

Origen *via* Rufinus on the New Testament Canon

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Around the turn of the fifth century Rufinus of Aquileia translated many important Greek theological works, especially by Origen and Eusebius. These translations have received a great deal of criticism for their lack of fidelity to their *Vorlagen*, a criticism that extends to their statements on the New Testament canon. Several scholars now assume that the list of New Testament books to be found in Origen's *Homilies on Joshua* 7.1 (available only in Rufinus' Latin translation) should be attributed to the translator rather than to Origen himself. This paper calls this assumption into question by comparing Eusebius' statements on the books of the New Testament to Rufinus' translation of those statements. We will find that Rufinus does, in fact, alter his text in some subtle ways so that the statements on the canon correspond more closely to the increasingly stabilised canon of the late-fourth and early-fifth centuries, but such subtle alterations do not overturn the translator's basic fidelity when reporting earlier views. This analysis suggests that Origen did produce a list of books in the mid-third century that closely – though not exactly – resembled the list of New Testament books published by Athanasius in 367.

Keywords: Origen, Rufinus, Eusebius, New Testament canon

1. Introduction

While preaching his way through the Book of Joshua, Origen found occasion to liken the New Testament authors to the trumpets that brought down the walls of Jericho. This analogy results in a full list of the New Testament books, with the possible exceptions of Revelation and 3 John.

sacerdotali tuba primus in Evangelio suo Matthaeus increpuit; Marcus quoque, Lucas et Iohannes suis singuli tubis sacerdotalibus cecinerunt; Petrus etiam duabus epistolarum suarum personat tubis; Iacobus quoque et Iudas. addit nihilominus adhuc et Iohannes tuba canere per epistolas suas¹ et Lucas Apostolorum gesta describens. novissimus autem ille veniens, qui dixit: 'puto

1 Some manuscripts add *et apocalypsin*. See discussion below.

autem, nos Deus apostolos novissimos ostendit' et in quatuordecim epistolarum suarum fulminans tubis muros Hiericho et omnes idolatriae machinas et philosophorum dogmata usque ad fundamenta deiecit.²

Matthew first sounded the priestly trumpet in his Gospel; Mark also; Luke and John each played their own priestly trumpets. Even Peter cries out with trumpets in two of his epistles; also James and Jude. In addition, John also sounds the trumpet through his epistles, and Luke, as he describes the Acts of the Apostles. And now that last one comes, the one who said, 'I think God displays us apostles last' [1 Cor 4:9], and in fourteen of his epistles, thundering with trumpets, he casts down the walls of Jericho and all the devices of idolatry and dogmas of philosophers, all the way to the foundations.³

Bruce Metzger assessed the importance of this list by noting that 'it contains together, without mentioning any other books and without making any distinctions, the books that in AD 325 Eusebius would cite as "homologoumena" and "antilegomena" ..., and Athanasius in 367 would enumerate as constituting the New Testament'.⁴ However, scholars generally now seem to doubt the authenticity of this passage, both because it would be an unusually early catalogue of New Testament books and because Rufinus of Aquileia, whose Latin translation of Origen's *Homilies on Joshua* is alone extant, admittedly modified passages in Origen to make them more orthodox according to his later fourth-century standards.⁵ According to Lee Martin McDonald, Origen's list of New Testament books 'is very likely a creation of ... Rufinus in the fourth century'.⁶ The present paper takes up the issue of the authenticity of this Origenic passage by comparing Rufinus' translation of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* at points where the topic focuses on the biblical canon.

Rufinus' methods of translation have received intense scrutiny; he is generally not trusted very far when it comes to the precise wording of his Greek *Vorlagen*.⁷

2 W. A. Baehrens, ed., *Origenes Werke VII: Homilien zum Hexateuch in Rufins Übersetzung* (GCS 30; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich, 1921) 327–8.

3 Translation from B. J. Bruce, *Origen: Homilies on Joshua* (FOC 105; Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2002) 74–5.

4 B. M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 140. Metzger did entertain the possibility 'that Rufinus altered Origen's words so as to reflect a later, fourth-century opinion concerning the extent of the canon' (p. 139), but he takes this idea no further.

5 For Rufinus' comments about modifying Origen's translations, see the preface to his translation of Origen's *De principiis*, as well as his preface to Origen's *Commentary on Romans*.

6 L. M. McDonald, *The Biblical Canon: Its Origin, Transmission, and Authority* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007) 306; see also p. 307. See also D. R. Nienhuis, *Not by Paul Alone: The Formation of the Catholic Epistle Collection and the Christian Canon* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007) 62.

7 For criticisms of Rufinus' translations, see E. L. Gallagher, *Hebrew Scripture in Patristic Biblical Theory: Canon, Language, Text* (VCS 114; Leiden: Brill, 2012) 39–40; and the works mentioned

Recently a more positive evaluation of Rufinus' methods has appeared, but this has little to do with trying to defend his accuracy in translation and more to do with attempting to understand sympathetically why Rufinus made certain changes to his base text.⁸ When it comes to passages dealing with the books of Scripture, scholars have often found that Rufinus updates his *Vorlage*, whether Origen or Eusebius, so that the discussion reflects better the more rigid views at the end of the fourth century and the beginning of the fifth. As Francis Murphy wrote long ago, Rufinus 'had some rather strong opinions of his own regarding the canonicity of the books of the New Testament, and, as in other matters, did not hesitate to correct Eusebius'.⁹

2. The New Testament in Rufinus' Translation of Eusebius

One of the problems in dealing with this material is the difficulty in understanding Eusebius' own opinion on the New Testament canon, particularly in what he seems to have regarded as his clearest and most straightforward articulation of his views, *HE* 3.25. I find myself in agreement with Éric Junod's recent assessment of Eusebius' presentation: 'A la première lecture, cette célèbre notice du livre III frappe par son caractère systématique. Pourtant plus on l'examine, moins on est sûr de bien comprendre les classifications d'Eusèbe!'¹⁰ The

in M. J. Kruger, 'Origen's List of New Testament Books in *Homiliae in Josuam* 7.1: A Fresh Look', *Mark, Manuscripts, and Monotheism: Essays in Honor of Larry W. Hurtado* (ed. C. Keith and D. T. Roth; LSNT 528; London: Bloomsbury, 2015) 99–117, at 100–101 n. 6.

8 On Rufinus' translation of Eusebius, see now M. Humphries, 'Rufinus's Eusebius: Translation, Continuation, and Edition in the Latin *Ecclesiastical History*', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16 (2008) 143–64; L. Ciccolini and S. Morlet, 'La version latine de l'*Histoire ecclésiastique*', in S. Morlet and L. Perrone, *Eusèbe de Césarée: Histoire Ecclésiastique. Commentaire*, vol. 1: *Études d'Introduction* (Paris: Cerf, 2012) 243–66. For a negative evaluation of his translations of Origen, see R. P. C. Hanson, *Origen's Doctrine of Tradition* (London: SPCK, 1954) 40–7; E. R. Kalin, 'Re-examining New Testament Canon History: 1. The Canon of Origen', *Currents in Theology and Mission* 17 (1990) 274–82, esp. 279–81; G. A. Robbins, 'Peri tōn endiathēkōn graphōn: Eusebius and the Formation of the Christian Bible' (Diss., Duke University, 1986) 89–97.

9 F. X. Murphy, *Rufinus of Aquileia (345–411): His Life and Works* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1945) 168; cf. J. N. D. Kelly, *Rufinus: A Commentary on the Apostle's Creed* (ACW 20; Westminster, MD: Newman, 1955) 20.

10 É. Junod, 'D'Eusèbe de Césarée à Athanase d'Alexandrie en passant par Cyrille de Jérusalem: de la construction savante du Nouveau Testament à la clôture ecclésiastique du canon', *Le canon du Nouveau Testament: regards nouveaux sur l'histoire de sa formation* (ed. G. Aragonne, É. Junod, E. Norelli; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2005) 169–95, at 175. See also id., 'Les mots d'Eusèbe de Césarée pour désigner les livres du Nouveau Testament et ceux qui n'en font pas partie', *Eukarpa: études sur la Bible et ses exégètes en hommage à Gilles Dorival* (ed. M. Loubet and D. Pralon; Paris: Cerf, 2011) 341–53. On the development of the literary critical categories employed by Eusebius – including their prehistory in classical

complexities of this discussion prevent us from entering fully into it here, but suffice it to say that Eusebius here divides Christian literature into three categories of books: the ὁμολογούμενα (universally acknowledged), the ἀντιλεγόμενα (disputed), and the heretical books, to which Eusebius does not here assign a title, though later he will call them παντελῶς νόθα, ‘completely spurious’ (3.31.6).¹¹ Problematically he has already used the word νόθος in 3.25 to describe the ἀντιλεγόμενα in such a manner that in that passage νόθος constituted either an alternative name for the ἀντιλεγόμενα or the name of a sub-category of the ἀντιλεγόμενα.¹² At any rate they were not universally received, and so the distinctive adjective ἐνδιάθηκος or ‘encovenanted’ could not apply to them.

2.1 Canon Terminology

How does Rufinus handle these various labels and classifications? In English translations such as contained in the Loeb edition, the adjective ἐνδιάθηκος is rendered ‘canonical’.¹³ Rufinus translates likewise infrequently.

scholarship and their adoption by Origen and other Christian writers prior to Eusebius – see A. D. Baum, ‘Der neutestamentliche Kanon bei Eusebios (*Hist. Eccl.* iii,25,1–7) im Kontext seiner literaturgeschichtlichen Arbeit’, *ETL* 73 (1997) 307–48.

11 Baum, ‘Neutestamentliche Kanon bei Eusebios’, 323–5. On the term ὁμολογούμενα, see pp. 325–6, and J. J. Armstrong, ‘The Role of the Rule of Faith in the Formation of the New Testament Canon according to Eusebius of Caesarea’ (Diss., Fordham University, 2006) 102–3.

12 For the first position, see E. R. Kalin, ‘The New Testament Canon of Eusebius’, *The Canon Debate* (ed. L. M. McDonald and J. A. Sanders; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002) 386–404, esp. 394–7; Robbins, ‘*Peri tōn endiathēkōn graphōn*’, 137–41; in favour of the second option, see Junod, ‘D’Eusèbe de Césarée’, 178; id., ‘Mots d’Eusèbe’, 345. The difficulty of determining the correct interpretation is illustrated by G. A. Robbins, ‘Eusebius’ Lexicon of Canonicity’, *Studia Patristica* 25 (1993) 134–41, at 134–5, who affirms both views, first saying that ‘[t]his middle category is further sub-divided to delineate between those orthodox counterfeits many ecclesiastics presumed to be genuine [= ἀντιλεγόμενα], and those which were widely recognized by the Church to be spurious [= νόθα]’ before asserting that ‘*HE* 3.25.6 makes it clear that ἀντιλεγόμενα and νόθα are, for Eusebius, simply two different words for the same category ...’; cf. Robbins, ‘*Peri tōn endiathēkōn graphōn*’, 122, 138. Robbins maintains that the distinction involves how the church views these writings: the church regards the first set as genuine but not the second set, whereas Eusebius regarded both sets as spurious. On the other hand, Baum, ‘Neutestamentliche Kanon bei Eusebios’, 338, 345 sees the distinction to consist in how Eusebius himself views these writings: the church regards all of these writings as spurious, but Eusebius thinks the first set are genuine.

13 Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History, books 1–v* (trans. K. Lake; LCL; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926) 259, etc. See Gallagher, *Hebrew Scripture*, 39–40. For criticism of this translation, see Robbins, ‘Eusebius’ Lexicon of Canonicity’, 135–6. On ἐνδιάθηκος, see Metzger, *Canon of the New Testament*, 292; T. Bokedal, *The Formation and Significance of the Christian Biblical Canon: A Study in Text, Ritual and Interpretation* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014) 76: ‘The Word “encovenanted” or “testament-ed” (ἐνδιάθηκος; cf.

The term ἐνδιάθηκος is quite rare in patristic literature, appearing twice in Origen and eight times in Eusebius, all in the *Ecclesiastical History*, and then in no other author of the fourth and fifth centuries in discussions of the canon.¹⁴ Actually, one of Eusebius' uses of the term overlaps with one of Origen's uses, since Eusebius is quoting Origen. This passage is at *HE* 6.25 (= *Philocalia* 3), where Origen, as quoted by Eusebius, introduces his canon list of the Old Testament with the observation that the Hebrews have twenty-two encovenanted books (ἐνδιάθηκοι βιβλίοι). Rufinus' rendering of this as *viginti et duo ... libri in canone veteris testamenti* is in agreement with the Loeb's translation. However, in only one other instance does Rufinus use the word *canon* to translate ἐνδιάθηκος. At *HE* 5.8.1, we read in Rufinus' Latin about the *ordo canonis divinarum scripturarum*, a translation of Eusebius' ἐνδιάθηκοι γραφαί. On other occasions Rufinus renders ἐνδιάθηκος as *divina* (6.14.1), or *in auctoritate* (3.3.3; 3.9.5), or *certum* (implied at 3.3.1), or he sometimes offers no precisely corresponding term (3.25.6; preface to book 6).

On the other hand, the word *canon* does appear in Rufinus' *Ecclesiastical History* in passages where Eusebius had not used ἐνδιάθηκος. For instance, at 3.25 where Eusebius introduces his own list of New Testament writings with the description that they are 'the writings of the New Testament (κοινὴ διαθήκη) which have been mentioned', Rufinus describes the list as 'the entire canon of the New Testament'. When Eusebius later summarises this discussion at 3.31.6 and speaks there of the 'holy writings' (ἱερὰ γράμματα), Rufinus

Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* III, 3.1) thus is the third century equivalent to "canonical" ...' (he had just cited Zahn to similar effect). Armstrong, 'Role of the Rule of Faith in the Formation of the New Testament Canon', 101–2 says that Eusebius 'never specifically equates this word [ἐνδιάθηκος] with any one of his three classes of Christian literature' (p. 102 n. 24), but Baum, 'Neutestamentliche Kanon bei Eusebios', 334 insists that Eusebius equates ἐνδιάθηκος and ὁμολογούμενα multiple times (citing 3.3.1, 3; 3.9.5; 3.25.1–2.6). Robbins, 'Peri tōn endiathēkōn graphōn', 144–5 points out that the term ἐνδιάθηκος reflects Melito's terminology in regard to his list of books of the Old 'Covenant' (4.26.12–14).

¹⁴ Junod, 'Mots d'Eusèbe', 351. For Origen's use of the term, see *De oratione* 14.4; *Selectae in Psalmos* = *Philocalia* 3 = Eusebius, *HE* 6.25.1. (Origen usually represented the concept of 'canonicity' with the term φερόμενος, 'circulating'; see Gallagher, *Hebrew Scripture*, 57 n. 147; Armstrong, 'Role of the Rule of Faith in the Formation of the New Testament Canon', 104–6. The Latin translations of Origen by Rufinus contain the word 'canon' three times (zero for Jerome's translations): *Commentarius in Canticum canticorum* prologue, twice; *De principiis* 4.4.6. For discussion, see Gallagher, *Hebrew Scripture*, 38, 42; id., 'Writings Labeled "Apocrypha" in Latin Patristic Sources', *Sacra Scriptura: How 'Non-Canonical' Texts Functioned in Early Judaism and Early Christianity* (ed. J. H. Charlesworth and L. M. McDonald; New York: Bloomsbury, 2014) 1–14. Nicephorus also uses the word several times, as do some other Greek writers (none before Origen). Total 29x in Greek literature, not counting the adverb ἐνδιαθήκως.

speaks of the *scripturarum canon*. Eusebius introduces the list of Old Testament books supplied by Melito of Sardis as the ὁμολογούμενα, which Rufinus renders *in canone* (4.26.12). At the introduction to Origen's Old Testament canon list, Eusebius' word κατάλογος comes across into Latin as *canon*. On one occasion, Rufinus translates Eusebius' term κανών with the Latin term *canon*, but whereas Eusebius used the word not of a catalogue of books but of a 'rule', namely, 'the Church's tradition of accepting only four Gospels',¹⁵ Rufinus makes clear that he is speaking about the *canon Novi Testamenti* (6.25.3; cf. 6.13.3). Rufinus also inserts the word where there is no corresponding term in Greek; for instance, at the end of Origen's list of Old Testament books, where Rufinus adds: 'With these books concludes the canon of the divine volumes' (6.25.2; cf. 7.25.1). These appearances of the word *canon* generally give the impression of more established boundaries of scripture, which is appropriate for the era of Rufinus' revision.

2.2 Eusebius' Categories

This impression also comes across in the way Rufinus structures Eusebius' New Testament canon in 3.25 and the terminology he employs there. He introduces it as the 'entire canon of the New Testament', which should imply that some of the books on the fringe for Eusebius in the early fourth century would be accepted in Rufinus' early fifth-century context. Indeed, this is the case. What had been ὁμολογούμενα in Eusebius are listed similarly in Rufinus, with the concluding assertion, 'concerning which no doubt ever existed at all' (*de quibus nulla umquam prorsus extitit dubitatio*, 3.25.2). In Eusebius we then get the ἀντιλεγόμενα in 3.25.3 and the νόθα in 3.25.4–5. While the relationship between these two categories might be a little difficult to work out, Rufinus has worked it out. The ἀντιλεγόμενα of 3.25.3 now become those books 'about which there used to be doubt by some' (*de quibus a nonnullis dubitatum est*), and the books listed are basically the same as the ones Eusebius had listed, that is, five of the Catholic Epistles (James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2–3 John), books which were actually in the canon for Rufinus. The category called by Eusebius νόθος is now writings 'about which there is the greatest doubt' (*de quibus quam maxime dubitatur*), and here we have listed the *Acts of Paul*, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, the *Epistle of Barnabas* and the *Didache* (3.25.4). Some of these writings feature in what Rufinus calls in his

¹⁵ Robbins, 'Peri tōn endiathēkōn graphōn', 153; Robbins, 'Eusebius' Lexicon of Canonicity', 138–9: 'Eusebius' preferred word for a list of sacred writings, or any list, is *catalogue*'. See also Baum, 'Neutestamentliche Kanon bei Eusebios', 333; R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship: From the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968) 207, who does think the word κανών here means 'canon', but contrast R. M. Grant, *Eusebius as Church Historian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980) 141 n. 28: 'Eusebius is simply referring to the Church's rule of accepting only four gospels.'

Commentary on the Apostle's Creed the 'ecclesiastical' books – non-canonical writings useful to the church – namely, the *Shepherd* and the *Didache*, if that is what Rufinus means by *Duae viae* in his *Commentary*.¹⁶ When Rufinus says in his translation of Eusebius that these books are doubted, he must refer to doubt about their place in the canon, not their orthodoxy, for ecclesiastical books are necessarily orthodox. But later he will class the *Apocalypse of Peter* among the *apocrypha* (6.14.1), a term Rufinus elsewhere uses for heretical works.¹⁷ The books Rufinus lists at *HE* 3.25.4, then, contain, in Rufinus' mind, both ecclesiastical books and apocrypha. Possibly, Rufinus retained this grouping from Eusebius not because the books listed formed a homogeneous group but because he felt constrained by his Eusebian *Vorlage*.¹⁸ These Greek and Latin categories can be presented in tabular form (see [Table 1](#)).

Rufinus thus divides what had been basically two categories for Eusebius (ὁμολογούμενα and ἀντιλεγόμενα) into three categories, acknowledging that there had been some doubt (note the perfect: *dubitatum est*) about certain of the Catholic Epistles, but nothing like the doubt that persists (*dubitatur*, present tense) in regard to the *Acts of Paul* and others. All of these had been ἀντιλεγόμενα for Eusebius, but Rufinus makes a firm distinction. In §6, Eusebius had said about the ἀντιλεγόμενα and νόθα together that 'these are all ἀντιλεγόμενα'; Rufinus completely omits this summary phrase, signalling again a distinction. Rufinus' presentation is not dissimilar to a strong modern tradition, represented by Bruce Metzger, for instance, of interpreting Eusebius' New Testament canon as encompassing both the ὁμολογούμενα and the better-attested group of ἀντιλεγόμενα.¹⁹

2.3 *The Apocalypse of John*

Earlier we noted that basically the same books appear in section three of both Eusebius and Rufinus, that is, Eusebius' first listing of the ἀντιλεγόμενα, before he introduces the term νόθος, and Rufinus' listing of the books about which there used to be some doubt. The lists are the same, except that Rufinus includes here the *Apocalypse of John*. Eusebius had treated the *Apocalypse* in a rather odd manner, including it among both the ὁμολογούμενα and the νόθα,

16 On the relationship of the *Didache* to the Two Ways mentioned by Rufinus, see R. E. Aldridge, 'Peter and the "Two Ways"', *Vigiliae Christianae* 53 (1999) 233–64, at 242–5. On the reception of the *Shepherd of Hermas*, see G. M. Hahneman, *The Muratorian Fragment and the Development of the Canon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) 61–71.

17 *Comm. Symb.* 36. See also his translation of Eusebius, *HE* 4.22.9; Origen, *Commentarius in Canticum canticorum* prologue, at the end, discussed in Gallagher, 'Writings Labeled Apocrypha', 7–8.

18 He does not always feel so constrained (cf. *HE* 6.14.1), but the fact that he seems to here suggests that he might merit somewhat more credence than is afforded him by Kalin, 'Re-examining New Testament Canon History', 279–81 (see below).

19 Metzger, *Canon of the New Testament*, 201–7.

Table 1.

Eusebius, HE 3.25	Rufinus' translation
ὁμολογούμενα ('received')	<i>de quibus nulla umquam prorsus extitit dubitatio</i> ('concerning which no doubt ever existed at all')
Gospels, Acts, Paul, 1 Peter, 1 John, Apocalypse of John	same books minus Apocalypse of John
ἀντιλεγόμενα ('disputed')	<i>de quibus a nonnullis dubitatum est</i> ('about which there used to be doubt by some')
James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2–3 John	same books plus Apocalypse of John
νόθα ('spurious') [either an alternative name for the ἀντιλεγόμενα or a sub-category]	<i>de quibus quam maxime dubitatur</i> ('about which there is the greatest doubt')
<i>Acts of Paul, Shepherd of Hermas, Apocalypse of Peter, Epistle of Barnabas, Didache, Apocalypse of John, Gospel according to the Hebrews</i>	same books minus Apocalypse of John

each time with the note 'if it should seem right' (εἴ γε φανεῖη, §§2, 4). The second occurrence also includes the observation that some people atheise the book while others put it in the ὁμολογούμενα. For Eusebius, the Apocalypse is either universally accepted or spurious.²⁰ Rufinus, apparently, thought Eusebius' presentation made no sense, so he removed the Apocalypse from both of those categories and inserted it into the middle category (§3), the books about which there used to be some doubt. This repositioning of the Apocalypse prompted the early twentieth-century scholar J. E. L. Oulton to observe: 'Rufinus, if he is unfaithful as a translator, is at any rate more intelligible.'²¹

20 See E. S. Constantinou, 'Banned from the Lectionary: Excluding the Apocalypse of John from the Orthodox New Testament Canon', *The Canon of the Bible and the Apocrypha in the Churches of the East* (ed. V. S. Hovhannessian; New York: Peter Lang, 2012) 51–61, esp. 58–9, who explains that Revelation actually was (nearly) universally acknowledged in the East (and West) when Eusebius wrote, but he himself found it dubious, and so he classified it as universally received, as it was, and as spurious, as he regarded it (pp. 58–9). See also Baum, 'Neutestamentliche Kanon bei Eusebios', 339–40; Metzger, *Canon of the New Testament*, 205 n. 38; Hahneman, *Muratorian Fragment*, 23–5. Contrast Kalin, 'New Testament canon of Eusebius', 395.

21 J. E. L. Oulton, 'Rufinus's Translation of the Church History of Eusebius', *JTS* 30 (1929) 150–74, at 157.

Eusebius promised a more lengthy discussion of the status and authorship of Revelation (3.24.18), which he delivers at 7.25 in the form of an extensive quotation of the opinion of Dionysius, the third-century bishop of Alexandria. Dionysius first mentions those ecclesiastical writers who have rejected the book, based on the ideas that it is not John's, that the meaning is obscured rather than unveiled (apocalypse), and that the book was actually written by the heretic Cerinthus. But, says Dionysius, these reasons do not persuade him to reject the book. He points out that while the writer calls himself John, he does not claim to be the apostle, and Dionysius asserts that the writer was certainly inspired. Up to this point, Rufinus translates the passage rather faithfully.

Then Dionysius argues in detail that the author of John's Apocalypse could not possibly be the author of the Fourth Gospel and the Catholic Epistle (1 John), due to several reasons: the Gospel and Epistle do not identify their author, but the John of the Apocalypse mentions his own name several times (*HE* 7.25.9–11); there were many people named John in the first century (7.25.12–16); and the literary style of the Gospel and Epistle clearly binds them together (7.25.17–21) and just as clearly separates the Apocalypse from them (7.25.22–7). All of this discussion against the common authorship of the Apocalypse and the Fourth Gospel occupies about three and a half pages in Schwartz's edition of the *Ecclesiastical History*.²² Rufinus severely abbreviates this discussion, reducing it to this bland comment:

Dionysius then makes an extended defence of the position that the Apocalypse was without doubt divinely inspired and written by a John, but that it does not seem clear to him that it is by the same John who wrote the Gospel, because the latter never makes mention of his own name nor references himself by name, but the former, who wrote the Apocalypse, makes mention of his own name about three times.²³ But also making a judgement from the very style of the writing he says that it could have been that in those times there was some other John, one of the saints, to whom God revealed these things.

What to make of this summary on the part of Rufinus? It is a clear case of Rufinus' freedom as a translator, and yet the translation does not distort the views expressed in the Greek, even though the views do not cohere with Rufinus' own or those of the fourth-century Latin church. While it is not a faithful translation, it is a faithful summary.

22 E. Schwartz, ed., *Eusebius Werke*, vol. II.2: *Die Kirchengeschichte, Bücher VI–X* (GCS 9.2; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich, 1908) 694–700. A glance through Schwartz's edition, which prints on facing pages both the Greek and Theodor Mommsen's edition of Rufinus' Latin translation, will demonstrate that 7.25 is not the only time Rufinus resorts to summary.

23 Actually, four times: 1.1, 4, 9; 22.8. Dionysius quotes all four.

2.4 The *antilegomena* and *notha*²⁴

Eusebius uses the word ἀντιλεγόμενα only seven times, and the verb ἀντιλέγω in reference to religious literature another three times.²⁵ A couple of times Rufinus offers no corresponding term (3.3.3; 3.25.6, first appearance), but mostly he alternates between three renderings: (1) books currently in doubt; (2) books received as canonical but about which some doubt had formerly been expressed; and (3) books that are not received as canonical but are used in the church. For the three appearances of the verb ἀντιλέγω Rufinus always opts for the first translation choice, retaining the sense of current doubt regarding the specified books (3.3.5, Hebrews; 3.3.6, *Shepherd*; 3.24.18, 2–3 John, Revelation).²⁶ Twice Rufinus renders ἀντιλεγόμενα according to the second option: at 3.25.3, as we have seen, and at 3.25.6, the summary statement to Eusebius' New Testament canon. In the latter passage, Rufinus describes the ἀντιλεγόμενα as those books 'about which there had been some objection or hesitation, but since they were accepted by the vast majority of churches, they should be admitted'. The term ἀντιλεγόμενα at other times comes into Latin according to the third translation choice above, as something akin to non-canonical books useful to the church, thus corresponding to what Rufinus called in his *Commentary on the Apostle's Creed* the 'ecclesiastical books' (§36). At *HE* 3.31.6, another summary statement where Eusebius had mentioned three groups – 'holy writings', ἀντιλεγόμενα, and writings that are 'completely spurious' – Rufinus instead speaks of the 'books which are held in authority' (i.e. canonical), the books 'which are completely repudiated' (i.e. apocryphal), and those which 'held a middle position and were received by churches for instruction alone, not for an indisputable authority'. At 6.13.6, Rufinus says something similar ('those books which seem not to be accepted by some') and names Wisdom of Solomon and Sirach. Whereas Eusebius had classified these two books as ἀντιλεγόμενα here, along with *Barnabas*, *Clement*, Jude and Hebrews, Rufinus sets off *Barnabas* and *Clement* in a separate sentence, and then Jude in its own sentence, and he completely omits reference to Hebrews.²⁷

24 On these two terms, see Armstrong, 'Role of the Rule of Faith in the Formation of the New Testament Canon', 104 n. 30, who notes that Eusebius did not develop this terminology in reliance on Origen, who 'never applies either of these terms to sacred texts'.

25 ἀντιλεγόμενα: 3.3.3; 3.25.3, 6 (twice); 3.31.6; 6.13.6; 6.14.1; ἀντιλέγω: 3.3.5, 6; 3.24.18.

26 At 3.24.18, Rufinus does not actually translate ἀντιλέγω; rather, he combines two Eusebian clauses (on 2–3 John and Revelation), eliminating the first reference to doubt but translating the second (*anceps sententia*), which now applies to each of these doubted Johannine books, though in Eusebius it had applied only to Revelation.

27 The omission of Hebrews here seems to counter Oulton's contention that Rufinus harboured doubts about Hebrews ('Rufinus's translation', 157–8), an opinion echoed by Murphy, *Rufinus of Aquileia*, 168–9, who even attributes to Rufinus a 'somewhat decided rejection of the *Epistle to the Hebrews*'. But Rufinus mentions in his canon list the *Pauli apostoli epistolae*

The last time Eusebius uses the term ἀντιλεγόμενα, Rufinus brings it into Latin as *apocryfa* and names the *Apocalypse of Peter* (6.14.1), which had been in Eusebius' νόθος category at *HE* 3.25.4.²⁸ In that passage Rufinus had brought νόθος into Latin as writings 'about which there is the greatest doubt' (*de quibus quam maxime dubitatur*), and his use of *apocryfa* at 6.14.1 to describe one of these same writings amounts to much the same thing.²⁹ Elsewhere Rufinus translates νόθος with words signalling doubt or rejection: 3.25.7, *de quibus dubitari diximus*, in reference to the earlier listing of dubious or spurious books; 3.31.6, *penitus repudientur*, where the subject is heretical writings; 6.31.1, *ficta et aliena ab scriptura prophetica*, as a description of Julius Africanus' accusations against the story of Susanna.³⁰ The verb νοθεύω appears once in the *Ecclesiastical History*. At 2.23.25, Eusebius says of James that 'it is considered spurious' (νοθεύεται), whereas Rufinus' Latin asserts that 'it is not received by some' (*a nonnullis non recipiatur*). In the same passage, Eusebius says that James and Jude 'have been read in public in most churches', but the Latin translation contends that 'they are received in almost all churches' (*ab omnibus paene ecclesiis recipi*).³¹ Here we can see clear adjustments by the Latin translator designed to update the thoughts presented in the older Greek work.

2.5 Summary

We have now gained some general impressions of Rufinus the translator when it comes to the issue of the biblical canon. Rufinus does sometimes adapt Eusebius' discussions of Scripture to his later early fifth-century context, after

quattuordecim, which must include Hebrews (*Comm. Symb.* 35). On the patristic reception of Hebrews, see Hahneman, *Muratorian Fragment*, 119–25.

28 Eusebius had named here as *antilegomena* Jude, the other Catholic Epistles, *Barnabas* and the *Apocalypse of Peter*. Rufinus omits reference to all but the last.

29 On the use of the term *apocrypha* in Rufinus, see Gallagher, 'Writings Labeled *Apocrypha*', 108–9.

30 The four appearances of νόθος discussed in this paragraph are the only appearances in the *HE* in reference to religious literature. Cf. also 5.16.8 (no corresponding term in Latin); 5.16.9 (Rufinus: *insanus*), where Eusebius writes of the prophecies of Montanus and his associates with the term νόθος; and 7.30.6 (Rufinus: *adulterina*), where the teachings of Paul of Samosata are described with the term. On νόθος in Eusebius, see Junod, 'Mots d'Eusèbe', 348–9; Armstrong, 'Role of the Rule of Faith in the Formation of the New Testament Canon', 104 n. 30; Baum, 'Neutestamentliche Kanon bei Eusebios', 327: 'Daher meint auch der Begriff οἱ νόθοι in 25,4 nicht einfach die unechten Schriften bestimmter Verfasser, sondern Werke, die insofern unauthentisch sind, als sie *entweder* nicht den angenommenen Autoren *oder* nicht der apostolischen Zeit angehören oder sogar in beiden Hinsichten unecht sind. Dies ergibt sich daraus, daß der Begriff der Echtheit in III,25,1–7 nicht in einen biobibliographischen, sondern in einen „chronographischen“ Kontext eingebunden ist.'

31 See Robbins, '*Peri tōn endiathēkōn graphōn*', 124. Rufinus similarly adjusts the wording at 3.3.1 (2 Peter).

the boundaries of the canon had become more firm. These adaptations are subtle: the tweaking of a category name, the addition of a word, the slight rearrangement of material. Even while adapting Eusebius, Rufinus does not invent a biblical canon for the earlier historian, nor does he even add or subtract any books in the chief passage where Eusebius' views are found, *HE* 3.25. Rather, he works within the boundaries imposed on him by his Greek *Vorlage*, subtly adjusting some of the wording, especially with the result of hardening the categories.³²

3. The New Testament in Rufinus' Translations of Origen

We turn now to the specific criticisms voiced by Everett Kalin and others regarding Rufinus' translations of Origen on the canon of Scripture. Kalin seeks to establish the untrustworthiness of Rufinus' translations based on three alterations he makes to Origen's comments about certain New Testament books as preserved by Eusebius in *HE* 6.25.3–14: (1) Rufinus has 'New Testament canon' where Eusebius, in the introduction to his quotations from Origen, had 'ecclesiastical canon'; (2) Rufinus gives the number of Pauline epistles as fourteen, whereas Origen specified no number; (3) Origen's reticence about 2 Peter and 2–3 John, his unwillingness to say more than that some Christians doubt their authenticity, becomes in the Latin translation a stronger approval of these writings with the admission that not everyone agrees.³³ Kalin does not mention that Origen omits reference to James and Jude in the passage from his *Comm. Joh.* 5 excerpted by Eusebius, even though these letters could have contributed to Origen's argument in that text that Scriptural writers typically produced few works, and despite his positive attitude towards James and Jude elsewhere. Rufinus also omits reference to them in his translation, resisting the urge to fill in the gaps in Origen's list.³⁴

Nevertheless, such evidence compels Kalin to suspect that the other passage in Origen's works containing a list of New Testament books, *Homilies on Joshua* 7.1, extant only in Rufinus' Latin translation, actually derives more from the translator

32 Similar conclusions in J. Ruwet, 'Les "antilegomena" dans les œuvres d'Origène', *Biblica* 23 (1942) 18–42, at 22–3.

33 Kalin, 'Re-examining New Testament Canon History', 280–1.

34 Robbins, 'Peri tōn endiathēkōn graphōn', 95 objects to the appearance of James and Jude in the list of books in Rufinus' translation of Origen's *Homilies on Joshua* 7.1 (on which, see below): '... James and Jude, mention of which was entirely lacking in Eusebius' version of Origen's "canon"' (i.e. *Hist. Eccl.* 6.25). But Robbins fails to note that Rufinus also omitted James and Jude at *HE* 6.25. Similar fidelity to his *Vorlagen* is demonstrated by other passages in Rufinus' translations: he does not add Esther to Melito's list, for instance, and even in Eusebius' confusing canon list at *HE* 3.25, he essentially remains faithful to the categories of books that he finds there, though of course he does harden the boundaries between the categories.

than his *Vorlage*. It is not entirely clear what Kalin thinks Rufinus' *Vorlage* looked like. Kalin doubts the list is Origen's 'in its present form'.³⁵ But which books in particular do not belong to such a list coming from the pen of Origen? What sorts of changes did Rufinus make? These questions Kalin leaves unaddressed. Certainly Origen accepted the fourfold Gospel, Acts, the Pauline letters, including Hebrews, and some of the Catholic Epistles, especially 1 Peter, 1 John, James and Jude.³⁶ Meinrad Stenzel wondered whether Rufinus has altered the sequence of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John), but he also realised that the same order appears in Origen's *Comm. Joh.* 1.4.6.³⁷ Origen also accepted Revelation, but Revelation probably did not form a part of this list in the *Homilies on Joshua*.³⁸ Second Peter appears in this list, and Origen's acceptance of it is certainly questionable, as is his acceptance of 2–3 John, at least one of which also appears on this list.³⁹ But this list says only that John authored letters, without supplying the number three, as we would expect if Rufinus were trying to update Origen for the fifth century. If we are looking for ways in which Rufinus may have distorted Origen's views on the New Testament canon, we can point only to his possible inclusion of the number two in relation to Peter's epistles.⁴⁰

There are signs that Rufinus exercised some restraint in this translation. First of all, such was his own claim about these homilies: in the epilogue to his translation of Origen's *Comm. Rom.*, he reflects on his translation of the Joshua homilies, saying that he had accomplished these translations – unlike some other of his

35 Kalin, 'Re-examining New Testament Canon History', 280.

36 See the extracts of Origen collected by Eusebius at *HE* 6.25.3–14. On James and Jude, see the evidence cited and discussed in Nienhuis, *Not by Paul Alone*, 54–60.

37 M. Stenzel, 'Der Bibelkanon des Rufin von Aquileja', *Biblica* 23 (1942) 43–61, at 53.

38 Baehrens, *Origenes Werke VII*, 327–8 includes in his apparatus some manuscript attestation for the Apocalypse (his Class C and Codex g), but the reading does not appear in his printed text. Metzger, *Canon of the New Testament*, 139 n. 51 agrees with Baehrens that it is 'probably a scribal expansion of the text'; see also Armstrong, 'Role of the Rule of Faith in the Formation of the New Testament Canon', 113–14 n. 49; Stenzel, 'Bibelkanon des Rufin von Aquileja', 53. Other scholars assume that Revelation is original: Kruger, 'Origen's List of New Testament Books', 108 n. 47; Kalin, 'Re-examining New Testament Canon History', 280; Robbins, '*Peri tōn endiathēkōn graphōn*', 89–97. The translator Rufinus certainly accepts Revelation as canonical; he includes it in his canon list at *Comm. Symb.* 35. As for Origen, he gives no indication of harbouring doubt over its authorship, asserting it to be by John the apostle (Eusebius, *HE* 6.25.9, quoted above). On the reception of Revelation in early Christianity, including its 'frequent' citations by Origen, see Hahneman, *Muratorian Fragment*, 23–5.

39 Origen never cites 2–3 John, but a few citations of 2 Peter are preserved in works surviving in Latin, e.g. *Hom. Lev.* 4.4.

40 Kruger, 'Origen's List of New Testament Books', 104–7 argues that the list as extant in Rufinus' translation accurately reflects the Origenic original in every detail.

translations of Origen – ‘literally and without great effort’, that is, without the effort of filling in gaps he perceived in Origen’s text or polishing the rough style.⁴¹ Since Rufinus is elsewhere so candid about the alterations he introduces into his translations of Origen (as noted above), we should not lightly dismiss this claim to literalness, which Rufinus presents as a fault of his own translation work. Second, with regard to our passage specifically, the list of books probably omits the Book of Revelation, though its inclusion would have resulted in the full twenty-seven-book canon that Rufinus endorses. Third, Michael Kruger has pointed out in a recent article that the order of books here, with Acts and Paul coming at the end (mirrored at *Hom. Gen.* 13.2), diverges from the more traditional sequence that Rufinus presents in his own canon list (*Comm. Symb.* 35).⁴² Admittedly, this example from the order of the books can be countered by the strange coincidence that the particular order for the Catholic Epistles (Peter, James, Jude, John) is known only in this translation by Rufinus and in Rufinus’ own canon list.⁴³ Possibly Rufinus has made some adjustment here.

Kalin encourages us to consider whether Origen would have omitted the *Shepherd of Hermas* from a list of New Testament books; he suggests that its absence here may be due to the translator.⁴⁴ Certainly Origen did hold the *Shepherd* in high regard; in his *Comm. Rom.* 10.31, he even asserted its divine inspiration.⁴⁵ But this argument loses some force when one realises that the *Commentary on Romans* is preserved only in Rufinus’ Latin. If Rufinus did not disguise Origen’s high regard for the *Shepherd* there, it is not clear that he would have done so in the *Homilies on Joshua*. Rufinus himself included the *Shepherd* in his ‘ecclesiastical’ category of non-canonical books that are useful (*Comm. Symb.* 36).

Judging by the types of changes Kalin finds in Rufinus’ translation of *HE* 6.25, we could guess that at *Hom. Jos.* 7.1 the Latin translator might have supplied the number ‘two’ for Peter’s epistles and the number ‘fourteen’ for Paul’s epistles, though why he did not also add the number ‘three’ to John’s epistles remains peculiar. As Kruger says: ‘The vagueness of Origen’s list on this point favors its authenticity.’⁴⁶ Such slight adjustments cohere with Rufinus’ practice in his

41 See Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Books 6–10* (trans. T. P. Scheck; FOC 104; Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2002) 311. For discussion, see A. Jaubert, *Origène: Homélie sur Josué* (SC 71; Paris: Cerf, 1960) 69. Jaubert’s entire ‘Appendice II’, in which she explores the quality of Rufinus’ translation of these homilies, is relevant to our discussion (pp. 68–82). Her comparison of the Latin to some Greek fragments leads her to affirm the basic fidelity of the translation: ‘Dans l’ensemble, elle donne l’impression d’une longue paraphrase, mais non d’une paraphrase inexacte’ (p. 82).

42 Kruger, ‘Origen’s List of New Testament Books’, 112–13. See also A. von Harnack, *Der kirchengeschichtliche Ertrag der exegetischen Arbeiten des Origenes* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich, 1918) 12.

43 Stenzel, ‘Bibelkanon des Rufin von Aquileja’, 54–5.

44 Kalin, ‘Re-examining New Testament Canon History’, 281.

45 Kruger, ‘Origen’s List of New Testament Books’, 110.

46 Kruger, ‘Origen’s List of New Testament Books’, 113.

other translations. On balance it seems probable that Rufinus' translation of Origen's *Homilies on Joshua* contains a list of New Testament books because the translator found such a list – very similar to what he provided in Latin – in the Greek copy of the homilies lying before him.

Such a list is unusual in the third century, and unusual in the works of Origen. Origen's practice elsewhere is to admit the doubts about books not universally received, as for example in the comments extracted by Eusebius at *HE* 6.25. No such acknowledgements of doubt find expression in *Hom. Jos.* 7.1. Perhaps Rufinus has eliminated any expression of uncertainty about some of the books, but his habit in his translation of Eusebius is to soften the doubts expressed rather than omitting them completely. Probably a better explanation for the manner in which this list is presented, without any hesitation about any of the books, concerns the literary genre. A homily arguably does not provide the appropriate occasion for mentioning such doubts. Metzger reasonably suggests that

in the context of a sermon Origen enumerates writings which had not yet attained universal approval but which might be used perfectly well for the edification of the faithful, whereas in more detailed discussions he customarily differentiates between the two categories of books.⁴⁷

It may be that the feature of this list that we have just observed – the absence of any note regarding the reception of particular books – could explain why Eusebius did not include the passage in his compendium of Origen's thoughts on the canon (*HE* 6.25). Assuming the authenticity of the list, Eusebius may have omitted reference to it because he either overlooked it or considered it less suitable for his purposes. After all, *Hom. Jos.* 7.1 offers almost no comment on the status of the books listed, while the passages Eusebius preserves explicitly mention not only the four Gospels, but also that the church accepts these and no others, not only the letters of Peter, but also that one of them is received and the other is disputed. Eusebius found these latter passages more conducive to his purpose of chronicling the reception of writings in the church.

This list does not clearly represent Origen's attempt to produce an exclusive canon list, just as *Hom. Num.* 27.1.3 does not represent Origen's attempt to limit the Scriptural books without obscurities (i.e. those easy to understand) to Esther, Judith, Tobit and Wisdom of Solomon.⁴⁸ The passage from *Hom. Jos.* 7.1 might not carry the connotations of Athanasius' list from 367, in which the Alexandrian bishop very explicitly excluded all books not on his list. In other

⁴⁷ Metzger, *Canon of the New Testament*, 140; see also Kruger, 'Origen's List of New Testament Books', 115–16.

⁴⁸ Armstrong, 'Role of the Rule of Faith in the Formation of the New Testament Canon', 113–14: 'Certainly, Origen did not consider this catalogue to be exclusive, for he appeals to works that do not appear in this list.'

words, Origen did not necessarily know a definitive canon of Christian Scripture. After all, at least one book that Origen consistently regarded as an authentic composition of an apostle – the Apocalypse of John – apparently found no place in the list originally.

4. Conclusion

Our reflections on Rufinus' translational habits have encouraged us to question the grounds for suspecting his work on Origen's *Hom. Jos.* 7.1. This paper has suggested that Origen did provide a list of New Testament books very similar to the later list of Athanasius, with the possible absence of 2 Peter, 2–3 John and Revelation. If the argument favouring the basic authenticity of this list proves persuasive, then scholars will need to give consideration to this passage in their histories of the canon. The recent dominant view has maintained that lists of Christian Scripture began to appear only in the fourth century with the work of Eusebius and those who followed him, an idea that also plays a significant role in the fourth-century dating of the Muratorian Fragment.⁴⁹ The late dating of that text, though having gained popularity in the wake of the publication of Hahneman's book, has never won a consensus.⁵⁰ Perhaps the theory that the fourth century saw the beginning of the impulse to list the books of the New Testament has trumped some of the data. Origen's list is one piece of that data, and it now deserves renewed attention, for it does not seem that it can be ignored as merely the product of the translator Rufinus.

49 See Hahneman, *Muratorian Fragment*, 132.

50 For a detailed response to Hahneman, see J. Verheyden, 'The Canon Muratori: A Matter of Dispute', *The Biblical Canons* (ed. J.-M. Auwers and H. J. de Jonge; BETL 163; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003) 487–556. Kruger's recent discussion of Origen's *Hom. Jos.* 7.1 frames its argument for the authenticity of Origen's list in terms of weakening one plank in the argument for a late date for the Muratorian Fragment; see Kruger, 'Origen's List of New Testament Books', 100.