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6-7 APRIL 1981, NIJMEGEN:
SYMPOSIUM
TRANSMISSION AND RECEPTION OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN PATERIKA
WILLIAM R. VEDER

Of the truly international literature of early Christianity, *Paterika* form a part of great importance: their tradition seems to reflect a much closer relation to varying local concerns than that of Biblical and patristic texts, while their text is more directly accessible to comparative study than that of many ritual and other texts with strong ties to local conditions. This consideration formed the basis of a short, but intensive symposium: two days of topical discussions, the written communications having been printed beforehand in *Полага кънигописъната .А.* They were complemented by four oral communications:

J.G.FREIRE (Coimbra) *Paschasius of Dumio's Collection of Apophthegmata as a Centuria*: At close reading, this collection proves to be an early example of tightly knit conscious organization, both thematic (according to the eight principal vices, as stated by its subtitle) and systematic (in 100 chapters according to textual affinity of groups of apophthegms). Deviant chapter divisions in the mss obviously betray either incomprehension of later scribes or the influence of other literary structures.

M. VAN PARYS (Chevetogne) *The Treatment of Arsenius in the Sources*: The complex personality and teaching of Arsenius are very unequally represented in the various traditions of *Paterika* and related texts: the Syriac collection of Ananjesus put his apophthegms in the very first place, but the Coptic collections almost ignore him, as do most non-apophthegmatic texts; the Greek collections betray an ambivalent attitude, including at times quite contradictory stories. The only reliable source of data seem to be the reminiscences of his disciples and the recently discovered Georgian version of a letter of his hand (cf. 'Irénikon' 54(1981):62-86).

P. PATTENDEN (Cambridge) *The Greek Manuscript Tradition of the Pratum Spirituale*: In the course of the preparation of the new critical edition, three of the numerous families of manuscripts have proven to be relevant for the constitution of the text: α of 360 chapters, β of 400 chapters and ξ of 450 chapters. The structure of the work is relatively firmly established for the chapters 1-301, which will form the basis of the projected

edition; for the chapters beyond that point, the form of an *auctarium* must be chosen owing to the high variability of the structures in the mss.

L. REGNAULT (Solesmes) *The Apophthegmata Patrum in V-VIth Century Palestine* (published in 'Irénikon' 54(1981)3:320-330): Exclusively Egyptian in content are only a few minor collections; all great collections (notably the alphabetic-anonymous and systematic) contain a high percentage of texts of Palestinian, less of Sinaitic, Cappadocian and Persian origin. The natural intersection of the lines from these different origins is in Palestine, where collections of apophthegms are attested in the early Vth century and where the originals of the VIth century Latin translations must be sought. Palestine, thus, may be considered the initial crossroads of almost all collection and propagation activity.

The discussions were lively and of general importance, though at times a bit vague, owing to the vastness of the traditions to be taken into account: Arabic, Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopian, Georgian, Greek, Latin, Slavic, Syriac, and even Sogdian, as M.VAN ESBROECK (Rome) pointed out; for few of those present were versed in more than three of them. Apart from the demonstration of the necessity to broaden one's outlook, the main result of the symposium were questions to be answered by future research, and practical desiderata to further that research, which I shall review below as concisely as possible:

What are Paterika?

Traditionally, *Paterika* proper (roughly: BHG 1433,1435-1438,1443-1448) are distinguished from *Historiae animae utiles* (roughly: BHG 1318-1322,1448-1449,2099-2102) and from related and tributary texts. But are they not rather, from the viewpoint of the extant mss, members of one continuous chain of development, separated only temporarily at their origin?

How should their tradition be studied?

The traditional concern of philology seems to be with original texts and structures and with missing links to the level of extant mss. This has provided us with excellent starting positions to move ahead and examine the more dynamic aspects of the transmission (closed vs. open tradition, dispersion vs. entropy as factors of evolution, tradition vs. imitation and innovation etc.). However, this is now possible only for the various collections of *Apophthegmata Patrum*; for the other *Paterika* and the *Historiae animae utiles* etc. the data on texts and mss in the various languages are

either incomplete or not entirely comparable (it was, for instance, impossible to draw up a simple approximative quantification of mss containing *Paterika* in the various languages). A comparative overview of such data was one of the very first desiderata voiced.

How should innovations in and imitations of Paterika be studied?

Of course, by relating them, in the first place, to their sources or models. The problem is, however, that the primary concern with originals, as noted above, makes it possible only in a very general and superficial way to identify these sources or models. It is just in this respect that the study of the dynamics of local compilations and florilegia is badly needed (and even of books with definite liturgical functions, like *Synaxaries*, which have played, in several areas, a major role in the propagation of texts from *Paterika*).

How should the reception of Paterika be studied?

Here, too, a genetic approach has prevailed, resulting in more concern for the prehistory of the text than for the conditions and consequences of its application. Yet it appears that there are enough concrete data at our disposal to make comparative research of the dynamics of reception possible: 1. textual data (availability, distribution, selection, transformation etc.), 2. meta-textual data (hierarchy of texts within books, dominance of structures, frequency of quotations and references, readers' marginalia etc.), 3. visual data (availability and distribution of frescoes, icons and miniatures, accompanying texts etc.). These data await to be gathered per area and rendered in comparable form in close collaboration of text- and art-scholars and related to identifiable historical conditions in close collaboration with historians. Also, the extant prescriptions for reading texts from *Paterika* should be brought together.

Other desiderata

The first place among them was for text editions: The critical edition of the Greek *Systematic Collection of Apophthegmata Patrum*, promised by J.C. GUY (Paris) for the 'Sources chrétiennes' series is long overdue; the anonymous part of the *Alphabetic-Anonymous Collection of Apophthegmata Patrum* still lacks its last third (P.CANART and M.CAPALDO (Rome) pledged to publish it in the very near future). Also, a current bibliography would be a badly needed working tool (B.OUTTIER and L.REGNAULT (Solesmes) made a promise to work in this direction).