

THE FORTY MARTYRS OF SEBASTE :

A STUDY OF HAGIOGRAPHIC DEVELOPMENT.

BY THE REV. D. P. BUCKLE, M.A.

IN a previous No. of the BULLETIN (vol. 5, Nos. 3-4, April-Nov., 1919, p. 219) Professor Tout gave an interesting account of John Mabillon's criticism of Daniel Van Papenbroeck, one of the earliest continuators of the work of Bollandus, and described the pleasing conclusion of the story by relating the Flemish doubter's conversion to the sound judgment of his French critic's better scholarship. The present paper will show, however, that if in that case Papenbroeck was too rash in his charges of the falsification of documents in cartularies he was sometimes at any rate too ready to accept the worst evidence as the best, and to set up "re-made and confected documents" (in Prof. Tout's language) as greater authorities than earlier, simpler, and more probable histories.

His account of the story of the forty martyrs of Sebaste illustrates this uncritical attitude. It is contained in the Bollandist "Acta Sanctorum," Martii, tom. 2, the contents of which are expressly stated to be "a Godefrido Henschenio et Daniele Papebrochio Aucta digesta et illustrata". We there find that the Latin "Acta" are regarded as the older; yet though in the case of the translation of Evodius by John the Deacon of Naples there is an attempt to fix the date, the editors do not give the slightest information about the original provenance or time of writing of the long narratives which they place first.

The great point of difference in the stories is the particular form of punishment, *genus supplicii*, by which the saints were martyred. The Bollandist editors avowedly follow the accounts which represent the martyrs as having been immersed in the waters of the lake of Sebaste on a cold winter night and therein frozen to death, then taken out to be broken and burned. They add that the ashes were thrown into the river, where they were miraculously kept together in one place,

OYCIUE NTEPOY
 4 CWTUAEFEYV
 TPOFACICAYWT
 ITKINAYNOCE
 POOY2NOYPAWE
 YSEITINAYKULL
 LIOOYKAZIYN
 NEY2OITE AYNO
 XOUNCABOALL
 LIOOY AYTH
 ITTEYVOIE2PAIE
 AIUNTEYTHIT
 ENTEYDOUTHPC
 AYWEAYTIWAG
 NZHTE NEATIEC
 LIOOYKADPNONOV
 XICWNEV2ZERAYOY
 ENTECUTITE FY
 QIZATIEFKACET
 CAWE EPEITEXI
 WNLINTIEXPIC
 TALLOCWOYOF
 XWOYAXNKA
 TQOTOYEBOL
 UTUNTAWW
 REAAMOWCAYW
 OYTOUONITEW
 ITTEHENTEPY
 CIONNRCWLE
 UTUAE2OYNETH
 NOYTEHNEFW
 PETTPWLEXPW
 LIOOYAMINW
 LIOQETREHITY

NECA2222222222
 TLIPTINAYETI
 LIAY FYTUBC
 NNEVERIY XE
 LIAPNLCWYEBOL
 XEANONZENX
 PHCTIANOC AYW
 NEYWWEFROXTH
 POYXEANONZEN
 XPHCTIANOC
 LALANERETIWA
 NIYEBOAZNPW
 OY2NOYCOOYTIN
 LYWNEYCOXITZN
 TEYTAIIPOKATA
 LEZICEFBEITEC
 TPTRWTEYCW
 LALINTINOIN
 NNEYLEAOC EPE
 NEYOB2EPW2TE
 XNNEVERIY2ITW
 TTEKACWITXAY
 EATEXICUNBEA
 TEYCAPZTHPCFBOA
 EATEFKACITW
 XRETIWUAYXW
 TEE2OYNWANEY
 LATKAC NILL
 XOTIONTIETNAY
 TAP2ICTANT
 UNTNOBUTTEI
 ZICE EREHTEIN
 TOUYLLAYAY

TOXOC XEPCUAN
 OYLLIEXOCWONE
 WARELLIIELOC
 TIPOYUWONE
 NILLIAY. AALA
 IITEIETCOACEA
 NNETENZENAY
 TIEICWANI XEPCY
 NAYEPPOYEXAY
 TIEIE TREPTENTAY
 ZEEBOA. OYAEON
 IITEICKATITIE
 IITEIYZIEECWCK
 ECWAA' TAITOYA
 AALAAYOYUWNN
 RAALITIKOYRIK
 LAPICEPTPOICEPO
 OY. EAPINAYEZE
 NAGTEACFAVEI
 IIECIITEBOAZNT
 IIEPESEENKADU
 NTIOOTUY. EYCB
 TWTEFTAAVEYN
 TATIENNETOYAAD
 EAOYANNAGTEAC
 KTOYCEZPAITIE
 UNOYKALL. ZU
 ITTPTIENTAYE
 EROAPDABZITNQ
 BOKESOUNETCI
 OUYN. EATEXA
 PICWITETINAE TOY
 AABUEZITK OY
 RIKADAPICEITL

IAY. IAY. IAY
 KAZITINAYE
 TAYNOXOYNE
 BOALLIAY. AU
 ITWTAQNOXUE
 PAITAIUNTI
 IYWYFBOANIL
 IAYZNTIΦW
 NNINOYUOTXE
 ANGOYXPHCTIA
 NOC. EAYCYW
 ITIEWYUWNT
 AICTHCEFTIWAY
 NTAQZOLIOLOGH
 IITXOEICZITEC
 FOC. AYWAQIUN
 IYNTCATEPE
 FTOUOXUINNEN
 TAYPZOWEFTUA
 NEAOOZENXT
 UNTOVE. EAY
 UWTIENNOYTARA
 IYHALLINOYCOA
 CEANNEITTE
 OYAAD. ZU
 TPEYXETITIE
 IITEZUEFBOAKA
 TATIETELITEZ
 IENZOYETOYA
 ARUTENPEFTAN
 ZOTINOYTEUW
 AYWTIENTAYP
 IAPTPOCEXU
 ITTEQPAN

whence they were rescued by Bishop Peter, who was directed to do so by a supernatural revelation and guided by extraordinary lights. The editors give all these details about the martyrdom and many others about preliminary trials and imprisonments, appearances of the Saviour and of the Devil, which have no support in the earliest and best authorities such as Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gaudentius.

This particular volume of the "Acta Sanctorum" was published at Antwerp in 1668, three years after the death of Bollandus. But within forty-five years from the publication of the texts and commentary of the Bollandists two critical works on the subject had not only appeared but also reached their second editions. This seems to show that a considerable number of readers took an interest in endeavours to treat the matters in question with a better sense of the value of evidence. Theodoric Ruinart (1657-1709) calls his work "Acta martyrum sincera et selecta". The John Rylands Library possesses a copy of the second edition published at Amsterdam in 1713. According to Delehay, who is himself a Bollandist, it is well conceived but not up to modern requirements. Ruinart, who was the pupil co-worker and biographer of John Mabillon, says that the death of the martyrs was not due to immersion but to the bitter cold of the air and also that the "vulgata acta" have not the authority of Basil. He refers to Tillemont, who published the second edition of his fifth volume at Paris in 1702. Tillemont gives his own account of the martyrdom on pp. 518-527, and adds notes on various points on pp. 788-791. Now, whereas the Bollandist editors, who place great reliance upon Gerardus Vossius, assert that his arguments, and what they cite from "Martyrologies," "Menaea," and writers like Petrus de Natalibus and Mombritius, seem to prove the immersion of the martyrs in the waters of the lake, Tillemont is certain that they suffered martyrdom in the middle of the city. He also attacks the notion that they suffered on the lake, *supra stagnum*, which the Bollandist editors thought was intimated by the language of Basil.

It is therefore necessary to quote the exact words which Basil used. They will be found in the fifth chapter of his nineteenth homily. He there says : ἐκέλευσε πάντας γυμνωθέντας ἐν μέσῃ τῇ πόλει πηγνυμένους ἀποθανεῖν. After describing the effect of frost on the human body he adds : Τότε τοίον αἰθριοὶ διανυκτερεύειν κατεδικάσθησαν, ὅτε λίμνη μὲν, περὶ ἣν ἡ πόλις κατώκισται, ἐν ᾗ ταῦτα διήθλον οἱ

ἄγιοι, οἷόν τι πεδίον ἱππήλατον ἦν, μεταποιήσαντος αὐτὴν τοῦ κρυστάλλου. καὶ ἡπειρωθεισθεῖσα τῷ κρύει, ἀσφαλῶς ὑπὲρ νῶτον πεζεύειν παρείχeto τοῖς περιουκοῖς· ποταμοὶ δὲ ἀένναα ῥέοντες, τῷ κρυστάλλῳ δεθέντες, τῶν ῥείθρων ἔστησαν.

It is obvious from this last quotation that the lake is mentioned not as the scene of the actual martyrdom, but for the purpose of giving a graphic picture of the keenness of the frost. The relative clause about the sufferings of the martyrs naturally explains πόλις and has no connection with λίμνη. It is joined to the wrong antecedent by Morcelli ("Kalendarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae," vol. 2, p. 68) who says that there was no need to describe the lake if the martyrdom took place elsewhere. But it is not necessary to limit the interpretation of Basil's striking description by such an argument. We find the same reference to the frozen lake as a proof of the severity of the cold in Gaudentius and Gregory of Nyssa. The books of these early writers are easily accessible in Migne's *Patrologia*, but the John Rylands Library is particularly fortunate in possessing among its treasures the enlarged versions of the story given by Petrus de Natalibus (Lyons, 1519), and in the exactly similar accounts (with slight differences of spelling) edited by Vincentius Bellovacensis (Strassburg, 1473) and Mombritius (Milan, 1480). These narratives only briefly refer to the first trial before Agricolaus the Prefect, and this is not even mentioned by Petrus de Natalibus, who simply says that he kept them in prison several days in expectation of the arrival of Lysias the Dux.

Here we see how the story began to grow. A further development appears in Lipomanus (Venice: Aldus, 1581), who relates the first trial at some length, describing in detail the flattery of the prefect and the firm refusal of the martyrs to save their lives by apostasy.

The subject of hagiographic texts was discussed by A. Dufourcq in his interesting book "*Les Gesta Martyrum Romains*" (Paris, 1900-1910). He divides editions into three classes, edifying, scientific, and definitive. His discussion of the question should be compared with that of H. Delahaye in "*The Legends of the Saints*" translated by Mrs. V. M. Crawford. Delahaye's classification of hagiographic texts is even more analytical than that of Dufourcq. He distinguishes six classes of texts and applies his system to Ruinart's "*Acta Sincera*". He is more drastic in his criticism than Dufourcq, and gives a useful account of the methods and moralities of hagiographers, and of ancient

ideas concerning history. The dearth of material caused supplementing, amplification, compilation, and adaptation. The hagiographer who was compelled to write by the order of a superior boldly took the only course open to him, and either made a generous use of development as practised in the schools or borrowed from other narratives.

Among the Coptic manuscripts in the John Rylands Library there is an Egyptian version of the story, which on the whole follows Basil's narrative very closely, making, however, a few additions. The nine leaves of which this fragment consists were divided into two parts, which Tattam, their original owner, apparently regarded as separate documents. In the Crawford volumes they are numbered 33 and 45. No. 33 has its first sheet both misplaced and reversed: it is entitled "Exhortations to Martyrdom," and the second "Acts of certain Martyrs". Mr. Crum in his useful catalogue has supplied a careful description of the manuscript reproducing the first sheet in its proper order of *recto* and *verso*, and printing a résumé of the remainder in English. The Coptic narrative shows a conflation of two accounts, death by frost and immersion in the water of the lake. A translation as literal as possible of the four pages, specially reproduced in facsimile to accompany this article, is now offered and should be compared with Basil's "Homily," and the narratives in the "Acta Sanctorum".

RYLANDS COPTIC MS. 94 [45].

(Page ρβ). And the order was to cast them into prison till he considered with what penalty he will punish them. And meanwhile when the saints were in the prison Christ appeared to them at midnight. An ineffable light surrounded Him. He said to them, Good is this purpose of yours, good is your resolve. He who shall endure to the end shall be saved. Moreover, in the morning the judge (δικαστής) ordered them to appear in the judgment-hall. He sentenced them to a bitter death.

There is a lake near the city, on which snow and hail were streaming down. They who know those districts testify that not only oil and water are wont to freeze and congeal in those regions, but wine also freezes in the bottle like a stone. So (will it be) with those who suffer in that winter through the deluge of snow falling everywhere. The judge therefore condemned the saints to spend one night, when the frost and hail and snow poured down like a torrent, while the blast of the north wind blew bitterly.

(ργ). But when they heard their sentence they accepted the danger gladly. They hastened, they stripped off their clothes, they cast them from them, they took their way to the lake, they ran with all their might and plunged into it. Its water froze like snow, as they stood in the midst of it and bore the bitter pain, while snow and hail fell on them without ceasing.

O the courage indeed, and patience, surpassing human nature. O the love towards God, when man takes it to himself for Him. They stood in the midst of the lake at that hour, exhorting one another, saying, Let us cry out that we are Christians, and they all cried out: We are Christians. But speech did not go out of their lips distinctly, and it was interrupted in their mouth in its utterance by the shivering of their bodies and the pain of their limbs, while their teeth chattered with the torture of the frost. The snow destroyed all their flesh. The pains of that frost penetrated even to their marrows.

Moreover, who can represent the greatness of that struggle but themselves alone? (*ρδ*) as knowing it by experience. So then how greatly increased the frost of that night. No man therefore can praise them according to their desert, as I said in the preface of this meagre discourse. This only will I say, When I merely mention their names I confess to you that I feel a joy and gladness leaping up in my soul towards them all, as the patriarch Severus said about the lights in the Church, Basil and Gregory, If you believe me, as often as I mention their names, my soul rejoices.

I must also tell you about the bath near the lake by which the enemies of truth thought to ensnare the saints, because their hearts did not waver at all, their whole thought was of God in heaven, while they were in the lake. When one of them recanted by the device of the devil, and left the lake and went into the bath and remained outside hope, outside hope indeed, grief seized them because he is their member according to the word of the apostle (*ρϵ*) if one member suffer, all the members suffer with him. But he who consoles those who are in troubles could not tolerate the sight of their grief for the renegade nor did he suffer the number of their forty to remain lacking one.

But he opened the eyes of the *cubiclarios*, who guarded them, when he saw forty angels coming down from heaven, with forty crowns in their hands, prepared to be placed on the heads of the saints.

When one of the angels returned to heaven with a crown after he who had fallen out had recanted and entered the bath, the grace of the holy spirit filled that *cubiclarios*, he stripped off his clothes, he cast them from him, he ran, he threw himself into the lake. He cried out with them in this one voice saying, I am a Christian. He became one with that thief, who confessed the Lord on the cross, and he is worthy of the full penny, with those who were called to labour in the vineyard at the eleventh hour. He became a comfort and a consolation to those saints, when he completed the number of the forty, according to the number of the forty holy days of our Life-giver the God of Truth, and he became a martyr for His name.

This literal translation shows that the Coptic writer accepted Basil's account of the severity of the frost, but gave other illustrations of its keenness. He follows, however, the other version of the method of martyrdom when he describes the saints as actually immersed in the water of the lake. Now it is remarkable that out of the eight chapters into which Garnier divides Basil's homily the Coptic MS. has distinct

similarities with seven. The 1st chapter in Basil is merely a general introduction and gives no particular information. The 2nd chapter refers to graphic descriptions and pictorial representations, and is therein followed by the Coptic text which transliterates Basil's expression *ζωγραφεῖν*. The Coptic narrative adds to Basil's story in his third chapter the statement that when the impious decree was published the saints went to the shrines of the standards, where there was a golden image of Christ in a niche in the eastern wall and made a covenant to be faithful unto death. This incident does not appear to occur in any other account. It would be interesting to know whether there is any other evidence of Christian soldiers having a shrine in camp at this early date.

That the Coptic story is comparatively early seems to be shown by an apparently liturgical reference. The actual MS. is assigned by Mr. Crum to the tenth or eleventh century. A *terminus a quo* for the time of composition is the quotation from Severus of Antioch (ob., 538). The words which will be found in the translation already given may perhaps refer to the joint use of the names of Basil and Gregory in the Liturgy. They are found together in Giorgi, "Fragmentum Ev. S. Jo." (Rome, 1789), who prints in the Appendix fragments of the Thebaic Liturgy before Dioscorus.

The 4th chapter of Basil's homily describes the flattery and bribes of the governor (ὁ κρατῶν). In the Coptic account the answer of the saints to the *δικαστής*, as he is there called, takes the form of a long denunciation of the sin of covetousness, extending over two pages and including six quotations from the Bible and one not identified. The 5th, 6th, and 7th chapters of Basil are practically identical with the four pages now before the reader of this BULLETIN, and do not disclose any noteworthy difference (omitting the question of immersion in the lake), except the appearance of the Saviour to the saints in prison, and the special name *δυνάμεις* given to the forty angels by Basil. The chief executioner whom Basil calls by the classical title *ὁ δήμιος* appears in Coptic as *κουβικλαριος*.

The occurrence of this curious word furnishes a convenient point of transition to a brief notice of the long Greek, Latin, Armenian, Syriac, and Old-Slavonic versions. It seems hardly likely that an exalted official like a chamberlain should have been chief of the executioners. The Coptic writer may possibly have had some knowledge

of the longer and most probably somewhat later Greek narratives, which gives the forms *καπικλάριος* and *καπηκλάριος*. This is regarded by Sophocles in his *Lexicon* as a corruption of *κλαβικουλάριος*. The Latin "Acta" have *clavicularius*, and the Old Slavonic of the "Suprasl Codex" (ed. Miklosich, Vienna, 1851) follows the Greek.

The longer Greek narratives will be found in the convenient editions of Gebhardt, "Acta Martyrum Selecta" (Leipzig, 1902), and in Abicht's text published in "Archiv für slavische Philologie," Vol. XVIII. (Berlin, 1896). Each of these editions has merits and defects of its own. Gebhardt divides the story into thirteen convenient chapters, which make the account easy to analyse, and facilitate reference, while Abicht's text is continuous and indicates the pages of the Paris MS. 520 which he follows, noting carefully passages where its imperfections have been restored. Gebhardt in his preface intimates that in addition to Abicht's Paris text he has used Cod. Ven. Gr. Zan., 359, and Cod. Vindob. Theol. X. His printed text does not, however, indicate which of these MSS. are responsible for the variants which he cites, nor does he supply any information about the MSS. themselves. He notes eighteen references to the Book of Psalms which the author of this particular form of the story seems to have used very freely. In Abicht's Psalm citations the references are made according to the Hebrew numbers, but Gebhardt more usefully follows the LXX. There are two differences between the editors in the matter of citation. At the end of Chapter IV Abicht repeats in a slightly different form a reference to a quotation already used in Chapter I. At the end of Chapter VIII Gebhardt's text adds a clause which is not in Abicht. With the exception of the enlarged beginning and ending in John the Deacon's translation of Evodius, the Latin narratives given in the "Acta Sanctorum" from Antwerp and Gladbach MSS., etc., are practically identical with one another, and with Lipomanus: they agree generally with the Greek texts of Gebhardt and Abicht, and with the Old Slavonic edited by Miklosich. A Latin translation of the Armenian version was communicated to Gerardus Vossius when he visited the Bishop of Ervan at Rome in 1601, and is reprinted in the "Acta Sanctorum". A German rendering of the Syriac narrative is given by W. Weyh in the "Byzantinische Zeitschrift," Vol. XXI. (1912), pp. 76-93.

These narratives supplement the earliest accounts by giving the names of the martyrs that of the local Prefect Agricolaus, and add a second trial of the saints before the Prefect and the Dux Lysias who came from Cæsarea for that purpose. After each trial there was an imprisonment with an appearance of the Saviour.

When the saints were brought into court for the third time it is related that the Devil appeared and said in the ear of Agricolans, *Ἐμὸς εἶ, ἀγωνίζου*. Gebhardt's 9th chapter narrates the miracle of the sun shining at the third hour of the night and warming the water. His 10th chapter introduces another appearance of the Devil, this time in human form, bewailing his defeat by the saints, and expressing his plan to prevent veneration of their relics by inducing the tyrants to burn them and throw the ashes into the river. In the 11th chapter the tyrants come and see the *καπικλάριος* with the saints in the lake.

These three chapters contain much additional matter which has no support in the earliest authorities. In the 12th chapter, however, Gebhardt's text reverts to the original story by relating the incident of the mother of Meletius, the youngest of the band. Though aged, she carried her still breathing son, who had been left by the executioners in the hope that he would recant, and placed him on the cart in which the dead bodies of his companions were being taken to the fire.

The 13th chapter narrates the casting of the relics into the river and their miraculous discovery. It is impossible within the limits of this article to give a complete account of the differences and similarities of the various stories, but it is useful and interesting to know that a Coptic MS. in the John Rylands Library, though containing some additions to the original story, on the whole supports the earliest account, helps to show that the later stories were amplified and embellished and assists in establishing the sound critical views of Ruinart, Tillemont, and Ceillier in the beginning of the eighteenth century and of Dufourcq, Delehaye, and Quentin in quite recent years.

NOTE.

The article contributed by the late Wilhelm Weyh to the "Byzantinische Zeitschrift" deserves special attention not only for its German rendering of the Syriac narrative, but also for its careful discussion of the relation of that form of the story to Gebhardt's text. Weyh notes a general agreement which in many sections is quite verbal, but he concludes that neither is a translation of the other on account of their numerous differences. He points out certain

additions and embellishments in the Syriac. He gives two comparative tables of the contents of certain sections in the Greek and Syriac texts proving, according to his judgment, that the Syriac reads smoothly and that there has been a dislocation of the order of incidents in the Greek.

He regards the Greek narrative as the redaction of a clumsy editor, but adds that many details in the Syriac, which are irrelevant to the sequence of the story, seem to show that in its present form it too has been edited and enlarged, while in some points it preserves the original story better than the Greek. He notes one phrase where in his view the Greek writer has misunderstood a Syriac expression, and another in which the Syriac order of words is reproduced in Greek. This seems to imply that the Syriac was the earlier and that the Greek editor made some use of it.

That the longer version of the story was also known in Egypt is proved by the British Museum Coptic MS. No. 1000. Unfortunately this is a very imperfect papyrus fragment. Mr. Crum in his Catalogue, p. 415, reproduces the text of parts of its four pages with some restorations of the numerous *lacunæ* caused by its dilapidated condition. They correspond with the end of the 4th chapter and the beginning of the 5th in Gebhardt's edition.

The traditional stories of the martyrdom received a severe criticism from Pio Franchi de Cavalieri in "Studi e Testi," No. 22, fasc. 3, pp. 64-70. The Italian critic supports his view by the supposed evidence of the "Testament of the 40 martyrs" which is most probably a later invention to expand the idea of the unity in death for which they prayed.

Görres, who has published a special work on the Licinian persecution, strongly asserts the historicity of the martyrdom, and defends his views against Schönbach (v. "Zeitschrift f. d. wissenschaftliche Theologie," Vol. XXI. pp. 64-70). He is supported by Keim, Hilgenfeld, Weizsäcker, and Ritter. The question of Christianity and military service at this period was fully discussed by Professor Calder in the "Expositor," 7th series, Vol. V., pp. 385-408.