

**Pachomius as Discovered in the Worlds of
Fourth Century Christian Egypt,
Pachomian Literature and Pachomian
Monasticism:
A Figure of History or Hagiography?**

by

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Abstract

The primary aim of the thesis is to discover the Pachomius of history in preference to the Pachomius of hagiography. The surviving direct links to Pachomius and the Pachomian era remain the original Pachomian texts, Pachomian monasticism, and Pachomian spirituality. While all these sources provide invaluable information, there are a number of problems associated with them. Pachomian literature is of a highly hagiographic nature, and care must be taken when accepting its historical and chronological accuracy. Since Pachomian monasticism ceased to exist during the early part of the seventh century, it is necessary to rely on the research carried out by various Pachomian scholars, including James Goehring, Graham Gould, Philip Rousseau, and Armand Veilleux, to assess its value. With regard to Pachomian spirituality, this is evidenced in his prayers, spiritual teachings, Instructions and writings. The literary works of Horsiesios and Theodore also provide an insight into the spiritual world of Pachomius.

Because of the lack of historical evidence it became necessary to fashion a methodology based on a two pronged approach: an indirect and a direct one. The first examined all the influences responsible for moulding the character of the youthful Pachomius. This indirect approach included assessing the importance of the Hellenism of the Ptolemies, the pragmatism of the Romans, the intellectualism of Gnosticism, the mores of ancient Egypt, and the world of the desert fathers. The direct approach included a review of all the Pachomian texts, and in particular assessment of their value as Pachomian sources. To arrive at a final judgment concerning the historical Pachomius, it was necessary to collate

all this material, and assess its value.

This approach resulted in an appreciation of the intellectual and spiritual wealth of early Egyptian Christianity. It also provided an introduction to the outstanding figures of this era: Antony, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Athanasius, Melitius, Basilides, Valentinus and others. It placed in perspective the problems associated with the development of orthodox Christian doctrines and the emergence of an institutionalized form of Christianity. The Pachomius of history achieved greatness, and as a man he did not need the embellishments and exaggerations offered by hagiography.

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Abbreviations

AB	Analecta Bollandiana
ABR	American Benedictine Review
Ag	Arabic Life held at Gottingen
Av	Arabic Life held at the Vatican
Bo	<i>Bohairic</i> Life
G1	First Greek Life
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
JEH	Journal of Ecclesiastical History
JRS	Journal of Religious Studies
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
S	Sahidic Lives
SBo	Composite <i>Bohairic</i> Life
SM	Studia Monastica
SP	Studia Patristica
VC	Vigiliae Christianae
VBr	Vita Brevis
VTh	Life of Theodore

Preface

In the attempt to discover the reality of the historical Pachomius, a number of problems emerged, the main one being the lack of substantial historical evidence. This deficiency was overcome, to a large degree, by researching all the relevant Pachomian texts, making allowance for their hagiographic nature. Two other important sources were Pachomian monasticism and the world of Pachomian spirituality, which symbolized both his humanity and his sanctity. What started as a rather onerous task, became an all-consuming challenge. This attempt to discover the reality of the Pachomius of history also led to the discovery of the world of Egyptian Christianity. Perhaps the most interesting of the many issues involved, was how Pachomius and his monks adapted to the cenobitic way of life, and its effect on their spirituality. This and other topics emerged in the search for the historical Pachomius, and it was extremely difficult to put them to one side.

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