



Selected Works

Bernard of Clairvaux , Ewert H. Cousins , Jean Leclercq

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Here in a new translation by G.R. Evans are the writings that have had such a major role in shaping the Western monastic tradition and influencing the development of Catholic mystical theology. Together with an introduction by the master of Bernard studies, Jean Leclercq, they comprise a volume that occupies a place of special importance in the chronicle of the history of the Western spiritual adventure.

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From Reader Review Selected Works for online ebook

Stephen Buerger says

Excellent introduction.

"On the Steps of Humility and Pride" (5 stars), 2/13/16

"On Consideration" (4 stars), 2/14/16.

"On Conversion" (3 stars), 2/26/17

"On Loving God" (5 stars), 3/26/17.

"Sermons on the Song of Songs" (4 stars), 5/14/17.

Jay says

Fantastic. I got it because Calvin quotes Bernard so often and so favorably in his Institutes.

"The Lawgiver knew that the burden of law was greater than men could bear, but he judged it to be useful for this very reason to advise men that they were not able to fulfill it, so that they might know clearly to what end of righteousness they ought to strive as far as their powers permit. So by commanding what was impossible he made men, not prevaricators, but humble, so that every mouth may be silent and all the world made subject to God, for no one will be justified in his sight by keeping the law (Rom 3:19-20). So accepting that command and aware of our insufficiency, we shall cry to heaven and God will have mercy on us (1 Mc 4:10). And we shall know on that day that God has saved us not by the just works we have done, but because he is merciful (Ti 3:5)."

"If he submitted himself to human misery so that he might not simply know it, but also experience it, how much more are you, not perhaps to make yourself what you are not, but to be aware of what you are, that you are truly wretched; and so learn to be merciful, for you can learn it in no other way.

"If you see your neighbor's failing and not your own you will be moved not to mercy but to indignation, not to help him but to judge him, not to instruct him in a spirit of gentleness but to destroy him in a spirit of anger."

"I do not think it is inappropriate to understand the guardianship of angels as being like a wall in the Lord's vineyard (which is the Church of those who are predestined), for Paul says, "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who receive the inheritance of salvation?" (Heb 1:14). And the prophet says, "The angel of the Lord hovers round those who fear him" (Ps 33:8). And so if we take it in that sense, it will mean that two things console the Church in her exile: the memory of the Passion of Christ in the past and in the future the contemplation of what she both thinks and believes will be her welcome among the saints (Col. 1:12). In these glimpses of the past and the future she is filled with deep longing. Each is wholly pleasing to her. Each is a refuge from the evils which trouble her and from her sorrow (Ps 31:7, 106:39). Her consolation is complete, for she knows not only what she is to expect, but the source from which it is to come. It is a joyous expectation with no hesitation in it, because it rests on the death of Christ. Why should she be awestruck at the greatness of the reward when she weighs the price that was paid for it? How joyously she thinks of the clefts in the wall through which the ransom of his most precious blood flowed upon her. How joyously she explores the crannies, the many and varied resting-places and mansions which are in her Father's house (Jn 14:2), in which he lodges his children according to the deserts of each!

And indeed she does the only thing she can for now\ and rests there in memory, entering in imagination into the heavenly home which is above."

""I have sought," she says, "him whom my soul loves" (Sg 3:1). This is what the kindness of him w ho goes before you urges you to do, he who both sought you first and loved you first (1 Jn 4:10). You would not be seeking him or loving him unless you had first been sought and loved. You have been forestalled not only in one blessing (Gn 27:28) but in two, in love and in seeking. The love is the cause of the seeking, and the seeking is the fruit of the love; and it is its guarantee. You are loved, so that you may not think that you are sought so as to be punished; you are sought, so that you may not complain that you are loved in vain. Both these sweet gifts of love make you bold and drive diffidence away, and they persuade you to return and move you to loving response. Hence comes the zeal, the ardor to seek him whom your soul loves, for you cannot seek unless you are sought and now that you are sought you cannot fail to seek."

Rebecca says

G.R. Evans' translation of "On Loving God" remains my favorite

Humphrey says

Really great. I particularly liked "On Conversion," though there were high points throughout; the conclusion of "On Consideration," for example, is also really excellent. Very glad I got this edition rather than some of the others available that include fewer treatises (there were good moments in the Sermons on Song of Songs, but I tended to prefer the treatises). Bernard's style is particularly interesting: while his treatises always have a set structure overall, they unfold at the sentence-to-sentence level by continually riffing off new scriptural passages, advancing his claims by advancing from citation to citation and in the process illuminating scriptural meanings not otherwise apparent. Bernard's theology is both gentle and pressing, loving and fiery, accessible and radical.

Dan Glover says

I actually read only the Sermons section of this work (p. 207-278), sermons on the Song of Songs. Bernard interprets them allegorically, both on the typological level as speaking of Christ and the Church, and on the tropological (moral) level of the soul and Christ. While I have questions about the individual picturing their soul as the bride of Christ, overall I think the directions he goes with this allegorical interpretation on both levels (individual and corporate) is healthy. Though there are similarities, I prefer Bernard's reading of Song of Songs to Gregory of Nyssa's. Where Gregory emphasizes the free will's effort to pursue virtue (which is legitimate to a degree), Bernard balances that out with the necessity of God's prevenient grace for the will to do this, and it is love of Christ and desire for union with him which is far more frequently emphasized than pursuit of virtue. These sermons anticipate some emphases in Calvin (God's prevenient grace and efficacious love, the soul's willful slavery to sin, etc.). This taste has made me want to read more.

Sara says

Read only the sermons on the song of songs, which is pretty facinating and edifying.

Ben De Bono says

There's some really great stuff in here. The first two works, On Conversion and On Loving God, are both excellent. I even used some quotes from On Conversion in my sermon this past weekend.

The selections from his sermons on Song of Songs are also good, but since they were only selections they felt a bit incomplete

Daniel Poe says

A great, little book that introduced me to some of Bernard's works and a glimpse of Christian thought in the Middle Ages!

Michael Hastings says

The four treatises are simple and profound and still very relevant to any christian's life

Beth says

Reading this book was like eating a rich dessert. I read it slowly and savored every bite. This 12th century saint had so much to teach me about relationship with God.
