

BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX: GOD, EVIL AND SUFFERING

BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX: GOD EVIL AND SUFFERING

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines Bernard of Clairvaux's thought on God, Evil and Suffering, in selected writings. Specifically, my aim is to establish whether or not the abbot of Clairvaux used the privation argument in his discussion of evil and suffering. The thesis is divided into two parts. Chapter One introduces Bernard and places him in context. It establishes that Bernard was familiar with Augustine's Confessions and a number of theologians who used the privation argument. It also discusses his approach to writing and the influence monastic theology and monastic literary genres had on his work. Chapter two explores variations of Bernard's account of the Fall, in order to judge who were the central players, why did Adam fall and what are the terms employed by Bernard to describe the Fall. It also examines Satan's role in Bernard's theology. The focus around which my evaluation revolves is J.B. Russell's claim that the abbot of Clairvaux, like most mystics, made use of the privation argument in his discussion of evil. Chapter two also asks what did Bernard have to say about human nature as a result of the Fall and does his theology of conversion and contemplation describe the restoration of a lack in human nature.

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INTRODUCTION

The problem of evil raises serious difficulties in Christianity because of the nature of reality and the Christian conception of God. God is all good, all knowing and all powerful, but if God is all good, he does not will evil. If he is all powerful, he can abolish evil. Evil exists. Therefore either God is not all good or he is not all powerful. This problem is further compounded by the declaration that God is love.

In his study of the history of the personification of evil mainly in Christianity, Jeffrey Burton Russell devotes some time to the question of evil and the mystics. He divides them into two groups, and distinguishes those associated with the line of Augustine and those associated with the line of Dionysius. He concludes that "the mystics, like many other theologians, were drawn to embrace the old and untenable argument that evil was privation,"¹ and although they felt the devil's presence more acutely than

¹ Jeffrey Burton Russell, Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 286.

most they did not make him a central figure in their theology.²

Russell places Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), a twelfth century monk and mystic, in the line associated with Augustine and includes him among those who utilise the privation argument in their discussion of evil.³ Russell's characterization is partially correct. While Bernard's theology implies a battle between Satan and God in its background, it is true that the devil is not a central figure in his account of original sin and humankind could have fallen without him. But contrary to Russell's claim, he makes no use of the privation argument to cope with the presence of evil in the world. In the texts examined: Sermons on the Song of Songs, On Grace and Free Choice, On Conversion, and Sermons on the Psalm 'He Who Dwells' Bernard is acutely aware of the evil, profound suffering and affliction that are present in the world. While he follows a number of Augustinian developments in his consideration of evil, it is precisely in the use of the privation argument and metaphysical language of being and nonbeing that

² Ibid., pp. 292-293.

³ Ibid., p. 286.

Bernard's discussion of evil abandons the tradition of Augustine. For example, in the Augustinian tradition the privation argument is utilized to answer the question whether or not evil has substantive form, but this question is not raised by Bernard. In contrast the main focus of his discussion of evil lies within the personal domain. It revolves around the relationship between God and humankind and that which destroys this relationship, sin. In privative terms sin may be considered as a turning of the human will from being to nonbeing. Bernard does not describe sin in this way; instead he speaks of the will turning from the divine will to do the will of Satan.

Although much of the following analysis centers around theodical questions, I refrain from using the word theodicy in relationship to Bernard's work. Deriving from two Greek words, theos (God) and dike (justice), the term means 'the vindication of the divine attributes.'⁴ G.W. Leibniz is well known for having introduced the term in a time and context quite different from Bernard's. Concerned with providing a defence of the goodness of God in the face

⁴ Michael Stoeber, Evil and the Mystic's God. (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1992), p. 35.

of evil and the doubts of a religious sceptic, Leibniz's thought is filled with metaphysical speculation that consciously wrestles with the problem of God and evil.⁵

Bernard's focus is quite different. We find, in his works, sustained attempts to understand and offer explanations of God's dealings with humankind and the problem of evil and suffering. There are pointed attempts to maintain God's justice, but generally the abbot of Clairvaux is not concerned with the religious sceptic, or with justifying God's goodness in the face of evil. Described as "love's first poet and theologian,"⁶ St. Bernard wrote of love in Letter 11, in 1124 or 1125, and hence forward the theme recurs in all his writings until his death.⁷ As "a theologian of the search of God,"⁸ much of his writing centers on conversion, or return to God, which may culminate in contemplation. Neither conversion nor contemplation can

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Jean Leclercq, Monks and Love in Twelfth Century France. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 15.

⁷ Ibid., p. 99.

⁸ Basil Pennington, ed. Bernard of Clairvaux: Studies Commemorating the Eight Centenary of his Canonization. Cistercian Studies 28. (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1977), p. viii.

be understood apart from Bernard's familiarity with Christian notions of the goodness of Creation, the Fall of humankind and its consequences, and the fulfillment of the human being's life lying in a future lived in union with God. He maintains that God is all good, all powerful and all knowing, but above all the divine substance is charity.⁷ These notions are of particular significance in Bernard's discussion of evil and suffering.

The argument against Russell's claim that Bernard uses the privation argument in his discussion of evil and suffering here is divided into two parts. The first chapter introduces Bernard and places him in context. Generally the monastic context is the most significant factor guiding his discussion of evil and suffering. The second chapter analyses the texts mentioned above. Although a number of definite Augustinian influences are found, there is no trace of the privation argument. Bernard does make use of an ontological framework, for example, he speaks of substance, the soul, and the will, but he refrains from using the

⁷ Bernard of Clairvaux, Liber de diligendo Deo. Trans. On Loving God. Trans. and intro. Robert Walton. The works of Bernard of Clairvaux, V; Treatises II. Cistercian Fathers Series 13. (Washington, D.C.: Cistercian Publications, 1974), p. 127. XII:35.

metaphysical language of being or nonbeing. I conclude with some reflections on Bernard's thought on evil and suffering.

Chapter One

BERNARD'S LIFE AND WORK IN CONTEXT

Bernard was a surprisingly influential twelfth century figure. The surprise arises because he was a monk and as such was vowed to a hidden life in the cloister. In spite of this, he participated, to greater and lesser degrees, in the evolution of the three most innovative and formidable institutions to arise out of twelfth century France: the expansion of the Cistercian way of life and the reform of Cluniac monasticism, the second Crusade, and the new schools of learning and the growing universities.¹⁰ These activities involved Bernard in many of the religious-political controversies and theological conflicts of the Europe of his day, necessitating long absences from Clairvaux and extended travel throughout Europe. The years 1130-1150 span the period of Bernard's most intense activity away from the monastery. Although these activities may have provided him with the opportunity to clarify and write about some of his ideas on evil and suffering, they were not the

¹⁰ R. W. Southern, The Making of the Middle Ages. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1953), pp. 17-20.

years or events that formed his thought. Essentially his thought was formed many years prior to these embroilments and is largely indebted to the influence of his monastic profession. Therefore I propose to draw a biographical sketch of Bernard's life. This will serve as an introduction to Bernard and in passing will highlight the possible influence that the canons of St. Vorles had on Bernard's preference for a literary approach to writing rather than a more systematic approach. Another significant factor in his life was the twelfth century idea that the spiritual realm is superior to the temporal, and therefore the temporal realm was subordinate to the spiritual. This was linked to the prevalent Christian idea that humankind had a particular end, willed by divine decree which lay ultimately in humankind's union with God. Bernard was deeply committed to this notion, it motivates many of his activities and is a fundamental premise of all his thought.

After discussing his biography, I pay particular attention to the monastic milieu because there are a number of influences within it which are of particular relevance to the approach Bernard takes in his considerations of evil and suffering. These influences are discussed under the headings of Bernard the Monk, the Reader, the Writer, the

Monastic Theologian and Monastic Theology.

Before placing the abbot of Clairvaux in context, it must be noted that generally it is agreed that we have no up to date biography of Bernard.¹¹ There are two reasons for this: first, he has been the source of considerable interest to scholars this century and extant biographies are out dated; and second, many of the historical studies done on him to date have used the Vita Prima as a reliable historical source. In recent years, a better understanding of patristic and medieval literary genres illuminates the weakness of this approach. The Vita Prima is a hagiographical text, written to further the cause of Bernard's canonization and to encourage and offer a model of virtue for the believer.¹² Thus, its purpose is to edify and while we indirectly learn about this period and current notions of sainthood, fundamentally it is not a historical

¹¹ See, for example, Michael Casey, Athirst for God. (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1988) p. 5. Jean Leclercq, A Second Look at Saint Bernard. trans. Marie-Bernard Said. (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1990) pp. 1-21, and Adrian H. Bredero, "St. Bernard and the Historians" In Saint Bernard of Clairvaux: Studies Commemorating the Eight Centenary of his Canonization. M. Basil Pennington, ed. (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1977) pp. 27-62.

¹² Bredero, "St. Bernard and the Historians" p. 50.

biography.

Nonetheless, it is possible to elaborate on some of the details of the abbot's life. He was born in Fontaines, France, in 1090, to a family of the lower aristocracy. His mother, Aleth, had a number of connections with aristocratic families in France as the daughter of Bernard of Montbard. His father, Tescelin the Red, was a military man who had a small castle less than four kilometres from Dijon. Bernard was the third son of seven children and he lost his mother in 1103 or 1104, as he entered adolescence. Educated by the canons of St. Vorles at Chatillon-sur-Seine, his later writings indicate his genius and the excellence of his education, but unfortunately we know little about this stage of his training. None of the writings we have that were penned by Bernard pre-date his monastic profession, but Leclercq suggests that these works indicate that Bernard's education leaned more toward literature than dialectic. The latter was being elaborated in the urban schools of his day and was later to become known as 'scholasticism.' The former continued to hold pride of place with the canons at

St. Vorles.¹³ While Bernard never became a dialectician, especially as the term is applied to the systematic question and answer reasoning of the scholastic schools, he never opposed dialectic or the arguments of reasoning as such. In fact, he occasionally made use of them in his own writing.¹⁴ However, Bernard had a pronounced preference for poetic prose and dramatic effect which sometimes meant that he sacrificed precision and clarity in order 'to move the heart' of his reader. The implications of his writing style for his discussion of evil and suffering are considered in more detail in the section on the influences of monasticism on his thought. Suffice to say here that the canons of St. Vorles seem to have planted and nurtured a seed in Bernard that flowered in his later years as he developed his talent for writing and applied himself to monastic literary genres.

The times lead us to expect that Bernard underwent some form of military training, but he was exempted from it

¹³ Jean Leclercq, Bernard of Clairvaux and the Cistercian Spirit. trans. Clair Lavoie. Cistercian Studies Series: Number sixteen. (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1976), pp. 14-15.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 58.

and completed his education.¹⁵ He had consistent health problems, particularly of the digestive tract,¹⁶ but in spite of these he enjoyed times of extraordinary energy and vitality which are seen repeatedly throughout his life.

To a man of many talents and good education, the twelfth century offered many avenues of opportunity. Bernard chose the monastery and probably entered Citeaux around 1113. He also was a spark behind the decision of at least thirty others to do likewise. These recruits included three of his brothers, while his father, remaining brothers and sister joined the monastic community at a later date.¹⁷

Two years after his entrance to Citeaux, Bernard left as a professed monk, appointed abbot of the daughter house to be founded at Clairvaux, in Champagne.¹⁸ Clairvaux was one of the first foundations of Citeaux, and during the lifetime of Bernard it directly spawned as many as sixty-eight foundations in places as far apart as the British

¹⁵ Casey, Athirst. p. 7.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁷ Watkin Williams, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux. (Great Britain: Manchester University Press, 1935, reprint. 1953.) p. 12.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 18.

Isles, France, Germany, Italy, Denmark, Portugal, Spain, Sardinia, Belgium, Sicily, and Sweden.¹⁹ Vast amounts of time, energy, and resources were needed from Clairvaux to effect this kind of expansion, and many of Bernard's travels involved the promotion and establishment of the Cistercian monastic life.²⁰ Besides the monasteries that were founded directly by Clairvaux, there were the foundations that arose from Clairvaux's daughters. In 1153, at the time of the abbot's death, at least one hundred and sixty-four monasteries were directly affiliated with Clairvaux.²¹ Clearly Bernard was deeply committed to the Cistercian way of life. He remained the abbot of Clairvaux until his death in 1153; but due to his prolonged absences after 1130 Godfrey de la Roche was appointed prior.

Although devoted to the promotion of the Cistercian way of life, Bernard's interest and activities in the monastic and religious life extended beyond this sphere. He encouraged his friend William of St. Thierry, without success, to remain a reformer inside the circle of Cluniacs,

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 94-95.

²⁰ Bredero, "St Bernard and the Historians" p. 61.

²¹ Leclercq, Cistercian Spirit. p. 16.

and he wrote a wonderful satire, the Apologia, at William's request on the known excesses in the Benedictine way of life in France.²² He was more successful with Suger, abbot of the Cluniacs at St. Denis, and persuaded him to promote reform there and at the abbeys of Argentueil and St. Genevieve.²³ There was sustained correspondence between himself and Peter the Venerable concerning the monastic way of life. Bernard also wrote at the request of other religious orders. For example, Prior Guy and his brethern, the Carthusians (a partly eremitic and partly cenobitic order) had requested that Bernard write them concerning perfect love. Much of Bernard's reply is found in a larger work On Loving God. His monastic concerns included nuns. He actively sought to secure their material needs, not only for the nuns of his own order but also the nuns of other observances, such as the Benedictines at Jully. Moreover, a number of his letters reveal his interest in lay peoples' affairs.²⁴

To these activities we must add Bernard's

²² Williams, Saint Bernard. p. 62.

²³ Ibid., pp. 223-225.

²⁴ Leclercq, Cistercian Spirit. pp. 44-49.

embroilments in religious politics from 1130-1139. During this time he was deeply involved in the division in Europe caused by the controversy over the Papacy. He, along with Peter the Venerable and Suger, supported Innocent II against Anacletus II judging him to be the most virtuous man of the two. To try to ease the conflict and support Innocent's claim, Bernard travelled extensively throughout France, Germany and Italy.²⁵

Between 1139 and 1140 Bernard became involved in a doctrinal conflict with Abelard at the request of William of St. Thierry. This conflict, centering on ecclesial, monastic and doctrinal matters, continues to engage scholars to the present day. The doctrinal conflict was over the Trinity, the second person of the Trinity, Christ's natures and his relationship to the Father, why the Incarnation, God's goodness and power, and sin.²⁶ While this controversy

²⁵ Ibid., p. 56.

²⁶ See, for example, Leclercq, Cistercian Spirit. pp. 58-61. Edward F. Little "Relations between St. Bernard and Abelard before 1139" in Bernard of Clairvaux: Studies On the Eighth Centenary of his Canonization. pp. 155-168, and specially Edward Little. "Bernard and Abelard at the Council of Sens, 1140" in Bernard of Clairvaux: Studies presented to Dom Jean Leclercq. (Washington, DC: Consortium Press, Cistercian Publications, 1977) pp. 55-67, where some of the doctrinal conflict in particular is discussed.

is relevant to the topic of this thesis, it is beyond the scope of the present study. In attempting a limited evaluation of its relevance for Bernard's discussion of evil and suffering two points can be made. First, Bernard understood Abelard to advance the position that free choice by itself suffices for something good.²⁷ As early as 1124, or shortly hereafter, in his work On Grace and Free Choice Bernard had argued that free choice since the Fall is not sufficient for something good. Without grace it can neither will the good, nor do the good.

The second significant feature of the conflict is Bernard's insistence on the limitations of reason in the face of God's mystery. God has secrets that are impenetratable to the human mind, and Bernard upbraids Abelard for reckless discussion of sacred matters, and derision of the Fathers who felt that such matters were better allowed to rest than an attempt made to solve them.²⁸ The notion of mystery is, as Leclercq points out, a

²⁷ Little, "Bernard and Abelard at the Council of Sens, 1140" pp. 63-64.

²⁸ Bruno Scott James, trans. The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux. (London: Burns and Oates, 1953), p. 316. Letter 242

fundamental one in monastic thought and has a long and honoured tradition in monastic theology. These two aspects of the conflict indicate that much of Bernard's thought was formed prior to 1139 and owes a great deal to monastic theology.

Other doctrinal disputes include those with Gilbert of Poitiers over God and his essence, the distinction between God and his essence and between God and his attributes, and the question "Is God identical with 'divinity'?"²⁹ He argued against Arnold of Brescia and his views on the papacy.³⁰ In his later years he preached against an increasingly influential Catharism, disputing their doctrines on ecclesial hierarchy and authority, baptism and marriage.³¹

In 1140, Bernard interfered in the election of the new Archbishop of York, and tried to mediate an unsuccessful reconciliation between King Louis VII of France and the Pope. In 1146, he began to preach in favour of the

²⁹ Leclercq, Cistercian Spirit. p. 61.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 61-63.

³¹ Casey, Athirst. pp. 14-15 and Sermons sixty-three to sixty-six of the Sermons on the Song of Songs.

Second Crusade. His preaching aroused support for the Crusade, but the Crusade failed and Bernard was blamed.³² Bernard quit public life in 1150, three years before his death in 1153.

Thus we can see that the abbot of Clairvaux was no stranger to controversy and was very passionate and tenacious in disputes. Sometimes slow to pick up on an issue, once he was convinced of its importance he had great powers to pursue it to a resolution. However we may judge his involvement in these areas he was undoubtedly a man of extraordinary talent and energy. He was involved in the three innovations of the France of his time: he actively preached the second Crusade, he did much to expand Cistercian monasticism, and his conflicts with Abelard and Gilbert of Poitiers in part reflect a negative response to aspects of the new learning. To comment on these activities with any depth is beyond the scope of the present study, but they give us some insight into the man Bernard and the kinds of activities he was capable of.

Looking at Bernard's life in its totality we realise

³² Casey, Athirst. pp. 14-15.

that he truly lived the life of a monk for only two years.³³ The problem was that although vowed to a life hidden in the cloister, he spent a considerable amount of his time away from Clairvaux engaged in matters not directly related to the monastery. Always returning to Clairvaux, the ambiguity of his position was not lost to him. In Letter 326, addressed to the Carthusian prior of Portes, Bernard describes himself as "a sort of modern chimaera, neither cleric or layman. I have kept the habit of a monk, but I have long ago abandoned the life."³⁴ Moving words from a man who was so devoted to monasticism, but his position was not unique in his time. Peter the Venerable, for example, was also involved in embroilments outside the monastery of Cluny, most notably the Papal schism,³⁵ and the election of the bishop of Langres in which he and Bernard were on opposing sides.³⁶

What sort of factors allowed for the prominent

³³ Leclercq, Cistercian Spirit. p. 37.

³⁴ James, Bernard's Letters. p. 402. Letter 326. James defines a chimaera as "a triple-bodied monster, lion before, she-goat in the middle and a serpent behind."

³⁵ Williams, Bernard of Clairvaux. p. 130.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 159-163.

position Bernard occupied in twelfth century European life, and do they have any bearing on his treatment of evil and suffering? Although this was a violent period, relative to the centuries prior to the twelfth century it was peaceful. This peace allowed for the cultivation of a great deal of new land, the improvement of agricultural methods and the art of estate management.³⁷ These all assisted the tremendous expansion of Cistercian monasticism in Bernard's lifetime. The relative peace of his century also allowed the monks to develop an efficient and continuous courier system³⁸ which kept Bernard informed of much that transpired in Europe and allowed him to disseminate his views, advice and opinion on a vast range of issues.

Geographically, his activities took him from France to Italy and Germany. Although he did not travel to England, he became involved in English religious and political matters. In many cases we find Bernard speaking with what could be described as a prophetic ardour that nonetheless fails to disguise a powerful tendency to

³⁷ Southern, Middle Ages. p. 44.

³⁸ Leclercq, Cistercian Spirit. p. 52.

dominate.³⁹ Thus education combined with personality played a part in Bernard's ascendancy as a powerful twelfth century figure. While these factors allowed Bernard to be influential, and exposed him to many facets of human life, their influence on his thought of evil and suffering are unclear.

The question why does Bernard display a general lack of hesitation in becoming frequently embroiled in various religious and political controversies provides a clearer answer to what guided his approach to life, the orientation of his theology and his particular emphasis in relationship to evil and suffering. Leclercq provides us with a clue to the answer when he speaks about the ideas of the twelfth century. Undoubtedly, the spiritual and the temporal realms are distinct, but they cannot be separated. The spiritual is responsible to guide the temporal. Therefore it is superior because it deals directly with humankind's end which is to fulfill God's will. That there is a prescribed goal to human life, that it is willed by divine decree, and is unalterable, is the foundation upon which Bernard builds his life and his theology. The fulfillment of the goal lies

³⁹ Ibid., p. 53.

in humankind's union with God. Bernard was a monk, an abbot and a contemplative. His life was particularly devoted to the search for God, and to preparing for a foretaste of humankind's fulfillment in this life. Thus the particular emphasis of much of his theology is on the relationship between God and the human being. Sin causes a division in this relationship and may ultimately destroy it. Hence Bernard's considerations of evil are limited to the personal domain, and particularly to sin. It is to aspects of Bernard's monasticism that we now turn to uncover some of the predominant influences on his considerations of evil and suffering.

1/ BERNARD THE MONK

The monastic order Bernard chose, while dependent on the Rule of St. Benedict which had spread throughout Europe in the seventh and eighth centuries,⁴⁰ was essentially a new order. The eleventh century saw a widespread and rapid growth in the eremitical vocation. Paradoxically these men

⁴⁰ Jean Leclercq, Francois Vandenbroucke and Louis Bouyer, A History of Christian Spirituality II: The Spirituality of the Middle Ages. (London: Burns and Oates, 1961) English trans. Burns and Oates 1968. p. 49.

who sought solitude became famous and found themselves surrounded by other men who wished to pursue the same life. This necessitated a communal existence and the group of hermits adopted the rule of St. Benedict and current monastic customs.⁴¹ A number of these hermits gathered together in the Burgundian forest of Colan (Molesme). After a number of years, lax recruits and generous benefactions made their strict way of life impossible, and in 1098, twenty monks left Molesme and headed for Citeaux.

Generally, the monks benefitted from the peace and growth of the eleventh century. Abbots, who were frequently not monks, tended to affairs outside the monastery. The monasteries became familiar to all kinds of pilgrims, visitors, and businessmen. Gradually they lost a long standing balance between prayer, manual work, and reading, the three pillars of Benedictine monastic life. The men who headed for Citeaux in the last years of the eleventh century adopted Benedict's Rule in its most literal form and dropped excesses in clothing, food, and liturgy. Once more the abbot became the father of the community. All feudal and

⁴¹ David Knowles, Christian Monasticism. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., World University Library, 1969), p. 65.

economic ties with society were broken. Child oblates were no longer accepted, and postulancy was restored along with the full year's noviciate. Therefore, recruits were adult. This factor led to changes in writing and ways of teaching at their monasteries.⁴² Manual labour was reinstated and the communities became self supporting.

Bernard entered this new community fifteen years after its foundation, in 1113. When he left two years later as a professed monk, he had been appointed abbot of the daughter house to be founded, Clairvaux.⁴³

As abbot of the community, Bernard was the spiritual father and many of his shorter writings reveal his thoughts on this role, and on monasticism more generally. The particular task of the abbot in a monastery is "the care of souls." Benedict enumerates two principles for this task: "first he [the abbot] should show them by deeds more than words, what is good and holy. To those who understand, he

⁴² Leclercq, Monks and Love. pp. 10-15.

⁴³ Williams, Bernard of Clairvaux. p. 18.

may expound verbally the Lord's directions."⁴⁴ Thus, as the abbot of Clairvaux, Bernard was particularly concerned with the individual and his spiritual growth, what is likely to further it and what is likely to stunt, or even destroy, it. This is reflected in Bernard's considerations of evil and is one of the reasons Bernard's discussion focuses so clearly on sin.

Bernard was not without his faults in dealing with his charges, as he himself reveals in Letter 73. This letter is a reply to Guy, abbot of Troisfontaines, a daughter house of Clairvaux's, and was circulated in the monastic community during Bernard's lifetime.⁴⁵ It indicates that Guy was troubled by the way he had dealt with one of his more difficult charges at Troisfontaines. In replying to him, Bernard elaborates on his own experience with a particular monk at Clairvaux. He became angry with the monk and hastily ordered him to leave the monastery.

⁴⁴ The Rule of St. Benedict. Trans. with intro. and notes by Anthony C. Meisel and M. L. del Mastro. (Garden City, New York: A Division of Doubleday and Co. Inc., Image Books, 1975) chapter 2. (Henceforth cited as RB with chapter number.)

⁴⁵ James, Bernard's Letters. pp. 101-103. Leclercq draws attention to this letter in Cistercian Spirit. pp. 41-42.

Distressed by his own action and distrustful of his personal judgement in this matter, because of his feelings toward the monk, he decided to bring the matter to the brethren. They ruled against him judging that he had not acted according to the Rule. Therefore the monk was readmitted to Clairvaux with his privileges intact. Here we see a more human side of Bernard and catch a glimpse of some of the difficulties that must be involved in living a monastic life. In the incident we also appreciate another aspect of the importance of Benedict's Rule for Bernard's life and thought. It was not only studied, but lived. We will return to Benedict's Rule in our consideration of Bernard the Reader.

Bernard the monk was also Bernard the contemplative; indeed, according to Bernard, contemplation is the crown of monastic life.⁴⁴ "Perhaps you too long for the repose of contemplation, and you do well;" he comments in Sermon 46 of the Sermons of the Song of Songs. In this particular work Bernard devotes a great deal of attention to the development of his contemplative theology. His life as a contemplative profoundly influenced the orientation of his theology

⁴⁴ Etienne Gilson, The Mystical Theology of Saint Bernard. Trans. A. H. C. Downes. (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1940, rpt. 1990), p. 16.

generally, and his discussion of evil and suffering in particular.

Contemplation is the culmination of the process of conversion. Conversion itself is comprised of three stages: the purgative, the illuminative, and the unitive (or contemplative stage.) Great and bitter suffering marks the purgative stage of conversion. The soul feels profoundly her own wretchedness, her attraction for evil, her powerlessness in the face of her own sinfulness and urgently recognises her need for God. At this stage in the conversion process God acts as a double-edged sword. He is the Physician who relentlessly scourges the soul, wounding her in order to heal. He is also the Judge and Creator, two aspects that inspire awe and fear in the soul.⁴⁷

Crying from the depths of her desolation, the soul begins to experience the divine presence bringing some measure of consolation. This is the second stage:

⁴⁷ Sermons on Conversion: On Conversion, a Sermon to Clerics/ and Lenten Sermons on the Psalm 'He Who Dwells'. Trans. and intro. Marie-Bernard Said. (Michigan, Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1981), see On Conversion, a Sermon to Clerics I:1. (Henceforth cited parenthetically as Conv with chapter and verse.)

illumination. Reason⁴⁶ becomes increasingly enlightened, but finds himself battling with the will. Divided within, the individual experiences alternatively hope and despair: hope because of God's sustaining grace, despair because of the stubbornness of the will. At this stage God acts as a Teacher. He guides reason and reason's wooing of the will, enticing the will to consent to reason's promptings. (Conv VI:8-XII:24) Much of the suffering of the purgative stage of conversion has eased.

The final stage of conversion is contemplation or union with God. Contemplation has three distinct phases, or rooms, according to Bernard.⁴⁷ Strictly speaking, it is in this stage that the soul feels herself to be in the divine presence. While the soul does not lose consciousness of herself, the dominant experience is of the Other. In the first stages of contemplation God again plays the role of

⁴⁶ Bernard personifies reason as male and the will as female in On Conversion.

⁴⁷ The following remarks on the three rooms of contemplation are taken from Sermon 23:5-16 in Sermons on the Song of Songs II trans. Kilian Walsh and intro. Jean Leclercq. (Kalamazoo, Michigan and London and Oxford: Cistercian Publications, 1976). Henceforth references from the Sermons on the Song of Songs will be cited parenthetically, including chapter and verse.

Teacher. The soul has a sense of ease that is paradoxically accompanied by a sense of watchfulness and restlessness. This arises because in some indistinct way she knows that this is not the repose of contemplation. Her desire for union with God is stimulated and her longing for this becomes increasingly ardent. God is alternatively present and absent which makes the soul fretful and anxious.

The second phase of contemplation is one of sheer terror. Faced, as it were, with the utter transcendence and majesty of God, the soul finds herself in a chamber of horror. There is no rest here, and the soul quakes in fear. In this phase God is experienced as a Judge. This presence is utterly devoid of consolation and the soul is shattered. God purifies and is experienced as a consuming fire.

It is in the third phase that the soul finds the deep peace and repose of contemplation. God's presence is that of Lover and the soul is the beloved. Mysteriously, the majesty of God is transformed into love and the horror of his majesty is overcome.

In identifying the part that the conversion process and contemplation play in Bernard's theology, we recognise that his own experience of wretchedness and powerlessness

must be coupled with his exalted experiences of God.⁵⁰ Bernard did much to elucidate the way the spiritual life develops. Writing for monks he was aware of their suffering, but also of the dangers of a cooling of the first fires of conversion. The experiences of conversion are all part of the Christian journey in life according to Bernard. Contemplation is theoretically open to all, but in the world of daily living it is rare. Conversion and contemplation both bring the soul into contact with what Bernard considers the two main aspects of God: his Majesty and his Love (15:1). That God is love does not preclude his making tremendous, almost impossible, demands on the human individual, nor is his love always manifested in soothing and gentle ways. God's pursuit of the soul and the soul's growth are frequently painful and at times terrifying. Certain types of suffering are fundamental to growth in the spiritual life, according to Bernard, and thus there is a positive dimension to suffering. Bernard's profound sense of mystery, especially the mystery that surrounds the relations between God and humankind is undoubtedly the focus

⁵⁰ Jean Leclercq, "St. Bernard and Christian Experience" in Worship. 41 (1967) pp. 223.

of his thought. As such, Bernard considers the active move away from God on the part of the human being to be the greatest evil, and hence another reason for the emphasis on sin in his discussion of evil.

2/ BERNARD THE READER

It is not possible to be rigorously precise about Bernard's sources. Some, such as Biblical influences, are very obvious, but the monastic liturgical life includes excerpts from various writings of differing authors. The parts that are read at the various liturgies are chosen because they are related to the monastic life, but it is difficult to know if Bernard read any of an author's complete works, or to what extent he was familiar with an author's writings as a whole. He did not quote directly and many lines of his thought seem to have been so much a part of him that he was unaware that they came to him from elsewhere.⁵¹

Classical influences are found in his works. Gilson pays particular attention to Cicero's influence on Bernard's

⁵¹ Leclercq, Cistercian Spirit. pp. 24-26.

notions of "good-will, disinterestedness and the reciprocal character of love" in Bernard's mystical theology.⁵² We can presume that the canons at St. Vorles gave Bernard "his basic grounding" in the classics.⁵³

The Bible is the monk's book and the way Bernard uses and interweaves it in his writings is remarkable. His extensive Biblical knowledge deeply penetrates his thought, language, and imagery and gives his writing a rich poetic quality.⁵⁴ Remembering the cycles of prayer involved in monastic life, much of Bernard's knowledge of Scripture was tied to liturgical cycles, as well as his personal reading of the Bible. Thus his knowledge was very much a living part of his life and a staple of his religious culture. Combining liturgical and Biblical Latin, many of his quotations seem to come from the writings of the early Fathers of the Church, which Bernard would have heard at the Office, rather than directly from the prevalent Biblical text of the time, the Vulgate.⁵⁵

⁵² Gilson. Mystical Theology. pp. 6-13.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 23.

⁵⁴ Leclercq, Cistercian Spirit. pp. 23-24.

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 22-25.

Although we are unclear about the extent of Bernard's familiarity with Christian authors, we do have a general idea of authors who influenced him. These include St. Augustine, Origen and St. Ambrose. Bernard would also have been familiar with Gregory the Great, who had been monk himself and was highly regarded in monastic circles, St. Leo, St. Jerome, and St. Anselm. Direct links can be found to Gregory the Great, and Origen, whose works underwent a kind of a revival in the twelfth century, among the first Cistercians particularly.⁵⁶

Augustine's influence is of particular interest to us here. What is actually known about his influence on Bernard? Casey has researched the question and concluded that "the relationship between Bernard and Augustine is, in general, territory unexplored beyond the obvious."⁵⁷ Of Augustine's many writings it is clear that Bernard knew the Confessions, a number of Augustine's great sermons used in the liturgy, and well known phrases commonly in use.⁵⁸

That Augustine's Confessions was familiar to Bernard

⁵⁶ Casey, Athirst. pp. 29-30.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 29, n. 52.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 28.

is illuminating because we find some discussion of the privation argument in it. The question "whence evil" had dogged Augustine for many years of his life. At one stage, his Manichean period, he had believed that there were two substances: one was good and the other was evil. In time his understanding changed and he concludes in the Confessions that evil cannot be a substance because there is only one God and God is good. Moreover, he is the Creator and what he creates is good. If something lacks all good it does not exist, since everything which exists is good, but it is subject to corruption. That which is corrupted is deprived of good.⁵⁹ Here we have the beginning of the privation argument. Bernard may have been familiar with this but it will become apparent below that his discussion of evil does not proceed along these lines.

In reviewing possible influences on Bernard's thought further mention must also be made of The Rule of St. Benedict. It was extremely influential in Europe for a number of centuries, and these new Cistercians prided

⁵⁹ Saint Augustine, Confessions. Trans. and intro. R.S. Pine-Coffin (England: Penguin Books, 1961, reprt. 1982), VII:12.

themselves on their strict adherence to it. It was read daily,⁶⁰ and we have seen a number of examples of its use in Bernard's life. The Rule of St. Benedict stresses the value of humility in monastic life. "The first degree of humility is prompt obedience." The monk does not live as his desires or will dictate but according to "the direction and judgement" of the abbot (RB 5). Humility is necessary to "find that perfect love which casts out all fear." At this stage, the monk is "cleansed of sin and vice" and "he will no longer act out of the fear of Hell, but for the love of Christ" (RB 7). Monastic life revolves around bringing one's human will into harmony with the divine will. Benedict's rule is short and immensely practical. He advocates a personal battle with evil and it is from here in many respects that Bernard takes his cue in his discussion of evil. He tried to live according to this Rule and we can imagine that the Rule and his monastic experience decisively influenced his life and thought.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Casey, Athirst. p. 28.

⁶¹ Jean Leclercq, "St. Bernard and Christian Experience" pp. 222-233.

3/ BERNARD THE WRITER

Early in his career, Bernard was asked to write down what he taught his monks orally. The result was On the Degrees of Humility and Pride, his first treatise. Around this time he also wrote Four Homilies in Praise of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Two of his treatises are addressed to William of St. Thierry: the Apologia and On Grace and Free Choice. The Apologia was probably written around 1124, On Grace and Free Choice is also an early text. Later came On Loving God addressed to Hameric, Lord Chancellor of the Roman Church. The treatise In Praise of the New Knighthood is addressed to the Templars. On Precept and Dispensation was written at the request of the monks of Saint-Pere de Chartres, A Life of St. Malachy at the request of Irish monks. When a Cistercian monk became Pope, Eugenius III, Bernard wrote On Consideration and from 1135 until his death he undertook to write a series of Sermons on the Song of Songs. Incomplete at the time of his death, he had finished eighty-six sermons. Apart from these major works we have numerous letters, and other sermons that were unpublished,

i.e., not circulated by Bernard in his lifetime.⁶²

A born writer, he enjoyed trying his hand at a variety of genres--"satire, descriptive portraits, and aphorism, the parable, the liturgical office, legends of hagiography, the epistle, the sermon, the treatise and the Biblical commentary."⁶³ Therefore, when reading his works, we must be mindful of their individual character. In writing Bernard paid a great deal of attention to composition. At Clairvaux, he had secretaries and a chancellery who were in charge of his less personal letters. All his other letters and sermons he dictated word for word himself, especially his undelivered but published literary sermons. After this came the stage of editing. Monks usually read aloud so when Bernard wrote he was very attentive to how his work sounded. In his later years he polished and revised his published works, i.e., those that were in circulation in monastic circles in his lifetime, also paying great attention to and revising his letters.⁶⁴

Writing generally for a monastic audience, he

⁶² Leclercq, Cistercian Spirit. pp. 27-28.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 29.

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 29-35.

consciously used traditional and patristic sources and genres. Despite his many activities he worked hard at his writing, and although he constantly refers back to earlier writers and says he does not want to write anything new, it is generally agreed that his synthesis is novel and bears an original Bernardine stamp.⁴⁵ Although Bernard paid a great deal of attention to his writing, it is not systematic. Nor indeed does he mean it to be. Bernard wrote to 'move the heart' of his readers, to stimulate a desire for the search for God. To this end, he found poetry and Biblical language a suitable vehicle for the communication of his theology. In the following sections I pay attention to the differences between the scholastic and monastic genres and their significance for Bernard's discussion of evil and suffering.

4/ BERNARD THE MONASTIC THEOLOGIAN

To understand St. Bernard and some of the elements of his theology it is necessary to have some familiarity with monastic culture. St. Benedict (480-547) and St.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Gilson, Mystical Theology. pp. 31-32, and Leclercq in Cistercian Spirit. p. 26.

Gregory the Great (c. 540-604) provided the essential elements of Western monastic culture and the "decisive factors" which guided it.⁶⁶ Legend relates that St. Benedict's conversion was away from studies to the search for God, i.e., the monastic life. As a young man, born to a distinguished Italian family, he was sent to Rome to complete his education. Deeply troubled because many of his fellow-students fell into a life of vice, he decided to abandon his studies and devote himself to the search for God, alone.⁶⁷ In spite of this, his Rule allots a place to learning. Chapter 48 of his Rule is devoted to the subject of Daily Manual Labour. Benedict allots a significant amount of time to reading in this chapter, and understands the monastery to have its own library. Learning keeps one from being idle and enhances the search for God. Thus the monastic orientation to learning is significant. Knowledge is not to be separated from the search for, or the love of, God.

St. Gregory, the second great influence in western

⁶⁶ Jean Leclercq, The Love of Learning and the Desire for God. trans. Catherine Misrahi. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1961), reprt. 1988. p. 37.

⁶⁷ "Introduction" to The Rule of St. Benedict. p. 25.

monasticism, profoundly influenced the monastic spiritual tendency because of his structured reflection on the subject of Christian experience.⁶⁸ Gregory was the chief source of medieval spirituality, and Bernard's writing kept to many of the lines of Gregory's achievement, which greatly illuminated spiritual development.⁶⁹ Interestingly, Gregory uses the privation argument in his discussion of evil, and speaks of sin in terms of the will turning from being to nonbeing.⁷⁰ It will become apparent that Bernard does not follow this line of thought.

Under the influence of St. Benedict and St. Gregory monastic culture took on a definite eschatological flavour.⁷¹ Hence we find great emphasis placed on "Devotion to Heaven" in the literary artistic realm. Heaven is the place monks strive for, and the monastery offers a foretaste of it. This conception gives monastic culture and theology its characteristic form.⁷² Contemplation, which is so

⁶⁸ Leclercq, Love of Learning. p. 25.

⁶⁹ History of Christian Spirituality, II p. 3.

⁷⁰ Russell, Lucifer. pp. 95-96.

⁷¹ Leclercq, Love of Learning. p. 25.

⁷² Ibid., pp. 53-67.

essential to an understanding of monastic life, belongs to the eschatological order. This life only allows "imperfect participation in the sight of God." Union with God and true love of God can only be perfectly achieved in heaven.⁷³ Underlying the monk's understanding of life lies a profound eschatological basis which strongly shapes a monk's understanding and interpretation of this present life. Bernard inherits this understanding and provides his own synthesis of it. The remarkable forward looking movement of his theology has its source in monastic culture. We also find that, for Bernard, much of the suffering the monk experiences actually furthers his aspirations and journey on the path to true love of God.

Bernard also inherits and makes his own the patristic tradition's way of Biblical exegesis. The purpose of this tradition was to "transmit and explain the Bible." Monastic exegesis proceeds from Biblical experience. The monk reads Scripture and benefits from it. His reading is active, using his eyes, lips and ears, and its purpose is to attain to "wisdom and appreciation." In time, with constant effort, this type of reading greatly influences the

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 67-68.

religious psychology of the reader. Ideally, it leads to a longing for heaven, and the sacred text becomes inscribed on his body and soul. It will play a profound part in his thinking, interpretation of life, imagination and memory.⁷⁴

Reminiscence plays an important role in monastic exegesis.⁷⁵ One Biblical verse is explained by another which has the same word. The monks made use of lexica in their exegesis, and the works of ancient naturalists. The lexica contained philological meanings and gave etymologies of the names of places and persons. They belonged to a long and honoured tradition that extended back as far as the Hebrew Bible.⁷⁶ This is another aspect of Bernard's inheritance and his theology is profoundly affected by his association with monastic culture.

5/MONASTIC THEOLOGY

One of the first notable characteristics of monastic theology is determined by its place. Written in the

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 71-73.

⁷⁵ See, Love of Learning p. 87 n. 14.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 77.

monasteries as opposed to the urban schools, this theology has in view a monastic audience and is a prolongation of patristic theology.⁷⁷

Throughout the Middle Ages there were two types of schools: the monks' schools, and the clerical schools. The monks taught children. Having a marked contemplative tendency, their teaching is inseparable from a liturgical setting and preparation for a certain type of experience of God. In contrast, the clerical schools took adults who already had a liberal arts education and prepared them for their role as priests. This included the knowledge necessary for liturgical celebration, administration of sacraments, particularly penance, and for preaching. Scholastic theology originated and developed in the urban schools.⁷⁸ The two schools recognised their differences. Their orientation varies noticeably in two areas: first in the methodology used in Christian reflection, and second in the "subject matter for reflection."⁷⁹

In relation to method we find differences in modes

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 191.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 195.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 199.

of expression and the processes of thought. For the monks, the former are linked to style and literary genre which conform to patristic and classical tradition. Speaking in images and comparisons that are borrowed from the Bible, their language and technical terms are those of general use and Scripture. Biblical language allows for a certain obscurity and mystery that the monks sensed is essential to humankind's relationship with God. The scholastics used the language of the philosophers, from which they gathered their technical terms. Aiming at clarity, their writings are systematic, which cannot be said of the monks. The scholastics place great emphasis on the use of logic in their form of expression, while the monks are at great pains to develop their grammatical and literary skills.⁸⁰

In terms of thought processes the scholastics were engaging in the pursuit of new solutions to new problems. Monastic theologians tended to shy away from this, perhaps, as Leclercq says, because of their deep and living roots in an ancient tradition, and their consideration that submission to the Fathers is an act of humility.⁸¹ On a

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 199-201.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 201.

number of occasions we find Bernard stating triumphantly that he has not moved far from an ancient author's position, or that he is saying nothing new.

Because of its objective, monastic theology concentrates on two main areas "in which man's relations with God are most immediately apparent":⁸² the first is the history of salvation itself (the Benedictines studied this in particular and Bernard is heir to their work), and the second is the presence of God in humankind and humankind's presence before God (particularly studied by the Cistercians). But in many respects, Leclercq thinks that this is a question of accent because the Cistercians built on the Benedictine legacy.⁸³

The spiritual doctrine of monasticism in the Middle Ages is deeply influenced by St. Augustine's conception of inner illumination "which penetrates us from the light which the Word Incarnate brought into the world."⁸⁴ Origen, Cassian, Gregory the Great and St. Augustine all laid foundations for the Cistercian understanding of the image of

⁸² Ibid., p. 217.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 221.

God in humankind. Cistercian theology is a theology of "the mystery of love", i.e., of God's love for us, manifested in the "economy," or the history of salvation. Their "anthropology" reflects on the realization in us, and the application to each of us of this Love, our transformation to love by Love. The mystery of love is a matter for reflection, as is the mystery of grace, and what must be done for God which leads into the domain of morality.^{es}

Bernard is a monastic theologian and his great work Sermons on the Song of Songs, although unfinished, is a beautiful example of monastic theology. Not only mystical, his thoughts on contemplation presuppose a theory of the powers of the soul. This in turn presupposes a "history" of humankind and humankind's relationship to God which allows it a more universal significance. Thus, while monastic theology has a monastic audience in view, the very nature of its reflection takes it beyond the monastic world.

How does Bernard's association with the monastic milieu affect his discussion of evil and suffering? Generally monastic genres do not lend themselves to the systematic questioning and answering of the later scholastic

^{es} Ibid.

schools. Nor does monastic theology hold a place for purely academic speculation, i.e., knowledge that is divorced from the love of God. Therefore we do not find a systematic approach to evil in Bernard's works; rather, the theme of evil is one of many threads that run through his works.

Bernard writes specifically to 'move the heart' of his reader, in order to kindle or keep aflame the desire to search for God. Thus his language is poetic, dramatic and symbolic. While a number of Bernard's written works indicate that he was capable of writing with great clarity, he frequently tends to sacrifice precision in the effort to strike a chord in his reader that is other than an intellectual chord. His preference for poetic language and a more personal style of writing may account for his reluctance to use the language of being and nonbeing in his considerations of sin. Sin involves the turn of the human will from doing the will of a Being, God, to doing the will of another being, Satan.

Bernard tended to favour a dramatic style when writing which lends to a consideration of evil that treats its more dynamic elements. Bernard's discussion of evil revolves around the perpetration of evil as it is seen within the realm of human action, rather than a discussion

of evil that considers its more passive elements such as blindness and which may lend more fittingly to the language of privation and lack.

Because of his strong sense of mystery, Bernard also tends to place certain questions beyond the realm of human reason. Thus, we find in his works a reluctance to speculate about God's majesty. Bernard associates God's majesty with his justice or omnipotence, for example, but he emphasises that God's love is more properly within the realm of human reflection because of the Incarnation and the ongoing transformations God effects within individuals. Moreover, these aspects of the divine stimulate a response of love in the human being which activates and sustains the individual in his or her return to God. In relationship to union with God knowledge without love is useless. The fruit of the Spirit is knowledge and love. Only those who have both can participate in the divine life of the Trinity (8:5-6). Thus the focus of Bernard's theology, and his discussion of evil and suffering in particular, is on the relationship between God and humankind and what causes division in this relationship, sin.

CHAPTER TWO
BERNARD BETWEEN LOVE AND PAIN
HIS SERMONS ON THE SONG OF SONGS

J. B. Russell, as mentioned above, places Bernard in the line of Augustine in his discussion of evil and the mystics. Specifically, he identifies Bernard as a theologian whose discussion of evil centres around the privation argument. Hence, "evil does not really exist; it is only a lack, a privation.... Those who choose evil turn away from being to nonbeing."⁸⁶ Russell goes on to say that Anselm (1033-1109) is one of the first theologians to try to disentangle moral and ontological categories in his discussion of evil, without success, after Augustine. Anselm did distinguish between two types of privation. The first privation concerns the lack of divine perfection in created beings and is inevitable in a created cosmos. The second kind of privation has to do with the lack in something or someone of a quality that it ought to possess, e.g., the lack of an eye in a cow.⁸⁷ Thus the language used

⁸⁶ Russell, Lucifer. p. 96.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 163.

in the privation argument discusses being and nonbeing, and evil is characterised by an inevitable lack of divine perfection, or the lack of a quality or attribute that an object, animal or person should have.

In the following pages I argue that while Bernard does fall into line with Augustine to a large extent in his discussion of evil, he avoids any discussion of evil in terms of privation. The texts that I examined are devoid of any references to evil in relation to privation or to being and nonbeing. Bernard is not a metaphysician and considering the care he takes in his writing we can conclude that this reserve is by deliberate choice. In this chapter I propose to sketch a brief history of the Song of Songs within the Christian tradition up until Bernard's lifetime, introduce Bernard's Sermons on the Song of Songs, and discuss his considerations on God, sin and related themes.

A. ANTECEDENTS

The Song of Songs has a long history in Jewish and Christian sacred literature. Around 200 B.C.E., it was included in the Septuagint translation, and Rabbinical authorities prescribed its annual reading during the solemn celebration of Passover. Melito, bishop of Sardis, included it in the earliest known Christian list of the Old Testament canon (circa 170 C.E.).⁸⁸ For the early Fathers of the Church, it presented two problems: the first is that there is no mention of God in the text, and secondly, it celebrates the passionate joys and sorrows of two anonymous lovers.⁸⁹

The Jewish custom of reading passages from the Song of Songs during Passover and Sabbath to recall God's loving union with his people passed on to the liturgy of the Church. Initially Hippolytus, St. Ambrose, St. Cyril of Alexandria and others explained the baptismal rite and its

⁸⁸ Ann W. Astell, The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990) note 1, p. 1.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

symbols in relationship to the images found in the Song.⁹⁰ Origen identified the two problems mentioned above, and distinguishes between the literal and spiritual meaning of the text. The literal meaning veils the spiritual and he identifies the Bridegroom with Christ, and the Bride as either the Church or the soul. Thus the text refers to a mystical union between Christ and the Church, or between the Word and the soul. Origen's identification remains the basis for all subsequent interpretation of the Song.⁹¹

We can find direct links between Origen and Bernard when discussing the Song. It seems likely that Bernard read the Latin version of Origen's commentary when he was writing his own sermons, although he was highly suspicious of, and condemned, the errors of Origenism.⁹² Thus, while Bernard's commentary is original, he is indebted to Origen's commentary and the tradition following him.⁹³

Part of the tradition that Bernard may have been acquainted with is an anthology of St. Ambrose's comments on

⁹⁰ Leclercq, Monks and Love. pp. 37-38.

⁹¹ Astell, Song of Songs. pp. 2-4.

⁹² Casey, Athirst. p. 46.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 30.

the Song. St. Augustine also influenced Bernard's work on this text. Augustine seems to have regarded the book a difficult one, and followed Jerome's recommendation that it be left to the end when reading the Bible. His influence led St. Bernard to restrain his use of spousal imagery. It is likely that Bernard was familiar with Gregory the Great's Super Cantica canticorum expositio. Gregory followed the precedent set by Origen and speaks of the soul's union with God. Any influence Gregory's work had on Bernard is likely to have been diffuse rather than of direct literary dependence.⁹⁴

B. THE TEXT

Bernard's Sermons on the Song of Songs were written over a period of eighteen years. He started the work in 1135 and by 1153, the year of his death, he had finished eighty-five sermons leaving his last one, number eighty-six, incomplete. He had covered chapters 1-3:1 of the Song in

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 47-48.

his commentary.⁹⁵ Written during a period of prolonged absences from Clairvaux, there are limitations to the precision with which we can date the completion of individual sermons.

Jean Leclercq outlines the following as the most likely dates. Beginning them towards the end of 1135, during Advent, Bernard sent some of them in the summer of 1136 to a religious at the Chartreuse de Portes, named Bernard, asking his judgement about continuing his work.⁹⁶ Before his trip to Italy at the end of 1136, he had completed the first twenty-four sermons. When he returned from Rome in 1138, he wrote another redaction of sermon twenty-four. Sermons 65-66 were written after 1143 and before 1145, in reply to Eberwin, Provost of Steinfield in the Rhineland, who had asked Bernard to refute the Cathars on five points. Sermon 80 was written after 1148. It contains allusions to Gilbert de Poitiers and the Council of Rheims.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Jean Leclercq, Sancti Bernardi Opera IV. p. xv. (Henceforth cited as SBO with volume number.)

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. xvi.

Research subsequent to the critical edition of Bernard's works concludes that Sermon thirty-three was written before Lent of 1130 and sermons twenty-four to forty-nine were completed by 1145.⁷⁸ Thus we can gather the sermons into four groups. Sermons 1-24 were written by 1136. Sermons 24-49 were completed by 1145. Sermons 50-83 were written after 1145 and sermons 80-83 occupied the last years of the abbot's life.⁷⁹

A few words should be devoted to the subject of literary genre because the inclusion of the word "Sermon" in the title may be misleading. Upon reading Bernard's Sermons on the Song of Songs one is struck generally by the length and polish of the sermons, and a number of them appear particularly difficult. The sermon is the most common literary genre used in monastic circles. Recent studies conclude that monastic sermons can be classified in two ways. The first is the sermon that was composed for preaching and was orally delivered. Bernard composed many

⁷⁸ Jean Leclercq, "The Making of a Masterpiece," intro. to Bernard of Clairvaux on the Song of Songs IV. Trans. Irene Edmonds. (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1980) pp. xi-xii.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. xi.

of these for the monks at Clairvaux. The sermon was part of monastic observance and a special time of day was set aside for it. In this way the sermon was a rite, "solemn and intimate" and "essentially pastoral in character."¹⁰⁰

The second category of monastic sermons is the sermon that was a literary composition meant for public reading, or private reading and study. A number of Bernard's sermons fall into this category and were studied in places as diverse as England, France, Spain, Portugal, Russia, Sweden, Belgium, Germany, Prussia, Italy, Holland and Bavaria during Bernard's lifetime and subsequently.¹⁰¹ Unlike the simpler type of sermon that was preached and not particularly speculative, the written sermon had a more doctrinal character, especially if it was to be offered to a larger public audience.¹⁰²

Bernard's model for the literary sermon was the recorded sermons of the Fathers of the Church.¹⁰³ It was a genre that the abbot of Clairvaux became increasingly

¹⁰⁰ Leclercq, The Love of Learning. p. 167.

¹⁰¹ SBO4 pp. xxii, and 62-65.

¹⁰² Leclercq, The Love of Learning. p. 170.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

familiar with in the latter half of his life. He found the format advantageous because it allowed him to keep close to the Biblical text but gave him plenty of room to digress and treat themes that attracted him or he felt were of particular interest to his audience. Thus Bernard's Sermons on the Song of Songs is a literary sermon, not a Biblical commentary.¹⁰⁴

Bernard's Sermons on the Song of Songs treats various themes and Bernard's style may continue to dazzle the reader even after a number of readings of the sermons. Not a systematic writer, aspects of a theme may be dealt with in a sermon, or part of it, and the theme itself may run with different facets throughout various sermons. For example Bernard's Christology runs through SC 8, 10, 13, 15, 19-20, 22, 27-28, 32-33, 35, 43, 45, 47, 61-62, 76, and 78; his treatment of love through SC 7-8, 18, 20, 23, 27, 44-45, 49-51, 57, 59, 69, 75, and 83; on the Trinity through SC 8, and 69; the Holy Spirit through SC 5, 8, 17-18, 28, 45, and 72; the Father through SC 8, 46, 69, 71, 73 and 76; contemplation through SC 1-4, 7-8, 10, 12, 23, 31, 41, 45, 49, 51-52, 57, 61-62, and 83; anthropological themes are

¹⁰⁴ Casey, Athirst. pp. 49-50.

found in SC 3-5, 11, 24-27, 32, 34-35, 40-44, 48, 71, and 80-84; conversion in SC 1-4, 10, 18, and 63; the Devil in SC 6, 17, 33, 37, 39, 54, 69, 72, and 77; the Church in SC 14, 27, 29-30, 33, 46, 49, 53, 58, 73, 78, and 79; Angels in SC 5, 19, 22, 77, and 78; temptation in SC 33, and 64; knowledge in SC 35-37; grace in SC 4, 9, 18, 21, 32, 34, 54, 57, 60-61, 67, and 74; and sin in SC 35-37, 39, 53, 56-58, 63, 81, and 82.

Bernard emphasises that the spiritual union of the soul with the Word is a central theme (1:5), and follows Origen in assigning to the text two main celebrations: "the praise of Christ and his Church, the gift of holy love, the sacrament of endless union with God," and secondly the ardent and growing desire of the soul, its marriage song with the Word, pouring forth in figurative language an exultation of spirit that dances with delight (1:8).

We have seen that Bernard considered mystic union of the soul with the Word the crown of monastic life. Much of his exposition centers around the vicissitudes of the soul that yearns for perpetual union with God, but in fact experiences alternatively the visits and absences of the divine presence. Above all he describes the text as the canticle of sacred love (79:1) because it speaks of the

manifestation of God's love in His relationship with the Church and the individual soul (1:8).

Unlike other Cistercian authors Bernard never wrote a de anima treatise, but his whole notion of contemplation presupposes certain powers of the soul.¹⁰⁵ It is also set within a Christian understanding of the relationship between God and humankind, and between God and the individual person, contemplation reversing the effects of the Fall.¹⁰⁶

C. GOD, SIN AND RELATED THEMES

In Evil and the God of Love John Hick divides Augustine's considerations of evil into two categories: theological and philosophical. Augustine's theological thought on evil contains four strands: first, Creation is good; second, pain and suffering are a result of the Fall;

¹⁰⁵ Bernard McGinn, "Introduction to On Grace and Free Choice," (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications Inc., 1988) pp. 4-5.

¹⁰⁶ Mystical Theology "The Mystical theology of St. Bernard is but the history of the restoration of humankind's lost likeness to God." p. 224. n. 38.

third, "Felix Culpa", and fourth, the final dichotomy of heaven and hell.¹⁰⁷

His philosophical thought on evil also contains four strands: first, evil as nonbeing; second, metaphysical evil as fundamental finitude; third, the principle of plenitude; and lastly, the aesthetic conception of the perfection of the universe.¹⁰⁸ In relationship to this categorization, when Bernard follows Augustine it is in the area of theology not philosophy. The texts examined contain Augustine's four theological strands concerning evil, but contain no reference to his four philosophical considerations. Hence I propose to examine the themes of sacred history and the image and likeness of humankind to God in Bernard's theology to place his discussion of evil in its theological context. It is in the context of humankind's likenesses to God that Bernard develops the theme of human liberty. Human liberty is pivotal to Bernard's understanding of Creation, the Fall, "Felix Culpa," the final dichotomy of heaven and hell, and what can be broadly classified as Bernard's thought on moral

¹⁰⁷ John Hick, Evil and the God of Love. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1977) rev. ed. pp. 170-179.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., pp. 179-193.

evil.

After discussing Bernard's thought on history and his doctrine of the image and likeness of humankind to God, I shall examine his account of the Fall in On Grace and Free Choice, in Sermon 10 of his Lenten Sermons on the Psalm 'He Who Dwells' and Lucifer's fall in Sermon 17 of Sermons on the Song of Songs. This will lead to a discussion of Satan's role in Bernard's theology, free choice and heaven and hell, ending with a discussion of conversion and contemplation. These points will clarify many aspects of Bernard's thoughts on evil. Examining his contemplative theology verifies his ongoing theological concern with sin and the effects of the Fall. The reversal of these effects reach beyond the moral and ethical categories associated with the toil required for their reversal, ultimately to a vision of God as he is.¹⁰⁹

SACRED HISTORY. Bernard's theology is remarkably eschatological and forward looking, but it cannot be understood without setting it within the context of the

¹⁰⁹ Emero Stiegman, "Action and Contemplation" in Bernard of Clairvaux On the Song of Songs III. trans. Kilian Walsh and Irene M. Edmonds. (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publication, 1979), p. xv.

notion of history he describes. Using a reference made to a garden in Song 5:1 Bernard elaborates "the plain, unadorned, historical sense of Scripture " (23:3):

Creation is symbolized in the sowing or planting of the garden; reconciliation by the germination of what is sown or planted. For in due course, while the heavens showered from above and the skies rained down the Just One (Is 45:8), the earth opened for a Savior to spring up, and heaven and earth were reconciled (Eph 2:14) (23:4).

The renewal will take place at the end of the world when there will be a "new heaven and a new earth (Rev 21:1)," and the good will be separated from the wicked and will rest with God (23:4).

Bernard sets his theology within the context of a history with three divisions: creation, reconciliation and renewal. History is the unfolding of God's relationship with humankind and the individual and it is for this reason that we can speak of sacred history. The three divisions also represent three aspects of time: past, present and future. Not lacking continuity, the past is finished but profoundly influences humankind's present condition, while the present is a preparation for the future. Another triad that Bernard uses to describe human history is creation, reformation and perfection. Each stage intimately involves the second person of the Trinity: Created first in Christ,

we are then reformed through Christ, and finally reach fulfillment with Christ in the state of eternity.¹¹⁰ Thus one aspect of time cannot be understood without reference to the other two, and particularly the present condition of humankind is incomprehensible without reference to the past and the future.

In speaking of creation and the past Bernard refers to the planting of the good man: 'who can doubt that a good man is a tree of God's planting?' (23:4) he asks. The present reconciliation is his pruning and his flowering, as it were, and the renewal and future delivers him from the storms of life and the possibility of a decay that could destroy him (23:4). Undoubtedly within this development lies the notion of predestination. By and large throughout this thesis I pay little attention to Bernard's thought on predestination because it is not as fundamental to his theology, or as developed, as his notion of human liberty. The axis around which much of Bernard's discussion of evil revolves is human freedom, and this underlies also his

¹¹⁰ Bernard of Clairvaux, On Grace and Free Choice, trans. Daniel O' Donovan. intro. Bernard McGinn. Cistercian Fathers Series 19A. (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1977) reprt 1988. XIV:49. (Henceforth cited as Gra with chapter and verse.)

understanding of the relationship between God and humankind. Both his mystical theology and his notion of the monastic ideal would fall without it,¹¹¹ as would his reasoning for the final dichotomy of heaven and hell.

IMAGE AND LIKENESS Bernard's discussion of human liberty is found in his elaboration of the relationship between the Word and the soul. They have much in common, sharing a natural kinship and a certain affinity (80:2). The Word is the Image of God (80:2), of the same substance as God. God is wisdom, righteousness and truth (80:2). In greatness the Word is equal with God (80:2) and as co-substantial his gifts are not accidents (80:3). "Greatness and righteousness are distinct in their nature but in the Word they are one" (80:3). "For the Image, greatness is not merely the same as uprightness, but existence itself is greatness and uprightness" (80:3). Now the soul is made in that Image, i.e., the Image of God and therein lies its natural kinship to him (80:2). It is in the resemblance to the Word that the soul has its affinity with the Word, for

¹¹¹ See McGinn p. 61, n. 1 and Gilson Mystical Theology p. 220, note 23. Although Gilson pays a great deal of attention to Bernard's notion of human liberty, it is only in a footnote that he mentions it as a fourth "bloc" utilized by Bernard in his mystical theology.

the soul is made not only in the Word's image (Gen 1:27) but also in the Word's likeness (Gen 5:2) (80:2). To explain in what the likeness¹¹² consists Bernard first looks at the image (80:2).

The soul is not itself wisdom, righteousness and truth because it is not the Image, but it is capable of them and yearns for them. This is perhaps why it is said to be made in the Image (80:2). Therefore, the soul is a "lofty creature" (80:2). Bernard never tires of proclaiming the nobility of humanity. The soul has a capacity for greatness in proportion to its capacity for the eternal, and in its longing "we see a token of its uprightness and it is upright" in proportion to its desire for heavenly things (80:2-3).

The soul that has lost its desire for heavenly

¹¹² I should say a word here on Bernard and the doctrine of the image and likeness of humankind to God. Bernard holds at least four somewhat different doctrines. See Maur Standaert, "La doctrine de l'image chez saint Bernard," Ephemerides Theologicae Lovaniensis, 23 (1947) 70-129 who analyses them in some detail. Bernard is aware of the differences noting in Sermon 81:11 "In the book I have written on grace and free choice you may find other observations about image and likeness, but I do not think they contradict the things I have been saying." He leaves it to the reader to decide which is preferable. For the course of this thesis I follow the doctrine of Sermons 80-84 in the Sermons on the Song of Songs.

things is "bent." Not upright but crooked it nevertheless does not cease to be great because it retains its capacity for eternity (80:3). While the Word can never fail to be upright and great since these qualities are part of its nature, for humankind they are gifts and are distinct from the soul (80:3). Therefore, in spite of the limits to the natural kinship and affinity of the soul with the Word, the soul's greatness adheres to it, allowing it the opportunity to become upright.

If uprightness is lost the individual limps on one foot, as it were, but he still "passes as an image" (80:4). He never loses the image or his greatness for without greatness the soul could not be called back to God. However, without its uprightness the soul is torn away from God and is troubled, estranged and sad (80:4). While uprightness and greatness are one in the Image, they are not so in the soul (80:5). We have this with reference to uprightness and Bernard also explains how greatness is distinct from the soul. Not finding the distinction between the soul and greatness as obvious as the one between the soul and uprightness because the soul cannot be deprived of its greatness in the way it can be of its uprightness, Bernard notes that greatness can be found outside the human

soul, in the angels, for example (80:5). The angels' greatness "derives from the same source as the greatness of the soul, from its capacity for the things of eternity" (80:5). "And since one [uprightness] is not found in every soul, and the other [greatness] is found otherwise than in the soul, it is obvious that each without distinction is distinct from the soul" (80:5). However, while the soul and its greatness are distinct they are not separable (80:5).

In Sermon 81 Bernard picks up the topic of human likeness to the divine. The soul's origin is in the divine likeness and because of this it has a natural simplicity of substance, that is for the soul to exist is to live (81:2). This likeness does not imply equality of the soul with the Word because for the Word to live is to live in Blessedness. "Life is the prerogative of the soul because of its natural affinity with the Word" (81:2).

The first and purest simplicity is God's for whom alone "to be is synonymous with being in a state of blessedness." The soul's simplicity is second and similar to it, "namely that existence is living." Although it exists at a lower degree, it can be raised not only to living well but to living blessedly (81:2). But even for the soul who attains to this it is not the same as being

blessed (81:2). Again, Bernard maintains the similarity of the Word and the soul but the similarity is limited. The ability of the soul to rise, unlike other living creatures (81:4), has important consequences in Bernard's discussion of humankind's return to God, as does the notion of the life of the soul and sin.

Another similarity, but not equality, that the soul shares with the Word is immortality (81:5). God is immutable and "that which is unchanging is incomprehensible and hence cannot be expressed in language" (51:7). God's incomprehensibility and mystery are of such dimensions that they totally evade humankind's ability to encompass them. This belief lies behind all of Bernard's stammerings about God. All change is an imitation of death. God alone does not change because the immutability of the Godhead is far above the immortality of the soul (81:5). If every change involves death how can we say that the soul is immortal? "[S]ince it has life in itself, and there is no way in which it can fall away from itself, so there is no way in which it can fall away from life." Therefore, the "soul has no little dignity, since it seems to resemble the Word in two respects: simplicity of essence, and perpetuity of life (81:5).

The third gift that adds to and enhances the soul's greatness and similarity to the Word is its power of free choice (81:6). It is here that Bernard's discussion of evil really begins and it is precisely in regard to humankind's likeness to the divine that he sets his discussion of human liberty. Within Christianity itself the notion of human liberty is as old as Christian thought and indeed it occupied thinkers outside and prior to this group of thinkers.¹¹³ The question of free choice was of great interest in the Middle Ages, and Bernard's division of freedom into three states wielded considerable influence.¹¹⁴

THE FALL So far we have discussed the present condition of the individual and humankind more generally, but this condition was preceded by a fall. Bernard is true to Gen. 1:31 and upholds that God is good and that everything he created is good. (Gra VI:19) Not subject to any necessity, God's goodness is purely by choice. (Gra

¹¹³ Etienne Gilson, The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy. A.H.C. Downes trans. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1936) reprt Notre Dame Press, 1991. p. 304.

¹¹⁴ McGinn, p. 18.

IV:9) Utterly self-sufficient, God's creation is a gratuitous gift.¹¹⁵ Everything necessary for subsistence, for instruction, for consolation, correction and delight were given to humankind. (QH 14:2) Even after the Fall the gift of redemption, another affirmation of God's goodness and the love that underlies all his gifts, was bestowed upon humankind. (Gra VII:21) If God created the world and everything he created is good, how did our present condition arise? It is in Bernard's account of the Fall and his discussion of human liberty that we find some of his answers.

One of Bernard's clearest and most systematic accounts of the Fall is found in his On Grace and Free Choice. Addressed to his friend William of St. Thierry, Bernard writes on a topic he describes as "obscure," God's grace and human freedom.¹¹⁶ Written around 1128,¹¹⁷ it is one of Bernard's earlier writings and was finished some

¹¹⁵ Bernard of Clairvaux, Lenten Sermons on the Psalm 'He Who Dwells', trans. and intro. Marie-Bernard Said. (Kalamzoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1981) 14:1. (Henceforth cited as QH with chapter and verse.)

¹¹⁶ Prologue to On Grace and Free Choice.

¹¹⁷ McGinn, p. 4.

fifteen years after he entered monastic life. In the text, Bernard is at pains to hold that despite divine initiation in the process of conversion and salvation, and despite the experience of God's grace impelling one to do good, and carrying and helping one to achieve perfection, no one can be saved against his or her will. There must be individual consent to salvation and the possibility of consent lies within the powers of the will. (Gra I:2)

Upon creation Adam found himself with three significant gifts. Although each is distinct, all are related to freedom. The first freedom was freedom of choice. It contained two important elements: the first is freedom which meant that Adam's will was radically free from any necessity, i.e., it could not be compelled by any external agent. The second element was rationality which meant that his will could judge whether it willed good or evil. The second freedom was freedom of counsel, which meant that while Adam was free to sin or not to sin he was under no constraint to sin. The third freedom was freedom of pleasure, which meant that Adam did not experience sorrow and it was possible that he would never experience sorrow. (Gra VII:21) With regard to the last two freedoms, Bernard distinguishes two degrees, a higher and a lower. Not being

able to sin is the higher degree of freedom from sin, and being able not to sin is the lower. Not being able to be disturbed is the higher degree of freedom of pleasure, and being able not to be disturbed is the lower degree. To explain why Adam fell, Bernard assigns to him the lower degrees of freedom in both cases. (Gra VII:21) Thus Adam had the capability of sinning or not sinning, of experiencing sorrow or not experiencing sorrow. If he had freedom of counsel and freedom of pleasure in their higher degrees, "he would never have suffered exile from paradise" (Gra VI:20) because it would have been impossible for him to sin and to experience sorrow.

Bernard describes the last two freedoms as "accidental likenesses to the divine power and wisdom" (Gra IX:28) because when Adam fell he lost them in their lower degrees. These likenesses are given to all rational creatures. The angels have them in the highest degree and were given the ability to persevere in them "untouched by sin and sorrow." Adam was given them in the lower degree, which allows the possibility that he would be without them as he was not given the ability to persevere. (Gra IX:29) Although Adam lost them and humankind inherited this loss, it seems that the loss is not irreparable as the process of

conversion restores in large measure the lower freedom of being able not to sin and contemplation itself gives a short respite from sorrow. The devil and his members are never able to never resist the will to sin and are thus devoid of the divine likenesses. Although the angels were given the ability to persevere without sin or sorrow, the devil and his dominions were not but Bernard does not elaborate on this form of predestination. (Gra IX:29)

While humankind can regain these lost freedoms, there is also the possibility of completely losing them. (Gra IX:29) Because of their loss at the Fall humankind in its earthly condition finds itself inextricably bound up with sin and sorrow. Thus human beings find themselves in the position that they cannot not sin and they cannot not experience sorrow and suffering. To understand how this came about we must examine the remaining freedom, freedom of choice. It is through the abuse of this freedom that Adam lost the other two freedoms. (Gra VII:22)

In On Grace and Free Choice Bernard wants to preserve the necessity of human consent for salvation despite the power of grace, and he equates freedom, the will and consent. Thus "consent is a spontaneous inclination of

the will,--a self-determining habit of the soul." ¹¹⁸

Neither forced nor extorted, its action "stems from the will and not from necessity, denying or giving itself on no issue except by way of the will." (Gra I:2) Without the will there is neither consent to salvation nor freedom. "Hence, where you have consent, there also is the will. But where the will is, there is freedom. And this is what I understand by the term free choice." (Gra I:2) Thus free choice has a spontaneousness that is radically free from necessity. Bernard tries to preserve the will from a susceptibility to any form of coercion or external force. Thus the essence of freedom lies in the will.¹¹⁹

To situate the following discussion a few words need to be said about Bernard's view of the soul. The nearest he comes to defining it is to say that the soul is a substance that is "incorporeal and invisible, possessing neither bodily limbs nor any visible clothing" (40:1). It has three faculties: reason, memory and will. Bernard identifies these with the soul itself rather than designating them as

¹¹⁸ The use of the word "habit" does not denote a technical term but merely indicates "a way of acting" McGinn, p. 15-16. Gra. II:3.

¹¹⁹ McGinn, p. 15.

three faculties distinct from the soul (11:5).

"Free" pertains to the will and "choice" pertains to reason. (Gra III:6) Bernard defines the will as "a rational movement, governing both sense perception and appetite. In whatever direction it turns, it has reason as its mate, one might even say as its follower." (Gra II:2) Although the will is not moved without reason it cannot "impose any necessity on it, which would prevent it from moving freely in accordance with its own judgement." (Gra II:4) Even though the will is accompanied by reason, reason cannot coerce the will, or diminish its freedom from necessity in any way. In fact the will often acts against the voice of reason. (Gra II:2) Therefore two essential characteristics of the will are freedom and rationality.¹²⁰ "Choice is an act of judgement" which distinguishes between what is lawful and what is not, or between what is right or what is wrong. (Gra IV:11)

In Bernard's account of the relationship between the intellect and the will there remain a number of ambiguities and his interpreters continue to disagree on their precise

¹²⁰ McGinn, p. 16.

nature.¹²¹ In the ensuing pages some of the difficulties created by this ambiguity will become more apparent. Bernard maintains an antecedent and subsequent role for reason in its relationship with the will. In maintaining the will's freedom he cannot allow the intellect any coercive power over the will, yet reason is essential to free choice. Bernard finds no justification to impute judgement on the mentally deficient, infants and the sleeping because they no longer retain the use of reason, and thus do not have the freedom to judge. (Gra II:2) Only a free choice that comprises freedom and the ability to judge between good and evil is susceptible to judgement.

Thus Adam before the fall did not experience sorrow, was in no sense constrained by sin, and he could will the good and do it. His will suffered no suppression and his reason could clearly judge what was lawful and what was not. Why did he sin? Part of the prerogative of free choice was the ability to sin. Adam "sinned, because he was free to sin, and free from no other source than his own freedom of choice, which bore the possibility of sinning." (Gra VII:22) While it was possible for Adam to sin, he could not be

¹²¹ McGinn, p. 16.

coerced into sinning. The blame for his fault lies totally with himself and must be attributed to him alone. Bernard allows no other cause for Adam's sin than the fact that he willed to sin, freely. And through his sin, sin and suffering entered into the world:

Thus, man received in his very nature, along with full freedom of choice, the lower degree of each of these freedoms; and when he sinned, fell from both. In losing completely his freedom of counsel, he fell from being able not to sin to not being able not to sin. Likewise, from being able not to be disturbed, he fell to not being able not to be disturbed, with the total loss of his freedom of pleasure. There only remained for his punishment, the freedom of choice through which he had lost the others; that he could not lose. Enslaved by his own will to sin (Rom 6:17f.), he deservedly forfeited freedom of counsel. Through his sin he became a debtor of death (Rom 5:12), so how could he hold on to his freedom of pleasure? (Gra VII:21)

Because Adam willed this, he was totally responsible for the Fall and was justly punished, i.e., he lost the freedom of being able not to sin and the freedom of being able not to be disturbed. This is how sin and suffering entered the world.

In giving humankind these gifts, must not God take some responsibility for Adam's fall? Bernard clearly maintains God's absolute innocence in relationship to Adam's sin and moral evil:

No failure this of the bestower, but rather of the abuser, who made over to the service of sin that faculty he had received for the glory of not sinning.

For though the root of his sin lay in the ability received, yet he sinned, not because he was able to, but because he willed to. So it was that, when the devil and his angels rebelled, others of their company refused to do so: not because they could not, but because they would not. (Gra VII:22)

God is not responsible for moral evil, but he permits it. Adam was truly free and God allowed him to use his freedom as he choose.

This is Bernard's most complete account of the Fall and in some respects it departs from that of previous theologians. Anselm, writing before Bernard, logically did not require any account of "diabolical temptation" in his account of original sin. While he never removed the devil from the scene, he did on occasion describe original sin and its effects without "any substantial reference to the devil."¹²² On Grace and Free Choice is one of Bernard's earliest accounts of the Fall and he seems to carry Anselm's position one step further making no mention at all of a "diabolical temptation" in relationship to his account of the Fall. In this sense Bernard's account seems almost untraditional. He does make some reference to the fall of angels but he does not connect this to Adam's fall. There is

¹²² Russell, Lucifer, p. 167.

not even an indirect implication of the devil's involvement in Adam's sin.

Removing the devil from the scene leaves Bernard with two main players in his discussion of the Fall, God and Adam. Bernard removes from God an indirect responsibility for moral evil. Freedom is truly built into the cosmos and Adam was given everything necessary to prevent his fall while allowing him complete freedom to exercise his liberty and maintain his dignity. There is no cause prior to Adam's fall; there is only "the vice of willing to" sin. (Gra VII:23)

Therefore nothing outside the human will is necessary to account for the Fall. Bernard's account here centers around moral evil, particularly human moral evil that needs no other cause than human free choice and the human will turning from God to explain it. In this discussion of moral evil Bernard does not speak in terms of a lack of good. Created by God, the will is good but it was given the capability to turn to good or evil, not that it might turn to evil, but that in refraining from evil Adam might appear more glorious. Humankind was created with true freedom. The Devil is clearly demoted from any central role in the transgression. While Adam falls alone and purely by

the action of his own will, it is unlikely that he could have been conscious of the full implications of the turning of his will from God, but Bernard is clear that Adam knew that his action was unlawful because his freedom of choice carried with it the ability to judge between lawful and unlawful actions. It is because of this ability to judge that Adam was punished and God remains just.

The language Bernard uses here is centered chiefly around freedom, choice and judgement. These are all gifts given to Adam. Although Adam's decision was poor, it was not the result of a lack of good, or any sort of privation. Adam was truly given the ability and freedom to choose and he turned from God and willingly chose to do what was unlawful.

In Sermon 85 of Sermons on the Song of Songs, written as late as 1152 or 1153, Bernard still maintains humankind's radical liberty. Human life is a warfare and human beings battle the world, the devil, but above all "man is his own greatest threat, for he can fall by his own momentum without any impulse from anyone else, but not without an impulse of his own" (85:4). "Every man is his own attacker. Every man throws himself down-indeed you need not fear any attack from outside, if you can keep your hands

with evil is in the moral domain. There is no reference to being or to privation, although, strictly speaking evil here transcends moral categories because it deals with the life and death of the soul. Evil is that which

deprives the soul of animate life, because it [sin] separates you from God until, once it reigns in us, our body is, as it were, soulless, and our soul is godless, truly dead to herself, (Jm 2:17) like one of those the apostle represents as being without God in this world. (Eph 2:12) (QH 10:2)--[T]he true life of the soul is God. And there is only one evil which separates them, but it is an evil of the soul: none other than sin. (QH 10:4)

Sin is the death of the soul, and despite some derogatory allusions Bernard makes to the body, the body is not the culprit in relationship to sin; it is the soul which spreads decay.

Bernard's concern with sin as evil must be seen in the context of his understanding of humankind's ultimate purpose and meaning. Humankind is created for union with God alone. Sin is the death of the soul because it takes away the soul's capacity to rise and to return to God in this life. If the soul cannot rise, it cannot live well, it cannot live blessedly and it cannot participate in the divine life of the Trinity. For Bernard to lose this capacity to rise is a great loss, indeed the greatest loss. Therefore the sorriest plight for the individual is to be

separated from God (QH 10:4) because "God himself is love, and nothing created can satisfy the man who is made in the image of God, except God who is love, who alone is above all created creatures" (18:6). It is in this section of the works examined that Bernard comes closest to providing us with his definition of evil and he equates evil with sin. He is not speaking in terms of being or a lack of good, but life and death and these with regard to the soul's relationship to God.

Further considerations of sin and humankind lead Bernard to distinguish between sin reigning in some and residing in others (Rm 5:21). If sin reigns the individual is dominated by sin and sin "has gotten such a hold that it cannot be shaken off at all." (QH 10:15) For those in whom it resides there is the hope that it will be finally plucked out, although presently it is not completely "cast out." (QH 10:15) Further considerations of sin residing and reigning brings Bernard to consider Adam and Eve:

[B]efore that initial deceit, (Mt 19:8) sin not only did not reign in our first parents, but it did not even exist. Yet it seems somehow to have been very near them, since it got in so quickly. What else was he warning them about, except that this penalty for sin, though not yet in their bodies, was however already, as it were, on the threshold, when he said: 'In the day that you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and

evil, you shall die the death.' (Gen 2:17)¹²⁵ What happy expectation and blessed hope (It 2:13) indeed is ours, for we await a resurrection which will so surpass in glory our first condition that no fault whatever, no penalty, no evil, no scourge shall dwell in or reign over, or even at any time be able to dwell in or reign over, our bodies or our souls. (QH 10:5)

Bernard's reference to sin as somehow being near Adam and Eve seems to add a certain ambiguity to his account of the Fall. Here Bernard intimates that there is a more mysterious aspect to the Fall than that found in the account in On Grace and Free Choice. That the Fall--despite the proliferation of deeply troubling consequences for humankind--is cast in the light of a fortunate fall adds to this aspect of mystery. Ultimately Adam's fault is a happy one because it has allowed for the perfection of humankind. Bernard's theology re-echoes Augustine's famous "Felix Culpa." He does not look back in grief and anguish but happily anticipates the future, a future which removes all threats of further evil and suffering for humankind.

This theme underlies the development of Bernard's theology of contemplation and his notion of the beatific vision and heaven. His contemplative theology not only contains a reversal of the consequences of the Fall, but

¹²⁵ Lenten Sermons on the Psalm 'He Who Dwells', as cited by Faustus of Reiz, De Gratia 1.1; PL 58:786B. ed. note, p. 197.

shows how humankind attains to the higher degrees of freedom of counsel and freedom of pleasure. "[W]hen perfection is reached, nothing remains to be done. There remains only to enjoy it, not to carry it out laboriously.... [T]he only activity is repose, and contemplation and affection the only duty" (72:2).

Here again there is no reference to privation in relationship to evil. A certain mystery surrounds the events of the Fall and the entrance of sin and suffering to the world. While Bernard firmly maintains God's innocence in relationship to evil, his justice in his dealings with humankind, and humankind's culpability because of free choice, there is an intimation here that this is not quite adequate to the whole truth of the Fall and the present human condition. While Bernard explicitly states that sin and suffering entered the world as a result of Adam's sin, he also maintains that Adam's fall was a happy one because it allowed for human perfection. Indeed, Adam was created good but not perfect. Perfection seems to be an avenue that opened to humankind only as a result of the Fall. Thus a certain tension runs through Bernard's works. It has already appeared in Bernard's discussion of sacred history because he emphasises that the past, present and future have

to be understood together rather than separately. Bernard's discussion of the Fall includes a strong retributive theme in relationship to evil and suffering, but Bernard also has a pronounced tendency to align mystery and teleology with the theme of retribution. Human perfection and perpetual union with God is the goal of human life, but without the Fall the goal could not be fulfilled. The theme of human perfection underlies Bernard's contemplative theology and gives it its dominant forward-looking perspective. His theme of mystery indicates that there are aspects of the Fall that are hidden from human view. Thus these three threads run through Bernard's discussion of evil and suffering. In Bernard's discussion of Satan's role in the cosmos the theme of mystery continues coupled with the theme of the limitations of human understanding.

LUCIFER'S FALL The last account of the Fall to be considered is the account in Sermon 17 of Sermons on the Song of Songs. Bernard makes many references to Satan in this work and in this Sermon he considers Lucifer's fall. He raises the question, did "Lucifer, son of the morning (Is 14:12), yielding precipitately to the impulse of pride begin to envy the outpouring of oil on our human race before he was cast out into darkness?" (17:5). Although Bernard

concedes that this was possible, he claims not to know; in fact, there is no way to know (17:5) as the Spirit is silent on this point (17:5). Perhaps, he speculates, it was possible that Satan was envious of the future glory of humankind. Considering them weak and unworthy of the glory being planned for them, he decided to hatch a plot to keep humankind under his personal control (17:4). If this is so Satan's plot failed because humankind's only Lord is its Creator (17:5). The Creator alone is their Judge (Ps 9:9) and he alone is their God (Ps 47:15). "For you, Lord, are still in our midst, and we are called by your name; (Jer 14:9) and the people you have chosen (1 Pet 2:9), the Church of the redeemed, cries out; 'Your name is oil poured out'" (Song 1:2) (17:6).

Satan hatched his plot in Paradise and although it "came forth as iniquity" (Ps 7:15) and it is through the devil's envy that death entered the world (Wis 2:24), every sin has its origin in pride (Sir 10:15) (17:6). Pride is the state of mind in which one is greater in one's own eyes than one is in truth before God (37:6). Sin's origin, therefore, may be found in Satan or in the human being. While Bernard maintains that sin and death were in the world before Adam's transgression, in this account, he makes no

attempt to shift responsibility for Adam's sin to Satan. God remains innocent of moral evil and his account of free choice and the will remains unaltered. It is not clear that Bernard is committed to the theme of Satan hatching a plot to subdue humankind prior to the Fall. The main emphasis in Sermon 17 is to acknowledge that Satan has very definite and real powers but they are limited and under God's jurisdiction. God alone is truly powerful and Satan cannot overpower God. The background to this discussion seems to be an ancient battle between Satan and God.

Sermon 69 deals with Satan's battle with the Son and the Father's jealousy for his son. It was Christ and not Satan who received power and it is Christ and not Satan who retains power (69:4-5). Many of the references to Satan in the Sermons on the Song of Songs consider the ongoing antagonism between Satan and God. Through the Incarnation the tyranny of evil spirits is over-thrown (6:3), the devil loses the sovereignty he had gained over the human heart (6:4), and those under the power of the devil are cured (6:7). Christ's power over Satan is affirmed in SC 6, 17, 20:3, 33:9-13, and SC 39. It is only since the Incarnation that we are aware of the designs of the devil (44:1). The devil, unlike God, is merciless and his punishment and

damnation are recorded for humankind's instruction (54:4). In Sermon 72 there are references to hostile powers and last things. Evil powers and the people who consent to them will be utterly wretched. Bernard allows that they may or may not be destroyed, but ultimately all Satan's power will pass away (72:5).

Sometimes Adam and Eve's fall is set in the light of a conspiracy on the part of hostile powers. Bernard does not develop the theme with much depth, but he makes a number of references to it throughout the Sermons on the Song of Songs. Adam and Eve were ignorant of the designs of the devil, and they conspired and took counsel against the Lord and his Christ (72:7). Although ignorant of the devil's true intent, they chose to side with him against God. In spite of this and the Lord's majesty, the present is a time of God's mercy rather than wrath (72:8). His mercy allows not only a return of the gifts given at Creation but these gifts are surpassed in the life to come.

Therefore, Satan can not prevail against Christ's power and unrepentent sinners will sink into utter blindness (72:10). Satan's ongoing battle with God affects the present condition of humankind. Satan can lead us seriously astray in the spiritual life and therefore a guide is

necessary (77:6). Bernard grants the devil mighty powers over humankind's body and heart. "Once he is admitted, he will take possession" (66:13). The devil is particularly merciless in his attacks on the monks because of their desire for union with God (60:6). While his temptations are particularly subtle (64:6), once his attempts to tempt individuals are recognised he can do no harm (64:7). The devil flees if we do not consent to his suggestion (85:4), and because of humankind's ability to consent either to God or to the devil ultimately humankind itself is its own greatest threat (85:4). Thus Satan has power over humankind, but only if there is individual consent to this power. Satan is allowed to assault the elect but his attempts have the paradoxical effect of adding to their glory (17:6). Satan is one of the sources of the evil impulse, the human heart is the other. It is not easy or necessary to discern whence the source is but it is important to deny consent to the impulse (32:5-6). Although Satan can suggest evil, he cannot coerce consent to it.

SATAN IN BERNARD'S THEOLOGY Thus while Satan does not play a role in the account of the Fall in On Grace and Free Choice, overall Bernard allots him a more significant presence in the Sermons on the Song of Songs. Satan fell

before Adam. While sin and death were in the world prior to Adam's transgression, humanity did not experience their influence prior to Adam's fall. Bernard definitely connects Satan to the Fall in his Sermons on the Song of Songs, but we do not find a particularly systematic or clear account of his connection to the Fall in this work. Although Bernard maintains that there is an ancient and ongoing battle between Satan and God, overall he depicts Satan as a more significant figure after the Fall. After the Fall Adam, and henceforth humanity, came under Satan's jurisdiction, but the Incarnation broke the hold Satan had over humankind. Thus while Satan is not the central figure in the Fall, he plays a definite role in Bernard's theology. Generally, Bernard's treatment of Satan is much more consistent with respect to his significance after the Fall rather than prior to it.

While the powers of evil are under God's jurisdiction, Satan's powers are real and destructive. He and his army represent an active force of evil in the world. In relationship to the monks, Bernard grants that these evil powers can tempt a monk and he may find it impossible to endure the temptation, therefore one of the functions of the contemplative is to comfort and offer strength to those

undergoing these sorts of trials (10:2). But generally Bernard maintains that Satan's temptations and the suffering he brings can be endured with God's grace, and can be useful and eventually lead to the future glory of the afflicted. (QH 17:3) Tribulation is a bitter seed but God can use it to the sufferer's advantage and if the individual is not attached to sin, there is growth in the spiritual life. (QH 5:2) Thus an individual's response to suffering is affected by his or her spiritual state and some suffering, at least, has its positive aspect because it can help the individual to grow and mature in love. (QH 7:10) The horrors of the devil's assaults could not be withstood without the grace of God to protect humankind and God can use Satan to benefit the elect and secure them a place of glory. (QH 7:6-7)

Satan's powers, in part, and his enmity with humankind seem to have arisen because of Adam and Eve's agreement to the original conspiracy against God, but as we have seen, Bernard does not develop this theme as consistently in these writings as he does the relationship between Satan and humankind after the Fall. Thus Adam and Eve in deciding to belong to themselves "did become like gods, knowing good and evil; but they were not merely their

own but the devil's (Gen 3:5). Hence free will makes us our own; bad will the devil's; and good will God's. (Gra VI:18)

Since the Fall, therefore, human beings while in some sense belonging to God, belong to the devil. This will remain so as long as the will continues to be bent. It is by good will we pass over to God and cease to belong to the devil. "No one, in fact, can serve two masters" (Mt 6:26). (Gra VI:18) The Fall meant the loss of freedom of counsel and the loss of freedom of pleasure but free choice is retained. Thus this life presents humankind with two choices: to belong either to God or to the devil, to good or to evil.

God is good and leads the army of the just. Satan is evil and leads the army of the wicked. He actively pitches his army against the army of the just and the forces of good. Free choice allows the human being to decide if he or she is going to become one spirit with God or one spirit with the devil. (Gra 11:5) Bernard draws out the implications of this part of his theology. An individual can decide to grow in love and goodness and come into increasing harmony with the divine will and the force for good in the world, or an individual can decide to take the opposite path and turn away from the divine will and the

common good to pursue the devil's will, and grow in wickedness. In speaking of those who choose evil, Bernard does not use the language of turning away from being to nonbeing, but turning away from God's will and love to the devil's will and wickedness, becoming one spirit with the devil rather than one spirit with God. His language is Biblical and dramatic rather than explicitly ontological or philosophical.

HEAVEN AND HELL Free choice and the orientation of the will to good or evil are the terms Bernard uses in his discussion of sin and it is because of free choice that there is a final dichotomy of heaven and hell. Free choice is

something clearly divine which shines forth like a jewel set in gold. From it the soul derives its power of judgement, and its option of choosing between good and evil, between life and death, in fact between light and darkness, and any other concepts which are perceived by the soul as opposites. It is the eye of the soul which as censor and arbiter exercises discrimination and discernment between these things, and arbiter in discerning and free in choosing. It is called free choice because it is exercised in these matters in accordance with freedom of the will.... But when there is no freedom, there is no merit or blame (81:6).

Of the two characteristics of the will, freedom and rationality, reason, or the rational element of the soul, is the culprit in relationship to evil. The will can judge

itself good if it has done good, or it can judge itself bad if it has done evil. "Only by willing, in fact, can it feel itself to consent to either." (Gra IV:2) This is a datum of experience for Bernard and psychologically it seems to have validity. There are times when we seem to choose evil or good and know we are entirely free in doing so.

Reason is a natural prerogative given to human beings that differentiates them from animals. It is because of this faculty of judging that human beings can be brought to judgement. Bernard maintains that the human being knows the difference between good and evil and can judge his or her action and intention accordingly. Bernard maps five stages on the road to sin. The first is sensual desire which is not always evil, but it and the impulse to evil is an aspect of humankind that remains until death. The second step is consent to an evil impulse and while there is no culpability in sensual desire there is in consenting to sin. The third step is to act on the consent and commit the wrong doing, while the fourth stage is to form a habit and repeat the sinful action. The fifth step is contempt for God and his ways (56:6) and the heart hardens against God and love. If one fights against the consent to sin the "whole fabric of wickedness will vanish" (56:6). Thus it seems that the

ambiguity of the relationship between the will and reason makes it difficult to locate the precise root of evil in the human being. While it seems to lie in the rational 'part' of the soul, rationality belongs both to reason and to the will. In consenting to follow one's own private desires rather than God's will which is for the common good,¹²⁶ one consents to do the work of the devil. Once again Bernard's discussion of evil is in the moral domain, it revolves around sin and the orientation of the will rather than a turning from being to nonbeing.

CONVERSION AND CONTEMPLATION While Bernard is firm in his thought on the efficacy of the will, he does make some qualifications concerning the will and the state of the soul in his discussion of conversion and contemplation. As a consequence of the Fall, the soul has lost its likenesses to the divine, but the likenesses are dimmed not destroyed. The soul finds itself free to will, but not free to will the good, or to conform to the good. The soul fell by itself but it is not free to rise by itself. The soul is confused and wanders distressed at its unlikeness to God and to itself (82:5). Indistinctly it knows that it is not itself.

¹²⁶ Gilson, Mystical Theology. pp. 56-57.

But these evils are accidental, and do not result from the good gifts which are natural to it and were given it at creation. The evils of confusion and weakness are superimposed on the natural gifts; they defile them but they do not wipe them out (82:5). The soul can regain these likenesses through the process of conversion. The verb Bernard uses to describe the present evils of the soul which result in its confused state is accedunt deriving from accedere (cedeo, cessi, cessum) to be added. The adjective he uses to describe these evils is adventitia which comes from adventicius (a, um) meaning foreign or extraneous. Thus the soul does not suffer from a lack since the Fall, rather it has gained additions that confuse it and veil from it its true nature. It is lethargic, weak and forgetful. These additions can be removed through the process of conversion which is possible since the advent of Christ. Conversion does not restore a lack in the soul as much as it removes the additions that are a consequence of the Fall. Somehow, under the sin and confusion of the soul lies the natural beauty of the soul. The tarnish of sin is removed by degrees to reveal the original beauty which lies hidden as a result of the Fall.

Bernard's theology of conversion and contemplation

describes the process of the removal of sin and confusion in the soul. His description of this process adds to, clarifies and raises a number of points concerning his discussion of evil and suffering. First we see that while God permits evil, he is the one who instigates an individual's personal battle with evil. There is no conversion without God's grace. Second, suffering is a necessary part of the conversion process. Indeed God inflicts terrible suffering in order to get the soul's attention and to purge the soul of evil. Third, the conversion process is the return of the soul to God. This is characterized by the development of a very personal relationship with God, which may culminate in the experience of God as 'Lover.' One's will comes into increasing harmony with a Being rather than being. If one refuses to take this path to God, one enters into a relationship with another being, Satan, rather than non being. Fourth, the process of conversion activates and sustains a force for good in the world that works to alleviate affliction and suffering and is a manifestation of God's continuing love for the world and his continuing care for the afflicted. Fifth, if the conversion process culminates in contemplation it offers an affirmation of the telos of human life. The heights of

contemplative experience snatches the contemplative, for a short while, from the cares of this world, offering a foretaste of the bliss of the next world. Finally, Bernard's consistent avoidance of the language of privation in relationship to the soul is very apparent; conversion and contemplation restore to the soul its original and natural beauty.

Bernard considers the Song of Songs to be the biblical text that sings an unparalleled song of sacred love (79:1). Not only does it sing of the soul's growing love for God, but also of God's faithful love for humankind. The soul could not desire union with God without God's desire for union with the soul. This love culminates in contemplation, or union with God, and is preceded by two stages in the process of conversion: purgation and illumination.

The purgative stage of conversion is a bitter and painful stage for the soul. Bernard describes the sinner in the anguish of repentance

she wept bitterly, she sighed deeply from her heart, she sobbed with a repentance that shook her very being, till the evil that inflamed her passions was cleansed away. The heavenly physician came with speed to her aid, because his word runs swiftly (3:1).

Compunction plays an integral part in the process of conversion, according to Bernard. He distinguishes two

types of compunction: the first is profound sorrow for sin, and the second is rejoicing for God's gifts (56:7). Every conversion experience is preceded by God's grace. (Conv 1-2) God not only calls the soul back to himself, but he leads the soul back and lays the charge against her before her very face. For the voice of God is not only mighty "but it is also a beam of light, both informing men of their transgressions and bringing to light things hidden in the darkness," i.e., God brings the soul to self-knowledge.

God is the only spirit who can act directly on the human mind. Satan, the angels and other human beings lack this power (5:8). The step toward self-knowledge brings the soul a step forward on the path toward knowledge of God (36:5) because God answers the appeal of the soul and begins to restore the lost image in the individual. In time one moves from knowledge of God to love of God. One cannot love what one does not know (37:1).

In the purgative stage of conversion God is experienced as a Judge. He judges inner thoughts, while relentlessly scourging the soul to repentance in order to bring about healing. This brings a distressing stage of grieving to the soul because she finds it difficult to bear God's and her own judgement of herself. (Conv 2:3) Not only

is one made profoundly conscious of one's individual sin and the misery of one's condition, but one also realises one's powerlessness in the face of this situation. The penitent becomes deeply aware of the need for God.

The other experience of God in the purgative stage is the experience of God as a consoler, or healer. These aspects of God begin to motivate the soul's love toward God. Not only Judge, he is also merciful. Bernard always considers God's judgement and mercy together. Two sides of the same coin, judgement without mercy would drive the sinner to despair, and mercy without judgement supplies the soul with a pernicious sense of security (6:8). Bernard does not allow that one precedes the other; here we reach one of the many incomprehensible aspects of God.

The purgative and the illuminative stages of conversion overlap. In the illuminative stage there is a deepening of God's enlightenment of the reason and the true assessment of oneself that follows reveals no justification for pride or haughtiness. Living in the regio dissimilitudinis humankind is burdened by sin, misery, countless worries and anxieties (36:5). Only this stark realization will impel the urgent and sincere cry to God for his help and consolation (36:5). In this instance God's

presence is also that of a Physician. One begins to experience some peace but not the repose of contemplation.

So far we have discussed purgation and the early stages of illumination. This is only a preliminary stage on the path of conversion. While necessary, Bernard insists that if one does not pass on from here one cannot experience the second type of compunction. Having lain a long time in "the slough of the marsh (Ps 39:3) filthy with all kinds of vices; if I return to it again I shall be worse than when I first wallowed in it" (3:3). A second grace is needed to sustain the soul on its journey. This grace allows the sinner to refrain from sin and helps the sinner to persevere in growth toward love and perfection (3:3). Advance toward contemplation is slow, made by degrees. God guides the sinner and teaches him or her (3:4). The grace imparted helps the sinner to live rightly and grow in virtue (3:6), whereby the soul's desire for God increases (9:1). In this stage sinful habits and desires are cut out (10:9). The soul becomes freer and freer from the burden of sin and the heart becomes purified (10:9).

The power to sin and commit iniquities lies within the will (10:7). In Sermons on Conversion Bernard personifies the reason (male) and the will (female),

dramatically describing the struggle of a person divided against him or herself and the struggle involved in the throes of conversion. After its enlightenment the reason has come into harmony with the divine decrees. Not so the will who at reason's suggestion to change like a

Crazy old hag leaps up and, completely forgetting her ailments, storms out with her hair standing on end, her clothes torn, her breasts bare; she picks at her sores, grinds her teeth, goes rigid and infects even the air with her poisonous breath.
(Conv VI:10)

A formidable partner, she berates the reason accusing him of a lack of compassion, abuse, theft, and in a rage she screams she cannot and she will not change. "[S]he retreats in fury and indignation screaming. 'I have you in my clutches and will keep hold of you for a long time to come.'" (Conv VI:10) Rebelling against every suggestion of the enlightened reason, she rouses the senses in a demanding fury and under her command the senses struggle violently with reason. (Conv XI:22) Reason cannot force the will to change, he must woo her gently. (Conv XII:24) Having had a taste of the repose of contemplation reason asks the will to accompany him to a garden of repose assuring her that she has nothing to fear. Enticing her to visit, God kindles her desire and she agrees to go. Upon her visit there she comes

to long to make her home in the garden. (Conv XII:24) No growth in virtue possible without the consent of the will (42:8). As sin is the death of the soul, the soul only recovers its life by changing its will (85:10).

Two questions arise here. The first because Bernard is clearly trying to maintain that the will is wooed gently to change, she cannot be coerced. She presents the most difficult 'element' in the conversion process. Although reason can be enlightened, and this is a passive process, the will must agree to change which requires an active consent on the part of the individual on the path of conversion. The difficulty that presents itself here is that the will also contains a rational component, otherwise it could not 'know' the difference between good and evil. The second question that arises surrounds the surprising priority Bernard gives to reason in the conversion process, as his mystical theology generally tends to limit rational understanding.

Concerning the first question, while it is clear what Bernard is trying to maintain, it is not so clear that the way he sets about it allows him to maintain it. Divine grace must be accompanied by free individual human consent in the process of conversion. Bernard locates freedom in the will, and free consent involves the will. Reason is the

location of choice and the will must consent, or not, to reason's choice. Clearly Bernard has to give the will a cognitive component in as far as it must 'know' what it is consenting to, i.e., somehow it must be able to distinguish between good and evil. This complicates matters because if the will has a rational component, must not it too be enlightened, i.e., must it not undergo the passive process that reason undergoes, or does Bernard's soul have two reasons? Thus while Bernard is clear that he wants to maintain the radical freedom of the will and is aware of the problems associated with regard to the relationship between the will and reason in as far as he gives reason an antecedent and subsequent role in relationship to the will, giving the will a rational component either limits the will's freedom in relationship to grace because its rational 'element' must be enlightened by grace in some sense, or else the soul must have two distinct reasons. Bernard does seem to make some distinction in terms of the way the rational 'element' of the will functions, it is concerned with consent, and the way reason functions, it is concerned with choice, but Bernard's anthropology insists that the soul is one and he does not distinguish faculties in the soul. Some of the ambiguities here may have been resolved if Bernard had made clearer distinctions between the

faculties of the soul.

The second question presents a different difficulty: the priority Bernard gives to reason in the conversion process in light of his general tendency to limit the powers of rational understanding. First it must be said that although Bernard limits the powers of rational understanding, he does so in the face of the utter transcendence and mystery of God. Reason cannot comprehend this in its totality, therefore faith and hope must take over because of reason's ability to 'see' in a glass darkly. Indeed that the human being is a thinking animal is fundamental to Bernard's understanding of humankind. Reason distinguishes humans from other animals and it the human being's capacity to reason and to know the difference between right and wrong that makes him or her culpable. Without this capacity there could be no justification for heaven and hell.

But reason is also part of the original beauty of the soul. As such it, along with the will and memory, was affected by the Fall, and therefore all three are involved in the conversion process. Reason's particular significance in conversion is not only that the process of restoring it to its original state is begun, but it is through reason

that God brings the soul to self-knowledge. Without a true assessment of itself and a knowledge of the depth of the human predicament, the soul would not become aware of its need for conversion or its need for God. Moreover, without a clear picture of its condition, the soul would not be prepared to undergo the rigors involved in the conversion process. Self-knowledge is also the first step toward knowledge of God. Once the weakness of the human condition is realised, the need for God is recognised as is the part he plays in the transformation brought about in the conversi's life.

Although reason's knowledge of the true state of affairs makes it a better 'leader' for the soul than the misdirected will, reason can never direct the soul without the consent of the will. Bernard tries to maintain a place for human freedom and he locates this in the will. Both knowledge and love are the fruit of the Spirit and both grow as a consequence of conversion. Therefore throughout conversion the human being not only comes into increasing harmony with the will of God, but his or her reason and will come into growing harmony with each other. Bernard insists that knowledge without love is insufficient, and love without knowledge goes astray. Without the ability to

reason, humankind could never begin to appreciate the depth of its predicament. It could not attain self-knowledge and hence knowledge of God. One begins to learn that God is a Physician and a Teacher. These aspects of God stimulate the soul's love for God. Reason is given the lead in the conversion process because it presents the soul with true self-knowledge and with the 'true facts' of the case about which it has to make a choice.

Memory was also affected by the Fall, and Bernard allots to it the last but also extremely important stage in conversion. Strictly speaking, conversion culminates in contemplation, therefore the memory's purification seems to belong to the illuminative stage of conversion. The result of the will's change means that "thereafter the will ceases delivering the body up to its former passions (Rm. 6:12) and delivers it over to reason urging it to serve righteousness for holiness' sake (Rm 6:19) with no less zeal than it formerly showed in serving evil for iniquity's." (Conv 14:29) "Once the will has been turned and the body subdued to service (1Co 9:27)...a third and very serious thing still remains to be done: the memory must be purified and the bilge water drawn off." (Conv 15:28)

God does this part of the work and he alone can do it. (Conv 15:28) "Only that living and effective word

sharper than a two edged sword [can say]: 'Your sins are forgiven you (Mk 2:5).'

"Sins are not cut out of the memory but God's forbearance wipes them away and what was causing discolouration is blanched thoroughly (Mk 2:5). "Full remission takes all of these away, and our sins no longer harm us, but even work together for our good (Rm 8:28) enabling us to offer devout thanks to him who has remitted them." (Conv 15:28) At this stage it is possible to experience the second part of compunction. The conversi is conscious of the changes taking place within them. Much of the sufferings of the first stages of conversion are behind one and one enjoys the changes that one finds in one's life. The conversi realises that these changes have been aided by God's grace and this gives rise to gratitude and joy.

With the increase in perfection and love of the soul the will comes into growing harmony with the divine will. In this stage the soul's growth in love manifests itself in the actions and way of life of the conversi. They are marked by gentleness and charity in dealings with others (10:10). Aspiration to contemplation is only possible when the sins that disquiet the soul are "blotted out with the light of consolation" (10:10).

Bernard views the conversion process as a reorientation of the will with a growing freedom from the

burden of sin, an ongoing enlightenment of the intellect, and a purification of the memory. Although it is a secret and hidden process it has palpable and visible results that are noticeable in the daily life of the conversi. Reorientation of the will involves a conscious battle with, and turning away from, sin and the ways of the unjust. Grace quickens the dullness and lethargy of the reason and will purify the memory, but it cannot work to this end without the consent of the will. In this process, God and the human being come into increasing harmony and cooperation.

So far in the conversion process, we find that although God permits evil, he is the one to begin the individual's personal battle with evil. God enlightens reason and scourges the soul to awaken it and make it conscious of its need for conversion. If the individual consents to change, God supplies it with the grace to sustain the soul on the path of conversion, and the soul finds that it can not only will the good but it can do the good. The suffering experienced in this process is necessary and God uses it to heal the soul. Thus clearly this type of suffering has a strong positive dimension. The conversion process is the return of the soul to God.

Bernard emphasises that this involves the soul in a personal relationship with God, which accounts for his consistent use of language that describes God as a Person and considers sin as the move away from a Person rather than a move away from being. That the conversion process is a manifestation of God's love for the world, and for the afflicted in particular, becomes more apparent in his description of contemplation, as does the affirmation of the telos of human life.

CONTEMPLATION The conversion process may culminate in contemplation. The Spirit plays a significant role in the progress toward contemplation. Proceeding equally from the Father and the Son, He "is the imperturbable peace of the Father and Son, their unshakable bond, their undivided love, their indivisible unity" (8:2). He is the love and benign goodness of both (8:4). The soul approaches Christ for the grace of the three-fold knowledge of the Father, Son and Spirit, since it is by him that it is revealed and to whom he wills (Mt 11:27), and Christ makes the revelation through the Spirit (8:5). It is the Spirit who inspires the daring of the soul that seeks union with the divine partner (8:3).

The gift the Spirit brings to the soul is two-fold,

the light of knowledge and the fervor of devotion (8:6). Thus contemplation has two forms of ecstasy: one of the intellect which brings enlightenment and knowledge; the other of the will which incites fervor and devotion that manifests itself in love for God, zeal for his work, and love of other human beings (49:4). Therefore knowledge and love continue to be two sides of the same coin in the relationship between God and humankind. Also the love of God does not remain as a proposition in a tractate of theology, but it is palpable in the life of the contemplative. His or her experience of change and growth seems to be attributable to some force outside of him or herself that can act in cooperation with the individual to bring about a transformation that signifies God's continuing love and care in and for the world.

With the increase in the faculty of love (8:6), the soul not only knows God but comes to love the Father (8:9). It is impossible to love Christ and thus the Father without the Holy Spirit (20:7). The soul also comes to realize that, loved by the Son, she is loved by the Father (8:9). The gift of the Spirit draws the soul to participation in the divine life of the Trinity which is a life of love (8:9). The union of the divine and human spirit is a

spiritual union, uniting the two into one (8:9). The Spirit is the inspiration behind the Song of Songs and the purpose of the text is to reveal the knowledge of the divine life and love of the Trinity, to inspire the human being to love of the Trinity and in some mysterious way to awaken the soul to desire participation in the divine love.

The soul which has progressed on the spiritual path is so full of the divine "music and fragrance" that her words and thoughts are saturated with considerations of and desire for God. Simultaneously God has so completely taken possession of her heart and tongue that there is a proportion between the soul's desire and growth in love and the soul's possession of God.¹²⁷

The Spirit's enlightenment of the mind and the incitement of the will manifests itself in an increase of the soul's desire for God. Driven by desire rather than reason in her search (9:2), her desire becomes so strong that she is absolutely convinced of God's goodness and forgets his majesty (9:4). His majesty usually inspires fear, but as the power of the soul's love for God increases her confidence and liberality of spirit also increase (7:3).

¹²⁷ Leclercq, Love of Learning. p. 92.

Having experienced God's grace her daring and confidence reach such heights that she is utterly convinced that if God will reveal himself to anybody it will be to her (8:3). Before the Fall Eve loved God, she did not fear him. But after the Fall she came to fear what she had once loved. (QH 5:2) The soul's excessive love in contemplation reverses one of the aspects of the Fall, and the soul is blinded to God's majesty because perfect love casts out all fear (1 Jn 4:18) (51:9).

"Among all the natural endowments of man love holds first place, especially when it is directed to God, who is the source whence it comes" (7:2). In the love between the soul and the Word there are no reservations, no self interest and therefore nothing to cause division (7:2). The soul who seeks union with the Word is bride and the affections of the Word for the soul allow him to be properly described as Bridegroom (7:2). The Holy Spirit helps the soul thirsting for God to grow in love and brings the soul toward its proper goal, union with God. The human being's whole purpose and meaning is to be perpetually united with God. He is the source of love that brings about the transformation in the soul that purifies its love.

The Spirit aids the soul's growth in love by helping

it grow in virtue and brings it benefits that lead to salvation. By a process called infusion, it brings benefits that are for the individual alone and by a process called effusion it brings benefits that are to be used for others (18:1). The Holy Spirit helps the soul battle with personal sin and this preparation is necessary before the individual can learn about love and the love of others (18:5).

Contemplation itself is comprised of three phases, or visions, of the divine. While Bernard gives an account of these three experiences, he maintains that contemplation is different for individuals "and each [soul] has her own secret rendezvous with the Bridegroom and says, "my secret to myself, my secret to myself (Is 24:16)." The Father has different arrangements for each (Mt 20:23) and the delights of the Bridegroom's visits are not experienced by all in the same rooms (23:9).

All contemplatives seek the place of deep repose but this final experience is preceded by two other experiences, or places, that are far from restful. Bernard describes the first as the place of restlessness:

This is a remote and secret place, but not a place of repose....In a way that is wondrous yet delightful [God] teases the awe-struck seeker till he reduces him to restlessness (23:11).

The soul experiences "a repose full of the sweetest surprise

and wondrous peace" but her heart is awake and "endures the lassitude of avid desire and laborious effort" (23:11). In this experience God is a Teacher (23:14), and he seems to stimulate the soul's desire for him, giving her a taste of the sweet repose of contemplation yet an awareness that she is not in the place of rest.

The second experience is a place of terror. Here the contemplative sees a vision of the justice of God and his dealings with the wicked (23:12). "That place is awe-inspiring (Gen 28:17) and totally devoid of quiet" (23:13). The contemplative does not know if she or he is worthy of praise or blame (23:12). In this place we learn to fear God "his name is holy and terrible; (Ps 110:9) it is the anteroom of .glory, for fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps 110:10) (23:13). In this experience the will is moved to decision (23:14). Coming face to face, as it were, with the utter transcendence and omnipotence of the living God, any illusions left of the powers of humanity are shattered. The first place is a place of preparation for wisdom, while the second sends the contemplative through the doors of wisdom (23:15).

The third place is the place of repose and deep peace (23:15). The joy that is experienced here surpasses

the terror experienced in the place of horror (23:15).

This is a vision that charms rather than terrifies; that does not arouse an inquisitive restlessness, but restrains it; that calms rather than wearies the senses (23:16).

The contemplative's experience of repose and peace is of short duration, but one of its longer lasting effects is love which manifests itself in action on behalf of one's neighbour (52:2, 52:6), and is particularly interested in Christ's interest in salvation (57:9). Carrying with it the grace of loving kindness (SC 12), it excels the graces of the other stages of conversion. Its elements are:

the needs of the poor, the anxieties of the oppressed, the worries of those that are sad, the sins of the wrong doers, and finally, the manifold misfortunes of people of all classes who endure affliction, even if they are our enemies (12:1).

Contemplatives are so dead to their own desires that they live only for others (12:1). Christ has become formed in them and they continue to form Christ in others (12:2). In everything one's purpose has become God-orientated, and the profound compassion that accompanies this opens one to doing good for all, never refusing to do an act of charity "whether spiritual or corporal, to an enemy, or withdraw it once offered" (12:7). Thus the mystic not only experiences God's goodness, love and mercy, but becomes a vehicle for them in the world. The "function of merciful love" is

superior to contrition and devotion because it works for the welfare of the afflicted (12:10). Mercy is above all other virtues because of its desire "to conform in all things to the will of the Bridegroom" (12:10).

Contemplation and action go hand in hand, according to Bernard, "Martha is sister to Mary (Lk 10:39)" (52:2). In the ideal order contemplation is to be preferred, but among the practical demands of life the order is often reversed and action takes priority over contemplation (52:3). Thus the contemplative becomes God-like. Concerned with God's concerns, he or she is particularly interested in salvation, with the afflicted, and with helping others on the path of conversion. The human being who consents to conversion becomes a manifestation of God's ongoing love for, and care for, the world. They become part of God's army in the ongoing battle with evil in the world.

Requiring years of study and moral discipline, the nuptial song is also a victory song. Bernard distinguishes between the psalms, or the Songs of the Steps, which sing of the victories of the soul as it reaches different stages in spiritual growth (1:10), and the Song of Songs which stands at the point where the Songs of the Steps culminate (1:11). The Psalms celebrate the overcoming of a temptation

an immoral habit brought under control, an impending danger shunned, the trap of the seducer detected, when a passion long indulged in is finally and perfectly allayed, or a virtue persistently desired and repeatedly sought is ultimately obtained by God's gift (1:9),

but the Song of Songs is the victory song. In the garden when Adam and Eve sinned their will turned from God and this earthly life affords the opportunity to restore the harmony between the human and divine will. Contemplative experience signals the restoration of this harmony, but the perfection of contemplation is not possible in this life (31:3).

Distinguishing between contemplation and the beatific vision, no matter how ardently the soul desires this vision, it is denied and the soul must await the completion of the earthly sojourn (41:2). Our present life in the body precludes the beatific vision (31:3). Prior to the Fall Adam could see God in the garden. After the Fall Adam could no longer see him, but he continued to hear him (28:7). In this life faith which cleanses us for the beatific vision comes by hearing (28:5), and the beatific vision is a reward for faithful hearing (28:5). Since humankind's spiritual sense of sight is too weak to see God as he is (28:6), the Holy Spirit makes use of our spiritual hearing to prepare us for the beatific vision (28:7). Again

contemplation is a reversal of the effects of the Fall.

Accompanying contemplative experience is a kind of death which

does not snatch away life but life's snares....For since the ecstatic soul is cut off from awareness of life though not from the soul itself, it must of necessity be cut off from the temptations of life (52:4).

This is why the Song of Songs is a victory song. Viewing life as a "ceaseless warfare" (1:9), the ecstasy of contemplative experience removes the mystic from the battle with the world, the flesh and the devil. A foretaste of humanity's fulfillment, heaven and perpetual union with God, the gift of contemplation relieves a number of the consequences of the Fall. The chains that oppress the will are loosened, and there is freedom from sin. Bernard views Paul as a contemplative, and before he died the only thing between himself and God was the sensual desire associated with the first stage of sin, but Paul had long since ceased giving consent to the evil impulse. Therefore while he was free to sin, he was free from sin, i.e., he was not constrained to sin, he could will the good and conform to it. The lower degree of freedom of counsel had been restored to him. During his experiences of the third heaven, or his contemplative experiences, he was temporarily

freed from sorrow and thus had freedom of pleasure restored to him in some measure. Closely allied with the beatific vision, which is the goal of human life, contemplation offers a foretaste of the vision and an affirmation of the goal of human life.

This is an experience open to all contemplatives and potentially open to all human beings. Offering a foretaste of the bliss to come it is deeply embedded in the eschatological order and the notion of "Felix Culpa." It is also clear from Bernard's account of conversion and contemplation that he consistently holds that the soul does not suffer from a lack or deficiency. Rather his depiction of conversion and contemplation describes the restoration to the soul of its original and natural beauty.

CONCLUSION

To gather up the threads of the preceding pages, not all of Bernard's thoughts on evil and suffering have been examined here, but many of the main lines of his thought have been drawn. Clearly, Bernard follows a number of Augustine's themes in his discussion of evil and suffering. In particular, the themes of the goodness of creation, the entrance of sin and suffering to the human domain as a result of the Fall, and one account of the Fall clothed in a veil of mystery that does not allow it to be viewed with deep regret. Ultimately, the Fall is a happy event because it opened the way for the perfection of humankind and allowed the possibility of a perpetual release from evil and suffering. The theme of "Felix Culpa" not only receives explicit attention from Bernard in his consideration of the psalm 'He Who Dwells', but it profoundly underlies his contemplative theology. Because of free choice, which includes humankind's ability to judge and reason, there is a final dichotomy of heaven and hell. Thus Bernard draws heavily on Augustine's four theological strands in his discussion of evil and suffering.

Bernard is a theologian of the search of God and this influences the focus of his discussion on evil. Thus, sin which cuts off the life of the soul and precludes a

harmony between the human and divine will receives most attention in his discussion of evil. Sin as the main focus of Bernard's discussion of evil not only relates to moral categories, but it transcends them and relates to humankind's ultimate goal and purpose, to see God as he really is and to be eternally united with him. This is primarily a theological concern. Bernard does not use the metaphysical language of being and non being to discuss sin, rather his "discussion of the orientation of the will uses the more personal language of a turning away from a being, God. The monk seeks union with God and Bernard is a monastic theologian who deliberately chose to use monastic literary genres, along with biblical and dramatic language in the development of his theology. While it is clear that the abbot of Clairvaux was indeed familiar with the use of the language of privation employed by other Christian writers in their discussion of evil, contrary to Russell's claim, Bernard himself chose to refrain from its use.

While all the reasons for this may not be clear, there are some indications in Bernard's works as to why he made this choice. As we have seen the language of being and non being is too impersonal a language for a discussion of sin which involves a personal relationship with God. Bernard does not consider there to be a lack in human nature

since the Fall as much as there are additions that hid the natural and original beauty of the soul. These additions are removed as the soul progresses on the path of conversion, freeing it from these extraneous burdens.

Bernard is silent about natural evils in his works. In the Christian tradition they are often described in terms of a lack or privation. While we find no references to natural evils in the writings examined for the thesis, Bernard does make reference to them in his letters, famine, for instance. His response is to look for aid for those suffering the effects of the famine. Thus although he does not try to account for natural evils, he does try to respond to them. Another reason Bernard makes no use of the privative argument is that he does not ask about evil and substantive form, i.e., he does not ask if evil exists, and this is one area where many theologians prior to Bernard made use of privation.

In highlighting the part Augustine's four theological strands play in Bernard's theology, I do not want to disregard some other themes that are essential to Bernard's understanding of the human condition. In following his interpretation of the story of humankind a number of questions arise and some of Bernard's thoughts on evil and suffering are clarified. One thread that runs

through his thought emphasises that because Adam sinned freely he was justly punished. God is innocent of moral evil and Bernard clearly places evil in the sphere of creation. God is not the source of evil, humankind and Satan are. There is a definite and strong retributive theme in Bernard's understanding of evil and suffering. Although he carefully draws out his discussion of human freedom, it is not clear why Adam decided to turn from God. The three freedoms and their degrees explain how Adam could have sinned, but they do not explain why a good creature would choose evil.

The past is not the only aspect of the human story that guides Bernard's discussion of evil and suffering. While the past, present and future must be taken as a whole, the future plays an almost predominant part in Bernard's understanding of the relationship between God and humankind and is another thread in Bernard's discussion of evil and suffering. The future adds another aspect to Bernard's retributive theme as a justification for evil and suffering. Human life has a telos or a goal. According to Bernard, Adam was presented with the choice either to remain good and in harmony with the divine will or to turn from it. Choosing the latter, the human race inherited the consequences of Adam's choice. Thus each individual is

again offered the choice that Adam was offered but the conditions have altered. Bernard believes that human nature is good but it has become "crooked" as a result of the Fall.¹²⁶ Thus the choice God offers humankind is not only a reversal of the effects of the Fall but the perfection of our "crooked" human nature and eternal union with him. The tools human beings have to make this decision are tarnished, but Bernard tries to maintain that the will remains radically free to choose.

Stoeber throughout his book Evil and the Mystic's God points out the strong teleological current that runs through mystical thought and its considerations of evil and suffering,¹²⁷ and this is certainly present in Bernard's theology. Although Adam fell, human perfection only became possible as a result of the Fall. Union with God is the goal of human life and it requires a high degree of perfection. Human freedom is absolutely necessary to the fulfilment of the telos and much of Bernard's thought on

¹²⁶ Bernard Lonergan, Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. (New York and London: Herder and Herder, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1970) p. 15. Lonergan notes that Bernard was the first to describe human nature as "crooked."

¹²⁷ Stoeber, The Mystic's God. See chapters 6-10, in particular.

evil and suffering has to be understood in light of humankind's purpose and the necessity of human freedom to fulfill it. At creation Adam was truly given freedom. This meant he was free to sin or not to sin. He was given this freedom so that in refraining from sin he would appear more glorious, not so that he would sin. After the Fall humankind retains free choice so that it can freely consent to its perfection. Thus free choice is essential for the fulfilment of the human telos, and in Bernard's thought teleology is an essential thread for understanding the present human condition. It must be aligned with Bernard's understanding of retribution to gain a fuller picture of his understanding of the human condition and the relationship between God and humankind.

Thus while God is not responsible for moral evil, he permits it. Adam was given freedom and it was an essential aspect of his human dignity. In giving Adam this freedom God truly allowed him to choose, even if the choice was in opposition to the divine will. Although the terms and conditions of humankind's freedom differ from those of Adam's, human beings continue to have free choice. A consequence of this type of freedom is the possibility of moral evil and indeed, given the the radical nature of human freedom, even radically moral evil. God permits this and

even though he does not will evil, evil is a consequence of the freedom he has given humankind. Thus the evil and suffering that one human being can inflict on another is a result of the perpetrator of evil's free choice. Free choice is necessary for the fulfilment of the human telos, but the evil or suffering one receives at the hands of another human being is not a punishment delivered by God. Free choice itself is more clearly aligned with fulfilment of the telos of human life than with retribution.

In speaking of radical moral evil, we come to a very difficult aspect of Bernard's explanation of the relationship between God and humankind. According to Bernard human freedom is essential to the fulfilment of humankind's purpose. Is this purpose enough to justify the suffering of the innocent victims of radical evil? It must be said that Bernard in the works examined does not explicitly raise this question, but his emphasis on human freedom and the choice of either becoming one spirit with God or one spirit with the devil seems to take radical moral evil into account. Therefore God whom Bernard considers all powerful, all loving and all good permits atrocities, which make many human beings who lack God's qualities shudder, to fulfill the divine will. Any answer to this question seems fraught with difficulties, but the telos of human life and

the necessity of freedom to fulfill this goal must be seen as another thread in Bernard's discussion of evil and suffering.

The third thread that runs through Bernard's thought on evil and suffering is mystery. The Fall and its consequences in his discussion of the psalm 'He Who Dwells' best describes this aspect. Mystery, as Leclercq points out, plays a fundamental role in monastic theology. Therefore while Bernard places significant emphasis on retribution and human freedom to fulfill the human telos in his account of humankind's present condition, it is clear that human rational powers are limited in understanding aspects of the human condition.

Bernard's life and his own dedication to an active combat with personal evil and his exhortation and guidance to others to do likewise must also be seen as a response to evil and suffering. The true contemplative takes up an extremely rigorous and demanding way of life and devotes special care to the afflicted and the suffering. It is not clear that Bernard affirms all suffering as positive. One's spiritual state affects one's response to suffering as we have seen but the afflicted are the special care of the contemplative. Bernard never minimises the opposition between good and evil. As a monk and a contemplative his

whole life is devoted to progress on the path of perfection. This involves rigorous moral discipline and an active battle with personal evil to grow in love. Bernard recognises the deeply disturbing aspects of affliction and encourages others to grow in love so they can actively fight evil in the world and ease the burden of suffering. This is possibly a truer characterization of Bernard's response to radical evil.

While human beings are fundamentally good, Bernard speaks of an impulse to evil that is found within the human heart. This impulse does not direct the orientation of the will or the judgement of reason. It can be overridden by both. If the will is oriented to good the human being tries to cooperate and grow in goodness, and if the will is oriented to evil then the individual consents to evil and grows in wickedness. Although the ambiguities we find in the relationship between reason and the will weaken Bernard's position, he tries to maintain that reason cannot coerce the will, but God's grace can enlighten reason, and if the will consents, the senses and the evil impulse are put under reason's command. Thus although Bernard finds an evil impulse within the human heart it does not orientate reason or coerce reason, it can only affect the soul if there is consent to follow its suggestion.

Another difficulty that arises because of the ambiguity of the relationship between the will and reason is, as McGinn points out, that Bernard has no clear discussion of factors that could lessen the culpability of an individual in certain situations.¹³⁰ For example, a man with a starving family who can not get work or food on request may decide to steal food. If he does so, is he completely responsible for this? Economic factors, hunger and concern for loved ones influence his decision to steal.¹³¹ Also how does a passion like hunger affect free choice?

Stoeber¹³² also speaks of the tremendously consolatory experience of mysticism. Two aspects of it are important to Bernard's considerations of evil and suffering. God is not the source of evil but he certainly inflicts suffering to bring about healing in the soul. God actively fights evil and he often employs suffering to do this. He scourges the soul causing great grief in his attempts to lead the sinner away from sin. He pricks the conscience and

¹³⁰ McGinn, p. 34. note # 101.

¹³¹ In fairness to Bernard, his letters may be more revealing of the direction of his thought in situations like this.

¹³² Stoeber, The Mystic's God. pp. 116-121.

confronts the sinner with his or her own wickedness. Moreover the contemplative and the individual who undergoes a conversion experience finds God to be the instigator of the battle with personal evil and an ally in the fray. Thus while God permits evil, he also actively fights it and this causes tremendous suffering. In this way, Bernard assigns a positive aspect of this type of suffering. He also claims that God's grace and the effects of this grace affirm God's goodness. Nor is this just the experience of the contemplative but it is part of the experience of all Christian life.

Another aspect of mystical experience that Stoeber refers to has to do with another facet of the telos of human life.¹³³ The contemplative, and this is abundantly clear in Bernard's writings, claims to experience a foretaste of human perfection and eternal bliss in this life. In this way he or she offers positive affirmation of the goal of human life. Stoeber argues that generally mystics subordinate retribution and free will to the goal of human life and this makes for a better theodicy. In doing so the world is seen as a region for "soul making." Bernard tends to keep the three threads of retribution, free choice and a

¹³³ Ibid.

human telos running parallel rather than subordinating one to another. Indeed there is no indication that he tried to sort them out and give one particular aspect priority over another.

To conclude, mystics are sometimes criticised for their lack of interest in evil and suffering. However, both play a surprisingly central part in Bernard's theology. This is not to say that Bernard has solved the problem of evil, far from it, but he does give some serious thought to evil and suffering in the human domain. Humankind lives in a tension between the past and the future which explains some aspects of evil and suffering. Mystery shrouds aspects of the human condition. Perhaps Bernard's most profound response to evil and suffering lies in his active concern for the afflicted and suffering, his battle with personal evil and his exhortations to others to do likewise and his encouragement to love and hope in the face of both.

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