

THE TEXT OF AUGUSTINE'S *CONFESSIONS*

B. ALEXANDERSON: *Le texte des Confessions de saint Augustin. Manuscrits et stemma*. (Acta Regiae Societatis Scientiarum et Litterarum Gothoburgensis, Humaniora, 42.) Pp. 105. Göteborg: Kungl. Vetenskaps- och Vitterhets-Samhället, 2003. Paper. ISBN: 91-85252-63-8.

Over 300 manuscripts of the *Confessions* have been listed. Since the 1890s, editors have used S, written in the sixth century, and a dozen or so manuscripts written from the ninth to the eleventh; they also take account of the excerpts made about 500 by Eugippius, of which the oldest manuscripts, some older than the ninth century, occasionally have the same variants as those of Augustine. Where these witnesses agree, editors seldom resort to conjecture, but the choice among variants is often hard, and so a stemma might help.

A. first sets out his principles of classification as though no one had ever done anything of the kind before (pp. 7–24). They are reasonable enough, except that it is stretching the concept of synonymity to bring *ergo* and *enim* under it (p. 20). He uses 'interpolation' as another word for 'contamination' (p. 9 n. 5), but no harm results. Despite stating a preference for *lectio difficilior* (pp. 17–18) and often reiterating it right up to his final sentence (p. 101), he acknowledges that difficulties can result from corruption (p. 23).

He then argues that the stemmata proposed by Verheijen in *CCSL* 27 (1981) and Gorman in *JThS* 34 (1983) are insecure because they rest partly on agreement in repeatable error and partly on debatable views about which variants are errors (pp. 25–41). Even if one disagrees on the latter point, as I do at 10.34(53) over *sacrificatori meo* (p. 29) and at 10.43(68) over *demonstrasti humilibus* (pp. 29–30), he is still right that little remains to go on. It could even be, though he nowhere considers such a possibility, that Augustine himself slipped into writing *humilibus* for *hominibus* because *humilitatem* was coming up; it is so obviously wrong that *hominibus* would have been easy to conjecture. Surprisingly, he concedes that *ades* for *ardes* in S and O at 10.29(40) may indicate a link (p. 40)—one reading in thirteen books.

He moves on to 'Passages importants pour un aperçu de la tradition', taken chiefly from Books 1, 4, 8, 10, and 12 (pp. 42–77), and ends with a statistical summary of how the manuscripts of both Augustine and Eugippius behave in relation to the truth and to one another (pp. 78–101). His main conclusion, reached already by H. Tränkle, *Hermes* 127 (1999), 210–13, and others cited there, is that widespread contamination rules out a stemma and so choices among variants should be made on internal grounds; he does add, however, that S is least given to explanatory expansion. Certainly, in the upper reaches of this tradition, any debate about contamination, visible in some of the extant manuscripts, will come down to a debate about what Augustine wrote, which may as well be conducted directly. If A. was determined to conduct it on stemmatic terrain, he might have gone on to ask which manuscripts are indispensable for assembling all the true readings unlikely to be the result of conjecture or lucky accident. That seems to have been Verheijen's strategy when he concentrated on S, O, and CD. After many of A.'s 'passages importants' turn out unimportant 'pour un aperçu de la tradition', such firm decisions as he makes on those of the rest where the majority or S in company may be wrong seem to require only SOHM, but two changes of mind would be enough for C or D to do the work of HM. That is the effective scale of his argument.

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A. also leaves it to be taken on trust that the editors chose the right manuscripts in the first place, that they have reported them fully and accurately (denied by Gorman), and that nothing would be achieved by a more historical approach to the tradition than his, in which no manuscript is more than a symbol (Gorman cites Bischoff's views on the date and origin of the oldest manuscripts).

Readers will therefore expect most profit, I imagine, from A.'s internal reasons for holding that Augustine wrote one thing rather than another. Very little here, though, is both new and convincing. At 1.2(2) (p. 44) his defence of *inferi* will need to be accepted or answered. At 10.28(39) (p. 32) *naufragat tolerantia* (for *ne frangat tolerantiam*), a conjecture suggested to him by a colleague but already reported by Skutella from old editions, has two drawbacks, that it obscures the tripartition and that it makes adversity bring capitulation, not just the danger of it; A. objects to the switch from indicative to subjunctive, when one is in a *quia* clause and the other in a *ne* clause, and observes that *frangere tolerantiam* occurs nowhere else in Augustine, when the moral qualities collected at *TLL* 1246.64–1247.18 as objects of *frangere* include *patientia* in Rufinus besides *ambitio* and *invidia* in Augustine himself. Particularly unconvincing is A.'s attempt to rescue at least the *-ne* of the *-nem* that B. Löfstedt removed from *locutionem* at 3.4(7) (p. 51); the noun contrasted with *quod loquebatur* can hardly be left unexpressed between *neque* and *sed*. Furthermore, I often found A. unhelpful to someone like me who is not immersed in Augustine. He rarely translates, a service that I felt an acute need for at 1.11(18) (p. 47), 3.7(12) (p. 51), and 7.6(8) l. 14 (p. 62); and if, for instance, at 1.8(13) one would rather postpone a decision between *natuque maiorum hominum* and *nutuque maiorum hominum* (p. 45) until one has looked for other occurrences in Augustine of *nutus* and *maiores homines*, one is nowhere told about the printed concordance to the *Confessions* (Hildesheim, 1991) or the *Thesaurus Augustinianus* on microfiche (Louvain, 1989). At 5.6(11) (p. 57) he fails to mention that *efferebam* requires *atque* for *ac*.

Two footnotes are repeated out of place, n. 28 in n. 25 and n. 64 in n. 87. At 1.10(16) (p. 46) Skutella confirmed my conjecture that CD have *micante*. In n. 139 '315' should be '215'. On p. 68 the last occurrence of *indidem* should be *in idem*. Despite n. 186, there has been no discussion of *praepositos* at 9.8(18) (p. 78). The manuscripts cited on p. 96 for *naufragat* are not those cited on p. 32.

The title of the monograph seemed to herald a book several times larger, but I came away wondering if even a short article would have repaid A.'s trouble.

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SYMMACHUS' LETTERS

G. A. CECCONI: *Commento storico al libro II dell'epistolario di Q. Aurelio Simmaco. Con introduzione, testo, traduzione e indici.* (Biblioteca di Studi Antichi 86.) Pp. 467. Pisa: Giardini Editori e Stampatori, 2002. Paper. ISBN: 88-427-0317-6.

The historical commentary by G. A. Cecconi on the second book of the letters of Q. Aurelius Symmachus is the latest addition to the collection of historical commentaries on Symmachus' vast epistolary corpus that began over twenty years under the supervision of Lellia Cracco Ruggini. The collection, which provides a useful companion to the recently completed edition with French translation by

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