



Patristics and Christian Learning

with Dr. Jordan Wood

Lecture 8: Desert Erudition: Early Christian Monastics on the Quest for Truth

Outline:

Desert Erudition: Early Christian Monastics on the Quest for Truth

- Saint Antony: In the person whose mind is sound, there is no need for letters at all.
 - This becomes the monastic ideal, which engenders a suspicion of worldly wisdom.
 - The only reason why you pry into mysteries is if you you're idle, distracted. Focus on your soul and its formation and don't ask these questions.
- John of Scythopolis is notable because he produces the first Greek annotated edition of the works of Dionysius (written by someone in the 6th century presenting themselves as Paul's convert).
 - In his prologue to the works of Dionysius he lists two arguments of erudition:
 - If we don't allow for wide breadth of learning then we will fall into a trap of misunderstanding other Christians who are well educated.
 - If you revel in ignorance then you measure everyone else according to your ignorance.
 - If we revel in ignorance then we don't succeed in imitating the Apostle Paul, who made use of all knowledge for faith. Surely it is possible to want to imitate Paul's learning.
- Cassiodorus is up to putting together a layout for a program of Christian liberal arts.
 - Cassiodorus was very well-educated.
 - He starts a monastery-school hybrid to construct a community of learning.
 - He writes, "The Institutions of Divine and Secular Learning."
 - He finishes what Augustine left unfinished.
 - Book 1: The source and summit of all learning (of the arts) is the Bible.
 - Book 2: He gives a list of the seven liberal arts.
 - He provides a theological vision of the kind of work of participating in educating the entire world.
 - He gives a completion of the vision of a Christian culture started by Augustine.