office. Lines 1-3 record how the Pope has urged Jerome 'to sit in judgement on the copies of Scripture, which are now scattered throughout the whole world'. Jerome, writing to Damasus in 377-8 alluded to Rom. 1: 8, 'I thank my God through you Jesus Christ for you all that your faith is spoken of throughout the world', in speaking of the papacy.[79] There is also a more general thematic context. Jerome is dedicating to the Pope his revision of the text of the four Gospels. In another letter, written around the same time as *Novum Opus*, the Apostles have been defined as *euangelii predicatores*.[80] In Jerome's exposition to Damasus on Is. 6: 1-11 (381 AD), the Seraphim are interpreted as the two Testaments. Their hymn of praise proclaiming the coming of Christ, *quomodo in omnem terram praedicatio illius porrigatur et apostolorum sonus mundi limites penetret*.[81]

In the opening part of *Novum Opus*, Jerome's rhetoric of textual criticism resembles that of his evangelical exegesis. Many of the Evangelists' defining

---

[76] For Jerome's changing views on textual transmission see H. Sparks, 'Jerome as Biblical Scholar' in P.R. Ackroyd and C.F. Evans (ed), *The Cambridge History of the Bible* I (repr. Cambridge 1980)
510-41.

[77] Angelo Di Beradino, *Patrology IV, The Golden Age of Latin Patristic Literature*, P. Solari (trans) (Maryland 1988) 120, discusses the role Damasus may have played. He writes, "In reality, his (Damasus') influence at most should be limited to approving the project of his young friend, or perhaps having expressed the desire for the production of a better version...".

[78] Jerome, *Letter XVI*, in *Saint Jérôme Lettres, Tome I*, J. Labourt (ed) (Paris 1949) 51; W. H. Freemantle (trans), NPNF 6, 2nd series, (repr. Grand Rapids 1989) 20. The Latin reads, '*Ita qui apostolus honore sequeris sequaris et merito, ita in solio cum duodecim indicaturus sedeas, ita te alius senem cum Petro cingat, ita municipatum caeli cum Paulo consequaris, ut mihi litteris tuis apud quem in Syriam debeam communicare significes...*'.

[79] Jerome, *Letter XV*, J. Labourt (ed) (1949) 49; W.H. Freemantle (trans) NPNF 6, 18, n.4.

[80] Jerome, *Lettre XXI*, J. Labourt (ed) (1949) 101.

[81] Jerome, *Letter XXVIII*, in *Saint Jérôme Lettres, Tome II*, J. Labourt (ed) (Paris 1951) 63. This theme is returned to in Part II. See for example Chapter 5, 96-8.

characteristics are also used to describe the reliable text. *Plures Fuisse*, the subject of the next chapter, is the main point of reference for the evangelical exegesis discussed in the following paragraphs. While this presents a dating problem, the former text being some fifteen years younger than *Novum Opus*, it is clear that Jerome was familiar with the main tenets of its exegesis at a much earlier stage.[82]

Jerome describes his work of revising the Latin version of the Gospels with reference to baptismal imagery. The preface opens with the words, *Novum Opus facere me cogis ex veteri.* Jerome sees himself as engaged on regenerative work.[83] This idea is added to subsequently. In lines 32-4, he writes, 'We must confess that as we have it [the Gospels' text] in our language, it is marked by discrepancies and now that the stream is distributed into different channels we must go back to the fountainhead [*fons*]'. These words reflect the *Plures Fuisse* identification of the Evangelists with the four rivers of paradise.[84] In a letter of 397 AD, which consists partially of an exposition on baptism, Jerome refers explicitly to the *fons*, writing, 'In Eden a garden is planted and a fountain in the midst of it parts into four heads'.[85] Contemporary exegesis accords to the Apostles the role of carrying these waters to the four corners of the world.[86] This seems to link this image with the symbolic role Jerome assigns to Damasus.

Novum Opus identifies the *fons* as the source of truth or *veritas*. Jerome defines the most reliable texts as those, *quae cum graeca consentiant veritate*. He writes in lines 13-14, *Sin autem veritas est quaerendum de pluribus cur non ad graecam originem revertentes....* *Plures Fuisse* describes the apocryphal writers as those

---

[82] Ample evidence occurs in other Jerome/Damasus correspondence e.g. the interpretation of the relationship between the Testaments contained in *Letter XVIII A, B* and the use in *LetterXX* of the Lucan biography to explain the difference between his account of the entry into Jerusalem with that of the other Gospels. See J. Labourt (ed) (1949) 53-77, 79-84 for versions of these letters.
[83] The spiritual significance Jerome attached to his works of translation and textual criticism have recently been discussed by Jennifer O'Reilly in, 'The Library of Scripture: Views from Vivarium and Wearmouth-Jarrow' in Paul Binski and William Noel (ed), (2001) 4-39, 21-26.
[84] *Plures Fuisse* is contained in Appendix F, 229-34. Discussion of this image occurs in Chapter 3, 48-9.
[85] Jerome, *Letter LXIX*, in *Saint Jérôme Lettres Tome* III, J. Labourt (ed) (Paris 1953) 200; W.H. Freemantle (trans) NPNF 6, 145. Paul Underwood (1950) 46-49 discusses Christian interpretations of the image of the *fons* and the *fons vitae*.
[86] Ambrose, *De Paradiso*, J.P. Migne (ed), PL 14 (Paris 1882) 296-300; J.Savage (trans), FC 42 (New York 1961) 294-7. This image is discussed on 48-9.

who, without divine inspiration or grace, can set forth only an orderly narration of events. They cannot compose the true history, *historiae veritatem,* of the Evangelists.[87] This citation from *Novum Opus* also reveals how Jerome's work is based on texts which accord with this *veritas*. Both *Plures Fuisse* and *Novum Opus* highlight the divine number of the Gospels. In the former text the definite number of the Gospels is contrasted with the innumerable apocrypha. In the latter, Jerome speaks of his intention to create one version of the four Gospels to be used in harmony throughout the whole Church. This is contrasted with the many versions of these texts currently in existence. Jerome writes, *Si enim latinis exemplaribus fides est adhibenda, respondeat quibus; tot sunt paene quot codices.*

In *Novum Opus* Jerome characterizes those responsible for the current state of affairs. He writes that he must 'correct the mistakes introduced by inaccurate translators, and the blundering alterations of confident but ignorant critics, and, further, all that has been inserted or changed by copyists more asleep than awake' (lines 21-3). This brings us to a significant way the opening section of *Novum Opus* provides a context for the explanation of the canons' principles. It is made clear that the textual critic must have an orthodox understanding of the content and nature of the Gospel text. Jerome distinguishes between his re-establishment of the 'true' text of the Gospels and the work of those such as Lucian and Hesychius. He writes, 'I pass over those manuscripts, which are associated with the names of Lucian and Hesychius and the authority of which is perversely maintained by a handful of disputatious persons' (lines 34-6).[88]

This orthodox understanding of the Gospels is based in part it seems on an understanding of the Gospels' divine inspiration. In *Novum Opus* Jerome recognizes that those who do not understand the changes he has made will,

---

[87] *Plures Fuisse*, Lines 1-12, 229.

[88] Later prefaces also describe the corruption of Scriptural texts by poor copyists in the language usually reserved for heretics. Jerome writes as follows to Paula and Eustochim concerning his second revision of the Psalter, 'You now find it [the Psalter text] again corrupted through the fault of copyists, and realize the fact that ancient error is more powerful than modern correction; and you therefore urge me…to root out the thorns, which are beginning to spring again; it is only right, you say, that rank and noxious growths should be cut down as often as they appear', W.H. Freemantle (trans) NPNF 6, 494. See also Helmut Merkel (1971) 42-3, where he discusses how the followers of Gnosticism had no qualms about altering the form or content of the Gospels.

'break out immediately into violent language, and call me a forger and a profane person for having the audacity to add anything to the ancient books or to make any changes or corrections therein (lines 6-9). When this storm breaks after the Vulgate Gospel has been published, Jerome writes thus to Marcella,

> I am not so dull-witted nor so coarsely ignorant... to suppose that any of the Lord's words are either in need of correction or is not divinely inspired; but the Latin manuscripts of the Scriptures are proved to be faulty by the variations which all of them exhibit and my object has been to restore them to the form of the Greek original.[89]

These words also demonstrate how the idea of the divine measure of the Gospels is central to Jerome's understanding of the text. He makes clear that he is in fact seeking to restore the Gospels to the form in which they were originally transmitted. Jerome draws on the *fons* image to demonstrate his detractors' limitations: 'If they dislike water drawn from the clear stream, let them drink from the muddy streamlet...'.[90]

Cassiodorus, writing in the sixth century, also comments on the care with which the textual critic must approach Scripture. In Book I, Chapter XV of the *Institutiones* he echoes many of Jerome's sentiments. He states: 'That which is known to have been said with the inspiration of the Lord cannot be corrupted', and lists the principles which should guide the critic. Cassiodorus refers to Christ's tunic as an image of the Gospels' divine measure. He writes: 'For rightly did our Fathers concern themselves particularly with this matter, namely that the tunic of the Lord our Saviour, which the cruel soldiers were not allowed to cut, be not put in the power of unskilled emenders'.[91]

Three more points regarding lines 1-47 of *Novum Opus* will be mentioned here. Firstly, while Jerome identifies the need to base his Gospel revision on the *graeca veritas*, he has to qualify this claim with regard to Matthew. He writes, 'This [the New Testament] was undoubtedly composed in Greek with the exception of the work of Matthew the Apostle who was the first to commit to the

---

[89] Jerome, *Letter XXVII*, J. Labourt (ed) (1951) 17; W. H. Freemantle (trans) NPNF 6, 44.
[90] Ibid.17, 44.
[91] Cassiodorus, *Institutiones Divinarum ac Saecularium Litterarum*, I, XV, R. Mynors (ed) (1937) 48; L. Weber Jones (trans) (New York 1946) 105-9. Ambrose's description of the Gospels in chapter ten of his Commentary on Luke may have inspired Cassiodorus' use of this image.

writing of the Gospel of Christ and who published his work in Judea in Hebrew characters' (lines 20-1). *Plures Fuisse* and *De viris inlustribus* make clear how the use of Hebrew is linked to Matthew's biography and to the originally intended audience for the text, 'Those of the circumcision who believed'.[92]

Secondly, in the preface's opening section, Jerome gives some attention to the Gospels' divine order. He clearly states the order of the Gospels which he accepts: 'Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, as they have been revised by a comparison of Greek manuscripts'. The acceptance of this order is based in *Novum Opus* on the evidence of the textual *fons*. In fact, this order's standardisation can be largely attributed to the success of Jerome's Vulgate revision. In the next part of the thesis, it will be shown how Hiberno-Latin exegetes refer to this line is when discussing the order of the canons.[93]

Finally, in the course of the *Novum Opus* preface Jerome works out his own method of revising the Gospel text. At the beginning he asks, 'How can I dare change the language of the world in its hoary old age and carry it back to the days of its infancy?' This problem is then developed. The author writes, 'Is there not a man learned or unlearned, who will not, when he takes the volume into his hands and perceives what he reads does not suit his settled tastes break out immediately into violent language…' (lines 9-11). At the end of the opening section, Jerome states that he will compromise with regard to language, but only provided the 'true' sense of the text has been preserved. He writes, 'Only early ones [Greek manuscripts] have been used. But to avoid any great divergences from the Latin, which we are accustomed to read, I have used my pen with some restraint, and while I have corrected such passages as seemed to convey a different meaning, I have allowed the rest to remain as they are' (lines 43-47).

See Ambrose, *Expositio Euangelii secundum Lucam*, X, 117-18, M. Adriaen (ed), CCSL 14 (Turnhout 1957) 378-9. This image is discussed in H. Merkel (1971) 208.

[92] Jerome, *De viris inlustribus*, PL 23, 613; E. Richardson (trans), NPNF 3, 2nd series (repr. Grand Rapids 1989) 362. *Plures Fuisse*, Appendix F, lines 25-30. See Chapter 3, 50-1 for discussion.

[93] See Chapter 6, 119-20.

Lines 48-84: Jerome's version of the *Letter to Carpianus*

The second part of the *Novum Opus* preface contains Jerome's version of the *Letter to Carpianus*. This version is almost exactly as long as the text's literal Latin translation. There are some differences between the two, however. These occur mainly in lines 33-42, which introduce the explanation of the tables' contents and use. The latter, contained in lines 43-58, presents few divergences.[94]

At the beginning of the second section, Jerome first mentions the tables' provenance from Eusebius after Ammonius.[95] The reasons Eusebius gives in his letter for the differing form his *Diatessaron* takes are excluded here. After mentioning the Alexandrine, Jerome proceeds thus, 'Whereby if anyone of the curious wished to know what are either the same, or similar, or unique, he could learn from the divisions of these' (lines 50-53). Nordenfalk has compared this statement of the broad nature of the sections' 'parallel' with what is contained in the *Letter to Carpianus*, writing,

> On the whole the canon tables contain a range of both precise and less precise parallels. St. Jerome underlines it when, in his preface to the revised Latin edition of the Gospels, he calls the Eusebian canons a means to find out the extent the Evangelists report 'the same or something nearly related' (*uel eadem, uel uicina*). Apparently, Eusebius hints at the same by using in his *Letter to Carpianus*, in order to denote parallels the word…meaning 'more or less similar.[96]

Later Hiberno-Latin exegetes also pick up on this distinction.[97]

Novum Opus differs from the letter's literal translation in characterizing the user of the canons as *quis de curiosis*. In his work, Jerome occasionally addresses his reader as *curiosus lector*. Bonnard has written, 'Péjoratif chez Augustin l'adjectif *curiosus* est au contraire une qualité pour Jérôme'.[98] The 'curious reader' in Jerome's works is diligent and thorough in his quest for orthodox

---

[94] The Latin translation of the *Letter to Carpianus* as it appears in the Lindisfarne Gospels is contained in Appendix A, 216-17.
[95] Jerome seems to misunderstand the Ammonius/ Eusebius relationship, not limiting Ammonius' role to a merely inspirational one. His description of Ammonius in *De viris inlustribus* also makes this point clear. This is cited in Chapter 1, 8.
[96] C. Nordenfalk (1984) 103. Nordenfalk is referring here to H. McArthur (1965) 254, discussed previously in Chapter 1, 19-20.
[97] See Chapter 6, 125-27.
[98] Jerome, *Commentariorum in Mattheum*, E.Bonnard (trans), SC 242 (Paris 1977) 282, n.47.

understanding. He is often cast as questioning claims which have been made, e.g. in his *Homily on Psalm 15*, Jerome writes, 'Perhaps now the inquiring (*curiosus*) reader will raise this objection…'.[99] Similarly, he states in his prologue to the *Book of Daniel*, 'But as to the objections Porphyry raises against this prophet or rather brings against this book Methodius, Eusebius and Appolinarius may be cited as witnesses, for they replied to his folly in many thousand lines of writing, whether to the satisfaction of the curious reader, I know not'.[100] Curiosity to understand the Scripture's (or their translations') apparent contradictions often involves recourse to the *hebraica veritas*. Jerome speaks of his own curiosity in such a context in his *Letter XXXVI* to Damasus.[101] In *Novum Opus*, the canon tables are portrayed as a means whereby the curious can develop their understanding of the evangelical text.[102]

Lines 53-7 reveal how the attainment of such understanding was being hindered by the problems of textual transmission. They read,

> This great error grew such in our books until what one Evangelist said more on the same thing was added to the other because it was thought less, while the other actually expressed the same sense in another way, he, who had first read one of the four would judge against its example what was to be corrected in the others. Whence it happened that with us everything was mixed up….

These words illustrate how the Gospels in their present state have become unbalanced. Both their measure and order have been disturbed. It is clear that Jerome views the canons as an instrument for redressing this situation:

> When, therefore, you have read the canons, which have been placed underneath, the error of confusion having been removed, you will know both the similarities of them all and also restore to each everything which belongs to them (lines 59-63).

His comment stresses the importance of each Evangelist's distinctiveness represented by Canon X. Jerome reiterates this point in *Plures Fuisse*, where each Evangelist is seen to record a different aspect of Christ's identity.[103]

---

[99] Jerome, *Tractatus de psalmo XV* in *Tractatuum in psalmos series altera*, G.Morin (ed), CCSL 78 (Turnhout 1958) 379; Sr. Marie Liguori (trans), FC 57 (Washington 1966) 30.
[100] Jerome, *Prologus in Danihele Propheta*, in *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, R. Weber (ed) (Stuttgart 1983) 1342; W.H. Freemantle (trans), NPNF 6, 493.
[101] Jerome, *Lettre XXXVI* , J.Labourt (ed) (1951) 59-60, reads *aestimas curiostatem esse finitem? Maior quaerendi ardor exoritur et in similitudinem hieremiae dissoluor undique et ferre non possum, quare septuaginta 'quintem generationem' et aquila transtulerit 'armatos'.*
[102] This ties in with the idea of the canons as a space of understanding, previously discussed. See Chapter 1, 18-19.

It is to be noted further how in the above citation, Jerome characterizes his work of revision as removing the 'error of confusion'. In his *Letter XXI* to Damasus he equates *confusio* with Babel. The tower's builders are described as motivated by 'illegitimate curiosity'.[104] This parallel illustrates how Jerome perceived his work as a textual critic as a work of faith, removing linguistic error and confusion in order to allow for the transmission of the true text of the Gospels, complete in its divine number, measure and order.

Novum Opus provides thus a very specific context for Jerome's comments on the canons. The preface is founded on the belief that the Gospels' divinely inspired nature is reflected in their material form. Jerome sees his Vulgate revision as an attempt to restore this form, which has been distorted by the work of ignorant copyists and critics. The canons, as a reflection of the Gospels' divine ordering, play a significant role in this attempt.

Mentions of the Canons in Later Patristic Literature

The second part of this chapter briefly examines references to the Eusebian series in patristic literature after the fourth century. Three principal writers will be discussed: Cassiodorus, Isidore and Victor of Capua. Their attention to the canons has two-fold significance. It firstly shows how the series continued to interest exegetes after Jerome. Secondly it formed, at least in the case of Isidore's *Etymologiae*, an important source for Hiberno-Latin writings on the Eusebian tables.[105]

Cassiodorus mentions canon tables in Book I, 7 of his *Institutiones Divinarum et Saecularum Litterarum*.[106] This work, usually dated to the early years of the monastery at Vivarium (c.560AD), was written as a guide to scriptural reading.[107] The canons form part of the recommended material on the Gospels.

---

[103] See for example Chapter 3, 50.
[104] Jerome, *Lettre XXI*, J.Labourt (ed) (1949) 90.
[105] Hiberno-Latin writers on the canons cite directly from Isidore's work, see Chapter 6, 113. The transmission of the *Etymologiae* to Ireland is discussed in Chapter 4, 76.
[106] Cassiodorus, *Institutiones Divinarum et Secularum Litterarum*, I, VII, R. Mynors (ed), (1937) 28; L. Weber Jones (trans) (1946) 89.
[107] Aspects of this work have recently been discussed by J. O'Reilly (2001) 3-39.

Cassiodorus mentions a collection he has made of Jerome's writings on this theme and he refers to the treatment of Matthew's Gospel by Hilary and Victorinus, of Luke by Ambrose and of John by Augustine. At the end of the chapter he includes two works which treat of Gospel harmony. He writes first that Augustine 'has also invested his four books *On the Harmony of the Evangelists* with an exceedingly subtle and necessary argument'. Directly after this, Cassiodorus states: *Eusebius quoque Caesariensis Canones evangelicos compendiosa brevitate collegit, ut in quibus loca communia dicunt, in quibus propria tangunt, verissima distinctione monstraret.*[108]

Although brief, this treatment of the canons demonstrates the significance Cassiodorus attached to the Eusebian series. The tables are among a very small group of texts seen to help the interpretation of the Gospels. They are mentioned directly after Augustine's *De consensu euangelistarum*, the only patristic commentary devoted wholly to this theme.[109] Eusebius is seen to have shown *verissima distinctione* in composing the series and is included in the chapter's closing line, *ubi quanta est plenitudo fidei, tanto floret et diversorum tractantium doctrina mirabilis.*

A very influential treatment of the Eusebian series occurs in Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*. The sixth book, entitled *De Libris et Officiis Ecclesiasticis*, treats among other things of the contents of the Old and New Testaments, of scriptural translators and exegetes, and of different genres of works and writing materials. Book 6, Chapter XV is devoted to the canons.[110] It is directly preceded by a chapter on copyists and their instruments and is followed by one on the conciliar canons. As in the *Institutiones*, the context in which the canons are placed is

---

[108] Cassiodorus, *Institutiones* I, VII, R. Mynors (ed), (1937) 28.

[109] H. Merkel (1971) 218-261. Merkel (267) describes *De consensu euangelistarum* as 'ein durch Nüchternheit ausgezeichnetes harmonistisches Gebäude'. Although some older scholarship claimed Augustine was acquainted with Eusebius' tables, this idea has now been rejected. This is mainly due to the work of A. Penna, 'Il «*De consensu Evangelistarum*» ed I «Canoni Eusebiani», *Biblica* 36 (1955) 1-19. Merkel (1971) fn. 49, 229-30 summarizes this debate and following Penna concludes, 'Augustin hat die Kanones Eusebs nicht gekannt'.

[110] This chapter entitled *De Canonibus Evangeliorum* is reproduced in Appendix D, 226. For the context in which this appears see *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi, Etymologiarum Sive Originum Libri XX, Tomus* I, W.M Lindsay (ed), (Oxford 1911).

significant. Later, Hiberno-Latin exegetes directly interpret the word canon as *regula* from Isidore's description of the canons of the great church councils.[111]

Isidore's chapter on the Gospel canons, although short, is structured after the Eusebian and Hieronymian descriptions of the series. The tables' provenance and the reason for their composition are first described. Isidore clearly understands Ammonius to have first invented this series. He writes, *Canones Evangeliorum Ammonius Alexandrinae primus excogitavit, quem postea Eusebius Caesariensis secutus plenius conposuit*. He differs from Jerome by describing the tables as showing merely the sections, which are *similia* or *propria*. In the listing of the contents which follows, he writes of the tables showing where the Evangelists said the same thing (*eadem*). The final part of the description deals with the canons' practical use. Isidore introduces this with the phrase *Quorum expositio haec est*. This seems to echo the Latin translation of Eusebius' *Letter to Carpianus*. The chapter as a whole however draws both on this work and the description of the canons in *Novum Opus*.[112]

The final treatment of canon tables to be discussed here occurs in Victor of Capua's introduction to his *Diatessaron*.[113] This work, written before 546 AD, predates both the *Institutiones* and the *Etymologiae*. It is preserved, along with other New Testament texts, in the Codex Fuldensis.[114] In the *Diatessaron* introduction Victor makes it clear that the manuscript which came into his hands was without marginal canon notations and he claims that he has inserted these from memory.[115] While Victor goes on to describe as Eusebian the tables which appear directly after the introduction, Patrick McGurk has shown how these are

---

[111] This occurs in the preface to the Irish Reference Bible. See Chapter 6, 114-15 for further discussion.

[112] P. Minard (1943) 19, fn. 2 writes 'Les *Etymologies* VI, 15 sont un résumé de la lettre Ammonius inspiré en même temps du *Novum Opus*'.

[113] The section from the *Diatessaron* relating to the Eusebian tables is contained in Appendix E, 227-28. For the full text see E. Ranke (ed), *Codex Fuldensis* (Marburg 1868) 1-3. Another edition is contained in PL 68, J.P. Migne (ed), (Paris 1847) 252-6.

[114] This manuscript is described in E. A. Lowe, *Codices Latini Antiquiores*, viii (Oxford 1959) 49. See also Patrick McGurk, 'The oldest manuscripts of the Latin Bible' in R. Gameson (ed), The Early Medieval Bible – Its Production, Decoration and Use (Cambridge 1994) 1-23, 8, and the entry on the *Codex Fuldensis* in E.A.Cross and F. Livingstone (ed), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd edition, (Oxford 1997) 372. The manuscript's early presence at Fulda and the identification of an annotating hand, which was thought to be that of St. Boniface, have led to the suggestion that it was once owned by him.

not, in fact, normal canon tables, but have been devised especially for this *Diatessaron*. McGurk writes, '...It is certain that Victor tackled the question of Canon Tables anew: he left out the Brescia type, if it existed in his original and put in its place a canon series modelled on those figures which he took such pains to insert in the margin of his text'.[116] In spite of this fact, Victor's introductory remarks will be discussed here for what they reveal of his conception of the Eusebian series.

As with Isidore, the comments on the series in the *Diatessaron* introduction follow the structure of the prefatory letters. It is clear that Victor was familiar with both of these. An excerpt from *Novum Opus* is included just before the tables begin on fol. 4v and he quotes the *incipit* of the *Letter to Carpianus* in the first part of his introduction, when discussing the possibility that Ammonius was the author of the work he has before him.[117] From this *incipit* it is clear that Victor was familiar with a translation of the *Letter to Carpianus*, different to that preserved in the Lindisfarne Gospels. In 1927, Donatien de Bruyne identified another witness to this translation among the prefatory material of the eighth-century Gospel book, Poitiers MS 17.[118] De Bruyne judges the Poitiers translation as more faithful to the Greek original and clearer than the version of the letter contained in Lindisfarne.[119]

Victor begins his treatment of the tables by discussing their provenance. In spite of his acquaintance with the *Letter to Carpianus*, he still sees Ammonius as the inventor of the tables. He writes that Ammonius invented the numbers, missing from his manuscript which Eusebius afterwards improved or polished (*excolere*).[120] After explaining how he has inserted the missing marginal figures,

---

[115] This is commented on by D. de Bruyne (1927) 9-11.
[116] P. McGurk (1955) 197-8.
[117] Ibid. 195. This extract is reproduced by E. Ranke (1868) 5.
[118] The Irish associations of this manuscript are discussed later on in this thesis. See Chapter 5, 79 for its inclusion of Ailerán's *Canon Evangeliorum* and Appendix H, 243-51, where it is mentioned in the discussion of Irish Hebrew Name lists.
[119] D. de Bruyne (1927) 6-9. He writes of the *Diatessaron* translation as 'beaucoup plus fidèle et plus claire'. See also the second edition of this translation in P. Minard (1943) 18-20.
[120] Earlier on in the preface, when discussing the possible author of this *Diatessaron*, he describes Ammonius as *qui canonum quoque euangelii fertur inuentor*, E. Ranke (1868) 1.

he then goes on to talk about the tables themselves. Most significant is the attention he gives to their number. He writes:

> *Sciendum sane quod hic numerus canonicus usque ad denarium perueniat quantitatem: neque scribentis uoluntate horum numerorum summa defixa est . sed ratione et regula naturali ab ammonio est inuenta sagaciter . neque enim aut infra denarium aut ultra poterit ullo modo alius numerus repperiri . qui quattuor euangelistarum dicta communia aut propria ualeat explicare.*

Victor makes it clear how the number of the tables was not decided on arbitrarily, but was wisely invented by Ammonius according to reason and the rules of nature. He writes that no other number, either lower or higher than ten, could be found which would so fittingly explain what the Evangelists said together or differently.

Victor's comments on the significance of the canons' number draws on the Neoplatonic conception of ten as the sum of the first four numbers, an expression of the highest perfection.[121] That this number is related to cosmological harmony is also made clear for Ammonius is spoken of as following the rules of nature in his invention of the series. Most significant however in illustrating the tables' perfect number and measure is Victor's use of the scriptural image of the *denarius*. The tables are described as reaching *ad denarium quantitatem*. Victor repeats this idea later on in the preface when he writes, *In quattuor igitur euangelistis, euidenti numerorum ratione monstratum est quod non ualeat communis propriaque relatio ultra progredi aut intra denarium contrahi quantitatem.*

Victor's use of the *denarius* to describe the ten canons draws on a rich patristic tradition.[122] Exegetes saw the New Testament *denarius*, rewarded to the workers in the vineyard in Mt. 20: 1-16, as a counterpoint to the Decalogue of the Old Testament. In his *Commentary on Ezechiel,* Jerome interpreted the ten-cubit-wide gate of the visionary temple in the following way,

---

[121] This was discussed more fully in Chapter 1, 14-15.
[122] See H.Meyer and R. Suntrup (1987) 591-2, 598 for discussion of this tradition. The significance of the *denarius* as an image of perfection is also mentioned in J. O'Reilly (1999) 181.

Mensus est quoque latitudinem liminis portae decem cubitorum, qui perfectus est numerus et uel decalogo continentur, uel euangeliorum quattuor sacramento qui ab una incipiens, ita ad I, II, III, IIII peruenit ut denarium impleat numerum.[123]

In the *Morals on Job* Gregory writes that: 'The number ten is perfect therein [in Scripture], because the Law is included in ten precepts, and no fault is forbidden further by the ten words, and as the truth relates the labourers in the vineyard are rewarded with a *denarius'*.[124]

Gregory's interpretation highlights the significance the *denarius* as an image of heavenly reward. Augustine often referred to the *denarius* in this way. In his commentary on the 153 fish (Jn. 21: 11) he writes, 'This same 10 correctly signifies the whole of that everlasting state which, faith teaches, will follow on the resurrection of the body. And perhaps this is the reason why those who are hired in the vineyard receive a *denarius* as salary'.[125] The numerical properties of ten are used to explain what this reward will be made up of: the unity of the created, signified by the seven and the Trinity.[126] In his Sermon 51 Augustine writes, *quia denarius numerus perfectionem habet iustitiae et beatitudinis, cum septenaria creatura creatoris inheret trinitati: unde etiam decalogus legis in decem preceptis consecratus est.*[127]

The idea of the *denarius* as reward also drew on the appearance of the coin, on which was represented the head of the Caesar. In Christian terms, this was seen to signify the reward of the vision of the Lord in heaven. In his *Commentariorum in Mattheum* Jerome writes: *Denarius figuram regis habet. Recepisti ergo mercedem quam tibi promiseram, hoc est imaginem et*

---

[123] Jerome, *Commentariorum in Hiezechielem*, F. Glorie (ed), CCSL 75 (Turnhout 1964) 563-88, 611.
[124] Gregory, *Moralia in Iob*, M. Adriaen (ed), CCSL 143 B (Turnhout 1985) 1802; J. Bliss (trans) (Oxford 1850) 692.
[125] Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus, LVII, De centum quinquaginta tribus piscibus*, A. Mutzenbecher (ed), CCSL 44 A (Turnhout 1975) 97; D. Mosher (trans) FC 70 (Washington 1982) 94.
[126] This division of ten has been seen as distinctly Augustinian. V.Hopper (1969) 85 writes, 'Ten had long been recognized as an image of unity, but it was Augustinian Pythagoreanism that produced it by adding the Trinity of the Creator to the hebdomad of the created'.
[127] Augustine *Sermones de Scripturis, Sermo LI*, J.P. Migne (ed), PL 38 (Paris 1841) 353. The *denarius* was also mentioned by Augustine in commentary on the number 11, which represents the transgression of its perfection. See Augustine *Quaestiones Evangeliorum* II, vi, A. Mutzenbecher (ed), CCSL 44 B (Turnhout 1980) 49.

similitudinem meam.[128] Later exegetes pick up on this theme. In *De Templo* Bede states, 'The number ten conventionally designates the hope of heavenly rewards, as the Lord affirms when he declares that those who worked in the vineyard of the great householder are to be remunerated; and this number is rightly used as a figure of the eternal reward in which our nature is eternally united to God in vision'.[129]

Apart from the emphasis Victor places on the tables' divine number and measure, one curious feature of his description of the canons remains to be discussed. This is the listing of the canon parallels. The following table compares Victor's listing with that of the *Letter to Carpianus*.

Canon	Eusebius	Victor
I	Mt, Mk, Lk, Jn	Mt, Mk, Lk, Jn
II	Mt, Mk, Lk	Mt, Mk, Lk
III	Mt, Lk, Jn	**Jn, Mt**
IV	Mt, Mk, Jn	**Mt, Lk**
V	Mt. Mk	Mt., Mk
VI	Mt, Lk	**Mk, Lk, Jn**
VII	Mt, Jn	**Mk, Jn**
VIII	Lk, Mk	Mk, Lk
VIIII	Lk, Jn	Lk, Jn
X	Propria	Propria

A number of differences are clear. While Victor begins his list with the parallel of the four Evangelists and ends with their unique sections, the intervening canons are not grouped to show the parallels of three and two Evangelists together. Instead, Victor lists first all the tables in which Matthew is paralleled, one table of three, three of two. He omits entirely the parallels of Mt, Lk, Jn and Mt, Mk, Jn normally contained in Canons III and IV. In addition, his two-way

[128] Jerome, *Commentariorum in Matheum*, D. Hurst and M. Adriaen (ed), CCSL 77 (Turnhout 1969) 176. See also Augustine, *Enarationes in Psalmos* IV, CCSL 38, 17.
[129] Bede, *De Templo*, CCSL 119 A, 226-7; S. Connolly (trans) TTH 21 (1995) 109. The image of the *denarius* is returned to in Chapter 5, 81-2 in the discussion of Ailerán's *Canon Evangeliorum*.

parallels for Mt seem to follow a reverse order, Jn Mt, Mt Lk and Mt Mk. This leads into the listing of other tables, which feature the Evangelist Mark. Surprisingly, in his list for Mark Victor includes two parallels Mk, Lk, Jn and Mk, Jn, which are not part of the Eusebian series. His Canon VIII reverses Eusebius' original order Mk, Lk for Lk, Mk.[130] Victor's Canon VIIII and X agree with the Eusebian system.

Victor's listing of the canons is difficult to explain, especially in light of his supposed knowledge of the *Letter to Carpianus* and *Novum Opus*.[131] Perhaps, following the work of McGurk, this canon listing is not dependent on the information contained in the prefaces, but on the tables he has drawn up for his *Diatessaron*. But this does not tally with the *Diatessaron* tables, which appear after this introduction in the Codex Fuldensis.[132] Alternatively, Victor may merely have listed the canons here, as with the marginal numbers, from memory, working through the parallels of each Evangelist until he reached the number ten. Whatever the explanation, it is worth noting that while Victor changes the canon parallels, he does not change the tables' overall number. This preserves the series' divine number and measure, something the preface emphasizes. One final comment can be made about the listing. Victor describes the agreement of each table in a range of different expressions: *concordare*, *convenire*, *consentire*, *eadem loqui*, *paria loqui*, *similia loqui*, *eadem narrare*, *descrepantia referre*, *singuli propria exponere*. This also serves to underline the variety and harmony of the fourfold Gospel.

---

[130] A number of other Gospel books reverse the order of this table to bring it in line with the ordering of the Vulgate. They do not make changes to the other tables however. See C. Nordenfalk (1938) 48 for discussion of this point.

[131] Victor's erroneous listing of the canons is noted by E. Ranke (1868) xxiv-v, but no explanation is provided. A hand contemporary to Victor's also noted the discrepancy between the list of canons in the preface and in the *Novum Opus* list. This is cited by E. Ranke (1868) xxv and 467.

[132] Tables reprinted in E. Ranke (ed) (1868) 5-20. Their link with the tables in the Book of Lindisfarne are discussed by P. McGurk (1955) 192-198.

Conclusion

The attention given to the Eusebian tables by Cassiodorus, Isidore and Victor illustrates how they continued to be a source of interest in the sixth and early seventh centuries. Cassiodorus includes the canons as part of a select group of texts which aid evangelical interpretation. Isidore's chapter on the tables in the *Etymologiae* does not present anything new in terms of content, but is significant in linking evangelical and conciliar canons. Victor's treatment of the series in the preface to his *Diatessaron* is perhaps the most interesting of the three. Victor emphasises the tables' divine number and measure, referring on a number of occasions to the image of the *denarius*. Somewhat perplexingly, he provides an incorrect list of the tables' contents.

The fact that Victor seems to have created tables specifically for his *Diatessaron* is one example of another way Late Antique interest in Eusebius' concordance manifested itself. Attempts to 'improve' or modify the series have been identified in most of the cultures to which it was transmitted. The Gospels of Syriac Peshitto manuscripts are divided into many more sections than their Eusebian counterparts.[133] They also facilitated the use of the tables by including parallel references at the foot of each page of text.[134] This practice carried over into Gothic Gospel books of the period.[135] Greek manuscripts show revision of the Eusebian series by a 'careful editor', who corrected the tables to ensure that no section was placed in two canons, and who rearranged some of the lists so that multiple parallels from one book are placed in chronological sequence.[136] Latin books facilitated the use of the tables by expanding their marginal entries to include the section parallels.[137] In addition, some Latin books contain tables with

---

[133] This is described by G.H.Gwilliams (1890) 241-272, 245-246. Gwilliams writes (246), 'The Syriac aimed at a complete tabulation of the more minute resemblances between the several statements within the compass of such paragraphs'.
[134] G.H. Gwilliams (1890) 247.
[135] For discussion of Gothic canon tables see C. Nordenfalk, (1938) 263-4 and Taf. 160 (a) and (b).
[136] These suggestions are made by C. Nordenfalk (1984) 101-103. Following Nestle and von Soden he suggests that the grammarian Theophanes may be responsible for these changes.
[137] This development is discussed by Tom O' Loughlin, 'The Eusebian Apparatus in Some Vulgate Gospel Books', *Peritia* 13 (1999) 1-92, 4-6. Such marginal entries are preserved in the oldest surviving copy of the Vulgate Gospels, the fragmentary St. Gallen 1395 from the late fourth or early fifth century.

the beginning of each section written out. The most splendid of these, the Brescia Gospels, is dated to early sixth-century Ravenna. Its highly decorated canons with opening sections would have spread over a total of 150 folios, of which 70 are now preserved.[138]

The existence of a manuscript like the Brescia Gospels and the decoration the series received at the opening of a number of extant Late Antique Gospel books also highlight the significance of the Eusebian concordance. This is compounded within the actual text of such books where the beginning of canon sections received visual emphasis.[139] Such illuminated manuscripts and the discussion of the series in the prefatory letters and in a work like the *Etymologiae*, formed the basis for the treatment of this concordance in the Insular world. Parts II and III of this thesis clearly show that, in spite of some innovation, the enthusiasm with which Insular exegetes and artists received the tables places them in an already long-established Late Antique tradition.

---

[138] This manuscript is discussed by C. Nordenfalk (1982) 37-8. In this article Nordenfalk also draws attention to a particular set of Coptic canon tables which include liturgical references in the columns of the tables' arches, another development of the canons' form.

[139] P. McGurk, (1994) 12-14, where he writes of how the Eusebian sections served to divide up the Gospel text. See also Patrick McGurk 'Text of the Gospels' in P. Fox (ed), *The Book of Kells - Commentary* (Lucerne 1990) 59-61, where he discusses the role of Eusebian sections in the layout of pages of text in Insular Gospel books.

Chapter 3

The Scriptural Tradition of Harmony Exegesis

Introduction

This final chapter of Part I does not discuss the Eusebian concordance. Instead, it focuses on another text, *Plures Fuisse*, which often appeared alongside the canons as a preface to Insular Gospel books.[140] Focus on this text allows for the discussion of a particular aspect of patristic harmony exegesis, namely the use of scriptural images to justify the existence of the fourfold Gospel. The antiquity of this tradition is clear from Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses*. In III, XI, already mentioned in the context of the cosmological tradition, Irenaeus also uses scriptural imagery to defend the Gospels. He refers to the Revelations' vision of the beasts, writing, 'For the living creatures are quadriform and the Gospel is quadriform, as is also the course followed by the Lord'.[141] He goes on to discuss how salvation history divides into four covenants, another evangelical type. Jerome's *Plures Fuisse* text offers one of the most condensed examples of the tradition, which uses scriptural images to describe the harmony of the Gospels.[142] Later Hiberno-Latin writers apply these images not only to the general theme of evangelical harmony but also to their specific exegesis on this harmony as represented in the Eusebian series.

Jerome's *Plures Fuisse* Preface

The *Plures Fuisse* preface is dated to the Spring of 398 AD. Jerome addresses the text to Eusebius of Cremona, who, it seems, requested a commentary on Matthew as his reading material for a voyage to Rome. The preface divides broadly into two parts. This discussion concerns itself with the first part, which treats of the inspired nature of the fourfold Gospel. The second part of the preface contains technical information about the succeeding commentary.

---

[140] Latin and English versions of this text are contained in Appendix F, 229-34.
[141] Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* III, 11, ANF 1, 429.
[142] *Plures Fuisse* is described by J. O' Reilly (1998) 49-94, 56-7 in the context of other patristic exegesis on the Evangelists.

Jerome informs us of his writing conditions, he supplies us with his bibliography, and he instructs Eusebius to give a copy of the commentary to a Roman friend of his, Principia. The second part of the preface is mentioned here only when it contributes to the discussion of the preceding lines.

The first part of the preface, which defends the existence of the fourfold Gospel, can itself be divided into four sections. The first section introduces the central theme: the difference between apocryphal writers and the inspired Evangelists. The second section contains six images alluding to the communion of Christ with the Church and its expression through the Gospels. Section Three describes each Evangelist and the writing conditions for the Gospels. The final section portrays the Evangelists in the symbolism of the four beasts. While the preface is discussed here mainly in the context of Hieronymian writings, some reference is made to other exegetes: to Origen and Ambrose in Section Two, to Eusebius in Section Three and to Augustine and Irenaeus in Section Four. These references point to the exegetical tradition in which Jerome participated.

Section One

The first section runs from lines 1-20. It begins by stating that there were many who wrote Gospels. Jerome supports this by quoting the *incipit* of Luke's Gospel: 'For as much as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a narration of the things that have been accomplished among us, who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word'. From this quotation Jerome testifies personally to the continued existence of such texts *usque in praesens tempus*. They are the cause of many different heresies. The list which follows is, apart from the inclusion of the Marcionite Appellis, similar to that in Origen's *Homily on Luke*.[143] But the list is curtailed. For the purposes of the preface we are told it is necessary only for us to know that 'there were many who tried, without the inspiration and grace of God, more to set forth in order a narration than to compose a true history". Jerome's words echo the previous Gospel

[143] See E. Bonnard's note to this passage in his translation of Jerome's *Commentariorum in Matheum*, SC 242 (Paris 1977) 62, n.1. On the apologetic history of the Lucan *incipit* see H. Merkel (1971) 11-12.

quotation, but with additions. The efforts of the 'many' failed because they lacked *spiritu et gratia Dei*. They can attempt therefore only the provision of an orderly narration, not the composition of true history. In this statement a kind of negative definition of the character of the Evangelists is provided. They are implicitly contrasted with the apocryphal writers. They have received the grace of divine inspiration and thus have composed *historiae ueritatem*.[144]

It is not only the product of the labour of the Evangelists and the apocryphal writers, which is contrasted however. The different nature of the process of inspired versus uninspired writing is illustrated by the use of different verbs to describe their activity, *texere* versus *ordinare*. The use later in the preface of *contexere* to describe Ezechiel's vision of the four beasts echoes this description of inspired writing (line 57). It is noticeable, in these opening lines, that the multiplicity of authors and heresies are mentioned. The heresies are too lengthy to enumerate and this contrasts with the very definite quaternity of Evangelists later presented. In like manner, the diversity of authors and heresies is set against the concordance and unity of the true faith found in the harmonious evangelical accounts. This is a theme which Eusebius was aware of and which Jerome also alluded to in *Novum Opus* in the context of the many and varying copies of the Gospels current in his time.[145]

The second part of the first section (lines 13-20) develops further the theme of divine inspiration. This development is achieved through the continued tension of the verbs *uenire / mittere*. This second part comprises of three Biblical quotations. Firstly from Ezechiel 13: 3, 'Woe to those prophets who work from their own inspiration, who say God says when he hasn't sent them'. Like the false prophets of the Old Testament, the apocryphal writers haven't been sent by God and are, therefore, without divine inspiration. Continuity is assumed between the dangers posed by Old Testament false prophets and that by heretical thought in Jerome's own day. This continuity is threaded through the New Testament in the section's second quotation. We are told of the Saviour's words

---

[144] See Chapter 2, 26-7 for a discussion of this line in the context of the Gospels' textual transmission.
[145] See Chapter 2, 26-7.

in John's Gospel: 'All others as many as have come are thieves and robbers. Who came', and Jerome adds, 'who were not sent' (Jn. 10: 8). From the Latin, one sees these words apply specifically to those who came before Christ's own Incarnation (*ante me*), his own sending by God (lines 17-18). The theme of the Incarnation is returned to in the preface's next section. The final Biblical quotation in these lines comes from the book of Jeremiah: 'They came and I sent them not' (Jer. 14: 14). It reiterates the understanding of false prophets/heretical writers through the verbal opposition *uenire/mittere*. Jerome consolidates this idea in his final comment, 'In those who come there is the presumption of boldness, in those sent the obedience of service'. The definition of the true Evangelist implied in the previous lines, i.e. those sent inspired by God, is here clearly stated.

Section Two

The second section of the *Plures Fuisse* preface runs from Lines 20-26. The section opens with the words *Ecclesia autem*, alerting us immediately to a subject change. The images of the Church, which follow, serve as an introduction to the succeeding description of each Evangelist. We are told, firstly, following Mt 16: 18, that 'the Church, by the saying of the Saviour was founded on rock'. This first image evokes the Church's steadfastness and strength. This strength, as we read in Jerome's succeeding commentary, is one founded on divine inspiration - that which revealed the true identity of Christ to Peter. Moreover, in his description of the second part of Mt.16: 18, 'and the gates of hell will not prevent it', Jerome sees this inspired strength as countering heresy specifically. He writes, *Ego portas inferi uitia reor atque peccata uel certe hereticorum doctrinas per quas inlecti homines ducuntur ad tartarum.*[146] His words here may be influenced by those of Origen's *Commentary on Matthew*, a work Jerome allows to have read in the preface's bibliography. Origen's interpretation of Mt.16: 18 reads, 'And likewise already each of the heterodox and of those who have already begotten any 'knowledge which is

[146] Jerome, *Commentariorum in Mattheum*, CCSL 77, 141; E.Bonnard (ed) (1977) 13-17.

falsely so called' has built a gate of Hades - Marcion one gate, and Basilides another, and Valentinus another'.[147]

Reference to Origen is also required in discussing, following this Matthean image of the Church, Jerome's use of metaphors from the Song of Songs.[148] Jerome's change of stance regarding Origen makes dealing with his use as a source in Hieronymian writings problematical. The nature of such problems can be seen when treating of the first reference to the Song of Songs in lines 21-22: 'But the Church...which the king hath brought into his storerooms'. In the preface to his translation of Origen's *Homilies on the Song of Songs* (383 AD), Jerome uses just this image to describe Origen himself. In the brilliance of his *Song of Songs Commentary*, Jerome tells us, Origen surpassed even himself. Hence it seems that the words, 'the king hath brought me into his storerooms' are accomplished in him.[149] Origen's comments in Jerome's translation of the homilies, which follow, show that this accomplishment is to be understood as the revelation to him of the most secret mysteries of Christ. We read that the bride alone is brought into the storerooms to see 'the most hidden treasures and the most secret hoards', a quotation from Isaiah 45: 3.[150] In the *Plures Fuisse* preface it seems that Jerome is following an Origenian interpretation of Songs 1: 3. This image is one of the most divine inspiration. In lines 21-22 Jerome applies it to the Church and, by extension, to its supports, the Evangelists.[151]

The second reference to the Song of Songs in this section continues the theme of divine inspiration and the moment of its revelation. We are told that 'through the opening of his hidden descent, the king put out his hand [to the Church]'. In his letter to the virgin Eustochim in 384, Jerome applied this image to describe the moment of communion between Christ and the individual Christian soul. He

---

[147] Origen, *Commentary on Matthew*, John Patrick (trans), ANF 10, (repr. Grand Rapids 1986) 457.
[148] It is interesting to connect Jerome's selection of these three images from the Song of Songs with his intended audience, not just Eusebius, but also Principia to whom, as he informs us at the preface's end, a Song of Songs commentary had been promised.
[149] Origen, *Homélies sur le Cantique des Cantiques*, Olivier Rousseau (ed), SC 37 (Paris 1966) 79.
[150] Ibid. 85.
[151] One must be aware however, that the dating of the *Commentary on Matthew* to 398 implies Jerome would no longer consider these words as applicable to Origen himself.

exhorts Eustochim to remain within her own house, not to venture into the city of Rome. He writes, 'Let the seclusion of your own chamber ever guard you; ever let the Bridegroom sport with you within....When sleep falls on you, He will come behind the wall and will put His hand through the hole in the door and will touch your flesh. And you will awake and rise up and say, "I am sick with love"'.[152] Jerome's addition in the preface of the words *Descensionis occultae* to Song of Songs 5: 4, 'My beloved put his hand through the keyhole [opening]', has been connected by Émile Bonnard to his exegesis of Christ's Incarnation in the following commentary.[153] In his discussion of Mt 1: 18, after supplying three reasons why Mary is portrayed as betrothed, Jerome writes: 'The martyr Ignatius has supplied a fourth reason: Christ, he said, appeared to be borne by one betrothed so that his birth would remain hidden from the devil at that time, so that he would believe that he was born not of a virgin but of a woman'.[154] This image in *Plures Fuisse,* lines 22-23, makes explicit that the prefiguration in the Old Testament of the revelation of the most secret mysteries of Christ to the Church was fulfilled in the New Testament. This communion of revelation was achieved through Christ's secret descent, the Incarnation. It is inspired by this that the Evangelists write.

Jerome's final metaphor from the Song of Songs applies to the figure of Christ himself. Following Songs 2: 9, that the king [Christ] is said to be 'like the roe and the hart of deer'. Discussing Jerome's use of this image, it is useful to return to Origen's *Homilies on the Song of Songs*. Origen, significantly, attributes to divine inspiration his ability to interpret this passage. He refers to Luke 24: 32, 'How Jesus opened the Scriptures to us'. Origen sees the hart and the roe as representing different aspects of Christ's nature. In the acuity of his vision (*theoria*), the Saviour is as to the hart. He is like the roe in his ability to destroy powerful enemies (*opera*).[155] An image of the active and contemplative Christ is thus presented to us here. Jerome draws on this idea in his subsequent description of the individual evangelical accounts. One must note, finally, two previous

---

[152] Jerome, *Letter XXII*, J. Labourt (ed) (1949) 136; Included in *Jerome, Select Letters*, F.A.Wright (trans) (Cambridge1980) 109.
[153] Jerome, *Commentariorum in Matheum*, SC 242, 62, n.3.
[154] Ibid. 79.
[155] Origen, *Homélies sur le Cantiques des Cantiques*, SC 37, 139-40.

Hieronymian uses of this image. Firstly in his *Tractates on the Psalms* (390), Jerome presented this image of Christ, as the roe and the hart bounding on high, as the model each individual Christian must strive to emulate.[156] Secondly in his letter to Magnus (397), this image is, like Songs 1: 3, applied to inspired commentators. He writes of his adversary, Rufinus, 'Please beg of him not to envy eaters their teeth because he is toothless himself, and not to make light of the eyes of gazelles because he is himself a mole'.[157]

The final lines of the second section (Lines 24-26) supply two Old Testament instances, which prefigure symbolically the relationship between the Church and the evangelical quaternity. Jerome draws firstly on Gen. 2: 10: The Church, like Paradise, makes gush forth from her four rivers. The work of Jerome's contemporary, Ambrose of Milan, supplies the context for the appearance of this image in *Plures Fuisse*. In his *Commentary on Paradise* we read firstly, "There was a fount, which irrigated the land of Paradise. Is not this the stream, our Lord Jesus Christ, the fount as well as the Father of eternal life?".[158] Christ, represented previously in the Jerome preface as the king and the roe and the hart, is implied in line 24 as the source of the waters from which *Ecclesia* issues forth in four parts.[159] In his paradisal commentary Ambrose proceeds, secondly, to see this source not only as that of eternal life, but also of wisdom/spiritual grace.[160] Later in *Plures Fuisse*, Jerome makes this same link between the Christological waters and divine inspiration. John is described as gushing forth (*eructare* being used again) his Gospel *incipit*, after leaning on the breast of Christ, drinking the waters of purest doctrine.

One must be aware also of the cosmological connotations of the image of the *fons*. Ambrose's commentary also reveals that the waters of Paradise, interpreted symbolically as various Christian attributes, go forth to water the whole world.[161] It was this dimension of the *fons*, which was referred to in the previous

---

[156] Jerome, *Tractatus in Psalmos*, G Morin (ed), CCSL 132 (Turnhout 1958) 282.
[157] Jerome, *Letter LXX*, W. H. Freemantle (trans), NPNF 6, 151.
[158] Ambrose, *De Paradiso*, PL 14, 296; J.Savage (trans) FC 42, 294.
[159] P. Underwood (1950) 43-138, 46-49, provides a good introduction to the patristic interpretation of the image of the *fons* or *fons vitae*.
[160] Ambrose, *De Paradiso*, PL 14, 296; J. Savage (trans) FC 42, 295.
[161] Ibid. PL 14, 296-7; FC 42, 297.

discussion of *Novum Opus*.[162] In *Plures Fuisse*, the image of the Church/Evangelist relationship as the four rivers issuing from Paradise develops the proceeding portrayal of Christ and the Church. The Evangelists can be seen as the earthly expression of the divine inspiration of the Church. Their Gospels are the culmination of the communion of king and bride. They are also the instruments by which the message of this union's salvation is spread. They are like four rivers, watering to the ends of the earth.

The second image Jerome supplies, from Exodus 25: 10-12, continues this development. The Church, like the Ark of the Covenant, the guardian of the Law, has four corners and four rings by which she is carried on immovable wooden poles. It is clear that this image is also a type of the four Evangelists, the means through which the message of the New Covenant was spread throughout the cosmos. Bede's *Commentary on the Tabernacle* reflects patristic exegesis on Ex. 25: 12. Bede writes, 'The four golden rings are the four books of the Gospels, which are deservedly golden on account of the splendour of wisdom with which they glisten'. He adds,

> Now the ark has four corners because the sacrament of the Lord's Incarnation never ceases to be celebrated throughout all the regions of the world into which the Holy Church is spread. And four rings were put at these corners because the Gospel of Christ is preached to the ends of the world, so that the hearts of the faithful might be saved.[163]

This image will be referred to again in Part II of the thesis as it is used by Hiberno-Latin exegetes in their discussion of the canons.[164]

The six lines which make up the second section of the preface treat of the theme of divine inspiration in a condensed manner. Images symbolising the relationship between Christ and the Church are first presented. These, drawn both from Matthew's Gospel and the Song of Songs, allude to Christ's communion with the Church, achieved through the Incarnation. This is a communion of divine inspiration, it makes the Church strong against heresy. The

---

[162] See Chapter 2, 26.
[163] Bede, *De tabernaculo*, D. Hurst (ed), CCSL 119 A, (Turnhout 1969) 15; A. Holder (trans), TTH 18 (Liverpool 1994) 14. Further discussion of this image is provided by J. O' Reilly (2001) 11-14.
[164] See Chapter 6, 122-23.

Evangelists referred to their Old Testament types spread, through the inspired Gospels, the message of this union's salvation throughout the cosmos.

Section Three

The third section of *Plures Fuisse* runs from lines 26-55. It contains information on each Evangelist and the writing of the Gospels. The information supplied neither follows a given formula, nor is each figure treated equally. The description of John (lines 39-55), takes up more than half the section, although the text prefaces a commentary on Matthew. Initially it seems this lack of descriptive uniformity could be explained by the existence of differing information on the Evangelists. Reference to Jerome's treatment of these figures in *De viris inlustribus* (393 AD) however, and the information found in its source Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, reveals this largely not to be the case.[165] Jerome was thus deliberately selective with the information he provides. The constructed distinctiveness of each description goes against attributing lack of formula to memory loss, as he would perhaps have us believe.[166] By avoiding uniform descriptions, the different origins, chronology and writing conditions of each Gospel are indicated. The harmony of the Gospels stems then not from earthly similarities, but from a common heavenly inspiration. This was the concern of the preface's first two sections. Reference to these explains also, as will be discussed, the expanded treatment of John.

The section's first lines contain information on Matthew. Jerome tells us he was *Primus omnium* - first of all. The omission of the word *euangelista* is significant. Although the *euangelia* of the first three writers are referred to, the title *euangelista* is applied in this section only to John. Jerome describes Matthew firstly as *publicanus*, i.e. by his profession before conversion. It is interesting that his post-conversion role of *apostolus* is not stated. In *De viris inlustribus,* he is thus described, 'Matthew, also called Levi, apostle and aforetimes publican'.[167]

---

[165] For the following comparison I am using Jerome's *De viris inlustribus* E. Richardson (trans), NPNF 3 and *Eusebius, History of the Church*, G. Williamson (trans) (1989).
[166] See his comments in the second part of the preface regarding speed of composition, the citation of other authors solely from memory and his own physical condition.
[167] Jerome, *De viris inlustribus*, Ch. 3, PL 23, 613; E. Richardson (trans) NPNF 3, 362.

Plures Fuisse supplies Matthew's surname second. The name Levi reveals the Evangelist's Jewish origin. The preface portrays Matthew's Gospel in the light of Jewish versus Christian covenants. It was composed in Judea, in Hebrew, 'chiefly for the sake of Jewish believers, who adhered in vain to the shadow of the law, although the substance of the Gospel had come'. *De viris inlustribus* tells us this Evangelist wrote simply, 'for those of the circumcision who believed [in Christ]'. The *Plures Fuisse* explanation cannot be found in the *History* either. In fact, in *H.E.* III.24, Eusebius refers to the tradition which relates that Matthew, leaving Judea, wrote out of necessity, 'so that for those with whom he was no longer present the gap left by his departure was filled by what he wrote'.[168]

The second Evangelist described is Mark. Jerome adheres therefore, in *Plures Fuisse*, to the increasingly accepted evangelical order: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.[169] In *De viris,* Luke's description succeeded Matthew's, based on chronological sequence. Jerome's ordering here reflects a move away from human temporal ordering. Mark's apostolic connection is mentioned first. We are told he was *interpres apostoli Petri.* The description returns to this. After being told he was the first bishop of Alexandria, a religious role absent for Matthew, we read, 'He did not himself see our Lord and Saviour but he related the matter of his Master's preaching more with regard to minute detail than to historical sequence'. Here, Jerome uses narrative style to prove the authenticity of the Marcan Gospel. Such evidence is not supplied in *De viris.*[170] It seems to have as its source Papias' account in *H.E.* III, 39:

> Mark who had been Peter's interpreter, wrote down carefully but not in order all that he remembered of the Lord's sayings and doings, for he had not heard the Lord or been one of His followers, but later, as I said, one of Peter's. Peter used to adapt his teachings to the occasion, without making a systematic arrangement of the Lord's sayings, so that Mark was quite justified in writing down some things as he remembered them. For he had one purpose only - to leave out nothing he had heard and to make no misstatement about it.[171]

Mark's reason for writing his Gospel, Peter's approval of it and also the reference to Mark in I.Pet. 5: 13 are all omitted in *Plures Fuisse*. These pieces of

---

[168] Eusebius, *H.E.* III, 24, 86.
[169] This is something previously discussed in the context of *Novum Opus*. See Chapter 2, 29.
[170] Jerome, *De viris inlustribus* Chapter8, PL 23, 621-3; NPNF 3, 364.
[171] Eusebius, *H.E.* III, 39, 103-4. Papias' description of Mark is discussed by H. Merkel (1971) 44-8.

information are not only in the *H.E.*, but are included by Jerome in his description of Mark in *De viris inlustribus*.

The description of Luke runs from lines 34-39. Although he, like Mark, was not an apostle, he is first described by profession, *medicus*, and place of origin, *natione Syrus Antiochensis*. While at the section's beginning, Matthew's background was implied by the inclusion of his Jewish surname, Luke's Gentile one is indicated by reference to his place of birth. Next mentioned is the Gospel praise of Luke. This is in II.Cor. 8: 18, where Paul writes, 'we send with him a brother whose praise in the Gospel is among all the Churches'. Luke's apostolicity is set forth plainly then in his description *ipse discipulus apostoli Pauli*. Luke's audience, a Gentile one, is implied by where he wrote his Gospel, Achaia and Boetia. The nature of his account and his sources are finally explained, 'He thoroughly investigates certain particulars and as he himself confesses in the preface, describes what he had heard rather than what he had seen'. The previous use in *Plures Fuisse* of the Lucan *incipit* referred to here, supports further the authenticity of Luke's Gospel. This description (lines 34-39) offers a condensed version of the information available on Luke included in *De viris inlustribus* and in the *H.E.*.[172] Unlike the two previous descriptions, there are neither discrepancies between these accounts and *Plures Fuisse*, nor are there significant omissions in the latter.

As stated, the treatment of the fourth Evangelist, John, takes up just over half of the third section (lines 39-55). It exemplifies the opposition between the heretical writer and inspired Evangelist. From John's title, *apostolus et euangelista*, three proofs of his worthiness taken from the Gospels are supplied; he was the apostle who Jesus loved most, he leant on the Lord's breast to drink of the purest doctrine and was the only apostle worthy to hear, *Ecce mater tua*! (Jn. 19: 29). In *Plures Fuisse* no comment is made regarding John's earthly origin, only his relationship with Christ is described. In contrast, *De viris inlustribus* reads, 'John, the apostle who Jesus loved most, the son of Zebedee and the

[172] Jerome, *De viris inlustribus*, Ch. 7, PL 23, 619-21; NPNF 3, 365. Eusebius, *H.E.* III, 4, 67, VI, 25, 201.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE Library CORK

brother of James'.[173] The focus on the spiritual in *Plures Fuisse* is linked to how the Johannine description proceeds. This Gospel was written directly to counter heresy. Jerome's elaboration on these heresies is almost as long as his previous description of Mark.

It is related then, that John was countering these heresies by writing specifically of Christ's divinity: 'When he was in Asia, at the time when the seeds of heresy were springing up...he was urged by almost all the bishops in Asia then living, and by deputations from many Churches to write more profoundly concerning the divinity of the Saviour and to break through all the obstacles so as to attain to the very Word of God (if I may so speak), with a boldness as successful as it appears audacious.' The shift in the use of the word *audacia* is notable. In line 20 it was applied negatively - it was the boldness of those not sent by God who presumed to write. Here, John's temerity is described as *non tam audaci quam felici*. The Evangelist's boldness has enabled his Gospel's sublimity.

The preface supplies no other reason, besides the growth of heresy, either for the composition of John's Gospel, or for his Gospel's focus on Christ's divinity. In *De viris inlustribus* however, after first mentioning heresy, Jerome goes on to relate that after John had read the other three Gospels, which tell of Christ's life after the imprisonment of John the Baptist, he wished to record also the beginning of his mission, i.e. before the Baptist's imprisonment.[174] This reason is the only one we find in Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*. No mention of heresy is made. John's focus on divinity receives therefore a different explanation. The first of these is provided by Eusebius: 'It seems natural as the genealogy of our Saviour had already been set out by Matthew, John should pass it over in silence and begin with the proclamation of his divinity, since the Holy Spirit had reserved this for him, the greatest of the four'.[175] Another explanation is provided in a quotation from Clement: 'Last of all, aware that the physical

---

[173] Jerome, *De viris inlustribus*, Ch. 9, PL 23, 623-5; NPNF 3, 364-5.
[174] Ibid. 364.
[175] Eusebius, *H.E.* III, 24, 87-8. See the previous discussion of these lines in Chapter 1, 22.

facts had been recorded in the Gospels, encouraged by his pupils and irresistibly moved by the Spirit, John wrote a spiritual Gospel'.[176]

That Jerome includes only the first reason for the writing of John's Gospel shows us again how focussed *Plures Fuisse* is in its opposition of Evangelist and apocryphal writer. Jerome refuses to admit into the representation of Gospel writing in *Plures Fuisse* any kind of earthly dialogue between the Evangelists. This section stresses the independence of their composition relative to one another, thus highlighting their one common point, divine inspiration. Unlike in *De viris inlustribus* where John's record of a different time of Christ's life is used to explain the apparent discrepancy between the Gospels, no room is given to such discrepancy in *Plures Fuisse*. Only the harmony of the Evangelists' accounts is stated.

Jerome continues his treatment of John with a detailed description of his writing conditions. Referring to the record of 'Ecclesiastical history' he says, 'When he was urged by the brethren to write, he replied that he would do so if a general fast were proclaimed and all would offer up a prayer to God'. There seems here a suggestion of the creation of earthly conditions conducive to divine inspiration. We read that after the fast, *revelatione saturatus in illud praemio caelo veniens eructavit*. It has been shown previously how this line reflects the image of the inspired Evangelist as one of the four river of Paradise, with its source Christ.

Section Four

It must be noted that Section Three's varying description of each Evangelist and their Gospel writing does not bring Jerome's exposition on the Gospels to a close. They are succeeded in Section Four (lines 55-82) by a final image of Gospel harmony: the visions of the beasts in Ezechiel and of Revelations. Jerome's use of these visions to conclude the prefatory exegesis shows him, as we have seen from the evidence of *Adversus Haereses*, to be following an ancient tradition, which associated the beasts with the Gospels. He had also

[176] Ibid. *H.E.*, VI, 14, 192.

drawn on this tradition in his previous writings. In 394, introducing the Bible to Paulinus of Nola, he described the Gospels by referring almost solely to the vision of Ezechiel:

> The New Testament I will briefly deal with: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are the Lord's team of four, the true cherubim or store of knowledge. With them the whole body is full of eyes, they glitter as sparks, they run and return like lightning. Their feet are straight feet and lifted up, their backs are winged, ready to fly in all directions. They hold together each by each and are interwoven one with another: Like wheels within wheels. They roll along and go whithersoever the breath of the Holy Spirit wafts them.[177]

Although this vision is cited differently in *Plures Fuisse*, it is already clear how its basic image- a quaternity of distinct members acting in inspired harmony- aptly summarises the preface's themes. The significance of the beasts as an image of concord is echoed in Hiberno-Latin works such as the *Canon Evangeliorum*, which represents the canons as conversations between the evangelical beasts.[178]

Jerome links Section Three and Section Four of the preface with the words: *Haec igitur quattuor euangelia.* The link illustrates the fluid frame of reference in the text for the words, *euangelia*, *Evangelista* and the proper names of the Gospel writers. Although the subjects of Section Three were the Evangelists, the section is referred to here as introducing the Gospels. In Section Four, after the prefiguration of the four Gospels in Ezechiel's vision has been described, each beast is related to an Evangelist. Mark is described thus, *secunda [leonis facies] Marcum [significant], in quo heremo rugientis auditur* - The second [face of a lion signifies] Mark, in whom [i.e. in whose Gospel] the lion roaring in the desert is to be heard. This fluidity of reference illustrates how Jerome understands the nature of the Evangelist as that of his Gospel, and characterizes them similarly.

The beginning of the fourth section relates the prediction of the Gospel by many. The selection from these 'many' of Ezechiel's vision, apart from its thematic suitability, echoes the preface's beginning. The first Old Testament quotation in Section One was taken from the Book of Ezechiel: 'Woe to those prophets who work from their own inspiration who say God says when he hasn't sent them'. The account of the vision of the beasts, from lines 55-60 and 67-72, summarizes

---

[177] Jerome, *Letter LIII*, J. Labourt (ed) (1953) 22; W.H. Freemantle (trans), NPNF 6, 101.
[178] See Chapter 5, 85-92.

the Biblical text. Ez. 1: 5 and 1: 10 are initially quoted, 'And in the midst thereof the likeness of four living creatures and the faces of them, the face of a man, and the face of a lion, and the face of a calf and the face of an eagle'. The description is interrupted then by the correspondence of each beast with an Evangelist (lines 60-67). The vision's conclusion (lines 67-72) refers to Ez. 1: 7 and 10: 10,

> The others who attended advanced in the same way, their legs straight, their winged feet, and through whatever spirit it moved, they moved and didn't turn around, their backs full of eyes and flaming coals and torches going to and fro and wheel in wheel and the four faces in each.

The presentation of the vision of Ezechiel is remarkable in how it attends to the preface's focus on the divine inspiration of the Gospel writers. Jerome comments only on the correspondence of beast/Evangelist, although his knowledge of existing evangelical exegesis, indicated in the letter of 394, make it reasonable to assume he could have commented on lines 67-72 had he so wished.[179] Jerome's pairing of beast with Evangelist follows Section Three's introduction of each distinct figure. His method is significant. To make the pairings Jerome draws on each Gospel *incipit*. It is thus the first moment of expressed inspiration, which is seen as the key to understanding the varying nature of each Gospel.

Two of the Gospel *incipits* have been already used in the preface. Luke's *incipit* was quoted, firstly, in line 2. This presents a problem for Jerome in Section Four. It is not what he has previously cited but Lk 1: 5 - which is used to correspond the calf with this Evangelist. Jerome makes no attempt to resolve this contradiction in the text. He writes only, 'The third, of the calf, which prefigures that the Evangelist Luke chose to begin with the priest Zacharias' (lines 64-66). The opening of John has also been quoted before, in lines 54-55. The sublime

---

[179] Jerome, *Letter LIII*, J. Labourt (ed) (1953) 22; W.H. Freemantle (trans), NPNF 6, 101. Footnotes 6 and 7 link Jerome's comments '*quadriga*' and 'the cherubim or store of knowledge' with the exegesis of Irenaeus and Clement respectively. This does not imply Jerome had direct access to their works. He may have learned of their ideas through secondary exegesis, e.g. the Irenaean influenced Hippolytus cited in his bibliography. A previous use of the *quadriga* image can be found in his letter to Pammachius of 397, J. Labourt (ed) (1953) 168; W. H. Freemantle (trans) NPNF 6, 135. After mentioning Paula, Paulina and Eustochim, he writes, 'Then to complete the team [*quadriga*] – if I may so call it- of four saints turned out by a single family, and to match the women's virtues by those of a man, the three have a fit companion in Pammachius, who is a cherub such as Ezechiel describes…'. This quote ties in also with the extended application in other Hieronymian writings of evangelical images of inspiration, used in *Plures Fuisse* e.g. Songs 1,3, 2, 9, to contemporary commentators and holy people.

character of his *incipit* leads to his correspondence with the eagle, 'The fourth is that of the Evangelist John, who having taken up the wings of an eagle and ascending to the heights, treats of the word of God' (lines 66-67). The *incipits* of the first two Evangelists previously unquoted, are included in lines 60-64. The face of a man signifies Matthew, 'for in his preface he seems to write the history of a man: The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of Abraham, the son of David'. Mark, as mentioned earlier, corresponds to the lion. His Gospel begins: 'A voice of one crying in the desert: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight his paths'.

In using the Gospel *incipit* to identify beast with Evangelist, Jerome is also following a tradition begun by Irenaeus in *Adversus Haereses*.[180] But this earlier work differs in both its pairings and order of the beasts from *Plures Fuisse*. While Jerome presents Matthew-man, Mark-lion, Luke-calf, John-eagle, Irenaeus, drawing on the Revelations' order, corresponded: John-lion, Matthew-man, Luke-calf, Mark-eagle. Jerome's beast/Evangelist pairs are different also to those of his contemporary, Augustine. Moreover, the latter in *De consensu euangelistarum*, attacked the Irenaean method of identification, writing, 'In forming their particular idea of the matter, these latter [Irenaeus etc.], have chosen to keep in view simply the beginnings of books, and not the full design of the several Evangelists in its completeness, which was the thing which should have been thoroughly examined'.[181] Jerome clearly was not of this opinion. In the context of *Plures Fuisse*, with its focus on divine inspiration, the use of the *incipit*, the moment of this inspiration's beginning, was most suitable to typify the nature of each Gospel.[182] Furthermore, it is interesting to note that in his *Commentary on Ezechiel*, written AD 411-414, Jerome refers to the beast/Evangelist pairings in *Plures Fuisse*, when dealing with Ez. 1: 6-8.[183] This reference may not only be specifically to lines 60-67, but also more generally to

---

[180] Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* III, 11, ANF 1, 428-9.
[181] Augustine, *De consensu Evangelistarum*, I, 6, F. Weihrich, (ed), CSEL 43 (Vienna 1904) 9; S. D. F. Salmond (trans), NPNF 6, 1st series (repr. Grand Rapids 1986) 80-1.
[182] But it should be noted that Jerome does not use the Gospel *incipit* in this way only in *Plures Fuisse*. A similar method is used in *De viris inlustribus* IX in his identification of John as the author of the epistle attributed to him.
[183] Jerome, *Commentariorum in Hiezechielem*, CCSL 75, 11.

this exposition's context and its place in the text as the culmination of the treatment of divine inspiration.

Jerome's treatment of the vision of the beasts in Revelations (lines 72-81) builds on the preceding Ezechielian one. After describing the appearance of the four living creatures in the Old Testament, he writes, 'And whence the Apocalypse of John, after the exposition of the twenty four elders, who holding harps and bowls adore the Lamb of God, introduces thunder and lightning and the seven flickering spirits, and the sea of glass and the four beasts full of eyes'. While he sets the scene for the appearance of the beasts by reference to details in Rev. 4: 4-6, his first direct citation from the text, in line 77, concerns the appearance of their faces: 'The first beast was like a lion and the second like a calf, the third like a man, and the fourth like an eagle in flight'. To finish his account of this vision, he moves to quote only the second half of Rev. 4: 8, 'Full', he said, 'of eyes and they rested not day and night from saying: "Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come."'

The description of the Revelations' vision is interesting. Although Jerome tells us of its form stemming from Ezechiel (*Unde et*), the two direct quotations detail the visions' difference from one another. In Line 77 the different order of the apocalyptic beasts is highlighted. Jerome wishes perhaps to illustrate that his order of beasts and pairings are taken from the Old Testament prefiguration of the Evangelists' symbolic forms (*multo ante praedicta*), and not from their apocalyptic representation. The second citation from Rev. 4: 8 develops further the nature of the beasts. They are full of eyes and praise the eternal Christ unceasingly. Their hymn, which echoes Is. 6: 3, reveals not only the eternal glory of the Divine, but also of the Evangelists. The presentation of both visions in the preface has revealed the timelessness of the Evangelists' role. They are the medium through which Christ's eternal glory is expressed. Their ability to voice this glory rests on their inspired nature.

In the account of the apocalyptic vision, how the beasts are *plena oculis* is twice included. Jerome's comment in his *Preface to Kings* explains the reiteration of this detail, '...We should thus have twenty four books of the Old Law and these

the Apocalypse of John represents as the twenty four elders, who adore the Lamb....while in their presence stand the four living creatures with eyes before and behind, that is looking to the past and to the future, and with unwearied voice crying Holy, Holy, Holy....'.[184] The beasts' eyes signify their ability to look through time. They are thus themselves above time.

The reference to the trisagion chant in lines 79-81 must be read in the context of Jerome's words, which conclude the preface's exegesis. Lines 81-84 read, 'By all of these it is clearly shown that one must admit only the four Gospels and all the dirges of the apocryphies are to be sung more by dead heretics, than by living men of the Church'. It is clear that the foil to the *neniae* of the heretics has been presented in the Holies hymn, that sung eternally by the living creatures.

Jerome's conclusion refers back to the preface's opening description of contemporary heresies. Moreover the text framed by Section One and this final comment has made clear that the orthodoxy of the canonical Gospels rests on their divine inspiration. Jerome expounded on this inspiration by presenting a series of images drawn from both Old and New Testaments. These refer initially to the source of this inspiration, the communion of Christ with the Church. They then move to present the form this inspiration's expression takes - a quadripartite one. The nature of this quaternity's members is finally attended to. The Evangelists are represented firstly as historical personages. The earthly writing conditions of their Gospels are described. These various conditions, transcended by divine inspiration, result in one harmonious product, however: the four Gospels. Such transcendence is portrayed again in the final glorious visions of the beasts, the symbolic representation of the Evangelists.

[184] Jerome, *Prologus in Libro Regum*, R. Weber (ed), (1983) 365; E. Richardson (trans), NPNF 6, 490.

Conclusion to Part I

Part I of the thesis aimed firstly to explore the origins of the Eusebian canon tables. Chapter 1 contained a detailed examination of Eusebius' *Letter to Carpianus*. It showed how the tables' conception should be set in an apologetic context. Eusebius consciously composed a harmony, which would preserve the distinctiveness of each evangelical account. This was influenced by his belief in the Gospels' divine number, measure and weight. This belief drew, in turn, on the fusion between contemporary Neoplatonic and Christian thought.

The second chapter of Part I examined the transmission of the Eusebian series to the West. Jerome's inclusion of the series in his Vulgate Gospels was chiefly responsible for this. By examining the *Novum Opus* preface, it was shown how Jerome sees the canons as a way of preserving the Gospels' orthodox form. This was linked to the necessity for the textual critic and translator to have an orthodox understanding of the nature of the evangelical text.

The second part of Chapter 2 briefly discussed mentions of the Eusebian series, which occur in patristic literature of the sixth and early seventh centuries. The continued interest in and significance of the tables is clear. Victor of Capua's description of the canons in terms of the *denarius* showed, in addition, how the series continued to be seen as an expression of the Gospels' perfection.

The final chapter of Part I concerned itself with patristic harmony exegesis. It focused on the traditional use of scriptural images to defend the fourfold Gospel. Jerome's *Plures Fuisse* preface offered a condensed example of this tradition. It justifies the existence of the quadriform Gospel with reference to the four rivers of paradise, the four carrying rings of the Ark and the four beasts of Ezechiel and Revelations. A second strand of exegesis based on Wis. 11: 21 also formed part of Late Antique exegesis on Gospel concordance. This strand was referred to in each of the previous chapters. Like the scriptural tradition, it plays a significant role in the Hiberno-Latin reception of the tables, the subject of the next five chapters.

Part II

The Treatment of the Eusebian Canon Tables in Hiberno-Latin Commentary Literature.

Chapter 4

Introduction and Background

The next four chapters discuss the treatment of the Eusebian canon tables in some Irish and Irish-influenced texts, dated between 600 and 800 AD. The discussion was prompted by the following comment by Bernhard Bischoff: 'Für die irische Evangelien-Auslegung ist ferner bezeichnend, dass gelegentlich die Zugehörigkeit einzelner Kapitel zu diesem oder jenem Kanon angegeben oder auch die Zahl der Kapitel in den einzelnen Kanones genannt wird'.[185] This comment appears in the first part of 'Wendepunkte in der Geschichte der lateinischen Exegese im Frühmittelalter'. Bischoff identified attention to the canons as symptomatic of a Hiberno-Latin text. Other 'symptoms' were, for example, dependence on unusual or rare sources, the use of particular title forms and characteristic expressions to mark changes in exposition and a marked tendency to render a word in the three sacred languages.[186] Mention of the Eusebian tables in combination with some of these features and with palaeographical indicators suggested to Bischoff that a particular anonymous early medieval biblical commentary was Irish or Irish-influenced. A list of texts which feature the Eusebian series accompany his comment on the canons.[187] Further additions to this list can be made from reading the 'Katalog der Hiberno-Lateinischen und der Irisch Beeinflüssten Lateinischen Exegetischen Literatur

---

[185]Bernhard Bischoff, 'Wendepunkte in der Geschichte der lateinischen Exegese im Frühmittelalter', *Sacris Erudiri* 6 (1954) 189-279, 206. Revised edition: *Mittelalterliche Studien: Ausgewählte Aufsätze aur Schriftkunde und Literaturgeschichte* I (Stuttgart 1966) 205-72, 218. Citations are from this version of the *Wendepunkte* article. An English translation by Colm O'Grady can be found in M. McNamara (ed), *Biblical Studies: The Medieval Irish Contribution* (Dublin 1976) 74-164, 84. O' Grady translates this comment as follows: 'The occasional mention of the appurtenance of individual chapters to this or that canon, or the enumeration of chapters in individual canons (nos. 13, 17 II, 27, 28, 29), is a further characteristic of the Irish interpretation of the Gospels'.

[186]According to Bischoff the following symptoms also attest to Irish influence: a particular way of citing familiar authorities, unrestrained use of questions regarding *locus*, *tempus*, *persona*, a tendency to enumerate and the use and formulation of some typical conceptual schemes. See B. Bischoff (1966) 215-22.

[187] List in *Mittelalterliche Studien*: Nrs. 13, 17I, 27, 28, 29; *Sacris Erudiri*: 13, 17, 27, 28, 29; C. O'Grady: 13, 17 II, 27, 28, 29.

bis zum Anfang des IX Jahrhunderts', which forms the second part of the *Wendepunkte* article.[188]

Bischoff's method of identifying these 'Hiberno-Latin' texts has been the subject of some debate in the half century since the first appearance of his article. One of the most significant contributions was made by Clare Stancliffe in 1975.[189] While agreeing with much of what Bischoff wrote, she introduced a note of caution. Stancliffe showed how some of the manuscript evidence, e.g. Irish glosses, or transmission in Irish manuscripts, is insufficient to demonstrate that a work is Irish. She also pointed out that Bischoff's 'symptoms' are not exclusively Irish and argued that these works should be set in a wider European context. Stancliffe wrote,

> Irish exegetical activity is so closely linked to the work of the Latin Fathers which preceded it and to that of contemporary exegetes in England and on the Continent, who both utilized it and influenced it, that I feel it something of a misnomer to talk about 'Irish exegesis'. Instead we are dealing with the role of Irishmen in an intellectual activity common to all Western Europe which serves to link this period with the Golden Age of the Church Fathers.[190]

In the decade following the publication of 'Early 'Irish' Biblical Exegesis', other scholars, such as David Dumville and Michael Herren, questioned the rigour of Bischoff's criteria for establishing the Hiberno-Latin identity of a text.[191] In 1993, Charles Wright re-examined the methodology which established the corpus of *Wendepunkte* texts.[192] He concluded that most scholars have accepted Bischoff's inventory of Irish symptoms and wrote, 'What remains controversial

---

[188]B. Bischoff (1966) 229-73. C. O' Grady (1976) 95 entitles this 'Catalogue of Latin Exegetical Literature both Hiberno-Latin and that showing Irish Influence, up to the Beginning of the Ninth Century'. The principal addition is No. 12, Ailerán's *Canon Evangeliorum*. Bischoff does not mention the attention given to the canons in the preface to the Irish Reference Bible, although he does remark on its dependency on *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum*, listed as No. 13. See B. Bischoff (1966) 234, 242.

[189] Clare Stancliffe, 'Early 'Irish' Biblical Exegesis', *Studia Patristica* 12 (1975) 361-70.

[190] Ibid. 370.

[191] See D. Dumville, 'Foreward' in D. Whitelock, R. McKitterick and D. Dumville (ed), *Ireland in Early Medieval Europe Studies in Memory of Kathleen Hughes* (Cambridge 1982) 1-8 and also his 'Introduction' to Vivien Law, *The Insular Latin Grammarians* (Woodbridge 1982). For Michael Herren see his 'Hiberno-Latin Philology: The State of the Question' in M. Herren (ed), *Insular Latin Studies - Papers on Latin Texts and Manuscripts of the British Isles: 550-1066 Papers in Medieval Studies* 1 (Toronto 1981) 1-22.

[192] Charles D. Wright, *The Irish Tradition in Old English Literature, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England* 6 (Cambridge 1993), especially 10-21.

is the degree to which these symptoms are sufficient to establish Irish authorship as opposed to Irish influence'.[193]

The *Wendepunkte* debate has been renewed in more recent times by Michael Gorman. In his 1997 'A Critique of Bischoff's Theory of Irish Exegesis', not a single item in Bischoff's catalogue was accepted as being of demonstrated Irish origin. Gorman described the symptoms as being 'so vague that practically any work of biblical exegesis composed in the early middle ages can be labeled Irish if they are adopted as criteria'. The author concluded, 'Although it is not impossible that a biblical commentary written by Irishmen in the period 600-800 is extant, it is not clear how we would go about recognizing one'.[194] In his subsequent 'Myth of Hiberno-Latin exegesis', Gorman claimed, 'the evidence for exegetical activity in Ireland is practically non-existant [*sic*]'.[195]

Both these articles have led to a re-evaluation of Bischoff's work and a new look at the field of Hiberno-Latin exegesis. Michael Herren, Dáibhí Ó Cróinín and Charles D. Wright have led the response to Gorman.[196] They show how Gorman's account of the scholarly reception of *Wendepunkte* is selective and one-sided.[197] He has misrepresented or ignored many of the palaeographical features on which Bischoff based his catalogue, e.g. the existence of manuscripts in Irish hands, or in script showing Irish influence.[198] Gorman passes over or

---

[193] Ibid. 17.
[194] Michael Gorman, 'A Critique of Bischoff's Theory of Irish Exegesis, The Commentary on Genesis in Munich Clm. 6302 (Wendepunkte 2)', *Journal of Medieval Latin* 7 (1997) 178-233, 201, 205.
[195] Michael Gorman, 'The Myth of Hiberno-Latin Exegesis', *Revue Bénédictine* 110 (2000) 42-85, 55.
[196] Michael Herren, 'Irish Biblical Commentaries before 800' in Jacqueline Hamesse (ed), *Roma magistra mundi: Itineraria culturae medievalis: Mélanges offerts à l'occasion de son [i.e. Leonard Boyle's] 75e anniversaire* (Leuven 1998) 391-407; Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, 'Bischoff's Wendepunkte Fifty Years On', *Revue Bénédictine* 110 (2000) 204-237; Charles D. Wright, 'Bischoff's Theory of Irish Exegesis and the Genesis Commentary in Munich clm 6302:A Critique of a Critique', *Journal of Medieval Latin* 10 (2000) 115-175. For another response to Gorman see Gabriel Silagi, 'Notwendige Bemerkungen zu Gorman's 'Critique of Bischoff's Theory of Irish Exegesis', *Peritia* 12 (1998) 87-94.
[197] See especially C. Wright (2000) 116-120.
[198] M. Herren (1998) 398; D. Ó Cróinín (2000) 231; C. Wright (2000) 121 writes, 'Gorman's representation of the palaeographical evidence, for example, is inaccurate and obscures considerations favourable to the possibility of Irish authorship or influence for these commentaries'.

dismisses much of the evidence for vernacular exegetical activity.[199] In addition, these scholars note how his strict definition of a biblical commentary excludes a large number of exegetical works.[200] Ó Cróinín and Wright, in particular, highlight the logic of the *Wendepunkte* methodology. Bischoff identified his list of 'symptoms' on the basis of works established as Irish by methods other than his own. They draw attention to the crucial remarks used to qualify these 'symptoms'. This is what distinguished their appearance in Hiberno Latin works from that in patristic and continental writings.[201]

In contrast to Gorman's claims, a variety of evidence for Irish exegetical activity in the seventh and eighth centuries has been gathered. This includes glosses (vernacular and Latin), such as those in the Würzburg Pauline Epistles, Hiberno-Latin epitomes of Latin works, like Laidcenn's *Ecloga* of Gregory's *Moralia in Iob*, treatises assigned to authors bearing Irish names e.g. Ailerán's *Interpretatio Mystica et Moralis Progenitorum Domini Iesu Christi,* and anonymous or pseudo-anonymous exegetical works, such as the Irish Pseudo-Augustine's *De mirabilibus sacrae scripturae*, the Reichenau commentary on the Catholic Epistles and the Irish Reference Bible. [202] These works form a core against which other items in Bischoff's catalogue can now be assessed.[203]

Significantly, each of the responses to Gorman points to advances which may help in the identification of texts. Herren speaks of the important contribution to

---

[199]Gorman mentions vernacular evidence only in the later 'Myth of Hiberno-Latin exegesis'. On 54, he writes, 'Some very faint traces of exegetical activity work which was carried out in the Irish language can just barely be perceived', and 'Although these works throw some light on native Irish exegetical activities, it is not easy to see how they could be used to identify Latin works which were influenced by commentaries composed in Latin in Ireland'. These have been discussed by C. Wright (2000) 174.

[200] D. Ó Cróinín (2000) 213 and fn. 37 re. *De mirabilibus sacrae scripturae*. This is also noted by C. Wright (2000) 130.

[201] D. Ó Cróinín (2000) 209-212, 225-230; C. Wright (2000) 135-143.

[202] These texts are identified by Michael Herren who describes himself as adopting a 'minimalist position'. See M. Herren (1998) 396-398. See also *Ecloga quam scripsit Lathcen filius Baith de Moralibus Iob quas Gregorius fecit*, M. Adriaen (ed), CCSL 145 (Turnhout 1969) and Ailerán's *Interpretatio Mystica et Moralis Progenitorum Domini Iesu Christi,* Aidan Breen (ed and trans) (Dublin 1995). M. Herren (1998) 403-06. For Ps-Augustine see PL 35 cols. 2149-2200. Further discussion of the Irish Reference Bible is on 76-7. Other texts are added to this list by C. Wright (2000) 139-142.

[203] C. Wright (2000) 139 writes that in order to prevent a circular argument, '...the crucial control is the existence of a core of commentaries whose Irish authorship is securely established by internal and external evidence of different kinds...'.

be made by Irish vernacular specialists and the survival of works such as the Old Irish Treatise on the Psalter and the Lambeth commentary.[204] Ó Cróinín draws attention to the 'plentiful computistical evidence', including the mid-seventh century *De ratione conputandi*, which supports Bischoff's characterization of Irish texts.[205] Finally, Wright notes how the establishment of electronic databases now affords scholars the opportunity to determine the distinctiveness of features in the *Wendepunkte* corpus.[206]

Although Gorman claimed that 'none of the characteristics which Bischoff isolated could be confirmed by valid systematic research', in the past fifty years no such research has been given to the treatment of Eusebian tables in the *Wendepunkte* corpus.[207] In the next four chapters some attempt is made to redress this neglect. The focus is on these texts' understanding of the Eusebian series and on the extent to which the canons had become an integrated part of Hiberno-Latin exegesis on the Gospels.

The next part of this introduction briefly describes the *Wendepunkte* texts which mention the canons. It examines the evidence which led Bischoff to see them as Irish or Irish-influenced. Some new evidence for investigating the question of origin has come to light in the course of this research. This is especially true for the evangelical series contained in Clm. 6235 / Paris B.N. lat. 1841 and for the commentary on Matthew in Vienna 940. This evidence is mentioned below and is discussed more fully in Appendices G and H.[208]

The discussion contained in the following chapters also contributes to the debate concerning these texts' authorship and provenance. These *Wendepunkte* texts share an exegesis of the canons which distinguishes them as a family group.

---

[204] M. Herren (1998) 407. The Treatise on the Psalter was edited by Kuno Meyer, *Hibernica Minora, being a fragment of an Old Irish treatise on the Psalter, Anecdota Oxoniensia, Mediaeval and Modern Series* VIII (Oxford 1894). See also Ludwig Bieler and James Carney (ed), 'The Lambeth Commentary', *Ériu* 23 (1972) 1-55.
[205] D. Ó Cróinín (2000) 234. Maura Walsh and Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (ed), Cummian's *Letter 'De controversia paschali' together with a related Irish computistical tract 'De ratione conputandi'*. *Studies and Texts* 86 (Toronto 1986).
[206] C. Wright (2000) 143-44.
[207] M. Gorman (1997) 205.
[208] Appendix G, 235-39, Appendix H, 240-53.

They differ from their patristic predecessors and from contemporary exegetes such as Bede. In addition, the way these texts discuss the Eusebian series parallels their treatment of other themes. This common methodology links these works with others in the *Wendepunkte* corpus, a number of which are of proven Irish origin.

Wendepunkte Texts with Eusebian References

Perhaps the earliest mention of the series appears in the *Expositio euangelii secundum Marcum*, attributed to Ps-Jerome (Cummeanus?).[209] The methodological debate concerning the identification of Hiberno-Latin texts has crystallized around this work. Bischoff dated this text to the early seventh century and suggested an Irishman, *Comianus*, as its author.[210] His findings were disputed by Stancliffe, who stated that Morin's 'Un commentaire romain sur Marc', which suggested the text was of fifth century Mediterranean origin, 'still remains fundamental reading on the problems relating to the authorship of this commentary'.[211] Michael Cahill, this commentary's recent editor, has seen Bischoff's seventh century dating as consistent, but has not declared in favour of an Irish origin.[212] The canons are mentioned in the commentary's preface and at its conclusion. Canon X seems also to be referred to in the text where passages particular to Mark are described as *propria*.[213]

The way in which the author of the *Expositio euangelii secundum Marcum* describes the Eusebian tables in his preface parallels the treatment of the series in another of the *Wendepunkte* texts, the *Canon Evangeliorum*.[214] This poem, dated to the mid-seventh century, presents each table as a conversation between the evangelical beasts. It has survived in 13 medieval manuscripts, the two oldest of

---

[209] B. Bischoff (1966) No. 27, 257-9.
[210] Ibid. 213-5.
[211] C. Stancliffe (1975) 366. See also D. G. Morin, 'Un commentaire romain sur Marc', *Revue Bénédictine* 27 (1910) 352-62 and G. Wohlenberg, 'Ein vergessener lateinischer Markuskommentar', *Neue kirchliche Gesellschaft* 18 (1907) 427-469.
[212] Michael Cahill, 'Introduction' to his edition of the *Expositio Euangelii secundum Marcum*, CCSL 82 (Turnhout 1997) 100-115, where he also summarizes past scholarship on this issue.
[213] M. Cahill (1997) 94-5.

which, the Augsburg Gospels and Poitiers Bibl. Mun. MS. 17, have Irish connections.[215] In 1912, Donatien de Bruyne identified the *Canon Euangeliorum* as the work of an Irishman, *Aileranus sapiens*.[216] This identification has been generally accepted. In more recent times, Nancy Netzer highlighted the poem's significance for the discussion of the early scriptorium at Echternach and the origins of beast canon tables.[217] Her work illustrates the importance of the canon table text in helping to identify provenance. Ailerán describes Canon X John as containing 97 sections, a variant known currently to be paralleled only in the Augsburg Gospels and in other books of Irish provenance.

The impression given by Ailerán's verse, that the canons were a significant element in seventh century Hiberno-Latin exegesis on the Gospels, is supported by Pádraig Ó Néill's recent research on the dry-point glosses in the *Codex Usserianus Primus*.[218] Bischoff mentioned these glosses in the first part of *Wendepunkte* as early evidence for Irish evangelical exegesis.[219] Ó Néill identified the Vulgate as this glossator's principal source and suggested that use of the *canones euangeliorum* may explain the ease with which parallel passages are correlated. He has drawn attention also to the balance struck, 'whether consciously or not', in the glossing of synoptic and unique passages in Luke's Gospel.[220] While the glosses in the *Codex Usserianus Primus* are not given detailed attention in the following pages, the pedgagogic function attributed to them by Ó Néill confirms the impression that the canons were an established

---

[214] B. Bischoff (1966) No.12, 242. See *Ailerani Sapientis Canon Euangeliorum*, David Howlett (ed and trans), 'Seven Studies in Seventh Century Texts', *Peritia* 10 (1996) 11-20. A copy of this is contained in Appendix I, 254-7.

[215] See Patrick McGurk, *Latin Gospel Books 400-800* (Paris/Brussels 1961) No. 72, 68-70; No. 64, 64-6. Information concerning the number of manuscripts in which this poem has survived is derived from fn. 70 of D. Ó Cróinín (2000) 221, where he writes, 'Dr. David Howlett, Oxford, who has a new edition in the press, informs me that there are 13 MSS of this work to his knowledge'. Older literature counted 11 extant witnesses to Ailerán's poem.

[216] Donatien de Bruyne, 'Une Poésie Inconnue d'Ailerán le Sage', *Revue Bénédictine* 29 (1912) 339-40.

[217] Nancy Netzer, 'The origins of Beast Canon Tables Reconsidered' in F. O' Mahony (ed), *The Book of Kells* (Dublin 1994) 326-7 and also Nancy Netzer, *Cultural Interplay in the Eighth Century* (Cambridge 1994) 61, 205-6.

[218] Pádraig Ó Néill, 'The earliest dry-point glosses in Codex Usserianus Primus' in T. Barnard, D. Ó Cróinín and K. Simms (ed), *'A Miracle of Learning' Studies in Honour of William O' Sullivan* (Aldershot 1998) 1-28. For a description of this Manuscript see CLA II 271 and P. McGurk (1961) No. 83, 79. Discussed by C. Wright (2000) 122 and D. Ó Cróinín (2000) 209, fn. 24.

[219] B. Bischoff (1966) 211.

[220] P. Ó Néill (1998) 8-9.

instrument in seventh-century Ireland for explaining the complexities of Gospel harmony.

A chapter in Adomnán's *De Locis Sanctis* provides further contemporary evidence of Hiberno-Latin interest in harmonizing the Gospels. The final chapter of Book I treats of the so-called 'Apocalyptic Discourse', which Christ delivered to his disciples during Holy Week.[221] Adomnán speaks of the necessity to clarify the nature, time and audience of this address. He writes, 'These three things become quite clear for us if we are willing to open the Gospels of the three writers Matthew, Mark and Luke, who speak in harmony (*concinentes loquntur*) concerning the character of the discourse'.[222] In the following lines, Adomnán takes Matthew's account as the basic version of events, supplementing this with details from the other synoptic Gospels. His use of the word *concinentes* to describe the harmony of the Evangelists parallels their description in the *Canon Evangeliorum*.[223] Although there is no direct reference to the Eusebian series, this chapter reveals at the very least the sophisticated understanding of Gospel harmony current on Iona towards the end of the seventh century.[224]

It is notable that each of the seventh-century texts to discuss the canons presents this information in a different genre. The *Expositio Euangelii secundum Marcum* includes its principal treatment of the series in the commentary's preface; Ailerán's *Canon Euangeliorum* appears as a Gospel book prefatory text in its two oldest witnesses; in the *Codex Usserianus Primus*, evidence for use of the tables is found in interlinear glosses on the evangelical text. In contrast, surviving

---

[221] I am referring here to the Dennis Meehan's edition of *De Locis Sanctis*, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae* III (Dubin 1983) I. xxv, 70-71. This chapter, entitled *De alia ecclesia ad dexteram Bethaniae partem constructa*, has been discussed at length by Tom O' Loughlin. He mentions the Eusebian tables in one of his first articles on this topic, 'The exegetical purpose of Adomnán's *De Locis Sanctis*', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 24 (Winter 1992) 37-53. On 47 he writes that the difficulty of harmonizing this account, 'would have been evident to Adomnán from the complexity of the Eusebian canons accompanying these passages'. His later treatments of this chapter do not mention the canons. They focus more on Adomnán's method and his use of Augustine's *De consensu euangelistarum*. See especially his, '*Res, tempus, locus, persona*: Adomnán's Exegetical Method', *Innes Review* 48 (1997) 95-111 and 'Adomnán's *De Locis Sanctis*: a textual emendation and an additional source identification', *Ériu* 48 (1997) 37-40. See also Chapter 8, 161 for further discussion of this theme.

[222] Adomnán, *De locis sanctis* I. 25, 70-71. The whole Latin sentence reads *Quae tria, si trium euangelia scriptorum aperire uoluerimus, Mattheum Marcum Lucam, nobis manifeste clarebunt. Qui de sermonis qualitate concinentes loquntur.*

[223] See Chapter 5, 92-5, for a discussion of the verbs of harmony used by Ailerán to describe the Evangelists' discourse.

[224] For a full discussion of this see T. O'Loughlin (1997) 95-111 and Chapter 8, 161.

eighth - century literature on the Eusebian series, catalogued by Bischoff, appears exclusively in commentary manuscripts. In their layout these often retain a formal link with the Gospel book. They may also include a number of Gospel book prefatory texts alongside the commentary literature.

Some of these features are evident in the shared transmission of three members of the *Wendepunkte* catalogue: *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum in euangelia excerpta*, the *Praefacio secundum Marcum* and the *Historica inuestigatio euangelii secundum Lucam.*[225] These are part of a group of evangelical texts preserved in two ninth-century manuscripts, Clm. 6235 and Paris, B.N. lat 1841.[226] The short text entitled *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum in euangelia excerpta*, described as a digest of a lecture on the Gospels, contains towards its conclusion a detailed description of the Eusebian series.[227] The *Praefacio secundum Marcum* includes information on the Marcan canons after a description of this Evangelist's biography. The *Historica investigatio euangelii secundum Lucam*, which replaces in these manuscripts the Lucan section of Ps-Jerome's *Expositio IV Euangeliorum* (Recension I), includes some remarks on the canons in the main body of its commentary.

The Hiberno-Latin nature of each of these texts, established according to Bischoff's methodology, has not been returned to in subsequent scholarship. Each text was seen to contain Irish 'symptoms', e.g. a shared interest in the canons, and the use of typically Irish expressions.[228] In addition, these texts have literary parallels with other members of the Wendepunkte corpus - *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum* is closely related to parts of the Gospel preface in

---

[225] B. Bischoff (1966) No.13, 242, No. 28, 258-9 and No. 29, 259-61. See Appendix G, 235-39 for discussion of other members of this evangelical series. *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum* and the *Praefacio secundum Marcum* have been edited by R. McNally in *Scriptores Hiberniae Minores* Pars I, CCSL 108 B. (Turnhout 1973) 213-224.

[226] See Ann Kavanagh, 'The *Expositio IV Euangeliorum* (*Recension* II): A Critical Edition and Analysis of Text', unpublished PhD Thesis (Trinity College Dublin 1996) Vol. 1, 98-9, where she points out the significance of Clm. 6235 which contains at least four Hiberno-Latin texts. C. Wright (2000) 120 defends Clm. 6235 against Coccia's earlier criticism of its Hiberno-Latin identification. Wright (144-5) lists it as a manuscript, which points towards Irish authorship and influence because of its paleographical features, internal evidence and limited manuscript tradition.

[227] R. McNally (1973) 211.

[228] These symptoms are listed by Bischoff in his *Wendepunkte* description, some are repeated by R. McNally (1973) 209-11.

the Irish Reference Bible. Evidence of the use of Irish sources also played a role in establishing identity. Bischoff pointed out the use of the *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis* in the commentary on Luke and the fact that this text preserves a number of Old Irish glosses.[229]

As well as internal evidence, palaeographical indicators were also cited in the attempt to establish provenance. Most attention has been given to the Munich manuscript. Its small graceful minuscule script is shared by a group of manuscripts Bischoff saw as emanating from a North Italian centre.[230] Clm. 6235's use of Insular as well as Italian abbreviations led to the suggestion that Bobbio was the source of this manuscript's exemplar.[231] A link with Verona is established by the use of a particular abbreviation for *misericordia*.[232] This ties in with Bischoff's categorization of Paris B.N. lat. 1841 as having been made, 'in der Nähe von Verona'.[233]

The Hiberno-Latin identity of this series was supported by the context in which it appears in Clm. 6235.[234] The commentary on the Pauline epistles, which opens the manuscript, contains a large number of Old Irish glosses and is closely related to Cambridge, Trinity College B. 12. 5, an early eighth-century Northumbrian Irish work, and to the Pauline Gloss in Würzburg M.p. th. f. 12.[235]

---

[229] B. Bischoff (1966) 259-61. One of these had been noted previously by Rudolph Thurneysen, 'Irische und Britannische Glossen', *Zeitschrift für Keltische Philologie* 21 (1939) 280-91, 287. There is some further discussion of this commentary's historiography at the beginning of Chapter 8, 149-50.

[230] Bernhard Bischoff, *Die Südostdeutschen Schreibschulen und Bibliotheken in der Karolingerzeit* I (Third Edition) (Wiesbaden 1974) 132 f and also his article, 'Italienische Handschriften des neunten bis elften Jahrhunderts' in C. Questa and R. Raffaelli (ed), *Il Libro et Il Testo, Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Urbino 20-23 settembre 1982* (Urbino 1984) 171-194, 182-3. See also C. Wright (2000) 128, fn. 44.

[231] B. Bischoff (1974) 133. Bischoff also suggested this in *Wendepunkte* (1966) 259.

[232] B. Bischoff (1974) 133, where he says that this abbreviation and some other features in these manuscripts, 'können freilich den Vorlagen entlehnt sein'.

[233] Bischoff (1984) 183. C. Wright (2000) 120 and 144-5.

[234] A description of the manuscript's contents is contained in Appendix G, 235-9. See also *Catalogus Codicum Manu Scriptorum Bibliothecae Regiae Monacensis* III, 3 (Wiesbaden 1965) 76.

[235] This commentary is catalogued by B. Bischoff (1966) No. 33, 263-5. It has recently been edited by Seán (John Liam) de Paor, 'A Study of the Irish Commentary on St. Paul contained in the Freising MS. Clm. 6235' unpublished D. Phil Thesis (Trinity College Dublin 1999) 2 volumes. See also John De Paor, 'Adam's Grave, Adam's Soul and Our Souls, the Doctrine of

Further work on the context in which these texts appear in Paris B.N. lat. 1841 may shed light on the question of origin.[236] Particular attention should be given to the short text included after the series on fols. 168v-170v (Plates 1 - 2). This is a previously unrecognized fragment of 'Alexander's Letter to Aristotle about India'.[237] While this letter was quite widely disseminated, a collation of the fragment in Paris B.N. lat. 1841 with Boer's edition of the *Epistola Alexandri* links it to two manuscripts of his second family: Paris B.N. lat. 7561, another ninth-century manuscript, and the eleventh-century Bruxellis, Bibliotheca Regia 5354-5361.[238] Neither of these manuscripts contains exegetical material catalogued in *Wendepunkte*. Further research into the transmission of this version of 'Alexander's Letter' may help identify more closely the place where Paris, B.N. lat. 1841 was produced. In addition to this question of context, a huge amount of work remains to be done on individual members of this evangelical series. This point is discussed more fully in Appendix G.

Apart from the texts contained in Clm. 6235 / Paris B.N. lat. 1841, two other items in *Wendepunkte* preserve exegesis on the canons. The first of these is the commentary on Matthew in Codex Vindobonensis 940, which is seen as a product of the circle of Virgilius of Salzburg.[239] This manuscript, on the basis of its script and binding, was written either in Salzburg or St. Amand during Arn's bishopric (784-812).[240] Related fragments in Visigothic script were used as fly-leaves for Paris BN. Lat. 536.[241] As well as the extended treatment given to the

---

the Three Letters, and Clm. 6235' in T. O' Loughlin (ed), *The Scriptures and Early Medieval Ireland, Instrumenta Patristica* XXXI (Turnhout 1999) 95-108.

[236] See Appendix G 235-9, for a detailed description of the contents of Clm. 6235 and Paris B.N. lat. 1841.

[237] For a general introduction see James S. Romm, *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought* (Princeton 1992) 109-16 and Lloyd L. Gunderson, *Alexander's Letter to Artistotle about India* (Meisenheim am Glan 1980).

[238] *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem ad Codicem Fidem Edita*, W.W. Boer (ed) (The Hague 1953). Boer describes these manuscripts on vi, xviii, xxiv-xxvi.

[239] B. Bischoff (1966) No. 17 I, 245-7. See also Anthony J. Forte, 'Some Philological Observations on Codex Vindobonensis 940' in T. O' Loughlin (ed) (1999) 109-115. As this commentary is without a title it is referred to throughout this thesis as the (*Commentarius in Mattheum*), following the practice of Joseph Kelly, CCSL 108 C (Turnhout 1974), in the case of the untitled commentaries on Luke and John in Vienna 997.

[240] Bernhard Bischoff, *Die Südostdeutschen Schreibschulen und Bibliotheken in der Karolingerzeit* II (Wiesbaden 1980) 111-2, description of the *Arn-Stil* 61-73.

[241] B. Bischoff (1966) No. 17 II 247-8 also E. A. Lowe, 'An Unedited Fragment of Irish Exegesis in Visigothic Script', *Celtica* 5 (1960) 1-7. This fragment has been discussed by C. Wright

series in this commentary's preface, Bischoff was the first to note that uncial titles throughout the main text mark out changes between canon sections.

Vienna 940 opens with a number of texts usually found in a Gospel book. The codex begins with a copy of *Novum Opus* and with a set of canon tables (Plate 3). These are followed by *argumenta* for the four Evangelists, the first entry from Mark and Luke's chapter lists, and corrupted Hebrew name lists for Luke and John.[242] The bunching of these texts together at the opening of the manuscript, as well as the simple framing of the canon sequence, suggest an *Insular* model for this prefatory series.[243] This is confirmed by an examination of the Hebrew Name lists on fols. 12v-13r (Pls. 4-5) which have been neglected in previous research on this manuscript. These lists are clearly related to a unique set of Irish Hebrew Names.[244] Unlike the other members of this set, Vienna 940 is currently the sole witness to the appearance of these lists in a commentary manuscript. The presence of such a list in this manuscript is clear testimony that it was produced in a centre with Irish associations. The *argumenta* contain a mixed text with both Irish and Continental associations. The single *capitula* entered for Mark and Luke belong to an exclusively Continental family and link the production of this manuscript with that of the Cutbercht Gospels.

As with the *Wendepunkte* items previously discussed, the Hiberno-Latin identity of Vienna 940 was determined by the appearance of a number of symptoms, such

---

(2000) 129-30, fn. 48, he has also, 144-5, listed Vienna 940 among the commentaries he thinks most likely to be Irish or Irish influenced.

[242] See Appendix H, 240-53, for a detailed discussion of this series of prefatory texts.

[243] On this as a feature of Insular books see P. McGurk (1961) 12-13 and also, 'The Gospel Book in Celtic Lands before AD 850: Contents and Arrangement' in P. Ní Chatháin and M. Richter (ed), *Ireland and Christendom, Bible Study and the Missions* (Stuttgart 1987) 165-189, 170-1. P. McGurk mentions this manuscript's canon tables in his article, 'The Disposition of Numbers in Latin Eusebian Canon Tables' in R. Gryson (ed), *Philologia Sacra: Biblische und Patristische Studien für Hermann J. Frede und Wather Thiele zu ihrem siebzigsten Geburtstag* (Freiburg 1993) 242-58, 253 fn. 13. See Appendix H for further discussion of these points.

[244] These lists are discussed in detail in Appendix H, 243-53. Previously identified witnesses to this Irish family are discussed in detail by Olivier Szerwiniack, 'Des Receuils d'Interprétations de Noms Hébreux chez les Irlandais et le Wisigoth Théodulf', *Scriptorium* 48 (1994) 187-258 and the additional article by Olivier Szerwiniack and Patrick McGurk, 'Des Recueils d'Interprétations de Noms Hébreux (suite)', *Scriptorium* 50 (1996) 117-122. I am grateful to Olivier Szerwiniack who read this section of the thesis and made many helpful suggestions and comments.

as linguistic peculiarities and an advanced introductory schema, in combination with palaeographical evidence.[245] While the commentary does not preserve Insular abbreviations, it is full of grammatical errors which Bischoff saw as 'zweifellos aus falscher Auflösung willkürlicher Suspensionen enstanden (sind), wie sie sich häufig in irischen Kommentarhandschriften finden'.[246] The author's access to Irish source material is made clear by the inclusion of a section drawn from Ailerán's *Interpretatio moralis et mystica progenitorum...* at the beginning of the text.[247]

The final work mentioned in *Wendepunkte* which treats of the Eusebian series is the Irish Reference Bible.[248] For Bischoff this collection of commentaries on each book of the bible was the culmination of Irish exegesis, which represented each 'symptom' in its most developed form. Although the commentary is normally dated to around 800, Gerard MacGinty, who has recently edited the section on the Pentateuch, has suggested it was compiled in the first half of the eighth century.[249] Research on the Old Testament section has led MacGinty to see the text as a set of lecture notes on possible sources of difficulty in the Bible.[250] The uneven treatment of the Gospels supports this theory.[251] The canons are discussed in the preface to the work's Gospel commentaries.[252] They are not mentioned in the main text, in spite of the attention given to problems of harmonizing the evangelical accounts.[253]

---

[245] B. Bischoff (1966) 245-7.
[246] Ibid. 246.
[247] An edition of this section was published as Appendix I of Aidan Breen (1995) 71-75
[248] B. Bischoff (1966) 1A-C, 231-6.
[249] Gerard MacGinty, 'Introduction' to *Pauca problesmata de enigmatibus ex tomis canonicis Praefatio et libri de pentateucho Moysi*, CCCM 173 (Turnhout 2000). On x he states 'Bischoff has suggested that the text was originally drafted around the year 750 A.D., and this has been generally accepted. I should be inclined to the opinion that it could have been later and, if anything, is somewhat earlier'. MacGinty elaborated on the reasons for this opinion in his article 'The Pentateuch of the Reference Bible: The Problem concerning its sources' in T. O' Loughlin (ed) (1999) 163-77, 165. His suggestion of an earlier date is based on text history, the work's ignorance of the writings of Bede and its acceptance of the theory of a flat earth.
[250] G. MacGinty (1999) 165 describes the text 'as rather unevenly developed lecture notes...'.
[251] This uneven treatment is clear from Joseph Kelly's article, 'Das Bibelwerk: Organisation and Quellenanalyse of the New Testament Section' in P. Ní Chatháin and M. Richter (ed) (1987) 113-123. Kelly (115) notes for example how 16 of the 19 folios devoted to Matthew deal with only the first 7 chapters of his Gospel.
[252] fol. 130v/a-131v/b of Paris B.N. lat. 11561, transcribed in Appendix N, 264-8.
[253] Two out of the three folios devoted to Mark concentrate on the divergences between his account and those of the other two Evangelists on the time of the Crucifixion and on the visit of the women to the tomb. The lack of reference to the canons in sections on evangelical harmony is

Bischoff's identification of the Reference Bible as an Irish work, or one composed at least under Irish influence, has been supported by the close links which have since been established between its Psalter Commentary and the Old Irish Treatise on the Psalter.[254] Michael Herren has recently summarized other circumstantial evidence pointing towards an Irish origin: the appearance of an excerpt of this commentary in Irish script, the inclusion of an Irish compilation as a source, the use of a formula in the title marked as Irish by a non-Irish writer and the pseudonymous citation of Virgilius Maro, a writer closely associated with the Irish.[255] In the Introduction to his edition of the Pentateuch Gerard MacGinty also supports Bischoff's argument for an Irish or Irish-influenced origin for the Reference Bible on the grounds of the language and orthography of some of the earliest manscripts of this text.[256]

Evidence of continuing Irish interest in the Eusebian series in the ninth century can be found in the work of Sedulius Scottus.[257] Sedulius commented directly on each of the general prefaces to the Gospels: *Novum Opus*, *Plures Fuisse*, *Eusebius' Letter to Carpianus* and *Sciendum Etiam*. In addition, he was the author of a short text entitled *Explanatiuncula De Breuiariorum Et Capitulorum Canonumque Differentia et Connexione Deque Eorum Aequalitate Atque Inaequalitate Speculatio*, which outlined the differences between a *capitula*, canon and section division.[258]

---

likely to be explained by the close dependence of the Reference Bible on its patristic sources, which do not incorporate the canons into their commentaries on the Gospels. This point is discussed more fully in the next part of this chapter.

[254] See especially Pádraig Ó Néill, 'The Old Irish Treatise on the Psalter and its Hiberno-Latin Background', *Ériu* 30 (1979) 148-64. Also relevant are M. McNamara, 'Psalter Text and Psalter Study in the Early Irish Church (A.D. 600-1200)', PRIA 73 C (1973) 201-72, and his 'Tradition and Creativity in Early Irish Psalter Study' in P. Ní Chatháin and M. Richter (ed), *Ireland and Europe. The Early Church* (Stuttgart 1984) 338-389, and also Kuno Meyer (ed) (1894).

[255] M. Herren (1998) 405-6. C. Wright (1993) 16, wrote that the evidence for Irish authorship, understood either in terms of composition or compilation of the Reference Bible is 'both extensive and compelling'.

[256] G. MacGinty (2000) x-xi. He writes 'His [Bischoff's] arguments are still valid, and there are other detailed arguments from the language and orthography of the text – particularly as represented by the Vatican MS – which could confirm ultimate Irish inspiration and possible authorship'.

[257] For a general introduction see James Carney, 'Sedulius Scottus' in R. McNally (ed), *Old Ireland* (Dublin 1965) 228-50 and R. Düchting, 'Sedulius Scottus' in H. Löwe (ed), *Die Iren und Europa im früheren Mittelalter* (Stuttgart 1982) 866-75. See also Michael Lapidge and Richard Sharpe, *A Bibliography of Celtic Latin Literature 400-1200* (Dublin 1985) 672-86.

[258] Sedulius' Commentaries on *Novum Opus* and *Sciendum Etiam* are in PL 103, 331-343. Mario Esposito provided a new edition of the commentary on *Eusebius' Letter to Carpianus* and a first

While the following chapters do not contain a detailed investigation of Sedulius' work, he is occasionally cited. His comments on the canons draw on the exegesis of the earlier *Wendepunkte* texts, especially on the Reference Bible.[259] Sedulius' debt to this Hiberno-Latin material is relevant to an aspect of the current *Wendepunkte* debate, namely, 'the extent to which the culture which originated among the Irish on the Continent in the ninth century originated in Ireland itself'.[260] Future comparison of this Sedulian material with other ninth-century exegesis on the Gospels may show whether he was reflecting a particularly Irish tendency in commenting on the canons or whether exegesis on the Eusebian series was widely received in the Carolingian era.[261]

Links with the Patristic Past

Like many of Bischoff's symptoms, Hiberno-Latin interest in the Eusebian canons is inspired by patristic source material. Comments on the tables in the *Wendepunkte* manuscripts depend in particular on *Novum Opus* and on Isidore's treatment of the canons in the *Etymologiae*.[262] Hiberno-Latin exegetes, apart from Sedulius Scottus, show no familiarity with *Eusebius' Letter to Carpianus* or with *Sciendum Etiam*. This is a significant point. Evidence from Gospel books points to the presence of these two texts across most of Europe at this time. The exception to this is in Ireland, where Gospel books appear with only one general

---

edition of the text on the various divisions in the appendices to his article 'Hiberno-Latin Manuscripts in the Libraries of Switzerland I', PRIA 28 C (1910) 62-95, repr. in M. Lapidge (ed), *Mario Esposito Irish Books and Learning in Medieval Europe* (Aldershot 1990). 83-95.

[259] C. Wright (2000) 120, fn 17 cites the editors of Sedulius' *Collectaneum in Apostolum* who believed that the Clm 6235 commentary on the Pauline epistles represents the kind of commentary tradition on which Sedulius drew, although they doubt he had access to this particular manuscript. Sedulius' comments on the Eusebian canons offer more evidence to support their case.

[260] M. Gorman (1997) 196-7, discussed by D. Ó Cróinín (2000) 235-6.

[261] One possible indication of Carolingian interest in the Eusebian series is the addition of glosses referring to the canons in Gospel books. This was the case with London B. L., Harley 1775. See Chapter 7, 130, for further discussion of this point in the context of the uncial titles in Vienna 940. A number of early medieval texts on the canons, some inspired by Ailerán's work, are listed by Friedrich Stegmüller in *Repertorium Biblicum Medii Aevi* I (Madrid 1950) 307-8. Further work is needed to place these texts in context and see the extent to which they reflect interest in and understanding of the Eusebian series.

[262] Both of these authors are cited by name in the *Wendepunkte* texts. See Chapter 6, 113 for a discussion of the use of *Novum Opus* and of the treatment of the canons in *Etymologiae* VI. 15. Evidence for the early dissemination of Isidore's work in Ireland is provided by J. M. Hillgarth, 'Ireland and Spain in the seventh century', *Peritia* 3 (1984) 1-16. See also Bernhard Bischoff,

introduction, *Novum Opus*.[263] The absence of any sign of acquaintance with *Eusebius Letter to Carpianus* apparent in the *Wendepunkte* texts may thus support the case for an Irish origin of these works.

Although deriving their information from patristic authorities, Hiberno-Latin exegetes, 'at once derivative and idiosyncratic', reformulated and developed the discussion of the tables.[264] Their inclusion of exegesis on Eusebius' series in Gospel commentaries sets them apart from the patristic tradition, which supplied information on the canons only in Gospel book prefatory texts or encyclopedic works.[265] Bede seems to have followed patristic example in relation to the series. The Eusebian tables were included as a preface in contemporary Gospel books from the Wearmouth-Jarrow scriptorium, but are not mentioned in his corpus of writings.

The Hiberno-Latin texts treated of in the following chapters are unique not only in the context in which they mention the canons, but also in the way that the series is discussed. Patristic source texts are used as the basis for a detailed examination of both the series' dynamics and its limitations. The significance of the tables' number, measure and weight is highlighted. The tables' liminal qualities, a feature of Chapter 1, are also picked up on by Insular exegetes. But the Hiberno-Latin discussion of the tables also goes beyond that of the patristic authorities. The series is associated with other images of evangelical harmony, such as the four beasts and the Ark of the Covenant. This fact, coupled with the appearance of exegesis on the canons alongside other ways of reading the Gospels, demonstrates their integration into contemporary evangelical interpretation. One of the most interesting aspects of the following chapters is

---

'Die europäische Verbreitung der Werke Isidors von Sevilla', repr. *Mittelalterliche Studien* I (Stuttgart 1966) 171-94.

[263] Gospel Books which limit their general prefaces to *Novum Opus* are: The Book of Durrow, the Echternach Gospels, the Books of Mulling and Armagh, Poitiers Ms. 17 Set II and also possibly the Book of Kells. On this see P. McGurk (1961) 12-3 and also P. McGurk (1987) 165-189, 170-1. See also Appendix H 241, for the inclusion of *Novum Opus* in the commentary manuscript Vienna 940.

[264] This description is drawn from C. Wright (1993) 19. He writes 'Detailed studies by McNally and others of specific themes characteristic of Irish writings have brought into sharper focus an Irish learned tradition at once derivative and idiosyncratic'.

how the Hiberno-Latin discussion of the Eusebian series can be seen to be part of a more general meditation on Gospel harmony and, related to this, on the ways of interpreting the evangelical text, both literal and spiritual.

The chapter on Ailerán's *Canon Evangeliorum,* which directly follows this introduction, clearly illustrates how the canons were associated with other images of scriptural harmony. The short texts discussed in Chapter 6 adopt a more scientific approach to the tables, highlighting the idea of their divine measure. This chapter comments on the following works: *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum*, the *Praefacio secundum Marcum* and the prefaces to the *Expositio Euangelii secundum Marcum*, to the commentary on Matthew in Vienna 940 and to the Reference Bible Gospel commentary. The final two Hiberno-Latin chapters focus on material relating to the canons in the titles to the commentary on Matthew in Vienna 940 and in the text of the 'Historical Commentary on Luke'. Chapter 7, on the Matthew commentary, demonstrates the significance of the series as a means of reading the Gospel text. The author of the 'Historical Commentary on Luke', discussed in Chapter 8, criticizes a number of Eusebian parallels in light of the varying means of interpreting the evangelical text.

[265] Patristic references to the Eusebian series have been discussed in full in Part I. The closest parallel to the Hiberno-Latin discussion of the tables is in Victor of Capua's Introduction to his *Diatessaron*. This was discussed in Chapter 2, 34-39.

Chapter 5

On Ailerán's *Canon Evangeliorum*.

Introduction

The ten-stanza poem on the Eusebian canons, which opens with the words, *Quam in primo speciosa quadriga...*, has survived in thirteen medieval manuscripts.[266] The oldest of these, the Augsburg Gospels and Poitiers Bibl.mun. MS. 17, have clear Irish connections. In 1912 Donatien de Bruyne identified the poem as the work of an Irishman, *Aileranus sapiens,* on the testimony of two later manuscripts.[267] This identification has been generally accepted. Contemporary Irish sources provide us with some information on this figure. A gloss in the *Martyrology of Oengus* describes Ailerán as *fer léigind* (lector) of Clonard.[268] The *Annals of Ulster* record the death from the plague of *Aileranus sapientis* in 665, thus providing a *terminus ante quem* for the composition of the poem.[269] Ailerán has been identified with certainty as the author of one other work - an allegorical exposition of the Matthean genealogy of Christ.[270]

The *Canon Evangeliorum* has been given considerable historical attention. At the beginning of the century, as well as the treatment by de Bruyne, it attracted notices from Mario Esposito and James F. Kenney.[271] In more recent times, the

---

[266] The older number of 11 manuscripts has recently been revised. See Chapter 4, 67-8, fn. 215 for information on this and the discussion of the manuscript evidence by D. Howlett (1996) 11-12.

[267] D. de Bruyne (1912) 339-40.

[268] *Féilire Oengusso Céli De: The Martyrology of Oengus the Culdee*, W. Stokes (ed), *Proceedings of the Henry Bradshaw Society* 29 (London 1905) 255, 262. The actual entry on Ailerán describes him as a sage or wise man (*ecnae*). It reads, 'Bid émid a cobair, in cech náir donn-ecrae, Victor coslóg sochlar la hAirerán necnae'. This is referred to by Aidan Breen in the introduction to his edition of Ailerán's *Interpretatio mystica et moralis progenitorum Domini Iesu Christi* (Dublin 1995) 1.

[269] *Annals of Ulster (to 1131) I*, S. MacAirt and G. MacNicoll (ed) (Dublin 1983) 136-7. See also P. Byrne, 'The Community of Clonard, Sixth to Twelfth Centuries', *Peritia* 4 (1984) 157-173. David Howlett (1996) 20 has suggested the poem could have been written in AD 650 as the number of this year corresponds to the total sum of canon parallels.

[270] Edited by A. Breen (Dublin 1995). The *Interpretatio mystica et moralis progenitorum*... is one of the texts accepted by M. Herren (1998) 399 as definitely Irish. A collection of *mirabilia* of Brigit of Kildare has also been attributed to Ailerán. This is discussed by A. Breen (1995) 8.

[271] M.Esposito, 'Hiberno-Latin Manuscripts in the Libraries of Switzerland II', PRIA 30 C (1912) 2-5.
J.F. Kenney, *Sources for the Early History of Ireland: Ecclesiastical* (repr. Dublin 1979) 297.

work of Nancy Netzer has identified the key place of the poem in the discussion of the early scriptorium at Echternach and of the origins of beast canon tables.[272] The edition of Ailerán's *Interpretatio Mystica et Moralis Progenitorum Domini Iesu Christi,* which appeared in 1995 was followed by a new edition of the *Canon Evangeliorum* in 1996.[273] This edition by David Howlett is contained in Appendix I.

Howlett's discussion the *Canon Evangeliorum* shows it to be influenced by 'biblical style'. There is rhythmic balance, chiastic and parallel disposition and play both with the words for number and with the intervals separating words.[274] Following Howlett, the use of this style is motivated by the desire to imitate the Divine Artificer, who worked according to numerical principles. Although we have seen how the Eusebian canons are also formed according to this idea, Howlett does not link the poem's style and substance. His analysis of Ailerán's work is purely linguistic. In the following pages some reference will be made to aspects of Howlett's discussion. More significant in the context of this thesis however, is the treatment of the poem by Jennifer O' Reilly in 'Patristic and Insular traditions of the Evangelists: exegesis and iconography'.[275] Following her work, the *Canon Evangeliorum* will be viewed in the light of both patristic and Insular exegesis on Gospel harmony.

Title and Form

A brief comment will be made here firstly regarding the poem's title. Howlett has reconstructed this as follows: *Ailerani Sapientis Canon Evangeliorum, The*

---

[272] N. Netzer (1994) 326-7. See also N. Netzer, *Cultural Interplay in the Eighth Century* (Cambridge 1994) 61, 205-6 and D. Ó Cróinín, 'Rathmelsigi, Willibrord and the Earliest Echternach Manuscripts', *Peritia* 3 (1984) 17-47.
[273] *Ailerani Sapientis Canon Evangeliorum*, D. Howlett (ed and trans), 'Seven Studies in Seventh Century Texts', *Peritia* 10 (1996) 1-70, 12-20.
[274] D. Howlett (1996) 12-20. The poem is written in hendecasyllabic verse, the same metre as contemporary Irish works like Laidcenn's *Lorica*. While many of Howlett's suggestions seem reasonable, I have reservations about the extent to which some of the poem's parallelism is intentional. The listing of the contents of the ten Eusebian canons obviously involves much repetition. For an outline of 'biblical style' see D. Howlett, *The Celtic Latin Tradition of Biblical Style* (Dublin 1995) 1-29 and *British Books in Biblical Style* (Dublin 1997) 1-31.
[275] J. O'Reilly (1998) 49-94.

Canon of the Gospels of Ailerán the Wise.[276] While the canons are ten in number, they are described here in the singular. This differs from their standard title of *canones euangeliorum*. In a different article, Jennifer O' Reilly has drawn attention to a section in Orléans 65 - an eighth-century Hiberno-Latin commentary on Matthew- which questions the use of the singular and plural persons in the context of the Matthean incipit. The commentary asks,

> Why Matthew called his work the book of the generation when in fact it records 42 generations and when the genealogy is only one small part of his Gospel. The answer is that the genealogy describes only one generating and may be properly called the book of Jesus Christ.[277]

One wonders if a similar thought process lies behind the singular description of the canons. Although the canons are tenfold, each canon in essence contains the harmony of all. Only when all four are considered can the individual tables take their form. It is, furthermore, the harmony of the accounts of the life of one man, Christ, which the tables represent.

Ailerán's interest in numerology opens another line of enquiry when considering the poem's use of the singular 'canon' to signify ten tables. We have seen how in patristic exegesis the perfection of the number ten, the sum of 1+2+3+4, was often commented on.[278] For Augustine ten symbolized many things, including universal knowledge and the reward of eternal life.[279] In the latter case, the ten-fold reward of heaven is represented by a single *denarius*. Cassiodorus interpreted the *denarius* in a specifically Christological context writing, 'He [Christ] himself is the *denarius*, which is to be given to those who come early and late in the day. He is the *denarius* because he bears the crown; He is the one *denarius* because He shall have no end whatsoever'.[280] Bede's commentary *On the Temple* shows the recension of such ideas in an Insular context. The cherubim above the Ark of the Covenant are ten cubits high because, 'By the awareness of the decalogue of the law they preach that God is to be served since

---

[276] There has been some criticism of Howlett's use of the biblical style to reconstruct texts. See Christopher Grocock, 'Review of D.R. Howlett, *The Celtic Latin Tradition of Biblical Style*', *Peritia* 12 (1998) 379-89 and Howlett's, 'Response to Dr. Christopher Grocock's *Review* of *The Celtic Latin Tradition of Biblical Style*', *Peritia* 13 (1999) 312-4.

[277] J. O'Reilly, 'Gospel Harmony and the Names of Christ' in J.L. Sharpe III and K. van Kampen (ed), *The Bible as Book - The Manuscript Tradition* (London 1998) 73-88, 77.

[278] See Chapter 1, 14-16 and Chapter 2, 36-8.

[279] Augustine, *De diuersis quaestionibus, LVII, De centum quinquaginta tribus piscibus*, CCSL 44 A, 97. See Chapter 2, 36-8 for further discussion of the image of the *denarius*.

they show that only those who serve God faithfully are to be rewarded with the *denarius* of an everlasting kingdom'.[281]

In patristic literature ten was also seen as having a specifically Christological dimension because of the traditional association of the Greek letter X (chi) (the first letter of Xpi) with ten. *De Templo* also reflects this interpretative strand. Bede tells us that the 18-cubit-high pillars before the temple can be understood 'in the more profound sense' as signifying Jesus for the first and second letters of his Greek name correspond to ten and eight respectively.[282] In Latin I and X were among the few numbers which had numerical value. Isidore believed them to be the only ones with these properties, commenting, *Latini autem numeros ad litteros non computant, sed sola uerbo componunt, excepto I et X littera, quae et figura crucem significat et in numero decem demonstrat.*[283] Both of these letters begin titles Jesus Christ, *Ihs* and *Xpi.*

It should be noted finally that the only appearance of the word *canon* in the poem occurs in the title. Howlett sees it as implied in the first stanza, and by extension one assumes also in stanza two, six, seven and eight. This is similar to the listing of the contents of the canons in *Novum Opus* and in Book IV.5 of the *Etymologiae*. In the former text, Jerome lists the canons as follows, *In canone primo concordant quattuor...in secundo tres...in tertio tres... etc.* [284]

In stanzas where the word *canon* is not implied a number of other terms describe the tables' sequence. We read of the discourse 'in the fourth place' (*Quarto loco*) and 'in the fifth part' (*Quinta vice*). The word *ordo* is used twice. Line 3 reads *Tum deinde tertio in ordine* and line 9, *Nonus ordo in quo duo pariter*. The series' order is also attended to in later Hiberno-Latin commentary literature. The evangelical prefaces in the Reference Bible and in Vienna 940 provide a two-fold

---

[280] Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmorum, In Psalmum* 110, CCSL 98, 1019; P.G.Walsh (trans) 131.
[281] Bede, *De Templo* I, 13, CCSL 119 A, 182; S.Connolly (trans) TTH 21, 51.
[282] Ibid. II.18. CCSL 119 A, 199 reads, *Quamuis possit et hoc altius intellegi quod nomen Iesu apud Graecos ab hoc numero incipiat. Prima littera nominis huius apud eos decem secunda octo significat*; S. Connolly (trans) TTH 21, 75. Further discussion of this point occurs in J. O' Reilly, 'Exegesis and the Book of Kells: the Lucan genealogy' in F. O' Mahony (ed) (1994) 344-97, 374.
[283] Isidore, *Etymologiae,* I.III.11.
[284] Jerome, *Novum Opus*, Appendix C, 221-22, lines 43-8.

basis for the order the Eusebian system follows.[285] Vienna 940 sees the order of the canons as based on *scribtio* and *principatus*, the latter then being divided into three parts – pre-eminence of number, of word and apostolic pre-eminence.[286]

The *Canon Evangeliorum* is 42 lines long. Howlett has related the number of lines in the poem to the number of generations in the Matthean genealogy of Christ, the subject of Ailerán's other known work.[287] Neither he nor Aidan Breen, however, has commented on the thematic significance of this agreement. Underlining the harmony of the canons is its expression in the same number of lines as the generations in Matthew's genealogy, long seen as a synecdoche of Gospel harmony.[288] Both of Ailerán's works have a similar goal in revealing aspects of the identity of Christ. In the preface to the *Interpretatio* Ailerán outlines this writing:

> It seems advantageous, concerning the names of the Dominical genealogy
> according to mystic men,
> to expound at least the understandings perceived by the authority of greater
> men, especially at first in that specified sense,
> so that by whatever manner the interpretation of any name may be referred to
> Our Lord Jesus
> it may be added to with consistent testimonies of the holy scriptures,
> and all the generations of the genealogy may be demonstrated to have
> prefigured and prophesied the same Saviour.[289]

The association between the Eusebian and genealogical harmonies is also evident in another Hiberno-Latin work, the *Praefacio Secundum Marcum*. This text follows its listing of canon parallels by demonstrating the harmony of the evangelical genealogies. We read:

> *Matheus genelogiam ab Abraham usque ad Ioseph per uiros xliiii duxit. Lucas uero ab Ioseph per uiros lxxvii usque ad Adam ducit. Iohannes non deduxit terrenam sed caelestem in breui conprehendit. Marcus uero terrenam numerauit, dicens: Iesu Christi.*

---

[285] *Pauca problesmata de enigmatibus ex tomis canonicis*, Paris B.N.lat 11561, fol.131r. See Chapter 6, 119-20 for further discussion of these points.
[286] (*Commentarius in Mattheum*), Vienna 940, fol.19r. This is discussed in Chapter 6, 119.
[287] D. Howlett (1996) 20.
[288] The significance of Matthew and Luke's genealogies of Christ as a test-case of Gospel harmony was discussed in Chapter 1, 21-22. J. O'Reilly (1998) 73-88, 84-5 described the Matthean genealogy as a synecdoche. In *De doctrina christiana* Augustine explains the trope of synecdoche as that 'which causes us to understand either a part from the whole or the whole from a part', Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana* III, 35, J. Martin (ed), CCSL 32 (Turnhout 1962) 110-11; D.W. Robertson (trans) (Indianapolis 1958) 111. Bede includes a description of a synecdoche in *De Schematibus et Tropis* II, ii, vii, C.B. Kendall (ed), CCSL 123 A (Turnhout 1975) 156-7.
[289] Ailerán, *Interpretatio Mystica Progenitorum Iesu Christi*, D.Howlett (trans) (1996) 9. Howlett's translation of the prologue to the *Interpretatio* has been chosen here rather than Breen's as it reflects more clearly the point being made.

Sed breuiter caelestem numerauit, cum dicit: Dei. Sed in breue haec omnia conprehendit.[290]

As in the work of Ailerán, this commentator's awareness of the patristic significance of the genealogies as an image of evangelical harmony is clear.[291]

It is worth pausing to note the numerological interpretation of the Matthean genealogy by patristic exegetes. This comes across clearly in *De consensu euangelistarum*. In this work Augustine sees that while the genealogy is reckoned in 3 sets of 14, it actually lists forty generations - Christ is excluded from the reckoning, Jechonias listed twice. Forty, seen in the context of the forty-day fasts of Moses, Elias and Christ, is related to life here on earth in which we are tempted by the devil. Augustine writes,

> And in explanation of the circumstance that this particular number should denote the temporal and earthly life, what suggests itself most immediately in the meantime, is that the seasons of the year also revolve in four successive divisions which scripture sometimes designates by the names of the winds....But the number 40 is equivalent to four times ten, furthermore the number ten is itself made up by adding several numbers in succession from one up to four together.[292]

Augustine also sees forty as representative of the life to come, drawing on the fact that Christ spent forty days with his disciples after the resurrection. Bede, as well as sharing these interpretations of forty, commented as follows on Moses' fast of forty days:

> Now Moses was with the Lord forty days and forty nights so that we might learn from this amount of time that the only ones who are able to fulfill the Decalogue of the Law which he with his people, had received are those whom the Lord assists with the grace of evangelical truth, which was to be recorded in four books for four times ten makes forty.[293]

We see here again the clear significance of the relationship of the numbers four and ten. One notes how the *Canon Evangeliorum's* 42 lines are divided predominantly into 4-line stanzas, each representing one of the ten canons.[294]

---

[290] *Praefacio Secundum Marcum*, R.MacNally (ed), CCSL 108B (Turnholt 1973) 221. See discussion in Chapter 6, 111.
[291] See Chapter 1, 21-22 for a discussion of the genealogies in the context of Eusebius' work.
[292] Augustine, *De consensu euangelistarum* II, 3, CSEL 43, 90-91; S.D.F. Salmond (trans) NPNF 6, 1st series, 105. The significance of the number 40 is discussed by V. Hopper (1969) 25-6, 71 and R. Meyer and H. Suntrup (1987) 710-27.
[293] Bede, *De Tabernaculo* I.2, CCSL 119 A, 10; A.Holder (trans) TTH 18, 7.
[294] The significance of this division is not commented on by D. Howlett (1996) 11-20.

While the writing of the poem in 42 lines seems to allude to the Matthean genealogy as an expression of evangelical harmony, a more obvious example of the use of images of harmony in the poem is the representation of the tables as conversations between the evangelical beasts. This is the subject of the next part of this chapter.

The Canons and the Four Beasts

The four beasts had long been seen as an image of Gospel harmony and the patristic tradition of their interpretation was picked up with enthusiasm by Hiberno-Latin commentators.[295] Ailerán's expression of the canons in terms of the image of the beasts seems to be quite innovative however. Some later Hiberno-Latin parallels can be cited. The (*Commentarius in Mattheum*) in Vienna 940 draws on the tradition of the symposia of the evangelical beasts by describing the Evangelists as *cantatores*. They sing with each other in the individual canons. We read, *quare quod cantatores canonum unumquemque quin dubium primum canonem iiii canunt.*[296]

Another example occurs in the *Expositio euangelii secundum Marcum* where the difference between Matthew and Mark's Gospels is described in terms of the beasts,

> However, they [Mt and Mk] are different in the declarations proper to each. It is like the way the wings overlap each other in the case of the animals, or just as one wheel goes in the same direction as the other; Matthew and Mark are like the sacred animals who turn their faces to gaze at each other.[297]

The canons are listed immediately after this sentence and draw on another type of Gospel harmony - the carrying rings of the Ark of the Covenant.[298]

---

[295] See Robert MacNally, 'The Evangelists in the Hiberno-Latin Tradition' in J. Autenrieth and F. Brunhölzl (ed), *Festschrift Bernhard Bischoff* (Stuttgart 1971) 111-122; J. O' Reilly, 'The Hiberno-Latin Tradition of the Evangelists and the Gospels of Mael-Brigte', *Peritia* 9 (1995) 290-309 and J. O'Reilly (1998) 49-93.

[296] (*Commentarius in Mattheum*), Vienna 940, fol.19r.

[297] *Expositio euangelii secundum Marcum*, CCSL 82, 1-2, Appendix L, 261. M. Cahill (trans), *The First Commentary on Mark – An Annotated Translation* (Oxford 1998) 20.

[298] This image is discussed in Chapter 3, 49, in the context of its appearance in *Plures Fuisse*. See also the discussion of the *Expositio euangelii secudum Marcum* in Chapter 6, 122-3.

Ailerán's description of the tables as conversations between the beasts, drawing on Ez. 1: 4-16 and Rev. 4: 1-11, implies that the poem be read on different interpretative levels.[299] On a literal level this work describes the contents of the ten canons. On a spiritual level the language used to describe the series reveals how the tables must be understood as an expression of divine measure and concord, both of the Gospels and of scripture as a whole. The poem's continuous play with the numbers 4 and 10, discussed in the previous section, is part of this interpretation. The ten canons can be seen to represent the Decalogue of the New Testament, containing in themselves the measure of the four Gospels. This impression is also confirmed in the poem by the use of other Old Testament images of harmony, such as the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, to describe the total number of parallels contained in individual tables. These images are returned to later on in this chapter. The sense in which the canons represent the harmony of scripture of a whole is also picked up in Chapters 6 and 7.[300]

The first line of the poem presents the beasts as a *speciosa quadriga*, 'a beautiful team of four'. The use of *quadriga* to describe the evangelical quaternity was quite standard. A very early example can be found in Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses*.[301] Jerome, writing to Paulinus in 394 AD, speaks of the *quadriga Domini*.[302] This is picked up in Hiberno-Latin works. *Quadriga Domini* is one of the 33 names of the Gospel in Vienna 940 and is expanded on as follows, *Nomen sibi quadriga domini quia mons est quadrige iiii habere ecquas et ecqui habere habenas et super seditur timone et aurigam habet ipsi. Itaque sunt iiii aequi iiii euangelistae....*[303]

More rare is the use of *quadriga* with the qualifying adjective *speciosa*. Only one Insular parallel has been noted: the inscription on f.1v of Royal I.E.VI, an Anglo-Saxon Bible fragment of the late eighth or early ninth century. The inscription in monumental capitals reads:

---

[299] For the use of these levels in literal and visual exegesis see Anna Esmeijer, *Divina Quaternitas* (Amsterdam 1978) 1-29.
[300] See Chapter 6, 117, 123 and Chapter 7, 139-45 in the discussion of the *iota* and *apex*.
[301] Irenaeus, *Aduersus Haereses* III, ii, 8, ANF I, 428-9.
[302] Jerome, *Letter LIII*, J. Labourt (ed) (1953) 22.
[303] *(Commentarius in Mattheum)*, Vienna 940, fol.15v.

HAEC EST SPECIO/SA QUADRIGA LUCI/FLUA AIAE SPS GRATIA/ PER OS AGNI DI INLUS/TRATA IN QUO QUAT/TUOR PROCERES/ CONSONA VOCE MAGNALIA DI CA/[.....]

Mildred Budny has translated this as follows, 'This is the resplendent *quadriga*, light flowing by the grace of the Holy Spirit, illuminated through the mouth of the Lamb of God (and) in which the four leaders, with harmonious voice celebrated in song the miracles of God'. [304]

Differing from Bischoff, who saw the Royal inscription as an adaptation of Ailerán's verse, Budny sees it as more likely that both works drew on common source material. Some differences between their use of *quadriga* can be identified. Firstly, as Budny has pointed out, the *speciosa quadriga* of Royal refers to the Evangelists, that of Ailerán to the evangelical symbols. A second difference is also evident. The Royal *quadriga* is associated very much with the symposia of the Gospels, whereas Ailerán links the Evangelists with speech as opposed to song. The whole stanza reads:

> How in the first [canon] a beautiful four-part team,
> a man, a lion, a calf, and and eagle,
> through seventy-one chapters
> together speak comparable things about the Lord!

This emphasis on speech will be returned to later in the chapter.

A final point about this phrase should be noted. In the *Interpretatio*, Ailerán's other work, the word *speciosus* is used on one occasion. Interpreting David as signifying *desiderabilis*, Ailerán quotes firstly from Mt. 17: 2, 'And his face shone like the sun' and then cites Ps. 44: 3, 'You are fairer (*speciosus*) than the children of men'.[305] The use of the adjective *speciosus* applied by Ailerán to Christ in the *Interpretatio*, to describe the beasts (themselves a Christ-bearing image) in the *Canon Evangeliorum* accords with the central concern of both works - to reveal aspects of Christ's identity in its various expressions.

---

[304] M. Budny, 'B.L.Manuscript Royal I.E.vi - The Anatomy of an Anglo-Saxon Bible Fragment', unpublished PhD Thesis (London 1994) 516. See also P. McGurk, 'An Anglo-Saxon Bible Fragment of the Late Eighth Century', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 25 (1962) 18-34. It should be noted that Budny revises McGurk's view of the manuscript's date assigning it to the late eighth or early ninth century.

[305] Ailerán, *Interpretatio mystica et moralis progenitorum Domini Iesu Christi*, A.Breen (ed and trans) 47.

From the *quadriga* of the opening line, the poem then describes the individual beasts in varying ways.[306] Matthew is most commonly referred to simply as *homo*. In Stanza 5 he is *homo prudens*. This seems to draw on the traditional association of Matthew with *prudentia*, the first of the four *uirtutes evangelii*. We see this association in a number of Hiberno-Latin texts. The Irish Reference Bible reads, *Item ex similitudine iiii horum animalium iiii uirtutes principales iiii euangelistis iunguntur prudentia in matheum et reuera inter omnia animantia hominis prudentia praecellit.*[307] Vienna 940 links Matthew with prudence along similar lines but refers also to this Gospel's genealogy, *prudentia matheus reputatur narranti genelogiam humanitatis xpi quia prudentia homini reputatur tamen secus omnes creaturas.*[308]

The sixth stanza of the poem describes Matthew / *homo* as *natus Adam*. The most straightforward interpretation of this description sees all men as descended from Adam. In the *Retractiones* Augustine asks, *omnis enim homo terrenus quid est origine nisi adam?*[309] Angers 55, a Hiberno-Latin work, speaks of *omnes genus humanum qui de [stirpe] Adae generis discendit.* [310]

The phrase 'born of Adam' also has a Christological dimension: Christ is the second Adam who has come to redeem his people scattered to the four corners of the world. This is alluded to by the letters A. D. A. M. which begin the names of the four directions. The four-lettered name of Adam was also seen as a type of the four Evangelists. Following patristic tradition, Angers 55 comments, *Quidam adserunt in Adam, primum homine, has sanctas quadrigas Domini figurasse, eo quod (hoc) nomen apud Ebreos Grecosque et Latinos ex quattuor litteris scribitur.*[311] Just as Adam sinned through four elements, so Christ came to redeem us through the quadripartite Gospel. The *Expositio IV euangeliorum*

---

[306] D. Howlett (1996) 19, notes that the words that refer to Matthew, Luke, Mark and John respectively number 9, 8, 7, 6. Numbering the Evangelists in this order corresponds to their order in the Eusebian series, where Luke preceded Mark because of his greater amount of section numbers.
[307] *Pauca problesmata de enigmatibus....*, Paris BN lat 11561, fol.134 r/a.
[308] *(Commentarius in Mattheum),* Vienna 940, fol.14v.
[309] Augustine, *Retractionum Libri duo* I 15, A. Mutzenbecher (ed), CCSL 57 (Turnhout 1984) 48.
[310] *Incipiunt quaestiones uel glosae in euangelio nomine* (Angers 55), R. McNally (ed), CCSL 108 B (Turnholt 1973) 146.
[311] Ibid. 134.

offers a more condensed version of the same theme: *Et sicut de Adam omnis homo nascitur: ita per quattuor euangelistas ad fidem ueniunt.*[312]

The lion of Mark features six times in the poem. As in the case of Matthew's man, Mark is presented often simply as *leo*. On two occasions reference is made to the roaring lion. Stanza 6 speaks of *natus Adam cum clamoso leone* and in the final stanza we are told, *Rugientemque leonem audies*. These references derive from the traditional association of the lion with Mark based on his Gospel *incipit* which cites Isaiah 40:3, 'A voice of one crying in the wilderness...'.[313] In *Plures Fuisse* Jerome wrote, *secunda Marcum in quo uox leonis in heremo rugientis auditur : Vox clamantis in deserto.....*[314] Gregory the Great wrote, *quia per clamorem in deserto (coepit), recte per leonem Marcus (significatur).*[315] Later Hiberno-Latin exegetes drew on these texts to describe the association of Mark with the lion. Both the Reference Bible and Angers 55 cite *Plures Fuisse* directly. Vienna 940 offers a slightly different wording of the same idea, *leo marcum significat narrantem de uocem leonem dicens uox clamantis in deserto....*[316]

Mark is referred to also in the poem as *leonis catulus*, 'the whelp of a lion'. Like the description of Matthew as *natus Adam*, this brings the Christological association of Ailerán's work to the fore. Jennifer O' Reilly has shown how this phrase derives from Gen.49: 9, 'Juda is as a lion's whelp'.[317] Both Augustine and then Bede related this phrase specifically to Christ's Resurrection. This was based on traditional bestiary lore, which told that the lion whelp is born dead but is raised to life after three days by the roaring of its father.[318] In his *Questiones super Genesim*, Bede reports this lore and then writes,

> *Quod ualde conuenienter de passionis morte aptatur Christo, qui tribus diebus et tribus noctibus in cubili sepulcri iacens, somnum mortis impleuit. Bene ergo Christo ut leo*

---

[312] Ps-Jerome, *Expositio IV Euangeliorum*, J. P. Migne (ed), PL 30 (Paris 1846) 550.
[313] This line cited by the each of the four Evangelists is the first parallel in Canon I. See Chapter 7 134-7, for further discussion of this point.
[314] Jerome, *Plures Fuisse*, See Appendix F, 229-34, for text, Chapter 3, 56-58 for discussion.
[315] Gregory, *Homiliae in Hiezechihelem prophetam, Homilia IV*, M. Adriaen (ed), CCSL 142 (Turnholt 1971) 47.
[316] (*Commentarius In Mattheum*), Vienna 940, fols.17v-18r.
[317] J. O'Reilly (1998) 73-88, 81-2.
[318] Isidore also includes this information in XII.II of the *Etymologiae*.

requieuit, qui non solum mortis acerbitatem, sed etiam ipsum mortis imperium uicit. Bene idem iterum et catulus leonis, quia die tertia resurrexit....[319]

An echo of the same tradition is found in the Irish *Liber de Numeris* where the virgin is described suckling the lion.[320]

Bede also refers to *leonis catulus* in his commentary on the Apocalypse. Following Augustine who related the lion to Matthew's Gospel, Bede writes, *Beatus autem Augustinus iuxta ordinem libri istius Mattheum in leone dicit intellegi qui regiae dignitatis in Christo prosapiam narrat, qui et 'uicit leo de tribu Juda'*. (Rev.5: 5) *'Catulus'enim'leonis Juda'* (Gen. 49: 9).[321] The phrase *leonis catulus* was not used exclusively in the Augustinian tradition of interpretation however. Hiberno-Latin examples of the application of this phrase to Mark as lion can also be cited. Another contemporary example occurs in the Gelasian Sacramentary, which records that Gen. 49: 9 is to be cited when Mark's Gospel is presented to the *baptizandus*.[322]

The poem's description of the Lucan beast is confined mainly to a variation between *bos* and *uitulus*, terms used in the visions of Ezechiel and of Revelations respectively.[323] The exception to this occurs in Stanza 5 when Luke is referred to as *mitis hostis*, 'gentle sacrificial victim'. The use of *hostia* in relation to Luke's Gospel was quite standard. Luke was traditionally related to the calf because his Gospel opens with Zacharias in the temple. He is thus seen to reveal at once the sacrificial and sacerdotal nature of Christ. In the second century Irenaeus wrote, 'But that according to Luke, taking up [His] priestly character, commenced with Zacharias as the priest offering sacrifice to God. For now was made ready the fatted calf, about to be immolated for the finding again of the younger son'.[324] Such ideas passed into Insular commentaries. The author of the Reference Bible quotes *Plures Fuisse*, writing *tertia uituli qui lucas a zacharia sacerdote*

---

[319] Bede, *Quaestiones super Genesim*, J.P. Migne (ed), PL 93 (Paris 1862) 357-8.
[320] Ps-Isidore, *Liber de Numeris*, J. P. Migne (ed), PL 83 (Paris 1862) 1295. For commentary see R. MacNally (1971) 117 fn.36 and 'Der Irische *Liber de Numeris*. Eine Quellenanalyse des ps. Isidorischen *Liber de Numeris*', unpublished PhD Dissertation (Munich 1957) 28.
[321] Bede, *Explanatio Apocalypsis*, J. P. Migne (ed), PL 93 (Paris 1862) 145.
[322] See R. MacNally (1971) 117.
[323] See D. Howlett (1996) 18, where he notes that two sequences of *uitulus*, *uitulus*, *bos* make a chiasmus around the central description of Luke as *mitis hostia*. These two sequences work with intervals of 38 and 45 words respectively.

sumpsisse principium significat dicens fuit in diebus herodis regis sacerdos quidam nomine zacharias.[325]

The description of the victim as *mitis* is less frequent. Most patristic commentators emphasized the meekness of Christ in the context of Mt. 11: 29, 'Take up my yoke upon you and learn of me: because I am meek and humble of heart....'. Jerome sees how Christ's meekness was prefigured in one who was a type of Him, 'Lord remember David and all his meekness' (Ps. 131: 1).[326] Augustine does however link Christ's meekness with his sacrificial nature, writing, *mitis enim erat christus: sicut ouis ad immolandum ductus est.*[327]

Most Hiberno-Latin commentators, while not explicitly linking meekness with Christ as victim, see the other related characteristics of the *hostis*. Vienna 940, associating temperance with Luke, writes, *Temperantia autem Lucae reputatur eo quod de oblationis ueteris legis namauit, id uituli et agni, quia uitulus et agnus animantia domata et mitis et munda sunt.*[328] The Reference Bible ascribes temperance to Luke, *Nam uitulus mansuetus ac dominabile est animal.*[329] Ps-Jerome makes a direct association between Christ's meekness and his unspotted nature, writing, *Ideo in columba uenit spiritus in Christum quia auis mitis est: ita Christus mitis sine macula.*[330]

The description of the fourth Evangelist John is similar to that of Luke in consisting mainly of a variation between generic words for the relevant beast. John is referred to as *aquila*, *uolucre* and *auis*. As with Luke, this is diverged

---

[324] Irenaeus, *Aduersus Haereses,* III.X.8, ANF 1, 428.
[325] *Pauca problesmata de enigmatibus....*, Paris, BN lat. 11561, fol.133r.
[326] Jerome, *Letter LXXXII* in *Saint Jérôme, Lettres, Tome IV*, J. Labourt (ed) (Paris 1954) 113; W.H.Freemantle (trans), NPNF 6, 2nd series, 170-1.
[327] Augustine, *Sermones ad Populum*, *Sermo CCLXXIV (a)*, PL 38, 1253. Bede includes an interpretation of meek oxen in *De Templo*, II 20, 5, where he interprets the lions, oxen and cherubim carved at the bases of the ten bronze lavers as types of the saints. The lions signify the stern denunciation of any sinners entrusted to the saint's charge. The saints are like oxen 'when they employ even the invective of correction in a spirit of meekness, when, in the heat of rebuking, they never cease to have the cloven hoof of prudent action and word, or to roll the words of divine reading around in the mouth as if ruminating upon them'. The martyr Stephen is used as a particular example of bovine meekness. See *De Templo*, II, 20, 5, CCSL 119 A 266; S. Connolly (trans) TTH 21, 95-6.
[328] (*Commentarius in Mattheum*), Vienna 940, fol. 14v.
[329] *Pauca problesmata de enigmatibus...*, Paris, BN lat. 11561, fol. 134r.
[330] Ps-Jerome, *Expositio IV Euangeliorum*, PL 30, 541.

from only on one occasion. In the final stanza the eagle is described as *subuolantem ad astra*, 'the one flying upwards to the stars'. An analogous description is found in the *Carmen Paschale* where we read, *More uolans aquilae, uerbo petit astra Joannes*.[331]

The descriptions of both Ailerán and Sedulius belong to the wider context of patristic and Insular exegesis, which made a special link between John and the revelation of Christ's divinity. This link with the heavenly led to his association with the eagle. On the one hand the eagle is said to be the only bird capable of looking unblinkingly at the sun, paralleling John's ability to speak immediately of Christ's divinity, *In principio erat Verbum.....* But in a more general sense, the eagle is seen as related to the heavenly while the other three beasts are earthbound. Thus, the eagle is also associated with Christ's Ascension.[332]

The Canons as Discourse

It can be seen from the above how Ailerán's treatment of the evangelical beasts draws on a rich exegetical tradition. The distinctive voice of the author is also evident. The representation of the canons as conversations between the beasts confirms this impression. A number of different verbs are used to describe their discourse: *loqui*, *conloqui*, *fateri*, *uno ore loqui*, *concordare in loquella*, *sonare clamore*, *uerba proferre* etc.[333]

Patristic descriptions of the canons used the verbs *dicere* and *loqui* but not to represent the canons as an evangelical conversation. In *Novum Opus*, Jerome

---

[331] Sedulius, *Carmen Paschale*, J. P. Migne (ed), PL 19 (Paris 1846) 591. For the use of these lines as *tituli* in Evangelist portraits see F. Wormald, *The Miniatures in the Gospels of Saint Augustine* (Cambridge 1954). Bede's acquaintance with this poem is evident in his *In Lucae euangelium expositio*, D. Hurst (ed), CCSL 120 (Turnhout 1960) 237. Irish knowledge of *Carmen Paschale* is discussed by James F. Kenney, *The Sources for the Early History of Ireland: Ecclesiastical* (New York 1929) 281; Neil Wright, 'The Hisperica Famina and Caelius Sedulius', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 4 (Winter 1982) 61-76; J. O'Reilly (1998) 49-94, 60-61; Richard Sharpe, 'An Irish Textual Critic and the Carmen Paschale of Sedulius: Colmán's Letter to Feradach', *Journal of Medieval Latin* 2 (1992) 44-54,

[332] See for example Augustine, *De consensu euangelistarum*, I, iv; S.D.F. Salmond (trans), NPNF 6, 1st series, 79, Jerome's *Plures Fuisse*, Appendix F, 229-34 and *Pauca problesmata de enigmatibus...*, Paris, B.N. lat. 11561, fol.133r.

states that the canons reveal where the same or similar or different things are said.[334] Isidore, following this, writes of the first canon, *in quibus quattuor eadem dixerunt*.[335] More general verbs of harmony are also used in these texts, e.g. *In canone primo concordant quattuor*. Ailerán's work includes such general terms. We read, *Quinta uice concordant in loquella*. Later Hiberno-Latin texts offer similar descriptions. The author of the *Praefacio Secundum Marcum* writes, *Marcus cum Mattheo communiter in xlvii capititulis narrat. Luce uero in xiii coniungitur*.[336]

Traditional exegesis on the evangelical symbols emphasized the harmony of the Evangelists in these terms also. A musical harmony was attributed to the Gospels at quite an early stage. Eusebius speaks of the harmonies of Tatian and of Ammonius as *Diatessaron* - a Platonic term which expressed the musical harmony of one through four.[337] This tradition is evident in *Plures Fuisse* and reappears, as we have seen, in Vienna 940. It is absent from the *Canon Evangeliorum*. Although the words *sonare* and *consona* are used, they are associated explicitly with speech: 'A son of Adam and a clamorous lion sound with comparable clamour'; 'The man and the bird speak consonant things about the Lord'.

Some examples of the Evangelists described as speaking in agreement can also be found however. As mentioned previously, Book I, Chapter 27 of *De Locis Sanctis* describes Matthew, Mark and Luke, who 'speak in harmony' (*concinentes loquuntur*) concerning the character of the Christ's Apocalyptic Discourse.[338] A fascinating parallel to Ailerán's description of the canons is found in the titles to the canons in the sixth century Syriac Rabbula Gospels. Some of these titles introduce the tables not only as places where the Evangelists agree, but also where they speak together. The first such title for Canon II reads,

---

[333] D. Howlett (1996) 20, notes that the intervals between *loqui* and its derivatives in the poem are always multiples of 7. This kind of variation in describing the canons' agreement was also evident in Victor of Capua's treatment of the series. See Chapter 2, 39.
[334] Jerome, *Novum Opus*, Appendix C, 222, lines 57-8.
[335] Isidore, *Etymologiae*, VI, 15, Appendix D, 226.
[336] *Praefacio Secundum Marcum*, Appendix K, 260, lines 32-33.
[337] This point is discussed in Chapter 1, 16-17. See also P. Underwood (1950) 118-131.
[338] This was mentioned in Chapter 4, 69.

'Second canon in which the four Evangelists speak and agree'. Canon IV is introduced as the, 'Fourth canon in which the Evangelists again speak and agree with one another'. The titles for part of Canon X again refer to speech. One example will be cited here, 'Tenth canon of Matthew in which he alone has written and in which he has spoken of different things'. [339]

Ailerán's emphasis on evangelical speech is illumined by reading Augustine. In *De doctrina christiana* he writes of the fact that God used men as intermediaries to convey his message,

> ...The condition of man would be lowered if God had not wished to have men supply his word to men. How would there be truth in what is said "For the temple of God is holy which you are" if God did not give his responses from a human temple, but called all that He wished to be taught to men from heaven and through angels?[340]

In *De consensu euangelistarum* the synoptic Gospel writers are described as men 'who have their conversation in a certain manner with Christ on earth'.[341] This ties in well with the *Canon Evangeliorum*. We have seen how each beast both reveals aspects of Christ's identity but also converses with Christ as he is present in the other beasts. The Logos, Christ, is at the heart of the canonical discourse, both subject and object. The beasts are described as speaking 'the highest Word', 'of the Lord' and 'the words of God'.

The ability of the Gospel writers to express the Word is due solely to divine inspiration. Ailerán states this explicitly in the ninth stanza where we read of the creatures 'inspired spiritually with sense', *inspiratu sensu spiritaliter*. Augustine saw how the ability to preach comes solely from God, 'whose hand are both we and our words', a quotation from Wis. 6: 7.[342] Origen wrote as follows,

> And the divine Scriptures bear witness to both the preaching of the Gospel by the apostles and to that by our Saviour. David, on the one hand, says of the apostles and perhaps also of the Evangelists, "The Lord shall give the word to them that preach good tidings with great power: the king of power is of the beloved". At the same time he also teaches that it

---

[339] These titles are translated in Guiseppe Furlani, 'The Manuscript of Rabbula', in C. Cechelli, G. Furlani and M. Salmi (ed), *The Rabbula Gospels – Facsimile Edition of the Miniatures of the Syriac Manuscript Plut. 1.56 in the Medicaean-Laurentian Library* (Lausanne 1959) 10-15. The Rabbula canon series is reproduced in full in C. Nordenfalk (1938) Taf. 130-48. See also Plates 20, 21 and 75.

[340] Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, CCSL 132, 4; D.W. Robertson (trans) 5-6.

[341] Augustine, *De consensu euangelistarum*, I.IV, CSEL 43, 6; S.D.F. Salmond (trans) NPNF 6, 1st series, 79.

[342] Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, IV, 15, IV, 30, CCSL 132, 139, 167; D.W. Robertson (trans) 140, 168.

> is not the composition of speech and the utterance of sounds and the practiced beauty of speech that produces persuasion but the provision of divine power.[343]

Ailerán's description of the beasts' discourse emphasizes how comparable the Evangelists' accounts are. They 'speak comparable things' in line 4 and 'comparably' in line 32. In Stanza 6 the man and the lion *pari sonant clamore*. Howlett has pointed out how the significance of *pari* in this line is highlighted by its placement at the centre of the whole composition. The poem's emphasis on the Gospels' comparable nature is reflected in later Hiberno-Latin attention to canon composition. The Irish Reference Bible devotes 74 lines of its Gospel preface to a discussion of the *qualitates canonum*. It examines the basis for each parallel (*eadem*, *vicina*, *sola*) working from *Novum Opus*.[344]

The *Canon Evangeliorum* also emphasizes the beasts' equality. The man, the lion and the eagle 'utter equal things' (line 13). The equality of the Evangelists had underpinned their exegesis since Irenaeus - types such as the rings of the Ark of the Covenant and the paradisal rivers assumed four like parts. The cosmological quaternities particularly stressed the equality of the four Gospels, based on Wis. 11: 21, 'Thou hast ordered all things in measure and number and weight'.[345]

The language Ailerán uses to describe the beasts' discourse is not particularly distinctive. A parallel use of the phrase *uno ore* (line 15) can be found in the *Interpretatio* in a citation from Phil. 2: 2. In the *Moral Exposition* Ailerán interprets Salmon as 'being percipient [*sensibiles*] in the Lord' and writes,

> Let us also be of the same mind which was in Christ Jesus, 'Who though he was in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied himself taking the form of a servant etc.' (Phil. 2: 5-7), And being of one mind let us give glory to God with one voice [*uno ore*], and having been instructed in the meanings of sacred scripture, we may become disciples of God, as holy Isaiah says, 'And they will all be taught by God' (Is. 54:13).[346]

---

[343] Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John*, R. Heine (trans), *Fathers of the Church* 80 (Washington 1989) 44.

[344] *Pauca problesmata de enigmatibus*..., Paris B.N. lat.11561, fols. 131r-131v.

[345] For further discussion of this see J. O'Reilly (1998) 49-94, 90-93.

[346] Ailerán, *Interpretatio mystica et moralis progenitorum Domini Iesu Christi*, A. Breen (ed and trans) 53. It should be noted in passing how the use of Phil. 2: 5-7 to describe Christ often occurred in exegesis on the Evangelists. Jennifer O' Reilly (1998) 77-88, 80-2, quotes its use by Gregory the Great in the interpretation of Ez. 1: 5 – that the four living creatures had the likeness of a man.

The *Canon Evangeliorum* also links the idea of speaking *uno ore* with the disciples. In the fifth canon the beasts accord together in speech in the number of 'the outstanding throngs of Jesus Christ believing in the Saviour, without Judas' i.e. the 72 disciples + the 11 apostles = 83. Such reference to the Evangelists speaking the Word in the number of disciples and apostles (lines 19-20, but also 29-30) seems to draw on Ps. 18: 4-5: 'There are no speeches (*loquellas*) or languages where their voices are not heard / Their sound (*sonus*) hath gone forth into all the earth and their words to the ends of the world'.

Insular exegetes, following patristic precedents, saw these lines to represent the spread of the Gospel to the earth's four corners. The Hiberno-Latin *Breuiorum in Psalmos* writes, *In omnem terram exiuit sonus eorum...' hoc est in omnes insulas, uel fines mundi.... 'In omnem terram...verba eorum' apostolorum scilicet atque evangeliorum.* [347] In *De Tabernaculo* Bede quotes this Psalm when commenting on the rings at the corners of the Ark of the Covenant, 'Aptly they are bronze because their sound has gone out into all the earth'.[348] His interpretation and that of Angers 55, of the 12 bronze oxen supporting the water laver as a type of the apostles going to the ends of the earth also draws on this exegesis.[349]

That such an interpretation underlies Ailerán's expression of the Evangelists' speech gains plausibility when one considers the placement of the poem in the Augsburg Gospels. The *Canon Evangeliorum* opens the manuscript (fol.1v) and faces a square inscribed with the words *Euangelia ueritatis* (Pl. 9).[350] Jennifer O' Reilly has discussed the dynamics of this inscription and has shown how the

---

[347] *Breuiorum in Psalmos*, J.P. Migne (ed), PL 26 (Paris 1845) 924-5. This work is also discussed in M. MacNamara (1973) 201-298, 225.

[348] Bede, *De Tabernaculo*, II, 12, CCSL 119 A, 82; A. Holder (trans) TTH 18, 93.

[349] Bede *De Templo*, II, 19, 5, CCSL 119 A, 209-10; S. Connolly (trans) TTH 21 87-8, describes how the 12 oxen, which signify the apostles and their successors, are grouped in threes and are placed facing in each of the four directions. This shows how they preach the belief of the Trinity to the four corners of the earth. A similar explanation is contained in *Incipiunt quaestiones uel glosae in evangelio nomine* (Angers 55), CCSL 108B, 145-146.

[350] For a general description of the Augsburg Gospels see J. Alexander *Insular Manuscripts 6th to 9th centuries* (London 1978) cat.24 51-3, Ills. 115-6, 119-24, 126. A full colour reproduction of the manuscript on microfiche is available in Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (ed), *Evangeliarum Epternacense*, (*Universitätsbibliothek Augsburg, Cod. I. 2. 4°.2*), (Codices Illuminati Medii Aevi, ix) (Munich 1988). See also N. Netzer (1994). This manuscript's layout is also described in Appendix O, 271.

layout of the text, a central cross with lozenge, 'strongly suggest an aniconic representation of the Creator-Logos from whom the Gospels proceed to the ends of the earth, their fourfold harmony figured in the *tetragonnus mundus*'. This is supported by the inscription's content which echoes the Epistles (e.g. Col. 1: 5) concerning the spoken and heard Gospel taught by the apostles. Dr. O' Reilly concludes that the figure, 'forms an appropriate accompaniment to Ailerán's poem which, through reference to the canon tables...shows how the four Gospels "speak together of the Lord", "in one voice" '.[351]

Carolingian authors expressed these ideas in a like manner. *Figura* XXI of Hrabanus Maurus' *Liber de laudibus sanctae Crucis* uses 72 framed letters to represent a cross (Pl. 10). Each arm is made up of 18 letters - a number whose significance was commented on by Bede in an earlier section. Four letters form a cruciform shape at the centre of the figure. The accompanying *declaratio* interprets 72 as the number of disciples, who preach the Gospel to 72 peoples in 72 different languages, and as the number of canonical books in the Bible. Finally, in the words of Ulrich Ernst, the image functions, 'Als numerologisches Sinnbild dafür, daß die Idee der göttlichen Dreifaltigkeit, die sich im Zeitmaß von 24 Stunden umdreht, verkündet wird'.[352]

A numerological link between the Eusebian canons and the number 72 is made in the *Alea euangelii*, a Carolingian board game based on the canons, which is preserved among the prefatory materials in the 12th century Irish 'Corpus Gospels' (Pl. 11).[353] The game is laid out on a board of 324 squares (18 x 18). Its introduction states that the board has four sides, 'and not 3 or 5, because the Evangelists are four in number'.[354] There are 72 pieces or 'men', their number calculated on the basis of the number of times each Evangelist appears in the canons. These calculations are represented in the keys at the top of the folio.

---

[351] J. O'Reilly (1998) 49-94, 79-80.
[352] Ulrich Ernst, *Carmen Figuratum* (Koln 1991) 256-7.
[353] This manuscript features in F. Henry and G.L Marsh-Micheli, 'A Century of Irish Illumination (1070-1170)', PRIA 62 C (1962) 152-5. The introduction to the *Alea Euangelii* is analysed linguistically by D. Howlett (1995) 352.
[354] J. Armitage-Robinson includes the full Latin introduction to the *Alea euangelii* with an English translation in 'Additonal Note D' of *The Times of St. Dunstan* (Oxford 1923) 171-181. This citation is from 177.

Matthew is assigned 20 men because, reading the keys horizontally, he appears 4 times in Canon I, 3 times in Canon II, 3 times in Canon III, etc. The I at the centre of the board represents the Trinity. It is placed in a lozenge of 16 men (4 x 4), this being itself a Christological figure. The *Alea evangelii* has received little scholarly attention.[355] For the purposes of this paper it reveals an interesting connection made by a later scholar. It can be noted however that from the evidence of this limited study medieval canon exegesis seems to offer new approaches for this topic's future research.

Other Harmony Images

Two other images are used to express the number in which the evangelical beasts speak. Each of these derives from the Old Testament and as such contributes to the idea of the canons as the evangelical reflection of the Old Testament Decalogue. The first such image occurs in Stanza 3. We read:

> a man and a cow speaks with a winged creature
> in the number in which the ancient
> letters of the alphabet of the Hebrews consist

David Howlett has used these lines to exemplify Insular knowledge 'about' rather than 'of' Hebrew.[356] Such knowledge was easily available from biblical sources and formed part of a broader Insular interest in the *tres linguae sacrae*.[357] The significance of the abecedarian Psalm 118, *Beati immaculati...*, to patristic and Insular exegetes is well documented, with Jerome's *Epistola* XXX to Paula holding special place.[358] In the Irish world, Psalm 118 was used to designate Christian revelation as a whole. In the *Pseudo-Historical Prologue to the Senchas Mór* Christianity is described as 'the white language of the *Beati*'.[359]

---

[355] Besides its treatment in the literature cited previously, it is mentioned by Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland 400-1200* (London/New York 1995) 229. He describes the 'Gospels' dice' as 'the tenth-century equivalent of Monopoly'.
[356] D. Howlett, 'Israelite Learning in Insular Latin', *Peritia* 11 (1997) 117-152, 120-1.
[357] Further reading on this topic is provided by R. MacNally, 'The *Tres Linguae Sacrae* in Early Irish Bible Exegesis', *Theological Studies* 19 (1958) 395-403.
[358] See R. McNally (1957) 158. See also the discussion of the *Altus Prosator* and *Apgitir Chrábaid* in T. Clanchy and G. Markus, *Iona-The Earliest Poetry of a Celtic Monastery* (Edinburgh 1995) 40-2 and 195-7.
[359] The *Pseudo-Historical Prologue to the Senchas Mar*, J.Carey (trans), *King of Mysteries - Early Irish Religious Writings* (Dublin 1998) 143,147.

Related to such ideas Cassiodorus saw Psalm 118 which contained all the letters of the Hebrew alphabet as a type of Christian unity. In his *Expositio Psalmorum* he wrote,

> *Per totum itaque psalmum uniuersalis sanctorum chorus eloquitur, qui ab initio mundi siue fuerunt, siue sunt, siue futuri esse creduntur. Inter quos reperiuntur apostoli, prophetae, martyres, confessores, ecclesiastici ordines et omnes qui sancta Domino integritate famulantur: Genus electum, regale sacerdotium, gens sancta, populus acquisitionis (I Petr. 2: 9), ab origine generis humani usque ad finem saeculi colligendus.*[360]

Bede picked up on this theme. He commented as follows on the final 22 lines of Proverbs 31,

> *Constat namque idem carmen uersibus uiginti et duobus iuxta ordinem uidelicet Hebraearum ac numerum litterarum ita ut singuli uersus a singulis litteris incipiant. Cuius ordine perfectissimo alphabeti typice innuitur quam plenissime hic uel animae cuiusque fidelis uel totius sanctae ecclesiae, quae ex omnibus electis animabus una peficitur catholica uirtutes ac praemia describuntur.*[361]

Psalm 118 was especially significant in the monastic world, where the alphabet in a general sense came to be seen as an image of the monastic life. Cassian compared the training of a novice to learning an alphabet and wrote, 'By these practices, then, they hasten to impress and instruct those whom they are training with the alphabet, as it were, the first syllables in the direction of perfection...'.[362] The sixth-century Irish metrical prose text, the '*Apgitir Chrábaid*' or 'Alphabet of Devotion' shows the recension of such ideas in an Insular circle.[363]

Ailerán's reference to the Hebrew alphabet in the *Canon Evangeliorum* draws therefore on a rich exegetical tradition. The alphabet's significance in the poem is partly numerological. The number of letters in the alphabet was seen by Jerome to represent specifically the number of books in the Old Testament. In the preface to his translation of Samuel and Kings he wrote, 'As then there are twenty-two elementary characters by means of which we write in Hebrew all we say, and the compass of the human voice is contained within their limits, so we

---

[360] Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmorum*, CCSL 98, 1059. For further discussion of this point see J. O' Reilly (1999) 185-192. The significance of 22 as an image of harmony is also reflected in Augustine's division of *De ciuitate Dei* into 22 books. Hrabanus Maurus following this tradition also structured *De uniuerso* into 22 sections, implying that the sum of total knowledge is contained in this number. On this phenomenon see V. Hopper (1969) 87.

[361] Bede, *In Prouerbia*, D. Hurst (ed), CCSL 119 B (Turnholt 1983) 149.

[362] John Cassian, *De institutis coenobiorum* IV, 9, M. Petschenig (ed), CSEL 17 (Vienna 1888) 53; E.C.S. Gibbon (trans) NPNF 11, 2nd series (repr. Grand Rapids 1991) 221.

[363] T. Clanchy and G. Márkus (1995) 195-9.

reckon twenty-two books, by which, as by the alphabet of the doctrine of God, a righteous man is instructed in tender infancy...'.[364] But the books of the Old Testament can also be reckoned as 24 and this allows Jerome to make clear that the Christ of the Old Testament is the Christ who is to come at the Apocalypse:

> ...We should thus have 24 books of the Old Law. And these the Apocalypse of John represents by the twenty four elders, who adore the Lamb..., while in their presence stand the four living creatures with eyes before and behind, that is looking to the past and to the future, and with unwearied voice crying, 'Holy, holy, holy....[365].

Drawing on such ideas the fourfold series of Hebrew alphabets which occur in Lamentations are interpreted in Vienna 940 as figures of the evangelical beasts.[366] Ailerán seems to be working along similar lines. The number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet expresses the number of chapters in which Matthew, Mark and John accord. The significance is again a Christological one.

The sixth stanza contains the final image used to express the number of chapters in which the Evangelists speak. This reads:

> Behold in the sixth there sound with comparable clamour
> a son of Adam with a clamourous lion
> things computed from towns handed over as a gift
> in honour of priests.

David Howlett derives these lines from the description of the Levitical cities in Num. 35.[367] 48 cities were granted to the Levites and this corresponds to the number of parallels between Matthew and Mark's Gospels. Six of these cities were places of asylum or *ciuitates refugii*. The cities were granted according to each tribe's means. Num. 35: 8 reads, 'And of these cities which shall be given out of the possessions of the children of Israel from them that have more, more shall be taken: and from them that have less, fewer. Each shall give towns to the Levites according to the extent of their inheritance".

While this reference may seem obscure to modern readers, it would be dangerous to assume as such for Ailerán's contemporary audience. Donnchadh Ó Corráin

---

[364] Jerome, *Prologus in Libro Regum*, R. Weber (ed) (1983) 364; W.H.Freemantle (trans) NPNF 6, 2nd series, 490.
[365] Ibid. 365, 490.
[366] (*Commentarius in Mattheum*), Vienna 940. On fols.18r-18v we read *quare quod prophetiae sunt in euangelium quin dubium ii sunt id prophetiae plena et prophetiae semiplenae. Prophetiae plenae ut sunt iiii animalia quam prophetia uidit proprium fluuium chobar . prophetiae semiplena . ut iiii alphabeta per quod contexitur lamentatio libri hieremiae.*
[367] D. Howlett (1996) 16, fn.20.

has shown how formative the Levitical cities were as a model for medieval Irish thought on church organisation. He writes, 'Early Irish ecclesiastical writers and lawyers identified many (perhaps all) of their major church sites as Levitical cities and treated them as cities of refuge'.[368] The *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis* contains a book of 14 chapters entitled *De ciuitatibus refugii.*[369] Ó Corráin cites the description of Kildare in Cogitosus' *Vitae Brigitae* to support his argument for the awareness of such ideas as early as the mid-seventh century, the time when Ailerán was also writing.[370] It could thus be argued that Ailerán's selection of this reference reflects its significance in the self-image of the contemporary Irish church and this must have had resonances for his audience.

What, however, is the significance of this reference in the *Canon Evangeliorum*? Medieval Irish commentary on the Levitical cities identified them primarily as 'holy places' and sanctuaries. A gloss by the *Lebor Brecc* scholiast on Oengus derives the etymology of the Irish words *caid* and *cadus* from Kedes, the name of one of the cities of refuge. The adjective *caid* means 'pure, noble, holy', *cadus,* derived from it, has the primary meaning 'reverence, honour' and the secondary meaning 'protection, sanctuary'.[371] By describing the *capitula* of the sixth canon in the number of Levitical cities, Ailerán emphasizes their sanctity and the honoured position attached to them. That these attributes apply by extension to Christ, the subject of the canon's parallels, accords well with the image of the Word constructed in the rest of the poem. Patristic exegetes had in fact explicitly associated Christ with the high priest in the city of refuge. In Book I of *Against the Pelagians*, Jerome wrote that ignorance is not without sin and commented,

> And if when one is cutting wood the axehead flies from the handle and kills a man, the owner is commanded to go to one of the cities of refuge (*ad urbem fugitiuorum*) and stay there until the high priest dies: that is to say, until he is redeemed by the Saviour's blood, either in the baptistery or in penitence which is a copy of the grace of baptism....[372]

---

[368] D. Ó Corráin, 'Irish vernacular law and the Old Testament' in P. Ní Catháin and M.Richter (ed) (1987) 297.
[369] H. Wasserschleben, *Die irische Kanonensammlung* (Giessen 1874, 1885) XXVIII.
[370] D. Ó Corráin (1987) 297-8.
[371] Ibid. 300.
[372] Jerome, *Dialogus aduersus Pelagianos, I, 14*, C. Moreschini (ed), CCSL 80 (Turnhout 1990) 42; W.H.Freemantle (trans), NPNF 6, 2nd series, 465.

Conclusion

This study of the *Canon Evangeliorum* has sought to set Ailerán's poem in the context of patristic and Insular exegesis on the Eusebian tables. The poem presents us with a series of images of harmony, both of the Gospels and of scripture as a whole: It is written in the same number of lines as the Matthean genealogy; its characters are the evangelical beasts, it expresses the number of canon parallels in the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Other images used to express the chapter numbers highlight the significance of the spread of the Word to the earth's four corners and the sanctity of the individual canon parallels. The heart of the poem emphasizes the canons as a Christ-bearing image. Each parallel reveals another view on the Word. The poem demonstrates the significance of the Eusebian canons as an image of evangelical harmony in seventh century Ireland. The discussion of Hiberno-Latin commentary material contained in the next three chapters clearly shows how this significance continued into the eighth century.

Chapter 6

The Treatment of the Eusebian Canon Tables in Hiberno-Latin Prefatory Texts

Introduction

This chapter begins the discussion of the role of the Eusebian canons in Hiberno-Latin commentary literature. It focuses on the treatment of the tables in prefatory texts. Two of these texts, *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum in euangelia excerpta* and the *Praefacio secundum Marcum*, are part of the series contained in Clm. 6235 / Paris B.N. lat. 1841. The three other texts commented on in the following pages are the prefaces to the *Expositio euangelii secundum Marcum*, the (*Commentarius in Mattheum)* in Vienna 940 and the Gospel Commentary in the Irish Reference Bible.[373]

Apart from the *Expositio euangelii secundum Marcum*, these texts have been dated to the eighth century. While formal differences separate them from Ailerán's *Canon Evangeliorum*, many of the themes discussed in the previous chapter are returned to here. Hiberno-Latin prefaces stress the canons' number and measure and associate the series with other images of evangelical concord. As was the case with Ailerán, such exegesis was inspired by patristic source material.

It should be noted, however, that the discussion of the tables in the prefaces to Gospel commentaries immediately distinguishes the Hiberno-Latin and patristic treatment of the Eusebian harmony. As mentioned previously, Late Antique exegetes commented on the canons only in the prefaces to Gospel books and in encyclopaedic works. The inclusion of exegesis on the canons in the commentary literature now under discussion indicates how the tables had become an integrated part of the Hiberno-Latin approach to the Gospel text.

[373] The treatment of the canons in each of these texts is contained in Appendices J-N, 258-68. Each of these prefaces is discussed in Chapter 4, 67-75, as part of the outline of 'Wendepunkte'

This chapter's discussion of the role of the canons in Hiberno-Latin prefaces divides into two parts. The first part considers the prefaces' layout with reference to the placement of exegesis on the tables in relation to other themes. The second part discusses the content of sections on the canons and identifies particular areas of Hiberno-Latin interest.

The chapter features a number of references to the work of Sedulius Scottus. His commentaries on the Gospel book prefaces draw on the interpretative tradition contained in the *Wendepunkte* texts.[374] Sedulius seems to have had access to a broader range of source material however. He comments on the Latin version of Eusebius' *Letter to Carpianus* and on *Sciendum Etiam*, neither of which is referred to by Hiberno-Latin scholars. The references to Sedulius in the following pages seek above all to highlight the existence of a continuous tradition of interpreting the Eusebian series from the seventh to the ninth century. Much work remains to be done on the Sedulian commentaries, both with regard to their texts and contents.[375]

Canon Exegesis and Commentary Layout

It is valuable initially to give some attention to the structure of each of the texts under discussion. The first table overleaf presents the layout of each of the prefaces. Three of the texts, *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum*, and the prefaces to the Reference Bible and the (*Commentarius in Mattheum*), are structured in an enumerative schema characteristic of Hiberno-Latin literature.[376]

---

texts with Eusebian references. Appendix G, 234-39, treats of the evangelical series in Clm. 6235 / Paris B.N. lat. 1841.

[374] This point is further discussed in Chapter 4, 75-6. See especially fn. 259, which refers to the opinion of recent scholars that Clm. 6235 is the kind of manuscript Sedulius would have had access to.

[375] Mario Esposito (1910) 63 pointed out the defective nature of Angelo Mai's edition of Sedulius' commentaries on the prefaces. In spite of this, apart from Esposito's edition of the commentaries on Eusebius' *Letter to Carpianus* and on the Gospel divisions, the lack of research on these texts has meant that I have had to consult Mai's versions as they appear in PL 103, 331-51. With regard to content, a significant point to be remembered is that Sedulius perceived these commentaries as complementary. There is little repetition in his interpretation of these prefaces, even though their texts contain very similar material.

[376] B. Bischoff, (1966) 218. See also Charles D. Wright, 'The 'enumerative style' in Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 18 (Winter 1989) 27-74. A revised edition of this article is included in Wright's, *The Irish Tradition in Old English Literature, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England 6* (Cambridge 1993) 49-105.

Table 1: Layout of Hiberno-Latin Prefatory Texts

Pauca de libris catholicorum	*Praefacio secundum Marcum*	*Exp. Eu. secundum Marcum*	*Reference Bible*	*(Commentarius in Mattheum)*
Introduction	cause of writing	Introduction	Introductory listings	Introduction
locus	generation	Mt / Mk similarity	nomen	nomen euangeliorum
tempus	name	**canons**	locus	locus / tempus
persona	nature of gospel	persona	tempus	persona
lingua	time	incipit	persona / genus	prophetae euangelii
regula	incipit	nature of gospel	lingua	demonstrationes
ordo	**canons**	quaternitics	ordo	conuentiones
auctoritas	genealogy	qualitates euangelii	auctoritas	praedicta
causa	incipit analysis		causa	figura
figura	name of Christ		**numerus**	prophetiae
demonstratio			**canones**	demonstrationes
conuentio			significationes	doctrina
qualitas			figura	**numerus**
numerus / canones			prophetiae	**canones**
documenta			demonstrationes	
			regulae	

Table 2: Layout of Sections on the Eusebian Canons

Pauca de libris catholicorum	*Praefacio secundum Marcum*	*Exp. Eu. secundum Marcum*	*Reference Bible*	*(Commentarius in Mattheum)*
6 numbers of gospels	chapter numbers	listing of parallels	6 numbers of gospels	3 numbers of gospels
(no. of canons, chs.)	listing of parallels	chapter numbers	(no. of canons, chs.)	(no. of canons, chs.)
canon examples			canon etymology	listing of parallels
canon divisions			canon authority	canon authority
canon authority			listing of parallels	canon length
listing of parallels			canon examples	ordines canonum
			canon divisions	
			ordines canonum	
			qualitates canonum	

The Gospels are discussed in a series of numbered sections, each with a different title. The number of titles and their ordering varies. *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum* lists 14 titles with treatment of the canons occurring under the thirteenth, *De numero*. The preface to the Reference Bible is composed of two different sets of titles, said to describe the 'exterior' and 'interior' ways of approaching the Gospel text. The sections on numbers and on the canons occur in the first list of 'exterior' ways. They occupy tenth and eleventh place out of a total of 16 titles.[377] The preface to *(Commentarius in Mattheum)* is also of two-fold composition. The first half describes the 33 names of the Gospels, while the second follows a schema similar to the two previous texts. Although *de numero* and *de canonibus* are excluded from the preface's initial listing of this section's titles, they form its final themes.

The two remaining commentary texts, *Praefacio secundum Marcum* and the preface to the *Expositio euangelii secundum Marcum* are structured more informally. They each treat of the canons at their opening, among the other introductory material concerning the person of Mark. Both then move to discuss one or two themes in detail: *Praefacio secundum Marcum*, the Marcan *incipit* and the *nomina sacra*, *Expositio euangelii secundum Marcum*, the *qualitates euangelii*.

Examination of these texts' structure reveals the variety in their placement of canon exegesis. They associate the canons with a range of themes, showing the different ways the series was interpreted by Insular writers. *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum* and the preface to *(Commentarius in Mattheum)* comment on the canons in the context of other means of reading the Gospels as a whole. In the former text, the section on the Eusebian concordance is directly preceded by the discussion of the four *qualitates* under which the Gospel can be read (lines 131-37). These listed as *precepta*, *mandata*, *testimonia*, *exempla*, are then linked to the four cardinal virtues. Sedulius Scottus also associates the

[377] It should be noted however that because *persona* and *genus* are combined as one category in the actual commentary, the sections on number and on the canons are placed ninth and tenth. A

canons and the *qualitates euangelii*. In the short text entitled *Explanatiuncula De Breuiarum Et Capitulorum Canonumque Differentia et Connexione...*, he sees the different ways of dividing the Gospels, *breues causae*, canons and chapters, as having three modes, *eadem*, *uicina* and *sola*, each of which consist of the four *species* of *praecepta*, *mandata*, *testimonia*, *exempla*.[378]

Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum follows its discussion of the tables with a section on four kinds of *documenta* (*speciale*, *generale*, *primitiuum* and *diriuatiuum*) contained in the Gospels. This reinforces the impression that the canons are seen as a way of reading the Gospel text. The preface to the (*Commentarius in Mattheum*) also makes this link. The headings *speciale*, *generale*, *primitiuum*, *diriuatium* are used to describe the four kinds of evangelical teaching, *doctrina*. Their discussion (fol. 18v, lines 6-10) directly precedes the section on numbers and the canons which brings the preface to a close.

The layout of the main text of the (*Commentarius in Mattheum*) in Vienna 940 also shows how the canons were used as a means of reading the Gospels. As this commentary is the subject of the next chapter, only some preliminary remarks will be made here. It is notable that from fol. 30v onwards the text of the *(Commentarius in Mattheum)* is divided into sections based on the Eusebian divisions (Plates 6-8). Each of these sections receives an uncial title, informing the reader of its canon provenance. At times this information is supplemented with reference to other means of reading the Gospels. So for example, on fol.63r, corresponding to Mt. 8: 23, we read

HUC USQUE V CANON MATH MARC LUC

HUC USQUE ACCEDENS ET PRAECEPTA NUNC ORDO.

From fols.46v to 48r, the equivalent of Mt. 5: 28-44, titles referring to the canons are interchanged with references to the *iota* and *apex* e.g. *HUC USQUE IOTA NUNC APEX*. This pair derives from Mt. 5: 18, 'For amen I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot (*iota*) or one tittle (*apex*) shall not pass of the Law,

---

neat numerical harmony is thus achieved with the ten canons being discussed under the tenth number.

till all be fulfilled'. The next chapter clearly shows the significance of the *iota / apex* as an image of scriptural harmony. It illustrates how the use of this image in Vienna 940 complements the titles which refer to the Eusebian series.[379]

In the preface to the Irish Reference Bible the placement of exegesis on the canons also associates the series with other ways of reading the Gospel text. This does not seem the case initially. The sections on numbers and on the canons occur immediately after the treatment of *persona* and before that of the *praecedentibus euangelii* comprising of *significationes*, *demonstrationes* etc. They seem thus to serve as a link between the descriptions of the individual nature of each Gospel and those of quadripartite harmony which follow. At the end of the whole preface, however, the discussion of the canons is seen as beginning this preface's list of ways, both exterior and interior, of looking at the Gospels. This list finishes with the final pairing of *passio / propassio*. The final lines of the preface on fol. 138v read, *Haec autem species praedictae sunt numero lxii . A loco ubi dixit canones propria eadem uicina sola usque ubi finit passio propassio.*

In addition to beginning the list of ways of reading the Gospel text, the author of the Reference Bible also sees the canons as occupying an intermediary role between the exterior and interior reading approaches. At the end of the section on the canons the author states, *Id autem species canonum deforis ostendere euangelium dicitur quia nihil de qualitate interna doctrina significat nisi tantum concentum euangelistarum*. The canons show the organisation of the outside of the text but also lead into an appreciation and understanding of the nature of internal Gospel harmony. This parallels the kind of role it was suggested Eusebius attributed to the tables - that they form a progressive space of understanding, symbolized in the move from the outer courtyard of the temple to its inmost Holy of Holies.[380] It also parallels Nordenfalk's interpretation of the

---

[378] Sedulius Scottus, *Explanatiuncula De Breuiarum et Capitulorum Canonumque Differentia et Connexione*, M. Espositio (ed) (1910) 94-5.
[379] See especially 139-45.
[380] See Chapter 1, 18-19.

tables as forming an entrance to or atrium before the sacred text of the Gospel book.[381]

The description of the tables as demonstrating the interior and exterior of the evangelical text may also relate to how they can be used to interpret scripture on different levels. Anna Esmeijer has commented on the significance of the book written inside and outside (*intus* and *foris*) of Rev. 5: 1. This was seen by patristic exegetes to represent not only the harmony of the Old and New Testaments, but also the literal and spiritual interpretation of the sacred text.[382] A similar exegesis was applied to the *inuolutus liber...scriptus intus et foris* of Ez. 2: 9. In his commentary on Isaiah Jerome writes of the one book *de quo hiezechiel mystico sermone testatur, quod scriptus fuerit intus et foris, in sensu et in littera.*[383] Gregory reiterates these ideas in his Homilies on Ezechiel stating, *Liber enim sacris eloquii intus scriptus est per allegoriam, foris per historiam. Intus per spiritalem intellectum, foris autem per sensum litterae simplicem.*[384]

The association of the Eusebian canons with different levels of scriptural interpretation is returned to later in this chapter in the discussion of the *qualitates canonum*. It is also picked up in Chapter 8 which is devoted to another Hiberno-Latin work, the *Historica inuestigatio euangelii secundum Lucam*. The author of this commentary highlights the necessity for spiritual interpretation to reconcile some of the apparent contradictions in the Gospel text and also criticizes a number of canon parallels, which he sees as based only on literal similarity.

In the two Marcan texts, the canons are not explicitly associated with other ways of reading the Gospels. In the preface to the *Expositio euangelii secundum Marcum* the discussion of the tables is part of an overall thematic concern to demonstrate the difference of Mark's Gospel from that of Matthew. The

---

[381] Nordenfalk voiced this idea most clearly in his 1982 article 'Canon Tables on Papyrus'. For further discussion and references see Chapter 1, 19. It is to be noted that other Hiberno-Latin texts also describe the interpretation of the Gospels *deforis*. One example occurs in the short text entitled *Ex dictis sancti Hieronimi*, R. McNally (ed) CCSL 108 B, 229, where a list of 15 categories, not including the canons, answers the question, *Quot sunt res deforis monstrant*?

[382] Anna Esmeijer, (1978) 14. A Christological interpretation was also applied to the book in Rev. 5: 1. On this see J. O'Reilly (1998) 73-89, 82.

[383] Jerome, *Commentariorum in Esaiam*, M. Adriaen (ed), CCSL 73 (Turnhout 1963) 373-4.

relationship between these Gospels is expressed in terms of the vision of the evangelical beasts in the Book of Ezechiel (lines 14-18). We read that,

> *licet in propriis quibusdam sunt disiuncti testimoniis ut ala alterius alam alteram protegat 'animalis'; et 'rota' rotam eadem sequatur uia; et ut 'uersis' inuicem 'uultibus' sese sancta contuantur 'animalia'.*

This description is paralleled in another Hiberno-Latin work, the (*Commentarius in Lucam*) in Vienna 997, which also uses the touching wings of Ezechiel's vision to express the complex relationship between the Evangelists. Discussing the appearance of eight beatitudes in Matthew's Gospel and four in Luke, he asks

> *Quia est ista dissimilitudo narrationis inter Mattheum ac Lucam? Quia Mattheus octo, Lucas quattuor inponit benedictiones, nisi ut ala alterius animalia alterum supereminet. Et in hanc breuissima narratione Lucae longa Matthei narratio conpletur.*[385]

The concern of the author of the *Expositio euangelii secundum Marcum* to emphasize the distinctive nature of Mark's Gospel is reflected in his section on the tables, which directly follows this reference to the evangelical beasts. Only the canons featuring Mark are cited. The author tells us that, *in propriis, uero, quae maxime ut cumque explanare dispono, xviii incedit speciatim capitulis; quae simul omnia ccxxxiii sunt capitula.* The preface then moves to describe Mark's biography, again underlining his difference from Matthew.

While no systematic use is made of the Eusebian canons in the commentary on Mark which follows this preface, some attempt is made to indicate the sections particular to this Evangelist. Michael Cahill has cited twelve such instances, e.g. Mk. 9: 7 is spoken of as *Hoc proprie Marci* and Mk. 15: 76 as *Hoc uere et proprie Marcus tulit*. He has also however pointed out that,

> Though proposing to comment on Mark's Gospel, indeed to concentrate on what is specifically Markan, the author sometimes harmonizes the Gospel accounts and comments on the resultant amalgamated text. Sometimes he quotes from another Gospel and comments on that.[386]

In spite of this fact, the use of the Eusebian series as part of this commentator's desire to express the distinctiveness of Mark's account is significant. It echoes the concern of *Novum Opus* to 'restore to each everything that belongs to them'

---

[384] Gregory, *Homiliae in Hiezechielem prophetam, Homilia IX*, CCSL 142, 139.
[385] (*Commentarius in Lucam*), J. Kelly (ed), CCSL 108 C (Turnhout 1973) 51. Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse Médiévale* (Paris 1959) I, 346-8 notes the tradition of interpreting the touching wings of the two Old Testament cherubim as an image of scriptural harmony.
[386] M. Cahill, Introduction to *Expositio euangelii secundum Marcum*, CCSL 82, 94-95.

and highlights also the significance of the tenth canon as part of the Eusebian synopsis.

The *Praefacio secundum Marcum* presents the canons at the beginning of a more general treatment of scriptural harmony. The section on the tables is followed by one on the Gospel *incipits*, previously quoted in the discussion of the *Canon Evangeliorum*. The diverse but harmonious nature of the various Gospel openings is made clear in the lines:

> *Matheus genelogiam ab Abraham usque ad Ioseph per uiros xliiii duxit. Lucas uero ab Ioseph per uiros lxxvii usque ad Adam ducit. Iohannes non deduxit terrenam sed caelestem in breui conprehendit. Marcus uero terrenam numerauit, dicens : Iesu Christi. Sed breuiter caelestem numerauit, cum dicit : Dei. Sed in breue haec omnia conprehendit.*

The association of the harmony of the canons with that of the Gospel openings is significant in this instance. We have seen how the demonstration of the agreement of the evangelical accounts of Christ's beginnings had long served as a kind of test-case of Gospel harmony. Eusebius treats of this topic in his *History of the Church* and in two other works.[387] Augustine, similarly, devoted much of Book II of *De consensu euangelistarum* to demonstrating the harmony of the genealogies.[388] The author of *Praefacio secundum Marcum* can be seen therefore as part of a long-standing tradition. His work is different in that he directly includes the harmony of the Eusebian canons as a preface to this apologetic task.

The section on the genealogies does not end the Marcan commentator's discussion of scriptural 'stumbling blocks'. He moves to look in detail at the Marcan *incipit*, noting how the Evangelist attributes a citation from both Malachy and Isaiah to Isaiah alone. The commentator provides a series of explanations for this phenomenon explaining, for example, that as Isaiah was greater in personal dignity than Malachy, his name is sufficient for the two testimonies.[389] His discussion of the Marcan *incipit* also investigates the reasons

---

[387] See Chapter 1, 21-22 for discussion of Eusebius' treatment of the genealogies.
[388] Augustine, *De consensu euangelistarum*, II, I-IV, CSEL 43, 82-95. That Insular exegetes and artists attached similar significance to the genealogies has been clearly shown by J. O' Reilly (1998) 73-88.
[389] This occurs on lines 52-92. There is further discussion of this citation in the next chapter on 134-37.

why Mark speaks of *euangelii Iesu Christi*, while Paul describes himself as *seruus Christi Iesu*. The inclusion of a section on the evangelical canons at the beginning of this preface should be seen therefore as part of this preface's general concern to deal with the question of scriptural harmony.

This discussion of the placement of exegesis on the Eusebian series has shown how Hiberno-Latin exegetes perceived the canons as having a number of roles. *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum* and the prefaces to the (*Commentarius in Mattheum*) and the Reference Bible presented the series as a means of reading the Gospel text. In the first two prefaces the canons are associated with the *qualitates euangelii* and with the types of *documenta* contained in the Gospels. In the Reference Bible the canons are seen as the beginning of the list of ways of reading the Gospels, they function on both literal and spiritual levels. The two Marcan prefaces place more emphasis on the role of the canons as an image of harmony. The author of the preface to the *Expositio euangelii secundum Marcum* uses the canons as part of his desire to highlight the distinctiveness of Mark's account, while in the *Praefacio secundum Marcum* the description of the canons prefaces the discussion of a series of test-cases of scriptural harmony.

The Content of Sections on the Canons

The second half of this chapter discusses the content of sections on the canons in Hiberno-Latin prefatory material. The discussion divides into four parts. The first part examines the Hiberno-Latin investigation of the canons' authorship and etymology. The second part treats of these prefaces' discussion of the tables' number, order and measure. The third part considers the way Hiberno-Latin texts list the canon parallels. The final part focuses on the *qualitates canonum* and on provision of examples for each table.

It must be noted that only the preface to the Irish Reference Bible is referred to throughout the following discussion. The other texts feature only a selection of the above themes. This is illustrated by the second table on page 105. In contrast to the Reference Bible, the two Marcan prefaces discuss only the chapter numbers and parallels. The two remaining texts, *Pauca de libris catholicorum*

scriptorum and the preface to the (*Commentarius in Mattheum*) occupy a middle ground, each discussing a number of topics in relation to the series.

The sections devoted to the Eusebian tables in these prefaces depend on two patristic sources: Jerome's description of the tables in *Novum Opus* and VI, 15 of Isidore's *Etymologiae*.[390] The preface to the Reference Bible refers to each of these authors by name, while *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum* mentions Isidore. In the prefaces to (*Commentarius in Mattheum*) and the Reference Bible there are, furthermore, almost direct quotations from *Novum Opus* which are unacknowledged.

One of the most interesting features of the following discussion is the extent to which Hiberno-Latin exegetes developed these patristic sources. The Hiberno-Latin treatment of the Eusebian series is informed in particular by the significance they attached to ideas of number, measure and order. The practicalities of the series' use receive little attention. The section normally devoted to this topic in patristic material is omitted from the Hiberno-Latin texts and new topics, such as the *qualitates canonum*, are considered.

Canon Authorship and Etymology

Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum and the prefaces to the Reference Bible and the (*Commentarius in Mattheum*) each give some attention to the question of the canons' authorship. Their discussion of this point depends heavily on patristic source material. *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum* and the preface to the Reference Bible refer to Isidore by name and cite his comments on Ammonius and Eusebius. The former text reads, *Dicit Isidorus: Canones iiii euangeliorum Ammonius Alexandrinus primus excogitauit, quos postea Eusebius Caesariensis plenius conposuit*.[391]

---

[390] These are contained in Appendices C and D and are discussed in Chapter 2, 24-32, 33-34.
[391] *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum*, lines 169-71.

The preface to (*Commentarius in Mattheum*) offers a looser version of this information.[392] It sees *amoenius scriba quidam in alexandria in regione gregorum* as the person *quis primus hanc sententiam reperret*. Eusebius, *amoeni alexandrini alumnus*, then gave the series number and order. Jerome also features in this text's history of the series' transmission. He is described as having included the tables at the behest of Pope Damasus, because of the corruption of the Gospel text pro *mala interpretis*. This final phrase draws on *Novum Opus*, where Jerome describes the corrupted texts in circulation as *a uitiosis intepretis mala edita*.

In comparison to these texts, Sedulius offers a more detailed account of the relationship between Ammonius and Eusebius. It is significant that this occurs in his discussion of the *Letter to Carpianus*, unfamiliar to Hiberno-Latin scholars. As we have seen, at the beginning of this letter Eusebius gives a detailed description of the Ammonian harmony.[393] On the basis of this, Sedulius works out that Ammonius, if he had indeed devised canon tables, could only have had seven. He concludes that Eusebius may have based his canons on some of Ammonius' divisions and writes *Unde perspicuum est quia nec praefatus Ammonius X canonum titulos in euangelio notauerit neque ipsos canones ordinauerit*.[394]

As well as discussing the tables' authorship, the preface to the Gospels in the Reference Bible also asks *cui lingua canon*? In response the author cites the etymology of *canon* from VI. 16 of the *Etymologiae, De canonibus conciliorum*. He writes,

> *Isidorus dicit canon aut graeci dicitur latine regula . Regula autem dicta quod recte ducit, ne aliquando aliorsum trahit. Alii dixerunt dictam regulam . uel quod regat uel quod normam recte uiuendi praebeat . uel quod distortum prauum quid corregat.*[395]

---

[392] This point is discussed on fol. 19r, lines 7-15. Although the text is somewhat confusing, the author does seem to clearly distinguish between the roles of Ammonius and Eusebius.

[393] See Chapter 1, 8-10 for discussion of the opening of Eusebius' letter.

[394] Sedulius Scottus, (*Expositio Eusebii in Decem Canones*), M. Esposito (ed) (1910) 85. That some confusion persisted in Ireland about the relative roles of Eusebius and Ammonius is clear from a twelfth-century source. A gloss on the version of *Novum Opus* included in Gospels of Máel-Brigte describes Ammonius as *suí clarainech*, 'a table-faced sage', and continues, *qui totum euangelium in memoriam retulit et postea signauit ubi concantionem fecerunt .iiii. aut . iii. aut. ii. aut i. euangelizae*...See Whitely Stokes, 'The Irish Verses, Notes and Glosses in Harl. 1802', *Revue Celtique* 8 (1887) 367.

[395] Isidore, *Etymologiae*, VI, XVI, W. M. Lindsay (ed) (1911).

The author sees Isidore's etymology to give two clear reasons why the tables are called evangelical canons. The first of these is that the series signifies correctly the variety of agreement (*concentus*) between the Evangelists. The second, drawing on *Novum Opus*, is that the tables correct the corruption of the evangelical text resulting from the transmission of the Gospels *apud inperitis*. Jerome is then cited in full, *Unde hieronimus dicit . Cum igitur canones legeris qui subiecti sunt confussionis errore sublato et similia omnia scies et singulis quaeque sua restitues*. As in Eusebius' *Letter to Carpianus*, the use of the tables is seen in itself as a way of ensuring an orthodox understanding of the evangelical text.[396]

On Number, Measure and Order

Hiberno-Latin exegetes give considerable attention to questions concerning the canons' number, measure and order. This is again a special feature of *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum* and in the prefaces to the Reference Bible and the (*Commentarius in Mattheum*). The two former texts present the canons as one of the six numbers contained in the Gospels. The other numbers are of the Evangelists, chapters, *breues causae*, verses and *concentus*. The preface to the (*Commentarius in Mattheum*) includes only three series of numbers in the *De numero* category: *breues causae*, chapters and canons, although it does feature the idea of *concentus* as part of its treatment of the tables.

The significance of these numerical divisions lies in the way they reflect the number and measure of the evangelical text. In the preface to the Reference Bible the divinely ordained nature of the evangelical quaternity is highlighted by a reference to *De consensu euangelistarum*. In response to the question of why there are neither more nor less than four Evangelists, the author cites Augustine's link between the fourfold nature of the Gospel and the quadriform cosmos:

---

[396] In the Insular context therefore the Eusebian canons were understood both as tables by which one could orientate oneself and as a list of rules for reading the Gospel text. This combined two interpretations of the word κανον as described by B. Metzger (1987) 289-93. On 291 Metzger writes that the Eusebian canons were 'not some kind of rules and principles, but ...systematically arranged lists of numerals that corresponded to the numbered sections in the texts of the Gospels by which one could quickly locate parallel passages'. See also Chapter 1, 13, 22, for discussion of this point.

> *Augustinus dicit . Isti igitur . iiii . euangeliste omni terrarum orbe notissimi . et ob hoc fortasse . iiii . quoniam iiii . sunt partes terre per cuius uniuersitatem ecclesia xpi dilatari ipso numero sacra declarauerunt.*[397]

In the same way the number of the canons is seen as fixed at ten. We read, *Numerus canonum usque ad X progredit nec plus inuenitur.* The author continues by contrasting the ever-increasing number of chapters written in the margins with the constant number of canons.[398]

The divinely ordained nature of the canons' number in relation to cosmological harmony is also picked up in the preface to the (*Commentarius in Mattheum*). Here the answer to commentator's question, *Quare quodmodo mensurauit numerum canonitionis ut infra nec extra numerum de numero est*, is simply, *quin dubium natura.* This reference to *natura* parallels the discussion of the canons in Victor's *Diatessaron* preface where their number was seen as resulting from reason and natural law. Victor writes,

> *Sciendum sane quod hic numerus canonum usque ad denarium perueniat quantitatem. Neque scribentis uoluntate horum numerum summa defixa est, sed ratione et regula naturali ab Ammonio inuenta est sagaciter. Neque enim aut infra denarium aut ultra poterit ullo modo alius numerus reperiri, qui quattuor euangelistarum dicta communia aut propria ualeat explicare.*[399]

In part the significance of the canons' number as a reflection of the number and measure of the Gospels relates to the numerical properties of ten, the sum of 1+2+3+4. Hiberno-Latin exegetes continually refer to this relationship. The length of each chapter or canon section is determined by the *concentus euangelistarum* which works on four levels. *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum* describes these as, *iiii uel iii uel ii uel propria uniuscuiusque, quae non habentur in aliis.* The canons also consist of four categories or divisions, *sunt iiii, id est iiii, uel iii uel ii uel i. Singularitur loquitur de proprietate numeri euangelii in decim canonibus.* The author of the Reference Bible divides these into a further three modes: *Prima species . id est concentus iiii . non uariatur sed uno modo inuenitur semper . ii . id est terniter uariatur . iii . quod singulorum narratio . uno tantum inuenitur quia non plus uariatur* (fol. 131r/b, lines 14-19).

---

[397] Irish Reference Bible, fol. 130r, lines 29-35. Augustine, *De consensu euangelistarum*, I, II, CSEL 43, 3.

[398] On fol. 130v, lines 7-14, he writes, *numerus autem capitulorum in singulis euangeliis . ab uno usque ad finem librorum increscit hic nigro colore prescriptus sub se habet alium ex minio numero discolorem quia ad x progrediens indicat prior numerus in quo sit canone requirendus.*

This kind of numerical play also informs Sedulius' exegesis of the canons. In his commentary on *Novum Opus* he points out the four modes of the tables: agreement of four, three, and two Evangelists and the sections particular to each. Each of these modes divides into further *species*, *formulae* or *uarietas*. These relate to the extent to which each chapter agrees with one or more chapters from the other Gospels. So for example, the second mode, in which three Evangelists agree is contained in three canons and presents three *formulae*: *Nam aut unus semel, et duo mulipliciter; aut duo semel et uno mulitpliciter; aut omnes tres aequaliter in ipsis consonant canonibus.*[400]

Significantly, Sedulius believes the number of the canons signifies the harmony of the Old and New Testaments. Just after his treatment of the canons' modes he writes, *Notandum quoque quod hic numerus x canonum in quatuor Euangeliis, attestatur doctrinam evangelicam decalogo legis esse concordissimam.*[401] This correlation between the canons and the Decalogue, measures of the teachings of the New and Old Testament respectively, is returned to in the next chapter in the discussion of the image of the *iota* and *apex*. An earlier reflection of this idea was found in Ailerán's *Canon Evangeliorum* where images such as the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, long seen as a type of the Old Testament, were used to express the number of a particular canon's parallels.

Another aspect of the Hiberno-Latin treatment of the Eusebian series is these texts' description of the chapter numbers and their relationship to the tables. The prefaces to the Reference Bible and to the (*Commentarius in Mattheum*) question how the individual *capitula* are measured (*mensurare*). As mentioned previously, the answer to this question lies in the level of agreement (*concentus*) between the individual Evangelists. The preface to the (*Commentarius in Mattheum*) reads,

> *Quare quomodo longitudinem capitulorum mensurauit . quo dum longiores uel breuiores sunt . quam breuis cause quin dubium mensurauit concantus spiritus sancti per uiros . iiii . uel iii . uel duos . uel i.*[402]

---

[399] Victor's comments on the canons are contained in Appendix E, 227-28. They are discussed in Chapter 2, 35-39.
[400] Sedulius Scottus, *Explanationes in Praefationes Sancti Hieronimi ad Euangelia*, PL 103, 341-42.
[401] Ibid. 342.
[402] (*Commentarius in Mattheum*), fol. 18v, lines 25-8.

The chapter numbers are significant as they represent the variety of agreement between each Evangelist, an agreement seen in this preface as divinely inspired.

The chapter numbers also however represent the complete measure of each Gospel. As part of this, the treatment of the *capitula* under the heading of *de numero* in the three prefaces now under discussion provides the sum of the chapters in each Gospel and their overall total, e.g. in *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum* we read, *numerus capitulorum, ut sunt in Matheo ccclv; in Marco ccxxxiii, in Luca ccclix, in Iohanne ccxxxiii. In quatuor euangeliis capitula ICXLIII sunt.*[403] That the *capitula*, like the canons, were perceived to represent the measure of each Gospel is supported by the testimony of the *Expositio euangelii secundum Marcum*. Although the canons feature little in this text, the author concludes by commenting thus on Mt. 16: 17: *Signa autem eos qui crediderint. Ducentesimo trecesimo tertio capitulo Marcus signa credentium cum Matthaeo et Luca concordans enarrat.*[404]

An interesting parallel to this practice is found in the Rabbula Gospels, already mentioned in the context of Ailerán's *Canon Evangeliorum*. The *explicit* for each Gospel in the Rabbula codex records the total number of sentences in which the Evangelist preached. Mark's explicit reads,

> Here endeth the writing of the Holy Gospel, the preaching of Mark the Apostle, who spoke, proclaimed and wrote in Latin [Roman] in Rome. In it, in his preaching, there are one thousand six hundred and seventy five sentences.[405]

The final explicit provides not only the number of sentences in John's Gospel but also the total for the whole book reading, 'But the sum of all the sentences in the Tetraevangelium is nine thousand two hundred and twenty four'.[406] David Howlett has commented on the appearance of this phenomenon in Talmudic texts, where rabbis seem to have counted the verses, word and letters of the

---

[403] It is to be noted that the number of chapters provided do not equal the total. This kind of discrepancy features in many of the prefaces and may be due in part to the ease with which Roman numerals could be erroneously copied. The one commentary which gives a correct mathematical total for the number of chapters it provides is the (*Commentarius in Mattheum*). This is somewhat surprising in light of the otherwise corrupted nature of this text. The prefaces also vary the number of parallels they assign to the individual canons. More work is necessary to determine if these variants can be used to determine the kinds of tables these texts were based on. A preliminary analysis does not reveal them to have particularly Irish features.

[404] *Expositio euangelii secundum Marcum*, CCSL 82, 82.

[405] *The Rabbula Gospels*, C. Cecchelli, G. Furlani and M. Salmi (ed) (1959) 16.

Hebrew text of the Bible.[407] Such practices must again be seen to reflect a larger conception of Scripture as inspired by the work of the Divine Artificer, 'who has ordered all things in number and measure and weight'.

The preface to the Reference Bible also includes another way of listing the chapter numbers. The description of its canon parallels, taken ostensibly from Isidore, includes the number of parallel chapters as well as the Evangelists involved, e.g. the description of Canon IV reads, *In iv canon xx mat*heus . *luc*as . *iohann*es. This way of presenting the *capitula* corresponds to their appearance in Ailerán's *Canon Evangeliorum*. They are presented similarly in the two Marcan prefaces, which give the total number of chapters where Mark agrees with Matthew and with Luke and also the number which are particular to him e.g. The *Praefacio secundum Marcum* reads *Marcus cum Matheo communiter in xlvii capitulis narrat*. These prefaces also refer however to the total number of chapters contained in Mark's Gospel. We have seen the awareness of this at the end of the Markan commentary and this is complemented by its preface's inclusion of the line, *simul omnia ccxxxiii sunt capitula*. In the *Praefacio secundum Marcum* we read, *Marcus totum suum euangelium in capitulis ccxxxii exponit...*

Number also played a role in establishing the series' order. In the preface to the (*Commentarius in Mattheum*) the order of the canons is briefly described as based on two factors: the order of writing, *scribtio*, and *principatus*. The latter category is then divided into three parts: pre-eminence of number, of word and finally apostolic pre-eminence. These divisions may derive from exegesis on the order of the Gospels. In *De consensu euangelistarum* Augustine writes of one order determining the matters of their personal knowledge and their preaching, another the task of given written narrative.[408]

The preface to the Reference Bible seems to support this interpretation. It sees the order of the canons based firstly on numerical pre-eminence, *ordo*

---

[406] Ibid. 18.
[407] D. Howlett (1995) 18-19.
[408] Augustine, *De consensu euangelistarum*, I, II, CSEL 43, 3.

discensionis. The tables move from a parallel of four Evangelists through to that unique to each Gospel. The series is also laid out following what is described as *ordo discretionis*. This relates both to the placement of individual columns of numbers in the tables and to the order in which the various harmonies of three and two Evangelists are presented. The author writes *queritur cur isti terni uel bini speci alius praecedunt uel quare alius alii speci alio sub secuntur*. To answer this question he refers his readers to the *prologus canonum*. It seems likely this is a reference to *Novum Opus*. Before its section on the canons Jerome has made clear the order of the evangelical books,

> *Igitur hace praesens praefatiuncula pollicetur quattuor tantum euangelia, quorum ordo iste est Mattheus Marcus Lucas Iohannes, codicum graecum emendata conlatione sed ueterum.*[409]

This identification is confirmed with reference to the Lindisfarne Gospels. Although this book also includes the Latin translation of the *Letter to Carpianus*, the rubric *Incipit prologus X canonum* is placed above the decorated opening of the *Novum Opus* text.[410]

The listing of canon parallels

Common to all of the texts under discussion is a listing of the parallels which the canons contain. In all of the prefaces, except for one, the contents of the ten canons are listed. The exception is the preface to the *Expositio euangelii secundum Marcum* which, as previously mentioned, lists only the canons in which Mark appears as part of its argument for the distinctiveness of his Gospel.

The following table compares the listing of the first parallel in each of these texts.

---

[409] *Novum Opus*, Appendix C, 221, lines 27-30.
[410] Jennifer O'Reilly (1998) 49-74, 70 has drawn attention to this title in her discussion of canon table illumination.

Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum	In primo numero iiii continentur qui eadem dixerunt, Mattheus Marcus Lucas Iohannes
Praefacio secundum Marcum	In primo canone Mattheus Marcus Lucas Iohannes
Exp. Eu. secundum Marcum	In primo canone Marcus cum Mattheo Lucaque comitatur et Iohannes
(Commentarius in Mattheum)	Primum canon iiii canunt
Reference Bible	In primo canone lxxi concordant iiii euangelistae

In spite of some differences in wording, we can see that *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum,* shows an affinity with Isidore. His entry for the first canon reads, *Sunt autem numero decem, quorum primus continet numeros in quibus quattuor eadem dixerunt: Mattheus Marcus, Lucas Iohannes.* The *Praefacio secundum Marcum* and the Reference Bible are related in a similar way to *Novum Opus*, which describes the first canon with the words, *In canone primo concordant quattuor Mattheus Marcus Lucas Iohannes.*

The listing in the prefaces of the other two commentaries, on Matthew and Mark respectively, are most interesting. Instead of using one of the standard verbs to express canon agreement e.g. *concordare*, *eadem dicere*, the preface to the (*Commentarius in Mattheum*) uses *canere* to describe its first parallel. As with the use of the word *concentus*, literally 'singing together' or 'harmony', to describe the agreement of the Evangelists, this description of the canons' contents draws on the musical harmony long attributed to the evangelical discourse. This was mentioned previously in the discussion of *Plures Fuisse*, where the trisagion chant, sung by the evangelical beasts, contrasts with the 'dirges of the apocryphies…sung by dead heretics'.[411] In the preface to the (*Commentarius in Mattheum*) the canons are additionally described as containing the harmony of singers, *cantatores*. This description may also have a cosmological dimension, for patristic exegetes often related the sonorous nature of evangelical concord to the four rivers of paradise, flowing out to water the whole world.[412]

[411] See Chapter 3, 59.
[412] P.Underwood (1950) 118-131.

As well as the use of the verb *canere*, the author of the (*Commentarius in Mattheum*) is also distinctive in his treatment of Canons II, III and IV. The contents of these tables are described not by listing the Evangelists which they contain, but by stating who is omitted. We read, *ii . canon non canon Iohannis . iii . canon non canon marcus. iiii . canon non canon lucas.*[413] Some parallel to this kind of description may be found in Sedulius'work. In his commentary on *Novum Opus* he notes the fact that each Evangelist appears in only a certain number of canons and writes,

> *Nam in Matthaeo octo positos esse uidebis, excepto octauo et nono canone. In Marco sex, praetermisso tertio, quinto, septimo ac nono canone. In Luca septem, exceptis quarto, septimoque canone. In Joanne sex, praeter secundum, quintum, sextum et octauum canonum positos repperies, sicut etiam superior canonum descriptio manifestat.*[414]

Although not contained in the first parallel, the listing of canons in the preface to *Expositio euangelii secundum Marcum* also uses symbolic language to describe the Eusebian canons. In the previous section, we have seen how it expresses the relationship between Matthew and Mark in terms of Ezechiel's vision of the beasts. This description is followed in the listing of the canons by a further image of quadripartite harmony, the carrying rings of the Ark of the Covenant. The entry for Canon VI reads, *in sexto canon uelut in una uelut in duo annuli, Mattheus semper coniungitur et Marcus, id est in xlviii capitulis.*

In *Plures Fuisse*, Jerome refers to this image in his description of the Church, which 'possesses four corners and four rings by which she is carried on immovable wooden poles'.[415] A similar interpretation is provided in the Irish Reference Bible, *Arca quippe ecclesium significat . in qua manna id corpus xpi uel doctrina et . ii . tabule . id . ii . testamenta et iiii anullis . id . iiii . euangeliis accingitur.*[416] Following this, the use of the rings of the Ark of the Covenant to describe the relationship between the canons in the preface to the Marcan commentary reveals again how their harmony is part of the more general one of Old and New Testaments. Their ten-fold composition is associated with the

---

[413] It is to be noted that his listing for Canon V incorrectly continues this practice reading *v. canon non matheus et lucas*. This mistake is then rectified, the entry for Canon VI is, *vi canon matheus et marcus*.

[414] Sedulius Scottus, *Explanationes in Praefationes Sancti Hieronymi ad Euangelia*, PL 103, 342.

[415] See Chapter 3, 49, for discussion of this line.

[416] Irish Reference Bible, Paris B.N. lat. 11561, fol. 132v, lines 29-34.

Decalogue. The canons, containing the complete measure of the Gospels, represent the Decalogue of the New Covenant.

The use of the image of the Ark also has cosmological connotations with the four rings seen to symbolize the four cardinal directions and the four corners of the world. The rings are seen to represent the way in which the Faith is spread by the Apostles and their successors. The transmission of such ideas to the Insular world is clear in the work of Bede. In *De Tabernaculo*, he writes,

> Now the ark has four corners because the sacrament of the Lord's incarnation never ceases to be celebrated throughout all the regions of the world into which the Holy Church is spread. And the four rings were put at those four corners because the Gospel of Christ is preached to the ends of the world, so that the hearts of the faithful might be saved.[417]

Examples from the canons and the *qualitates canonum*

Although the treatments of the canons by both Jerome and Isidore contain an explanation to guide the tables' practical use, no attention is given this topic in the Hiberno-Latin prefaces now under discussion. That the tables were actually used in this literature is made clear from the final two features of the prefaces to be discussed here, the provision of examples from the canons and the discussion of the *qualitates canonum*.

Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum and the preface to the Reference Bible each provide examples of sections from the individual canons to illustrate their parallels' listing. The presence of such examples only in these two texts confirms an affinity between them which has been present throughout this discussion.[418] It must be noted however that their sections are not identical. The following table lists the parallels cited in each.

---

[417] Bede, *De Tabernaculo* , CCSL 119 A, 16; A. Holder (trans) TTH 18 (1994) 14.

[418] They both, for example, include six categories of numbers in the Gospels. Their relationship was also commented on by B. Bischoff (1966) 234. In his discussion of the Reference Bible we read, 'Noch eindeutiger als in der Einleitung zu den Psalmen zeigt sich der Zusammenhang mit einer im Laufe von Generationen ausgebildeten irischen Schultradition in der sehr breiten Einführung in die Evangelien. Diese erweist sich großteils als ein Mosaik zu dem die Einleitung Nr. 13 [*Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum*] sowie der Kommentar von Orléans 65 und Augustins *De consensu euangelistarum* direkt beigetragen haben'.

Canon	Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum	Reference Bible
I	Non est propheta sine honore nisi in patria sua	Uox clamantis in deserto
II	Amen dico, sunt quidam de hic stantibus qui Non gustabant mortem reliqua	Post baptismum cum ferebatur a spiritu
III	Non est discipulus super magistrum	Non est discipulus super magistrum, reliqua
IV	Omnia quaecumque petieritis in orationes credentes accipietis	Omnia quaecumque petieritis in oratione credenter
V	Non sum missi nisi ad oues domus Israel qui perierunt	Non sum missi nisi ad oues reliqua
VI	Quicumque ligaueritis super terram et reliqua	Si autem manus uel pes tuus scandalizatte reliqua
VII	Postquam crucifixerunt eum diuiserunt sibi uestimenta eius	Quicumque ligaueritis super terram reliqua
VIII	Discendit ihs in Caphernaum in ibique docebat eos sabbatis	Discendit ihs in Caphernaum in ciuitate galileae ibique docebat eos in sabbatis
VIIII	Intrauit satanas in Iudam qui nominantur Scarioth unus de xii	Nominatur scariottis unus de xii
X Mt	Beati mites reliqua	Beatis mitis qui ipsi possidebunt terram
X Mk	Seorsum autem deserebat discipulis suis omnia	Ad ille egressus cepit praedicare et diffamare
X Lk	Exi a me homo peccatorum, Domine	Quod cum uideret simon petrus procedit ad genua ihu dicens rogate exi a me quia homo peccator reliqua
X Jn	Si quis ministrauerunt, me sequatur	Haec in bethania facta sunt trans iordanem ubi erat iohannes baptista

Eight of the examples in the table are common to both texts. One of these *Quicumque ligaueritis super terram et reliqua* is misplaced in *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum*. It occurs correctly in the Reference Bible as the example for Canon VII. Following from this, it can be conjectured that the Reference Bible follows more accurately the original source for this section, providing a correct example for each canon and especially Canons VI and VII.

This provision of examples, interpreted at its most basic level, confirms a point made previously that the canons were seen as a means of understanding the Gospels and were used to this end. One wonders if more can be said. While it

seems logical that the first entry in each canon would be chosen as an example, this is the case only for one of the examples in *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum* and four in the Reference Bible.[419] Other parallels come from various parts of the tables.[420] In the Reference Bible the choice of examples could be seen to be motivated by the desire to present an abbreviated version of Christ's life. John the Baptist's prediction exemplifies Canon I, Christ's betrayal by Judas, Canon IX. If this idea were correct, the examples in the Reference Bible would show in literal form the *diatessaron* offered by the canons' figural harmony. But one must note that while a general chronology is followed, the intervening canon examples are not all in exact sequence.

The provision of examples from each canon is unparalleled in our patristic source material. Bischoff wrote the following concerning this section in *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum*: 'Unter *de numero euangeliorum* sind u. a. die Kanones, anscheinend auf Grund von Tafeln mit ausgeschriebenen Anfangsworten der Sektionen behandelt'.[421] A number of canon tables accompanied by citations or section résumés have survived, e.g. in the sixth-century Brescia Gospels and in Poitiers 17, an eighth- or ninth-century manuscript with Irish connections. Their tables' citations do not, in general, resemble those in the Hiberno-Latin texts. They are based, moreover, on an Old Latin text of the Gospels, while the Hiberno-Latin prefaces use a 'mixed' Vulgate text.[422]

The Reference Bible supplements its provision of examples from the tables with an extended discussion of the qualities which determine the individual canon parallels.[423] Drawing on *Novum Opus*, the three *qualitates canonum* are listed as *eadem*, *uicina* and *sola*. Each of these is described as consisting of a number of

---

[419] The first canon parallel is taken as the example for Canon VIII in *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum*. The Reference Bible lists the first parallel for Canons I, II, VIII and X Mk.

[420] The example for Canon III is placed 8th or 9th, for Canon IV, 9th and 10th for Canon V, 29th, for canon VI, 6th or 21st, for Canon IX, 4th etc.

[421] B. Bischoff (1966) 242.

[422] For a complete edition of such tables see D. de Bruyne (1912) 158-170 and P. Minard, 'Témoins inédits de la vieille version latine des Évangiles. Les canons à initia des Évangéliaires de Saint-Croix de Poitiers et de la Trinité de Vendôme', *Revue Bénédictine* 56 (1945-6) 58-92. On Poitiers 17 see also Patrick McGurk (1955) 192-198, 194.

modes, which are based on the relationship between *sensus* (sense) and *superficie* (surface). These categories reveal how the harmony contained in the canons was read on different interpretative levels, *superficie* representing the literal interpretation of Scripture, *sensus*, the spiritual.[424]

This point is clearly illustrated by looking at the first category of *eadem*. To demonstrate sameness of sense and surface the author cites the parallel, *non est propheta sine honore nisi in patria sua*, which appears in each of the four Gospels.[425] Sameness of sense but difference of surface is exemplified by paralleling Luke, Section cclxxiiii and John ccxxxi. This example reads,

> *Eadem sensu . sola superficie ubi in luca dicit dominus petro et tu aliquando conuersus confirma fratres tuos Et in iohanne dicit dominus petro . si diligis me pasce oues meas . Haec desimilia superficia sunt sed eadem sensus et id circo uno . id est viii[i] canon . (n)[c]oniunguntur.*[426]

An implicit criticism of the tables seems to be contained in the first example provided in the discussion of *uicina*. The author shows how Luke, Section cccxli and John, ccxxv are placed together in Canon VIIII even though they only agree superficially.[427] They do not describe the same event or the same time in the narrative of Christ's life. The author writes:

> *Haec superficie tantum similia sunt et dissimilia sensu . quia nec eadem historiae est nec eodem tempore gesta . et tamen in euangelio . in viiii . canon coniunguntur quia uicinitas quaedam similitudines in eis est et tamen nec minor diuersitas.*

This kind of sentiment is echoed in another Hiberno-Latin work, the *Historica inuestigatio euangelii secundum Lucam*. In this commentary, discussed in Chapter 8, the author points out how a number of the canons' parallels are based only on verbal similarity and do not agree in the spiritual sense.

---

[423] This runs from fol. 131r/b-131v/b.

[424] There is further discussion of this point in Chapter 8, 161-66, which includes a number of patristic and Insular comments on the *sensus / superficie* distinction.

[425] Although it appears in each of the four Gospels, the author includes citations only from the Gospels of Matthew, Luke and John.

[426] The two sections paralleled are Lk. 22: 32, 'And thou being once converted confirm thy brethren' and Jn. 21: 17, 'And he said to him: Feed my sheep'. The sentence as it appears in the text does not make sense. These sections are paralleled in Canon IX and so it seems likely that *non iunguntur* of the text must have originally read *coniunguntur*.

[427] The author compares Lk 24: 42, 'And the offered him a piece of broiled fish and a honey-comb' which occurs at Pentecost and Jn. 21: 13, 'And Jesus cometh and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish in like manner', which happens on the shores of the sea of Galilee.

The author of the Reference Bible uses the Gospel *incipits* to exemplify the remaining modes and qualities to be discussed. Similarity of sense, but difference of surface, is demonstrated by the placing together of the openings of Matthew and John. These are commented on in the following way,

> *In his capitulis quaedam uicinitas sensum depraehenditur et tamen nec eadem esse sensu possunt. Superficie autem longe dissimilia sunt et tamen initio canon.*

Following this, the Matthean and Lucan genealogies are cited to illustrate similarity of sense and surface. We read,

> *Id est ut quidam uicina sensu et superficie dicantur quorum hoc est genlogia in matheo et altera in luca similis sunt in superficie . id est in seriae generationum in sensu similis quia unius eadem familia id generis david sucessio in utique genelogia texitus et tamen in multis different. Unde nec eadem dici possunt.*

These examples reflect the tendency of Hiberno-Latin exegetes as a whole, following patristic models, to use the *incipits* as a test case for Gospel harmony. This is something already mentioned in this chapter in the discussion of the *Praefacio secundum Marcum*.

The Reference Bible's section on the *qualitates canonum* contains a very real investigation of the basis for the canon listings. The author illustrates the complexity of Gospel harmony, seen to operate at both literal and spiritual levels. The occasional criticism of the series, which seems implied in the discussion of parallels based only on superficial similarity, reappears in the *Historical Commentary on Luke*, the subject of Chapter 8. It is worthwhile to note finally that this section on the *qualitates canonum*, which shows the necessity of spiritual understanding in the tables' use, immediately precedes this preface's claim that the canons can function as a door between exterior and interior ways of reading the evangelical text.

Conclusion

The first part of this chapter discussed the layout of the five Hiberno-Latin prefaces which mention the Eusebian canons. In *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum* and the preface to the (*Commentarius in Mattheum*) the tables were viewed as a way of reading the Gospel text. The author of the preface to the Reference Bible saw the series as aiding the reading of the Gospels on different interpretative levels, literal and spiritual. The two Marcan prefaces present the tables in a somewhat different light. They stress the role of the series as an instrument which demonstrates the harmony and distinctiveness of the fourfold Gospel.

The second part of the chapter examined the content of these prefaces' sections on the canons. These sections are most extensive in *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum* and in the prefaces to the (*Commentarius in Mattheum*) and the Reference Bible. These texts contain a very detailed investigation of the series' origins and authorship. In the preface to the Reference Bible Isidore's definition of *canon* in the context of conciliar canons is applied to the Eusebian tables, which are seen to provide rules for interpreting the evangelical text.

Each of the prefaces gives some attention to the series' number, measure and weight. While this was also a feature of patristic texts, the significance attached to this theme in Hiberno-Latin material is quite distinctive. The prefaces stress the role of the canons as a reflection of the divine measure of the Gospels, playing with the relationship of the numbers ten and four. The discussion of the canons' order in the prefaces to the Reference Bible and the (*Commentarius in Mattheum*) also draws on patristic exegesis concerning the number and order of the Gospels.

Each of the texts also features a listing of the tables' parallels. Jerome and Isidore were followed closely in *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum*, the *Praefacio secundum Marcum* and the preface to the Reference Bible. In contrast, the prefaces to the (*Commentarius in Mattheum)* and the *Expositio euangelii secundum Marcum* express the canons' parallels in other images of scriptural

harmony. The former text describes the tables as singing in agreement, drawing on ideas of evangelical symphonia. The preface to the Marcan commentary refers to the image of the carrying rings of the Ark of the Covenant to explain the relationship between Matthew and Mark. As was the case with Ailerán, the use of such imagery shows how the canons were seen to represent not only evangelical but also scriptural concord.

Another feature of the Hiberno-Latin treatment of the Eusebian series is the little attention given to explaining the tables' practical use. In place of this, *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum* and the preface to the Reference Bible include examples from each of the tables. In addition, the latter text gives considerable attention to the *qualitates canonum*, which consist of various modes based on the relationship of *sensus* and *superficie*. The use of such criteria to investigate the canons' parallels again seems to show how Hiberno-Latin exegetes viewed the tables as working on both literal and spiritual levels.

Features of the treatment of the canons in these Hiberno-Latin prefatory text are returned to in the next two chapters which discuss the titles in the (*Commentarius in Mattheus*) and the comments on the canons in the *Historica inuestigatio euangelii secundum Lucam*. The next chapter highlights the role of the series as a way of reading the Gospels and as itself a reflection of scripture's divine measure. In contrast, the comments on the canons in the *Historical Commentary on Luke* bring forward much more the idea of the different levels of harmony contained in the tables' parallels.

Chapter 7

References to the Eusebian Canons in Vienna 940's (*Commentarius in Mattheum*)

Introduction

This chapter focuses on references to the Eusebian tables in Vienna 940's (*Commentarius in Mattheum*). Bischoff was the first to note these references, writing, 'Äußerlich fällt auf, daß von c. 3: 3 (30v) an zu jedem alten Kapitel in einer Unzialüberschrift angegeben ist in welchem Kanon es steht'.[428] In spite of this comment, the titles referring to the canons have received little attention in subsequent scholarship.[429] Anthony Forte, the current editor of the (*Commentarius in Mattheum*), suggests that they are additions by an earlier scribe.[430] A similar addition may be found in the second set of corrections to London, British Library, Harley 1775. Patrick McGurk recently noted how the ninth-century Tironian *notae* added to this Gospel book mark the beginning (with the sign for *hic* or by the use of an appropriate Eusebian section) and end (with the sign for *usque*) of numerous lections.[431]

Forte's belief that the titles in Vienna 940 'do not add clarity or intelligibility to the text' has led to his decision to relegate them to his edition's *apparatus criticus*.[432] This chapter takes a somewhat different view. It examines the extent to which the titles reflect the significance of the Eusebian series as a means of reading the Gospels and also draw on the canons' role as an image of evangelical harmony and measure.

---

[428] B. Bischoff (1966) 246

[429] There is no reference to the titles in J. Kelly, 'A Catalogue of Early Medieval Hiberno-Latin Biblical Commentaries II', *Traditio* 45 (1989-90) No. 77, 409-10, or in M. Lapidge and R. Sharpe (1985) No. 772, 207-8. In an article entitled 'The Gospel Commentary of Máel Brigte ua Máeluanaig and its Hiberno-Latin Background', *Peritia* 2 (1983) 185-214, 188 fn. 1, Jean Rittmueller argued this commentary should be called *Argumenta et breues euangeliorum glossae secundum canonum*, on the grounds of an inscription on fol. 10r. I have been unable to locate this title on the microfilm version of fol. 10r.

[430] A. Forte (1999) 111.

[431] P. McGurk (1994) 1-23, 19 fn. 59. London, B. L., Harley 1775, a sixth-century Italian Gospel book, is described in CLA II, No. 197, 23, where the ninth-century corrections are seen of French origin.

The chapter divides into two broad parts. The first part describes the placement of the uncial insertions and discusses the inclusion of the first title at Mt. 3: 3. The second part of the chapter examines the additional ways of reading the Gospels referred to in the titles. The appearance of references to the canons alongside those to the *qualitates euangelii* and the *iota / apex* shows how the series had become an integrated part of exegesis on the evangelical text.

The Layout and Placement of Titles

The placement of titles in the text of the Matthew Commentary must first be set in the context of this manuscript as a whole. The attention given to the Eusebian series in this commentary's preface was examined in the previous chapter. The preface lists the tables' number and contents and investigates their authority and guiding principles. Two points of particular interest were noted. Firstly, drawing on the patristic motif of the Gospels' musical harmony, the preface describes the tables as 'singing' in agreement. Secondly, it explains the canons' number as having been determined by nature, an idea which finds some parallel in Victor of Capua's introduction to his *Diatessaron*.

The short texts which precede this preface were mentioned in Chapter 4 and are discussed fully in Appendix H.[433] The codex opens with a copy of *Novum Opus*, a set of canon tables, *argumenta* for the four Evangelists and Luke and John Hebrew Name lists. This prefatory series lends to the manuscript the air of a Gospel book opening. A further parallel between Vienna 940's layout and that of an Insular Gospel book is the attention given in the commentary to Matthew's account of Christ's genealogy.[434] Uncial titles distinguish part of its interpretation from the main text. The treatment of this section opens on fol. 19r

---

[432] A. Forte (1999) 111.
[433] See Chapter 4, 72-73 and Appendix H, 240-53.
[434] The emphasis on placed on Matthew's genealogy in Insular Gospel books was discussed by Patrick McGurk, 'The Irish Pocket Gospel Book' *Sacris Erudiri* 8 (1956) 247-270, 257-8 and more recently by J. O' Reilly (1998) 73-88.

with the invocation *IN NOMINE DEI SUMMI* and ends on fol. 21r with the title *FINIT GENELOGIA.*[435]

The next uncial title in the text occurs on fol. 30v. It refers to the canon provenance of Mt. 3: 3: 'For this is he that was spoken of by Isaias the prophet saying "A voice of one crying in the desert. Prepare ye the way for the Lord, make straight his paths"'. The title, which is misleadingly placed before the passage it refers to, reads *HUC USQ*UE *PRIMUM NUNC QUATTUOR EVANGELIST*A *IN PRIMO CANONE CONCORDANT* (Pl. 6). The next uncial title, on the facing page, notes the change in canon at Mt. 3: 4 : *HUC USQ*UE *PRIMUS CANON . NUNC VI . MATHEUS MARCUS.* From this point on, most canon changes are noted. The last title referring to the canons appears on fol. 140v *HUC USQUE II NUNC X.* This applies to Section ccclv, the final one in Matthew which begins at Mt. 28: 9.

In all, there are over 320 canon titles in the manuscript. At times, as in the complex sectioning at the end of Matthew's Gospel, there may be as many as five uncial titles on any one page e.g. fol. 119v, 124v (Plate 7). Many sections receive both an *incipit* and *explicit*. On fol. 40v the title prefacing Mt. Section xxiii, Canon I reads, *HUC USQ*UE *VI CANON . NUNC I MATH. MARC. LUC. IOH.* The commentary on this passage ends with the uncials, *HUC USQ*UE *I CANON NUNC X ID PROPRIUM.* Other sections are referred to only at the end of their exegesis. The canon provenance of Mt. 3: 7 is mentioned after it has been commented on, the title reading, *HUCUSQ*UE *V CAN*ON . *MATHEUS MARCUS.* This practice occasionally leads to succeeding sections belonging to the same canon not being identified separately. Mt. 5:5 and 6 remain undifferentiated, receiving the common title, *HUC USQ*UE *V CANON. NUNC X CANON ID PROPRIUM.*[436]

---

[435] This section of commentary on Matthew's genealogy has been edited by Aidan Breen (1995) 71-5. On 71 he describes it as 'a synopsized and simplified version of Ailerán's *Expositio Mystica*.

[436] It should be noted that Mt. 5,7, *Beati misericordes...*, is also referred to in this title, even though it belongs to Canon X. In this instance, it seems likely that the scribe has misplaced the title. The following section also belongs to Canon X and begins with very similar wording, *Beati mundo corde....*

At times, titles begin at points somewhat different to the normal canon divisions. An example occurs on fol. 38v. Section xvii, Canon VI, which normally corresponds to all of Mt. 4: 11, is segmented. The title *HUCUSQUE V CANON NUNC VI ID MATH MAR*, occurs before the second part of this verse, 'and behold Angels came and ministered to him'. This verse's opening phrase, 'Then the devil left him', appears in the commentary on the preceding section, belonging to Canon V. The commentary on Section xxii, Mt. 4: 21, begins midway with the phrase, 'In a ship with Zebedee...', with no exegesis on the opening lines. Towards the end of the manuscript (fol. 116r), an erroneous division is made in Matthew Section ccxxiii, Mt. 22: 15-33, where the title *HUCUSQUE II NUNC X* divides the passage into two different canons at Mt. 2: 23, 'That day there came to him the Sadducees...'. A number of further errors occur in the assignation of canon number. The scribe seems occasionally to have misread II for V or VI, even though some of these titles then correctly list the members of the second canon. An example occurs on fol. 59v, where the title before Mt. 7: 28, Section lxiii, Canon II reads, *HUCUSQUE V CANON : NUNC VI ID* EST *MATH. MARC . LUC.*

Only one of the Eusebian sections before Mt. 3: 3 is alluded to. On fol. 27v, the change in canon between Mt. 2: 4 and 5 is signaled in the comment, appearing in normal script, *hucusque exempla nunc testimonia: et hucusque proprium*. This testifies that what has gone before is particular to Matthew, belonging, by implication, to Canon X.[437] There is a noticeable lack of uncials for this title and of references to the other sections at the beginning of Mathew's Gospel. One possible explanation for this may lie in the fact that although Mt. 3: 3 corresponds to Eusebian Section viii, it is the first parallel in Canon I, the first time the four Evangelists agree. Its identification with this table is clear from the Irish Reference Bible, which uses *Vox clamantis in deserto* to exemplify Canon I.[438] That this is the first titled section in Vienna 940 may reflect the scribe's method of work, where he began to insert the uncial titles with the first canon before him. Alternatively, it may have arisen from the desire to begin the titles

[437] Compare this with the references to the tenth canon in the text of the *Expositio euangelii secundum Marcum* cited in Chapter 6, 110.

with a reference to the harmony of the four Evangelists. By beginning the uncial titles with this reference to the first canon and ending them on fol. 140v, with a section drawn from the final one, the titles reflect the order of the canon series.[439]

The attention this commentary draws to Mt. Section viii reflects earlier patristic and Insular notice of the citation of Isaiah's prophecy by each of the four Evangelists. The passage is discussed by Augustine in *De consensu euangelistarum*.[440] It was especially connected with exegesis on the Evangelist Mark, for it serves as his Gospel's *incipit* and is the basis for his symbolic association with the lion. Jerome cited *Vox clamantis* in this context in *Plures fuisse*, drawing on his commentary on Ezechiel.[441] Ambrose and Gregory also use this line to characterize Mark's Gospel.[442] Hiberno-Latin texts follow suit. The *Quaestiones uel glosae in euangelio nomine* quotes Jerome: *Secunda Marcum, in qua uox leonis rugientis in heremo auditur, ut dicitur: uox clamantis in deserto, et reliqua.*[443] The preface to the commentary in Vienna 940 is similar. We read, *Leo marcus significat narrantem de uocem leonis dicens . Vox clamantis in deserto paratae . reliqua.*[444] In this way, the placement of this commentary's first uncial title relating to the canons points towards a whole complex of exegesis on evangelical difference and harmony.

Mt. 3: 3, containing Is. 40: 3, also embodies the harmony of the Old and New Testaments - the idea of the Gospels as the fulfillment of all that is contained in the Law and the Prophets. Ireneaus wrote of Mark beginning with

> A prophetical spirit coming down from on high to men saying, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as it is written in Esaias the Prophet", pointing to the winged

---

[438] Paris, B.N. Lat. 11561 fol. 131r/a reads *Quaeritur quae sunt exempla de singulis . Primus canon . Uox clamantis in deserto .reliqua....* These examples were discussed in Chapter 6, 123-5.

[439] In this context it is worth noting how Sedulius Scottus in his commentary on *Novum Opus* emphasizes the significance of the first parallel in each canon. He writes, *Sed ab eo loco specialiter incipit, ubicunque in quolibet euangelio primus canon primum superscribitur; secundo quoque canone ibi incipiente, ubi in quolibet Euangelio primus superscribitur*, PL 103, 342.

[440] Augustine, *De consensu euangelistarum*, II. 12, CSEL 43, 122-4; S.D.F. Salmond (trans), NPNF 6,1st series, 116-17.

[441] Jerome, *Commentariorum in Matheum*, CCSL 77, 3, discussed in Chapter 3, 57.

[442] Ambrose, *Expositio euangelii secundum Lucam*, CCSL 14, 2-5; Gregory, *Homiliae in Hiezechihelem Prophetam, Homila* IV, CCSL 142, 47.

[443] *Incipiunt quaestiones uel glosae in euangelio nomine*, CCSL 108 B, 135.

[444] Vienna 940, fol. 17v.

aspect of the Gospel and on this account he made a compendious and cursory narrative for such is the prophetical character.[445]

In the *Tractatus in Marci euangelium*, Jerome saw the Isaiah citation as the end of the Law, the beginning of the Gospel, writing *Initium euangelii finis legis est: finitur lex, et incipit euangelium*. John is the voice in the desert, but Christ is the speech. We read, *Simulque considerate quod Iohannes Baptista uox dicitur, et Dominus noster Iesus sermo: seruus praecedit dominum.*[446] Origen cites *Vox clamantis in deserto* in the same vein in the *Commentarium in Canticum canticorum*, seeing John as the final voice to prophesy the Lord.[447] For Augustine, John was greater than a prophet because 'It was granted to the preceding Prophets to foretell the future events about Christ, but to this man to point to him with his finger'.[448]

Insular material reflects the idea that Is. 40: 3 signals the prophetic nature of Mark's Gospel. *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum in euangelia excerpta* comments *Marcus scripsit secundum regulam prophetiae dicens: uox clamantis in deserto.*[449] The preface to the Irish Reference Bible reads, *Marcus regulam tenens prophetiae . In primis prophetarum ponit testimonium.* It also places Mark last in its *ordo summitatis canonis*, claiming *iii . marcus . qui dixit de prophetia . ut uox clamantis . reliqua . quia post legem peruenit prophetia.*[450] In his exposition on Mark's Gospel, Bede sees this Evangelist's citation of Is. 40: 3 as serving a number of purposes: it shows how the Old Testament prophets were inspired by the Holy Spirit; it demonstrates to the Jews how they should respect the evangelical mysteries and illustrates to the Gentiles that the Old Testament should be received and venerated.[451]

---

[445] Irenaeus, *Aduersus Haereses*, III, 11, ANF 1, 428.
[446] Jerome *Tractatus in Marci euangelium*, G. Morin (ed), CCSL 78 (Turnhout 1958) 451. This section directly follows exegesis on the relationship of Mark with the lion: *in Marco leonem in heremo personat 'Initium euangelii Iesu Christi....eius'. Qui in heremo personat, utique leo est, ad cuius uocem omnia animalia pertimescunt, et concurrunt, et fugere non audent.*
[447] Origen trans. Rufinus, *Commentariorum in Canticum Canticorum*, CCSL 198, 213.
[448] Augustine, *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus*, D. R. Williams (ed), CCSL 36 (Turnhout 1954); J.W. Rettig (trans), FC 78 (Washington 1988) 93, *Tractate 4*
[449] *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum in euangelia excerpta*, CCSL 108 B, 215.
[450] Paris, B.N. Lat. 11561, fol. 134r/b, fol.129v/a.
[451] Bede, *In Marci euangelio expositio*, D. Hurst (ed) CCSL 120 (Turnhout 1960) 438.

The way Mark cited Isaiah 40: 3 received some patristic attention. In his commentary on Matthew, Jerome notes Mark's assignation to Isaiah of the words, 'Behold I send my angel before thy face, who shall prepare the way before thee', when in fact they come from Malachy 3: 1. He refers to Porphyry's use of this apparent discrepancy and cites the standard Church response: *Nos autem aut nomen Esaiae putamus additum scriptorum uitio quo et in aliis locis probare possumus, aut certe de diuersis testimoniis scripturarum unum corpus effectum.*[452] Jerome takes a slightly different line in the *Tractatus in Marci euangelium*. He repeats Porphyry's use of this apparent mistake by Mark to question his pedigree as a Gospel writer, but does not use scribal error to explain this apparent discrepancy. Jerome claims instead that Mark uses the words of Malachy to explain what Isaiah meant writing, *expositio autem ipsius capituli in alio propheta melius dicitur.*[453]

The problem posed by Mark's attribution of Malachy's words to Isaiah did not escape Insular writers. Bede states that Mark can in no way be seen to have erred as the prophecies of both Isaiah and Malachy have the same meaning. In *In Marci euangelium expositio*, he comments, *In utraque autem sententia similiter paranda uia domini praedicatur ideoque non fallitur euangelista qui hoc dictum ab Esaia scribit quod, etsi non eisdem uerbis, eodem tamen sensu ab ipso scriptum inuenit.*[454] In the last chapter we have seen how the Hiberno-Latin *Praefacio secundum Marcum* gives considerable attention to this question.[455] It explains that the name of Isaiah, because he is greater in personal dignity than Malachy, is sufficient for the two testimonies, which are actually the same because they are spoken by the same spirit.[456] The author is acquainted, furthermore, with a variant reading of this passage which shows the standard

---

[452] Jerome, *Commentariorum in Matheum*, CCSL 77, 16-17.
[453] Jerome, *Tractatus in Marci euangelium*, CCSL 78, 452. It is to be noted that in his commentary on Malachy, Jerome does not really address the implications of this citation for Mark, concentrating instead on how the Gospel citation differs in wording from that found in the Septuagint. Jerome repeats a point dear to him that while the creators of the Septuagint did not translate literally, they preserved always the true sense of Scripture. See *Commentariorum in Malachiam prophetam*, M. Adriaen (ed), CCSL 76 A (Turnhout 1970) 927-8 and also Jerome's *Letter LVII* to Pammachius on the art of translating, J. Labourt (ed) (1953) 55-73, 67; W.H. Freemantle (trans), NPNF 6, 2nd series, 112-19, 116.
[454] Bede *In Marci euangelio expositio*, CCSL 120, 439.
[455] See Chapter 6, 111-12.
[456] *Praefacio secundum Marcum*, CCSL 108 B, 222 and fn. (12).

citation to be the result of scribal error. He writes *Vitium scriptorum hic ⟨est⟩, quia sic recte dicit⟨ur⟩ 'sicut scriptum est prophetis', in Malachia utique in Esaia.*[457] This text also explains that Malachy's words are cited before those of Isaiah because he was nearer in time to Christ, or because, like John the Baptist, he comes before someone greater than himself.[458]

The appearance of the first uncial canon title in this text at Mt. 3: 3 touches thus on a range of issues relevant to the theme of evangelical difference and harmony, the subject of the Eusebian canon tables. This section of Matthew's Gospel is not only the first in Canon I, but also brings in the broader question of scriptural harmony, having the common citation of Is. 40: 3 as the basis for its parallel. In light of this, it seems an appropriate beginning for the series of titles relating to the canons.

The Canons and Other Ways of Reading the Gospel Text

In the title series references to the canons are occasionally supplemented with other ways of reading the Gospel text. Some passages are classed as *ordo* or *accedens*. The preface to the Irish Reference Bible provides information on these divisions. It sees them as two modes of *historia* and comments,

> *Ordo est cum alicuius rei narratio sine ullius alicuius interuentione historie . cepto ordine ad finem usque deducitur . Accedens est elatam quaedam narratio in ordine cepte prius narrationis inserta cuius narrationem scriptor ad ordinem relictum reuertitur in cuius narratione accedentes et si aliquando ordo actionis seruatur.*[459]

The preface subsequently divides *ordo* into three categories *ordo uerbi, temporum* and *uirtutum* and describes *accedens* as, *quicquid extrinsecus in euangelio ex terra proprietate . ut est magi ab oriente uenerunt hierusalem.*[460] This latter example is one of those noted in Vienna 940. On fol. 26r the comment, *hucusque ordo nunc accidentia*, precedes the second part of Mt. 2: 1,

---

[457] Ibid. 222.

[458] Ibid. 222. We read *Quare testimonium Malachiae primo posuit ⟨Marcus⟩? Quia sicut praecedens Iohannes Christo, Malachias ante Esaiam ponitur.* Also *Cur testimonium Malachiae prius posuit ⟨Marcus⟩? Quia propinquior est Christo prophetia eius quam Esaie.*

[459] Paris, B.N. Lat. 11561, fol. 134v/a. See also B. Bischoff (1966) 218. He identified such use of *ordo / accedens* as a feature of Hiberno-Latin exegesis, writing 'Auf den Wechsel zwischen der Hauptlinie des Berichts und Einschaltungen wird durch Bemerkungen wie *hic est ordo, nunc accedens (accidens)* hingewiesen'. His comment is mentioned by A. Forte (1999) 111.

[460] Paris, B.N. Lat. 11561, fol. 136r/b-137v/a.

Ecce magi ab oriente.... The end of the Magi's visit, Mt. 2,12, is marked with the words *hucusque accidentia nunc ordo* (fol. 28v).

While these comments appear in normal script, such identification of passages also appears in uncial titles, sometimes in combination with a canon reference.[461] On fol. 38v we read of the change in canon between Mt. 4: 11 and 12, *SEXTUS CANON NUNC IIII . CANON . MATH MARC IOH ET HUC USQUE ACCEDIT NUNC ORDO*. On fol. 95r the first uncial title reads simply, *HUCUSQUE ORDO NUNC ACCEDENS*, referring to the change in narrative mode between Mt. 15: 21, 'And Jesus went from thence, and retired into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon' and the subsequent, 'And behold and woman of Canaan who came out of those coasts...'. The title marking the end of this episode, *HUCUSQUE VI CANON ET EXEMPLUM SALUTIS NUNC ORDO*, combines reference to the canons and to *ordo* with a third way of reading the text based on the so-called *qualitates euangelii*: *praecepta, mandata, testimonia, exempla.*

The division of the Gospels into this category receives some comment in other Hiberno-Latin texts. As we have seen in Chapter 6, *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum in euangelia excerpta*, lists out the four *qualitates euangelii* just before its treatment of the canons.[462] It provides examples of each quality, linking them with the four cardinal virtues. The preface to the Reference Bible contains a similar treatise, with an additional section on the *subqualitates*: *prima, media, perfecta.*[463] In Vienna 940, there are around 40 title references to the *qualitates*. These are mainly to *exempla* and *praecepta*, e.g. between Mt. Chapters 5 and 6, we read, *HUC USQUE V CANON . NUNC X CANON ET HUCUSQUE PRAECEPTA NUNC EXEMPLA* (fol. 49v). Some passages, such as Mt. 2: 5-6, are identified as *testimonia* at the beginning of the text. The references to *exempla* are often expanded as on fol. 95r, cited above. In addition

[461] 17 titles refer to *ordo / accedens* alone or in combination with a reference to the *qualitates euangelii*. A further 22 *ordo / accedens* references are combined with information about the canons.
[462] *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum*, CCSL 108 B, 217-8. See also Chapter 6, 106-07.
[463] Paris, B.N. Lat. 11561, fol. 134v/b.

to this *exempla salutis*, we read of *exempla pietatis, humilitatis, orationis, uirtutis, remissionis*, etc. [464]

The final type of uncial entry in Vienna 940 refers to the image of the *iota / apex* (Plate X). This occurs in six titles from fol. 46v-49r. The titles, inserted at intervals in the commentary on Mt. 5: 28-44, read simply, *HUCUSQUE IOTA . NUNC APEX* (Pl. 8).[465] The pair derives from Mt. 5: 18, 'For amen I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot (*iota*) or one tittle (*apex*) shall not pass of the Law, till all be fulfilled'. Passages titled with *iota* refer to sections beginning, *Audistis quia dictum est antiquis*.., 'You have heard that it was said to them of old...'. That this is to be interpreted as the Old Testament is made clear by the repetition of Mt. 5,17, 'Do not think that I have come to destroy the Law...', each time this line is cited. Passages titled with *apex* refer to the New Testament. They begin with Christ's words, *Ego autem dico uobis*.[466]

The commentator explains the significance of the *iota* and *apex* on fol. 45v, before the titles begin. This happens in the context of Mt. 5: 21-22, the first instance where Christ compares what was said before 'You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not kill. And whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of judgement', to what he will say, 'But I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of judgement'. The commentator writes,

> *Audistis quia dictum est antiquis . nunc iotam inponit . id est uetus legem. Ac si dixisset quia putastis me soluere legem . legem uobis commendabo . et adimplere temptabo. Id est apicem noui testamenti addere.*

Mt. 5: 21-22 is cited before this point in exegesis on Mt. 5: 19 (fol. 45r). Its 'least commandments' are seen to be those of the Old Testament because, as Paul writes, 'the Law brought nothing to perfection'.[467] The commentator continues, *minimum est non occidere . quia facile est implere . magnum est non irasci quia pene inpossibile est*. This line illustrates the commentator's previous point that

---

[464] See titles on fols. 87r, 110r, 52r, 63v, 105r. The example on fol. 59v is cited by A. Forte (1999) 111, fn. 18.

[465] One of the titles on fol. 47v reads, *HUC USQUE APEX*.

[466] Besides Mt. 5: 21-22, 5 of these comparisons are made. These correspond to Mt. 5: 27-28; 5: 31; 5: 32; 5: 38 and 5: 43.

[467] This is a citation from Hebrews 7: 19. It is one of a series of Pauline references in this part of the commentary. Others references introduced by *ut paulus ait* are to Romans 2: 15 (fol. 46v), Hebrews 6: 16 (fol. 48r) and Romans 7: 15 (fol. 49r).

the *apex*, placed on top of the letter, signifies the New Law added to the Old: *Apex autem capiti . littere ponitur significans legem legi addiunctam superne.*[468]

Such use of the *iota / apex* draws on a rich patristic tradition, which viewed Mt. 5: 18 as an expression of scriptural completion and harmony. Jennifer O'Reilly has sketched the emergence of this tradition in the work of Origen, who claimed that, 'the wisdom of God has penetrated to all inspired Scripture even as far as the slightest letter (the *iota*)'.[469] Augustine describes the *iota / apex* as, 'a vehement expression of perfect observance'.[470] For Jerome the figure of the *iota* showed that even the least element of the Law is filled with 'spiritual sacraments' and that all things are brought together in the Gospels.[471] In his homily on Psalm 5, Jerome illustrates the significance of the *iota* as a symbol of scripture's divine measure. He states,

> I am amazed at the implication that there can be anything in Scripture without a reason. If it be true that 'not one jot or one tittle shall be lost from the Law' how much more shall not a word or syllable be lost?[472]

Insular commentators picked up on this theme. Bede often refers to the *iota / apex* image. At the end of *De Tabernaculo*, he cites Mt. 5: 17 to show that,

> There are many things that the Law commands to be made, or that it predicts must be done or celebrated forever, which have in fact ceased to be observed according to the letter. However they will never cease to be observed spiritually by the saints in accordance with the typic understanding, for the one who comes not to abolish the law but to fulfill it bears witness that not one iota, not one stroke, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.[473]

In his commentary on Luke's Gospel, Bede links the image of the *iota / apex* with exegesis on the Transfiguration writing, *Tunc moysen et heliam speculabuntur in gloria quia melius intellegent quomodo iota unum aut unus*

---

[468] This also appears on fol. 45r of the commentary, but in the section on Mt. 5: 18.
[469] J. O' Reilly (1999) 159-211, 179-185. Most of the following patristic references are cited on 182 of this article. For Origen's understanding of this image, see also F. Young (1997) 21-7.
[470] Augustine *De sermone Domini in monte*, M. Adriaen (ed), CCSL 35 (Turnhout 1948) 20-1; D. J. Kavanagh (trans), *Fathers of the Church* 11 (New York 1951) 37-39.
[471] Jerome, *Commentariorum in Matheum*, CCSL 77, 27: *Ex figura litterae ostenditur quod etiam quae minima putantur in lege, sacramentis spiritalibus plena sint et omnia recapitulentur in euangelio.*
[472] Jerome, *Tractatus siue Homiliae in Psalmos, Tractatus de Psalmo* V, CCSL 78, 12; Sr. Marie Liguori Ewald (trans), *The Fathers of the Church* 48 (Washington 1964) 15.
[473] Bede, *De Tabernaculo*, CCSL 119 A, 139; A. Holder (trans), TTH 18, 162.

apex non praeterierit a lege nec dominus soluere legem vel prophetas sed adimplere advenerit.[474]

The Irish Reference Bible uses the image of the *iota / apex* as one of its ways of reading the Gospels. It explains how,

> The *iota* refers to the Old Testament, the Law of the ten commandments and the righteousness of the scribes, while the letter's *apex* signifies the fullness of the spiritual sense, the New Testament, the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount, and the righteousness of the apostles, manifested in fasting, almsgiving and prayer.[475]

The explanation refers to Mt. 5,21-22, specifically citing *non occides*...as its example of the Law and *non irasceris*... when referring to the New Testament. Other Hiberno-Latin texts, such as the commentary on Matthew in Clm. 6233 and Ps.-Jerome's *Expositio IV Euangeliorum*, provide similar interpretations of this image. The latter commentator summarizes his view simply, stating, *iota uetus Lex, apex Nova.*[476]

In the context of this chapter, it is necessary to examine the extent to which the inclusion of these references to the *iota / apex* illumines other aspects of Vienna 940's formal layout. Like the titles referring to the canons, to *ordo* and *accedens* and to the *qualitates euangelii*, this image was regarded as a means of reading the Gospel text. The *iota / apex* pair relates closely to the Eusebian series. Both function as means of harmonizing scripture, the former of the Old and New Testaments, the latter of the four Gospels. Other links between the two can also be established, the first of these is numerological.

Throughout this thesis it has been shown how the tables' number plays on the significance of the relationship of ten and four as an expression of perfect harmony.[477] Exegesis on the numerological significance of the *iota* followed

---

[474] Bede, *In Lucae euangelium expositio*, CCSL 120, 206.
[475] J. O' Reilly (1999) 185. Paris, B.N. Lat. 11561, fol. 137v.
[476] Ps.-Jerome, *Expositio IV Euangeliorum*, PL 30, 545. This and the commentary in Clm. 6233 are discussed in J. O' Reilly (1999) 184-5. Vernacular interpretation of the *iota / apex* as an image of completion occurs in the Irish Lambeth Commentary, dated to the tenth century but thought to contain an eighth century text. See L. Bieler and J. Carney 'The Lambeth Commentary', *Eriú* 23 (1972) 1-55, 34 for Old Irish text, translation on 43.
[477] See Chapter 1, 14-16, Chapter 2, 36-38, Chapter 6, 115-17.

similar lines.[478] Drawing on older exegetical traditions, both Ps.-Jerome and the author of the Reference Bible note the equation of the Greek *iota* with ten, signifying the Decalogue, and the Latin letter i with one. The *Expositio* states, *Iota unum, nomen litterae, quae uno ducto: fit deca littera, id est, decem uerba Legis, apud Graecos litterae, quod nos unum diximus.*[479] The fact that the *iota* is the first letter of the Greek name Jesus intensified both its significance and by extension that of the number ten. The commentary on Matthew in Clm. 6233 increases the numerological significance of the *iota / apex* pair by seeing the four lettered apex to signify the Gospels.[480] The perfection of the number ten containing the sum of 1+2+3+4 again presents itself. In this context, it works on the representation of the Ten Commandments which, 'if spiritually interpreted and interiorised, could be seen to be filled with the four Gospels'.[481]

A problem emerges, however, in rehearsing such exegesis to associate titles relating to the canons and to the *iota / apex* in Vienna 940. This commentary does not include the standard numerological interpretation of the *iota* in its section on Mt. 5: 18. On fol. 45r, the *iota* is seen mistakenly as the equivalent of *gamma*, the third letter of the Greek alphabet.[482] With the addition of the *apex* it becomes *tau*, the twentieth letter. *Gamma* signifies the faith of the Trinity, *tau* the two laws, each valued at ten and equal to, *x uerba legis et octo beatitudinis euangelii et duo mandata.* It was because of this Christ said *non pertransisset fides trinitatis in duabus legibus usque ad consummationem saeculi*, a reference perhaps to Matthew, Chapter 24.[483]

---

[478] The following is based on J. O' Reilly (1999) 181, 183-185. Further discussion of the numerological significance of the *iota* see H. Meyer and R. Suntrup (1987) 598.
[479] Ps.-Jerome, *Expositio IV Euangeliorum*, PL 30, 545.
[480] J. O' Reilly (1999) 184.
[481] Ibid. 181.
[482] A logical explanation for this mistake does not readily present itself. The commentator may have understood *iota* as a Hebrew word equivalent to the Greek *gamma*. Such thought, however, precludes his knowledge of a number of standard patristic explanations of the *iota*. A parallel to Vienna 940's confused interpretation of the numerical significance of the iota can be found in Clm. 6302's Genesis commentary which sees *tau* as opposed to *iota* as the Greek equivalent of the Latin letter I. This is commented on by M. Gorman (1997) 187.
[483] B. Bischoff (1966) 246, sees this section on the relationship of the *iota* and *apex* to Mt. 24: 31 as an example of this commentator's tendency, 'zum Ergründen und haarspaltenden Beantworten sachlicher Probleme'.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE Library CORK

While it does not include the standard numerological explanation, Vienna 940's exegesis is still based on the significance of the number ten, using it to show the harmony of the two Testaments, and in particular the harmony of the commandments of the Law and the Beatitudes.[484] The commentary on Mt. 5: 2-11 expands this point. The phrase *Et aperuit os suum* (Mt 5: 2) is likened to the opening of a vase of new wine, and to the opening of the mouths of the prophets. The commentator writes *Et aperuit os suum sicut aperitur uas cum uino nouo . sic aperuit os suum . aperuis se dicitur quia hucusque ora prophetarum et patriarcharum aperuit* (fol. 41r). An Old Testament parallel for each beatitude is then cited, e.g. the third beatitude 'Blessed are those that mourn for they shall be comforted', is linked to Jeremiah 31: 16, 'Thus saith the Lord: let thy voice cease from weeping, and thy eyes from tears for there is reward for thy work saith the Lord'.[485]

In more general terms, both the canons and Vienna 940's interpretation of the *iota / apex* use numerology to illustrate harmony. This commentator equates *gamma* with the number three, symbolic of the harmony of the Trinity. This interpretation draws on earlier patristic works. In his *Commentary on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount*, Augustine identifies three as 'a symbol of perfection'.[486] His interpretation of the 153 fish caught by the disciples after the Lord's Resurrection in *De doctrina christiana* emphasizes three's perfect nature. It is seen to signify the three eras - before the law under the law, under grace - the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and the Trinity.[487] Augustine's interpretation of the eight Beatitudes also stressed their harmonious nature. The final beatitude, promising the same reward as the first, 'returns, as it were, to the beginning: it presents and approves something consummate and perfect'. This link between the first and eighth blessing meant that Augustine actually enumerated seven beatitudes, the eighth 'clarifies and approves what is already

---

[484] The *Historica inuestigatio euangelii secundum Lucam*, the subject of the next chapter, includes exegesis on the *iota* and *apex* in the numerological discussion of the eighth day on which Christ was circumcised. This is further discussed in Chapter 8, 155-6.

[485] The commentator presents this verse in Jeremiah in abbreviated form, writing simply *Tertia qui escat uox tua a ploratu.*

[486] Augustine, *De sermone Domini in monte*, CCSL 35, 70-1; D.J. Kavanagh (trans), *Fathers of the Church* 11, 87-8.

[487] Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, CCSL 32, 51; R.H. Green (trans) (1995) 87.

complete'.[488] The commentary in Vienna 940 draws on Augustinian thought. It associates the Beatitudes with the creation of the world in seven days, with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and with the seven petitions in the Our Father (fols. 41v-42v).

Apart from numerology, another link between the canons and the *iota / apex* image is their shared liminal quality. We have seen in the previous chapter how the author of the Irish Reference Bible sees the canons as functioning as a kind of door between the exterior ways of looking at the Gospels and the examination of their inner *medulla* or spiritual core.[489] In a similar way, exegetes saw the *iota* and *apex* to signify the move from exterior to interior. The titles on fols. 46v-49r in Vienna 940 compare the Law (*iota*), which judges exterior action, with the Gospels, which concern themselves with interior motivation (*apex*). After the explanation of the significance of the *iota / apex* in exegesis on Mt. 5: 21-22, the Vienna commentator notes that the Law cuts off only the branches of sin, the Gospel, its roots (fol. 45v). This image is echoed in the preface to the Reference Bible, where the Gospel's cutting back (*resecat*) of the *materias peccatorum* is contrasted with the Law, which only forbids or damns sins.[490]

The tension between exterior action and interior motivation, symbolized in the image of the *iota / apex*, also takes place in each individual. This is illustrated in the episode concerning the *iota* in the *Vita Columbae*. Baithéne's concern, 'for completeness and perfection in the execution of the external letter of scripture contrasts with the elementary stage...[he] is shown to have reached in learning humility and spiritual wisdom'.[491] Vienna 940 also includes this idea of the exterior and interior man. Mt. 5: 29, 'And if thy right eye scandalize thee...', is seen to symbolize the desire of the interior man, for whatever is named right or left in the Gospels is to be interpreted as the interior and exterior man

---

[488] Augustine, *De sermone Domini in monte*, CCSL 35, 12-13; D.J. Kavanagh (trans), *Fathers of the Church* 11, 26.
[489] See Chapter 6, 108-09.
[490] Paris B.N. Lat. 11561, fol. 127v/a reads, *Euangelium uero materias peccatorum resecat ut illud audistis . quia dictum est antiquis non occades . ego autem dico uobis qui irascitur fratri suo . reus erit iudicio.*
[491] J. O' Reilly (1999) 178.

respectively.[492] On Mt. 5: 39: '....But if one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other', the commentator states,

> *...qui hominem tuum blasphemat interiorem . id qui de intus iudicat praebe illa beneficia exterioris tui . et qui exteriorem tuum hominem offendit praebe illi indulgentiam interioris* (fol. 48r).

The link between the interior man and the Gospels is made clear in the commentary's preface which reads: *mundus spiritalis euangelio conuenit . quia sicut mundus corporalis exterior homini seruit . sic mundus spiritalis interiori homini seruit* (fol. 14r).

The use of the iota/apex to represent the transition between Old and New Testaments, from exterior to interior, serves thus as a useful counterpoint to the interpretation of the canons as a door into the Gospels, which leads from exterior ways of looking at the evangelical text to the examination of its interior spiritual qualities.

[492] This comment is on fol. 47r: *oculus dexter est desiderium interioris homini quicquid autem in euangelium nuncupantur . dexteram aut sinistram duos significat homines id est interiorem hominem quod [d]exter . est . et exteriorem quia sinister est.*

Conclusion

The layout of Vienna 940 illustrates the significance of the Eusebian series as a means of reading the four Gospels in the Hiberno-Latin milieu. The idea of marking out each canon section with a title reflects to some degree the practice of a Gospel book where such information is placed in the margins. Indeed, in the related commentary on Luke contained in Vienna 997, some such marginal entries appear alongside the exegetical text.[493] This physical marking out of section changes, in titles or marginal entries, is the clearest formal evidence of the use of the canons as a basis for the comparative reading the Gospels in these early medieval commentaries.

References in the Vienna 940 titles to other ways of reading the Matthew's Gospel show that while the canons were the dominant method in this commentary, they were not the only one. Titles referring to the *qualitates euangelii* and to the pairing of *ordo* and *accidentia* correspond with the placement of the canons near such sections in Hiberno-Latin prefatory material. The most interesting titles in Vienna 940, besides the Eusebian references, are those based on the image of the *iota* and *apex*. These offer a number of comparison points with the Eusebian references: they have an important numerological dimension and a liminal quality. The use of the *iota / apex* image confirms the impression given by the canon titles of the significance of harmony as a tenet of Insular scriptural interpretation. That the Eusebian tables are an integrated part of this approach in Hiberno-Latin exegesis is reflected also in the *Historica inuestigatio euangelii secundum Lucam*, the subject of the next chapter.

[493] These marginal entries are mentioned by B. Bischoff (1966) 261, 'An einigen Stellen sind die normalen Kanoneszahlen wie in einem Evangeliar stehengeblieben'. They are not included in the description of the manuscript by J. Kelly in his introduction to CCSL 108 C, vii-xvi. On 94 of the Introduction to his edition of the *Expositio euangelii secundum Marcum* Michael Cahill notes the inclusion of marginal Eusebian references in some later copies of this commentary.

Chapter 8

Difference and Harmony in the *Historica inuestigatio euangelii secundum Lucam*.

Introduction

This chapter discusses the treatment of evangelical difference and harmony in a ninth-century Hiberno-Latin commentary on Luke. The first part of the thesis demonstrated the richness of this tradition in the patristic era.[494] The Gospels' unity and distinctiveness was expressed in the interpretation of the beasts of Ezekiel and Revelations as an image of the four Evangelists. Knowledge of the quadriform cosmos supplemented the association of the Evangelists with scriptural quaternities. The Gospels were linked to the four elements, seasons, winds etc., as the work of their common Creator, 'who has ordered all things in measure and number and weight'.

Augustine's *De consensu euangelistarum* demonstrated the harmony of the Evangelists, not just with reference to quaternities, but also by detailing the complementary nature of the four accounts of Christ's life.[495] The Eusebian canon tables physically demonstrated the Gospels' harmonious and distinctive sections. Inclusion in the Vulgate established the tables as a preface in Late Antique Gospel Books, although they do not figure explicitly in patristic commentaries on the Gospels.[496]

The *Historica inuestigatio euangelii secundum Lucam* preserves a number of patristic features in relation to this theme. It employs quaternities to express the harmony of the Gospels and reflects the Augustinian working out of the minutiae

---

[494]The tradition of the scriptural interpretation is discussed in detail in Chapter 3 on Plures Fuisse, while the cosmological tradition is mentioned in each of the first three chapters. For a general introduction to the patristic methods developed to reconcile the evangelical texts see H. Merkel (1971). The Hiberno-Latin approach to the harmony of the Gospels is discussed by R. MacNally (1971) 111-122 and especially J. O' Reilly (1998) 49-94.

[495] Augustine, *De consensu euangelistarum*, (ed) J. Weihrich, CSEL 43; S.D.F.Salmond (trans), NPNF 6, 1st series.

[496] This point is discussed in Chapter 4, 77.

of evangelical chronology. It differs from the patristic tradition by including an analysis of the Eusebian concordance within its main text. In this it also diverges from the treatment of the canons in most other Hiberno-Latin works which discuss the series in their prefatory material. The last chapter showed how the commentary in Vienna 940 is structured with reference to the canon divisions, but only contains an extended treatment of the tables in its preface. Two other works mention canon provenance within their main text. The *Expositio euangelii secundum Marcum*, as already noted, occasionally draws attention to sections particular to Mark.[497] Mention of canon provenance also appears in the early ninth-century Visigothic fragment which is closely related to Vienna 940. The change in canon at Mt. 8: 23 is marked by the phrase *hucusque u. canon, nunc .ii. matheus marcus lucas hucusque accidens et praecepta nunc hordo,* which appears as part of the main text.[498]

While many of the remarks on the tables in the *Historica inuestigatio euangelii secundum Lucam* relate to canon provenance, they are more extensive than those cited above. Their tone also sets them apart. Bischoff first noted this writing, 'Auf die Zugehörigkeit eines Abschnitts zu einem bestimmten Kanon ist nicht nur widerholt hingewiesen, sondern sie wird in mehreren Fällen als nur auf scheinbarer Ähnlichkeit beruhend kritisiert.'[499]

The following chapter briefly discusses this text's manuscript tradition and historiography. It then examines the ways the commentary treats of difference and harmony, both of the Gospels and of Scripture as a whole. The use of number to demonstrate harmony is firstly considered. This is followed by an examination of the text's references to the canons. These are related to other approaches to the question of evangelical concord: the historical method adopted in *De consensu euangelistarum* and the more spiritual resolution of contradictions, ultimately inspired by the exegesis of the Alexandrian school. This commentary's integrated treatment of the Eusebian series suggests an intellectual engagement with the tables, which has been hitherto unnoticed. It

---

[497] See Chapter 6, 110.
[498] This text appears in full with plates in E. A. Lowe (1960) 1-7.
[499] B. Bischoff (1966) 260.

finds a close parallel in the Irish Reference Bible's discussion of the *qualitates canonum*.[500]

Manuscript Tradition and Historiography

The *Historica inuestigatio euangelii secundum Lucam* is preserved in two manuscripts: Clm. 6235 and Paris B.N. Lat. 1841.[501] In each case, it occurs in a copy of Ps-Jerome's *Expositio IV Euangeliorum*, replacing the standard Lucan text. Unlike the commentaries to Matthew and Mark, Luke's text does not receive a separate prologue. Within the commentary itself, however, some distinction is made. In Clm. 6235, the manuscript which this paper refers to, a line is left blank following the end of Lk. 1: 4. Lk. 1: 5 begins with an enlarged initial F, *Fuit in diebus*... (fol. 49v, lines 15-17).[502] A series of short texts separates the end of the Lucan commentary from the Johannine one. The first of these contains an interpretation of the names of Christ's ancestors in Matthew's genealogy (fol. 65v/a-66r/a).[503]

Brief bibliographic attention to the commentary has focused on its Hiberno-Latin features. As early as 1937, Bruno Griesser commented on the prevalence of Insular abbreviations in the Munich version of the *Expositio IV Euangeliorum* and held an illegible, possibly Insular, model responsible for its numerous textual corruptions.[504] In 1939, Rudolph Thurneysen published one of the Lucan commentary's Irish glosses.[505] A second Irish gloss was noted by Bischoff in *Wendepunkte*.[506] Indeed, it is this treatment of the commentary which remains the most extensive. Later scholarship, by Joseph Kelly and others, has failed to revise either Bischoff's suggested dating (mid-ninth century) or provenance (Northern Italy, Bobbio?).[507]

---

[500] These were discussed in Chapter 6, 125-27.
[501] These manuscripts are discussed in Chapter 4, 70-2 and in Appendix G, 234-39.
[502] The title to the commentary is taken from the Paris manuscript however. On this correction see J. Kelly (1989-90) 393-434, 418-9.
[503] This list is briefly mentioned by Aidan Breen in his edition of Ailerán's: *Interpretatio Mystica et Moralis Progenitorum Domini Iesu Christi* (1995) 69.
[504] B. Griesser (1937) 283-4.
[505] R. Thurneysen, (1939) 280-291, 287.
[506] B. Bischoff, (1966) 259-261.
[507] J. Kelly, (1989-90) 418-9 and see also M. Lapidge and R. Sharpe (1985) 210.

The commentary has been mentioned most recently in theses by Ann Kavanagh and Seán de Paor. The former identified the significance of Clm. 6235 in containing at least four Hiberno-Latin texts, one of which is the Historical Commentary on Luke.[508] The latter mentions the Lucan text in the context of an edition of the Irish commentary on the Pauline epistles, which runs from fol. 1v-31v of the Munich manuscript.[509] The work is referred to here by its given title, 'The Historical Commentary on Luke'. In line with past scholarship, however, the discussion illustrates how this is a misnomer.[510] The commentator employs not only historical but also spiritual interpretation when addressing the issue of Gospel concord.

The Significance of Number

Hiberno-Latin prefaces often use quaternities to express the Gospels' unity and distinctiveness. Some of those which seem most likely to be incorporated from a preface into the main body of a Gospel commentary are the *demonstrationes evangelii*. *Pauca de libris Catholicorum scriptorum* lists these as the four men who carry the bed of the paralytic and the four soldiers who cast lots for Christ's garments.[511] A more extended treatise on the *demonstrationes evangelii* occurs in the preface to Vienna 940. Added to the previous examples are the four animals of Revelations, the four months in Jn. 4: 35 and the three quaternities contained in the number of the apostles.[512] The preface to the Reference Bible cites these examples and others, like the four tens which make up the forty days in the desert and the four baskets of scraps collected after the miracle of the loaves and fishes.[513]

---

[508] Ann K. Kavanagh 'The *Expositio IV Euangeliorum* (*Recension* II): A Critical Edition and Analysis of Text' , 2 volumes, unpublished PhD Thesis (Trinity College Dublin 1996) 98-9.
[509] Seán (John Liam) de Paor 'A Study of the Irish Commentary on St. Paul contained in the Freising MS Clm 6235', 2 volumes, unpublished D. Phil Thesis (Trinity College Dublin 1999) 7.
[510] B. Bischoff (1966) 259-261, J. Kelly (1989-90) 418-9.
[511] *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum in euangelia excerpta*, CCSL 108 B, 217. The gloss on Lk. 5: 18 in the Codex Usserianus Primus sees the *uiri portantes* as *iiii (e)le(menta), iiii euan(gelia)*. This gloss is published by P. Ó Néill (1998) 15.
[512] Vienna 940, fol. 17v-18r, Line 28-4. Jn. 4: 35 reads, 'Do you not say, there are yet four months and then the harvest cometh?'.

While some of these incidents are recounted in the Historical Commentary on Luke, their quadripartite nature isn't emphasised. The quaternity which receives the most attention in this text is the link made between the four temporal rulers of Christ's province and the four Evangelists. This is mentioned for the first time on fol.51r/b in relation to Luke 2: 1-2. Caesar is seen as signifying God the Father; Cyrinus, Christ; the four tetrarchs under Cyrinus, the four Evangelists. We read. *Caesar . significat . deum patrem . Cyrinus . xpm . quattuor tetrarche . iiiior . euangeliste sub xpo*. The quaternity is repeated on fol. 52r/b, where the four *procuratores* under Tiberius Caesar signify the four Gospel writers. The evangelical four is increased in this instance with the addition of the two high priests, Annas and Caiphas. These signify the two laws. The sum of the governors, representing the Evangelists, and the priests, figuring the law, is the perfect number 6, linked to the restoration of the world in the sixth age.

Finding parallels for this quaternity is difficult. While both Ambrose and Bede attend to these passages, neither mentions the fourfold link.[514] This is also the case in the other Hiberno-Latin Commentary on Luke contained in Vienna 997.[515] A parallel is found however in the Lucan text normally contained in the *Expositio IV Euangeliorum* (Recension I). It contrasts the mention of the king in Lk. 2: 1 with the following chapter's description of the king and tetrarchs. This can be explained by the fact that Chapter 2 deals with Christ's nativity, Chapter 3, his coming to preaching and baptism. The four tetrarchs are mentioned because they signify the Gospels. We read:

> *Ab anno quinto decimo Tiberii Caesaris: primus rex, primus praeses in natiuitate Christi memorantur, id est, dum non coeperant docere; nunc autem rex quartus tetrarcha commemoratur, dum ad praedicationem et ad baptismum uenit. Rex significat Christum, et quattuor tetrachae ostendunt quattuor Euangelia: duo sacerdotes, id est, duas leges: per senum numerum factus est mundus.*[516]

---

[513] Paris B.N. Lat. 11561, 133v/a-134r/b.
[514] Ambrose, *Expositio euangelii secundum Lucam*, CCSL 14, 46-7. Bede, *In Lucae euangelium expositio*, CCSL 120, 44-6, 74.
[515] (*Commentarius in Lucam*) CCSL 108 C, 13, 22.
[516] Ps-Jerome, *Expositio IV Euangeliorum*, PL 30, 570. Recension I of the *Expositio IV Euangeliorum* is referred to throughout this chapter. An examination of the case for an Insular origin of this Recension appears in A. Kavanagh (1996) especially 94-102. See also her introductory article 'The Ps.-Jerome's *Expositio IV Euangeliorum*' in T. O' Loughlin (ed) (1999) 125-31.

A more standard quaternity to appear in the *Historica inuestigatio euangelii secundum Lucam* is the link between the Evangelists and the four seasons. On fol. 53r/a, 'the acceptable year of the Lord' prophesied by Isaiah is interpreted as *nouum . xii . menses . xii . apostoli . quattuor tempora iiiior . euangelistæ.* The *Exp. IV Euangeliorum's* Commentary on Luke again offers a close parallel reading, *'annum Domini', id est quia annus quatuor tempora habet, ostendit quatuor Evangelistas: et duodecim menses, duodecim apostolos ostendit.*[517] On a more general level, most Hiberno-Latin prefaces on the fourfold Gospel refer to this quaternity. It appears in the Reference Bible, Vienna 940, and *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum*, sometimes combined with the activities of the four Evangelists (*arat, seminat, inrigat, incrementum dat*).[518] The quaternity has an ancient history. Jerome mentions it in his Homilies on Ezechiel, in association with the four elements, four cardinal virtues and four directions or parts of the earth.[519]

The link between the unity represented by the four seasons, signifying the Evangelists and the 12 months, representative of the apostles, recurs in other Hiberno-Latin works. Jennifer O' Reilly has drawn attention to a short exegetical text on the four Evangelists on fol.9r of the Gospels of Máel Brigte, a 12th century Irish work.[520] The text, like other elements in this Gospel book, reflects much older Irish exegesis and resembles the preface to the Gospels in the Irish Reference Bible. After mentioning the seasons and activities associated with the Evangelists, the writer comments, *His . iiii . te(m)poribus annus domini acceptabilis cum duadeno ap(osto)lorum nu(mer)o q(ua)si . xii . m(en)sib(us) completur.* Dr. O'Reilly remarks,

> The image of the unity and completeness of the four seasons of the year as a means of demonstrating the divinely ordained nature of the four Gospels is further detailed by the concluding lines in the *Evangelia* text in Harley 1802 which briefly allude to the twelve apostles whose number accords with the number of months contained within that evangelical image of completeness.[521]

---

[517] Ps-Jerome, *Expositio IV Euangeliorum*, PL 30, 570.
[518] Paris, B.N. lat. 11561, fol.132v/a, Vienna. 940, fol. 18r, *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum* CCSL 108 B, 217. See also R. MacNally (1971) 119-120 and J. O'Reilly (1995) 290-309, 292, 296 for discussion of this quaternity. It is also mentioned on a number of occasions in J O' Reilly (1998) 49-94, 57, 60, 69, 82 etc.
[519] Jerome, *Commentariorum in Hiezechielem, Hom.* I, I, 6-8, CCSL 75, 12-14, cited by J. O' Reilly (1998) 49-94, 57.
[520] J. O' Reilly (1995) 290-309.
[521] Ibid. 296.

An interesting point emerges here. Harley's reference to the apostles, absent from the Reference Bible preface, is one of 'the brief additions which may be paralleled in other strands within the Hiberno-Latin exegetical tradition on the Gospels'.[522] The use of the wording *annus domini acceptabilis* suggests this addition originated in a Hiberno-Latin commentary on Luke. The exegetical text on fol. 9r is directly followed by a poem on the apostles in Old Irish, also an abbreviation of an earlier Hiberno-Latin work.[523] It describes the distinctive appearance of each of the twelve. One sees how the concern to represent difference and harmony in exegesis on the Gospels also applies to commentary on the apostles. A visual witness to the shared nature of the evangelical and apostolic series is the decoration of canon series with portraits of the apostles in a number of Insular related Gospel books.[524]

The commentary on Luke in Clm. 6235 uses other evangelical quaternities to reconcile Matthew and Luke's versions of the Sermon on the Mount. The way the eight beatitudes of Matthew relate to Luke's four is like the eight souls contained in the four cornered ark of Noah.[525] We read, *hoc . est . quia arca . quadrata . iiii angulis . octo animas continuit* (fol. 54r/b). The fourfold nature of the Lucan beatitudes leads the commentator to associate them with the four cornered temple, the four letters in the name Adam, the quadriform world and its directions and the four virtues: *prudentia, iustitia, temperantia, fortitudo*. While these quaternities appear in both the patristic and Insular tradition, the closest parallel to their use in this context is in two other Hiberno-Latin works.

The *Expositio IV Euangeliorum's* commentary on Luke associates its beatitudes with the quaternity of cardinal virtues and the four parts of the world. While the

---

[522] Ibid. 295. Note also the appearance of the phrase *annus acceptabilis* in the seventh century computistical text *De ratione conputandi*. See *Cummian's Letter De controuersia in Paschali' together with a related Irish computistical tract De ratione conputandi*, Maura Walsh and Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (eds) *Studies and Texts* 86 (Toronto 1985) 154. I am grateful to Dáibhí Ó Cróinín for this reference.

[523] Ibid. 300-301. This text is also discussed by Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, '*Cummianus Longus* and the Iconography of Christ and the Apostles in Early Irish Literature' in D. Ó Corráin, L. Breatnach and K. McCone (ed), *Sages, Saints and Scholars: Celtic Studies in Honour of James Carney* (Maynooth 1989) 268-79, 271-2.

[524] Apostolic Canon Tables appear for example in the Trier and Maeseyck Gospel Books. See Chapter 9, 199-202, for further discussion of this theme.

souls in the ark are interpreted as a figure of Matthew's blessings, a different link is made to it in the historical commentary. We read simply, *Item octo ad octo animas pertinet, quae fuerunt in arca Noe, per quas omnes genus humanus ostendit.*[526] The (*Commentarius in Lucam*) in Vienna 997 sees the Lucan beatitudes as redeeming mankind from the curse of Adam. The beatitudes are a figure of the Gospels themselves and are associated not only with the four virtues, but also with the four winds which winnow away the stubble and chaff of physical and spiritual sins. The commentator writes, *Hi sunt quattuor euangelii, uenti qui inutiles stipulas et uanissimas paleas uitiorum corporis et animae uentilare possunt.*[527] We have already seen how the image of the evangelical beasts explains the relationship of Matthew and Luke's blessings. Responding to the question, *Quae est dissimilitudo narrationis inter Mattheum ac Lucam*?, the commentator writes

> *Quia Mattheus octo, Lucas quattuor inponit benedictiones, nisi ut ala alterius animalis alterum supereminet. Et in hac breuissima narratione Lucae longa Matthei narratio conpletur.*[528]

The 'Historical Commentary on Luke' reinforces the use of quaternities as an expression of evangelical difference and harmony, by generally identifying the Gospels with the number four. An example occurs on fol.62r/b. This relates to Lk. 19: 8, where Zaccheus claims, 'Half of my goods I give to the poor and if I have wronged any man in anything, I restore him four fold'. The commentator links the first part of this statement with the Old Testament, specifically Is. 58: 7, 'Deal thy bread to the hungry..'. The four-fold restoration belongs to the New Testament however. We read, *Do pauperibus id* est *hic legitur in ueteri testamento ubi dicitur frange esurienti panem tuum. Do pauperibus et reddo quadruplum hic lex et prophetæ continentur. Reddo quadruplum hic nouum testamentum.* On fol. 51v/b, the 84 years of Anna, Lk. 2: 36-7, are seen to signify the eight books of the New Testament which contain the four Gospels.

---

[525] The association between the four rings of at each corner of the Ark and the Evangelists / canons was discussed in Chapter 6, 122-23.

[526] Ps-Jerome, *Expositio IV Euangeliorum*, PL 30, 571. The introduction to the Gospels in Angers 55, another Hiberno-Latin text, uses the four cornered ark containing the 8 souls as an image of the 8 beatitudes and the Gospels. See *Incipiunt quaestiones vel glosae in euangelio nomine*, CCSL 108 B, 136.

[527] (*Commentarius in Lucam*) CCSL 108 C, 50-1.

[528] Ibid. 51. This has already been cited in the context of the discussion of the *Expositio euangelii secundum Marcum* , Chapter 6, 110.

The seven years she lived with her husband while preserving her virginity correspond to the seven books of the Law.[529]

The Harmony of the Old and New Testaments

Both of these instances show not only the association of the Gospels with four, but also the way in which the commentator deals with the question of scriptural harmony, the difference and agreement between Old and New Testaments. The use of numerology to this end, as was evident in the exegesis of Anna , reappears in the text in the interpretation of the number 18 as the eight books of the New Testament combined with the Decalogue.[530] This happens twice in the commentary. First with reference to Lk. 13: 4, the eighteen on whom the tower of Siloe fell, and then again at Lk. 13: 11, where the 18 years which the woman bore a spirit of infirmity are interpreted merely as *decalogo et nouo testamento*. A similar exegesis of this passage is evident in the commentary on Luke in Vienna 997 which interprets 8 as the beatitudes reading, *Mulier haec sinagoga est, qui in terrena opera inclinatur per decalogi sermones et octo beatitudines contemnendas. Nec omnino poterat sursum respicere: Id est, ad praeterita patriarcharum et prophetarum opera non intendebat.*[531]

Eight is also a significant link in the commentary on Lk.2: 21, 'And after eight days were accomplished that the child should be circumcised' (fol. 51v/a). Christ's circumcision is explained with reference to Mt. 5: 17, 'Do not think I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil'. The discussion of this line in Vienna 940 has already made clear its significance in demonstrating the harmony of the Old and New Testaments.[532] The Lucan commentator continues by linking the eighth day of circumcision to Matthew's beatitudes. This is not just because they are followed by Mt. 5: 17, but also

---

[529] The (*Commentarius in Lucam*) in Vienna 997 offers a different but complementary interpretation of this theme, *Usque ad annos LXXXIIII: Id est, ad octenam beatitudinem euangelii et usque ad quattuor principales uirtutes: temperantiam, prudentiam, fortitudinem, iustitiam.* The seven years are left untreated. See CCSL 108 C, 20.

[530] See Chapter 5, 82, for a different Christological interpretation of the number 18.

[531] (*Commentarius in Lucam*), CCSL 108 C, 83. Ambrose seems to be a possible source for the interpretation of 13: 11 in this way. See the *Expositio euangelii secundum Lucam*, CCSL 14, 274.

[532] See Chapter 7, 139-45.

because the eighth beatitude relates to suffering. We read, *In octauo enim beatitudinem circumcisio . est . ut dicitur beati qui persecutionem patiuntur . Et post octauo beatitudines matheus dicit Non ueni soluerem legem.*

The commentator demonstrates the harmony of the eighth day by next citing the image of the *iota / apex*: *In circumcisione iota in beatitudinibus apex inuenitur.* This link reflects the association of the *iota* / Old Testament with exterior observance and the *apex* /New Testament with the interior motivation, which was given some attention in the previous chapter.[533] The exegesis on Lk. 2: 21 closes with a look to the future. Christ's circumcision is seen to represent the blood of all those persecuted up to Judgement Day. Alternatively, it signifies Judgement Day itself, when all who are superfluous to Christ's spiritual body will be cut away. Following the above comment on the *iota* and *apex*, we read, *et ideo circumciditur quia significat genus sanguinem . In persecutionibus usque iudicium . In septimo dies requies In octauo circumcisio . hoc est in iudicium circumcidunt . superflua a corpore xpi hoc est . infideles.*

The above discussion has described some of the ways the 'Historical Commentary on Luke' deals with the question of difference and harmony. Most significant among these is the use of number. The text uses evangelical quaternities and continually identifies the Gospels with four. Number, along with the image of the *iota* and *apex*, also illustrates the harmony of Old and New Testaments. The following paragraphs discuss this text's use of the Eusebian canons and examine the extent to which they also function as an image of difference and concord.

The Comments on the Canons

There are five specific references to the canons in this text.[534] The first of these occurs on fol. 54r/a. The commentary asks, *Cur hic dum secundus canon uterque diuisus . est . id est . ut conueniat ad responsum . ceteris euangelistis*

---

[533] See Chapter 7, 144-45.

[534] These five all refer explicitly to the canons. A reference to Luke *propria* also occurs in the text and is discussed later on in this chapter.

because the eighth beatitude relates to suffering. We read, *In octauo enim beatitudinem circumcisio . est . ut dicitur beati qui persecutionem patiuntur . Et post octauo beatitudines matheus dicit Non ueni soluerem legem.*

The commentator demonstrates the harmony of the eighth day by next citing the image of the *iota / apex*: *In circumcisione iota in beatitudinibus apex inuenitur.* This link reflects the association of the *iota* / Old Testament with exterior observance and the *apex* /New Testament with the interior motivation, which was given some attention in the previous chapter.[533] The exegesis on Lk. 2: 21 closes with a look to the future. Christ's circumcision is seen to represent the blood of all those persecuted up to Judgement Day. Alternatively, it signifies Judgement Day itself, when all who are superfluous to Christ's spiritual body will be cut away. Following the above comment on the *iota* and *apex*, we read, *et ideo circumciditur quia significat genus sanguinem . In persecutionibus usque iudicium . In septimo dies requies In octauo circumcisio . hoc est in iudicium circumcidunt . superflua a corpore xpi hoc est . infideles.*

The above discussion has described some of the ways the 'Historical Commentary on Luke' deals with the question of difference and harmony. Most significant among these is the use of number. The text uses evangelical quaternities and continually identifies the Gospels with four. Number, along with the image of the *iota* and *apex*, also illustrates the harmony of Old and New Testaments. The following paragraphs discuss this text's use of the Eusebian canons and examine the extent to which they also function as an image of difference and concord.

The Comments on the Canons

There are five specific references to the canons in this text.[534] The first of these occurs on fol. 54r/a. The commentary asks, *Cur hic dum secundus canon uterque diuisus . est . id est . ut conueniat ad responsum . ceteris euangelistis*

---

[533] See Chapter 7, 144-45.
[534] These five all refer explicitly to the canons. A reference to Luke *propria* also occurs in the text and is discussed later on in this chapter.

quia ipsi forte non simul iungunt . licet hic ordine dicuntur. The question refers to verses 12 and 13 of Luke Chapter 6, which are divided into two different canon sections, although both belong to Canon II. Their division is explained with reference to the order of narration of the other Evangelists. Matthew and Mark do not treat of these verses together, hence the distinction in Luke's account. This question is typical of one way this text looks at the canons. The approach is technical and detailed, the Eusebian system closely scrutinized.

Another kind of approach is presented on fol. 55r/b. The context is Luke 7: 36, 'One of the Pharisees desired to eat with him...'. We read, *Rogabat* autem *eum primus canon pro similitudine uerborum* tamen pro *qualitate* proprium cum *luca.* According to the commentator, this section is assigned to Canon I on the grounds of verbal similarity. By virtue of its 'quality', however, it should be placed with that distinctive to Luke's account, i.e. in Canon X.

The distinction between different kinds of similarity, between the sense or quality of a thing and its surface appearance, is something also encountered in the discussion of the canons in the Irish Reference Bible. We have seen in Chapter 6 how this text identifies three *qualitates canonum* (*eadem*, *uicina* and *sola*) drawing on Jerome's description of the canons *Novum Opus*.[535] Each of these qualities has a further two modes, sense and surface. The Reference Bible commentator provides illustrations; a similarity (*uicina* not *eadem*) of sense links the Matthew and John *incipits* in Canon I , although outwardly different. We read, *In his capitulis quaedam uicinitas sensum depraehenditur et tamen nec eadem esse sensu possunt . Superficie autem longe dissimilia sunt . et tamen initio canon.*[536]

The third reference to the canons in the Lucan commentary continues the same kind of thought. This occurs on fol. 56v/b-57r/a in the context of Luke 10: 25, 'Behold a certain lawyer stood up tempting him...'. The placement of this section in Canon II is commented on thus, *matheus non dicit temptans eum non sunt eadem licet uicina sed pro similitudine uerborum canon coniungit.* The

[535] See Chapter 6, 125-27 and Appendix N, 266, lines 34-7.

commentator points out that this section in Luke is not the same as that in Matthew, for he does not relate the Pharisee as tempting Christ. The passages are admittedly related to each other, but they are not the same and are placed in Canon II by virtue of verbal similarity.

The canons are referred to for the fourth time on fol. 58v/a: *Dixit autem similitudinem hoc uero et similitudo eorum . hoc faciem hoc quintus canon ut illud quod in matheo dicitur Ne solliciti sitis animae uestrae et reliqua.* The section in question is Lk. 12: 22-31 which begins, 'And he said to his disciples: Therefore I say to you, be not solicitous for your life what you shall eat; nor for your body what you shall put on'. The commentator does not criticize this canon selection. In fact he seems to be emphasising the similarity between it and Mt. 6: 25-35, 'Therefore I say to you, be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body what you shall put on. Is not life more than meat: and the body more than raiment?'.

The final direct reference to the canons is on fol. 59v/a. It continues the tone of the comment on fol. 58v/a, justifying the placement of a Lucan section in parallel with one from Matthew. The section being referred to corresponds to Luke 13:14, 'And the ruler of the synagogue, (being angry that Jesus had healed on the sabbath)...'. It is seen as complementing Mt. 12: 9 'And when he had passed from thence, he came into their synagogue...'. The commentator remarks, *hoc proprium licet quintus canon coniu(n)git pro similitudine salutis in sabbato.*

The choice of sections commented on here seems surprising. Not one of them refers to the Eusebian treatment of a traditional 'test-case' for evangelical harmony, e.g. the genealogy of Christ or the Passion. The first reference, concerned with a point of canon division, occurs just before the Sermon on the Mount. In the discussion of the discrepancies between Luke and Matthew's versions of the Sermon, the tables are not mentioned. There seems to be a clear distinction between the theological discussion of evangelical harmony and the analysis of the canons' technical structure. This point is discussed further in the next section which looks at the ways differences between individual passages of

[536] Discussed in Chapter 6, 126-27. Appendix N, 267-68, fol. 131v/a-b, lines 36-13.

the Gospels are commented on. It examines the extent to which ideas which underlie the criticism of the tables also inform the treatment of this issue.

Reading Difference and Harmony

One way in which this author deals with the issue of the quadripartite Gospel is evident at the end of the text. On fol. 65v/b, after Lk. 24: 49 has been quoted, we read, *Hiic dimittuntur multa quae in alio euangelista pleniter dicuntur ut dicit multa quæ non sunt scripta in hoc libro.* Much has been left out in this place which is treated of more fully by another Evangelist, as he says (perhaps a reference to John's *explicit*) there are many things not written in this book. There is an underlying belief that the true sequence of events can be constructed only by reading all four accounts. The patristic precedent for such thought is found in *De consensu euangelistarum.* It views the evangelical accounts as complementary, as opposed to contradictory. Augustine writes, 'Nothing... like a want of harmony can be made out between the two writers merely on the grounds that the latter states what the former omits, or the former mentions what the latter leaves unnoticed'.[537]

Complementary reading of the Gospels is evident throughout the text. A number of occasions will be cited here. On fol. 56r/a Mark's Gospel fills in Luke's account of the healing of Jairus' daughter: *Surge hoc quia marcus dicit tabia comin . Id* est *filia surge.* John's account is used at an earlier stage to elucidate the Lucan chronology. We read *In primo sabbato curatur paraclitus secundum iohannem . in secundo uelluntur spicæ* (fol. 53v/b). A further use of John occurs just before this section. Commenting on the fish which broke through the nets in Lk. 5: 6, the author writes, *Captura* autem *alter cata iohannem post resurrectionem.* That which can only be learned from Luke's account is also indicated. On fol. 64r/b in the account of Christ before the chief priests his words, 'If I shall tell you, you will not believe me....' (Lk. 22: 67) are glossed,

[537] Augustine, *De consensu euangelistarum*, II, 19, CSEL 43, 148, S. D. F. Salmond (trans) NPNF 6, 1st series, 113. For an analysis of Augustine's approach, see Rodger Ray, 'Augustine's *De consensu Evangelistarum* and the Historical Education of the Venerable Bede', *Studia Patristica* 16 (1979) 557-563 and T. O' Loughlin (1997) 95-111.

hoc in luca proprium, a wording perhaps echoing the title to Canon X, to which these lines belong.

In some cases, where the Gospels seem to directly contradict each other, Augustinian thought is also followed. The evangelical accounts are different because the Evangelists are beginning at different, but complementary, points. So for example, the difference in the openings of Mark and Luke's accounts is explained as follows, *Quia marcus a profecia lucas a lege incipit*.[538] Similarly, the standard explanation for the varying genealogies of Matthew and Luke is cited *alius secundum legem alius naturam dicit*.[539] Finally, as we have seen, the commentary on the Sermon on the Mount illustrates how the eight beatitudes of Matthew are contained in the four supplied by Luke. Augustine comments as follows on Matthew and Luke's versions of the sermon, 'their modes of narrating of it being indeed different, but the truth being given with equal fidelity by the two writers in all that concerns the facts and sayings which both of them have recounted'.[540]

The Augustinian approach is not employed consistently however. Other cases of evangelical discrepancy are merely noted, without further explanation. A difference in tone is identified on fol. 53r/b where Matthew's account of Jesus preaching in the synagogue in Nazareth and the line 'Is this not the son of Joseph?' (Lk. 4: 22, Mt. 13: 55) is seen as more grudging than Luke's. The story of Christ healing the man at Genesar in Luke 8: 26-39 is contrasted with Matthew's account of a number of people being healed in this place (Mt. 14: 34-36). Matthew is seen to have told the more accurate account, although no reason is given for this. Similar factual discrepancies are noted concerning the transfiguration. Luke tells us this happens eight days after Christ's questioning of the disciples as to his identity, while the others say six days have elapsed. This is noted on fol. 56r/b reading, *Fere dies octo . id* est . *pro aliis dicentib*us

---

[538] This has been discussed in a number of places in the thesis. See Chapter 1, 21-22 for patristic exegesis on this topic. A Hiberno-Latin treatment of this passage occurs in the *Praefacio Secundum Marcum*, which shows the different but harmonious ways each Gospel describes Christ's identity. See Chapter 6, 111.

[539] On the treatment of the genealogies in Insular exegesis and art see J. O' Reilly (1998) 73-88.

[540] Augustine, *De consensu euangelistarum* II, 19, CSEL 43, 148; S. D. F. Salmond (trans) NPNF 6, 1st series, 125.

post dies sex. Finally, on fol.65r/a it is mentioned how Luke records the women at the tomb being spoken to by two men, while only one appears in Mark's version.[541]

The way these details are noted, but not discussed, is interesting. In part it may reflect the problems they present to another exegetical method common in Insular commentaries. Thomas O' Loughlin has pointed out Adomnán's use of the questions of *res, locus, tempus, persona* in reconciling differences in the evangelical accounts of Christ's 'Apocalyptic Discourse'.[542] This method is also clearly evident in a commentary on Luke contained in Vienna 997. On Lk. 1: 5 *Fuit in diebus Herodis*, we read *Mos est scripturae diuinae locum et tempus et personam ponere*;[543] Lk. 2: 1 is commented on thus: *Factum est in diebus illis. Adiungitur ad locum ubi dicitur impletum est tempus pariendi. Confirmatio in tempore et in persona et in loca fit. Tempus: in diebus; persona: Caesaris; locus: totus mundus*.[544] Many of the examples from the 'Historical Commentary on Luke', cited in the previous paragraph, complicate the answers to questions regarding person, place and time. The fact that these discrepancies are mentioned but not explained may signal the deficiencies in using this method for reconciling the evangelical texts.

A second possible reason for the lack of comment is found at the opening of the commentary. On fol. 51v/b–52r/a it is noted that while Luke recounts that the Holy Family return from Bethlehem to Nazareth in Galilee, Matthew records their flight into Egypt. We read, *...et non si contradicit matheus lucæ . sed hoc testimonium maioribus inuestigari relinquimus difficilis historia sed sacramenta non ammittit*. The commentator claims firstly that he is not capable of

---

[541] A more detailed comparison of this passage appears in Ps-Jerome's *Expositio IV Euangeliorum, Et ecce duo viri steterunt, in Matthaeo unus angelus, in Marco adolescens, in Joanne duo angeli, in Luca duo uiri dicuntur, id est, multa itinera mulierum, et diuersae sunt uisiones: uel in unum, iterum et una uisio et dissimiles sunt narrationes euangelistarum*, PL 30, 578.

[542] T. O' Loughlin (1997) 95-111. He provides a brief summary of this in 'Adomnán's *De Locis Sanctis*: a Textual Emendation and an Additional Source Identification', *Ériu* 48 (1997) 37-40 There is some discussion of *De Locis Sanctis* in Chapter 4, 69. Other comments on the use of the *res, locus, tempus, persona* method were made by B. Bischoff (1966), with some qualifying remarks by C. Stancliffe (1975) 361-70.

[543] (*Commentarius in Lucam*), CCSL 108 C, 4.

[544] (*Commentarius in Lucam*), CCSL 108 C, 13.

explaining this difference and will leave it to those greater than him (*maioribus*). This reflects an ancient tradition of the interpretation of Scripture evident for example in the works of Origen. In the preface to Book I of *De Principiis*, he explains that,

> The apostles delivered themselves with utmost clearness on certain points which they believed necessary to everyone...while on other subjects they merely stated the fact that things were so, keeping silent as to the manner or origin of their existence; clearly in order that the more zealous of their successors...might have a subject of exercise on which to display the fruit of their talents.[545]

The quote on fol. 51v/b is interesting, however, for the commentator shows an awareness of where a solution to this problem lies, namely in employing a more mystical kind of interpretation, reading beyond the level of *historia* to that of *sacramenta*. Origen's thought again provides an early patristic parallel,

> The Scriptures were written by the Spirit of God, and have a meaning, not such only as is apparent at first sight, but also another, which escapes the notice of most. For those (words) which are written are the forms of certain mysteries, and the images of divine things.[546]

Knowledge of four different senses of interpretation (one historical and three spiritual), were transmitted to the Insular world in works such as Cassian's *Conlationes* and Jerome's *Homilies on Ezechiel*. The classic example from the former concerns the interpretation of Jerusalem:

> And so these four previously mentioned figures coalesce, if we desire in one subject, so that one and the same Jerusalem can be taken in four senses: historically, as the city of the Jews; allegorically as the Church of Christ, anagogically as the heavenly city of God 'which is the mother of us all', tropologically, as the soul of man, which is frequently subject to praise or blame from the Lord under this title.[547]

The Vienna commentary on Luke contains a theoretical expression of these senses. The turtle doves mentioned in Lk. 2: 24 are seen as a figure of divine Scripture when linked with Ps. 67, 14, 'you shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and the hinder parts of her back with the paleness of gold'.

---

[545] Origen, *De Principiis*, F. Crombie (trans), ANF 4 (repr. Grand Rapids 1994) 239.
[546] Ibid. 240.
[547] Cassian *Conlationes* 14,8 M. Petschenig (ed), CSEL, 13 (Vienna 1886) 405; E.C.S. Gibson (trans) NPNF 11, 2nd series (repr. Grand Rapids1991) 438. Bede quotes this example in his treatise on allegory in *De Schematibus et Tropis* II, ii (ed) C.B. Kendall, CCSL 123 A (Turnhout 1975) 169. In his commentary on the tabernacle, Bede interprets the four feet of its table as the four senses of scripture, see *De Tabernaculo*, CCSL 119, 25. Cassian's example is also included in the Reference Bible preface, Paris B.N. lat 11561, fol. 135v/a, lines 29-35. Beryl Smalley provides a general introduction to the different levels of interpretation in Chapter 1 of her *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (3rd ed.) (Oxford 1983) 1-36. See also A. Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition* (Oxford 1981). For Bede's interpretative method see especially Chapter 3 of G. H. Brown 's *Bede the Venerable* (Boston 1987).

It is asked, *Quid argenti color nisi eloquentiam diuinae historiae significat? Per auri autem formam sensus triplicem spiritalem indicat idest tropologiam, anangogen, allegoriam.*[548]

The quaternity of senses also appears in the preface to the Reference Bible.[549] In the historical commentary on Luke, a simpler distinction between the historical and the spiritual usually reconciles differences between the Gospels.[550] On fol. 59v/b commenting on Lk. 13: 35 and Mt. 23: 39, 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord', we read *donec dicatis uerbis ad historiam* autem *ad sensum* autem *in matheo* quia *ad fidem pertinet*. Matthew and Luke are again compared on fol. 62v/b. Christ's words 'you shall find the colt of an ass' (Lk. 19: 30) are commented on as follows, *hic matheus historicam. Lucas sacramentum seruat*. Finally the need for a mystical interpretation of the *denarius* in Lk. 20: 24, 'Whose image and inscription hath it?' is pointed out with reference to the treatment of this line in a commentary on Matthew, *in eorum questionibus sunt scintillæ spiritales* quia haec *imago mistice intelligitur ut in matheo diximus*.[551]

It is this understanding of the need to go beyond the literal to a more spiritual interpretation which links the exegesis on evangelical difference with this commentator's criticism of the canons. In the latter he accuses Eusebius of creating only literal parallels, without acknowledging differences in spiritual meaning. The Reference Bible's explication of the various *qualitates canonum* and its modes serves thus also as a guide to understanding levels of evangelical harmony, something already mentioned in Chapter 6 and discussed further in the following pages.

---

[548] (*Commentarius in Lucam*) CCSL 108 C, 18. This derives from Jerome's *Commentarioli in psalmos*, LXVII, G. Morin (ed), CCSL 72 (Turnhout 1959) 214. See Martin McNamara (1984) 364-66 for a discussion of these lines and of different levels of interpretation employed in Irish psalm commentaries.

[549] It devotes three whole columns to a treatise on the four senses, c.f. Paris, B.N. lat. 11561, fol. 135r/a-135v/b.

[550] This is in common with a number of other Hiberno-Latin works, if one follows B. Bischoff (1966) 221. He writes, 'Recht unterschiedlich sind in dieser Literatur die Methoden und Ziele der Auslegung. Der mehrfache, und zwar besonders der vierfache Schriftsinn ist bekannt...In der Praxis wird meist zwischen *historia* und *sensus* geschieden; in diesem sind moralischer und allegorischer Sinn häufig zusammengefaßt'.

[551] See B. Bischoff (1966) 252-3 for comments on this 'lost' commentary on Matthew.

The Distinction between *Sensus* and *Superficie*

The use of the words *sensus* and *superficie* to interpret the Scripture appears in a number of patristic commentaries. In *De resurrectione mortuorum*, Tertullian writes, 'Divine Reason...lies in the very pith and marrow (*medulla*) of things, not on the surface and very often is at variance with appearances'.[552] Augustine thus describes his difficulty in commenting on Psalm 118:

> For in proportion as it seemeth more open, so much the more deep doth it appear to me; so that I cannot show how deep it is. For in others, which are understood with difficulty, although the sense lie hid in obscurity, yet the obscurity itself appeareth; but in this, not even this is the case; since it is superficially such, that it seemeth not to need an expositor, but only a reader and listener.[553]

In the *Conlationes*, Cassian reports the following speech by Serenus:

> The authority of Holy Scripture says on those points on which it would inform us some things so plainly and clearly even to those who are utterly void of understanding, that not only are they not veiled in the obscurity of any hidden meaning, but do not even require the help of any explanation, but carry their meaning and sense on the surface of the words and letters: but some things are so concealed and involved in mysteries as to offer us an immense field for skill and care in the discussion and explanation of them.[554]

In the Insular world, Bede often used the *sensus / superficie* distinction. In his commentary on Proverbs a striking metaphor explains these two levels of scriptural interpretation. Bede likens surface interpretation to honey, spiritual interpretation to the sweetness extracted from honeycomb. We read,

> *Sed hoc inter utriusque significantiam distat quia mel quod in promptu est ad comedendum moralem litterae superficiem insinuat fauus autem in quo mel de cera exprimitur allegoricam locutionem figurate denuntiat ubi subducto litterae uelamine suavitas sensus spiritalis aliquanto cum labore uel mora percipitur.*[555]

In his commentary on the Song of Songs Bede not only refers to *sensus* and *superficie* but also links the interpretation of honeycomb with the richness of scriptural interpretation.[556] Cant. 4:11, 'Your lips my spouse are dripping with honeycomb', is commented on as follows:

---

[552] Tertullian, *De resurrectione mortuorum* III, J. Borleffs (ed), CCSL 2 (Turnhout 1954) 925; P. Holmes (trans), ANF 3 (repr. Grand Rapids, 1989) 547-8.
[553] Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos CI-CL*, CCSL 40 1664-5; A. Clevland Coxe (trans), NPNF 8, 1st series (repr. Grand Rapids, 1996) 560.
[554] Cassian, *Conlationes*, 7, 3, E.C.S. Gibson (trans), NPNF 11, 2nd series, 376.
[555] Bede, *In prouerbia Salomonis libri III*, II, 24: 13, D. Hurst (ed), CCSL 119 B (Turnhout 1983) 121.
[556] Bede, *In cantica canticorum*, I, 1: 13, I, 2: 10, D. Hurst (ed), CCSL 119 B (Turnhout 1983) 206, 221.

> Honey in the wax is meaning of the divine utterances in the letter, which is rightly called dripping honeycomb: for the honeycomb drips when it has more honey than the wax containers can hold, because such is the fecundity of the holy Scriptures that a verse which is usually written within a brief line could fill many pages, if it were examined by scrutinizing the expressions more diligently for the great sweetness they more interiorly contain.[557]

Bede goes on to give the example of the different interpretations of Jerusalem according to the four senses.

In the *Retractatio in actus apostolorum*, drawing on the same kind of imagery as Tertullian, Bede writes how the fruit of ecclesiastical teaching is shown to us not only in the surface of the letter, but also, if one could understand perfectly, one would have the pith and marrow (*medulla*), which is laden with the goodness of spiritual meaning.[558] The preface to the Reference Bible also draws on this image, the contemplation of the medulla described as characteristic of *allegoria mistica*.[559]

The way in which the Reference Bible comments on sense and surface seems influenced not only by exegetical, but also grammatical works. Two works by Irish witers in the Carolingian Empire use this distinction to comment on Donatus' *Ars Maior*, the text which formed the basis of the Irish Latin curriculum.[560] Both Murethach and Sedulius' 'exegetical grammars' include the line, *Litteratura debet esse in oratione, ut congruam constructionem partium in superficie retineat; sensus, ut plenum habeat intellectum; accentus, ut proprium in loco tenorem uindicet*.[561] Murethach's *In Donati artem maiorem* also speaks of the two modes of sense and surface in commenting on *De uerbo* and this

---

[557] Ibid. I., 4: 11, CCSL 119 B, 260.

[558] Bede, *Retractatio in actus apostolorum*, 28: 30, M. Laistner (ed), CCSL 121 (Turnhout 1983) 163. The Latin reads, *Qua expositione docuit cetera quoque quae in hoc uolumine vel de ipso apostolo Paulo uel de aliis quibusque scripta sunt non in superficie tantum litterae fructum nobis ecclesiasticae praemonstrare doctrinae, uerum etiam, si quis perfecte intellexerit, medullam sensus spiritalis uirtute habere grauidam.*

[559] Paris, B. N. lat. 11561, fol. 135r/b-135v/a.

[560] For a general introduction to Donatus and to the teaching of Latin in Ireland see D. Ó Cróinín (1995) 174-176, 183-186 and V. Law (1982).

[561] Murethach, *In Donati artem maiorem*, L. Holtz (ed), CCCM 40 (Turnhout 1977) 46. Sedulius Scottus, *In Donati artem maiorem*, B. Löfstedt (ed), CCSL 40 B (Turnhout 1977) 57.

parallels the Reference Bible's use of this pair as modes of the *qualitates canonum*.[562]

As mentioned in Chapter 6, the conclusion to the Reference Bible's treatment of the tables also reflects the distinction between their sense and surface. The commentator writes, *ideo autem species canonum . de foris ostendere euangelium dicitur quia nihil de qualitate interna doctrina significat nisi tantum concentum euangelistarum*.[563] The canons show the outside (or *superficie*) of the Gospels. They contribute to the understanding of the Gospels' internal teaching (*sensus*) only in one way, with reference to the harmony of the Gospels.

The comments on the canons in the *Historica inuestigatio euangelii secundum Lucam* explore the way in which the tables teach of this *concentum euangelistarum*. The author's occasional criticism of the kind of harmony they construct, when based only on a harmony of surface rather than sense, shows a close involvement with and understanding of the Eusebian system. While other Hiberno-Latin works have illustrated such an understanding, the appearance of these comments on the canons in the main body of the Lucan text, used alongside more traditional exegetical tools such as numerology, illustrates how the tables have become an integral part of the Insular treatment of the question of evangelical difference and harmony.

---

[562] Murethach , *In Donati artem maiorem*, CCCM 40, 134. He writes, *Propterea, quia duobus dicitur modis, uel quod cadat superficies siue quod cadat sensus. In nomine namque et litteratura cadit et sensus sicuti doctus nominatiuus casus est et nominationem ostendit, genetiuus uero docti, ecce cecidit et sensus et superficies.*

[563] Paris, B.N. Lat. 11561, fol.131 v/b, lines 30-35, discussed in Chapter 6, 108-09.

Conclusion to Part II

The last five chapters examined the treatment of the Eusebian canon tables in Hiberno-Latin literature. Bernhard Bischoff's 'Wendepunkte in der Geschichte der lateinischen Exegese im Frühmittelalter' provided the starting point. In this article Bischoff identified attention to the canons as symptomatic of a Hiberno-Latin text. The first part of Chapter 4 briefly described the nature of 'Wendepunkte' and its historiography. It was noted that while a number of Bischoff's symptoms have featured in subsequent research, no such attention has been given to the Eusebian series. With this in mind, the second part of this chapter outlined the 'Wendepunkte' texts which contain Eusebian references. These texts, dated between the seventh and eighth centuries, vary both in genre and in the amount of attention they give to the tables.

Chapter 5 was devoted to a discussion of Ailerán's *Canon Evangeliorum*. The chapter revealed how the canons functioned as a significant image of harmony in seventh-century Ireland. The poem describes the tables as conversations between the evangelical beasts. This shows how the series was seen to contain the harmony of both the Gospels and scripture as a whole. The sense in which the ten canons represent the Decalogue of the New Covenant is reinforced in the poem by the use of Old Testament harmony images, such as the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, to express the number of parallels contained in the individual tables.

Chapter 6 examined the treatment of the canons in Hiberno-Latin prefatory material. The first part of the chapter discussed the layout of each preface. This revealed how the canons were fully integrated into the Hiberno-Latin approach to the Gospel text. The second half of Chapter 6 examined the content of each preface's section on the canons. Hiberno-Latin exegetes gave significant attention to questions of the canons' number, order and measure. *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum* and the preface to the Reference Bible also provide a series of examples from each canon and this raises questions about the kind of tables available to these scholars. In addition the preface to the Reference Bible devotes considerable attention to a discussion of the *qualitates canonum*, the

different kinds of harmony which lie at the basis of each parallel. The preface's discussion of these *qualitates* under the modes of *sensus* and *superficie* showed how the canons' parallels were understood to operate on both literal and spiritual levels.

Chapter 7 discussed the uncial titles referring to the canons which are included in the main text of the (*Commentarius in Mattheum*) in Vienna 940. The first part of the chapter discussed these titles' placement and layout. It highlighted the significance of the appearance of the first title at Mt. 3,3. While the canons were clearly the dominant way of viewing the Gospels in this text, the titles occasionally refer to other interpretative approaches, *ordo / accedens*, the *qualtitates euangelii* and the *iota / apex*. The second part of Chapter 7 examined each of these approaches and showed, especially in the case of the *iota / apex*, that they operate in similar ways to the Eusebian series.

Chapter 8 looked at references to the canons contained in the *Historica inuestigatio euangelii secundum Lucam*. This commentary is striking in that it is occasionally critical of the canon parallels. This criticism, which is based on the tension between the literal and spiritual reading of the Gospel text, has much in common with the Reference Bible's treatment of the *qualitates canonum*. The way in which this text incorporates its comments on the canons alongside other means of reconciling the evangelical accounts, shows again how the series had become an integrated part of Hiberno-Latin exegesis on the four-fold Gospel.

Hiberno-Latin discussion of the Eusebian series is clearly inspired by patristic source material, but there is also much that is original. These exegetes highlight the canons' number, order and measure. The idea of the tables as an intermediary between ways of reading the Gospel text, present in some of the commentary texts, gives new impetus to the liminal role they have been seen to play. The most significant finding to emerge from these five chapters is the sense of the integration of the Eusebian series into the general interpretation of the Gospel text. This is evident both in the use of the canons as a way of reading the Gospels and in the association of the tables with a range of harmony images.

The final chapter of this thesis shows how this association was also made visually in the illumination of the canons in Hiberno-Saxon Gospel books. Part II's discussion of the treatment of the tables in Hiberno-Latin literature provides a cultural and intellectual background for considering the Gospel book evidence. It is clear that the decorative emphasis given to the series in manuscripts of the Gospels can now be set in the context of a literary milieu which understood and celebrated Eusebius' tables as an instrument of evangelical harmony.

Part III

The Iconography of the Eusebian Canon Tables in Insular Gospel Books

Chapter 9

The Iconography of the Eusebian Canon Tables in Insular Gospel Books

Introduction

This chapter examines the decoration of the Eusebian canons in Insular manuscripts of the Gospels prior to 800 AD.[564] These books provide a literal explanation of the Eusebian series by prefacing the tables with one or more of the patristic texts discussed in Part I of the thesis. They also express their understanding of the canons in visual form. The unchanging nature of the prefaces included in these manuscripts contrasts with the various ways the tables are illuminated. Contemporary understanding of the Eusebian series is often indicated through this visual decoration.

While Ailerán's *Canon Evangeliorum* is the only Hiberno-Latin text included as an additional preface in one of the books discussed here, this chapter illustrates the shared interpretation of the canons underlying the commentary texts and the series' illumination in Insular Gospel books. Both exegetes and artists stress the significance of the canons as an image of harmony and draw attention to questions of number, measure and weight. In addition, as in the commentary literature, visual exegesis on the tables functions on a variety of interpretative levels, literal and spiritual.

The chapter divides into a number of parts. The first part compares the decoration of Insular tables with the Late Antique archetype as reconstructed by Nordenfalk. It also sets the illumination of the series in the context of these books' overall decorative programmes. The chapter's second part briefly discusses canon text and marginal Eusebian references. The discussion then moves to examine canon tables with non-architectural frames and looks at the extent to which these frames carry iconographic significance. The largest part of the chapter is devoted to a discussion of Insular tables with arch frames.

[564] A complete list of these manuscripts and their layout is contained in Appendix O, 269-71.

Attention is given to these tables' form, their filling ornament and their inclusion of figural representations. Each of these elements is shown to express visually aspects of the Insular understanding of the Eusebian series.

Insular Tables and the Late Antique Tradition.

In the Introduction to *Die Spätantiken Kanontafeln* Nordenfalk explains how his work was inspired by the fact that the Eusebian series often comprised the only form of decoration in Late Antique Gospel books.[565] Late Antique artists viewed not only the tables themselves but also their explanatory text as part of this decorative sequence. The Rabbula Gospels and the Gospel Fragment in London 5111 preserve their versions of Eusebius' *Letter to Carpianus* within decorative frames (Pls. 17, 19). As well as decorating this text, Nordenfalk believed that the Greek prototype of Eusebius' series followed Canon X with a *tholos* illustration alluding to the Holy Sepulchre (Pl. 13). The inclusion of this image seemed to him highly appropriate. He writes

> Als Schlußseite der Kanones, die eine Zusammenfassung der Berichte der Evangelien von dem Leben und der Lehre Christi darstellen, würde jedenfalls eine Erinnerung an das Endziel des Erdlebens Christi und der Inbegriff der christlichen Erlösungshoffnung als durchaus sinnvoll erscheinen.[566]

Some variation on Nordenfalk's reconstructed prototype is evident in surviving Late Antique examples. The decorative programme of manuscripts was often expanded to include full-page miniatures relating to events in Christ's life.[567] Variation also occurred in the illumination of the Eusebian series with the appearance of an illustrated statement of the harmony of the Gospels, the so-called hypothesis statement, before the prefatory text.[568] The most famous of these statements is in the Rossano Gospels where a declaration of evangelical

---

[565] C. Nordenfalk (1938) 13. He writes, 'Ich habe mich dann für die Behandlung der spätantiken Kanontafeln entschieden, weil dieses Material die reichsten und für die spätantike Kunstgeschichte im allgemeinen wichtigsten Ergebnisse versprach'. A synopsis of *Die Spätantiken Kanontafeln* is contained in Appendix P, 272-83.

[566] C. Nordenfalk (1938) 108.

[567] A series of such illustrations is included at the beginning of the Rossano Gospels. The depictions of Christ raising Lazarus and the tale of the Good Samaritan are reproduced in Kurt Weitzmann, *Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination* (London 1977) Plates 29 and 32. See also William Loerke, 'The Miniatures of the Trial in the Rossano Gospels', *Art Bulletin* 43 (1961) 171-95.

[568] The origins and early medieval development of this representation is discussed by P. Underwood (1950) 43-138.

concord appears inside a circular wreath containing portraits of the Evangelists at its cardinal points (Pl. 22).[569]

The decoration of the Eusebian tables in Insular books reflects a number of elements of this Late Antique tradition. On some occasions, apart from the elaboration of Gospel *incipits*, the canons offer the only instance of decoration in a manuscript. An example of this is the Leningrad Gospels, which limits its illumination to twelve heavily ornamented almost 'baroque' tables (Pl. 38).[570] The canon tables were deemed worthy of ornament even in the most modest of manuscripts, such as Royal I. B. vii where, again, they are the only decorated passage besides the Gospel openings (Pl. 37).[571] In a book like the Augsburg Gospels, the tables occur with only one other miniature, a carpet page before the opening of John's Gospel (Pls. 39-40).[572]

Some difference between Insular and Late Antique artists is evident in their treatment of the prefatory material explaining the tables. In part this difference may be due to the inclusion of more prefatory texts in Insular books. The table contained in Appendix O clearly illustrates this point. Manuscripts belonging to the tradition exemplified by the Lindisfarne Gospels include *Novum Opus*, *Plures Fuisse* and *Eusebius to Carpianus* before the beginning of the canon series.

Another factor working against a common framing of preface and tables in Insular books is the fact that many of these manuscripts are laid out so that the text explaining the canons is separated from the series itself. Both Durrow and Kells include a set of Hebrew Names directly before the series, while Royal I. B. vii places Matthew's *argumentum*, *capitula* and Neopolitan feasts between the

---

[569] P. Underwood (1950) 109-110. See also J. O' Reilly (2001) 11.

[570] This draws on the description of the Leningrad tables by Françoise Henry, *Irish Art in the Early Christian Period* (London 1940) 134. She writes that in some manuscripts, including Leningrad, 'A more florid style, a sort of 'baroque' feeling, creeps in, leading to a profuse and flamboyant ornamentation'.

[571] Royal I.B.vii is significant in demonstrating how the canons were included in a book intended for regular use. On this see Richard Gameson, 'The Royal I. B. vii Gospels and English book production in the seventh and eighth centuries' in R. Gameson (ed) (1994) 24-52.

[572] The Augsburg Gospels' carpet page is discussed by Robert Stevick in *The Earliest Irish and English Bookarts* (Philadelphia 1994) 200-10 and in J. O' Reilly (1998) 49-94, 91-2.

end of Eusebius' letter and the opening of the tables. The most extreme example of this dislocation of texts occurs in the Cutbercht Gospels where the canon tables along with Evangelist portrait are included between Mt. 1: 1-17 and 1: 18.[573]

While Insular books do not give a common framing to the series and its prefaces, the significance of the prefatory texts is often emphasized by the elaborate decoration of their opening initials. In the Book of Durrow the initial to *Novum Opus* is larger than that which opens Matthew's Gospel and ornamented initials are attached to each of the prefaces in Lindisfarne (Pls. 27, 32). Within these texts, visual emphasis was placed on the listing of the Eusebian series. In Durrow this emphasis does not really become clear until the third entry, *In canone tertio*…. The beginning of this and subsequent entries (fols. 5v-6r) is enlarged and the words are more widely spaced than normal. In the Lindisfarne Gospels, *Novum Opus'* listing of the canons (fol. 5r) is again widely spaced. In this manuscript a formal harmony is achieved between the number of Evangelists contained in each canon and the number of lines its listing takes up: so four lines for the listing of Canon I, three for Canon II, two for Canon V etc.[574]

Paul Underwood has clearly shown how the tradition of prefacing the Eusebian series with a declaration of evangelical concord was picked up by Carolingian artists in the Fountain of Life illustration facing Canon I of the Soissons Gospels.[575] Insular artists also prefaced their tables with representations of harmony. The fragmentary Gospel book contained in the Utrecht Psalter seems to have opened its book with a hypothesis wreath echoing the Rossano miniature (Pl. 36).[576] Another form of harmony statement occurs in the Book of Kells, where the four evangelical symbols are placed in the left-hand column of fol. 1r, directly preceding the opening of the canon tables (Pl. 55).

---

[573] This dislocation is also significant in illustrating the way in which Matthew's genealogy of Christ was treated as a prefatory text. This point is discussed by J. O' Reilly (1998) 73-88, 78.
[574] The entry for Canon VI is an exception to this rule, as it occupies one line only. Canon X takes up five lines.
[575] P. Underwood (1950) 43-138.
[576] For further discussion of this illustration see Carol A. Farr, 'The Shape of Learning at Wearmouth-Jarrow: The Diagram Pages in the Codex Amiatinus' in J. Hawkes and S. Mills (ed), *Northumbria's Golden Age* (Stroud 1999) 336-44, 338 and also J. O' Reilly (2001) 11.

Other manuscripts include harmony representations as frontispieces to their general prefatory texts. The Trier Gospels begins on fol.1v with a four-symbols page which faces the opening of *Plures Fuisse* (Pl. 41). The opening of *Novum Opus,* the next text in the manuscript, is opposed by a tetramorph, another representation of Gospel harmony (Pl. 42). The placement of these images directly before the canon series shows how its harmony is not just one of the Gospels, but spans the whole Biblical canon. It has been predicted by the beasts in Ezechiel and will be present at the end of time. These illustrations also have a cosmological dimension. Jennifer O'Reilly has written the following concerning this manuscript's four-symbols page:

> The idea of Christ as the source and fount of the fourfold Gospel taken out to the four parts of the world is conveyed by the positioning of the beasts at the four corners and by the decorative golden interlace, which flows continuously from the central portrait medallion, along the four arms of the cross to the four cardinal points and into the border of the quadrangular world described by the image.[577]

The two Insular Bibles containing canons also preface the series with harmony miniatures. The Codex Amiatinus includes a *Maiestas Domini* representation opposite its opening to *Novum Opus* (Pl. 35).[578] Royal I. E.vi also began its Gospels with a full-page harmony miniature, now lost. This was faced by a large purple page inscribed with the words:

> This is the resplendent *quadriga,* light flowing by the grace of the Holy Spirit, illuminated through the mouth of the Lamb of God (and) in which the four leaders, with harmonious voice, celebrated in song the miracles of God.[579]

The inclusion of such material before the canons in these bibles parallels Carolingian books like the Codex Aureus of St. Emmeram which prefaces its first canon with a *Maiestas Domini* representation (Pl. 79).

While Insular manuscripts do not include the *tholos* representation at the end of their canon sequences, a thematic echo of this tradition may be found in the Book of Durrow. The manuscript begins with a double opening of cross-carpet and four-symbols page (Pl. 26). A link between the cross on fol. 2r and the

---

[577] J. O' Reilly (1998) 49-94, 87.

[578] See the recent discussion of this illustration by J. O' Reilly (2001) 11-13.

[579] This inscription was discussed in Chapter 5, 86-7. The nature of the lost miniature it describes was first discussed by M. Budny (1985) 528-35 and more recently in the article, 'The *Biblia Gregoriana'* in R. Gameson (ed), *St. Augustine and the Conversion of England* (Stroud 1999) 237-84, 244-45.

subsequent canon series is made by the inclusion of a similarly shaped base for the cross underlying the canon table on fol.8v (Pl. 28). This link clearly identifies the harmony of the four-symbols page and the figural harmony of the Eusebian canons. It may also refer to the significance of the cross as an image of the crowning point of Christ's life and death.

The link made in the Book of Durrow between the canons and the cross frontispiece is paralleled in a later Anglo-Saxon book, the Arenberg Gospels, which places a representation of the Crucifixion facing the first table (Pl. 80). Rosenthal has interpreted this in the light of the thematic dominance of the cross over the figural scenes placed on top of the Arenberg tables. Its dominance over the content of these tables is also indicated, however. The attention to the cross-form in the Book of Durrow seems to carry the same meaning. To quote Rosenthal,

> The pre-eminence accorded this image [the Crucifixion], reflects the supreme importance of Christ's immolation in the scheme for salvation as revealed in the Gospels, for without his death on the cross, there would have been no remission of sins, no resurrection from the dead and no immortality of the flesh.[580]

While Durrow's association of the canons and the cross can be seen to have some thematic links with the representation of the sepulchre in the Eusebian archetype, it differs in placing this representation before as opposed to after the canon series. The Book of Kells is the only Insular manuscript to directly follow its tables by a full-page prefatory miniature. Following an originally blank double opening, fols.6v-7r, the canons are succeeded by a representation of the Virgin and Child which faces the opening of the Matthew *capitula* (Pl. 65). George Henderson has interpreted this miniature with reference to the canon series. Drawing on the work of Underwood, he writes,

> Just as the Crucifixion image in the Durham Gospels can be seen to be retrospective, referring back to the text on the previous recto, so the Virgin page of the Book of Kells, illustrating the mystery of the Incarnation, the portal opening on Salvation, can serve as a gloss to the canon tables placed before it, as an alternative, more intense and devotional, to the academic or classicizing composition of the architectural *Fons vitae* miniature before the canons in the Soissons Gospels.[581]

---

[580] Jane E. Rosenthal, 'The Historiated Canon Tables of the Arenberg Gospels', unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation (Columbia 1974) 80.

[581] G. Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells, The Insular Gospel Books 650-800* (London 1987) 153-155. It is interesting to note the connection between Henderson's description of the Incarnation as a portal the function of the preceding canon arcades. Carolingian books which follow their

The Tables in the Context of their Books

As well as considering the decoration directly around the canon series, it is clear that the tables should be set in the context of their books as a whole. In manuscripts where the canons are not the only kind of decoration, attention to the series and to the other prefatory materials continues to be significant. The lavishness of the canons' decoration seems to increase proportionately, a process exemplified in the highly decorated canons of the Book of Kells.

To some extent, to follow an idea of Nordenfalk's, the concentration of decoration on the opening prefaces could be seen as a kind of compensatory device, making these prefaces suitable to precede the sacred text.[582] On the other hand, their decorative emphasis concurs with the kind of formal significance attached to the discussion of the canons in Hiberno-Latin exegesis. It could be argued that the canons received this amount of attention in Gospel books precisely because of their crucial role in demonstrating Gospel harmony. In the Book of Kells it is significant that, along with the canons, the feature in the book which, if completed, would have received the most decorative attention is the Matthean genealogy, long seen as a synecdoche of evangelical concord.[583]

Insular books' decoration of the Eusebian series and their inclusion of frontispiece harmony miniatures are often part of a whole decorative programme which thematizes evangelical difference and harmony. The frontispieces in the Trier Gospels are complemented throughout this book by the appearance of Evangelist and symbol portraits before the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke.[584] In the Book of Durrow, individual Gospels are prefaced by symbol

---

canons with full-page harmony representations include the Gospels of Aix-la-Chapelle, discussed by P. Underwood (1950) 129-31 and fig. 68.

[582] C. Nordenfalk (1938) 125-6.

[583] The relationship between the harmonies of the Eusebian series and the Matthean genealogy has been discussed in a number of the preceding chapters. See Chapter 1, 21-22, Chapter 6, 111-12.

[584] These portraits are reproduced as Plates 19, 28 and 34 in N. Netzer (1994). A portrait of John may have originally featured between fol. 179v and fol. 180r. This point is discussed by N. Netzer (1994) 30.

portraits which hark back to the four-symbols page on 2r.[585] The inclusion of these symbols in their Old Latin order (man, eagle, calf, lion) seems to stress the variety of agreement which exists between the Evangelists. In the Cutbercht Gospels, the distinctive appearance of each Evangelist included in the tympana of the first table is picked up again in the Evangelist portraits which appear before the individual Gospels. These portraits are each given a different frame, again stressing the distinctiveness of the evangelical accounts.[586]

The sense in which the canons are part of a larger decorative programme comes across most clearly in the Book of Kells. The theme of evangelical harmony is expressed in the elaborate decoration intended for the Matthean genealogy and in the decoration given to Luke's account of Christ's ancestors. The evangelical beasts which appear on fol. 1r and throughout the canon series also feature on four-symbols pages which preface three of the Gospels and in the 'portrait' on fol. 32v.[587] Jennifer O' Reilly's recent work on the four-symbols page before John's Gospel has shown how this illumination refers not only to the harmony of the Evangelists but also to that of the cosmos (Pl. 67).[588] A similar allusion may be made in the carpet page before John in the Augsburg Gospels, which Robert Stevick has shown to play continually with the significance of the first three numbers (Pl. 40).[589] That this carpet page is the only illustration to feature with the canons in this book seems to highlight again the role of the series as a representation of order and harmony.

This discussion has illustrated how the decoration of Eusebian tables in Insular Gospel books must be set in a wider tradition. Insular artists follow a number of Late Antique conventions: they give decorative attention to the tables' prefatory

---

[585] The symbol pages appear on fols. 21v, 84v, 124v and 191v. See J. Alexander (1978) Pls. 14-17.

[586] The Cutbercht portraits are reproduced in J. Alexander (1978) Ills. 181, 184, 186. The different framing given each portrait is discussed by S. von Daum Tholl (1985) 83. This point is returned to later on in this chapter in relation to canon frames. See 184-85.

[587] Many scholars have noticed the attention this manuscript gives to the theme of Gospel harmony. Jennifer O' Reilly (1998) 73-88, 84, writes, 'The theme of Gospel harmony reaches a crescendo in the Book of Kells. Most obviously this is achieved through the repeated motif of the Evangelist symbols depicted with prodigious variety, who animate the canon tables displaying the concordant passages of the four Gospels and who are shown in three surviving four-symbols pages placed before individual Gospels'.

[588] J. O' Reilly (1998) 49-94, 77-94.

texts and often precede the canons with some form of hypothesis statement. Insular tables must also be seen as part of their books' overall decorative programmes. The theme of evangelical difference and harmony informs many aspects of these manuscripts' decoration. Before examining how this theme is expressed in the illumination of the tables, some attention will be given to the marginal references to the tables and to the nature of the canon table text.

Marginal Eusebian References and Canon Text

It should be noted that the Eusebian series often influenced the appearance of the text in Insular Gospel books.[590] The beginning of a new section in the text was often marked with a decorative initial. At times the appearance of such initials in fragmentary books indicates that they were prefaced by canons. This is the case in the fragments of Cambridge Corpus Christi College MS 197 B / London B. L. Cotton MS Otho CV where the beginning of Eusebian sections are marked with small initials and blobs of yellow or green and orange dots.[591]

In order to complete the Eusebian apparatus, most books contain section numbers in the margins of their Gospels. At times, as in the marking of the sections, the presence of these numbers indicates the existence of a now lost set of canon tables.[592] In general marginal entries which refer to the canons have received little scholarly attention.[593] The variety of their layout may point towards common exemplars for some manuscripts. An interesting book in this regard is the Codex Bigotianus, which echoes Late Antique models by including only the number of the particular section and canon in its margins (Pl. 45b).[594] The marginal entries in the Trier Gospels are also interesting. References to the tables the sections belong to are prefixed with a K e.g. K I, K II etc., even though

---

[589] R. Stevick (1994) 200-10, also discussed by J. O' Reilly (1998) 49-94, 91-2

[590] This point is discussed by P. McGurk (1990) 59-61 and P. McGurk (1994) 12-14.

[591] This decoration is mentioned by J. Alexander (1978) 44. E. A. Lowe CLA II, No. 217, 28 suggested that the leaves in Royal 7. C. xii, 'come from a manuscript similar to Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 197, or else are part of that very manuscript'.

[592] This is the case in for example the Gotha Gospel book and in Durham A. II. 16. This point is further discussed in Appendix O 269.

[593] The exception to this is the recent edition of the marginal entries in the Book of Durrow by T. O' Loughlin (1999) 1-92.

the titles to the tables in this book always refer to the canons with a C (Pl. 45a). This use of K may reflect the influence of a book such as the Augsburg Gospels, which is the only surviving Insular example to refer to the series as *Kanones* (Pl. 39).

At times the marginal entries in these books are erroneous or the numbering misses out certain passages. In the Book of Kells, apart from one bifolium at the opening of John's Gospel, no canon sections are marked. This adds to the evidence for this book's ceremonial role – it shows the symbolic value of the tables, separate from their use as a means for reading the text. Some support for this interpretation was provided by the treatment of the tables by Hiberno-Latin exegetes who gave little attention to the series practical use.[595]

Problems with the marginal entries are complemented in many books by the inclusion of badly laid-out or erroneous canon tables. In Kells the doubling up of columns in Canon II makes this table practically unusable. In parts of the series in the Stockholm Codex Aureus numbers for Matthew are 'consistently and inexplicably increased by one'.[596] Mistakes in canon table text and layout also appear in later books such as those of the Rheims school.[597] Many mistakes also occur in the tables of the Arenberg Gospels, a manuscript dated to the late tenth-century and thought to be produced in Glastonbury or Canterbury. On these Rosenthal comments, 'The imperfect state of the text makes it certain that the tables were never used, nor were they intended to be in Gospel books of the early Middle Ages'.[598]

The nature of the canon text in a number of Insular books and the absence of marginal entries in a book like Kells clearly implies that the tables could not have

---

[594] This manuscript is described by P. McGurk (1961) 59 and J. Alexander (1978) 60. See also Appendix O, 269.
[595] This point was discussed in Chapter 6, 113.
[596] P. McGurk (1993) 254. Similar mistakes are described by S. von Daum Tholl in her discussion of the Cutbercht canon text (1985) 111-16.
[597] P. McGurk (1993) 252-3. Another example of a practically unusable canon series occurs in the Codex Beneventanus, discussed by David Wright in his article, 'The Canon Tables of the Codex Beneventanus and Related Decoration', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 33 (1979) 135-55, 138-143.
[598] J. Rosenthal (1974) 285.

been used as a practical way of reading the Gospel text. The next part of this chapter examines the decoration of the series and looks at the extent to which this carries symbolic meaning. This discussion shows how the tables can be seen to function as visual instruments. Like other medieval schemata, form is significant in illustrating content.[599] These forms' filling ornament and inclusion of figural representations in the tables of a number of books adds additional layers of meaning to the figural synopsis.

Non-Architectural Tables

Insular books present the tables in two different forms. While the majority of tables are framed by a series of arches, a number of books with Irish associations appear in non-architectural frames. These latter frames appear in the Book of Durrow, the fragmentary Gospel book in Turin, the Echternach Gospels, the Book of Mulling and the Book of Armagh. They also feature on four tables of Royal 7. C. XII, on the two final tables in the Book of Kells and in the series included at the beginning of Vienna 940 (Pls. 3, 28-31).[600]

The appearance of some of these non-architectural tables demonstrates how the canons were viewed as an exegetical text in the prefatory series. The unframed columns of numbers which comprise the final tables in Royal 7. C. xii, resemble the Insular layout of other parts of the Gospel text, such as the genealogies of Christ.[601] The positioning of the canons in the Echternach Gospels also makes clear how they were viewed as one of a series of texts. The first table begins directly after the end of *Novum Opus* in the left-hand column of fol.2v. The

---

[599] The canon tables have been described in the context of other medieval *schemata* and *tabulae* by John E. Murdoch in *Album of Science* (New York 1984), especially 31-37. For general reading on this topic see Harry Bober, 'An Illustrated Medieval Schoolbook of Bede's 'De Natura Rerum'', *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery*, 19-20 (1956-7) 65-97, idem.' *In Principio. Creation before Time*' in M. Meiss (ed), *Essays in Honour of Erwin Panofsky, De Artibus Opuscula* 40, 2 vols. (New York 1961) 13-28; Anna Esmeijer (1978); Barbara Obrist, 'Wind Diagrams and Medieval Cosmology', *Speculum* 72 (1997) 33-84.

[600] These tables are described with full references in P. McGurk (1990) 52-57, 53, fn. 39.

[601] The layout of Insular genealogies is discussed by J. O' Reilly (1994) 344-97 and (1998) 73-85. See also Carol Farr, *The Book of Kells, Its Function and Audience* (London 1997) 80-88.

tables occupy only two-thirds of their final page (fol.13v) and are directly followed by the beginning of the Matthew *capitula*.[602]

The appearance of the canon text in simple rectangular frames which occurs in the Echternach Gospels and in the Book of Durrow associates the series with other framed texts in Insular books. The frames used in the Durrow tables, in particular, bear some resemblance to those used to frame Matthew's genealogy and final lines in the Lichfield Gospels.[603] The inclusion of such rectangular frames draws attention to the significance of these texts, but also shows how they are perceived as containing a certain measure. This ties in with the significance attached to ideas of measure and order in the tables' exegesis and also features in the framing of the tables under arches.

The extent to which each framed area is seen as an expression of completion and measure is clearly dependent on its content. On fol. 9r of Durrow (Pl. 29) the corner of the third page in the canon series is left open to show the continuance of Canon II from 8v-9r.[604] A more complicated situation is presented in the Echternach Gospels. Both the top left- and bottom right- hand corners of its tables are left open, perhaps showing the measure of the whole series (Pl. 30). Additional breaks are included however at various intervals in the long lines dividing columns in the individual tables, which seem to serve only a decorative purpose.

While the tables in the Echternach Gospels do not contain additional ornament, the Christological dimension of the Eusebian series is made clear in the Book of Durrow. Here four out of five of the canon pages have a cross shape picked out through the decoration of the grid-lines. The example on fol.8v (Pl. 28) has already been mentioned, where the final ornament of the central grid-line has a bell-shape similar to the bottom terminal of the cross on the preceding four-symbols page (fol.2r, Pl. 26). Even on fol. 9r, the only page of the series which

---

[602] This information is contained in the description of the manuscript by P. McGurk (1961) 60-61.
[603] Reproduced in J. Alexander (1978) Pl. 79.
[604] Such breaks in frame are evident in other contexts in Insular manuscripts, such as in the Lindisfarne Gospels *incipit* pages and signify the continuance of a text from one page to the next.

contains no horizontal cross divider, a stepped base similar to that on a cross appears at the end of the central vertical line (Pl. 29).

The small ornaments which form the underlying crosses in the Durrow tables often themselves have Christological import. On fol.10r the interior of the small circular decorations contain a double monogram, cross and lozenge. Ornament at the intersections of the grid lines also stresses the number four. On fol. 8r the intersections are decorated with small squares divided into four different compartments. Emphasis on the fourfold nature of the decoration is continued at the series' corners which are often drawn out into sharp points.[605] The corners on a number of the canon pages are often emphasized by changes in colour, on fol. 9r, the colour of the interlace changes at the three corner spaces.[606]

The inclusion of the large cross forms underlying the Durrow tables not only points to the centrality of the Crucifixion in the Gospel accounts, but also has a cosmological dimension. As in the Trier cross-carpet page, the form of the Durrow crosses, extended to touch the borders of each frame, show how the Word embodied in Eusebian harmony was spread to the four corners of the world. Another element of exegesis on the cross may be of relevance here. Anna Esmeijer has described the exegetical tradition which interpreted Eph. 3: 18, 'You may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length and height and depth', as a reference to the cross 'reaching out to all the points of the compass, and of Christ's power by means of this cross to bind the cosmos, hold it together and restore it'.[607] In the light of this tradition, the cross which underlies the Eusebian canons may function as an image of the order and balance, underpinning the order and harmony inherent in the tables.

---

[605] This is evident at the corners of some of the folios on fol. 8v. The feature is mentioned by by Peter Meyer in his discussion of this table in the commentary volume accompanying the Durrow facsimile. See *Evangeliorum Quattuor Codex Durmachensis*, A. A. Luce, G. Simms, P. Meyer and L. Bieler (ed), (Lausanne 1960) 110.

[606] A parallel to this kind of decoration occurs on fol. 5v of the Book of Kells where the interior intersections of the grid are filled with lozenges placed within squares and petals forming a Chi-shape. An echo of the confronted beasts at the crown of the arches on fols.2v-3r can be seen in the two flattened beasts heads above the grid's top border (Pl. 64).

[607] A. Esmeijer (1978) 97.

One final point about the Durrow canons can be made. The decoration of the tables with underlying crosses, in conjunction with the cross-carpet and four-symbol pages of the manuscript's opening, creates a unified approach into the Gospel text. This impression of a prefatory entrance to the sacred text is heightened in Insular Gospel books which present their canons under a series of arcades.

Architectural Tables: The Arch Form

Nordenfalk voices his idea that the canons present a multiplex portico into the Gospel text in a series of works after *Die Spätantiken Kanontafeln*.[608] His idea was based primarily on the placement of the tables at the beginning of the Gospel book and their use of the arch frame. Evidence supporting Nordenfalk's suggestion is found in other Late Antique and Insular books which often use arches to enclose their prefatory material. Arches frame the list of contents in the Ashburnham Pentateuch and enclose the chapter lists before its individual books (Pls. 23-24).[609] Decorative arches also enclose the dedication and contents pages in the Codex Amiatinus.[610] Arches were also used to frame the opening to many non-scriptural texts, such as the eighth-century Gothic missal in Rome, Bib. Vat. Regin. Lat. 317 and the Gallican lectionary in Paris, B. N. lat. 9427.[611]

Arches were used to frame not only prefaces but also illustrations leading into the Gospel text. The portrait of Luke in the sixth century St. Augustine Gospels appears in an elaborate arch structure (Pl. 25a). This is echoed at the opening to Luke's Gospel in the Royal Bible which has a similar formal composition to many Insular canon tables (Pl. 25b). Different elements fill various parts of this page's arch: the Gospel's *incipit* is included under the architrave, the tympanum is filled by a representation of the Lucan Evangelist symbol and the arch crown is surmounted with a medallion containing an illustration of a bust-length figure.

---

[608] An example occurs in the article 'The Apostolic Canon Tables', *Gazette des Beaux Arts* 6: 62 (1963) 17-34, 18 where Nordenfalk describes the canons as 'forming an impressive atrium at the entrance of the sacred text itself'.
[609] These tables are discussed in D. Wright (1979) 147-9.
[610] These tables have recently been mentioned by J. O' Reilly (2001) 13-14.
[611] Reproductions of these openings are contained in Ernst Heinrich Zimmermann, *Vorkarolingische Miniaturen* (Berlin 1916) Vol. 1, Taf. 46a and 56a.

Budny has written, 'At one and the same time, the image in the book functions as a portal and leads the beholder to the Gospel text within; and the Gospel text leads the contemplator to Christ in heaven'.[612]

The Eusebian entrance differs from much of this other prefatory material in that its tables' content is significant in determining the shape of the arch frame. Wright has referred to, 'the principles of architectural arrangement for canon tables, where the frame is intended to match the intrinsic arrangement of the columns of numbers'.[613] The immaculately laid out tables of the Lindisfarne Gospels are a clear example of a successful Insular execution of the tables' design, where the number of inter-columniations in tables vary to match their contents (Pl. 33).[614]

The potential of the arch to express something of the tables' content was exploited to the full in the series contained in Royal I. E. vi. Mildred Budny has pointed out how on fols.4r and 6r (Pls. 53-4), the frameworks containing either the first or last table, the pillars dividing the columns all have equal weight. In the other frameworks, slender subsidiary pillars separate the columns of each canon table, while a wider more elaborately decorated pillar comes between either the different canon table or the different parts of the same canon table in the two halves of the arcade. In tables like Royal's the technical problem of table design dovetails with the exegetical concerns. Budny writes,

> This set of arcades must have been devised according to the text's lists and designed to present it in such a way as to reflect, to embody and to convey its essence. The arcades stand as a portal to the Gospels construed as a whole with the similar, yet highly varied, arcades matching and mirroring the similar yet frequently diverging Gospel accounts which the lists of numerals represent and the arcades enshrine.[615]

---

[612] M. Budny (1999) 265. See also Francis Wormald, *The Miniatures in the Gospels of St. Augustine* (Cambridge 1954).
[613] D. Wright (1979) 139-40.
[614] The one exception is on fol. 14r where four intercolumnar spaces are provided for Canon IV, which parallels three Evangelists. It should be noted that another tradition of Insular scribes was to include a standard four columniations for each table, even though this meant one column was left blank on tables containing Canons II-V. This tradition appears for instance in the Trier Gospels, the Maeseyck Fragment, and the Barberini and Cutbercht Gospels. It is discussed by N. Netzer (1994) 60 who writes, 'The four inter-columniations throughout Trier and the Maeseyck Fragment are to be explained as an Insular scribal practice rather than a feature of the Roman model'.
[615] M. Budny (1985) 571.

The capacity of the Royal arches to show both the unity and diversity of the varying Gospel accounts is expressed differently in other Insular books which contain their tables in a series of varying arch forms. Such variation is evident on the eight pages remaining of the Cutbercht series, where four pairs of quite different arches contain the tables' figural harmony (Pl. 50).[616] This use of different arch frames is paralleled in the remainder of the book in the various framing of the Evangelist portraits. A late antique parallel to this practice is provided in the Rabbula canon series where the portraits of the Evangelists included in the tables on fols. 9v-10r each appears under a different arch frame (Pl. 21).[617]

Another manuscript which consciously varies the form of its canon arches is the Book of Kells. While the most dramatic change in this form comes in the final pages of the series, where plain grid frames replace the arcades of the previous tables, the design of the previous tables also varies (Pls. 56-64).[618] Recognition that the Kells artist 'rings changes in his format several times' works against Friend's argument of a significant change in model on fol. 4v of the series.[619] Two scholars have suggested that, like in Royal I. E. vi, some of these changes in the form of the Kells arches may have been determined by the content of the tables they enclose.

The first of these scholars is George Henderson. He suggests that the design of the arches for Canon V (fol. 4v) - a single arch over two columns, then repeated

---

[616] The different framing of the four extant pairs of tables in the Cutbercht Gospels is described in detail by S. von Daum Tholl (1985) 245-62. Two other members of the Cutbercht canon series are reproduced in E. Zimmermann (1916) Tafel 302 and 303.

[617] This point was suggested to me by Jennifer O' Reilly. Reproductions of both plates are contained the Rabbula Gospels facsimile. Fol. 10r is also reproduced as Plate 91 in N. Netzer (1994).

[618] As in many books the Kells tables are designed in pairs. Significant changes occur in the form of these pairs' capitals, bases and the composition of the space above their inter-columniations.

[619] This is a citation from G. Henderson (1987) 137, who asks 'Is it not important that his artist rings the changes in his format several times?'. A break in the Kells tables on fol. 4v was suggested by A. M. Friend Jnr. in his article, 'The Canon Tables in the Book of Kells' in W. Koehler (ed), *Medieval Studies in Memory of A. Kingsley Porter* II (Harvard 1939) 611-40. A number of scholars have responded to his work. See P. McGurk, 'Two Notes on the Book of Kells and Its Relation to other Insular Gospel Books', Scriptorium 9 (105-7) and *idem*. 'The Canon Tables of the Book of Kells' in P. Binski and W. Noel (ed) (2001) 40-58; G. Henderson (1987) 131-41. A more favourable reception of Friend's theory is provided by Jonathan Alexander, 'The Illumination' in P. Fox (ed) (1990) 265-303, 268-273.

with a shallow spandrelled tympanum in the single embracing arch above - expresses the 'two-ness' of this table (Pl. 62). Henderson claims that, unlike the other pages, where because of the canons' layout each Evangelist symbol could be represented on the table's arch, the artist in this instance would be limited to only two beasts.[620]

The evidence of a book such as Royal I. E. vi supports the argument for interpreting the kind of canon frame used on fol. 4v as an expression of the twofold agreement contained in this table. Henderson's suggestion that this change in design may have been motivated by the limited number of beasts which could be included seems more problematical. It has since been noted that the lack of ornament in this tables' tympanum may result from the unfinished state of its decoration.[621] In addition, as Jonathan Alexander has pointed out, Henderson is incorrect in stating that each table contains an allusion to all four beasts- fols. 3r and 3v represent only three beasts.[622] Following this it would have been possible for the artist to include only the symbols for Matthew and Luke in this tables' decoration.

The move from arches to grid frames in the Kells series has also been related to the tables' content (Pls. 63-64). In his essay on the illumination of the canons in the Kells commentary facsimile Jonathan Alexander records a suggestion made to him by Nordenfalk that while the short Canon IX is included under these grids, the significance of their framing in this manner may relate to the fact that they mainly enclose Canon X. Alexander writes,

> If the aim of including the symbols was precisely to emphasize the concordance of the Gospel authors where they speak with a common voice, they were not appropriate in Canon X where each Evangelist is unique.[623]

This suggestion seems questionable. In previous chapters the significance of the tenth canon was pointed out. It is essential to Gospel harmony in that it shows each Evangelist's distinctiveness. This table's significance is underlined by the numerological significance of the number ten as an expression of perfect unity.

---

[620] G. Henderson (1987) 137.
[621] Jonathan Alexander, 'Description of the Illuminated Pages' in P. Fox (ed) (1990) 305-14, 307.
[622] Ibid. 269.
[623] Ibid. 270-1.

In addition, as George Henderson has pointed out regarding the appearance of the Evangelist symbols in Kells: 'Their formal visual disparateness comes over at least as clearly as their unity of purpose'.[624] With this in mind it seems improbable that the Kells artist would have to resort to grid frames to demonstrate the distinctiveness of each Evangelist. Surely placing symbols of the Evangelists frontally in the small arcades over the figural columns would have achieved this purpose? It seems more reasonable, therefore, to see following Patrick McGurk the shift in design on fols. 5v-6r of Kells as having been determined by veneration for an older model, that which may also have led to the parallel change in Royal 7.C.xii.[625]

Insular variation in the form of the canon arches finds a general parallel in other medieval schemata which vary their form to convey the impression of difference and harmony. Such schemata are included at the beginning of the Codex Amiatinus (Pl. 34).[626] On fols. VIr, VIIr and 8r 'elegantly varied containers' illustrate the divisions of scripture according to Hilary, Jerome and Augustine.[627] That these diagrams are complementary as opposed to contradictory is expressed in the depictions of the persons of the Trinity, one on each of the discs at the top of each diagram.[628] A more specific link between the way these different divisions of Scripture are in harmony and the canons is found in the *Institutiones*. Cassiodorus writes that all the divisions of scripture 'have adapted the sacred books in appropriate mysteries, just as it is generally agreed to have been the case in the harmony of the Evangelists, in whom the faith in events is uniform and the manner of speaking divergent'.[629]

This section has discussed the use of the arch form to frame the canon series. It showed that while this form created the sense of an entrance into the text in a

---

[624] G. Henderson (1987) 153.
[625] P. McGurk (1955), (1990) and (2001).
[626] These have been recently discussed by J. O' Reilly (2001) 3-39. On 14 the diagrams are seen as part of this manuscript's 'sustained and varied expression of the theme of the unity of divinely inspired Scripture'.
[627] George Henderson, 'Cassiodorus and Eadfrith once again', in M. Spearmann and J. Higgit (ed), *The Age of Migrating Ideas. Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland* (Edinburgh 1993) 82-91, 84.
[628] C. Farr (1999) 339-40.

number of different contexts, in the case of the Eusebian tables it also expressed something about the content of the enframed material. This was especially true in the case of a manuscript such as Royal I. E. vi. While variations in the arch form in other manuscripts, like the Cutbercht Gospels and the Book of Kells, have been seen to serve only a decorative purpose, they may also express something of the unity and distinctiveness of the evangelical accounts. Such variation in form is paralleled in other early medieval schemata, such as the diagrams in the Codex Amiatinus. The next section of this thesis examines the filling ornament of the Eusebian arches. This often heightened the Christological significance of the portico constructed by the canon arcades.

Filling Ornament

While Nordenfalk did not include his suggestion regarding the canons as portal in *Die Spätantiken Kanontafeln*, he does draw attention to the fact that the first page, 'Eingangsseite' ('entrance' or 'opening' page), of many late antique canon series often received more elaborate decoration than those following.[630] A number of Insular books can be seen to follow this pattern. Emphasis is placed on the first canon table in Royal I.E.vi both in terms of the number of colours and patterns used and the weight of the framework, compounded by two major intersecting arches (Pl. 53). This emphasis, according to Budny, 'serves to reinforce the sense of presenting an entryway to the Gospels through a hierarchical series of portals'.[631] The same kind of attention is paid to the first canon in a number of other Gospel books. In both the Barberini and Cutbercht Gospels only the first page of the series contains representations in the tympana of the table's smaller arcades (Pls. 50, 51). In Barberini the Evangelist symbols are represented, in Cutbercht, the Evangelists themselves.

In his later work Nordenfalk saw the canons to be significant not only in forming an entrance to the sacred text, but also in their role as an image of this text's

[629] This is referred to by J. O' Reilly (2001) 13-14, C. Farr (1999) 339. The original appears in Cassiodorus, *Institutiones*; L. Webber Jones (trans) (New York 1946) 102.
[630] C. Nordenfalk (1938) 102. The fact that both canons and prologue were framed in the Late Antique archetype Nordenfalk reconstructs meant that the 'Eingangsseite' was in fact a prologue page. In the Insular world, it was the first page of Canon I.

harmony and completion.[632] This role was based mainly on the tables' numerological significance, ten being seen as the expression of all numbers, concords, proportions and harmonies. In Part I of the thesis the canons' number was also seen as significant in the context of exegesis on the temple.[633] Progress through the canons was likened to the move from the temple's outer quadrangular courtyard, a symbol of the literal understanding of the Gospel text, to the temple interior, which represents the highest spiritual understanding of Christ. An echo of this tradition may be found in Hiberno-Latin exegesis where the canons are seen to function as an intermediary between interior and exterior ways of reading the Gospels.[634]

Another strand of temple exegesis saw not only the temple's Holy of Holies but its door as a figure of Christ. Bede writes 'No one comes to the Father except through Him, and as He says elsewhere, 'I am the door, if anyone enter by me he shall be saved'".[635] A visual echo of the same sentiments occurs in the Codex Amiatinus, where the door to the Tabernacle's Holy of Holies is decorated with a small cross.[636]

Insular artists picked up on the link between Christological connotations of both the series' number and the arch frame. A number of manuscripts play with the ambivalent X shape – which alludes to ten, the cross and Chi, the first letter of Christ's title. In the Lindisfarne Gospels *Novum Opus* is inscribed *Incipit prologus X canonum* – The prologue to the ten canons, but also to the canons of the cross or of Christ (*Xpi*). The tenth canon of the Cutbercht Gospels faces a large decorated *Xpi* page. A small cross-inscribed Chi-Rho precedes the explicit to the canons after the end of Canon X in Royal I.E. vi (Pl. 54). On fol. 290v of the Book of Kells, the four beasts are arranged around a saltire cross (Pl. 67).

---

[631] M. Budny (1985) 572.
[632] C. Nordenfalk, 'The Beginning of Book Decoration' in O. Goetz (ed), *Essays in Honour of Georg Swarzenski* (Berlin / Chicago 1951) 9-20. On 16 he writes 'The ten canons of the Eusebian harmony not only emphasized the intrinsic unity of the four Gospels by demonstrating their manifold agreements, they also raised them to a new sphere of mathematical perfection'. These ideas are repeated in C. Nordenfalk (1982) 29-39.
[633] See Chapter 1, 18-19.
[634] Chapter 6, 108-09.
[635] Bede, *De Templo*, II.18.4, CCSL 119 A, 198-99; S. Connolly (trans) TTH 21, 74.

This not only associates the page with the *Xpi* page on fol.34r, but also underlines the numerological connection between four and ten. It thus forms part of the background of the decoration of some of the canons in Kells with representations of the four beasts.

The Christological significance of the tables was also expressed in the ornament which fills many Insular canon frames. The degree to which the filling ornament intimates Christ varies. While most of the decoration in the Lindisfarne series is of an abstract nature, its arch keystones often present a cross-shape. This is the case on the arch on fol.11r where the beaks of two birds form a Chi (Pl. 33). On fol.12r of the related Leningrad Gospels, some of the capitals, surmounted by vine scroll arches, present crosses embedded in an interlace field (Pl. 38).

More extensive decoration of this kind can be found on the opening page of the canons in Royal I. E. vi (Pl. 53). A Christological allusion is evident at the keystone of the arch where two animals flank a rosette medallion.[637] This motif can be seen in more of the table's decoration. The circular capitals of columns 1 and 5 contain beasts with protruding tongues. These face each other and flank the central capital, whose decoration consists of a lozenge, placed on a bed of interlace. A golden cross and eight-petalled red and blue rosette are picked out in the lozenge's interior. Further down in the decoration of the columns the small circular and square panels repeat these motifs. At the smaller central panels in the columns the pattern of rosette between beasts is evident, although in this instance the beasts are frontal lions' heads.

The most developed example of the decoration of arches with Christological filling ornament occurs in the Book of Kells. Bases such as those of columns 2 and 4 on fol.4v present a stepped-cross pattern (Pl. 62). On fol. 5r the decoration of the bases forms an interlaced cross (Pl. 63). The columns and arches of the table on fol. 2v (Pl. 58) are filled with interlaced peacocks, long seen as a symbol

---

[636] J. Alexander (1978), cat.7, Pl. 23. For comment see J. O' Reilly, 'Introduction' to Seán Connolly's translation of Bede's *De Templo*, TTH 21 (1995) lii-lv.

[637] See O. Werckmeister, *Irisch-northumbrische Buchmalerei des 8. Jahrhunderts und monastische Spiritualität* (Berlin 1967) 30 for the Christological connotations of this image. The role of flanking beasts is returned to later in this chapter (204).

of Christ's immortality. The peacock columns on this page are set alongside some containing cross-inscribed lozenges. Even within the columns themselves, ornament alluding to Christ occurs. On fol. 2r pairs of peacocks can be seen at the bottom of the first and fourth inter-columniations (Pl. 57). The pair in the first column, as Isabel Henderson has noted, flanks the numeral ccclii, which directs the reader to Matthew's account of the Resurrection.[638] Another Eucharistic allusion is found in the split flabellum, which appears towards the top of the third inter-columniation on fol. 1v (Pl. 56).

The ornament of the capitals in the Book of Kells also presents a number of variations on the cross theme. This occurs most clearly in the opening of fols.1v-2r (Pls. 56-7). Here the square capitals contain lozenges, interlaced crosses, and crosses surrounded by spiral ornament. Along with peacocks, vine scrolls also belong to the repertoire of arch ornament. A good example is evident on fol. 2r where the vine scroll filling the arch grows out of a keystone chalice. The Kells' canons often decorate their squared-off spandrels with confronted peacocks and on a number of pages flabella occur at the spandrel corners (fol. 4r, Pl. 61). The spandrel frames on fol. 2v-3r terminate in confronted beast heads, which flank what may be Christological representations (Pls.58-9).

The animal ornament in other manuscripts may also contain veiled references to Christ. Susan von Daum Tholl has drawn attention to the series of mythological and astronomical animals which are included in the friezes at the base of Cutbercht tables (Pl. 50). Six out of eight of these animals either have Christological connotations or allude to the anti-Christ. This fact combined with the friezes' paradisiacal setting leads to the suggestion that the canons' imagery,

> assumes a salvific tone in accord with the message of the New Testament itself concorded in the tables which these animals decorate. The Cutbercht canon pages are harmonies which parallel the later fountain of life frontispieces in the Carolingian court school Godescalc and Soissons Gospels.[639]

The number of the animal ornament on some of the pages of the Lindisfarne series may also allude to aspects of Christ's identity. A total of forty-two birds

---

[638] Isabel Henderson, 'Pictish Monsters: Symbol, Text and Image', *H.M. Chadwick Memorial Lecture* 7 (Cambridge 1996) 1-52, 36.
[639] S. von Daum Tholl (1985) 244.

or dogs fill each table's columns and arch on fols. 10r, 10v, 16v, and 17r. This is the number of generations in Matthew's genealogy, another harmony image. The use of this number has been interpreted symbolically in another context. Of the Book of Durrow, Henderson writes,

> The geometrical basis of the designs in Durrow is severe, and enumerable. Is it a coincidence, we may ask that there are forty-two spirals on the carpet page of fol.3v, forty-two animals on the carpet page of fol.192v? Forty-two is the number of the generations of Christ in Mt.Chapter1, verses 1-17.[640]

In a more general sense the impression of order and balance created by a series of canons such as Lindisfarne tables may be to reflect the harmony and proportion of the Gospels and that of their Creator, 'who has ordered all things in measure and number and weight'. A later Anglo-Saxon Gospel book, Hannover, Kestner-Museum WM XXIa, 36 (the Eadui Codex), explicitly illustrates this idea.[641] The tympanum of its first table (fol.9v, Pl. 82) depicts a hand of God holding compass and scales. Succeeding tables' tympana represent Christ and the evangelical symbols, in whose interpretation the Wisdom citation was so important.

The filling ornament contained in the arches of Insular canons contributes significantly to the tables' iconography. The emphasis placed on the first page of the series in a number of books corresponds with the interpretation of the canons as creating an entrance into the Gospel text. Insular artists illustrated the Christological nature of this entrance by decorating the tables' arches with various cross-shapes and with Eucharistic imagery, peacocks, flabella and vine scrolls. Other allusions to Christ may be included in the kind and number of the animal ornament which decorate some of the frames. The impression gained from the study of the filling ornament that the canons function as a Christ-bearing image is strengthened in the final part of this chapter, which discusses the ornament included in these tables' tympana and spandrels.

---

[640] G. Henderson (1987) 41.
[641] For a description of this manuscript see Elzbieta Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts 900-1066* (1976) cat. 67, Pls. 224-9.

Decoration of Arch Tympana and Spandrels

In Insular books arch tympana and spandrels are decorated mainly with representations of the four evangelical beasts and / or portraits of the apostles. The decoration of the canons with these images of numerological completion highlights the ordered nature of the series' number and harmony. It is worthwhile initially to set these representations in the context of later manuscript illumination of both Eastern and Western provenance. The inclusion of figural representations, especially the beasts, is paralleled in a number of later Western books including the Carolingian Soissons Gospels and London B. L. Harley 2788, the Leon Bibles from tenth-century Spain, and the later Anglo-Saxon Eadui Codex. These manuscripts also include other images of Christ. On the first opening of the Eadui Codex, the previously mentioned scales' representation faces a portrait of Christ (Pl. 82). In the Soissons Gospels, the 'Fountain of Life' is represented in the tympanum of fol.11r. The facing canon contains a portrayal of 'Christ Immanuel' (Pls.77-8).[642]

Later Eastern manuscripts offer similar representations. The ninth-century Greek book, Berlin, Preuss. Staatsbib., Ham. 46, represents Christ, flanked by two haloed figures, in the arcades above each inter-columination of its first table (fol.2r, Pl. 73). The twelfth-century Cilician-Armenian Gospel book, now Baltimore, Walters Gallery, Ms. 538, contains a veiled allusion to Christ in the small ciborium included above the table on fol. 11r.[643]

Often the tympana of these Eastern tables simply contain cross-inscribed medallions. One sees this in the tenth-century Greek book Vienna bib. Marciana gr.1.8 (Pl .74). Examples of the same motif on Armenian and Ethiopian tables can also be cited.[644] An earlier use of the cross-inscribed medallion in this context occurs in tables of the sixth-century Rabbula Gospels (Pl. 75). Other

---

[642] These significance of these representations is discussed in detail by Paul Underwood (1950) 43-138.

[643] Ibid. 77-8, fig. 32. As well as alluding to Christ, Underwood discusses how the ciborium representation on Canon X is seen to symbolize *Ecclesia* in twelfth-century Armenian exegesis.

[644] An Armenian example from the eleventh century is offered by the series in Jerusalem Armen. Patriarchalbibliothek. Cod.2555. An even later Ethiopian series which decorates its canons'

Christological symbols are also used as tympanum decoration. On fol. 7v of Paris bib. nat. gr.70 (Pl. 71), another tenth-century Greek production, two beasts flank a floral medallion. This reminds us of the keystone decoration of Royal I.E.vi (fol.4r, Pl. 53). The Christological nature of this representation strengthens the similar interpretation of this form as it appears on the sacred name in Kells fol. 203r (Pl. 72).

Beast Canon Tables

Beast canon tables appear in four Insular Gospel books dated before 800 AD. Most prominent among these are the beasts which appear in the tympana of seven of the tables in the Book of Kells. In addition, the Maeseyck Gospels places Evangelist symbols in the medallions, which crown the final four tables in its series (Pl. 49). The Maeseyck Fragment and the first page of the series in the Barberini Gospels insert beasts over the tables' inter-columniations, each symbol framed by a smaller arch (Pls. 46-7, 51).

The visual association of beast symbols with the canons is paralleled in the exegesis discussed in previous chapters. The most striking of example of this is Ailerán's *Canon Evangeliorum*, which represents the tables as conversations between the evangelical beasts. Other examples can also be cited such as in the *Expositio euangelii secundum Marcum* where the difference and concord between Matthew and Mark's Gospel is described in terms of Ezechiel's vision.[645] On a purely formal level, the canons and the beasts are afforded the same kind of significance in the commentary texts. One reason for this may be their shared liminal quality – the beasts, symbols of harmony, are intermediaries between heaven and earth, the harmony of the canons is also intermediate, forming an entrance to the sacred text.

---

tympana with crosses is found in Kunsthandel. Aethiopisches Evangeliar fol. 6a. Reproductions of these canons are found in C. Nordenfalk (1938) Taf. 26-30 and Taf. 37.

[645] See Chapter 5, 85.

The discovery of this Hiberno-Latin material, especially the work of Ailerán, has played a role in the debate concerning the origin of the beast canon tables.[646] It has strengthened the refutation of Friend's theory that the beast canons in Insular manuscripts were inspired by Carolingian imports.[647] It seems increasingly possible that the original model for these tables was a Late Antique or even Insular one.

The placement of beasts in Insular tables indicates how they are revelatory of Christ. This parallels their biblical role of accompanying theophanies. A number of other full-page illustrations in the Book of Kells, fols. 27v and 129v, directly represent the beasts around the cross. The canons are also being revealed as Christ-bearing images. On fol.2r (Pl. 57) the intertwined wings of lion and calf form a cross shape on the table's central axis. This is directly below the flabellum attached to the inside of the arch and the chalice, which forms the arch's keystone.

More explicit representations of Christ revealed by the beasts occur on other tables. One example is contained on the first page of the Barberini series where a frontal, bearded face is placed in the central capital, between the evangelical symbols (Pl. 51). The way this face is concealed within the table's form parallels the partial representation of syndemos figures in medieval schemata.[648] Jennifer O' Reilly has recently discussed such a figure on fol. 291v of the Book of Kells (Pl. 68). Its cruciform shape, 'underlies and holds together the quadripartite world and may suggest both its divine creation and its redemption'.[649]

A parallel to the Barberini representation may occur on one of the tables in the Maeseyck Fragment. On fol. 5r the table's central capital contains a frontal bust-

---

[646] Nancy Netzer, 'The origins of the beast canon tables reconsidered' in F. O' Mahony (ed) (1994) 322-32, 326-7 and Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, 'Rathmelsigi, Willibrord and the Earliest Echternach Manuscripts', *Peritia* 3 (1984) 17-47.

[647] A. M. Friend (1939) 611-41. Ailerán's poem is mentioned by P. McGurk (1990) 56, fn. 47 and (2001) 48. See also J. Alexander (1990) 272.

[648] Partially concealed syndesmos figures are discussed by A. Esmeijer (1978) 105-106.

[649] J. O' Reilly (1998) 49-94, 93. The second figure further down in this central column has been seen by Isabel Henderson (1996) 49-50 to represent a figure in hell. George Henderson (1987) 165 writes that this figure is 'more likely to be topographically placed – down in the darkness, below the light of Christ preached by the four Evangelists'.

length figure while flanking capitals represent beasts with protruding tongues (Pl. 47). The appearance of bust-length figures in the capitals of the two outermost columns of this table must also be noted however and may work against viewing the central figure as a representation of Christ. Other representations of Christ revealed by the beasts may occur on a number of tables in the Book of Kells. These figures are discussed in the final part of this chapter.

The four beasts not only intimate the presence of Christ, but also reveal various aspects of his character. This was clear in Ailerán's *Canon Evangeliorum*, which alluded to Christ as the son of Adam, the lion's whelp and the meek victim. The variety in the representation of the beasts in Kells emphasizes the many ways the Gospels lead us to Christ. The beasts vary in form, attributes, pose, and style of decoration, even their placement within the table is subject to change. In spite of these variations, the function of the beasts remains constant. This is true even on fols. 3v-4r, where the beasts move from the tympanum of the over-riding arch to the smaller arcades.

The presence of the evangelical beasts associates the Eusebian synopsis with a range of other harmonies. These work on a number of interpretative levels. The appearance of the beasts in the Books of Ezechiel and Revelations implies that they illustrate not only the harmony of the Gospels, but that of the whole of scripture.[650] This was recognized by Jerome in his preface to the Book of Kings, where he explains that the beasts have 'eyes before and behind' because they look both to the past and the future.[651] The sense in which the canons represent the Decalogue of the New Testament was one which featured in a number of previous chapters.[652] Late Antique manuscripts provide a more explicit illustration of this theme. In the Rabbula Gospels the marginal illustrations on the first twelve pages of the series are headed by representations of the Old Testament prophets, while narrative Gospel scenes are drawn beneath (Pls. 20, 75). Carolingian manuscripts continued this idea. The *Maiestas Domini* of the

---

[650] See J. O' Reilly (2001) 11-13 for a discussion of the significance of the appearance of the beasts in the Codex Amiatinus' *Maiestas Domini*.
[651] Jerome, *Prologus in Libro Regum*, R. Weber (ed) (1983) 365. This citation is also referred to in Chapter 3, 58-59, in the discussion of the *Plures Fuisse* preface.
[652] See for example Chapter 5, 86, Chapter 6, 122, Chapter 7, 139-45.

Codex Aureus of St. Emmeram clearly represents how the beasts link prophets and Evangelists. This page faces the opening of the canon series, again decorated with the evangelical symbols (Pl. 82).

Another harmony the symbols evoke is cosmological, also discussed in the context of fol.1v of the Trier Gospels. From quite early times exegetes related the quadripartite nature of the Gospels to the beasts but also to the fourfold nature of the world, its elements, winds and liquids.[653] In representing the beasts above the canons' figural harmony, we see how the Gospel it embodies is spread to the four corners of the world. One wonders if the constant movement and changing direction of the beasts in Kells, especially on the first four tables, signifies the spread of the Word throughout the cosmos.

Linked to the beasts cosmological harmony is the harmony of discourse they reveal the canons to possess. This discourse was described musically in *Plures Fuisse* and Vienna 940. It links the spread of the Gospels to the four sonorous rivers of Paradise, which flow out to water the whole world. In Ailerán, the discourse was a spoken one, playing with the idea of the spread of the Word through the spoken word. Insular canon tables represent the discourse of the beasts in a number of ways

On the opening folios of the Kells' series the beasts are in constant physical contact with one another. The tympanum of fol.2r (Pl. 57) is a good example. The lion touches the angel's face with his tongue, as well as holding its wing between his paws. The lion's own body and wings are intertwined with those of the calf, while his tail extends to touch the eagle's head. The calf and eagle also come in contact with each other, the eagle's wing touches the calf's breast. On fol. 2v the interrelationship between the evangelical beasts is expressed not only by physical contact, but by the representation of Luke's symbol, the calf, with the body of an eagle, the symbol of John (Pl. 58). The attention to the physical contact between the beasts displayed on these tables offers a visual parallel to the description of the canons in the *Expositio euangelii secundum Marcum*, which

presented the relationship of the beasts in the image of the touching of the animals' wings.

Another way the discourse of the Evangelists is represented on fol.2r in the Book of Kells is through the beasts' exchanged glances- the lion looks at the angel, the calf at the eagle, the eagle at the angel (Pl. 57). This kind of interplay is different on each of the tables in this series. Its significance is summed up in the following comment by Jennifer O' Reilly,

> The beasts' various striking groupings, exchanged glances, overlapping and interwoven pinions and limbs, their hybrid forms borrowing each other's features, seem to articulate the interconnectedness of the Gospels they represent and to form a pictorial exegesis on the harmony of the four Gospels which the canon tables were devised to demonstrate.[654]

While not as developed, other books offer some parallel to the kind of exchange displayed in Kells. In the Barberini Gospels (Pl. 51) pairs of symbols again face each other, angel and calf, lion and eagle. A similar discourse is evident on a number of tables in the Maeseyck Fragment. A variation of the same theme is evident on first page of the Cutbercht series (Pl. 50), where pairs of Evangelists look toward each other and share a book.[655] More abstract, but perhaps part of the same general complex, is the decoration of fol.14v of Royal I.B.vii (Pl. 37). Two pairs of heads form the capitals of this table's second and fourth columns. The inner heads of each pair face one another. Those on either side face in opposite directions, looking out beyond the table. The intense engagement between the Gospels, illustrated most clearly in Kells and paralleled in some of these other books, is a visual reflection of the amount of attention given to the problems of harmonizing the evangelical accounts in both the patristic and Hiberno-Latin texts, discussed in a number of the previous chapters.[656]

---

[653] See J. O' Reilly (1998) 49-94, for a description of patristic and Insular exegesis on the evangelical symbols.
[654] J. O' Reilly (1998) 49-94, 71.
[655] S. von Daum Tholl (1985) 250 writes, 'The...Evangelists are paired and jointly participate in the activity of holding open books. They actively perform a cooperative task'.

London, B.M., Add.5111, one of the earliest surviving fragments containing canons, displays another form of Late Antique tympanum decoration (Pl. 18). This comprises of the bust-length portrait of an Apostle within a medallion frame. In order to represent the whole apostolic group, the London fragment, which spread its canons over eight pages, also decorated its prologue pages with portraits. This extension was unnecessary in manuscripts of the smaller Latin series, which distributed their canons over twelve pages.[657]

Surviving Insular manuscripts which contain 'Apostolic canons' do not position the portraits within the tympana, but use them instead to crown the tables' arches. These canons occur in manuscripts associated with the Echternach scriptorium: the Trier and Maeseyck Gospels and the Maeseyck Gospel Fragment (Pls. 43-44, 46-48). A related form of decoration occurs in the Stockholm Codex Aureus, an eighth century manuscript produced in Canterbury, but thought to rely in part on Continental models (Pl. 52).

The inclusion of these portraits of the Apostles adds to the tables' symbolism. As well as being an image of numerical completion, the Apostles, like the beasts, stress the orthodoxy of the Eusebian system. In *Plures Fuisse*, Jerome emphasized how there are only four inspired Gospels. In *Novum Opus*, the apostolic pre-eminence of Pope Damasus set the seal of orthodoxy on the Vulgate translation.

The series of Apostles in surviving Insular canons begins with Peter holding his key, e.g. fol.11r of the Trier Gospels, fol.6v of Maeseyck Gospels (Pls. 43, 48). Set on the arch form, this decoration adds a celestial dimension to the tables. One recalls the opposition alluded to in *Plures Fuisse* between the heavenly gates and those of Hades, constructed by heretical writings.[658] In his *Letter to Carpianus*, Eusebius was at pains to stress the orthodox nature of his

[656] The attention given to the harmonization of the Gospel accounts was discussed especially in Chapter 8 on the *Historica inuestigatio euangelii secundum Lucam*.
[657] This point is discussed by C. Nordenfalk (1963) 17-34.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE Library CORK

Diatessaron. His concern is reflected in the attention given to the composition of the canons in Hiberno-Latin exegesis. In the preface to the Commentary on Matthew in Vienna 940, the order of the canons is explained to be based on pre-eminence of number, word and finally 'apostolic' pre-eminence i.e. that order of the Evangelists sanctioned by the orthodox Church.[659]

A visual link between the Apostles and the Evangelists is established in each of the manuscripts mentioned above. In the Trier Gospels we have seen how the 'Apostolic canons' are preceded by two full-page miniatures which draw on the harmony of the beasts (Pls. 41-2). The eight tables of the Maeseyck Gospel Fragment represent simultaneously the harmony of the Apostles and the Evangelists (Pls. 46-7). The Apostles are contained in medallions crowning the arches, while various combinations of beasts occur in each of the smaller arcades. The Maeseyck Gospels develops this process even further. It represents the Apostles in medallions on eight pages and completes the series with depictions of the evangelical symbols (Pls. 48-9). This fusion may also reflect what Nordenfalk saw as one of the original functions of this type of decoration, to attest to the orthodoxy of the non-Apostolic Evangelists Mark and Luke, showing that their writings were nevertheless of 'Apostolic age and authenticity'.[660]

The appearance of the Apostles in these tables parallels the general Insular concern to stress the orthodoxy of their faith. Columbanus voiced such sentiments writing thus to Pope Boniface in 613, 'For all we Irish, inhabitants of the world's edge, are disciples of Sts Peter and Paul....and we accept nothing outside the evangelical and apostolic teaching'.[661] His words lead into another element of the representation of the Apostles, a cosmological one. Insular commentators were very aware that the Apostles and their successors were the means by which the Gospel was brought out to 'the ends of the earth'. Ailerán, as we have seen, used the number of apostles to signify the number of sections

---

[658] See Chapter 3, 45-46.
[659] See Chapter 6, 119.
[660] C. Nordenfalk (1963) 32.
[661] This is quoted by J O' Reilly (1998) 73-88, 73. The original occurs in *Sancti Columbani opera*, G.S.M. Walker (ed) (Dublin 1970) Ep. 5, 38-9.

contained within a particular canon. In the Augsburg Gospels, his poem faces the *Evangelia veritatis* page (Pl. 9), these words themselves drawing on Paul's description of the spreading of the Word in Corinthians 1: 5. Bede interpreted the twelve oxen at the base of the Temple's laver as types of the Apostles and the Evangelists, and indeed all ministers of the word. He writes thus of their grouping and placement,

> The Apostles, who by this mystery were twelve, that is four times three, were chosen to proclaim belief in an acknowledgement of the holy Trinity throughout the four corners of the world and baptize all nations in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.[662]

The role of the Apostles as preachers of the Gospel seems to be indicated in their Insular portrayal. They are usually depicted holding books or scrolls. On fol.12v of the Trier manuscript this book is explicitly identified as a Gospel by its cover decoration.[663] A similar kind of decoration occurs on the book held by the Apostle on fol. 2v of the Maeseyck Fragment. In both the Trier and Maeseyck Gospels the free hands of the figures who hold books, are raised in an act of blessing. Other figures in Trier, who hold scrolls, or a key, in the case of Peter, raise their free hands in a variety of gestures, perhaps indicating preaching, e.g. Thomas on fol.12r, Peter on fol.11r (Pls. 43, 44). Such gestures are paralleled on fol.5r of the Maeseyck Fragment and fol.9r of the Maeseyck Gospels (Pl. 47). In this latter book, the Apostles' veiled hands indicate the sanctity of the Word they preach. This motif is also included in the representation of the evangelical symbols on the fols.10r-11v (Pl. 49). Occasionally the exchanged glances of figures on facing pages suggests the apostolic discourse, e.g. on the Trier opening fols.13v-14r.

The significance of the Apostles as models for contemporary teachers of the faith did not go unnoticed by Insular commentators. In Bede's *De Templo*, the successors of the apostles and the prophets are those who open the doors of spiritual understanding, enabling the faithful to progress into the temple interior.[664] Bede also develops the Pauline image of the apostles as pillars of the Church. He comments as follows on the two great bronze pillars, 'They signify

---

[662] Bede, *De Templo*, II. 19, 5, CCSL 119 A 210, S. Connolly (trans) TTH 21, 88.
[663] This is reproduced in N. Netzer (1994) Plate 8. Plates 65-77 contain reproductions of most of the Maeseyck canons not included as plates in this thesis.
[664] See J. O' Reilly (1995) xxxix-xlvi for a full discussion of this theme.

the apostles and all spiritual teachers those, that is, who are strong in faith and work and elevated to heavenly contemplation'.[665] These pillars flank the temple's entrance, which Bede sees as a Christ-bearing image. More profoundly understood, the pillars themselves also signify Christ. They are eighteen cubits high and so, correspond numerically with the Greek letters *chi* and *rho*.[666]

The representation of the apostles at the top of the canons' portals in Insular manuscripts reflects the centrality of their role and those of their successors in evangelization, the opening of doors of spiritual understanding. In the Stockholm Codex Aureus, the representation of apostles and saints in medallions has moved from the arches to form their capitals and bases (Pl. 52). Here, the idea of the apostles as pillars of the Church seems to be represented quite literally. The medallions flank the tables' figural synopsis, revealing its Christological character.

A contemporary Continental parallel to this image is found on the first page of the canons of the Flavigny Gospels (Pl. 76).[667] On this table the Evangelists form the bases of pillars 1,2, 4 and 5. The pillars' capitals comprise of the evangelical symbols. These reveal Christ, displayed at the top of the central column. A representation of John the Baptist forms this column's base. This image not only portrays the Evangelists as ecclesiastical pillars, but also shows the intercessory role they play, linking heaven represented in the columns' capitals, and earth, the columns' bases. The central column reveals the fulfilment of the final prophet's predictions concerning the advent of the Messiah. In the Codex Aureus the inclusion of apostles and saints in the tables' medallions also reveals their role as intercessors. More generally, as in the decoration of tables with evangelical symbols, the appearance of apostles on Insular canons emphasizes the sanctity of the Eusebian series.

---

[665] Bede, *De Templo*, II. 18,4-6, CCSL 119 A, 198-99; S.Connolly (trans) TTH 21, 74-5.
[666] Bede's interpretation of the pillars of the Temple is discussed by J. O' Reilly (1994) 344-397, 374.
[667] See P. McGurk (1961) cat. 47, 52-3 and the brief discussion of this miniature by J. Porcher, *Europe in the Dark Ages* (Kampala 1969) 180-3.

The Crowning Figures in the Kells series

In the Book of Kells, the arches on a number of tables are crowned not by representations of the Apostles, but by a series of other figures. While no parallels to this kind of decoration are found in contemporary manuscripts, some later examples can be cited. The Kerasous Gospels, an eleventh century Greek Gospel book, crowns its prologue page with a small bust of Christ flanked by angels.[668] A later Insular example occurs in the Arenberg Gospels, where sophisticated figural scenes appear above the arches on each of its canons.[669]

It is difficult to identify the figures represented over the tables in the Book of Kells and there is little scholarly consensus. This discussion follows the suggestion of Françoise Henry that the figures with symbols below them form 'an elusive *Maiestas Domini*'.[670] This interpretation is supported by the tables' ornament previously discussed, which demonstrates the Christological nature of the entrance formed by the canon series.

The first figure in this series is an angel included on the arch of fol. 1v (Pl. 56). The angel holds a book in its right hand and turns towards the facing page. Acting as a messenger between heaven and earth, it shares the intermediary role held by the beasts in the tympanum below. The Christological nature of this angel's message is made clear by the inclusion of a small cross in its halo. This is paralleled in the Arenberg Gospels where the first two pages are crowned by angels, seen as prophetic of Christ (Pls.80-1). The central archangel on fol.10r holds crossed rods, on fol.10v a cross-inscribed disk.[671]

Fol. 2r of the Book of Kells does not represent a figure crowning its table's arch. On fol.2v (Pl. 58) the spandrel frame terminates in lion heads. These flank a frontal, bust-length figure, whose hands grasp the lions' protruding tongues. This figure is naked, with a dark beard and long, blond hair. Three crosses

---

[668] This manuscript is discussed by C. Nordenfalk (1963) 17-34 and fig. 7.
[669] J. Rosenthal (1974) Pls. 2-9. See also T. H. Ohlgren (ed), *Insular and Anglo-Saxon Illuminated Manuscripts – An Iconographic Catalogue 625-1100* (London / New York 1956) Pls. 11-12 and E. Temple (1976) cat. 56, Pls. 167-71.
[670] Françoise Henry, *The Book of Kells* (London 1974) 194.

appear in his halo, associating him with the angel of fol.1v. The identification of this scene as a Crucifixion is strengthened by the attention given to the halo's central cross. As in the case of fol.1v, the evangelical symbols are included in the tympanum below. In this case, they may be identifying the figure above as Christ. The angel raises his book towards him and both angel and calf / eagle continue the role of flanking the figure, occupied by the lion heads above. The representation on fol. 2v is one both of human suffering, made clear in the detailed drawing of the body, and of triumph. The figure's open eyes parallel those of Christ in the Durham Crucifixion (fol.38v).[672]

Eamonn Ó Carragáin has interpreted the two lion heads which flank this figure with reference to the Canticle of Habbakuk.[673] While this may well be the case, another interpretation of the image sees the lions to denote the central figure's majesty. Commenting on fol. 28v of Kells, which contains the 'Portrait of Matthew', Jennifer O'Reilly has mentioned the Mediterranean iconographic motif of two lions as the flanking attendants or guardians of images of divinity or majesty.[674] Confronted lion heads appear in a number of contexts in this manuscript, including fol. 29r (Pl. 66), where two lion heads in the left hand corner cross tongues to form a chi-shape, indicating the motif's Christological significance. A variation on this theme occurs on the canons on fol. 4v and fol.5r, where lion heads serve as column capitals (Pls. 62-3). Again these may indicate the majesty of what they contain, something especially evident on fol.5v where they flank the beasts. A later Anglo-Saxon manuscript, London B.L. Harley 76, supports this suggestion. On fol. 8v two lion headed capitals terminate in a crossed arch above which appears a glorified Christ, flanked by angels (Pl. 83).[675]

---

[671] J. Rosenthal (1974) 173-180.
[672] See Jennifer O' Reilly, 'Early Medieval Text and Image: The Wounded and Exalted Christ', *Peritia* 6-7 (1987-88) 72-118, 91-92.
[673] Eamonn Ó Carragáin, ''Traditio evangeliorum' and 'sustentatio': The relevance of liturgical ceremonies to the Book of Kells' in F. O' Mahoney (ed) (1994) 398-436, 421-432.
[674] J. O' Reilly (1998) 73-88, 82.
[675] E. Temple (1976) cat.75, Pls. 221, 230-1. Jennifer O' Reilly first drew my attention to the similarity of the structure of this table and those of Kells 4v-5r.

In the Book of Kells, the triumph of Christ over death was recorded in the last set of numerals directly preceding this scene on fol.2r (Pl. 57). Confronted peacocks frame the final section number in the first inter-columniation which, as mentioned earlier, corresponds to Matthew's account of the Resurrection. The second pair of peacocks in the fourth inter-columniation, one of which is eating grapes, may indicate the Eucharistic significance of this event. Turning over the page to fol. 2v (Pl. 58), the Eucharistic tone comes through strongly in other elements in the table's decoration. As well as the decoration of the arch and outer columns with peacocks, symbols of Christ's immortality, ten small disks are attached to the table's capitals and flabella appear at the spandrel corners. The association of the crucified body of Christ with the Eucharistic host seems clear.

An Eucharistic tone can also be discerned on the facing page (Pl. 59). As well as corner flabella, on this table the confronted lion heads directly flank a flowering chalice as opposed to the crowning figure. Two peacocks are inter-twined with the chalice's vines and these bite on the lions' tongues. The inclusion of the chalice in this position echoes fol.2r, where the chalice formed the arch's keystone, its vines serving as filling ornament. On fol.3r, a small robed beardless figure, set against a blue background appears in the medallion above the flowering vine. Both Henderson and Ó Carragáin have interpreted this figure as a cleric or priest. The latter has written,

> One key to the unity of the opening fols.2v-3r seems to be the continuity and contrast between the historical event and the liturgical enactment of that event. On fol.2v there is a direct representation of Christ revealed in His Passion as God and man. This is matched on fol.3r by a representation of the life offered to men by the glorified Christ, the true vine who also offers life from the Eucharistic cup.[676]

The figure in the medallion over 'the true vine' is seen as a priest or the whole faith community.

Differing from their views, Meehan believes the figure crowing the arch on fol.3r, 'must be that of Christ'.[677] Although the physical features of the two crowning figures on this opening are very different, this does not preclude the

---

[676] E. Ó Carragáin (1994) 427.
[677] Bernard Meehan, *The Book of Kells* (London 1994) 57.

Christological interpretation of both. Kells is far from consistent in its representation of Christ. Viewing fol.3r as a whole, we can see the figure is again crowning a tympanum containing the revelatory beasts. Beneath these, the medallion form of the table's top is repeated in the roundel containing an angel. This appears above the table's central inter-columniation. The angel, like the figure above, is turned to the right. He carries a book in his raised left hand. This composition is reminiscent of the two roundels contained in the Ascension picture in Turin, Bibl. Nazionale. Cod.O. IV. 20, a fragmentary Irish book of the early ninth-century (Pl. 70).[678] It is interesting to ask if this table in Kells may also contain a representation of the ascended Christ.

There may be some support for this theory in the parallel offered between this figure and a number of figures crowning Kells' *incipit* pages, which have been seen as representations of the Divine. Such a figure is seated on the top of the '*ib*' on fol.29r (Pl. 66). This has been seen by Henderson to take the place of Christ in the compositional parallel he draws between this page and fol.7r of the Valenciennes Apocalypse.[679] Another nimbed figure holding a book appears at the top of the opening to John (fol. 292r, Pl. 69). Henderson has suggested this may be a representation of God the Father, but the similarity between this figure and that of Christ on fol.2v is also striking.[680]

The Christological interpretation of this figure on fol. 3r gains support when one realises that it is immediately backed by an abbreviated cross-shape. This appears at the centre of the frame on fol.3v and is accompanied, as was the central cross in Christ's halo on fol.2v, by two flanking crosses (Pl. 60).

The final figural representation of the Kells' series occurs on fol. 4r (Pl 61). This is perhaps the most mysterious of all. Like the angel on fol. 1v, the figure appears above the spandrel frame. His face is similar to that of Christ on fol. 2v, with long, blond hair, a dark beard and green eyes. Unlike on fol. 2v the halo of this figure is not pronounced. The figure is frontal and holds a book in either

---

[678] J. Alexander (1978) cat.61, Pls. 277-80.
[679] G. Henderson (1987) 158-9.
[680] G. Henderson (1987) 176.

hand. The decoration of the table again supports a Christological interpretation of this figure. The corners of the spandrels have flabella attached, as on previous pages. Their decoration on fol. 4r is explicitly Christological, containing cross and lozenge patterns. An echo of the decoration of fols. 2v-3r occurs also around the capitals. Two discs containing cross-shapes are attached to the outer edges of the first and fourth capital, paralleling the discs in this position on fol. 2v. Along with the Evangelist symbols, the smaller arcades contain depictions of flowering chalices. One appears by the angel's right foot in the arcade on the left and under the eagle's claw in the arcade on the right-hand side. Vine scrolls decorate the table's central columns. Representations of conflicting peacocks and warriors fill the spandrels, perhaps alluding to the Crucifixion.[681]

The likelihood that the figure on this table represents Christ is based both on its similarity to the face of Christ on fol.2v and the fact that it crowns a table teeming with Christological ornament. The gesture of the figure is difficult to explain. One wonders if it is influenced by the illustrated Apocalypse which Henderson sees as having a pervasive role in the book's decorative programme.[682] If this is the case, and the figure here represents Christ at the end of time, the series of crowning figures would itself form an image of completion, representing various stages of Christ's life and of the history of human redemption.

That the crowning figures on the tables in Kells could be read as a series is supported with reference to numerology. The significance of ten as an image of completion was based on its being the sum of the first four numbers.[683] The presence of four figures on the Kells' tables may play with this idea and allude to the harmony of the Old Testament Decalogue, represented by the ten canons, and the fourfold Gospel. Viewing the figures as a series allows us to set Kells in the

---

[681] See B. Meehan (1994) 59.
[682] G. Henderson (1987) 158-9. The frontispiece on fol. 2r of the Leon Bible of 960 offers a parallel depiction of a bust-length Christ holding two books, who is surrounded by the evangelical symbols. This is discussed by John Williams, 'The Illustrations of the Leon Bible of the year 960', unpublished Ph.D Dissertation, 2 volumes (University of Michigan 1963) 43-47 and fig. 1.
[683] This has been discussed in a number of previous chapters, see Chapter 1, 14-16, Chapter 6, 115-17 etc.

tradition of Late Antique books, such as the Rabbula Gospels, which decorated their tables with illustrated synopses of Christ's life (Pl. 20, 75). Kells could be seen as a precursor of later books, like the Arenberg Gospels, which crowned their canons with similar representations (Pls. 80-1).

The nature of the evidence supporting this interpretation of the figures in the Book of Kells must lead to caution. While the first two figures can be easily identified, the final pair are more mysterious. What can be said with certainty is that these figures further embellish the manuscript's elaborate canons. Their inclusion associates the decoration of the tables with that of the Gospel *incipits*. The appearance in the tables of the symbolic beasts links them with the manuscript's four-symbols pages. The decorative association of the canons with these elements highlights again the significance of the Eusebian series for Insular exegetes and artists.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the iconography of the Eusebian canon tables in Insular Gospel books. The first part set Insular tables in the tradition of Late Antique illumination. As was the case with the exegesis, Insular artists both follow and develop aspects of this tradition. The next part of the chapter set Insular tables in the context of their books. It was shown how the canons are often only one of a series of features contributing to the theme of evangelical difference and harmony.

The examination of the tables' iconography was prefaced by a brief discussion of canon text and the marginal Eusebian references. The erroneous nature of the text in a number of books and the failure to include marginal entries in a manuscript like the Book of Kells points towards the significance attached to the series' symbolic role.

Insular tables can be divided into two categories on the basis of their framing. Non-architectural frames were used in some books with Irish associations. These frames show how the tables were seen as an exegetical text. The emphasis on the cross form in the decoration of the Durrow canons indicates additional layers of meaning attached to the series.

Arches are used to frame the majority of Insular tables. This form creates the sense of an entrance into the Gospel text, but also expresses something of the tables' content. The sacred nature of this entrance is intimated in the decoration of the arches with Christological filling ornament and in the inclusion of figural representations in the tympana of the arch frames. The appearance of the evangelical beasts in this position associates the canons with a range of different harmonies and emphasizes the diversity and unity contained in the tables' figural synopsis. The crowning of tables with representations of the Apostles demonstrates the orthodoxy of the series and relates it to the broader theme of evangelization.

The final part of the chapter discussed the figures which crown four arches in the Book of Kells. It was suggested that these form a harmonious series, each representing a different stage of Christ's life. This accords with the general iconography of the tables contained in Insular books. At the heart of this visual comment is the way in which the tables offer a door to understanding the nature of Christ as revealed in the Gospels, but also function themselves as a Christ-bearing image.

Some Final Comments

Rather than repeat the conclusions included at the end of each part of the thesis, these final comments highlight some of its most significant findings and indicate avenues for further research.

This thesis identifies the existence of a continuous tradition of commenting on the Eusebian series from the fourth to the ninth centuries. Its nine chapters construct a coherent argument for revising current views of the canons. It is clear that the tables not only functioned as a concordance to the Gospels, they also had a significant symbolic role.

Developing ideas first put forward by Nordenfalk, the thesis shows how the ten canons were perceived as an image of the Gospels' divine number, measure and weight. The perfection of the number ten played a key role in Eusebius' construction of his tables. The significance of the canons' number was picked up by later commentators, like Victor of Capua, who describe the series in terms of the *denarius*. Hiberno-Latin exegetes also give significant attention to this feature. A work such as Ailerán's *Canon Evangeliorum* presents the ten tables as containing a whole range of different orders and harmonies. Such exegesis is echoed in Insular Gospel books which often decorate their canons with images of numerical completion.

The Eusebian tables also create an entrance to the Gospel text. The first part of the thesis links this entrance to exegesis on the temple. The progress of understanding implied in the move from Canon I to Canon X is likened to the move from the temple's exterior courtyard, signifying the literal understanding of the Gospel text, to the Holy of Holies, which represents the most developed spiritual understanding. This idea is returned to in Part II's discussion of the Irish Reference Bible. In this text the tables are described as occupying an intermediary role between the literal and spiritual understanding of the Gospels. Part III's discussion of the tables' iconography illustrates, in addition, how the entrance formed by the tables' arches could adopt a specifically Christological character.

As well as demonstrating the symbolic significance attached to the Eusebian concordance, this thesis contains the first ever discussion of the treatment of the canons in Hiberno-Latin exegesis. Chapters Four to Eight demonstrate the level of interest in and understanding of the Eusebian tables which existed amongst the authors of the 'Wendepunkte' corpus. In contrast to patristic authors, who only include information on the canons in prefaces to Gospel books or in encyclopaedic works, Hiberno-Latin exegetes treat of the tables in their commentary literature. This indicates that the series had become an integral part of their evangelical exegesis. The discussion of the tables in these commentary texts also distinguishes Hiberno-Latin authors from their Anglo-Saxon contemporaries, such as Bede, who never mention the Eusebian system.

The thesis' examination of Hiberno-Latin exegesis on the tables provides a fitting backdrop to its final chapter, which is devoted to iconography. The decoration of the tables in Insular Gospel books can now be set in the context of an intellectual milieu which understood and celebrated the Eusebian canons. An aspect of the Hiberno-Latin tradition which seems particularly relevant to the iconographic discussion was the lack of attention the exegetes give to the series' practical use. This complements the illumination of the canons in a manuscript like the Book of Kells, which emphasizes the tables' symbolic role.

It is clear that the present work represents only a beginning in terms of the study of the early medieval reception of the Eusebian series. Further research on the attention given to the canons by Carolingian exegetes is imperative. This will help to determine the extent to which the interest in the tables displayed by Sedulius Scottus is a reflection of his Irish background or shows him as part of mainstream European thought. There is a range of extant evidence for Carolingian interest in the canons, some of which, like the *Alea Euangelii*, has been mentioned in the previous pages. In addition to this written evidence, the decoration of the tables in Carolingian Gospel books provides valuable clues towards contemporary understanding of the Eusebian concordance.

One of the most exciting aspects of the study of the Gospel canon tables is the opportunity it provides for comparative research. Tantalising parallels exist

between the decoration of the Eusebian series in Western manuscripts and later Eastern productions, especially those of Armenian provenance. The fact that the Eusebian concordance was included as a preface to Gospel books in most parts of Christendom for almost a thousand years has ensured the survival of an incredibly rich range of source material, so often lacking in other areas of medieval research. The thesis highlights the existence of these sources in an Insular context and demonstrates their capacity to illumine the medieval understanding of the harmony of the fourfold Gospel.