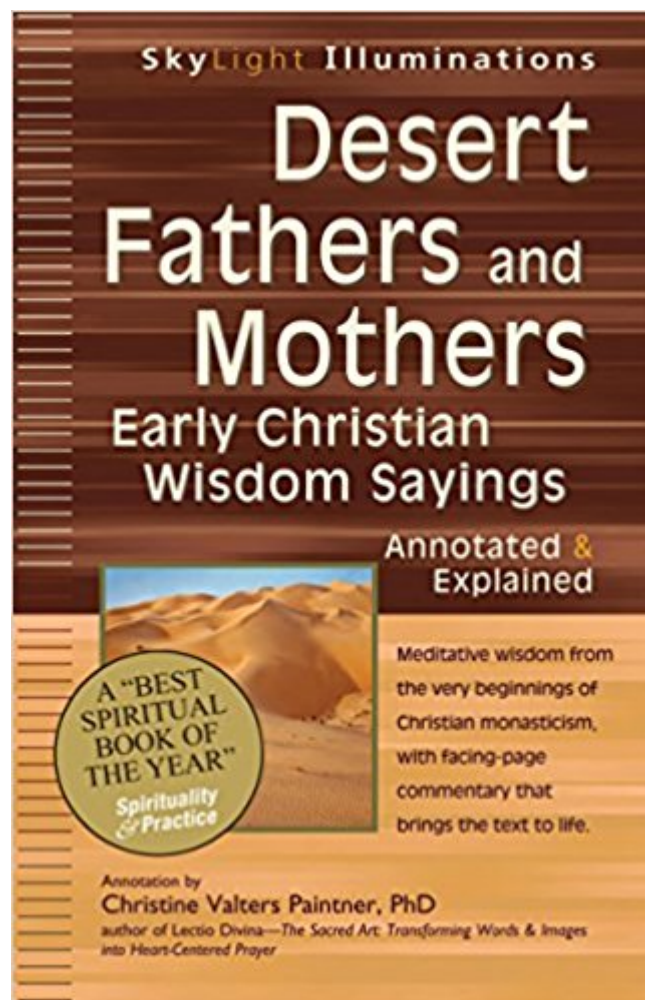




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# Desert Fathers And Mothers: Early Christian Wisdom Sayings—Annotated & Explained (SkyLight Illuminations)



## Synopsis

Timeless and contemplative sayings from the earliest Christian sages of desert spirituality can be a companion on your own spiritual journey. The desert fathers and mothers were ordinary Christians living in solitude in the deserts of Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Arabia who chose to renounce the world in order to deliberately and individually follow God's call. They embraced lives of celibacy, labor, fasting, prayer and poverty, believing that denouncing material goods and practicing stoic self-discipline would lead to unity with the Divine. Their spiritual practice formed the basis of Western monasticism and greatly influenced both Western and Eastern Christianity. Their writings, first recorded in the fourth century, consist of spiritual advice, parables and anecdotes emphasizing the primacy of love and the purity of heart. Focusing on key themes of charity, fortitude, lust, patience, prayer and self-control, the Sayings influenced the rule of St. Benedict and have inspired centuries of opera, poetry and art. This probing and personal SkyLight Illuminations edition opens up their wisdom for readers with no previous knowledge of Western monasticism and early Christianity. It provides insightful yet unobtrusive commentary that describes historical background, explains the practice of asceticism and illustrates how you can use their wisdom to energize your spiritual quest.

## Book Information

Series: SkyLight Illuminations

Paperback: 192 pages

Publisher: SkyLight Paths; 1 edition (August 1, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1594733732

ISBN-13: 978-1594733734

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.4 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 17 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #559,695 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #130 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Worship & Devotion > Monasticism & Asceticism](#) #131 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Worship & Devotion > Monasticism & Asceticism](#) #1712 in [Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Religious Studies > Christianity](#)

## Customer Reviews

"Provides not only a wonderful introduction to a fascinating world (the opening chapter alone is worth the price of the book), but an invitation to seek our own 'word' from the abbas and ammas of

Christian antiquity.... Offers one of the best guidebooks I've seen for those who've been called to the contemplative life." — Paula Huston, author, *The Holy Way and Simplifying the Soul* "Offers the reader a good drink from the clear stream of desert wisdom. She honors the tradition while making it entirely relevant to our times." — Mary C. Earle, writer and Episcopal priest; author, *The Desert Mothers: Spiritual Practices from the Women of the Wilderness and Celtic Christian Spirituality: Essential Writings* — Annotated & Explained — "A splendid introduction to one of the most essential periods of the Western contemplative tradition.... Offers insight into the austere and wondrous spirituality of the desert ... and why their pithy teachings remain so essential for the study and practice of Christian spirituality today. [The] commentary makes the wisdom of the desert come alive." — Carl McColman, author, *The Big Book of Christian Mysticism and Answering the Contemplative Call*

Christine Valters Paintner, PhD, a Benedictine Oblate, is author of *Lectio Divina* — *The Sacred Art: Transforming Words & Images into Heart-Centered Prayer*, *Desert Fathers and Mothers: Early Christian Wisdom Sayings* — Annotated & Explained (both SkyLight Paths) and *The Artist's Rule: Nurturing Your Creative Soul with Monastic Wisdom*, among other books. She frequently leads retreats and teaches on the wisdom of Benedictine, Celtic and desert ways of praying. A writer, artist, spiritual director, retreat facilitator and teacher, she is the online Abbess of [www.abbeyofthearts.com](http://www.abbeyofthearts.com), a global online monastery dedicated to the integration of contemplative practice and creative expression.

I decided to purchase this book based on a recommendation from another book I was reading and because I enjoy Christine Valters Paintner's style of writing and her focus on wisdom teaching. There are so many wonderful quotes and comments hidden inside these pages. Paintner has taken ancient sayings from seemingly austere origins, then masterfully brought them into our century. Ancient truths, simply, are truths in any time. I recommend reading this book each morning, move throughout the day meditating on the passage and let it become part of you. Good reading!

This is a book that calls us back to the essential wisdom discovered by those brave early Christians, who found something ever ancient and ever new in the deserts. A wonderfully presented volume, it reminds me of the basics of life. It is a resource for all who wish to make their lives centred on the will of the God of many names.

This book introduced me to a segment of Christian thought I was unfamiliar with. The introduction to this book is outstanding. Some of the commentary by Christine Paintner was obviously biased by her own views, and missed the mark. But overall, a book that is worth reading for Christians who want to go deeper, and enjoy contemplation.

This book went way beyond my expectations (I have read other books on this subject) and I found myself underlined something on almost every page. Good explanations of words and culture. Paintner is an artist with words. Her books always inspire me. Paulette

This book is so rich in content. I am attempting to do what the author suggests...slowly reading, sinking in...living into the practice. The old wisdom is tried and true, and has much application for today. I appreciate all the research that went into this publication, so I can sit back and drink it in.

well done, BUT, with a modern view, in a few cases. I know the writings of the Fathers well, and some of the comments were just not according to history. Other than that it is mostly well-written. Good job overall.

Gives a glimpse into the early christian tradition with expert explanations and interpretations of the text that make it much more compelling.

A book that will always be in my library. These are awesome sayings to read before prayer of any kind.

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