



The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius (Christian Roman Empire)

Edward Walford

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The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus is an intriguing though neglected work of the late 6th century AD. A staunch though broadminded Chalcedonian, Evagrius styles himself as continuator of the great Church historians Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret. While never straying from his purpose, Evagrius records a great deal of information from both religious and temporal history much of it witnessed by him personally that would have otherwise been lost.

The first section of this work deals almost exclusively with ecclesiastical issues, such as the heresy and death of Nestorius, the Council of Ephesus, the second Council of Ephesus (the so-called Robber Council), extensive passages on the Council of Chalcedon, the circular and counter-circular of Basiliscus, and the Henoticon of the emperor Zeno. For these important events in Church history, Evagrius is a first-class source for some of them, he is the sole source in the original Greek. Evagrius also drew upon other contemporary historical tracts that are now either severely truncated or lost all together, including the works of Eustathius, Zachariah Scholasticus, and John of Epiphania.

But what makes Evagrius most interesting is his inclusion of his own eye-witness testimony. Born in the mid-530s AD in Apamea near Antioch, Evagrius witnessed the devastation of Roman Syria by the Persians and experienced first-hand the first recorded outbreak of Bubonic Plague which swept the Mediterranean world beginning in the 540s. He saw and even conversed with several of the myriad saints and scoundrels who lived in his time and he witnessed the miracles and catastrophes that occurred with astounding regularity. He is the first to record the existence of the fabled Mandyllion of Edessa a miraculous image of Christ that some have attempted to link to the Shroud of Turin.

This reprint of Walford s translation is intended for students and general readers. It has been completely re-typeset and includes a modern bibliography and recommended further reading list, as well as explanatory notes at the end of each chapter by the current editor to help bring the text up to date.

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