

## EUSEBIUS AND HIS "HISTORY."

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We have all been brought up to accept a certain scheme of early church history. This scheme comes over to us from the Roman Catholic Church, but is generally believed by Protestants also. The great fountain-head of our so-called information here—the bed-rock of the scheme—is the Ecclesiastical History ascribed to Eusebius Pamphilus, and purporting to cover the first 324 years of this era.

Eusebius is reputed to have lived approximately 260-339, to have been Bishop of Cæsarea, and to have enjoyed exceptional opportunities of learning what had taken place in Christian circles up to his own time. What "sources" of his facts does he himself disclose, and by what outside testimony is he supported? In his first chapter (Bohn's translation) he tells his readers:

"I shall go back to the very origin and the earliest introduction of the dispensation of our Lord and Savior, the Christ of God. But here, acknowledging that it is beyond my power to present the work perfect and unexceptionable, I freely confess it will crave indulgence, especially since, as the first of those that have entered upon the subject, we are attempting a kind of trackless and unbeaten path. Looking up with prayer to God as our guide, we trust, indeed, that we shall have the power of Christ as our aid, though we are totally unable to find even the bare vestiges of those who may have travelled the way before us; unless perhaps, what is only presented in the slight intimations which some in different ways have transmitted to us in certain partial narratives of the times in which they lived, who, raising their voices before us, like torches at a distance, and as looking down from some commanding height, call out and exhort us where we should walk and whither direct our course with certainty and safety. Whatsoever, therefore, we deem likely to be advantageous to the proposed subject we shall endeavor to reduce to a compact body by historical narration. For this purpose, we have collected the materials that have been scattered by our predecessors, and culled, as from some intellectual meadows, the appropriate extracts from ancient authors. In the execution of this work we shall be happy to rescue from oblivion the successions, if not of all, at least of the most noted apostles of our Lord, in those churches which even at this day are accounted the most eminent; a labor which has appeared to me necessary in the highest degree, as I have not yet been able to find that any of the ecclesiastical writers have directed their efforts to present anything complete in this department of writing."

That is, boiled down, Eusebius does not even claim to have sources, but proceeds to construct his history from materials taken from where the celebrated German got his camel—out of his inner consciousness. His way of putting it