The Lunar and Paschal Tables of
De ratione paschali
Attributed to Anatolius of Laodicea

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Introduction

There can be no other document which has played such a long role in the Paschal controversy and been quoted in support of such contrasting principles as the Paschal canon of ANATOLIUS, Bishop of Laodicea in Syria who died circa 282. It was first cited by EUSEBIUS of Caesarea circa 311\(^1\), about thirty years after ANATOLIUS' death, who reproduced an excerpt from it in order to support the principles that the date of the Pasch should be computed according to a 19-year cycle and the earliest date fixed by reference to the spring equinox, which EUSEBIUS took to be *xi k.apr.* (22 March). About eighty years later Saint JEROME in his *De viris illustribus* referred glowingly to ANATOLIUS' Paschal work saying: *mirae doctrinae vir fuit in arithmetica, geometria, astronomia, grammatica, rhetorica, dialectica. Cuius ingenii magnitudinem de volumine quod super Pascha compositum et decem libris de arithmeticae institutionibus, intelligere possumus*.\(^2\) About ten years later RUFINUS published his edition of EUSEBIUS' *History of the Church* wherein is found a Latin version of EUSEBIUS' ANATOLIAN excerpt\(^3\). However a simple collation between RUFINUS and EUSEBIUS also shows that they differ in a considerable number of details and the former is clearly *not* a translation of the latter. For example he introduced his citation of ANATOLIUS' Paschal text as follows\(^4\): “Many distinguished treatises, also, composed by the said Anatolius


\(^{2}\) *Patrologia Latina*, MIGNE, vol 23, 683.

\(^{3}\) E. SCHWARTZ Eusebius Werke, with RUFINUS text by TH. MOMMSEN, (Leipzig, 1903), p. 723.

\(^{4}\) J. MORETON, personal communication translated from E. SCHWARTZ & TH. MOMMSEN, Eusebius Werke, p. 723: *Multa quoque opuscula supra dicti Anatolii magnifice composita ad nos usque venerunt. I wish to acknowledge gratefully both this and her translation of KRUSCH'S edition of *De ratione paschali* and much constructive discussion.
have come down to us”, which may be compared with EUSEBIUS’ introduction⁵: “Not a great many works, indeed, were composed by ANATOLIUS, but enough have reached us to enable us to perceive both his eloquence and his great erudition”, which introduction should also be compared with JEROME’S glowing tribute.

The Latin translation from ANATOLIUS which RUFINUS provided in place of EUSEBIUS’ Greek corresponds essentially verbatim with that found in De ratione paschali, a text known widely in the British Isles and in Insular circles on the Continent, with the single exception that RUFINUS reproduces EUSEBIUS’ Roman equinoctial date of xi k.apr (22 March) rather than the date viii k.apr (25 March) found in De ratione paschali. The earliest indication we have of the use of De ratione paschali is to be inferred from ALDHELM’S letter to King GERAIN of Cornwall in 672 wherein he writes concerning the latercus, i.e. the Paschal table then followed by the Celtic church: “some celebrate the Paschal sacrament with the Jews on the fourteenth moon according to the nineteen-year computation of ANATOLIUS, or rather according to the rules of SULPICIUS SEVERUS, who made an 84-year cycle, although the pontiffs of the Roman Church followed neither of them as a correct scheme of calculation”⁶. Note that whereas his primary attribution is to ANATOLIUS his amendment to SULPICIUS SEVERUS concerns the length of the cycle, which is the only respect in which the Paschal principles of De ratione paschali and the latercus differ, as has been fully discussed by MCCARTHY⁷. Concerning SULPICIUS we know that a request from him for chronological material was forwarded by PAULINUS of Nola to RUFINUS in 403, just immediately after RUFINUS had completed his Latin edition of EUSEBIUS. SULPICIUS died c. 420 and the implication is therefore that between 403 and c. 420 SULPICIUS used De ratione paschali to construct the latercus.

About 180 years after SULPICIUS’ time we find COLUMBANUS of Bangor in his letter to the synod of Chalon in 603 attributing his Paschal tradition to ANATOLIUS as follows: sed confiteor conscientiae meae secreta, quod plus credo traditioni patriae meae iuxta doctrinam et calculum octoginta quattuor annorum et Anatolium ab Eusebius ecclesiasticae historiae auctore et sancto catalogi scriptore Hieronymo laudatum Pascha celebrare⁸. In an earlier letter to pope GREGORY c. 600 he had cited approvingly the stern injunction in De ratione paschali against celebration of the Pasch on luna xxi and luna xxii⁹. About thirty years later the Paschal controversy in Ireland was evidently in full flight, because we find CUMMIAN in his letter to SÉGÉNE and BECCAN in Iona deliberately distorting the text of De ratione paschali in order to use it to argue his case

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⁵ EUSEBIUS Church History VII.32, see LAWLOR & OULTON op. cit., vol I, p. 248.
⁹ WALKER, op. cit. p. 3–4.