Much of what is known of the earliest history of Christian monasticism is derived from the *Tales and Sayings of the Desert Fathers (Apophthegmata Patrum)* of which three major collections survive. Until now only the ‘Alphabetic’ and the ‘Systematic’ collections have been available in English translation; with the present volume, the ‘Anonymous’ collection becomes available, not only in English, but with the first complete edition of the Greek text on facing pages. Although many of the contents of these collections refer to desert communities in north-west Egypt, the collectors may have been refugee monks settled in Palestine who sought to record in Greek an oral tradition of instruction originally in Coptic to secure it for future generations. The ‘Alphabetic’ collection and its appendix, the ‘Anonymous’, were both created towards AD 500 (the ‘Systematic’ somewhat later) but it is clear that further material was added to the ‘Anonymous’ well into the seventh century. Consequently, this volume furnishes almost as much material for the study of the late antique world from which the monk sought to escape as it does for the monastic endeavour itself. But the spread and gradual evolution of monasticism are well illustrated here over a period extending to the Moslem conquest.

THE ANONYMOUS SAYINGS
OF THE DESERT FATHERS

A Select Edition and Complete English Translation

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY

JOHN WORTLEY
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Note on the translation

Some Greek words now current in English have been presented in their English form, e.g. *accidie, higoumen*. Where the Greek text uses a Coptic word, this has been retained, e.g. *abba, amma* (father, mother).

Some Greek words have been retained because it would take too many words to translate them (e.g. *porneia*, which means any illicit sexual activity in mind, word or deed) or because of the peculiar ambivalence of the word (e.g. *logismos, -oi* and *hêsychia*) the meaning of which the reader must construe from its context.

The Old English word *worldling* has been resurrected to translate *kosmikos* (*biôtikos* in N. 295), a person not a monk, which would otherwise require a significant periphrasis. “Lord-and-master” represents the word *despôtes*. 
Abbreviations

AB  Analecta Bollandiana
AP  Apophthegmata Patrum
APalph  Apophthegmata Patrum, the alphabetic collection (see Apophthegmata Patrum and Ward, The Sayings in the Bibliography)
APanon  Apophthegmata Patrum, the anonymous collection (Nau) (see Regnault, . . . série des anonymes in the Bibliography)
APsys  Apophthegmata Patrum, the systematic collection (see Guy, Les Sentences and Wortley, The Book in the Bibliography)
BHG  François Halkin, Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca, 3rd edn, 3 vols., Subsidia Hagiographica No. 8a (Brussels 1957); and idem., Novum auctorium Bibliothecae Hagiographicae Graeae, Subsidia Hagiographica no. 65 (Brussels 1984)
C  see Introduction, p. 7
CPG  Corpus Patrum Graecorum
GRBS  Greek Roman and Byzantine Studies
LXX  Septuagint
N  (Nau) = APanon
PG  Patrologia Graeca
PL  Patrologia Latina
PO  Patrologia Orientalis
P&J  Pelagius and John (see Bibliography)
ROC  Revue de l’Orient Chrétien
S  see Introduction, p. 7
SC  Sources Chrétiennes
V  see Introduction, p. 7