

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07708-8 - The Lausiaca History of Palladius: Volume 1: Prolegomena

Edited by Dom Cuthbert Butler

Excerpt

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## THE HISTORIA LAUSIACA OF PALLADIUS.

## § 1. INTRODUCTORY.

THE origins of Christian monachism and the sources of its early history are fields of enquiry to which continental scholars have of late years been devoting considerable attention. Much has been written about various ascetics of the first three centuries; but so meagre is the original information, and so dense the obscurity in which the whole subject is involved, that to find a safe basis for investigating the beginnings of historical Christian monachism, it is necessary to start from the literature of the close of the fourth century and of the early years of the fifth, which portrays the manner of life and the teaching of the multitude of hermits and cenobites who at that time peopled the Egyptian deserts. Again, the early history of divine worship in the Christian Church is a subject which is attracting still more attention; and any one who has read recent works dealing with the development of the Canonical Office, such as those of the Abbé Batiffol<sup>1</sup> or Dom Bäumer<sup>2</sup>, will recognise how important a place is held in such investigations by this same literature. For students therefore of monastic or of liturgical origins it is clearly a matter of necessity to know how far the records of this literature are authentic, and what measure of credibility they can rightly claim.

The two scholars who in our day have made the most elaborate study of the sources of Egyptian monastic history, Dr Lucius and M. Amélineau, are agreed that the extant documents are few, and

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire du Bréviaire Romain*. (Paris: Lecoffre, 1893.)

<sup>2</sup> *Geschichte des Breviers*. (Freiburg i. Breisgau: Herder, 1895.)

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that the most important of them are the *Historia Lausiaca* of Palladius, and the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, which goes under the name of Rufinus<sup>1</sup>. The former work is beset with certain textual difficulties, with which neither Lucius nor Amélineau has, in my judgment, successfully grappled; yet on the true solution of these problems must depend to a very great extent our estimate of the historical character of both the above named works. My concern is chiefly with the *Historia Lausiaca*; and to make the discussion which follows more easily intelligible I shall here give a brief sketch of its author's career, in so far as it bears on the subject-matter of his book.

Palladius was born in Galatia in the year 367: about 387 he embraced the monastic life, and perhaps spent some time in Cappadocia and Palestine, before going to Egypt. In 388 he came to Alexandria, and after some two years passed under eminent masters of the ascetic life in the neighbourhood of that city he withdrew into the desert of Nitria. A year later (390—1) he retired into the still more remote desert, which from the number of hermitages with which it was studded was called "the Cells." Here he lived for about nine years, at first with Abbot Macarius of Alexandria, and then with Evagrius, who was famous during his life for his austerities and his ascetic lore, but after his death fell under the suspicion of Origenism. During this sojourn Palladius enjoyed the instruction of several of the best known of the solitaries, and met the disciples of many more. At the beginning of 400 he was compelled by ill health to quit the desert and betake himself to Alexandria, whence he returned to Palestine. Later on in the same year he became bishop of Helenopolis in Bithynia. He was consecrated perhaps by St John Chrysostom, whose faithful adherent he henceforth was, and in whose persecutions he shared. In 404 or 405 he travelled to Rome in his master's interests, and whilst there he visited some who were leading an ascetic life in the neighbourhood of the city and in Campania. He subsequently suffered a long exile for his fidelity to St Chrysostom, being banished to Syene, and again to

<sup>1</sup> Lucius, *Die Quellen der älteren Geschichte des ägyptischen Mönchtums* (Brieger's *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 1885, p. 163). Amélineau, *De Historia Lausiaca*, p. 3 (Paris: Leroux, 1887).

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the Thebaid, where he passed three or four years among the monks of Antinoopolis; he also lived for some time in Palestine among the monks who dwelt on the Mount of Olives. In 417 his troubles came to an end; and in 420 he wrote his *Historia Lausiaca*, a series of biographical sketches of the monks whom he had known, either personally, or through the reports of their disciples. This work he dedicated to one Lausus, a chamberlain at the court of Theodosius II.; and from this circumstance it receives its title<sup>1</sup>.

Palladius has won from a master of the old school of historical scholarship and criticism the following high encomium: "On peut dire qu'il y a peu d'histoires qui méritent plus de croyance que celle-la. Car il y paroist partout un grand caractère de simplicité et de sincérité, avec beaucoup d'exactitude, et un grand soin de s'informer de la vérité des choses, sans y rien ajouter pour les rendre plus agréables ou plus merveilleuses. Pallade fait profession dans sa préface de ne dire que ce qu'il a vu luy-mesme, ou appris des auteurs originaux; et il n'y a presque pas de page de son livre qui ne fasse voir qu'il s'est acquitté de cette promesse avec beaucoup de fidélité." So Tillemont<sup>2</sup>. In quite recent times a very different verdict has been pronounced by Dr Weingarten. He declares that the time has come to "lay the axe to the root of the superstitions" handed down as the records of early monachism; and he sets to work to some purpose. Paul the Hermit "never existed." As for St Anthony, the life of him attributed to St Athanasius has no historical value whatever; it is a mere "Tendenzschrift," a romance written for the purpose of propagating an ideal. If such a personage ever lived, he must be placed not in the third century but in the second half of the fourth; for there were no Christian solitaries or monks in Egypt before the year

<sup>1</sup> This account, put together by Tillemont (*Mémoires*, xi. 500—523) out of Palladius' own writings, has been adopted by subsequent writers; even Dr Weingarten accepts it in its main outlines. I believe that Dr Lucius stands alone in regarding as fabrications the details given by Palladius about himself. There are a few chronological difficulties; but these are fairly met by the supposition that Palladius, writing at a distance of from 20 to 30 years from the events he narrates, is not always minutely accurate in his notes of time. The question will be dealt with in detail in Part II. of this Study (§ 14).

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires*, xi. 524.

340. The *Historia Lausiaca* and *Historia Monachorum* are mere fairy tales, which must not be regarded as in any sense historical sources, and which deserve no more credit than Gulliver's Travels. Only one fact can be gleaned from these romances, viz. that the earliest form of the monastic life was the eremitical<sup>1</sup>. The late date at which Weingarten set the beginnings of Christian monachism called forth much criticism even on the part of writers of his own school; but his estimate of the two works in which we are interested has been accepted in many quarters. Dr Zöckler, however, an historical critic of tried repute, cannot adopt so extreme a view of the untrustworthiness of Palladius. In the first edition of Herzog's *Encyclopädie* he had expressed himself somewhat favourably as to the historical character of the Lausiaca History, and had thereby brought upon himself a rebuke from Weingarten. But in the second edition he emphasised his earlier verdict. He does not question that the biographies have been highly coloured and enriched with wonders; but in his judgment it is not conceivable that they are mere fictions and romances; in the case of most of the holy men portrayed, the details of their manner of life, their sayings and doings, are given with an actuality and a precision which do not admit of so extreme a hypothesis<sup>2</sup>.

Dr Lucius' view of the histories of Palladius and Rufinus is hardly more favourable than Weingarten's. In his eyes Palladius is a "monkish falsifier of history," and his book is an uncritical patchwork put together from several different sources. These elements may at best be a mixture of historical facts and monkish fables, with perhaps here and there some personal reminiscences. Lucius altogether rejects the idea that the Lausiaca History records the personal experiences of its author. Palladius, in his view, systematically substitutes himself for the person of each of the various writers whose materials he uses: he relates their experiences—or what profess to be such—as his own: the fact that

<sup>1</sup> *Ursprung des Mönchtums* (Brieger's *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 1876, pp. 1—35, 545—574); reprinted separately (Gotha, 1877). Weingarten defended his position against his critics in Herzog-Plitt, x. 758 ff., Article *Mönchtum* (1882).

<sup>2</sup> Herzog-Plitt, *Encyclopädie für protestantische Theologie*, xi. 173—5, Article *Palladius* (1883). In various later writings that will be mentioned in the course of this Study, Zöckler enforces the same view.

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the work is thrown into the form of a personal narrative is but a device to give it a seeming unity. Lucius refuses to believe that the writer ever was a bishop, and hints that it is more than likely that he never set foot in Egypt, and indeed never left his native Galatia<sup>1</sup>.

M. Amélineau has approached the problem of the Lausiac History by another road. He has made a special study of Coptic and Arabic Christian literature, and has devoted much time to the Christian antiquities of Egypt. He has conducted his researches in the chief libraries of Europe, and has further made explorations and investigations in various parts of Egypt itself. It is not too much to say that he has done more than any living scholar to illustrate the history of early Egyptian monachism<sup>2</sup>. His judgment therefore on the question before us should carry a greater weight than those which are reached by the somewhat subjective methods of other writers. So far from thinking that the author never was in Egypt, M. Amélineau bears witness to the accuracy of the descriptions which Palladius gives of special localities and of their natural scenery: he is convinced that he must have visited these spots. A comparison of the Lausiac History with Coptic records leads him to the conclusion that, in general, where Palladius relates what was done or seen or heard by himself, he is worthy of credit; but that information which he derived from Coptic writings, or learned by hearsay, must be received with great caution<sup>3</sup>.

Having thus summarised the opinions expressed by the most recent critics of the Lausiac History, we must now address ourselves to our task, which falls into two parts. The First Part is Textual; its object is to call attention to the various redactions in which the *Historia Lausiaca* has come down to us, and to determine which of these forms is to be regarded as the original work, and in what language the materials were first written: this will involve an examination of the several versions. The Second Part is Historical; the results gained in the First Part

<sup>1</sup> *Die Quellen der älteren Geschichte des ägyptischen Mönchtums* (Brieger's *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 1885, pp. 192—196).

<sup>2</sup> A list of M. Amélineau's works on the subject will be given in § 12.

<sup>3</sup> *De Historia Lausiaca*, pp. 8, 18, 72, &c.

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will form the basis of a discussion of some of the problems which belong to the early history of Christian monachism and the development of the monastic idea in East and West down to St Benedict's time.

## PART I. TEXTUAL CRITICISM.

## § 2. REDACTIONS OF THE 'HISTORIA LAUSIACA.'

IN the sixteenth century much uncertainty prevailed as to what precisely was the *Historia Lausiaca*. This uncertainty arose from the fact that three Latin translations, representing three different redactions of the book, were in the field. No Greek text had as yet been printed, when Rosweyd in the first edition of his monumental *Vitae Patrum*<sup>1</sup> faced the problem and decided in favour of the longest of the three redactions. This he placed in the body of his collection: the other two he relegated to the small print of an Appendix. His judgment has not been challenged by

<sup>1</sup> Antwerp, 1615 and 1628. Rosweyd was a Jesuit, one of the earliest pioneers of the great seventeenth century historical school, and projector of the *Acta Sanctorum* carried out by the Bollandists. His *Vitae Patrum* is a folio volume of upwards of a thousand pages of texts (Latin only) and erudite notes. It consists of ten Books and an Appendix.

Book I., which occupies nearly half the volume, contains the lives of SS. Paul the Hermit, Anthony and Hilarion, and a number of similar biographies from different hands;

Book II. is the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*;

Books III., V., VI. and VII., are collections of the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, or short anecdotes and sayings of the chief Fathers of the Desert, often full of shrewdness and deep knowledge of human nature;

Book IV. is made up of extracts from Cassian and Sulpicius Severus;

Book VIII. is the Lausiaca History of Palladius. (In the edition of 1628 a few alterations have been made to bring the Latin into conformity with the printed Greek texts.)

Books IX. and X. are similar collections of short biographies by Theodoret and John Moschus.

Rosweyd's *Vitae Patrum* is reprinted for the most part in volumes LXXIII. and LXXIV. of Migne's Latin Patrology.

It is well to observe that all the materials essential to the discussion here entered upon may be found in Rosweyd.

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## RÉDACTIONS OF THE 'HISTORIA LAUSIACA.'

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the scholars of the present day. It has been accepted without criticism by Weingarten, Lucius, Zöckler and Amélineau in the discussions already referred to. It has been accepted by W. Möller<sup>1</sup>, by a number of contributors to the *Dictionary of Christian Biography*<sup>2</sup>, and by Dr Grützmacher in a monograph which has quite recently appeared<sup>3</sup>. Bishop Lightfoot<sup>4</sup> and Dr W. Wright<sup>5</sup> have also accepted it, as we may gather from their passing references; for, unlike the scholars named above, they have not had occasion to deal directly with the problems that arise out of the Lausiaca History. In fact all recent writers who have dealt with the matter, so far as I know, acquiesce in Rosweyde's verdict; and they further accept as the genuine work of Palladius the Greek text printed in Migne (*P. G.* xxxiv.). They take no serious account of the other redactions—indeed they seem hardly to be aware of their existence<sup>6</sup>.

Now no one who reads with attention the *Historia Monachorum* and the *Historia Lausiaca*, as authenticated by Rosweyde, can fail to notice that the former work is contained bodily in the latter. The *Historia Monachorum* purports to be a personal narrative of a round of visits to the most eminent solitaries of Egypt made in the winter of 394—5; and ever since Rosweyde's time the Latin work, the only form hitherto known, has been regarded as coming from the pen of Rufinus<sup>7</sup>. It is singular that the presence of this work in the Lausiaca History has not hitherto received at the hands of critics the careful analysis that so curious a phenomenon deserves. Rosweyde offers only the comprehensive suggestion that one of the writers borrowed from the other, or else both borrowed from some unknown common source<sup>8</sup>; and one or other of these alternatives has satisfied the critics of our day. Weingarten

<sup>1</sup> Herzog-Plitt, xiii. 100, Article *Rufinus* (1884).

<sup>2</sup> Articles *Palladius*, *Rufinus*, *Heracleides*, &c., &c.

<sup>3</sup> *Pachomius und das älteste Klosterleben* (Freiburg, 1896), pp. 1—4.

<sup>4</sup> *Ignatius and Polycarp* (ed. 2, 1889), i. 153—4.

<sup>5</sup> *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts*, III. (passim).

<sup>6</sup> I suppose no work could be named more up to date or more scientific than the new edition of Potthast's *Wegweiser* (1896); and there (p. 891) we find a formal restatement of the traditional view.

<sup>7</sup> The *Historia Monachorum* forms Book II. in Rosweyde's *Vitae Patrum*.

<sup>8</sup> *Vitae Patrum*, Prolegomenon iv. § 2 (Migne, *P. L.* lxxiii. 23).

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enunciates the idea that Palladius borrowed from Rufinus, and this is the view adopted in Potthast; W. Möller believes in a Greek document, translated into Latin by Rufinus and incorporated in his history by Palladius; Lucius strongly advocates a similar theory, in which he is followed by Grützmacher, and by Zöckler in his most recent pronouncement on the question<sup>1</sup>. Amélineau, on the other hand, holds that both writers made independent translations of a Coptic original.

A study of the Latin texts in Rosweyd had suggested to me a solution of the problem different from any of these, at once simpler and more in accord with the facts of the case. A subsequent examination of the Greek printed texts and manuscripts led to the same result, and confirmed the suspicion that the difficulties of recent writers are due to a failure to examine with adequate care the extant texts. I propose therefore in the first place to indicate the steps by which I arrived at my conclusion.

The three Latin forms of the Lausiaca History, printed by Rosweyd, are these:—

I. The version which had been given in the earliest printed editions of the *Vitae Patrum*, copies of three of which may be found in the British Museum, dated hypothetically in the Catalogue between 1470 and 1480: Rosweyd, Appendix, pp. 978—995 (ed. 1615); 984—1001 (ed. 1628).

II. The version first printed by Le Fèvre d'Étaples, Paris, 1504, under the title *Paradisus Heraclidis*: Rosweyd, Appendix, pp. 933—977 (ed. 1615); 939—983 (ed. 1628). (Rosweyd reprints Lipomanus' edition, Venice, 1554, in which some considerable gaps had been filled up by translations from a Greek MS. at Venice.)

III. A translation made from the Greek by Gentian Hervet, and published at Paris in 1555. This is the redaction accepted by Rosweyd as representing the genuine work, and printed as Book VIII. of his *Vitae Patrum* (pp. 704—783 in both editions; in the second edition, however, with some alterations based on Greek MSS.).

<sup>1</sup> *Askese und Mönchtum* (Frankfurt a. M., 1897), p. 213; in 1882 he shared Weingarten's view.



Of these three Latin redactions, I. may be at once eliminated. We shall see hereafter that internal evidence shows it to be but a corrupt redaction, at once loaded with interpolated matter and incomplete<sup>1</sup>. No Greek text corresponding to it is known to me; and the other early versions (Latin, Syriac and Coptic) show that this was not the redaction current when they were made.

The Greek text of II. was printed by Meursius (de Meurs) at Leyden in 1616, from a tenth century manuscript of the Palatine Library, then at Heidelberg, now in the Vatican<sup>2</sup>. It is contained also in an Arundel ms. in the British Museum, in a Vossian ms. in the Leyden University Library, and in several others in the Bibliothèquc Nationale at Paris, and elsewhere. These MSS. will be described and classified in the proper place.

A Greek text purporting to be the text of III. was published at Paris by Fronto Ducaeus (Du Duc) in 1624; the subsequent editions of the Greek are based upon this, and it is substantially the text now commonly used, and found in vol. xxxiv. of Migne's Greek Patrology. There are three Greek manuscripts of III. at Paris, one of them (incomplete) dating from the tenth century. But Du Duc's Greek text was not based on MSS. of this redaction; but was patched up from copies of II. and of the *Historia Monachorum* so as to correspond in structure with Hervet's Latin translation<sup>3</sup>. A list of the Greek editions of this redaction is given in the footnote<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. § 9. To adduce but one piece of internal evidence out of several:—the Proëm in this redaction, as in the others, contains a promise to give some account of the solitaries of Lower Egypt, of Syene and Tabennisi, of Mesopotamia, Palestine and Syria, and of Rome and Campania. In the other redactions this promise is fulfilled; but here the information is all but wholly confined to Lower Egypt. The chapters relating to the monks of St Pachomius in Tabennisi are not to be found, nor is anything said about them beyond the brief account of St Macarius' visit to Tabennisi. Of Asiatic monks only two are noticed, and of Italian none at all. This of itself makes it clear that I. is but an abridged, or, rather, a truncated redaction of the Lausiaca History.

<sup>2</sup> *Palladii Episcopi Helenopoleos Historia Lausiaca*. Joannes Meursius primus Graece nunc vulgavit et notas adjecit. Lugduni Batavorum, MDCXVI. (This is not the text printed in Tom. viii. of Lami's edition of the *Opera Joannis Meurstii*, Florence, 1741 &c.)

<sup>3</sup> The genesis of Du Duc's text and of the later editions will be explained in the *Introduction* to the Text.

<sup>4</sup> The editions are:—(i) Du Duc's own edition, Paris, 1624; in Tom. ii. of the

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We may now return to Rosweyde's Latin redactions II. and III. A comparison of these brings out the fact that, speaking roughly, the main difference between them lies not in the text of individual biographies but in the number of the biographies which they contain; for III. contains all those in II. and many more. In nearly all cases the Lives common to both redactions are identical in substance, being as a matter of fact independent translations of the same original. We may therefore conveniently speak of redaction III. as the Long Recension, and of redaction II. as the Short Recension of the Lausiaca History.

### § 3. THE 'HISTORIA MONACHORUM IN AEGYPTO.'

After these preliminary details concerning the work which forms the chief subject of the ensuing investigation, some account must be given of another work, very similar in character, which has been already referred to and will frequently be mentioned in the course of this Study, the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*. This work describes a series of visits paid in the winter of 394—5 to a number of hermits and monks in the Thebaid and Lower Egypt by a party of seven persons<sup>1</sup>. The writer represents himself throughout as having been one of the party: and Rosweyde established the fact once for all that the current Latin text is

*Auctarium* to La Bigne's *Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum*. There are some lacunae in the Greek text as compared with Herve's Latin, and some differences of reading.

(ii) Paris, 1644; and again, 1654; in the *Magna Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum*, Tom. XIII.; an exact reprint of (i).

(iii) Florence, 1746; in Tom. VIII. of Lami's edition of Meursius' works. The Greek of the lacunae of (i) and (ii) had been printed by Cotelier from two Paris mss. (*Ecclesiae Graecae Monumenta*, III. 158—170), and Lami reproduces Du Duc's text, printing these fragments, not so as to fill the lacunae, but at the end of the chapters in which they should stand.

(iv) Paris, 1860; in Migne's Greek Patrology, Tom. XXXIV., cols. 995—1260. The same text; but Cotelier's fragments are inserted in their places, so that the Greek text is continuous and the lacunae no longer appear.

<sup>1</sup> The date is thus fixed: (i) The party was with John of Lycopolis shortly after Theodosius had gained his victory over Eugenius, i.e. towards the middle or end of September 394. (ii) When they reached Nitria, Macarius of Alexandria was already dead: he died at the end of 394, or the beginning of 395.