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Bernard of Clairvaux, Material and Spiritual Order, and the Economy of Salvation¹

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Abstract

This article explores themes connected to the spiritual and the material, especially in connection with order and economy, in the thought of the Cistercian abbot Bernard of Clairvaux (1090/91-1153). It argues that these themes are particularly useful to an analysis of Bernard's articulation of the challenge of human existence in a fallen world, and the proper role of the church, its leaders and members, in response to wider concerns for Christian salvation and the material circumstances of twelfth-century Europe. Three treatises provide case-studies for this approach, contextualised with discussion of economy in the Christian tradition, and its implications more widely in Bernard's writing.

Article

Rhetoric of seclusion and separation from the world forms a characteristic element within early Cistercian writing. William of St Thierry's famous description of the approach to Clairvaux, the third house to be founded from Cîteaux is a case in point.

The first thing those who came down from the hills surrounding Clairvaux would see *was God in these houses*. This silent valley spoke to them of the simplicity and humility in the buildings, mirroring the simplicity and humility of those living there. Then, in that valley full of men,

¹ The research for this article was made possible by the Norwegian Research Council, and was carried out under the aegis of the research project 'Religion and Money: Economies of Salvation in the High Middle Ages' (project number 222545, University of Oslo). The author would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers of this article for their perceptive and thoughtful comments.

where none was at rest, where all were toiling at their work and each one had a job assigned to him, at midday and at midnight they found silence all around them, save for the sound of work, save for the brother occupied in the praise of God. ... The solitude of this place, among the shady woodlands and enclosed by the nearby impassable mountains in which the servants of God lie hidden, represented in a fashion that cave where our holy father Saint Benedict lived.¹

The solitude and silence of the valley in which the monastery was located mirrored in spiritual peace of the community, its unceasing spiritual work a consequence of retreat from the world. Nevertheless, vast amounts of lay support were necessary to support Cistercian houses, ranging from the lay brethren who formed of the community (an arrangement the Cistercians shared with the Grandmontine order), to the more traditional support of lay families in land, property and other gifts.² Cistercian abbeys were often considerable economic enterprises, and

¹ William of St Thierry, Arnold of Bonneval and Geoffrey of Auxerre, *Vita prima sancti Bernardi claraevallis abbatis, Liber primus*, ed. Paul Verdayen, Corpus christianorum continuatio medievalis, 89B, (Turnhout 2011), I.35 (Book/ch): : ‘Prima que facie ab introeuntibus Claramuallem per descensum montis, Deus in domibus eius cognoscebatur, cum in simplicitate et humilitate aedificiorum simplicitatem et humilitatem inhabitantium pauperum Christi uallis muta loqueretur. Denique in ualle illa plena hominibus, in qua nemini otiosum esse licebat, omnibus laborantibus et singulis circa iniuncta occupatis, media die mediae noctis silentium a superuenientibus inueniebatur, praeter laborum sonitus uel si fratres in laudibus Dei occuparentur...Loci uero ipsius solitudo inter opaca siluarum, et uicinorum hinc inde montium angustias, in quo serui Dei latebant, speluncam illam sancti Benedicti patris nostri quodammodo repraesentabat...’. English translation in William of St Thierry, Arnold of Bonneval and Geoffrey of Auxerre, *The First Life of Bernard of Clairvaux*, trans. H. Costello (Kalamazoo 2015).

² For general discussion see Janet Burton and Julie Kerr, *The Cistercians in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge 2011), chapter 7, and E. M. Jamroziak, *The Cistercian Order in Medieval Europe, 1090-1500* (Abingdon 2013), chapter 6. An instructive case study of the strategies and complexities of land donation and a Cistercian house is provided

communities that played an important role in transforming the landscape in which they lived.³ The contrast between the activity of the spiritual and of the worldly, and more particularly of worldly and spiritual wealth is central to William's exposition. He notes, in terms of wonder, that he had been privileged to visit Clairvaux in what he considered to be its golden age, when those who had been rich and honoured in the world were now seeking, pursuing and living a life of poverty.

William's emphasis on the juxtaposition between the spiritual and the material adheres to a dominant conceptual framework through which early Cistercian writers shaped the presentation and defence of their communities. The conception of two economies, two ways of ordering, allowed the relationship between worldly success and spiritual discipline to be navigated, and was important in the articulation of the early Cistercian movement. At one and the same time the juxtaposition of the two acts as a metaphor for individual and institutional spiritual progress, as a commentary on the values and aspirations of the secular world, and as a descriptive means to transform material wealth within and for monastic living into that which serves a spiritual goal. All three of these elements were important in the articulation of the early Cistercian movement.

in E. M. Jamroziak, *Rievaulx abbey and its social context 1132-1300: memory, locality and networks* (Turnhout, 2005).

³ Regional studies of Cistercian economic activity include, indicatively, Constance Berman, *Medieval Agriculture, the Southern French Countryside and the Early Cistercians* (Philadelphia, 1986); G. G. Astill (ed.), *A Medieval Industrial Complex and its Landscape: The Metalworking Watermills and Workshops of Bordesley Abbey*, Council for British Archaeology, Research Report, 92 (York 1993); S. C. Bouchard, *Holy Entrepreneurs: Cistercians, Knights and Economic Exchange in Twelfth-Century Burgundy* (Ithaca 1991); James France, *The Cistercians in Scandinavia*, Kalamazoo MI 1992 and Richard Oram, 'Holy Frontiersmen: Twelfth- and Early Thirteenth-Century Monastic Colonisation and Socio-Economic Change in Poland and Scotland', in R. Unger (ed.), *Britain and Poland-Lithuania: Contact and Comparison from the Middle Ages to 1795* (Leiden 2008), 103-21.

The period from the later eleventh century to the mid-point of the twelfth century saw the rapid expansion of the order, starting from the small community at Cîteaux in 1098, to some 333 houses across western Christendom by the 1150s.⁴

The most significant early Cistercian voice was that of Bernard of Clairvaux. One of the more complex characters of the High Middle Ages, Bernard was born in 1090 or 1091.⁵ Entering the newly established community at Cîteaux in 1112 (although this date is contestable as well) with a large number of family members and friends, he was soon made Abbot of Clairvaux. From the 1120s he was keenly and actively involved in the affairs of the Cistercian movement, legally, pastorally and polemically. The papal schism of 1130-1139, and Bernard's energetic and vociferous advocacy of Innocent II brought him a vastly increased range of contacts and correspondents and ensured his reputation spread across Christendom. Subsequent high-profile activity included his role in the theological trials of Peter Abelard and Gilbert de la Porée (1140 and 1145), and his preaching of what is customarily known as the Second Crusade in 1147.⁶

Although Bernard's writings are voluminous, unifying themes emerge, explored in different ways throughout his life. Scriptural exegesis was the bedrock on which all else was built; devotion to Mary another prominent theme. An interrogation of monastic vocation, its values, and its wider

⁴ Burton and Kerr, *Cistercians*, 42; Jamroziak, *Cistercians*, chapter 2.

⁵ There is debate about the precise date and no current consensus. 1091 has been vigorously defended by A. Bredero, 'Saint Bernard est-il né en 1090 ou en 1091?', in *Papauté, monachisme et theories politiques I. Le pouvoir et l'institution ecclésiastique. Etudes d'histoire médiévale offertes à Marcel Pacaut*, ed. P. Guichard, M-T. Lorcin, J-M. Posisson and M. Rubellin (Lyon, 1994), pp. 229-241. See also Brian Patrick McGuire, 'Bernard's Life and Works: A Review', in ed. Brian Patrick McGuire, *A Companion to Bernard of Clairvaux* (Leiden, 2011), pp. 18-61 at pp. 21-22.

contexts is never far from Bernard's thought. Unifying tendencies are apparent in his written style also, especially a propensity to move between antitheses and paradox, strongly reminiscent of Anselm of Canterbury.⁷ This mode of expression is present within the polemical and political writing as much as the devotional and pastoral. So, for example, the treatment of the mystery of Christ as man and God, or Mary as mother and virgin, human nature as utterly foul and corrupt yet made in the likeness of the divine, the unity and diversity in the church, and the contradictions between active and contemplative monastic life.

In this connection a unifying theme of some significance in Bernard's writing in this connection is the dichotomy between the material and the spiritual, used particularly in his thinking on order. More powerfully than William of St Thierry, Bernard developed his thought on the spiritual and the material aspects of order as integral to his presentation of the Christian life, the monastic, and specifically Cistercian, vocation, and the challenge of a fallen world. In an early didactic text for his monastic charges at Clairvaux Bernard contrasts the thorns on Christ's crown which pierce externally (*extrinsicus*) in a material fashion (*materialis*), but internally (*intrinsecus*) in a spiritual fashion (*spiritualis*).⁸

How the relation between the spiritual and the material should be cast was of importance also, with links to the wider sense of order. In the famous *Apologia to Abbot William*, Bernard confronts the issue directly. While berating the Cluniacs for their disobedience to the Rule of St Benedict, Bernard suggests that someone might object to him on the following grounds: 'It looks as though you are so concerned with the spiritual side of things that you discredit even those

⁷ Eileen Sweeney, *Anselm of Canterbury and the Desire for the Word*, Washington D.C 2012.

⁸ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sententiae*, in *Bernardi opera*, vol. 6.2, ed. J. Leclercq et H.M. Rochais, Rome 1972, 3.114.

material observances imposed on us by the Rule'.⁹ This is not the case, Bernard points out. The material observance should be made, but if it comes to a choice, the spiritual must prevail over the material: 'For, just as the soul is more important than the body, so spiritual practices are more fruitful than material ones'.¹⁰ Bernard's persistent meditation on the spiritual and material draws on a longer background of Christian thinking concerning order, or economy as it was expressed by patristic authors discussed below. That background is important to explore.

Salvation

Economy has a strongly theological conceptual underpinning, central to biblical expression of the relationship between Creation and Creator and between human communities and individuals. In a Christian context what has become known as the economy of salvation provides the foundation for one of the most important subjects in theological discourse: the activity of the creator God in the world to redeem a fallen and sinful humanity.¹¹ The medieval period,

⁹ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Apologia ad Guillelmum abbatem*, c. 13, in *Bernardi opera*, vol. 3, ed. J. Leclercq et H.M. Rochais, Rome 1963, 81-108 at 93: '<<Quid ergo>>, inquis? <<Siccine illa spiritualia persuades, ut etiam haec, quae ex Regula habemus, corporalia damnes?>>'. English translation from Bernard of Clairvaux, *Cistercians and Cluniacs: St Bernard's Apologia To Abbot William*, trans. Michael Casey (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1970).

¹⁰ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Apologia*, 'Quanto enim spiritus corpore melior est, tanto spiritualis quam corporalis exercitatio fructuosior'.

¹¹ For a convenient modern theological statement on the economy of salvation see the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, at http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/index/e.htm See also Tatha Wiley, *Original Sin: Origins, Developments, Contemporary Meanings* (New York, 2002). The Jewish roots of Christian metaphors for sin, and the implications on later Christian understanding of forgiveness, are expertly identified Gary Anderson *Sin: A History* (New Haven, 2009).

especially the period from the later eleventh to the early thirteenth centuries, witnessed a particularly important and sustained instantiation of this discourse. How human society and individuals might respond to the chasm between the vision of creation in Eden, and its condition after the expulsion, was of paramount pastoral and theological concern for Bernard and his contemporaries. For medieval thinkers, inheriting a line of thought associated especially with Augustine, the issue of human creation was related also to the question of how, or if, the numbers in heaven were to be compensated for the fall of the disobedient angels.¹² The purpose of Creation might be variously expressed, but at its core lay themes connected to the overflowing of divine love and the adoration of the Creator by the created, in a harmonious, balanced and fulfilled universe. The consequences of a fallen humanity, disobedience to the divine command and intention, caused a shattering dislocation on the part of the creature. The world of sin, of pain, temptation and death resulted.

The Christian Church especially as it developed from later antiquity into the early Middle Ages laid great emphasis on the alleviation of sin and the care in Christian communities for its consequences. For Gregory Nazianzen (c.329-390), the pastoral care of human souls was the ‘art of arts and science of sciences’, a phrase later made famous in the Latin West by Pope Gregory the Great (c.540-604).¹³ The ecclesiastical revolution of the high medieval period dominated by

¹² As for example in Anselm of Canterbury’s *Cur Deus homo*. See Vojtech Novotny, *Cur homo? A History of the Thesis Concerning Man as a Replacement for Fallen Angels* (Prague: Charles University, Karolinum Press, 2014).

¹³ Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration 2 ‘In Defence of his Flight to Pontus’*, in *Orations, Sermons, Letters*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd Series, Vol. 7, Grand Rapids 1989, ch. 16,. Latin translation in *Orationum Gregorii Nazianzeni Novem Interpretatio*, trans. Rufinus, ed. A. Engelbrecht, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, 46.1, Vienna 1910: ‘*ars artium et disciplina disciplinarum*’. Grégoire le Grand, *Règle pastorale*, ed. B. Judic and F. Rommel, trans. Ch. Morel, 2 vols, Sources Chrétiennes 381, 382, Paris 1992, vol. 381, 1.1 (book/ch.); English translation from Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Care*, trans. Henry Davies, Mahwah, 1950, 21.

movements of reform, was underpinned in large part by ideals of pastoral care. The vast framework of the later medieval church with its stress on confession, penance and the proper provision for Christian education was laid down in the later eleventh and twelfth centuries.¹⁴

Salvation was central to the Christian message, with multi-faceted and complex influence. A broader conceptual notion of economy took shape, which integrated and explained the material economy of the world in paradigmatic, spiritual, terms. Christian views on wealth and money were shaped through an already venerable tradition that rested on an institutionalized interpretation of Biblical texts with a clear division between the worldly and the spiritual, and this applied equally when it came to wealth and money.¹⁵ The ordering of the household in classical Greek thought, the *oikonomia*, became a powerful theological device already for early Christian authors.¹⁶ The term was transformed from its original meaning, to encompass the ordering activity of a Creator God, creating the world from nothing and his self-disclosure through the acts of creation and redemption. Economy in the hands especially of Irenaeus of Lyon who flourished in the second century AD, would become a concept related to a grand vision of the ordering of creation, the divine household, its unbalancing by the sin of Adam and Eve and re-balancing in the redemptive act of Christ, the incarnate God.¹⁷

¹⁴ Norman Tanner and Sethina Watson, 'Least of the Laity: The Minimum Requirements for a Medieval Christian', *Journal of Medieval History* 32 (2006), 395-423.

¹⁵ See Gary Anderson, *Charity: The Place of the Poor in the Biblical Tradition*, New Haven, 2013.

¹⁶ Moses Finlay, *The Ancient Economy*. London, 1973, 20-1. On the appropriation of the term into the Latin rhetorical traditions see Kathy Eden, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition: Chapters in the Ancient Legacy and Its Humanist Reception*, New Haven 1997, 27 and chapters 2 and 4 in particular.

¹⁷ On Irenaeus see Eric Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyon*, Cambridge 2001. The position on economy is summarised in J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th edition, London 1977, 104 and 108. The later patristic use of 'Economy' is complex term, for a general outline see T. F. Torrance, *Divine Meaning*, Edinburgh 1995.

Divine order, divine economy, the economy of creation and the economies of human familial and societal organisation, were all related. Human economies were, however distorted by the effects of sin, reflective of, and derived from, the divine economy. What might be thought of as secular economies, markets, modes of exchange, were capable of being integrated conceptually into spiritual economies, whose currencies were sin, forgiveness, and the right ordering of the world. Material goods, and coin especially, played a role in this multi-dimensional economy, both as forms of value and mechanisms to exchange goods, and as a symbol, or metaphor, for the existential issues: debt in monetary terms as a symbol of moral debt, new coins as spiritual re-birth, the monetary value of an offering related to the moral worth of its donor or the purpose of the gift.¹⁸

Bernard and the Fall

The themes of order and economy, from the early Church and as part of contemporary responses, institutional and individual, to anxiety about the consequences of sin, were absorbed and articulated powerfully by Bernard. The longer theological themes connected to the economy of salvation emerge in his writings, in both continuity and discontinuity with Patristic responses. In his first advent sermon, Bernard asks his monastic audience to consider for whom they are waiting for in this season, and why. Bernard enjoins wonder at the greatness of he who arrives, the second person of the Trinity (though no less in power, dignity and divinity than the others), whose incarnation will end human exile, an exile caused by pride. Succumbing to Lucifer's

¹⁸ Imagery of new coins and spiritual conversion is discussed with reference to the English anchorite, Wulfric of Haselbury in Giles E. M. Gasper and S. H. Gullbekk, 'An intimate encounter with English coinage in the High Middle Ages: the case of Wulfric of Haselbury', *British Numismatic Journal* 83, 112-9, at 115.

blandishments that they would be as gods, Adam and Eve were disobedient, insulted the son, and received the vengeance of the Father.

the leading figures of our race, were disobedient and the companions of thieves; at the instigation of the serpent – or rather of the devil in the guise of a serpent -, they tried to steal what belong to the Son of God. The Father did not ignore the insult to the Son – for the Father loves the Son – but immediately took vengeance on humanity and made his hand heavy upon us.¹⁹

Bernard continues, stressing that God created human ‘to fill the empty places and to repair the ruins of Jerusalem’.²⁰ While no redemption was open to the disobedient angels, no creature was created to replace human beings, implying that their state was not irredeemable. The fallenness of humans required that the Son of God come to dwell amongst them, rather than humans asking for God’s help.

In the *Sentences*, Bernard lays out in more detail what humanity lost and how it lost it, in the fall, and the consequences of original sin. As a rational creature, the human ‘ought to love himself in

¹⁹ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones in aduentu Domini*, in *Bernardi opera*, vol. 4 of 8, ed. J. Leclercq et H.M. Rochais (Rome: Editiones cistercienses, 1966), Sermon 1.4: ‘Revera enim principes nostri Adam et Eva, principia nostrae propaginis, inoboedientes et socii furum: quod Filii Dei est, serpentis, immo diaboli per serpentem consilio surripere tentant. Nec dissimulat iniuriam Filii Pater, - PATER ENIM DILIGIT FILIUM -, sed continuo et in ipsum hominem vindictam retribuit, et aggravat super nos manum suam.’ English translation from Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermons for Advent and Christmas*, trans. Irene Edmonds, Wendy Beckett, and Conrad Greenia, ed. E. Rozanne Elder (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2007).

²⁰ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones in aduentu Domini*, Sermon 1.5: ‘ut repleantur ex his loca vacua et ruinae Ierusalem restaurentur’.

order to be blessed and to love God through whom alone he can be made more blessed'.²¹ This was the state of pre-lapsarian existence. The activity of the tempter, however, was to corrupt the qualities inherent to humanity, corporeal and spiritual. As concerns the former, gluttonous desire and self-indulgence goad the flesh into self-destruction. With respect to spiritual qualities the two-fold assault of pride and greed conspire to overwhelm the human being, and remove it from beatitude. Bernard points to four things to which humans give allegiance in this mortal, because fallen, life: the flesh, the world, the devil and God. Gluttony and lust serve flesh, avarice and arrogance the world, envy of others and pride against God the Devil. Piety, humility, and struggle against flesh, the world and the Devil, through the agency of Grace, through the Holy Spirit, serve God, the reward for which is the fullness of joy.²²

Part of the way in which Bernard navigates the tensions between the fallen world, the contradictions of human existence and the hope of salvation is to relate them to an overarching antithesis between the external and superficial, and the internal and spiritual. A theme to which Bernard identifies repeatedly in his writing is the false attraction of the superficial. External form is no substitute for the inner movement of actions inspired by right purpose. From the better-known *Apologia to Abbot William* (of Saint Thierry), to admonitory texts, biblical exegesis and sermons, the emphasis on monastic ascent beyond the trappings of the world is clear. The *Apologia*, part of a sequence of rhetorical contests with the older Burgundian Benedictine foundation of Cluny, during the 1120s, stresses the simplicity of Cistercian life in positive comparison to the excesses of Cluny. Bernard highlights the opulent decoration and

²¹ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sententiae*, 2.1: 'RATIONALIS creatura ad hoc se debet diligere, ut beata sit, et Deum, per quem solum beatificari possit'. English translation from Bernard of Clairvaux *Sentences*, trans. Francis R. Swietek, Kalamazoo 2000.

²² Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sententiae*, 2.2.

accoutrements of the church, jewels, gold and silver, expensive carvings and culinary excesses (how many ways, he asks, can an egg be cooked?).²³ The celebrated story of Bernard's journey around Lake Lausanne after which his brothers had to tell him the details for he could remember none, is another case in point. In a similar example of a journey to the Grande Chartreuse, in which he could recall not details about the horse he borrowed, or its fine harness which had surprised his host Abbot Guigo, Bernard had, according to Geoffrey of Auxerre 'circumcised his eyes outwardly and occupied his mind inwardly to such an extent that what he himself had noticed at once Bernard had not seen for the whole journey'.²⁴ These examples involve both Bernard reflecting, to and for others, his own emphasis on interiority while journeying within the world, and reflecting on the most suitable monastic environment within which to shun the world.

This theme of interiority and exteriority, spiritual and material, is evident in the first in Bernard's famous sequence of 86 sermons on the Song of Songs, a sequence which was composed from the mid 1130s and revised by Bernard until his death. The first sermon takes as its premise that the monastic audience has learnt to recognise the 'false promise of the world'.²⁵ Ecclesiastes and Proverbs provide a bulwark against 'misguided love of the world and an excessive love of self'.²⁶

²³ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Apologia*, c. 20, p. 98.

²⁴ William of St Thierry, Arnold of Bonneval and Geoffrey of Auxerre, *Vita Prima*, III.4: 'quod sic ille Dei famulus foris oculos circumcidisset, intus animum occupasset, ut quod ipse primo offenderat uisu, hoc ille tanti itineris spatio non uidisset, nec considerasset omnino'.

²⁵ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones super Cantica canticorum*, ed. H. Rochais and J. Leclercq, *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, vol. 1, *Sermones super Cantica canticorum 1-35*, Rome 1957, Sermon I ch. 2: 'mundi huius cognoscere et contemnere vanitatem'. English translation from, Bernard of Clairvaux, *On the Song of Songs*, vol. 1, trans. Kilian Walsh, Kalamazoo 1971.

²⁶ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones super Cantica canticorum*, Sermon I ch. 2: 'vanus scilicet amor mundi, et superfluum sui...'

The flesh needs to be tamed, the world's attractions and temptations to be rejected, before spiritual doctrine can be set for study. 'How', Bernard asks, 'can there be harmony between the wisdom that comes down from above and the wisdom of the world, which is foolishness to God, or the wisdom of the flesh which is at enmity with God?'²⁷

As Bernard moves through the sermon he explores the nature of the victory by which an individual's faith may overcome the world. A new song, conversion to life as a Cistercian, is part of this process, with its beginning in repentance. As the mysteries of Scripture become bright with meaning, gratitude is due to the Creator for the instigation of inner growth. Bernard reminds his charges that this is the purpose of monastic life, to learn that 'man's life on earth is a ceaseless warfare'.²⁸

As often as temptation is overcome, an immoral habit brought under control, an impending danger shunned, the trap of the seducer detected, when a passion long indulged is finally and perfectly allayed, or a virtue persistently desired and repeatedly sought is ultimately obtained by God's gift; so, often, in the words of the prophet [Isaiah], let thanksgiving and joy resound.²⁹

²⁷ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones super Cantica canticorum*, Sermon I ch. 3: 'Quae enim societas ei quae desursum est sapientiae et sapientiae mundi, quae stultitia est apud Deum, aut sapientiae carnis, quae et ipsa est inimica Deo?'

²⁸ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones super Cantica canticorum*, Sermon I ch. 9: 'sicut militiam esse vitam hominis super terram incessanter'.

²⁹ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones super Cantica canticorum*, Sermon I (9): 'Quoties tentatio superatur, aut vitium subiugatur, aut imminens periculum declinatur, aut laqueus insidiantis deprehenditur, aut annosa et inveterata quaecumque animae passio semel perfecte que sanatur, aut multum diu que cupita et saepius petita virtus tandem aliquando Dei munere obtinetur: quid nisi toties, iuxta Prophetam, personat gratiarum actio et vox laudis...?'

The inspiration of the Song of Songs in showing how scripture might reveal its mysteries and the path to spiritual ascent is lauded in the upward movement of the heart. Bernard points at the end, however, to the discipline needed to hear the song, and for the union of souls to which it alludes. The inadequacies of human language and the necessity of analogy show, for Bernard, the completeness of the divine economy, and the shattered nature of its perception by humankind.

The tension between the two economies was one with which Bernard himself was all too familiar. Monastic poverty remains an essential element in Bernard's world-view as too the tension between monastic seclusion and the demands of the world. His famous self-reflection on his split personality between world and cloister was expressed in a letter to the Carthusian Prior of Portes, where Bernard described his life as monstrous, and that he had become a chimera, neither cleric nor man.³⁰ Immediately after this confession Bernard alludes to the dangers through which he passes in the world. A chimera was no jocular allusion. Described by Homer in the *Iliad* as the lion-headed, goat-torsoed and serpent-tailed, beast of Lycia slain by Bellerephon and by Ovid as 'the monster with fire in its belly, the breast and head of a lion and the tail of a serpent', the

³⁰ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Epistolae*, ed. H. Rochais and J. Leclercq, *Sancti Bernardi opera*, vols. 7-8, *Epistolae I, Corpus epistolarum 1-180; Epistolae II, Corpus epistolarum 181-310, Epistolarum extra corpus 311-547*, Rome 1977, Epistula 250: 'Tempus est ut non obliviscar mei /Clamat ad vos mea monstruosa vita, mea aerumnosa conscientia Ego enim quaedam Chimaera mei saeculi, nec clericum gero nec laicum. / Nam monachi iamdudum exui conversationem, non habitum'. English translation from Bernard of Clairvaux. *The Letters of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux*, trans. Bruno Scott James, intro. Beverly Mayne Kienzle, Stroud 1998, numbered as Letter 326: 'It is time for me to remember myself. May my monstrous life, my bitter conscience, move you to pity. I am a sort of modern chimaera, neither cleric nor layman. I have kept the habit of a monk, but I have long ago abandoned the life.'

chimaera offers a vision of distortion and savagery.³¹ In the apparent contradiction between the contemplative and the active, it might be proposed that the two economies provide a helpful analytical tool through which to interpret Bernard's writings. His writings on the relationship between the spiritual and material then provide something of a framework for the wider question of how to analyse the spiritual and material economies and their articulation within twelfth-century society.

Bernard's writings on conversion and office-holding are particularly pertinent for this analysis, notably the ways in which he discusses the relationship of ordered religion to the world, and the responsibilities of spiritual leadership. The contiguity between the economy of salvation in a cosmic perspective, and the experience of living, as fallen humanity, in the world, is clear in all three texts for scrutiny. *On Conversion: A Sermon to the Clerics (De conversione, ad clericos)*, *Letter on the Office of Bishops (Epistula de moribus et officio episcoporum)* and *The Five Books of Consideration (De consideratione)*, reveal Bernard outlining the material and spiritual economies to would-be monks (or would-be scholars), bishops, and finally the Pope. These treatises form a chronological group stretching from the mid 1130s to the early 1150s. As such they fit into Bernard's maturity and the point at which he was most engaged in what he would refer to as worldly affairs.

Monastic Conversion

³¹ Homer, *Homeri Ilias. Recensuit / testimonia conguessit. Volumen prius, rhapsodias I-XII continens*, ed. Martin L. West, Stuttgart and Leipzig 1998, VI; P. Ovidi Nasonis *Metamorphoses*, ed. R. J. Tarrant, Oxford 2004), 9.647-9 (book/line numbers). English translation from Ovid, *Metamorphoses A New Verse Translation*, trans. David Raeburn, London 2004. Given the binary nature of Bernard's image, Ovid's depiction of a two-natured monster rather than three, may have been most influential on the medieval author.

The *Sermon on Conversion* emerges from a confrontation with student scholars at Paris 1139 to 1140. Geoffrey of Auxerre recorded the event in his contribution to the *First Life*, and describes how Bernard, who ordinarily declined public meetings, decided to visit Paris as requested by the then bishop Stephen (of Senlis, bishop from 1124-1142). The result was the *Sermon on Conversion*.³²

So when a great group of clergy had gathered, as they always did to hear the word of God, at once three of them were struck with compunction and turned away from their inane studies to engage in true wisdom, renouncing the world and keeping close to the servant of the God.³³

Bernard stresses two themes from the opening: conversion to the monastic order involved the renunciation of the world and conversion as the operation of the divine voice, rather than the human. The dependence of human society and creation on the Creator is important to note.

In the course of his sermon the language of trade is deployed for pastoral effect. ‘Does a man not hate his soul’ Bernard asks, ‘when by his hard and impenitent heart he stores up wrath for himself on the day of wrath, trafficking today in hell’s stocks?’³⁴ The sinful soul is given visceral and striking imagery: to see a man scratch his hand until it bleeds is an image of the activity of sin. Craving the things of the flesh creates suffering, which in turn instigates torment; as the itching

³² William of St Thierry, Arnold of Bonneval and Geoffrey of Auxerre, *Vita Prima*, IV.10: ‘Conueniente igitur clero admodum copioso, sicut semper ab eo | solebant expetere uerbum Dei, continuo tres ex illis compuncti sunt, et conuersi ab inanibus studiis ad uerae sapientiae cultum, abrenuntiantes saeculo et Dei famulo adhaerentes’.

³³ William of St Thierry, Arnold of Bonneval and Geoffrey of Auxerre, *Vita Prima*, Book 4.10: ‘Conueniente igitur clero admodum copioso, sicut semper ab eo | solebant expetere uerbum Dei, continuo tres ex illis compuncti sunt, et conuersi ab inanibus studiis ad uerae sapientiae cultum, abrenuntiantes saeculo et Dei famulo adhaerentes’.

³⁴ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Ad clericos de conversione (textus longior)*, ed. H. Rochais and J. Leclercq, *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, vol. 4, *Sermones*, Rome 1966, ch. 5: ‘Annon odit, cui gehennae cumulos mercatur in dies, cui secundum duritiam suam et cor impaenitens thesaurizat iram in die irae?’ English translation from Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermons on Conversion*, trans. Marie-Bernard Saïd, Kalamazoo 1981.

hands are rendered bloody, so human souls are torn to pieces by sin. This state of affairs is induced in part by the numbness of the mind to what is going on: 'some minds dwell on stew-pans, others on purses'.³⁵

Love of money and its consequences becomes a dominant theme and a lens through which Bernard focuses his thought on the ultimately spiritually purposeless and dangerous pursuit of worldly gain. An uncontrollable love of riches serves only to heighten the desire of, rather than refreshing, the soul. Pleasures of the world, gluttony, lust and love of money are so unsatisfactory because transitory, insatiable. Acquisition of material wealth is a fraught process; fear of loss ends up fuelling a terror in possession. All of this distracts the rich man from the proper object of devotion 'he despises the glory which eye has not seen, not ear heard, not the heart of man conceived, which God has prepared for those who love him'.³⁶

Death, Bernard reminds his audience is the one unassailable verity of life. 'And yet, among all human happenings, what is more certain than death, what more uncertain than the hour of death?'³⁷ Death does not discriminate and casts aside all lingering allusions as to the perishable nature of the world: possessions, money, produce, goods, all will perish. Experience of contemplation provokes Bernard to further economic analogies. To begin the path to contemplation is to enter the garden of paradise; not material but spiritual. The spiritual virtues,

³⁵ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Ad clericos de conversione*, 5: 'Denique et animus quorundam in patinis, quorundam in loculis invenitur'.

³⁶ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Ad clericos de conversione*, 13-14, quotation at 14: '...eam parvipendere gloriam, quam nec oculus vidit, nec auris audivit, nec in cor hominis ascendit, quae praeparavit Deus diligentibus se...'

³⁷ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Ad clericos de conversione*, 16: 'Quid vero in rebus humanis certius morte, quid hora mortis incertius invenitur?'

which surround and pervade the inhabitant of this garden, this paradise, are continence, truth and joy, a foretaste of the delights of charity. However, these are not yet the rewards of eternal life, but rather present due, the hundredfold, owed to the church.³⁸

Tracing the richness of Bernard's biblical allusions is a fruitful task, although not one to be taken lightly, given the range and register of his references. The context of the hundredfold [*centuplum*] is, nevertheless, worth considering here. It comes in Matthew's Gospel, in Christ's preaching in Judea, prior to the entry into Jerusalem on a donkey, celebrated as Palm Sunday. The indissolubility of marriage, Christ's welcoming of the little children 'for the kingdom of heaven is for such', leads to the discussion of worldly and spiritual wealth. Jesus challenges the young man who has kept the commandments but wishes to be perfect to sell what he has, give to the poor, and to follow Christ. If so, he will have 'treasure in heaven'; the young man went away sad, for he was possessed of much. To his disciples Jesus explains that a rich man shall hardly enter the kingdom of heaven, with the analogy of camels and needles' eyes. Questioned by the disciples as to who can be saved, the answer is given to leave such decisions to God, but for those who follow Christ reward there will be:

And every one that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting. And many that are first, shall be last: and the last shall be first.³⁹

³⁸ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Ad clericos de conversione*, 25.

³⁹ Matthew, 19:29-30 (Vulgate): 'Et omnis qui reliquerit domum, vel fratres, aut sorores, aut patrem, aut matrem, aut uxorem, aut filios, aut agros propter nomen meum, centuplum accipiet, et vitam aeternam possidebit. Multi autem erunt primi novissimi, et novissimi primi'.

The resonance of the phrase might alert Bernard's listeners and readers to a wider series of analogies. The marriage of the Church to Christ, of monk to monastery, the parental care of Christ for his children, for the abbot of his charges (which Bernard himself expressed in both maternal and paternal registers), and the challenge to the world by its rejection in the monastic life, at the same time as reinforcing monasticism as the inheritance of the apostolic state, are all present. The cascade of images through which Bernard's writing operates is clearly evident. In this case the foundation for these images is the relationship between the two economies.

Bernard goes on to give more detailed contrast the desires created by sin in this world, and the seeking after righteousness. The profound dissatisfaction induced by satiety of wealth and riches is emphasised.

I have myself known men sated with this world and sick at the very thought of it. I have known men sated with money, sated with honours, sated with the pleasures and curiosities of this world, sated not just a little, but to the point of repugnance.⁴⁰

Grace alone enables proper satisfaction. Human perception should be turned on its head, satisfaction properly conceived is not repletion but rejection and scorn of the false. The human body will be sated with air, Bernard remarks, before the heart of a man is sated with gold. Such desire requires to be mocked, and to be understood for what it represents.

Conversion is, nonetheless, achievable and possible. Mercy and forgiveness must be sought and offered in equal measure internally as well as externally. The sinner must first learn to forgive him or herself, before this can be extended to others. Debt and payment play an important role in the way Bernard articulates his views in this context. 'If you have defrauded someone, restore

⁴⁰ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Ad clericos de conversione*, XIV.26: 'Novi ego homines satiatis hoc mundo, et ad eius omnem memoriam nauseantes. Novi satiatis pecunia, satiatis honoribus, satiatis voluptatibus et curiositatibus huius mundi, nec mediocriter, sed usque ad fastidium satiatis'.

the exact amount: what is left over you must distribute to the poor'.⁴¹ Alms-giving is one mechanism, but if not possible, the will to do so must be there. Here again, internal reform carries greater significance than external action. Penance, its austerities and sufferings are enjoined as the essential step to enlightenment and the slow process of turning the human mind to contemplation.

On the Office of Bishops

The second text to be considered here is a letter-treatise *On the Office of Bishops, De moribus*, the longer version of which seems to have been compiled around 1145. In it Bernard directs his attention to vices and virtues which bishops should avoid or develop accordingly. After an introduction in which Bernard sets out the reasons why he as monk can criticise a bishop, he moves to a longer discussion on chastity, charity and humility. It is in the first section that criticism of the prelates who seek to please the world rather than God occurs.

A significant element in this criticism concerns clothing. Bernard fulminates against what he refers to as a cult of clothing amongst clerics. Expressed with reference to the most opposed scenario imaginable, that of the apparel of women, he suggests that prelates should not: 'deck themselves out with the products of weavers and furriers in place of their own deeds'. 'Let them shudder', Bernard continues, 'at sheathing in fur from martens' pelts – the white throat fur that gets dyed red – the consecrated hands which in turn consecrate the awesome mysteries'.⁴² Sable

⁴¹ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Ad clericos de conversione*, 16.29: 'Si forte quempiam defraudaveris, redde vel simplum; quod superest da pauperibus et, misericordiam praestans'.

⁴² Bernard of Clairvaux, *Epistula de moribus et officio episcoporum*, ed. H. Rochais and J. Leclercq, *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, vol. 7, *Epistolae I, Corpus epistolarum 1-180*, Rome 1977, II.4 (ch./section): 'Despiciant iam textricum sive pellicum, et non propriis operibus gloriari. Horreant et murium rubricatas pelliculas, quas gulas vocant, manibus

fur was, and still is, amongst the most costly of products. The sharp rhetorical contrast drawn between the vocabulary of workmanship, dyeing and colouring prepared pelts, is overlain with the martial resonance of hands sheathed, but in the most inefficacious of armour. The implied inadequacy of military costume reflects the far greater shortfalls in equipment for the spiritual fight in which the episcopacy is supposed to lead. The detail of the material serves to underline the spiritual mystery of the eucharist: hands that participate in the central element of the economy of salvation, the remembrance and re-enactment of Christ's sacrifice of himself, and that consecrate in the most tactile manner his body, are separated physically from this action.

Even in so short a phrase the complex interaction of material and spiritual economies is both a powerful device for persuasion, and a means to think through the superficial to experience the deeper economy on which created life depends. The phrase incorporates a reminder too of original sin, and the need for the economy of salvation. In Genesis 2.25 Adam and Eve were naked and not ashamed, after eating of the tree of knowledge, the disobedience of the original, their nakedness was revealed to them. It was the attempt to disguise this with fig leaves and to hide from the Lord that revealed sin and fear of its consequences.

Eve's temptation might set up for Bernard some of the direction of his negative comparison to the apparel of women. Fine clothes are not the marks of Christ or the martyrs; they are rather, according to Bernard, what are thought of as 'feminine trappings such as women, who are preoccupied with worldly things and how best to please their husbands, go to great pains and

circumdare sacratis, et sacramentibus tremenda mysteria'. English translation from Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Baptism and the Office of Bishops: Two Letter Treatises*, trans. P. Matarasso, Kalamazoo 2004.

expense to provide themselves with'.⁴³ It is worth noting too the ordering of the events of the expulsion. God creates clothing for Adam and Eve, they are denied immortality, and for Eve the pain and travail of labour, for Adam the labour to find and grow food. The Cistercian emphasis on manual labour, which Bernard espoused might be recalled in this context also.

The recipient of Bernard's *De moribus*, was Henry, Archbishop of Sens, whom he praises for having amended his ways. Parallels examples are not hard to find: Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester gently chastised Geoffrey of Coutances in the 1070s for his taste for lambskins.⁴⁴ The luxurious tastes of twelfth century bishops are commonplace. Ranulf Flambard and Hugh du Puiset at Durham serve as two convenient examples, Ranulf noted for his clothes and women, du Puiset for his gluttony.⁴⁵ A particular criticism of the moral dangers of clothing in a secular setting is that of the Anglo-Norman court of William Rufus, which came under considerable fire in the 1090s from Anselm of Canterbury for its louche fashions. Eadmer of Canterbury and William of Malmesbury repeated these criticisms:

The knightly code of honour disappeared; courtiers devoured the substance of the country people and engulfed their livelihood, taking the very food out of their mouths. Long owing hair, luxurious garments, shoes with curved and pointed tips became the fashion. Softness of body rivalling the weaker sex, a mincing gait, effeminate gestures and a liberal display of the person as they went along, such was the ideal fashion of the younger men. Spineless,

⁴³ Bernard of Clairvaux, *De moribus*, II. 4: 'Muliebria potius esse noscuntur insignia, quae utique curiosius et sumptuosius illae sibi praeparare consueverunt, cogitantes nimirum quae sunt mundi, quomodo placeant viris'.

⁴⁴ William of Malmesbury, *Vita Wulfstani*, in *William of Malmesbury: Saints Lives, Lives of Saints Wulfstan, Dunstan, Patrick, Benignus and Indract*, ed. and trans. R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3.1.

⁴⁵ On Ranulf Flambard see *The Life of Christina of Markyate: A Twelfth Century Recluse*, ed. and trans. C. H. Talbot (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 41-43. On Hugh du Puiset see William of Newburgh, *Historia Rerum Anglicarum*, 5.1, ed. Richard Howlett, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, 3 vols, (London: Longman & Co., 1885), vol. 2, pp. 416-17.

unmanned, they were reluctant to remain as nature had intended they should be; they were a menace to the virtue of others and promiscuous with their own.⁴⁶

Benedictine commentators condemn secular behaviour in this example. Bernard moves his target more pointedly to the episcopacy. An indicator, perhaps of deeper shifts in the prosecution of church reform.

Competing for the attention of the world is a trade, and economy, in which priests, and especially bishops should take no place. Seeking office and lust for power and domination at one level involves the episcopal candidate in use of money that might invite negative assessment. Once one promotion is secured more have to follow; a priest made a dean, provost or archdeacon desires to hold more benefices, and eventually a single bishopric; a bishop desires to be archbishop, the costs of which are considerable, and even if spiritually motivated the presumption of promotion should still invite censure'.⁴⁷ Bernard here echoes the discussion made by Augustine in *City of God* of the 'libido dominandi', the will to dominate.⁴⁸ The lust to dominate is part of the continual attempts by fallen men and fallen angels to assert their incomplete power, subjecting others to their will. The unity of Bernard's vision is revealed here: the cosmic dislocation of the harmony of creation in the fall, of the devil as well as Adam, finds

⁴⁶ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum anglorum*, ed. and trans. R. A. B. Mynors, R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom, Vol 1 of 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press), Book IV c. 314: 'Soluta militari disciplina, curiales rusticorum substantias depascebantur, insumebant fortunas, a buccis miserorum cibos abstrahentes. Tunc fluxus crinium, tunc luxus uestium, tunc usus calceorum cum arcuatis aculeis inuentus; mollitie corporis certare cum feminis, gressum frangere, gestu soluto et latere nudo incedere adolescentium specimen erat. Enerues, emolliti, quod nati fuerant inuiti manebant, expugnatores alienae pudicitiae, prodigi suae.' See also Eadmer, *Historia novorum in Anglia*, ed. M. Rule (London: Longman, 1884), pp 48-49.

⁴⁷ Bernard of Clairvaux, *De moribus*, VII, 27.

⁴⁸ Augustine of Hippo, *De civitate Dei*, ed. Bernard Dombart and Alphonse Kalb, Corpus christianorum series latina, 47 and 48, Turnhout 1955, xiv.28 (book/ch.).

expression in the choice of clothing, and the pursuance of vocation. It is a reminder too of the complete dependency of Creation upon Creator, all are dependent on the will of God.

On Consideration

The themes of appropriate authority and behaviour between spiritual and material spheres reach a denouement in Bernard's *On Consideration*. The text considers the office of the Pope and the appropriate things for him to 'consider'. Its recipient was Pope Eugenius III, Pope 1145-1153; the treatise composed in about 1150. Consideration was defined by Bernard as the process of living the injunction of Psalm 45.1 'Be still and know that I am God'. It is a psychological and anthropological treatise as well as an analysis of the social and religious role of the Pope. It is also a case study into the dangers, general and particular experience by the Pope in relation to the world. It is divided into Five Books: Book One, on the nature of the office; Book Two, consideration of himself; Book Three, on the things that are below him; Book Four on the things that are around him and Book 5 on the things that are above him - the nature of God.

Bernard's advice and admonitions are wide-ranging, but gravitate around the tensions between the active and contemplative life, made more acute by Eugenius's vocation as a Cistercian monk, and his peculiar position as Pope, surrounded by the vices of the world and some of their most devoted practitioners. Eugenius is urged to take Christ's lead in dealing with the ambitious: pursue and punish them as Christ did the money-changers in the temple.

Let such businessmen embarrass you, if that is possible; if not, give them reason to fear. You too have a whip. Let the moneychangers be afraid, and trust not in their money, but lose

confidence in it. Let them hide their money from you, knowing that you are more likely to throw it away than take it.⁴⁹

The Pope should not relax in luxury or wallow in pomp.⁵⁰ The inheritance passed from St Peter was not of gold or silver.

Bernard reminds Eugenius of Peter's words to the lame man at the temple Beautiful [*Speciosa*]: 'Silver and gold I have none; but what I have, I give thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise, and walk'.⁵¹ This remark in Acts is the prelude to the conversion of many by Peter and John, and a powerful series of statements on faith in Christ and God as that to which his human followers simply point. The larger purpose to which the Pope should dedicate himself is indicated in the direct comparison to Peter and the biblical hinterland in which the comparison is situated. If silver and gold are available to Eugenius they should be used not for pleasure but to meet the needs of the time. Then, as Bernard states, 'you will be using them as if you were not using them. These things are neither good nor bad when you consider the good of the soul, but the use of them is good, the abuse bad, solicitude for them is worse, and using them for profit is shameful'.⁵² The apostolic charge is not laid upon Eugenius for to institute material gain. Ministry,

⁴⁹ Bernard of Clairvaux, *De consideratione*, ed. H. Rochais and J. Leclercq, *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, vol. 3, *Tractatus et opuscula*, Rome 1963, 1.14 (book/ch.): 'Erubescant vultum tuum istiusmodi negotiatores, si fieri potest; si non, timeant. Et tu flagellum tenes. Timeant nummularii, nec fidant in nummis, sed diffidant; abscondant aes suum a te, scientes effundere quam accipere paratiorem'. English translation from Bernard of Clairvaux, *Five Books on Consideration*, trans. John Anderson and Elizabeth T. Keenan, Kalamazoo 1976.

⁵⁰ Bernard of Clairvaux, *De consideratione*, 2.10.

⁵¹ Acts 3.6: 'Petrus autem dixit: Argentum et aurum non est mihi: quod autem habeo, hoc tibi do: in nomine Jesu Christi Nazareni surge, et ambula'.

⁵² Bernard of Clairvaux, *De consideratione*, 2.10: 'Sic eris utens illis, quasi non utens. Ipsa quidem, quod ad animi bonum spectat, nec bona sunt, nec mala; usus tamen horum bonus, abusio mala, sollicitudo peior, quaestus turpior'.

not dominion, must dominate his leadership. Most importantly, the worldly economy must be placed at the disposal of the spiritual.⁵³

The Pope should be mindful of his background and birth, rather than seeking to be a person he is not. ‘Were you born wearing this mitre/ Were you born glittering with jewels or florid with silk, or crowned with feather, or covered with precious metals’.⁵⁴ Bernard moves however, not to a comment on social mobility but to the first parents, developing an analogy of the leaves with which Adam and Eve cast around themselves having eaten of the tree of knowledge, recalling perhaps his comments on episcopal dress. Eugenius is enjoined to tear off the covering ‘which hides your shame but does not heal your wound’, and in so doing to destroy the pretence of fleeting glory and temporal status. Later Eugenius is encouraged to put on his garments of glory and to contemplate again the illustrious founder of his see, Peter who is never known to have travelled with the trappings of the attendants, rich clothing, servants and finery.

The operations of the worldly economy also form part of Bernard’s consideration for the things that are around the Pope, as he moves to Book Four. The life of the poor, Bernard states, is sown in the streets of the rich. Silver glistens in the mud; people run to it from every direction and it is picked up not by the man who is more in need but by the stronger, or by the one who happens to run faster.⁵⁵ Specific examples of good behaviour by leading clerics are given. One such is Martin of Cibo, who had served a legate in Dacia, and emerged poor; offered a horse by the bishop of Pisa, he returned when the bishop asked for a favour in a legal suit. ‘Is it not an event from another century’, Bernard asks, ‘that a legate has returned from the land of gold

⁵³ Bernard of Clairvaux, *De consideratione*, 2.10.

⁵⁴ Bernard of Clairvaux, *De consideratione*, 2.18.

⁵⁵ Bernard of Clairvaux, *De consideratione*, 5.5.

without gold, that he has travelled through the land of silver and not known silver, and above all that he has immediately returned a gift which could have been suspect?⁵⁶ Geoffrey of Chartres, legate to Aquitaine is recalled also. Bernard was with him when he was presented with a sturgeon by a priest, and asked the costs – he ended up giving five solidi to the reluctant and shame-faced priest

Another time, when we were in a certain village the lady of that village as a sign of reverence offered him with a towel two or three dishes which were beautiful even though made of wood. This man of scrupulous conscience examined them for some time and praise them, but he did not agree to accept them. When would he have accepted silver dishes who refused wooden ones?⁵⁷

Eugenius is instructed to value himself about his possessions; but gravity is urged rather than austerity – the former renders you hateful the latter is absent renders you contemptible. Moderation in all things is the best. Bernard moves in the fifth book to a more theological contemplation, emphasising the contingent nature of created existence to the Creator. Consideration of the divine can involve three modes, the practical (using the senses), scientific (focusing on the discovery of God) and speculative (freeing itself for the contemplation of God).⁵⁸ It is this exercise to which the smaller examples, the discussion of the behaviour of individuals and communities, point and by which all else is underpinned.

⁵⁶ Bernard of Clairvaux, *De consideratione*, 4.13: ‘Nonne alterius saeculi res est, redisse legatum de terra auri sine auro, transiisse per terram argenti et argentum nescisse, donum insuper, quod poterat esse suspectum, illico reiecisse?’

⁵⁷ Bernard of Clairvaux, *De consideratione*, 4.14 (V): ‘Item cum essemus in quodam oppido, domina illius oppidi obtulit ei pro devotione cum manutergio duas vel tres paropsides pulchras, ligneas tamen, quas aliquamdiu intuens homo scrupulosae conscientiae, laudavit eas, sed non acquievit accipere Quando argenteas recepisset, qui ligneas refutavit?’

⁵⁸ Bernard of Clairvaux, *De consideratione*, 5.3-4.

Concluding Reflections

Bernard was all too well acquainted with the mechanisms of worldly power, in curial circles ecclesiastical as much as secular and the costumes and settings of its political drama, public and private. His commentary on the material and spiritual economies reflects and is marked by tension and ambivalence, antitheses and apparent paradoxes. While twelfth century mores might be described as inclining to moderation, Bernard's texts and concerns stand as reminder that for moderation to be proposed extremes have to be imagined or witnessed and that moderation is in some ways comparative to these extremes. This tension Bernard exhibits in himself, familiar with courtly practice, but an equally fervent and ascetic monk, dedicated scriptural exegete and compassionate father/mother to his monastic charges.

Spiritual and material economy was, for Bernard, a powerful heuristic device, and an exploration of the role of economy in his thought sheds light on characteristic aspects of his theological expression, from soteriology to ecclesiology. In addition it illustrates the complexities and changes in wider contemporary medieval understanding of the relationship between the material and the spiritual, and what Bernard sought to confront. It is not a theme which has occasioned any particular, or specific, emphasis in secondary scholarship.⁵⁹

A final reflection revisits Geoffrey of Auxerre's insistence that renunciation of the world was the first step to monastic life. Questions concerning renunciation, worldly riches, and faith, in the

⁵⁹ The literature on Bernard is vast, as outlined in Anthony N. S. Lane, *Saint Bernard Theologian of the Cross*, Kalamazoo 2013, 11ff. Order and economy are relevant to Bernard's thought on the atonement, Mary, monasticism, mystical theology, and his active political role, which represent dominant areas of focus for Bernardine studies. To date nothing deals explicitly with the implications of juxtaposing spiritual and material economies.

context of the transitory nature of earthly life, form important considerations in Bernard's thought. Lying at the root of this ability to renounce in the midst of plenty is the simultaneously complex and simple relationship evoked by Bernard between the material and the spiritual in the context of order. The conjunction and clash between the two provided an essential spur for his theological vision, its frequent formulation expressive of the broader, temporally unresolved tension between the limited capacities of humanity to live according to its first creation, and the hope of salvation.