I have limited this bibliography to works on early monasticism in the Latin West. For works on early monasticism in the Greek East and the Syriac Middle East, see “Early Christianity and Patristic Theology: Antony & Early Monasticism.”

1. **JOHN CASSIAN & EARLY MONASTICISM: TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS**

John Cassian was the one who most significantly translated the Egyptian monastic principles and practices to the Latin West. Equally at ease in Greek and Latin, he became a monk in Bethlehem in the 380s. In 385, he moved to Egypt, settling in Scetis, where he absorbed emerging monastic theologies, especially that of Evagrius Ponticus (d. 399). Cassian drew deeply, but never uncritically, on Evagrius’ formulations, passing on key insights to the Latin West (much as Maximus Confessor did for the Greek East). In 399, Cassian left Egypt and, after stints in Constantinople (where John Chrysostom ordained him deacon) and in Rome (where he befriended Pope Leo the Great), he settled in Marseilles where he composed two influential works: *Institutes* (*De institutis*) and *Conferences* (*Collationes*). These two works would be commended by Benedict in his *Rule* and thus powerfully influence the medieval monastic (and mystical) tradition.
Latin Texts


Translations


John Cassian, *The Institutes*, trans. Boniface Ramsey, Ancient Christian Writers 58 (New York: Paulist Press, 2000). Cassian’s summary of the guiding principles of Eastern (and mostly Egyptian) monasticism. This includes a long section on what would become the “Seven Deadly Sins”—an analysis Cassian derives from Evagrius. This new translation is the first one in over a century.

*The Desert Fathers: Sayings of the Early Christian Monks [=Verba Seniorum of Pelagius and John]* Penguin Classics, trans. Benedicta Ward (London: Penguin Books: 2003). The Egyptian experience was also passed on to the Latin West when in the mid-6th century, two Roman clerics, Pelagius and John (who perhaps became the later Popes Pelagius and John) translated the anonymous Greek work *Sayings of the Desert Fathers (Apophthegmata Patrum)* into Latin. The Latin version, entitled *Verba Seniorum (Sayings of the Old Men)*, gathers the famous sayings and stories about the Egyptian desert fathers of the 4th and 5th centuries, collecting them under 21 different themes: “quiet” (*hesychia*), “compunction,” “discernment,” “unceasing prayer,” “hospitality,” “humility,” “great seers.” This would be recommended by Benedict in his *Rule* as required reading monks in his monasteries and thus come deeply influence the spirituality of Western monasticism.

2. JOHN CASSIAN & EARLY MONASTICISM: STUDIES

William Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). The 4th- and 5th-century Desert Christians of Egypt captured the imagination of the ancient world, creating and inspiring various classes of Western spirituality. This study introduces readers to key texts, such as the *Lives* of Antony and Pachomius and the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*. It also examines the pioneers of monastic theology, Evagrius Ponticus and John Cassian. Geared to a wide audience. It has opening chapters that survey the geography, politics, and religious world of Christian Egypt. Interspersed in each chapter are a variety of maps, diagrams, and images to help readers sort through the key texts and the rich-textured world of early monasticism. Readers are also given a taste of the path-breaking discoveries of and sharp debates among contemporary scholars.
Columba Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). This is a superb in-depth study of Cassian’s spirituality, emphasizing especially his approach to contemplative prayer.


3. BENEDICT & MEDIEVAL MONASTICISM: TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

Benedict of Nursia (mid 6th cent.) was the great legislator of Western monasticism. The little we know of Benedict's life comes from an account found in Gregory the Great's Dialogues (Dialogi). Benedict's Rule is a masterpiece of insight and moderation and is one of the most influential documents in Western civilization. It has served as the basic constitution for Western monasticism for the last 1500 years. It is a work of spiritual and practical genius, notable for its humanity and its moderation (obvious when compared with its sources). Benedict had drawn on earlier rules, notably the anonymous Rule of the Master (Regula Magistri), considerably improving its prose and moderating its legislation. Benedict's Rule was eventually adopted as the constitution governing most medieval monasteries, especially from the 9th century onward, thanks to the efforts of the Carolingian abbot Benedict of Aniane.

Latin Text


Translations

RB 1980: the Rule of Benedict (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1980). This is the best translation and has the Latin text on facing pages.


4. **BENEDICT & MEDIEVAL MONASTICISM: STUDIES**


K. Stöber Jamroziak, ed., Monasteries on the Borders of Medieval Europe: Conflict and Cultural Interaction, Medieval Church Studies 28 (Brepols, 2013) hardcover, €80. NEW.


Catherine Thom, Early Irish Monasticism (New York: T&T Clark, 2006).


### 5. THE VENERABLE BEDE: TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

The Venerable Bede (673-735) was arguably the most important theologian writing in Latin in the early Middle Ages. He is remembered today primarily as a historian, but he and his contemporaries thought his important works were his biblical commentaries. Bede would be declared a Doctor of the Church in 1899 by Pope Leo XIII.

**Latin Texts: Historical Works**


**Latin Texts: Exegetical Works**


- *De tabernaculo (On the Tabernacle)*, CCSL 119A (1969): 5-139
- *Expositio Apocalypseos (Commentary on the Book of Revelation)*, PL 93:129-207.
• In Epistolae VII Catholicas (On the Seven Catholic Letters), CCSL 121 (1983).
• In Genesim (On Genesis), CCSL 118A (1967).
• In Habacuc (On Habbakuk), CCSL 119B (1983).
• In Marci Evangelium Expositio (Commentary on the Gospel of Mark), CCSL 120 (1960): 443-648.
• In Regum Librum XXX Questiones (30 Questions on the Book of Kings) CCSL 119 (1962): 293-322.

Translations: Historical, Didactic & Scientific Works


Translations: Exegetical Works & Sermons


Faith Wallis, trans., *Bede: Commentary on Revelation*, Translated Texts for Historians (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013) paperback, $40. NEW.


6. THE VENERABLE BEDE: STUDIES


Another excellent introduction.


7. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX & THE CISTERCIANS: TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

Texts

The critical edition of the Latin text of Bernard’s writings is the 8-volume *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, ed. J. Leclerq, C.H. Talbot, and H. Rocahis (Rome, 1957-1977), usually abbreviated “SBO.” It is now available in the *Sources chrétiennes* series, which includes the Latin with a French translation on facing pages:


**Translations**

Bernard of Clairvaux, *Selected Works*, Classics of Western Spirituality, trans. G.R. Evans (New York: Paulist Press, 1987). The great leader of the reform of Citeaux (the Cistercians); one of the great analysts of the degrees of mystical love; also the polemical opponent of Abelard and a respectful, but harsh critic of papal overreaching. This is a good selection of his works.


8. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX & THE CISTERCIANS: STUDIES

Brian Patrick McGuire, ed., *A Companion to Bernard of Clairvaux*, Brill’s Companions to the Christian Tradition (Leiden: Brill, 2011). Bernard of Clairvaux (1190-1253) was the leader of the reform of Citeaux—what eventually became the Cistercian Order. He was also one of the great analysts of the degrees of mystical love, a polemical opponent of Peter Abelard, and a respectful, but harsh critic of papal overreaching. Fine articles by leading experts.

Constance Hoffman Berman, *The Cistercian Evolution: The Invention of a Religious Order in Twelfth-Century Europe*, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000). An important revisionist account of the founding of the Cistercian. She skillfully debunks the tendency of older scholars to attribute the rapid growth of the Cistercians to the singular achievement of Bernard. She illustrates the complex way older monasteries became affiliated with the Cistercians.


Étienne Gilson, *The Mystical Theology of St. Bernard*, Cistercian Studies 120 (reprint of 1940 edition: Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1992). While dated, this classic study does a great job of illuminating the cornerstone of Bernard’s mysticism: that the human person possesses an inner nobility, a dignity that comes from being made in the image and likeness of God.


