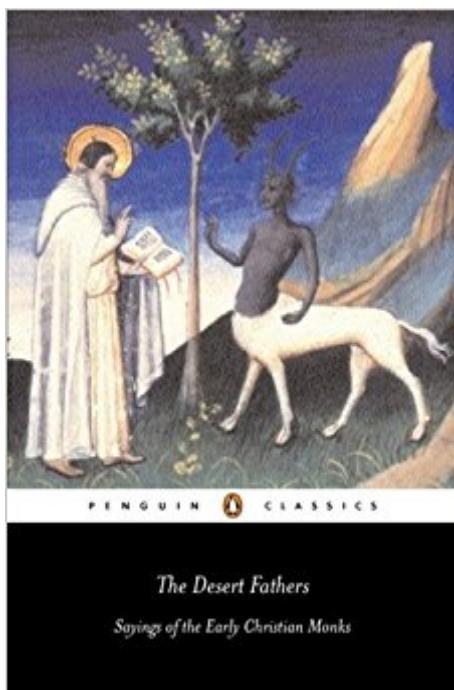


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The Desert Fathers: Sayings Of The Early Christian Monks (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

The Desert Fathers were the first Christian monks, living in solitude in the deserts of Egypt, Palestine, and Syria. In contrast to the formalized and official theology of the "founding fathers" of the Church, they were ordinary Christians who chose to renounce the world and live lives of celibacy, fasting, vigil, prayer, and poverty in direct and simple response to the gospel. First recorded in the fourth century, their Sayings—consisting of spiritual advice, anecdotes, parables, and reflections on life— influenced the rule of St. Benedict, set the pattern for Western monasticism, and have inspired centuries of poetry, opera, and art. Organized around key themes—Charity, Fortitude, Lust, Patience, Prayer, Self-control, and Visions—this edition of the Sayings is fresh, accessible, and authoritative. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

Benedicta Ward is a reader in the history of early Christian spirituality at the Theology Faculty in Oxford. She has translated The Prayers and Meditations of St. Anselm for Penguin Classics.

When I received this book it was in great condition. The book itself is put together in such a way that as you are reading the quotes of the desert Abbas and Ammas the questions you are having are answered. The sections are laid out well, and most of the time take you to where your thoughts need to go next as a result of the previous quote or story. The layout is very clean and easy to follow, and overall very helpful in reading such dense stories and quotes.

I'm loving this book! Very interesting and captivating. The introduction lays out the background needed to understand the context. Then with that context you can jump in and read the little sayings and stories and just glean so much perspective from the monks and brothers. Each story captures a real life issue people still live with today and give you then the insight from the monks on how to treat the issue. I'm really enjoying this book!

I have read many articles and books by Benedicta Ward. In fact, I used portions of this text when I was researching my doctoral dissertation; however, it is a great read for anyone who wants to know what the Abbas and Ammas had to say and how their words should be applied to our spiritual journey. I will read and reread this book!

I can't say enough good things about the selections in this book. It's like the book of Proverbs, in that it is a collection of often pithy (but sometimes paragraph long) sayings that are chalked full of wisdom. However, Benedicta Ward has arranged them topically, which is helpful. Like the biblical Proverbs, trying to read straight through the book would be like drinking from the fire hose. You really have to mull the sayings over, and you'll be glad you did. On occasion the sayings are quite strange and hard to apply, sometimes gross and overly self-deprecating, sometimes funny, but most of the time you feel that there is something deep and insightful to take away for yourself. There are also many stories of interactions between hermits or other community members, sometimes in conflict. The way they treat each other and solve their problems in humility is surely something we can learn much from today. And, if nothing else, the sheer devotion and self-discipline of the pious men and women described will stir your soul and inspire you. I can't recommend it enough.

An excellent selection, sorted by subject matter and full of wisdom, mixed with quirkiness! However a table of contents enabled for kindle would be appreciated.

This is a very good book on the subject of the Desert Fathers. It is well organized and easy to read.

An important early Christian compilation-weirdly compelling because of sheer age . The austerity and faith of these early hermits is almost incomprehensible to 21st century minds.I found the book very difficult going primarily because of the alienness of their lives. Their words are stripped naked and primarily focus on asceticism and the barrenness of the life of the world. After a few pages I found I couldn't absorb any more. I read the sayings piecemeal, over a period of time(which is easy to do as they are short paragraphs from various men arranged under subject headings). Their thoughts give me a glimpse of of lives and faith I could not imitate. In fact after reading many of the sections, I found myself returning to the Gospels to refresh in myself the sense of God and especially Jesus' all encompassing love that made me a Christian in the first place. There are many fountains of true water in the stories of the desert fathers but not for the faint of heart.

Helpful introduction to the context of the Fathers precedes the sayings.

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