



The Canons of Our Fathers: Monastic Rules of Shenoute (Oxford Early Christian Studies)

Bentley Layton

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This book is the first publication of a very early collection of Christian monastic rules from Roman Egypt. Designed for the so-called White Monastery Federation, a community of monks and nuns who banded together about 360 CE, the rules are quoted by the great monastic leader Shenoute of Atripe in his writings of the fourth and fifth century. These rules provide new and intimate access to the earliest phases of Christian communal (cenobitic) monasticism.

In this volume, Bentley Layton presents for the first time the Coptic text of the rules, amounting to five hundred and ninety-five entries, accompanied by a clear and exact English translation. Four preliminary chapters discuss the character of the rules in their historical and social context, and present new evidence for the founding of the monastic federation. From passing remarks in the rules, Layton paints a brilliant picture of monastic daily life and ascetic practice, organized around six general topics: the monastery as a physical plant, the human makeup of the community, the pattern of ascetic observances, the hierarchy of authority, the daily liturgy, and monastic economic life. The Canons of Our Fathers will be a fundamental resource for readers interested in Christian life in late antiquity, ascetic practices, and the history of monasticism in all its forms.

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