

## Bernard of Clairvoux Mysticism (Great Christian Mystical Writings Book 7)



It is universally recognized that Bernard was a prince among mystics. His mysticism is very -personal; he was too great and individual a character for it to be otherwise. But it is at the same time of a very definite type; it is, as Abbot Butler wrote in his *Western Mysticism*, Pre-Dionysian, pre-scholastic, non-philosophical. In his theories of the life of prayer Bernard belonged to the age of the Fathers. Speculatively, Augustine and, in a lesser degree, Ambrose, were his masters. In the practical ordering of life, he depended to some extent on Basil and Maximus the Confessor, but very largely on Benedict, whose rule in its purity the Cistercian Order tried to inculcate. M. Pourrat, in his well-known *History of Spirituality*, contends that Bernard had no system of mystical theology. He writes : The mysticism of Bernard is not set out in any systematic form. Hence in a discussion of the Saint which covers about a hundred pages, M. Pourrat devotes only sixteen to his mystical theology. He prefers to study Bernard as the Father of the Middle Ages in his tender devotion to the Sacred Humanity; and he considers that therein lies the Saints chief, if not exclusive, claim to a distinctive place in the sacred roll of spiritual masters. M. Gilson does not accept M. Pourrats view of Bernards mysticism; and in these lectures he aims at proving that Bernard was a theologian whose speculative vigor and power of synthesis put him among the greatest

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