This volume contains a first complete edition and English translation of the second of the three major forms in which the so-called “Sayings of the Desert Fathers” (Apophthegmata Patrum, AP) have come down to us. The first form is known as the “Alphabetic” collection (APalph) because its roughly a thousand items\(^1\) are arranged in more or less alphabetical order by reference to the approximately one hundred and twenty fathers who allegedly uttered the sayings or are mentioned in the tales, ranging from Abba Antony to Abba Ôr, A–Ω. One version of the text of APalph has been available since the seventeenth century in the well-known edition with Latin translation by Jean-Baptiste Cotelier.\(^2\) Par contre (passing over the second collection (APanon) for a moment), there is now an excellent critical edition of the third, the “systematic” collection of apophthegmata (APsys).\(^3\) In one form or another, most of the contents of APsys can be found in one (but rarely in both) of the first and second collections; extracts from the Ascetic Discourses of Isaiah of Scete\(^4\) and a number of pieces from elsewhere were subsequently added to these. APsys is systematic in that here the items (some twelve hundred in the extant Greek

\(^{1}\) There are 948 items in the edition; a further 53 were established by Jean-Claude Guy in Recherches sur la tradition grecque des apophthegmata Patrum (Brussels 1962, rpt 1984 with corrections).


\(^{4}\) Ed. Αὐγουστίνος μοναχὸς Ἱορδανῆς, Ταῦτα ἀπὸν πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἀββᾶ Ἡσαΐου λόγοι κτ’ (Jerusalem 1911, rpt Volos 1962), tr. John Chryssavgis and Pachomios Penkett (Kalamazoo 2002); see pp.31–5 on the unpublished critical edition made by the διήμνητος Derwas Chitty.

\(©\) in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org
manuscripts) have been rearranged systematically under twenty-one heads (κεφάλια), each bearing the name of some monastic virtue or difficulty, e.g. Sorrow for sin/Compunction (ς), Fornication (ς), Obedience and Humility (ς, 1ς). The sections are by no means of equal length, the longest being the one on Discretion/diakrisis (το) with 194 items while the shortest (ςς, concerned with Hospitality and Almsgiving) contains only nineteen. The classification is by no means rigid; items occur in one section which might very well have been placed under another head, or under several heads. In each section the pattern is more or less the same: extracts from APalph come first, then the extracts from Isaiah of Scete followed by any extraneous items, then the pieces from APanon. Since both APalph and APanon are generally thought to have been constituted at the end of the fiςς century, the fiςς version of APsys could not have been much earlier than c. AD 500. A terminus ante quem is established in the mid sixth century by the existence of a Latin translation of the text made by the deacon Pelagius and the subdeacon John (P&J), each of whom subsequently became pope of Rome, from 5ςς to 5ςς and from 5ςς to 5ςς respectively. The contents of P&J, however, number only 737, scarcely two-thirds of what is found in the critical edition. Examination of the extant Greek manuscripts of APsys suggests that P&J represents the earliest surviving evidence of a text in a state of evolution, two further stages of which are discernible. There are no extracts from Isaiah of Scete in P&J, while a second version of APsys is characterised by the incorporation of a little material by that author. A third version (the one that has come down to us) contains a significant amount of Isaiah material and also presents evidence of the other contents having been rearranged somewhat to accommodate it.

Turning now to the second collection, APanon, let us say that, rather than “a collection”, this should probably be called “the second part of (or an appendix to) the first collection”. For, after explaining the alphabetical arrangement of the items, the writer of the Prologue to APalph continues:

Since there are also other words and deeds [ληγοι . . . και τροπες] of the holy elders that do not indicate the names of those who spoke or performed them, we have set them out under headings [ςς κεφαλαιοις] after the completion of the

---

7 Such is the conclusion of Guy, Recherches, 8ςς–ς4.
This passage is of interest, not least in its statement that (as the compilers have already hinted) their was not the first attempt to record such material in writing. But the authors claim to have created a supplement or appendix to the first collection and the three things they say about that appendix that are of especial interest are: (a) that its contents are anonymous; (b) that they are arranged under headings; and (c) that anything else coming to their notice was added at the end, i.e. after the section with headings. There are several reasons for believing that the text this volume presents is indeed the appendix of which the above quotation speaks. Not the least of these is the fact that, in the principal manuscripts containing APalph, the text of APanon follows directly after. But whereas the contents of the former are in nearly every case clearly linked to the name of a person, the contents of more than the first half of the latter are sharply distinguished from those of APalph precisely by recording the deeds and sayings of unnamed persons. Furthermore, in the same section the contents of APanon are indeed set out under headings (i.e. ἐν κεφαλαίοις), viz:

Περὶ τῶν Μαγιστριανῶν / Concerning imperial officials [N.37ff.]
Περὶ τοῦ σχήματος τοῦ ἄγιου τῶν μοναχῶν / Concerning the holy habit of monks [N.55]
Περὶ ἀναχωρητῶν / Concerning anchorites [N.132 bis ff.]
Ὅτι δὲ τὴν ἡσυχίαν καὶ τὴν κατάνυξιν μεταδίδειν / That we should pursue ἡσυχία and grief for sin [N.133ff.]
Περὶ ἐγκράτειας / Concerning temperance [N.144ff.]
Περὶ διακρίσεως / On discretion [N.216ff.]
Ὅτι ἐπὶ τοῦ τῆς κρίνει / That one must be on his guard against judging anybody [N.254ff]
Περὶ τοῦ μηδὲν εἰς ἐπίθεσιν τοιεύον, καὶ πλεονεξίαν ἀποστρέφεσθαι / That nothing should be done for ostentation and that avarice should be avoided [N.256ff.]
Περὶ τοῦ δεῖν πάντοτε νήφειν / That one should always be vigilant [N.264ff.]
Ὅτι κρίνει ἐλευθεραίον καὶ φιλοξενεῖν ἐν λαρΌτητι / On the necessity of being joyfully compassionate and hospitable [N.281ff.]
Περὶ ὑπακοῆς / On obedience [N.290ff.]
Περὶ τατουνοφροσύνης / On humble-mindedness [N.298ff.]
Περὶ ἀνεξικακίας / Concerning forbearance [N.335ff.]
Περὶ ἀγάπης / Concerning charity [N.344ff.]

8 Prologue to APalph, PG 65:73BC.
9 Ibid. PG 65:72A; the works referred to are no longer extant.
The Anonymous Sayings of the Desert Fathers

Περὶ διορατικῶν / On those who have the gift of second sight [N. 359ff.]
Περὶ πορνείας / Concerning porneia [N. 454ff.]
Περὶ τοῦ μὴ κρίνειν / On not passing judgement [N. 475ff.]
Περὶ κατανοάσως / Concerning grief for sin [katanyxis, compunctio] [N. 519ff.]

The contents of the latter part of the collection are very mixed and might well have been whatever the compilers were able to scrape together from various sources, as they say in the passage cited above. There is little doubt that subsequent copyists added other material, much of which cannot be dated any earlier than the seventh century, but it seems safe to conclude that the main body of APanon in indeed the appendix to APAalph of which the compilers speak.

APanon first saw the light of day when François Nau transcribed its first 400 items from Cod. Paris. Coislin. 126 and published them with a partial French translation at the beginning of the last century. Subsequently, Dom Lucien Regnault published a translation of the entire collection, apparently working directly from five manuscripts of the text.

The present publication is an attempt to complete the work of those scholars; it must, however, be emphasised that this is an edition, not the definitive “critical edition” scholars like to see of ancient texts. Indeed it is doubtful whether such an edition could ever be made, as it would presuppose the existence at some time of a definitive text, such as the one that emerges from the hand of a single author. There was no such person for the apophthegmatic material; it derives from an oral tradition (one rooted in a different language) already widely disseminated and several decades old by the time it was set down in writing. This becomes abundantly clear when one asks: what is meant by apophthegm in the Christian era?

It has been customary for some centuries to denominate apophthegmata the greater part of the literary débris of the earlier generations of Christian monks: those many men and some women who renounced “the world” and withdrew into the deserts of Egypt and of Syria-Palestine from the fourth through the seventh century of this era. The Greek versions of this material we have received represent a tradition that was both Coptic and oral in origin; it appears to have been the early collectors and editors who applied to that material the Greek term apophthegm, “a terse, pointed saying embodying an important [monastic] truth in few words” (OED).

The definition is entirely appropriate to the greater part of the material,
which does indeed consist of sayings of the Desert Fathers (and a few Mothers) that generations of ascetics had carefully memorised and often repeated. But interspersed with the sayings (like gravel in sand) there are tales (διηγήσεις) – and these are a different matter. Fewer in number but of greater length, the tales are of two kinds. There are tales that narrate an event (or a series of events) in the life of a father (who may or may not be identified) and that may or may not include a saying. Such tales complement the sayings, for while they express the theory, these tales illustrate the practice of eremitic monachism; thus tales such as these came to be known as “Lives of the Fathers”.\(^\text{12}\)

But there are other narratives, not always sharply distinguished from the former ones nor so easily defined, now known as “spiritually beneficial tales” (διηγήσεις ψυχωφελείς).\(^\text{13}\) Quoting Hippolyte Delehaye, François Halkin says these are “nouvelles destinées à mettre en lumière une doctrine religieuse”,\(^\text{14}\) then goes on himself to say: “Sans attache nette avec aucun pays ni aucune époque déterminée [ces récits] laissent dans un anonymat sans relief les personnages fictifs dont ils rapportent les exploits.”\(^\text{15}\) Elsewhere he says the beneficial tales are “des sortes de paraboles développées dont les héros ne sont pas toujours imaginaires . . . [récits] qui incarnent pour ainsi dire en un exemple frappant, voire paradoxal, un enseignement théorique difficile et transcendant.”\(^\text{16}\) He might have added that they resemble the parables in the Gospel according to Luke, with which those who perpetrated them were no doubt familiar. These remarks are especially pertinent to the present collection for \textit{APanon} contains a significantly higher proportion of beneficial tales than do the other two.

Apophthegmatic material has survived in a bewildering array of highly disparate manuscripts. It has been rightly said that “Le problème philologique des \textit{Apophthegmata Patrum} est l’un des plus complexes que pose l’édition des texts patristiques”,\(^\text{17}\) so great is the variation both in the composition of each manuscript and of the individual contents. Scribes who would normally strive to reproduce the exemplar before them as

\(^{\text{12}}\) Patrum vitae, \textit{BHG} Appendix vi, 1433–5022; see also \textit{Patrum Spirituale}.


\(^{\text{14}}\) Hippolyte Delehaye, “Un group de récits ‘utiles à l’âme’”, \textit{Mélanges Bidez} (Brussels 1934), 237.

\(^{\text{15}}\) François Halkin, “\textit{La vision de Kaioumos et le sort éternel de Philentolos Olympiou (BHG 1322w)}”, \textit{AB} 63 (1945), 56.

\(^{\text{16}}\) François Halkin, \textit{Recherches et documents d’hagiographie byzantine; Subsidia Hagiographica} 51 (Brussels 1971), 261, 303.

\(^{\text{17}}\) J.-Cl. Guy, \textit{Recherches sur la tradition grecque des \textit{Apophthegmata Patrum}}, 2nd edn (Brussels 1984), 7 and n.1 for similar comments by W. Bousset and R. Devreesse.
accurately as possible appear to have accorded themselves the widest licence to amend, revise, abbreviate and augment the material as they thought fit when the material was of an apophthegmatic nature. They would rearrange the contents as though they were leaves in a file and not hesitate to rephrase a tale at will, adjusting the location, the characters and even the thrust of the tale on occasion. The actual sayings fared better, but additional comments were sometimes added, to say nothing of ascriptions of dubious accuracy. This extraordinary instability may be explained by the nature of the apophthegmatic tradition. Long before they became literature, tales and sayings circulated as folklore, but this was lore with a purpose: to train and foster those who aspired to monastic ideals. There is no reason to suppose that this material immediately ceased to circulate orally as soon as it was committed to writing. Oral and written forms would have coexisted for some centuries, constantly contaminating each other. Thus a scribe might well set down, not the dead text found in his exemplar, but the living word he had received (directly or indirectly) from the mouth of some charismatic abba. Add to this the fact that Coptic was the language of most of the early monks and that Greek was the language of the sophisticated city-dwellers from the north and it is not too difficult to imagine that there were those who cherished the oral tradition more dearly than any written one, especially if it were written in what might have appeared to be an invasive language.

The provenance of a great number of the tales and sayings is north-west Egypt, especially the monastic settlements at Nitria, The Cells and (above all) at Scete; but the work of codifying and recording the matter may well have been done elsewhere. It is noticeable that there was an increasing migration of monks from Egypt to Syria-Palestine starting after the first devastation of Scete by the Mazices in 407/408. It is quite possible that it was refugee monks from the Nitrian desert, resettled in the Judaean desert, who undertook this task. Fearing for the future transmission of the oral tradition in troubled times, they sought to capture in writing what “the fathers used to say” – to be “on the safe side”. But, as we said, endangered though it might have been, there is no reason to suppose that the oral tradition had perished, nor even that it was moribund. The likelihood is that monks continued to be trained by memorising and reflecting upon the sayings and tales of the elders, taught and told to them by elders. Inevitably each time it was repeated or retold, each saying and a fortiori every tale would be a little transformed. The present writer has even been

moved to suspect that, given the laconic nature of the extant tales, the written version is no more than an outline or skeleton which the narrator was expected to flesh out and embroider as he saw fit. Such is the instability of apophthegmatic material that it might not be inappropriate to compare it to some creature that was for several centuries in a state of evolution. Since the would-be editor lacks the means to make a moving-picture of its evolutionary process, the best he/she can do is to make a still-life study (as it were) of a corpus as it was at a particular stage in its development. It is fortunate that in the case of APanon there have survived three roughly contemporaneous manuscripts that present a relatively coherent version of the text. These are:

C: Paris Coislin 126, tenth to eleventh centuries contains:
ff. 1–158r (mutilated at the beginning) APalp
ff. 158r–353v (mutilated at the end) APanon titled: Ἀποφθέγματα τῶν ἁγίων γερόντων, N. 1–676

S: Sinaí St Catherine 448, AD 1004 contains:
ff. 1rv Prologue (cf. PG 65:72A–76A)
ff. 2r–148r Ἀποφθέγματα γερόντων κατὰ στοχεῖον (APalp)
ff. 149r–340v Ἀποφθέγματα τῶν ἁγίων γερόντων (APanon) N. 1–765

V: Vatic. Graec. 1599, tenth century
ff. 1–115v APalp
ff. 116r–307v Ἀποφθέγματα τῶν ἁγίων γερόντων (APanon) N. 1–765

While these three are by no means identical texts, they do march sufficiently in line with each other to permit one to discern a consensus. Using C and S until the point where C breaks off, then S and V to the end, we have attempted to present that consensus (duly noting the major variations, but not the minor aberrations of spelling) in the apparatus. But such consensus as it is possible to discover should not conceal the fact that the tradition continued to evolve. Where tales and sayings occur in the Synagogê of Paul Euergetês assembled about a century and half later, they often show evidence of further development and there is no shortage of yet later manuscripts in which the process can be seen to proceed still further.

19 For a striking example of the way a tale can vary in the manuscripts, see J. Wortley, “A narratio of rare distinction: de monacho superbo” [BHG 1450x] (N. 620), AB 100 (1982), 353–63.
20 Guy, Recherches, 63–74. 31 Ibid., 16–17, 94–7. This is Regnault’s ms J.
Άποφθέγματα τῶν ἄγιων γερόντων

1. Ἡρωτήθη ὁ ἄγιος πατὴρ ἢμῶν Ἀθανάσιος ὁ ἐπίσκοπος Ἀλεξανδρείας. Πῶς ἰσος ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ πατρός; Καὶ ἀπεκρίθη: Ὡς ἐν δυσιν ὀφθαλμοῖς τὸ ὀρέαν.

2. Ἡρωτήθη ὁ ἄγιος πατήρ ἢμῶν Γρηγόριος ὁ θεολόγος. Πῶς ἰσος ὁ υἱὸς καὶ τὸ ἄγιον πνεύμα τῷ πατρί; Καὶ ἀπεκρίθη: οὐκ ἐν ἡλίοις [Ἑ. 158 ν] τρισίν ἐχομένων ἀδήλων, μία τοῦ φωτὸς σύγκρασις ἢ θεότης.

3. Ὡς αὐτὸς εἶπεν ὅτι τὰ τρία ταῦτα ἀπαίτεῖ ὁ Θεός ἀπὸ παντὸς ἀνθρώπου ἔχοντος τὸ βάπτισμα: πάντα ἀρθή ἀπὸ τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ ἀλλήλων ἀπὸ τῆς γλώσσης καὶ σωφροσύνην ἀπὸ του σώματος.

4. Δύο ἄδελφοι ἤσαν γνήσιοι ἐν Σκήτῃ καθεζόμενοι, καὶ συνέβη τὸν ἐνα ἀσθενήσα. Ἐλθόντος οὖν τοῦ ἄδελφοῦ ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ, καὶ αἶτησάμενοι αὐτοῦ παρὰ τοῦ πρεσβυτέρου προσφόραν, ἀκούσας ὁ πρεσβύτερος λέγει τοῖς ἄδελφοῖς: Ἄγωμεν ἐπισκευώμεθα τοῦ ἄδελφον. Ἐλθόντων οὖν καὶ ἐυξεμένων ἀνεχώρησαν. Πάλιν οὖν τὴν ἄλλην κυριακήν, ἐρωτᾶττον αὐτὸν ὁ πρεσβύτερος πῶς ἔχειν ὁ ἄδελφος. Ὁ δὲ ἄρα ἔδωκεν [Ἑ. 158 ν] ὑπέρ αὐτοῦ. Πάλιν οὖν ὁ πρεσβύτερος τοὺς ἄδελφους λαβὼν ἐπορεύθη σὺν αὐτοῖς πρὸς τὸν κάμινον ἄδελφον. Ἐλθόντων οὖν αὐτῶν, καὶ ἄρα ἦσαν καθήμενοι, ἐκεῖνος ἡμεῖς τοὺς κυματίζει. Τῶν δὲ ἄδελφων φιλονεικοῦντο καὶ τινῶν λεγόντων ὅτι ἡξιώθη τοῦ παρακλήτου, ἄλλων δὲ περὶ τούτου ἁμβαλλόντων, καὶ βλήτων αὐτοῦ ὁ ἄδελφος αὐτοῦ, ἔφη πρὸς αὐτοῦ· Τί φιλονεικεῖ πρὸς ἄλληλους; θέλει γνώσει τῆς ἔχει τὴν δύναμιν; Καὶ στραφεῖ πρὸς τὸν ἄδελφόν αὐτοῦ, ἔφη πρὸς αὐτοῦ· Ὡς πάγεσαι ἄδελφε μου. Ὁ δὲ ἀσθενῶν ἔφη· Ναι, ἀλλ’ εὐξάς ὑπέρ ἐμοῦ. Ὁ δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἔφη· Φύσει, ἄδελφέ μου, οὐκ ἁφῶ σε ἀπέλθειν πρὸ ἐμοῦ. Καὶ στραφεῖ πρὸς τοὺς καθημένους [Ἑ. 159 ν] ἄδελφους ἔφη· Δότε μοι ψιάθιν καὶ ἐμβρύμων. Καὶ
Our holy father Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, was asked: “In what way is the Son equal to the Father?” He replied: “In the same way that there is seeing in two eyes.”

Our holy father Gregory the Theologian was asked: “How are the Son and the Holy Spirit equal to the Father?” He replied: “The Divinity is a single fusion of light as in three suns adjacent to each other.”

The same [father] said: “God requires these three things of every man who has been baptised: right belief of his soul, truth of his tongue and sobriety of his body.”

Of two actual brothers living at Scete one happened to fall ill. His brother came into church asking the priest for the Sacrament. When the priest heard, he said to the brothers: “Let us go and visit the brother.” They came, they prayed and went away. Then again, on the following Sunday, the priest asked him how his brother was. “Pray for him”, he said. Again, taking the brothers, the priest went with them to the sick brother. They came and, as they were sitting there, he was at the point of death. The brothers began to argue, some saying that he was worthy of the Paraclete while others were taking the contrary position on this. Looking at them, his brother said to them: “Why are you arguing with each other? Do you want to know who has power?” And, turning to his brother, he said to him: “You are going,
λαβὼν καὶ κλίνας τὴν κεφαλήν, παρέδωκε πρῶτος τὴν ψυχήν, ἐπείτα ἡ ἀσθενῶν. Καὶ εὐθεώς ἄμφοτέρους κηδεύσαντες οἱ πατέρες, ἀπηνέγκαν καὶ ἐθάψαν μετὰ χαρᾶς, ὥς ἄρτι ἐπειλήφθησα τὸ φῶς τὸ νυμφῶν.

5. Δύο ἦσαν ἄδελφοι ἄμα οἰκουντές ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ. Ὁ δὲ εἶς ἐξ αὐτῶν ἡμῖν ἀνεμονήσθη τοῦ κρίματος τοῦ Θεοῦ πολλοστών ἀπέδρα εἰς τὴν ἐρήμων πλαζόμενος. Ὁ δὲ ἔτερος ἐξήρχετο ὑπὸ σοiw αὐτοῦ ζητῶν αὐτῶν. Καὶ πολλὰ κόμιων ἦσαν ὑπὸ θυρή αὐτῶν, λέγει αὐτῷ· Διατί ὁ πλῆθος ἄποδιδράσεις ἦσαν; Σὺ μόνος ἐποίησας τὰς ἀμαρτίας τοῦ κόσμου; Λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ ἄδελφος· Νομίζεις οὐκ οἶδα εἰ ἄφθησαν οἱ ἀμαρτίας μου; Ναὶ [ἐ. 159 Β'] οἶδα ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς συνεχόρησε τὰς ἀμαρτίας μου, ἀλλὰ τὸν μόχθον τοῦτον ποιῶ ἵνα ἐν ἡμέρᾳ κρίσεως γένωμαι θεωρῶν τοὺς κρινομένους.

6. ἦσαν δύο ἄδελφοι γειτνιώντες ἀλλήλοις καὶ ὁ εἶς ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐκρυπτευ eι t'i εἰχεν, εἴτε κέρμα, εἴτε ψωμία, καὶ ἐνέβαλεν εἰς τὰ τοῦ πληθσον αὐτοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἦδει ὁ ἄλλος, ἀλλ' ἐθαυμαζεῖν ὅτι ἐπιπλήυνον τὰ αὐτοῦ. Μίας οὖν τῶν ἡμερῶν, ἔθασεν αὐτὸν αἰφνιδίως τοῦτο ποιοῦντα, καὶ ἔβαλε μάχεσθαι μετ' αὐτοῦ λέγων· Ὅτι διὰ τῶν σαρκικῶν σου εὐφύεσθας μου τὰ πνευματικά. Καὶ ἀπήτθησαν αὐτῷ λόγουν, ἵνα μηκέτι τοῦτο ποιήση, καὶ οὕτως αὐτῷ συνεχόρησαν.

7. Ἀδελφὸς τις ἐποίησεν ἀντίκλειδον καὶ ἤρειγεν [ἐ. 159 ν'] ἔνος τῶν γερόντων τὸ κελλίων καὶ ἐλάμβανε τὸ κέρμα αὐτοῦ. Ὁ δὲ γέρων ἔγραψε χάρτην λέγων· Κύριε ἄδελφε, εἰ τις ἐὰν ἔχῃ, ποιήσην ἀγάπην, ὅτι οἴκων εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν χρέαν. Καὶ ποιήσας τὸ κέρμα δύο μέρη, ἔθηκε τὸ χαρτίν. Ὁ δὲ πόλιν εἰςελθὼν, σχίσας τὸ χαρτόν ἠλάβεν δίλον. Εἶτα μετά δύο ἐτη τελευτά, καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ ὑπὲρ ὑπήρξε τὸ κέρμα. Καὶ εἶτεν ὁ γέρων· Διατί τάχιον οὐκ εἴπετε; Ὅμως ἐξαμένου αὐτοῦ παρέδωκεν.