



# **The Forgotten Desert Mothers: Sayings, Lives, and Stories of Early Christian Women**

*Laura Swan*

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An introduction to the Sayings, Lives, stories and spirituality of women in the postbiblical, early Christian movement.

## The Forgotten Desert Mothers: Sayings, Lives, and Stories of Early Christian Women Details

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## **From Reader Review The Forgotten Desert Mothers: Sayings, Lives, and Stories of Early Christian Women for online ebook**

### **Ed Oakes says**

While the book had some intriguing parts, the generality of these women's stories became routine. I enjoyed the first and last but the middle lagged. I will say it has spurred my interest to other women's experiences.

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### **Grete says**

Introductory text with interesting vignettes that serve mostly as springboards for further study of various desert mothers. Swan provides a pretty good list of sources to consult.

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### **Aryeh says**

Five stars easily, and if there were more I'd give more. Prioress Laura Swan brings again to public awareness the frequently lost or overlooked voices of women who were leaders in early Christian mysticism and spiritual direction. However, the voices of the desert mothers are so strong that anyone could have done that just by even quoting them. What this author does differently is categorizing and commenting on their teachings in ways that are immediately, timelessly relevant. I especially found helpful/beautiful the sections on urban monasticism, and the personal epilogue. This is the perfect blend of spiritual work and scholarship, something extremely rare to find. Worth reading, worth owning, worth returning to.

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### **Kim Shively says**

It was certainly interesting to read about all the various female ascetics of the early Church. This book was really written for people who want to pursue the contemplative life, and as attractive as such a pursuit seems at times, I'm not really one of those people.

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### **MargCal says**

Finished reading ... The Forgotten Desert Mothers : sayings, lives, and stories of early christian women / Laura Swan ... 13 September 2017  
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I was expecting more of a narrative history – which only goes to show I should have paid attention to the subtitle, because that's what this book is.

In the introduction, the author says (pp.2-3):

*“... I grew increasingly frustrated with the lack of information on the women who had also dwelt in the desert.*

*I began to pursue and collect traces of these women's stories. ...”*

And “traces” are pretty much what you get. With the stories of these women being told in one or two sentences or a small paragraph, with occasionally a page or two, this was more frustrating than enlightening. Some things did stand out for me however: a disproportionate number of women here were fleeing marriages that were in the process of being arranged or marriages they had unwillingly entered, and that some abandoned their children in their flight to the desert. And some seemed bonkers. For me, that somewhat negates the words of wisdom they espouse.

So – interesting, after a fashion, but this book really didn't do a lot for me.

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### **Joseph says**

I really enjoyed this book, but when she does a mini-biography for each Amma she finds the book gets a bit redundant. If I could just rate the first three chapters and the epilogue, I would give it a 4 or 5 star rating.

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### **Jacob says**

Five stars so far.

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### **Deborah Blair says**

This is a book of stories of the Desert Mothers - - - Many people do not know that along with the Desert Fathers there were also women of the time who were devoted to the path of discovering their relationship with God through leaving behind civilization.

With a good many decades of my life devoted to a chunk of every day in prayer, meditation and solitude - I have found good inspiration in this book. I keep it on a shelf and refer to it at least several times a year.

Women on the serious spiritual path will find the story of women before us inspirational. For students of women's history - especially of spiritual devotees - this is a valuable resource.

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### **Jon Cooper says**

Great read. Swan's commentary is as invaluable as the sayings she records.

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### **Ramonita Rodriguez says**

good comments, histories, tidbits, dayings of early Christian women who decided to live ascetic lives and tend to the poor and needy.

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### **Zach Hollifield says**

I truly enjoyed this book. Many viewpoints and perspectives from so many of the earliest saints who are often forgotten or ignored, and for that I am grateful. I was left wanting more primary source material. Obviously there is only so much primary source material and you can't add what isn't there, but the primary sources felt overshadowed by Swan's own interpretation at times.

All in all, a great read and an important addition to the study of the life and thought of the early church.

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### **Corinne Wilson says**

I'm down for any nonfiction where names like "Susanna Blessed Hermit" and "John the Dwarf" are bandied about like they're the family next door. The biographies, prayers/liturgy and timeline of these desert women were interesting, but the commentary was textbook-y and basic.

Discussions of male-centric language of the day were noteworthy. Also interesting that the virtuous desert fathers were frequently tempted by harlots and overcame the lust of their bodies, whereas the virtuous desert mothers were frequently falsely accused of fathering children while disguised as men, which they mostly took the punishment for, falsely admitted to, and raised the resulting offspring.

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### **Debbie says**

nice little book that has a lot of info in one small volume.

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### **Kr says**

I am grateful that this book shines light on the intellectual and spiritual gifts and dedication of these early Christian women who gave their all for their ideals and the quest for authentic communion with the divine. A substantial weakness of the book is the lack of an index, a feature I often wished for when a story of one of these women referenced another.

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### **Michele says**

An excellent place to start with the Desert Mothers or Fathers. A good framework for understanding these wonderful, but obscure and sometimes harsh ascetical lives.

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