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VOLUME 2

PRACTICE

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The Cambridge Edition of Early Christian Writings offers new translations of a wide range of materials from ca. 100 CE to ca. 650 CE, including many writings that have not previously been accessible in English. The volumes will focus on selected themes and will include translations of works originally written in Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Coptic, together with introductions, notes, bibliographies, and scriptural indices to aid the reader. Taken together they should greatly expand the range of texts available to scholars, students, and all who are interested in this period of Christian thought.

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Notes on Contributors

Mark DelCogliano is Assistant Professor of Theology at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota. He translated Athanasius's *Letter to Amoun*, the selections from John Cassian's *Conferences*, Pachomius's *Paralipomena* 19–20, and the selections from Augustine's *On Catechizing the Uninstructed*.

Ellen Muehlberger is Associate Professor of Christianity in Late Antiquity in Near Eastern Studies and History at the University of Michigan. She translated the *Teachings of Silvanus*, Antony's *Letters* 1 and 4, Ammonas's *Letters* 2, 10, and 12, the *Protrepticus* and *Paraeneticus* by Evagrius of Pontus, the selections from *Book of Steps*, Shenoute of Atripe's sermons *Abraham, Our Father* and *As I Sat on a Mountain*, the canons from Rabbula and John of Tella, Theodore of Mopsuestia's *Homily on Baptism*, and Narsai's homily *On the Symbols of the Church and on Baptism*.

Andrew Radde-Gallwitz is Assistant Professor of Liberal Studies at the University of Notre Dame. He translated the selections from Methodius of Olympus's *Symposium*, Basil of Caesarea's *Canonical Letters*, and Gregory of Nyssa's *Canonical Letter to Letoius*.

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Edward Vodoklys, SJ is Senior Lecturer in Classics at College of the Holy Cross. He translated the selected *Letters to Olympias* by John Chrysostom.

Acknowledgments

This project began in early 2012, when Andrew Radde-Gallwitz began to assemble an editorial team for a new translation series in early Christian writings. Being on that team alongside Mark DelCogliano and Bradley K. Storin has been a joy. In these three scholars, extensive knowledge of the early Christian period and unflagging attention to the innumerable details of translation are matched by persistent, delightfully wry enthusiasm. Work undertaken with friends hardly seems like work.

As we completed this volume, we have had the generous help of many other scholars and institutions. We are grateful to the Hank Center for the Catholic Intellectual Heritage and the Cardinal Cody Chair at Loyola University Chicago, whose support enabled a collaborative workshop at an early stage of work on this volume. Special thanks go to Mark Bosco, SJ, Edmondo Lupieri, and Randall Newman. Edward Vodoklys, SJ allowed his translation of John Chrysostom's letters with Olympias to be part of the volume, for which we are very grateful. Each piece in the volume went through a four-stage process of checking and revision. In the case of most of the texts translated from Coptic or Syriac, we enlisted specialists to help at one stage of the process: Adam Becker, David Brakke, Matthew Crawford, Maria Doerfler, Michail Kitsos, Gina Konstantopoulos, Becky Krawiec, Alexandra McLaughlin, Blossom Stefaniw, and Janet Timbie all generously gave their advice, corrections, and suggestions for those translations. Whatever errors remain are, of course, entirely our own.

We thank Cambridge University Press and especially our editor, Hilary Gaskin. Her guidance and her encouragement brought this series into being, and we are very grateful for her support.

Finally, I want to thank my spouse, Gina Brandolino, for her love and support. Equal parts brilliant, plainspoken, and hilarious, she makes every day a joy and the sum of days almost unbearably good.

Note on the Texts and Translations

Our translations have been produced in consultation with published editions and, in some cases, with manuscripts. Bibliographical information for the editions used can be found in the introduction to each translated text. The numeration of each work follows that of the editions from which we have translated. Numbers in the text with no surrounding brackets indicate chapter or paragraph divisions. In the case of texts with subdivisions or multiple numbering systems, the major chapter division is indicated in bold, followed by the subdivision in regular type with a full stop. Where bracketed numbers in bold appear, these indicate page numbers in a printed edition or folio numbers in a manuscript codex.

Series Introduction

The literary legacy of the early Christians is vast and spans multiple linguistic traditions. Early Christians used the written word in many ways: they sent letters, staged dialogues, reported revelations, gave advice, defended themselves, accused others, preached homilies, wrote histories, sang hymns, hammered out creeds, interpreted texts, and legislated penances – just to list the most common examples. They did these things in Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Coptic; while countless Christians would have used other languages, such as Armenian, these four are the medium of the vast majority of our surviving texts. For each text that has survived, there is a unique story. Some became part of educational curricula for Christians in medieval Byzantium, Basra, and Bologna; some were recited or sung liturgically; some were read in private devotions; some lay at the core of later theological debates such as the European Reformations in the sixteenth century or the Ressourcement movement in twentieth-century Catholicism; some suffered a literary death, being buried in the sands of Egypt only to be discovered again, quite by accident, in the past century. The question of how these works have been received over the centuries is undoubtedly important, but their later interpreters and interpretations ought not to overshadow their original significance and context.

The *Cambridge Edition of Early Christian Writings* offers a representative sample of this diverse literature in six thematic volumes: *God*, *Practice*, *Christ*, *Creation*, *Community*, and *Reading*. While no series of this kind can be comprehensive, these themes allow the reader to understand early Christianity in its full intellectual, practical, ritual, and communal diversity. The theme and the selection of texts are thoroughly discussed in each volume's respective introduction, but certain principles have guided the construction of all six volumes. Our goal has been neither to narrate the establishment of orthodox or normative Christianity as this has been traditionally understood nor to champion its replacement by another form of Christianity. Instead, we have opted to let each text speak with its own historical voice and authority, while aiming to expand the number

and range of early Christian texts available to English speakers. Because of this, many of these texts are translated into English here for the first time, while all others have been translated anew. We have combined magisterial works with neglected ones in order to show the diversity and interconnectedness of Christianity in its formative period. We are neither reproducing a canon of classics nor creating a new one. We make no claims that the included works are aesthetically or intellectually superior to other texts we have excluded. Some well-known classics have been omitted for simply that reason: they are readily accessible and widely read. Others are too lengthy and do not bear excerpting well. In some cases we have judged that attention to a single work by an author has led to an unfortunate neglect of other works of equal or greater value by the same author. In such cases we are taking the opportunity to cast our spotlight on the latter. In sum, by no means have we felt constrained by previous lists of "must-reads" in our own selections.

We have sought to produce translations that are literal – faithful to the original language's meaning and, when possible, syntax. If a meaningful term appears in the original language, we have aimed to capture it in the translation. At the same time, we have aimed to produce intelligible and attractive English prose. At times the two goals have conflicted and prudential judgments have been made; as part of a team of translators, we are fortunate that we have not had to make such decisions alone. Every translation that appears in our volumes has gone through a rigorous multi-stage editorial process to ensure accuracy as well as readability. We hope that this painstaking collaborative process ensures the reliability and consistency of our translations. As a team, we have come to see the value – and indeed the necessity – of such collaborative work for the academic study of early Christianity's rich library of texts.

Andrew Radde-Gallwitz
Mark DelCogliano
Ellen Muehlberger
Bradley K. Storin

Introduction

The texts in this volume have been selected to represent the history of practice in early Christianity. When we speak of "early Christianity," we mean the political, cultural, and religious traditions from the first six centuries of this era that draw their importance from the life or teachings of Jesus, whose followers claimed him as Christ, the Son of God. Because Christianity now looks back to this early period as the time when its most essential ideas and practices were established, understanding it is important for understanding the Christian religion as a whole. Yet it is important to remember that early Christianity was not characterized by uniformity. Over time, great developments happened that make the beginnings of the movement inspired by Jesus seem quite different from the imperial style of Christianity enacted in the era of Theodosius at the end of the fourth century, or even that of Justinian in the sixth. For example, the earliest extant documents to mention Jesus are the letters of the first-century teacher and writer, Paul. But taken in the context of their own time, Paul's letters are easily classed as Jewish texts that inform others about a Jewish teacher whose presence sheds new light on the lessons and history recorded in the Septuagint and its teachings about humanity. There is no evidence that Paul, nor any of the early followers of Jesus, would have understood themselves as starting something called "Christianity." It is only over the course of a long period of time that the movement expanded and developed a sense of itself as a new religious tradition. So, what is termed "early Christianity" and may seem like a single entity was in fact an emerging tradition, with all the complexity and disorganization that growing movements experience.

This volume focuses on the practices that developed during the first six centuries of that movement – what early Christians did. The evidence we have with which to reconstruct early Christian actions comes mostly in the form of texts. This is the case, at least in part, because of the historical position of Christianity. Archeological sites, objects, buildings, and inscriptions that can represent the growing material culture of Christianity do survive, especially from after the legitimization of Christianity in the fourth

century. But a much larger part of the heritage preserved from the early Christian period are texts. This is also a result of the fact that for Christians, the interpretation of existing texts and the production of new ones was *itself* an important practice. We often think of texts as something opposite to actions, but the reproduction, curation, and use of texts was a labor Christians took on as a religious activity, one which held pride of place even in Christianity's beginnings.

To have as accurate a sense of the Christian past as possible, it is important to keep in mind two limits that are peculiar to textual evidence. First, texts are created for reasons that pertain to their own eras and environments. None of the texts included here was created for the purpose of revealing to twenty-first-century students of Christianity the character of early Christian practice. Consequently, they require the same patient analysis and understanding of genre and form that other primary sources require, if they are to be used effectively as evidence of the past. Second, texts from antiquity have survived because a centuries-long process of copying and transmission has delivered them to the present day. As a result of the selective forces inherent in such a process, the character of texts that we have may be more representative of those who preserved them from antiquity than it is of antiquity itself. These caveats, though important, are small in comparison to the bigger challenge of understanding what a religious community practices simply by consulting documents – imagine trying to reconstruct the daily life of a household from just the books on its shelves! Even with these impediments, a skillful reader can learn quite a bit about the goals, concerns, and hopes of those early Christians whose writings we do possess. While some aspects of early Christian practice are not accessible to us, many are.

In this volume, readers will encounter evidence of a wide range of cultural, ritual, intellectual, and bodily activities – ways of living that came to define the growing and changing tradition of Christianity. Much of our early evidence shows Christian leaders taking the role of teachers of texts, helping other Christians to read them and, through interpretation, to understand the nature of the world, of humanity, and of God. Christians with advanced knowledge gave individualized advice, often through letters in response to requests for guidance about the best Christian ways of life. Later, Christian writers and speakers offered this kind of guidance to entire communities of Christians whom they sought to teach about moral behavior and the importance of community standards. Such writings often

tell us as much about what Christians were not to do as what they did do. Eventually, it became the duty of the leaders of Christian communities to help Christians participate in the special rituals that were rooted in important events in the life of Jesus. Starting in the fourth century, we have a number of texts that record the training Christian leaders gave to those who were preparing to participate in structured ritual events such as baptism and the Eucharistic meal. Though the activities that the texts in this volume record – reading and writing, teaching and learning, gathering and being initiated – may not seem as striking as some more dramatic Christian practices such as extreme fasting or martyrdom, they are arguably the basic building blocks of Christian culture.

Most of the texts in this volume were chosen because they illustrate features of early Christian practice that would become important in later Christian tradition. But many of these texts show such practices in the earliest moments that we know them to exist. So, readers must be careful not to assume too much from a single text and indeed, as historically minded readers, we have to exercise a type of conservatism with respect to the sources we have. For example, consider the place of Cyril of Jerusalem, who lived in the middle of the fourth century and whose teaching about how to participate in the rituals of the Christian community is included in part IV of this volume. One way to read his mystagogical lectures is to see Cyril fulfilling the office of bishop and doing what bishops had always done, namely, training his congregation in the actions of rituals such as baptism and Eucharist and teaching them the meaning of those rituals. To see him that way, however, imports a continuity to Christian tradition that is impossible to reconstruct from the available evidence. Because Cyril's is the earliest example of this type of instruction, we cannot assume that he was simply enacting a duty that had long been imagined for bishops. It is perhaps safer to see Cyril as a constructor of the role of bishop as ritual teacher and leader of Christian initiation than it is to assume that he represents a continuous tradition that somehow was not preserved in the historical record.

A second example of this sort of conservative approach to reading can be drawn from early Christian Egypt. The fourth- and fifth-century Shenoute of Atripe is often spoken of as an early Christian ascetic because his works were preserved in the White Monastery, an institution which claims him as one of its earliest leaders; some of his writings are, in fact, rules for an organized residential community of Christians. Yet to read Shenoute's sermons,

like the two included in this volume, is to recognize that while he did lead a substantial monastic community, Shenoute was also the most important Christian leader of the village nearby and the surrounding countryside. So, to tag him with the label "ascetic" might suggest that he was removed from a more standard style of Christianity expressed in non-ascetic congregations in towns and villages, in which marriages and biological families were important. If such a style of Christian community existed near Shenoute during his lifetime, we know little about it. It is safer simply to understand Shenoute's life and works as representative of Christianity for fourth- and fifth-century Upper Egypt, rather than to interpret his life and impact as being less than what it seems by seeing it through the specialized lens of a later label such as "asceticism" or "monasticism." Because of the distorting effects that such interpretative frames can have, this volume attempts to avoid imposing them on the texts presented here, so that readers can make judgments for themselves about what these texts can tell us about early Christian practice.

Such judgments require evidence, and to facilitate the reader's exploration of and engagement with the practices of the early Christian period, we have included a wide range of texts, representative of different places, habits, linguistic communities, and theological commitments. Though we have grouped the texts under four themes, the pieces in this volume can be read profitably in other groupings, by comparing, say, Clement's advice in *The Instructor* to that given by Athanasius in his *Letter to Amoun* in order to trace the evolution of early Christian leadership in Alexandria, or by comparing the *Teachings of Silvanus* to John Chrysostom's instructions on baptism in order to tease out the common threads of philosophical education that they share. Moreover, some texts that have had pride of place in reconstructions of early Christian practice have been left out of the volume. We did not include the texts known commonly as the "church orders," like the *Didache* or the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, because the authors, contexts, and dates of composition for these texts are very difficult to establish. We do, nevertheless, encourage teachers to make use of whatever other texts they find helpful alongside those published in this volume.

The first group of texts included in this volume are explicitly educational, adopting either the form of literature used in ancient schools or the metaphors of teaching and learning. The third-century author Clement of Alexandria, for example, draws on the well-known role of the instructor, a guide and guard for young pupils, as he explains the role of the Word in

a Christian's development. Other texts draw on genres that had been long used to pass on wisdom and moral teaching. In a text like the *Teachings of Silvanus*, we can see the fluidity of ancient educational forms: while this version of the text is certainly Christian, as it presents Christ as the vehicle for the wisdom it offers, much of what it contains is common with other collections of wise guidance about life. Ongoing Christian uses of educational genres are visible in the fourth-century writer Methodius's *Symposium*, a dialogue in which many young women speak on abstract topics of Christian morality and wisdom; in this volume, we visit the speeches of two of these women, Thallousa and Agathē. From such texts, it becomes clear that the paired roles of teacher and student and the forms of literature so central to ancient schooling were also important to the development of early Christianity.

The second group of texts in this volume are documents of advice given by more advanced Christians to less advanced ones. They are occasional guidance, most of them given in response to concerned requests. The examples of this type of guidance range broadly across many topics, from how to fight demons to how to deal with one's unruly body, or how to quiet one's passions to allow the mind to return to its natural state. Taken as a group, such letters and documents are evidence of the comprehensive nature of late ancient Christian practice. Christianity was, for these writers, a tradition that aspired to be useful in all kinds of situations, from the very personal to the communal. While most of these texts offer advice about action – detailing what it is proper and right to do – none of them sees actions as an end in themselves. Instead, they base their judgments about what is proper on their unique understandings of God, the world, and the Christian's place in it. So, though these are not explicitly theological treatises, they can be read for information far richer than details of what one should or should not do. We have put them together here to show the continuity of concerns and responses to concerns that these writers share, regardless of their later classifications as bishops, monks, ascetics, or heretics. Further, we want to demonstrate that theirs is a Christianity that accommodates various levels of advancement, in which teachers introduce new lessons when the students become ready.

The third section of the volume groups texts that offer more general standards of behavior, namely, directions given for groups instead of personalized guidance. Some of these texts are expressed in the form of rules: statements of what is correct and what is incorrect. Others were first given as sermons

to a community, but give similar directions about correct and incorrect behavior. Still others are case-by-case directions for how to deal with specific problems. In all we can see how the character of the community and its boundaries are shaped. While important imperial councils such as Nicaea or Chalcedon are often considered the prime historical sites of the definition of Christianity, these more narrowly focused documents show the ordinary and basic establishment of the foundational structures of Christianity: the idea of who is a Christian, what standards his behavior should follow, and how the community should respond to difficulty.

The final section of texts includes explicit instructions for ritual. The texts presented here are a selection from the authors whose works have traditionally funded historical reconstructions of the development of Christian liturgy. Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Narsai all delivered series of lectures in which they introduce the actions of ritual such as baptism or the Eucharist to their listeners. In addition to providing instruction about how to act during rituals, these texts also teach Christians how to think during rituals. In part, this additional content is visible in the metaphors the instructors offer: in turn, participating in Christian rituals is like becoming a citizen of a city, or fighting a battle in an arena full of spectators. These metaphors reveal how Christians framed their rituals, what importance they gave them, and to what extent they expected participation in organized rituals to govern the rest of their lives. Moreover, as these early Christian instructors explain the rituals, they also offer explanations of their causes and origins, and in these explanations lies quite a great deal of theological and cosmological detail. Thus we can discern what Christians were taught to do and to think during the execution of a ritual. We can even make out the underlying metaphysical assumptions teachers made about the place of humanity and its potential for contact with the divine.

Indeed, what is true of these ritual instructions is true of all the texts in this volume: though they reveal the details of many different early Christian practices, they also reveal much more. We hope that readers use them to explore the ancient Christian past, understanding that there is no account of a community's religious actions that does not also describe, implicitly or explicitly, that community's perspective on the world, its ideas about the divine, and its hopes and fears for humanity.