

The Journal *of* *Theological Studies*

OCTOBER, 1919

NOTES AND STUDIES

LA TRADITION MANUSCRITE DE LA COR- RESPONDANCE DE SAINT BASILE

By THE LATE ABBÉ J. BESSIÈRES

(INTRODUCTION BY C. H. TURNER)

THE correspondence of St Basil consists in the Benedictine edition of 365 pieces, in Migne's reprint of 366. No attempt has been made since the Benedictine edition appeared in 1730 (in vol. iii of St Basil's works) to study the MSS and their mutual relations: even the Benedictine editors (Dom Gamier and Dom Maran) concentrated their efforts rather on establishing the chronology of the letters than on ascertaining the best available text. In the main their chronology, that is to say the new order in which they arranged the Letters, has been unshaken by criticism, and it has found a zealous defender in Dr Loofs.¹ But as regards the text they were content to give a straightforward and readable text, based on the evidence of the MSS most accessible to them at Paris. And results which do not begin by taking account of the manuscripts as a whole and of a comparison of their contents are unsatisfying, if not necessarily unsatisfactory: so that it was a serious gap in one of the most important sources of our knowledge of St Basil, the man and his times, which M. Bessières set himself to fill by the detailed investigation of which an account has now to be given.

In studying the manuscripts of the correspondence of an ancient writer, there are three ways by which the subject may be approached. There is, firstly, the age and number of the manuscripts: a family represented, by many MSS or by the older MSS is likely to be more original than a family represented only by one comparatively late MS.

¹ *Eustathius von Sebaste und die Chronologie der Basilienbriefe*, Halle, 1898.

There is, in the second- place, the test of the order of the letters: MSS which give the letters in the same order belong to the same family, and, since there would probably be in the minds of scribes and editors a desire to classify the *disieda membra* of an extensive correspondence by grouping together letters directed to the same correspondent or letters bearing on the same or similar subjects, a group of MSS where this sort of classification is extensively adopted is likely to belong to a later stage of the development of the collection than a group in which the letters are less logically arranged. But it must not be forgotten that we are dealing only with probabilities and presumptions, and therefore we can never dispense with the third and final test, namely a comparison of various readings actually found in the manuscripts of different families.

The treatise now before us is, in the main, an exhaustive application of the second of the three methods just described to the problem of the correspondence of St Basil. M. Bessières' results are in the highest degree interesting: he has spared no labour in the enumeration of the contents of the different MSS and in the construction of tables of concordance between them; and he has, in my judgement, rightly divined which family of MSS should be placed at the head of the tradition, as representing the earliest stage of the development. But though this main and primary conclusion seems to me incontestable, I think that he has throughout depended too exclusively on this second' method (the order, that is, of the letters in the different MSS) taken by itself, and that if he had kept a more open mind to considerations of the age and number of the MSS, and still more of the filiation of the text as evidenced by *variae actiones*, his treatment of the relative priority of the groups in one of his main families of MSS would have worked itself out on rather different lines to those which are embodied in his essay.

Broadly speaking, M. Bessieres has examined between twenty-five and thirty MSS, ranging in date from the tenth to the sixteenth century, all of them containing at least 100 letters and most of them not less than 200. In western Europe he has worked at the libraries of Paris, Oxford, Berlin, Munich, and Vienna, besides the chief libraries of Italy, and he also visited Patmos. It is certain that no one would willingly repeat the toilsome process of describing so minutely the number and order of the letters contained in these MSS, and from this point of view alone it may be said to be quite essential to the interests of learning that M. Bessières' researches should find their way into print.

A preliminary chapter (pp. 9-22) describes the printed texts.' Although the first Greek edition of any of the letters goes back as far as 1499, the various editions that followed in the sixteenth century made only gradual progress in the recovery of the correspondence. Morel's Paris edition of 1618 repeated from previous editors a total of 214 letters, which was

exactly doubled by the addition of a contribution from English sources of a further 214.¹ This edition concluded the chapter of the recovery of the letters: the three centuries which have elapsed since Morel have scarcely added anything to the substance of the material, but they have seen at least the opening of the critical treatment of it. The Benedictine editors, a century after Morel, for the first time digested the amorphous mass into something like an ordered series, divided into three classes: 46 letters written before St Basil's consecration to the bishopric of Caesarea in 370; 245 letters (47-291) written between his consecration and his death on Jan. 1, 379; and 74 letters (292-365) impossible to date, or doubtful, or spurious.

The first of M. Bessières' numbered chapters (chap. I pp. 22-240, with a list of the MSS used, pp. 21, 22) describes in succession the contents of twenty-seven MSS; in a few cases, where the MS is quite late and the family to which it belongs has several older representatives, summarily, but as a rule with full detail. For the convenience of the reader in following the thread of the argument which is to follow, the order of description already assumes a rough division into lines of transmission ('embranchements') and families of MSS ('families'): M. Bessières divides his material into two main branches, A and B, the A line of transmission having three subdivisions, the families Aa, Ab, Ac, the B line four subdivisions, Bo, Bu, Bx, and Bz. The largest group, reckoned by the number of MSS belonging to it, is Aa, with eight MSS, of which Patmos 57, of the tenth century, is the oldest: but it happens that though almost a third of M. Bessières' MSS are now, and were at the date of the Benedictine edition, in Paris, the only Aa MS at Paris is of the sixteenth century, so that it is not surprising that the Benedictine edition does not reproduce the Aa text. If M. Bessières is, as we fully believe, right in assigning the superiority to this family over all the rest, it is at once obvious that, from the point of view of the readings adopted, a new critical edition might in detail differ rather widely from the Benedictine.

Chapter II (pp. 51 ff.) is devoted to an examination of the mutual relations of the three subdivisions of the A line of transmission. The Aa family (especially as expressed in its three oldest representatives, Patmos 57, s. x, Oxford Baroccianus 121, s. xi, Venice Marcianus 6x, s. xi) contains 272 letters, the order of which is, at least when compared to the order of Ab and Ac, relatively haphazard. Both Ab and Ac are larger in bulk than Aa, and both make more attempt at systematic classification: but their additions and their rearrangements are independent of one another, so that they appear to be distinct developments of a common

¹ See preface to vol. i, and vol. ii p. 1000, 'epistolae novae, quae a Richardo Moitacutio [Mountague, afterwards bishop of Chichester and Norwich] nunc primum ex Anglicis codicibus MSS. eduntur et Latinitate donantur; An. MOCXVII.' ...

stock which is Aa. Ac (which would seem to be a closer representative than Ab of Aa, though in number and age of the MSS composing it it is the less important of the two) takes Aa as its base, but at every fresh name of a correspondent it brings together all the letters addressed to him at whatever point in Aa they occur; and to the Aa total it adds the group known as 'Avētya-foi', that is, letters without the name of the addressee. Ab contains 310 letters, rearranged on a somewhat similar plan, but with still more drastic systematization.

Next follows, in chapter III, a corresponding study of the four families or subdivisions of the other or B line of transmission. The matter is here more complicated, and the conclusions reached, it must be frankly added, are less satisfying. M. Bessibres takes his start from the two families Bo and Bu, which have both the most ancient and the most numerous attestation among the four of this line, the former resting on the testimony of five MSS, the latter on three, in either case with a MS of about A. D. 1000 as the earliest. Using the same criterion as for the A families, we find that Bo, though far from shewing so elaborate a plan as either Ab or Ac, is both more complete and more systematically arranged than Bu; from which facts the conclusion is provisionally drawn that it is later. Next the subdivision Bz is considered, first by a comparison of its two representatives with one another, then by a comparison of their resultant order with the order of Bo and again of Bu. Relationship is clear, and it is more marked with Bu than with Bo. What then is the kind of relationship? Is Bu derived from Bz, or is it vice versa? or if they are descendants of a common ancestor, which reproduces it the more faithfully? M. Bessières compares in succession several small groups of letters found, but in differing order, in both families, and concludes that Bz, of which the distinguishing mark is the great 'incoherence' of its order, is the more primitive collection of the two, and that Bu is a recasting and improvement of Bz, as Bo in turn was seen to be of Bu. Finally the subdivision Bx receives separate treatment, and though its independence of its companions is very thorough-going and its order of the letters is the issue of a revision effected with relentless logic, it is decided to be fundamentally of the B type, and descended from a Bz MS.

Thus on M. Bessières' chain of reasoning the Bz family emerges as the most primitive representative of the B line of transmission, and it only remains to bring it into connexion with the corresponding oldest representative of the A line, in order to see whether there is any 'common measure' between the two main lines of transmission in their ultimate forms: and chapter IV is intended to answer this question. But in fact, as we shall see later on, there is some weak point in the argument, for the conclusion as to the antiquity of the Bz family in relation to other families breaks down hopelessly when confronted with

the test of the actual readings it offers. It was suspicious, to start with, that a family whose two representatives were of the thirteenth and sixteenth century respectively should be supposed to transmit the most original form of the collection contained in any of the B MSS: and when to that is added the evidence which M. Bessières' fifth chapter will be found to provide as to the worthless character of the Bz text, one can only say that the use of the classification method as the sole clue to the disentanglement of the rival claims to priority of the different families of a single line of transmission has in this instance broken down. It is conceivable, of course, though perhaps not very probable, that a MS or group of MSS might retain a primitive order of contents, even when its text was subjected to a drastic process of depravation. But it becomes at least quite useless for textual purposes: and any future editor of St Basil's letters will do well to fight entirely shy of Vaticanus 435 and Berolinensis 23, the two component members of the Bz family.

Chapter IV deals in general, as we have said, with the question of the possibility of establishing contact between the ultimate or original form of the A line and the ultimate or original form of the B line of transmission. But as we have already given the caution that M. Bessières' results as to the most ancient type among the B families will be shewn by a consideration of his own material, as supplied in his next chapter, to be quite untenable, it would be superfluous to go into further detail with regard to the steps by which he seeks to shew, first, the existence of points of contact between his Aa and his Bz, and, secondly, the priority of Aa over Bz. Without denying the validity of his conclusion in itself, it only shews (on our view) the dependence of a late B type on an early A type; and the problem of the relation of the earliest traceable B type to the earliest A type remains so far unsolved. Nevertheless the chapter contains two further side-enquiries which merit notice; namely, (1) at the start, a detailed enumeration of a homogeneous group of letters, some thirty-eight in number, headed 'Avtμπα^os, absent from the earlier MSS of the Aa family, and (2) at the close, a discussion of the bearings of a papyrus fragment at Berlin, said to be of the fifth century, containing successive extracts from five letters of St Basil. The grounds for asserting that the author of this *florilegium* drew on a MS which gave the letters in the *order* of the Aa family are not very convincing: but there is more substance in the conclusion that the readings of the papyrus are much closer to the *text* of the A MSS than to that of the B MSS.

This preliminary enquiry into textual relations' leads on to the full and detailed examination in chapter V of the readings of a number of MSS for one selected letter, Ep. 46 *ad virginem lapsam*. It is unfortunate that M. Bessières should have chosen for his specimen-

texta letter that is on the one hand not quite certainly genuine, and on the other has a place in the manuscript tradition not only of the letters of St Basil but of his homilies, since the possibility is opened that cross-currents from the one line of tradition may have had effect on the other, and therefore the normal text of a MS, or group of MSS, of the letters may' on this occasion have suffered contamination from another source, namely MSS of the homilies. But with this reserve the evidence must be accepted, and its tenor is¹ clear enough; so clear that M. Bessières would surely have been the first to see it in its full bearings, if his mind had not been preoccupied by the results to which the exclusive use' of his method of comparison of the order of the letters had already led him.¹ He admits indeed that the text of the family Bz—the family which he places at the source of the B line of transmission—is 'un texte fortement glôse'. But he supposes) if I understand him aright, that this is the most ancient stage of the text to which we can reach back,¹ and that the A and the rest of the B line represent independent and haphazard efforts at disembarassing it of its accretions. But a very slight consideration of the variants themselves will lead us at once to a much simpler conclusion: Bz stands not at the beginning but at the end of a long line of developement, and betrays itself either as tertiary when it gives a conflate reading made up of two (or even more) readings found separately in other authorities, or at least as secondary, by its Biblical 'tags' or its doctrinal polish.

A few examples must suffice in proof of this :—

- (1) dAA⁰ (rv¹ Trjs 0«as zKdvr)<i KOIVONCOS TOV t.vybv¹ airoprijtao-a Aa-C and (at any rate for the first six words) 7 MSS of Homilies.
 ũAA⁰ trir T¹S 6éias iKeivrs Kotvwvías TÖV f.vybv¹ aTroppifacra Ab.
 dA\à o~v ri)s 6tiás iKeCvtji (rwa<pela<s TÖV f.vybv diropplij/acra Bo.
 dW a¹ Kal Trjs 0«aś CKUvr<s crwa< >éias TÖV f.vybv a¹ Troppi/fao-a Bu.
 dAA⁰ Kal a~b T?)S Otlas¹ eKeivrs irapOévtas TOV f.vybv d¹enjcrao-a 3 MSS of Homilies.
 dXA⁰ Kal t) r¹s #eías lKtivr<; Koivaivias /ca¹ (rwa¹tt¹as ri)s CK rijs TrapOrvía¹; TÖV f.vybv d6crffjo~ao'a o~v . . • Bz.

Here Bz is certainly the latest, Aa-c presumably the earliest, reading.

- (2) TOV dvSpos Bo-u (and Rufinus's Latin version 'viro suo').
 TOV d.rj\$ivov dvSpos A (a, b, c) with 3 MSS of Homilies.
 TOS¹aOávaro¹ avSpos 10 MSS of Homilies.
 TOV dXrjOivov Kal dOávwrov dvSpos Bz.
 (3) TOV hto-iroTov A Bo-u with 8 MSS of Homilies.
 TÖV iTTovpáviovSeo-TTorov Bz with 3 MSS of Homilies.

¹ But this is not quite consistent with what he says elsewhere of the superior originality of A.

- (4) *TOV wflL<f>lov*: *TOV dXrj&iu'ov wfiufiov* Bz with 4 MSS of Homilies.
 (5) *TTLKporepov xoAijs evprjareis*: -f Kai *TjKÓvrijfévov fiaXkov* /ta^a/pas SIOTO/ÁOU
 (Prov. v 4) Bz with 6 MSS of Homilies.
 (6) *Tepe'uou*: + *TOV irpo'rp-ov* Bz with 3 MSS of Homilies.

But the data supplied by these collations enable us to extend our inductions beyond this negative result about the Bz family. They supply corroborative proof of the general excellence of the A text: for instance:—

- (7) *irpòs tòv vífufiouv* A (5 MSS of Homilies): *irpòs tòv OXTOJOLVON VVJLNOV* B (8 MSS of Homilies):

and compare *Koinwias* in (1) above. But they also supply, what takes us a step further in the process of working out the text-relationships between the A and B families, some clear indications that the Ab family is a link between the two lines: thus:—

- (8)' *nUpayí pfifiv fj -n-epi' 175 Hpu-SiaSos* Aa-c with 10 MSS of Homilies.

Add (after *xfttov*) 6 *ta^aw>* is Ab B with 3 MSS of Homilies.

- (9) *avpav Sc^d/jLivr]* *TOV* de'pos *TOV* *7rvev/xaTòs* *TOV* *VUV* *ivcnyōvvros* Aa—C

• (9' MSS of Homilies): *TO5* *ueplov* (for *depos TOV*) *TrvtfULTòs* Ab B. Here *avpa* seems to call for the literal word *depos*.

- (10)' *TOV iirjTpioov olcov KaTaXhrovra* Aa-C (one MS pf Ab) and 5 MSS of Homilies: *vaTpZov* Ab (two MSS) B and 9 MSS of Homilies.

Here *ixijrpiov* recalls what has been said about grandmother, mother, and sister earlier in the letter: *7aTpZov* is a Biblical reminiscence from Ps. xlv (xliv) 11.

• In the final section of this fifth chapter, M. Bessières poses the question whether behind the collection Aa, which to him is the sole ultimate source of the rest, we can get back to any earlier stage of the formation of the *corpus* of St Basil's letters. *A priori* it is likely that large collections should have been formed out of smaller ones—we see this process at work in the various enlargements of Aa, and we have no reason to suppose that Aa itself had been immune from it in the course of its own growth. Moreover, examination of its contents (it is an amorphous mass, as it stands, of letters heaped up after one another pell-mell) does suggest points of juncture between one stage of the collection and another. In the first portion letters to the same correspondent are almost without exception grouped together. But after we have passed beyond the first 100 items we find, for instance, a second group of letters to Libanius (105-107 Of the Aa order) followed immediately by a second group of letters to Eusebius of Samosata (108-111). - There is therefore something to be said for the conjecture that the original nucleus of the Aa collection was a small edition of only some 100 letters or so, which in process of time received one supplement after another until the complete

number of 272 letters was attained. If we go on to ask whether the external evidence of history has anything to tell us in reinforcement of the internal evidence of our earliest extant collection, we have in answer the interesting *datum* that St Gregory Nazianzen did in fact send his friend Nicobulus (see his 53rd epistle) a collection of St Basil's letters and of his own. Perhaps M. Bessières is overstepping the due bounds of caution when he conjectures that St Gregory's collection was, as regards the Basil section, nothing else than the first 100 letters of the Aa MSS: certainly it would need a parallel work of enquiry into the tradition of St Gregory's own letters before the hypothesis could be called more than plausible. But anyhow the evidence of the Basil MSS alone is enough to indicate the three main stages of the development of the collected correspondence: first an original nucleus, fairly well arranged, of (it would seem) about 100 letters, going back no doubt to within a few years of St Basil's death; secondly, a stage of successive additions, spread it may be over a century or more, by which without any rearrangement one supplement after another was tacked on to the existing collection, until the 100 letters had swelled to 272, and the collection emerges to the light of day in our Aa MSS; thirdly a process, or rather a series of independent, possibly even simultaneous, processes, by which something was done to enlarge the collection, and a great deal was done in the way of recasting and rearranging it—processes represented by all our MSS except those of the Aa family. But greatly though this editorial labour must have served the convenience of the reader, it is almost always the case that the text suffers when an editor's hand is once at work. The letters are not only sorted and put in order, but they are emended and polished as well. It is not surprising that the Aa order of the letters being the most original, the Aa form of text should turn out to be the most original also.

In the sixth and last chapter M. Bessières discusses the problem of the genuineness of the correspondence. He first reviews those letters, between ninety and a hundred in number, which do not form part of the Aa collection, but were incorporated subsequently. More than a third of these belong to the group, already mentioned, of the *'Avmīṣpa<f>oi*: but as a matter of fact the *'Aveviypafoi* can hardly be separated from a number of other letters which though not strictly 'unaddressed' are addressed to unknown or obscure individuals, and so the number of letters in this subsection, if we may so call it, is raised to a proportion of quite two-thirds of the letters absent from A. These letters do not appear in the oldest MSS even of the B line of tradition: they entered therefore into the collections at a relatively late date, and in the Ab family they retain their place apart at the end of the collection. Obviously they do not bear the same external guarantee as the letters

of the earlier collections. Yet it does not follow that they are not for the most part genuine: M. Bessières finds indeed that some of them are too insignificant to offer any opening for criticism, favourable or otherwise; a few are letters of Gregory rather than of Basil; a few again are not really, whether genuine or not, letters at all; but, apart from certain letters to Libanius and to Apollinaris, there are hardly any which there is actual reason to suspect.

Next M. Bessières turns to the few items appearing in the collection Aa on which doubt has been thrown. He defends epp. 45-46 (of the Benedictine numeration) *ad monachum lapsam, ad virginem lapsam*, though as homilies rather than letters: rejects the pair of letters to and from Julian, epp. 40, 41: rejects also ep. 16, which is not a letter but is extracted from Gregory of Nyssa's work against Eunomius, and ep. 321, which belongs to Gregory Nazianzen.

Lastly he examines the correspondence with Libanius (epp. 335-359)) and points out that in Aa, which contains some twenty of the letters in question, they appear in three different groups; for the genuineness of the first group (epp. 335-343) he declares decisively, and for the second group (epp. 344-346) with more hesitation: the rest, apart from ep. 358, he rejects.

Here ends this most valuable dissertation: and here ends the analysis and criticism of it.

C. H. TURNER.

LA TRADITION MANUSCRITE DE LA CORRESPONDANCE DE SAINT BASILE

INTRODUCTION.

EN abordant l'étude des manuscrits qui nous ont transmis la Correspondance de S. Basile, nous nous proposons, en gros, d'en tirer tout ce qui nous permettrait d'établir l'histoire du texte de cette Correspondance, et c'est en fixant nos classifications et nos filiations de manuscrits que nous avons été conduit à des conclusions relatives à l'histoire du texte antérieurement aux manuscrits les plus anciens. Notre étude comprendra donc deux parties distinctes bien qu'étroitement liées, la première ayant pour objet de décrire et de classer les manuscrits, la deuxième de découvrir l'état du plus ancien recueil.

Le problème qui se pose à propos de la Correspondance de S. Basile se pose aussi à propos de tous les textes anciens. Les données traditionnelles diffèrent pour chaque auteur, il est vrai, et elles obligent la recherche philologique à varier chaque fois l'emploi de ses critères et de ses méthodes. Lorsque les manuscrits sont peu nombreux, on obtient d'excellents résultats par la collation intégrée de leur contenu.