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978-0-521-50988-6 - The Anonymous Sayings of the Desert Fathers: A Select Edition and Complete English Translation

Edited and Translated by John Wortley

Frontmatter

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THE ANONYMOUS SAYINGS OF THE DESERT FATHERS

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.

JOHN WORTLEY is Professor of History Emeritus at the University of Manitoba. He has published widely on the Byzantine era, and completed several translations to date, including *Les Récits édifiants de Paul, évêque de Monembasie, et d'autres auteurs* (1987), *The "Spiritual Meadow" of John Moschos*, including the additional tales edited by Nissen and Mioni (1992), *The Spiritually Beneficial Tales of Paul, Bishop of Monembasia, and of Other Authors* (1996), *John Skylitzes: A Synopsis of Byzantine History, 811–1057* (2010) and *The Book of the Elders: Sayings of the Desert Fathers, the Systematic Collection* (2012). Ordained in 1959, Professor Wortley is still active as an Anglican priest.

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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*, *bigoumen*.

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 *hēsychia*) the meaning of which the reader must construe from its context.

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

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