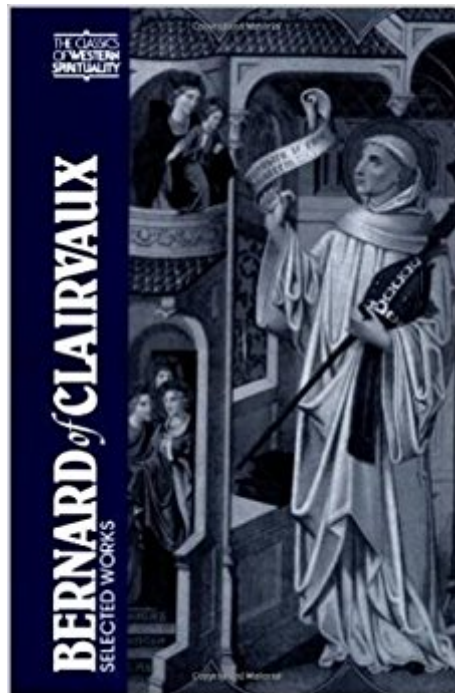




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# Bernard Of Clairvaux: Selected Works (The Classics Of Western Spirituality)



## Synopsis

Born in Fontaines-l'Abbe-Dijon in 1090, Bernard had become, by his twenty-fifth birthday, the abbot of a Cistercian monastery which he had founded in the valley of Clairvaux near Aube, France, some four years earlier. There in those isolated and rugged surroundings he became the spokesman for a revival of monastic life in an age when the radical spirit of religious life was endangered by a movement, best seen in the excesses of the monks of Cluny, that stressed the adaptation of the rule of St. Benedict to the exigencies-and taste for princely comforts-of the royal courts of twelfth-century France. But Bernard's dedication to the strict observance of Benedict's rule was mingled not with the abrasive, shrill style of the prophet but with a sweetness and purity of vision that earned him the title Doctor mellifluous. For he possessed a sense of the love of God, the importance of humility, and the sheer beauty of holiness that has made his writings favorites of scholars and laymen alike throughout the ages. 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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## Customer Reviews

Text: English, Latin (translation)

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.

It is hard to quantify the enormous value I have gleaned from studying from the classic spiritual writings. The Christian community has such a wealth of wisdom in her history and I am so very grateful and fortunate to draw from this wonderfully rich and deep well. The HarperCollins Spiritual Classics series is edited by Emilie Griffin and includes a number of writings from the Christian tradition. Some of the titles in the series follow: John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, John and Charles Wesley, William Law, and the subject of this review, Bernard of Clairvaux. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) was a Cistercian (Trappist) monk and founding abbot of Clairvaux Abbey in Burgundy. He was a very distinguished and influential leader during the course of his life and left a vast collection of writings that have significant impact upon the shaping of Western monasticism and Christian mystical traditions. It is said that his writings had a profound effect on the likes of Martin Luther and John Calvin. This volume in the HarperCollins Spiritual Classics series, bearing his name, is an accessible introduction to some of Bernard's foundational writings that shaped Western religious thought and culture. This small book introduces the reader to four primary works of Bernard; they are *On Conversion*, *On Loving God*, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, and *Selections from His Letters*. It is hard for me to choose a favorite chapter as each of these writings has influenced me in uniquely specific ways at different points of my spiritual journey. If I were pressed to choose one writing however, I would choose *On Loving God* as it is a teaching that continues to circulate in my memory and affect my daily living more than some of the others. In describing the journey of loving God, Bernard details four stages or degrees of love. He identifies the stages as follows: First degree--love of self for self's sake, Second degree--love of God for self's sake, Third degree--love of God for God's sake, and Fourth degree--love of self for God's sake. "What are the four degrees of love? First, we love ourselves for our own sake; since we are unspiritual and of the flesh, we cannot have an interest in anything that does not relate to ourselves. When we begin to see that we cannot subsist by ourselves, we begin to seek God for our own sakes. This is the second degree of love; we love God, but only for our own interests. But if we begin to worship and come to God again and again by meditating, by reading, by prayer, and by obedience, little by little God becomes known to us through experience. We enter into a sweet familiarity with God, and by tasting how sweet the

Lord is we pass into the third degree of love so that now we love God, not for our own sake, but for himself. It should be noted that in this third degree we will stand still for a very long time." -Bernard of Clairvaux; The Love of God It is my opinion there is no substitute for learning from these spiritual classics. I am reminded of the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews who said, "Remember your leaders who taught you the word of God. Think of all the good that has come from their lives, and follow the example of their faith" (Hebrews 13:7 NLT). There is much we can learn from those who have traveled the journey that is the Christian life. Some of the original writings from these great spiritual masters can be hard to obtain and very difficult to read. I am thankful for those who have brought these ancient writings to us in a package that is accessible and affordable.

Bernard of Clairvaux was very much a mystic who gave all of us ways to celebrate Christ and His Church in our lives." When God grants us the grace of a sweet familiarity with him, so that we can live better lives in accordance with the relationship, we lift our heads from the dust with greater confidence so as to kiss the hand of our benefactor as people do---"p.111 Much of the book is filled with the spirit and joy of contemplation.

academic. clear exposition of a peculiar medieval thinker the series is in itself an amazing opportunity to go beyond a first contact with the author without being extremely hard to swallow I find it useful although I usually regret the minimal attention to the biography and circumstances behind the theological and poetic production of an author A nice chance to get in touch with Bernard's theology

While Bernard is often known for his association with early church politics this book presents a clear description of his theology and spirituality. The chosen excerpts from his own writings are translated in a easy to read, enjoyable format.

Love St. Bernard . . .

Outstanding!

Accurate description and timely delivery. Thank you!

All medieval scholars AND all Christian thinkers who are not all scholars at all should read these

writings. Bernard of Clairvaux wrote beautiful prose, and while most medieval Christian writings feel puritanical or superstitious these days, Bernard's work reads like it was written last week by someone who knows The Lord.

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