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## *The Desert Fathers*

*Sayings of the Early Christian Monks*

**The Desert Fathers**  
*Sayings of the Early Christian Monks*

*Translated and with an Introduction by*  
BENEDICTA WARD

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## Contents

Introduction	vii
Further Reading	xxvi
A Note on the Text	xxix

## THE DESERT FATHERS

1 PROGRESS IN PERFECTION	3
2 QUIET	8
3 COMPUNCTION	12
4 SELF-CONTROL	19
5 LUST	33
6 POSSESSING NOTHING	53
7 FORTITUDE	60
8 NOTHING DONE FOR SHOW	77
9 NON-JUDGEMENT	84
10 DISCRETION	88
11 SOBER LIVING	118
12 UNCEASING PRAYER	130
13 HOSPITALITY	134
14 OBEDIENCE	140
15 HUMILITY	148
16 PATIENCE	171
17 CHARITY	177
18 VISIONS	184

Some Names from the Text 197

*'All must endure great  
conflict when they are first come  
but later they have unspeakable joy'*

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The desert fathers provided the inspiration for Christian spirituality throughout the Middle Ages and beyond. The men and women who first embraced the life of solitude in the deserts of Egypt, Palestine and Syria were seldom clerics or scholars. Yet these uneducated peasants, shepherds, itinerant traders, former slaves and prostitutes soon attracted so many followers they were said to have turned the desert into a city. From the fourth century onwards, along with biographies and full-length treatises, their reflections were brought together and widely circulated. Powerful and moving in their depth of religious conviction and wholehearted, even joyful, commitment to poverty, simplicity and humility, the sayings directly influenced the Rule of Saint Benedict, and set the pattern for Western monasticism.

This edition makes freshly accessible the most influential Latin collection of sayings. The new English translations follow the original Latin organization around themes important to the monks, such as charity, fortitude, lust, patience, prayer, self-control and visions.

Translated with an introduction by **BENEDICTA WARD**

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