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BASIL
LETTERS 59–185



Translated by
ROY J. DEFERRARI

BASIL

LETTERS 55-165

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WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY

ROY J. DEFERRARI

藏书章



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PREFATORY NOTE

ST. BASIL'S letters in the present volume include numbers LIX to CLXXXV, and in nearly every case are of great human interest. Highly technical letters, as, for example, on the Trinity or on the Canons, do not appear.

All of the letters included here, with the exception of numbers LXIV and CII, appear in the MS. known as Coislinianus 237 (sig. = E). No letter of this volume, however, appears in any of the other MSS. collated by the author, *i.e.* Parisinus 506 (A), Parisinus 763 S (B), Parisinus 967 (C), Parisinus 1021 S (D), and Parisinus 1020 S (F). The last-named MS. (F), noted in the Benedictine edition as Harlaeanus, has since the time of that edition been greatly curtailed, a large portion at the end having been destroyed. This accounts for the appearance of readings from that MS. as noted by the Benedictine editors, and not as my own collations. Other important or interesting readings from the edition of the Benedictines have also been included in the critical apparatus. One probably important fact has been noted in the process of this work: the Benedictine editors frequently quoted readings as found only in the earlier editions (*editi antiqui*), and apparently without any MS. authority, but our collation of E has shown most of these readings to exist also in that MS.

PREFATORY NOTE

I am greatly indebted to the members of my Greek seminar of the years 1925-26 and 1926-27, with whom many of these letters were made an object of special study, for much assistance in bringing this second volume to a completion. In a special manner, I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness also to Mr. Martin R. McGuire, Instructor in Greek and Latin of the Catholic University of America.

ROY J. DEFERRARI.

NOTE ON LETTER VIII

Although the question of the authenticity of Letter VIII had been raised at times, and Abbé Bessières had called attention to a rather weak manuscript tradition for it in the Basilian corpus, no one had given the matter any serious attention. It remained for Robert Melcher in an article entitled "Der 8 Brief des hl. Basilus, ein Werk des Evagrius Pontikus" (*Münsterische Beiträge zur Theologie*, Heft 1, 1923),¹ to treat the subject for the first time in a definitive manner. The Very Reverend Melcher not only demonstrates convincingly that the letter does not belong to St. Basil, but makes a strong case for assigning it to Evagrius and for dating it toward the end of the fourth century. He approaches his problem from the strictly philological and historical point of view, and especially from the view-point of theological content.

¹ I regret that this important monograph did not come to my attention until Vol. I was well through press.

CONTENTS

PREFATORY NOTE	xi
----------------	----

LETTERS

59. TO GREGORY, HIS UNCLE	3
60. TO GREGORY, HIS UNCLE	11
61. TO ATHANASIUS, BISHOP OF ALEXANDRIA	13
62. TO THE CHURCH OF PARNASSUS	17
63. TO THE GOVERNOR OF NEOCAESAREA	19
64. TO HESYCHIUS	21
65. TO ATARBIUS	23
66. TO ATHANASIUS, BISHOP OF ALEXANDRIA	27
67. TO ATHANASIUS, BISHOP OF ALEXANDRIA	33
68. TO MELETIUS, BISHOP OF ANTIOCH	37
69. TO ATHANASIUS, BISHOP OF ALEXANDRIA	39
70. CONCERNING A SYNOD	49
71. TO GREGORY	53
72. TO HESYCHIUS	59
73. TO CALLISTHENES	61
74. TO MARTINIANUS	67
75. TO ABURGIUS	79
76. TO SOPHRONIUS	81
77. ABOUT THERASIUS	83

CONTENTS

78. IN BEHALF OF ELPIDIUS	85
79. TO EUSTATHIUS, BISHOP OF SEBASTE	87
80. TO ATHANASIUS, BISHOP OF ALEXANDRIA	89
81. TO BISHOP INNOCENT	91
82. TO ATHANASIUS, BISHOP OF ALEXANDRIA	97
83. TO A CENSITOR	101
84. TO THE GOVERNOR	103
85. ON TAKING THE OATH	109
86. TO THE GOVERNOR	113
87. ON THE SAME SUBJECT	115
88. FOR A TAX COLLECTOR	117
89. TO MELETIUS, BISHOP OF ANTIOCH	119
90. TO THE BRETHREN AND BISHOPS OF THE WEST	123
91. TO VALERIAN, BISHOP OF THE ILLYRIANS	129
92. TO THE ITALIANS AND GAULS	133
93. TO THE PATRICIAN CAESARIA	145
94. TO ELIAS, GOVERNOR OF THE PROVINCE	149
95. TO EUSEBIUS, BISHOP OF SAMOSATA	155
96. TO SOPHRONIUS	157
97. TO THE SENATE OF TYANA	161
98. TO EUSEBIUS, BISHOP OF SAMOSATA	165
99. TO COUNT TERENTIUS	171
100. TO EUSEBIUS, BISHOP OF SAMOSATA	183
101. CONSOLATORY	187
102. TO THE CITIZENS OF SATALA	191
103. TO THE PEOPLE OF SATALA	193
104. TO THE PREFECT MODESTUS	195
105. TO THE DAUGHTERS OF COUNT TERENTIUS	199

CONTENTS

106. TO A SOLDIER	201
107. TO THE WIDOW JULITTA	203
108. TO THE GUARDIAN OF THE HEIRS OF JULITTA	205
109. TO COUNT HELLADIUS	209
110. TO THE PREFECT MODESTUS	211
111. TO THE PREFECT MODESTUS	213
112. TO ANDRONICUS	215
113. TO THE PRESBYTERS AT TARSUS	221
114. TO CYRIACUS	225
115. TO THE HERETIC SIMPLICIA	229
116. TO FIRMINUS	233
117. ON ASCETICISM	235
118. TO JOVINUS, BISHOP OF PERRHA	239
119. TO EUSTATHIUS, BISHOP OF SEBASTE	241
120. TO MELETIUS, BISHOP OF ANTIOCH	245
121. TO THEODOTUS, BISHOP OF NICOPOLIS	249
122. TO POEMENIUS, BISHOP OF SATALA	251
123. TO URBICIUS	255
124. TO THEODORUS	257
125. A TRANSCRIPT OF FAITH	259
126. TO ATARBIUS	271
127. TO EUSEBIUS, BISHOP OF SAMOSATA	275
128. TO EUSEBIUS, BISHOP OF SAMOSATA	277
129. TO MELETIUS, BISHOP OF ANTIOCH	283
130. TO THEODOTUS, BISHOP OF NICOPOLIS	291
131. TO OLYMPIUS	297
132. TO ABRAMIUS, BISHOP OF BATNAE	301
133. TO PETER, BISHOP OF ALEXANDRIA	303

CONTENTS

134. TO THE PRESBYTER PAEONIUS	305
135. TO DIODORUS, PRESBYTER OF ANTIOCH	307
136. TO EUSEBIUS, BISHOP OF SAMOSATA	313
137. TO ANTIPATER	317
138. TO EUSEBIUS, BISHOP OF SAMOSATA	319
139. TO THE ALEXANDRIANS	325
140. TO THE CHURCH OF ANTIOCH	333
141. TO EUSEBIUS, BISHOP OF SAMOSATA	339
142. TO THE PREFECTS' ACCOUNTANT	345
143. TO THE OTHER ACCOUNTANT	347
144. TO THE PREFECTS' OFFICER	349
145. TO EUSEBIUS, BISHOP OF SAMOSATA	349
146. TO ANTIOCHUS	351
147. TO ABURGIUS	353
148. TO TRAJAN	355
149. TO TRAJĀN	359
150. TO AMPHILOCHIUS, AS IF FROM HERACLEIDAS	361
151. TO EUSTATHIUS, A PHYSICIAN	371
152. TO VICTOR, THE GENERAL	375
153. TO VICTOR, THE EX-CONSUL	377
154. TO ASCHOLIUS, BISHOP OF THESSALONICA	377
155. ON THE CASE OF A TRAINER	381
156. TO EVAGRIUS THE PRESBYTER	385
157. TO ANTIOCHUS	391
158. TO ANTIOCHUS	393
159. TO EUPATERIUS	393
160. TO DIODORUS	399
161. TO AMPHILOCHIUS	411

CONTENTS

162. TO EUSEBIUS, BISHOP OF SAMOSATA	417
163. TO COUNT JOVINUS	419
164. TO ASCHOLIUS, BISHOP OF THESSALONICA	421
165. TO ASCHOLIUS, BISHOP OF THESSALONICA	429
166. TO EUSEBIUS, BISHOP OF SAMOSATA	431
167. TO EUSEBIUS, BISHOP OF SAMOSATA	435
168. TO THE PRESBYTER ANTIOCHUS	437
169. TO GREGORY	439
170. TO GLYCERIUS	443
171. TO GREGORY	445
172. TO SOPHRONIUS	445
173. TO THEODORA	449
174. TO A WIDOW	453
175. TO COUNT MAGNENIANUS	457
176. TO AMPHILOCHIUS, BISHOP OF ICONIUM	459
177. TO SOPHRONIUS	461
178. TO ABURGIUS	463
179. TO ARINTHAEUS	465
180. TO SOPHRONIUS	467
181. TO OTREIUS OF MELETINE	469
182. TO THE PRESBYTERS OF SAMOSATA	469
183. TO THE SENATE OF SAMOSATA	471
184. TO EUSTATHIUS, BISHOP OF HIMMERIA	473
185. TO THEODOTUS, BISHOP OF BERRHOEA	475

**COLLECTED LETTERS OF
SAINT BASIL**

ΤΟΥ ΕΝ ΑΓΙΟΙΣ ΠΑΤΡΟΣ ΗΜΩΝ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΟΥ ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΑΙ

LIX

Γρηγορίῳ θείῳ

Ἐσιώπησα. μὴ καὶ αἰὲς σιωπήσομαι, καὶ ἀνέ-
ξομαι ἐπὶ πλεῖον τὴν δυσφορωτάτην ζημίαν τῆς
σιωπῆς κυρῶσαι κατ' ἑμαυτοῦ¹ μήτε αὐτὸς ἐπι-
στέλλων, μήτε ἀκούων προσφθεγγομένου; ἐγὼ
μὲν γὰρ μέχρι τοῦ παρόντος ἐγκαρτερήσας τῷ
σκυθρωπῷ τούτῳ δόγματι, ἡγοῦμαι πρέπειν
καμοὶ τὰ τοῦ προφήτου λέγειν· ὅτι Ἐκαρτέρησα
ὥς ἡ τίκτουσα, αἰὲς μὲν ἐπιθυμῶν ἡ συντυχίας
ἡ λόγων,² αἰὲς δὲ ἀποτυγχάνων διὰ τὰς ἁμαρτίας
τὰς ἑμαυτοῦ. οὐ γὰρ δὴ ἄλλην τινὰ αἰτίαν
ἔχω τοῖς γινομένοις ἐπινοεῖν,³ πλήν γε δὴ τοῦ

¹ Paulo post Harl. τὰ αὐτὰ τῷ προφήτῃ.

² λόγου E.

³ εἰπεῖν duo MSS.

¹ Written at about the same time as the preceding letter, in 371. The subject matter is likewise the same as that of Letter LVIII. Basil's uncle Gregory, bishop of an unknown see, was in sympathy with the disaffected bishops of Basil's province. Gregory of Nyssa, in an effort to bring about a reconciliation between his uncle and brother, went so far as to forge more than one letter in the name of the uncle. This crude counterfeit, when discovered, naturally increased

COLLECTED LETTERS OF SAINT BASIL

LETTER LIX

TO GREGORY, HIS UNCLE¹

I HAVE kept silence. But shall I always keep silence, and shall I endure² still longer to impose upon myself the most unbearable punishment of silence, by neither writing myself nor hearing the greeting of another? For having up to the present time persevered in this sullen resolution, I believe that it is fitting to apply the words of the prophet³ to myself also: "I have been patient as a woman in labour," always longing for an interview or a discussion with you, but always failing to obtain them on account of my sins. For I certainly cannot imagine any other reason for what is happening, except that, as I am convinced, I am paying the bitter feeling between the two, which was overcome later only with difficulties.

¹ Cf. Isa. 42. 14. The reading of the Septuagint according to Swete (Cambridge, 1912) is: *ἐσιώπησα, μὴ καὶ ἀεὶ σιωπήσομαι καὶ ἀνέξομαι; ὡς ἡ τίκτουσα ἐκαρτέρησα, ἐκστήσω καὶ ξηρανῶ ἅμα*. The Douay Version, which is clearly based on a different text, reads: "I have always held my peace, I have kept silence, I have been patient, I will speak now as a woman in labour: I will destroy, and swallow up at once."

² Cf. note 2 above.

COLLECTED LETTERS OF SAINT BASIL

πεπεισθαι παλαιῶν ἁμαρτημάτων ἐκτιννύειν δίκας, ἐν τῷ χωρισμῷ τῆς ἀγάπης σου· εἰ δὲ καὶ ὀνομάζειν χωρισμὸν ὅσιον ἐπὶ σοῦ καὶ οὐτινοσοῦν τῶν τυχόντων, μὴ ὅτι γε ἡμῶν, οἷς ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐν πατρὸς γέγονας χώρα.

Ἀλλ' ἡ ἁμαρτία μου νῦν, οἷα νεφέλη βαθεῖά τις ἐπισχοῦσα, πάντων ἐκείνων ἄγνοιαν ἐνεπδίησεν. ὅταν γὰρ ἀπίδω, πλὴν τοῦ ἐμοὶ λύπην τὸ γινόμενον φέρειν, μηδὲν ἕτερον ἐξ αὐτοῦ κατορθούμενον,¹ πῶς οὐχὶ εἰκότως ταῖς ἐμαυτοῦ κακίαις ἀνατίθηναι τὰ παρόντα; ἀλλ' εἴτε ἁμαρτίαι τῶν συμβάντων αἰτίαι, τοῦτό μοι πέρας ἔστω τῶν δυσχερῶν· εἴτε τι² οἰκονομούμενον ἦν, ἐξεπληρώθη πάντως τὸ σπουδαζόμενον. οὐ γὰρ ὀλίγος ὁ τῆς ζημίας χρόνος. διό, μηκέτι στέγων, πρῶτος ἔρρηξα φωνήν, παρακαλῶν ἡμῶν τε αὐτῶν ἀναμνησθῆναι καὶ σεαυτοῦ, ὃς πλεονῇ κατὰ τὸ τῆς συγγενείας εἰκὸς παρὰ πάντα τὸν βίον τὴν κηδεμονίαν ἡμῶν ἐπεδείξω, καὶ τὴν πόλιν νῦν ἡμῶν ἕνεκεν ἀγαπᾶν, ἀλλὰ μὴ δι' ἡμᾶς ἀλλοτριοῦν σαυτὸν τῆς πόλεως.

Εἴ τις οὖν παράκλησις ἐν Χριστῷ, εἴ τις κοινωνία Πνεύματος, εἴ τινα³ σπλάγχνα καὶ οἰκτιρμοί, πλήρωσον ἡμῶν τὴν εὐχήν· ἐνταῦθα στηῆσον τὰ κατηφῆ, ἀρχήν τινα δὸς τοῖς φαιδρότεροις πρὸς τὸ ἐξῆς, αὐτὸς τοῖς ἄλλοις καθηγούμενος ἐπὶ τὰ βέλτιστα, ἀλλ' οὐχὶ ἀκολουθῶν ἐτέρῳ⁴ ἐφ' ᾧ μὴ δεῖ. καὶ γὰρ οὐδὲ σώματος

¹ κατορθούμενον, πῶς οὐχί] κατορθούμενος, πῶς οὐκ editi antiqui.

² τό add. editi; om. E.

³ τινα] τις E.

⁴ ἐτέρῳ Harl.

LETTER LIX

penalty for my old offences in this separation from your love—if indeed it is not sacrilege to use the word “separation” in connexion with you and anybody in the world, much less in connexion with ourself, for whom, from the first, you have taken a father’s place.

But now my guilt, having spread over me like a heavy cloud, has caused me to be ignorant of all this. For when I consider that no other result of what is happening, except its bringing sorrow to me, is satisfactory, how can I in all reason help ascribing the present state of affairs to my own wickedness? But if sins are answerable for what has taken place, let this be the end of my difficulties; or if some sort of discipline was intended, the object has been completely fulfilled. For not short is the time of my punishment. Therefore, containing myself no longer, I have been the first to speak out, exhorting you to be mindful both of us and of yourself, who throughout our whole life have shown greater solicitude for us than the nature of our relationship requires, and also at this time to cherish the city for our sake, instead of alienating yourself from the city¹ on account of us.

If, then, there is any consolation in Christ, if there is any communion of the Spirit, if there is any compassion and pity, fulfil our prayer: Here and now put an end to our dejection, grant some beginning to greater cheerfulness for the future, yourself guiding the rest of us to the best course, but not following another to what is wrong. For indeed

¹ *i.e.* Caesarea. Basil, on being elevated to the metropolitan see of Caesarea, was very anxious to secure the support of the various bishops, among them his uncle Gregory, who was in sympathy with the bishops of the opposition.

COLLECTED LETTERS OF SAINT BASIL

χαρακτήρ ἴδιος οὕτω τινὸς ἐνομίσθη, ὥς τῆς σῆς
 ψυχῆς τὸ εἰρηνικόν τε καὶ ἡμερον. πρέποι¹ δ'
 ἂν οὖν τῷ τοιούτῳ τοὺς ἄλλους ἔλκειν πρὸς
 ἑαυτόν, καὶ παρέχειν πᾶσι τοῖς ἐγγίζουσί σοι,
 ὥσπερ μύρου τινὸς εὐωδίας, τῆς τοῦ σοῦ τρόπου
 χρηστότητος ἀναπύμπλασθαι. καὶ γὰρ εἴ τι
 καὶ ἀντιτεῖνόν ἐστι νῦν, ἀλλὰ μικρὸν ὕστερον
 καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ τῆς εἰρήνης ἀγαθὸν ἐπιγνώσεται.
 ἕως δ' ἂν ἐκ τῆς διαστάσεως αἱ διαβολαὶ χώραν
 ἔχωσιν, ἀνάγκη αἰετὰς ὑποψίας ἐπὶ τὸ χεῖρον
 συναύξεσθαι. ἔστι μὲν οὖν οὐδὲ ἐκείνοις πρέπον
 ἀμελεῖν ἡμῶν, πάντων δὲ πλέον τῇ τιμιότητί
 σου. καὶ γὰρ εἰ μὲν ἀμαρτάνομέν τι, βελτίους
 ἐσόμεθα νοουθετούμενοι. τοῦτο δὲ ἄνευ συντυχίας
 ἀμήχανον. εἰ δὲ οὐδὲν ἀδικοῦμεν, ἀντὶ τίνος
 μισούμεθα; ταῦτα μὲν δὴ οὖν² τὰ τῆς ἰδίας
 ἑμαυτοῦ δικαιολογίας³ προῖσχομαι.

“Α δ' ἂν ὑπὲρ ἑαυτῶν αἱ ἐκκλησίαι εἴποιεν, οὐκ
 εἰς καλὸν τῆς διαστάσεως ἡμῶν ἀπολαύουσαι,
 βέλτιον μὲν⁴ σιωπᾶν. οὐ γὰρ ἵνα λυπήσω τοῖς
 λόγοις κέχρημαι τούτοις,⁵ ἀλλ' ἵνα παύσω τὰ
 λυπηρά. τὴν δὲ σὴν σύνεσιν πάντως οὐδὲν δια-
 πέφευγεν· ἀλλὰ πολλῷ μείζω καὶ τελειότερα
 ὧν ἡμεῖς νοοῦμεν αὐτὸς ἂν ἐξεύροις τῇ διανοίᾳ,
 καὶ ἄλλοις εἴποις, ὅς γε⁶ καὶ εἶδες πρὸ ἡμῶν
 τὰς βλάβας τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν⁷ καὶ λυπῇ μᾶλλον
 ἡμῶν πάλαι δεδιδαγμένος⁸ παρὰ τοῦ Κυρίου

¹ πρέπει E.

² δὴ οὖν om. E.

³ διστολογίας editi antiqui.

⁴ με E.

⁵ τούτοις add. E; om. editi.

⁶ ὅς γε] ὥστε E.

⁷ τὰς βλάβας τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν] τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν τὴν ζημίαν
 alii MSS.

LETTER LIX

no trait of any man's body has been considered so characteristic of him as peacefulness and gentleness are characteristic of your soul. It would be meet, therefore, for a man of your character to draw others to himself, and to afford to all who approach you an opportunity of being filled with the excellence of your character as with the fragrance of some perfume. For even if there is now a certain opposition, still, in a little while, the goodness of peace will of itself be recognized. But so long as, because of the present dissension, slanders are given room, suspicions will necessarily ever increase for the worse. It is accordingly not becoming even for the men I have in mind to ignore us, but still less for your Honour. For if we do anything sinful, we shall become better by being admonished. But this is impossible without an interview. And if we do no wrong, why are we hated? Such, then, are the statements which I submit in my own justification.

What the churches might say in their own defence for the advantage they are basely taking of our dissension, it is better to pass over in silence. For it is not to cause pain that I have employed these words, but to put an end to that which causes pain. Your sagacity is such that nothing has escaped it; but you might, by using your powers of discernment, discover for yourself and relate to others much greater and more serious instances than those which we know, seeing that you must have noticed, before we did, the harm being done to the churches, and by a distress greater than ours must long since have

^b προδεδιδαγμένος editi antiqui.