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The humanism in the thought and in the spirituality of saint Bernard of Clairvaux: The fundamental attitude discovered in cistercian mystics and cistercian art

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Abstract

This paper is dedicated to humanism in the thought, spirituality and teaching of Saint Bernard. Bernard's way of thinking and his spiritual, interior life were the object of study by many scholars. However, only a few concentrated their research on his humanism. The background of humanism is the concept of human nature. Evidently, Bernard discovered the nature of man in three stages. In the beginning, human nature is noble and splendid among God's creatures because it is created on the image and likeness of God. Then it became a fallen creature because he lost his likeness. However, a man could recover the splendid nature—image and likeness thanks to Christ—by renovation and reformation. Consequently, his nature could be fulfilled. It is a rather mystical experience of human nature. In this background, Bernard built the pedagogical concept of restoration and reformation of human person, which consists of three levels of formation. First, it is recognition of himself, which brings humility and experience of truth. The second level is consideration and contemplation, which makes it possible to discover the invisible God. The third level is the love of God and love on neighbor, which guide to communion with God. this process of formation and education of man in the monastic milieu (environment) is the humanism of Bernard. Consequently, the process of renovation concludes in the humanity of Christ and his corporeality. The work of redemption presumes his suffering and his death. Therefore, Christ's body and human body were pictured in the Cistercian book painting.

Keywords

medieval humanism, Bernard of Clairvaux, cistercians, cistercians spirituality, cistercian art, human nature, human body

Introduction

When we study the work of R. W. Southern on scholastic humanism, we discover that the research and consideration of human nature was a crucial point of intellectual culture of the XII and XIII centuries.¹ In fact, the great synthesis of God's word and God's image didn't pass over the human being and human nature.

This book was inspiration to penetrate the texts of Bernard and to ask the question: Could we find the outlines of humanism in the Bernard's way of thinking and in the Bernard's mystical experience?

Many scholars studied Bernard's thought and in his research took in consideration the bernardian reflection on human beings and the human nature of Christ. Étienne Gilson studies his mystiques and has published considerable works.² We find also some valuable indications for the research on humanism in the texts of Michael Casey. In 1992, he published a study on the fundamental topics of Bernard's spirituality.³ In 2011, appeared his synthesis of Bernard's message.⁴ Michael Casey sketched out outlines of Bernard's theological anthropology, giving inspiration to the search for humanism.

Marinus B. Pranger was interested in the literary works of Bernard.⁵ However, he emphasized his experience of Christ's mystery and the human nature of Savior.

Emilia Jamroziak dedicated a chapter in his study on the Cistercians in the Middle Ages to the theological anthropology of Bernard.⁶

¹ R. W. Southern, *"Medieval Humanism" and other studies*, Oxford 1970; R. W. Southern, *Scholastic humanism and the unification of Europe*, vol. 1: *Foundations*, Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford-Cambridge, MA 1997; R. W. Southern, *Scholastic humanism and the unification of Europe*, vol. 2: *The heroic age*, Wiley-Blackwell, Maiden, MA 2001.

² É. Gilson, *La théologie mystique de saint Bernard*, Vrin, Paris 2000; É. Gilson, *La cité de Dieu de s. Bernard*, in: *Saint Bernard homme de l'Église*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris 1953; É. Gilson, *Saint Bernard. Un itinéraire de retour à Dieu*, CERF, Paris 1964.

³ M. Casey, *Le spirituel: les grands thèmes bernardins*, in: *Bernard de Clairvaux: histoire mentalité spiritualité: Colloque de Lyon-Cîteaux-Dijon*, CERF, Paris 1992, pp. 605–635 (Sources Chrétiennes, 380).

⁴ M. Casey, *Reading Saint Bernard: the man, the medium, the message*, in: *A companion to Bernard of Clairvaux*, ed. B. P. McGuire, BRILL, Leiden 2011, pp. 62–107 (Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, 25).

⁵ M. B. Pranger, *Bernard the Writer*, in: *A companion to Bernard of Clairvaux*, pp. 220–248.

⁶ E. Jamroziak, *The Cistercian Order in medieval Europe 1090–1500*, Routledge, London–New York 2013.

We take into account also a study of Rafal Tichy,⁷ a polish philosopher on Bernard's concept of human nature. The systematic, logical, and well-disposed dissertation brings to light the human nature in its dynamism and means in its development. But the line of man's growth has been put into the contexts of mystical experience and in the relationship with God.

It is naturally necessary to mention a series of studies on Christian humanism in the Middle Ages.⁸ There are some essays dedicated to the humanist thought and attitudes of Anselm of Canterbury, William of Saint Thierry, Abelard, Hugh of Saint Victor, and Peter Lombard Aelred of Rievaulx.⁹ This text brings a new, critical look at the problem of 12th century humanism.

David Appleby studied the concept of human nature in the spirituality of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux.¹⁰ In his paper, the author confronted the general conviction that the 12th century was and specifically Bernard was anti-humanist. However, in his study of Bernard's concept, he discovers dignity, knowledge, and virtue as God's gift to man. Consequently, he studied the relationship between necessities and human nature in the states of fall and recovery. In fact, his point of departure is conviction that Bernard was rather anti-humanist. The considerable remarks on the man's concept are in the large monography on the humanism of R. W. Southern.

More importantly, we need to emphasize, that our goal is the humanism of Bernard's thought and mystics. Therefore, we need to distinguish between theological anthropology and the concept of humanism. Consequently, we try

⁷ R. Tichy, *Mistyczna historia człowieka według Bernarda z Clairvaux*, FLOS CARMELI, Poznań 2011.

⁸ *A companion to medieval Christian humanism: Essays on principal thinkers*, ed. J. P. Becket, CERF, Leiden–Boston 2016.

⁹ B. Brown, *The humanism of William of Saint Thierry*, in: *A companion to medieval Christian humanism: Essays on principal thinkers*, ed. J. P. Becket, CERF, Leiden–Boston 2016, pp. 88–100; E. Sweeney, *Abelard's Christian Socratism*, in: *A companion to medieval Christian humanism*, pp. 101–121; A. Salzmann, *The soul's reformation and the arts in Hugh of St. Victor: A book written twice without*, in: *A companion to medieval Christian humanism*, pp. 142–167; J. T. Slotemaker, *Peter Lombard and the imago Trinitatis*, in: *A companion to medieval Christian humanism*, pp. 168–188; J. S. Russell, *Conceiving the soul: Aelred of rievaulx and the sanctifying labor of the mind*, in: *A companion to medieval Christian humanism*, pp. 189–211.

¹⁰ D. Appleby, *"Bodily need is a Kind of Speech": Human dignity and bodily necessity according to Bernard of Clairvaux*, in: *A companion to medieval Christian humanism*, pp. 122–141.

to find the answer to the questions: What is humanism? Therefore, our point of departure is the concept of human being. So we start to analyze it.

In order to reach the truly and real concept of Bernardian humanism, we need to make a survey of the concept of human being. In fact, Bernard in his writings rethought human nature designing a spiritual journey. The concise analysis of this journey, inspired by the work of Rafal Tichy but based on the writings of Bernard, should be the foundation of our description of humanism.

1. The human condition designed by Bernard as a journey

The most splendid creature

Bernard collocated a man among God's creatures. Naturally, he accepts ontological division of spiritual and material creatures. Consequently, he considers the spiritual beings as superior. In fact, there is a great distance between spiritual and material words. Unquestionably, for him, there is also a hierarchy among the spiritual creatures. The highest is God, below stands angels, men, and in the lowest positions are animals. Among this hierarchy, Bernard discovered a particular condition and particular role of man. The man, whose ontological character consists of the unity of body and soul, is extraordinary, being different from the angels and animals. Bernard wrote¹¹:

Nullus enim deo vicinior gradu inter omnes quae sub soli habitans creaturas,
quam anima humana (*Sermones de diversis* 9, 2).

Thus, the human being is the highest creature in the material word, but the lowest creature in the spiritual world. This position in the border between two categories of beings makes him a particular creature. Bernard asserts that man is *nobilis creatura*.

In fact, this is the point of departure of Bernardian anthropology, bernardian consideration of human nature. More importantly, Bernard don't hesitate

¹¹ Bernardus Claraevallensis, *Sermones de diversis* 9, 2, in: S. Bernardi [...] *opera omnia*, vol. 2, ed. J.-P. Migne, Parisiis 1862, col. 566 (*Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, 183).

to make profound this concept of nobility. In his work *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, he describes that man creates *ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei*.¹² In fact, this image of God in man is essential. This likeness to God supposes *liberum arbitrium*—the faculty of free choice. Bernard wrote¹³:

Hinc est fortassis, quod solum liberum arbitrium sui omnino defectum seu diminutionem non patitur, quod in ipso potissimum aeternae et incommutabili divinitatis substantive quaedam imago impressa videatur (*De gratia et libero arbitrio* 28).

The fallen creature

We discover the antithesis of *similitudo Dei*. This is the state of fall and deterioration of human beings. The man made a free choice because he enjoys freedom. It gives him the possibility to make a free decision without any external pressure. But it is necessary in particular to add that a man received an opportunity not to commit sin, possibility not to choose evil. Bernard wrote¹⁴:

Soli inter animantia datum est homini potuisse peccare, ob praerogativam liberi arbitrii Datum est autem, non ut perinde peccaret, sed ut gloriosior appareret si non peccaret, cum peccare posset (*De gratia et libero arbitrio* 22).

This is the fundamental assertion of Bernard because this possibility is granted to man to avoid sin and evil and to develop his own excellence. Bernard considered the two greatest causes of the evil choice. The first is excessive pride and vain glory—*superbia*. The second cause is ignorance. Both vices are defined by Bernard by Latin terms: *propria voluntas*, which means pride and vain glory, and *proprium concilium*, which could be translated as ignorance.

However, a man has freely chosen evil, and the consequences of this choice appeared. The most striking consequence of bad choice is the loss of divine similarity. Indeed, the human creature, created according the divine model, had lost its similarity and has been deteriorated. Bernard analyzed these bad

¹² Bernard de Clairvaux, *L'amour de Dieu. La grâce et le libre arbitre*, introductions, trad., notes et index par F. Callerot, CERF, Paris 1993 (Sources Chrétiennes, 393).

¹³ Bernard de Clairvaux, *L'amour de Dieu. La grâce et le libre arbitre*, p. 304.

¹⁴ Bernard de Clairvaux, *L'amour de Dieu. La grâce et le libre arbitre*, pp. 294–296.

transformations in Sermo 81 of Cantiques.¹⁵ He asserts that the similitude has been changed in the *disssimilitudo*. So, the man has lost divine features.

In the *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, Bernard asserts that the human person, created by God, is formatted on a model called *imago Dei*. However, in the original fall, this *imago* was deformed and lost its original ability to reflect the divine nature. Bernard wrote:¹⁶

Puto autem in his tribus libertatibus ipsam, ad quam conditi sumus, Conditoris imaginem atque similitudinem contineri, et imaginem quidem in libertate arbitrii, in reliquis autem duabus bipertitam quondam consignari similitudinem (*De gratia et libero arbitrio* 28).

...hoc est imaginem suam, quae nativo spoliata decore, sub pelle peccati sordens, tamquam in pulvere latitabat, inventam tergeret et tolleretur de regione dissimilitudinis... (*De gratia et libero arbitrio* 32).

The revived creature

Bernard discovered the way to reconstruct God's image and restore human nature. The first step of this restoration is to consider himself and his proper condition. Indeed, the cognition of his own condition is the point of departure of this journey to renewal. Bernard in his work *De consideratione* inspires the recognition of his own misery and his own lie.¹⁷ But this is only one point of view. *Doctor mellifluis* focused also on the rationality and dignity of fallen man. So he didn't hesitate to integrate in human beings 304, 314 both features—the spirit of life and the mud of misery (*De consideratione*, 2, 18). The cognition of himself initiates the fundamental attitude of man—humility.

But cognition of himself and humility are only the starting point of restoration. Bernard started to contemplate Christ, who is the Son of God, the Word of God, and the Image of God—*Filius Dei*, *Verbum Domini*, and *Imago Dei*. This

¹⁵ Bernard de Clairvaux, *Sermons sur le Cantique*, vol. 5: *Sermons 69–86*; texte latin de s. *Bernardi Opera* par J. Leclercq, H. Rochais, Ch. H. Talbot; préf. M. Zink; introd. et notes P. Verdeyen; trad. R. Fassetta; index Abbaye Sainte-Marie de Boulaur, CERF, Paris 2007, pp. 296–319 (Sources Chrétiennes, 511).

¹⁶ Bernard de Clairvaux, *L'amour de Dieu. La grâce et le libre arbitre*, pp. 304, 314.

¹⁷ Bernard de Clairvaux, *De la considération*, trad. P. Dalloz, CERF, Paris 1986.

last definition is the most important in Bernard's anthropology. Jesus Christ *imago Dei*, the image of God perfectly reveals the nature of God. Bernard says in sermo 80 in *Cantica canticorum*¹⁸:

Verbum est veritas, est sapientia, est iustitia: et haec imago Cuius. Iustitiae, sapientiae, veritatis. Est enim Imago haec iustitia de iustitia, sapientia de sapientia, veritas de veritate, quasi de lumine lumen de Deo Deus (*Sermones in Cantica canticorum* 80, 2).

However, this is an image of God existing in his eternal existence. But to set a man on the way of renewal, it was necessary to display him the incarnated image of God. Christ, the true God and true man, the incarnated Son of God, is the subject who frees a fallen man from misery and gives him back a true and perfect image of God. In this excellent image, a man discovers a true image of man created *ad imaginem dei*. In fact, a man created and formed, who experienced before *degeneration and deformation*, recovers in Christ his own image of God in *renovation and reformation*.

Christ is a perfect model in which a man rediscovers his dignity and similarity to God and enters the continual process of conformation to Christ. This process supposes two fundamental attitudes of cognition. On the one hand, a man gets to know his miserable condition and starts to cleanse his mind and his will. On the other hand, he gets to know his God self, his own dignity, and the similitude of man to God. Bernard wrote¹⁹:

Atque hoc modo erit gradus ad notitiam Dei, tui cognition; et ex imagine sua, quae in te renovatur, ipse videbitur, dum tu quidem revelata facie gloriam Domini cum fiducia speculando, in eandem imaginem transformaris de claritate in claritatem, tamquam a Domini spiritu (*Sermones in Cantica canticorum* 36, 6).

¹⁸ Bernard de Clairvaux, *Sermons sur le Cantique*, vol. 5, p. 276.

¹⁹ Bernard de Clairvaux, *Sermons sur le Cantique* *Sermons sur le Cantique*, vol. 3: *Sermons* 33–50, texte latin de s. *Bernardi Opera* par J. Leclercq, H. Rochais, Ch. H. Talbot; introd., trad. et notes par P. Verdeyen, R. Fassetta, CERF, Paris 2000, p. 120 (*Sources Chrétiennes*, 452).

The fulfilled creature

It was very difficult for Bernard to say something about the heavenly reality. In particulars, it is necessary to say that he experienced a strong inability to describe the eschatological reality. Because of this, the last point of this anthropological itinerary is enough to present only some remarks. On the one hand, he underlines the spiritual union of God and human being. This is the total unification of both natures—divine and human—mutual cognition and mutual love of both persons, God and man. (*Cantica canticorum* 82, 7). On the another hand he emphasized deification, which means ontological transformation of human nature, which makes a total agreement of human substance with divine model and muster. It presumes the transformation of the human incomplete and imperfect image of God into the perfect and complete image of the Supreme Being.

Mystical experience of human nature

We have studied Bernard's concept of human nature. Naturally, it wasn't an academic concept of anthropology. Bernard's experience of humanity was an experience of a mystic, no scholastic, an experience of a contemplator, no scholar. Therefore, we have got only some remarks of it. These are only some statements of a monk, contemplator, and spiritual director, which came from his own meditative experience. It is needless to say that his cognition of human nature is cognition in himself coming from his personal prayer, rather than from his personal studies. But the mystical anthropology and spiritual description of the human condition, even attributed to monks and contemplators, is not at the core of humanism.

Just in this moment is necessary to repeat with zeal the question: What is humanism, whose Bernard was an author and outstanding person? We have a first answer. Humanism is not equal with the concept of human nature. But where is the just and precise answer?

We can search this answer in the considerable works of Bernard *De consideratione*.²⁰ This work has been dedicated to pope Eugen, a friend of Bernard. The three first chapters of this book contain the remarks, advices, and admonitions given to friends to make them easier and fruitful the fulfillment of his pope's

²⁰ Bernard de Clairvaux, *De la considération*.

office. This work displays the area of research on humanism. In fact, in the center of Bernard's interest stays the human person, her condition, her personal development, and her growth in spiritual life. Bernard takes care of his friend because he is aware of the dangers and ambushes which come against Eugene the pope.

So, we discover Bernard as an abbot, spiritual director, and master of monks, but not only of monks. Certainly, his area of activity is monastic milieu, where lives the Cistercian community, trying to pray and to work. In fact the Cistercians practiced *officium divinum*, *lectio divina* and *labor manuum*. Therefore, Bernard engages his abilities and experience to teach and educate the monks in the true way of life.

The humanism of Bernard could be described as his personal activity and the activity of the monastic community, whose goal is to educate the human person in the context of his own life and his own choice. Is this really monastic humanism? We can answer positively because its effect has been presumed to be in the monastic milieu. However, this is also the universal humanism because it gives a project of renewal and growth of the human person. Bernard proposes the tools, which have been used in monastic convents.

2. Humanism as a system

After these analyses above, we can assert that the humanism of Bernard of Clairvaux isn't a concept of human nature but a series of recommendations, instructions, activities, attitudes, behaviors and practices, which guide a person to the renovation of human nature and to restitution in him an image of God. It was rather a system of monastic pedagogy, which shows how to educate a conscious person, able to contemplate God and receive salvation.

This is the system because we discover logical connections between different sectors of that. But bernardino concept of human being is really a foundation of whole humanism because pedagogy takes its inspiration from the concept of man. We can consider some great sectors of humanism, understood as recommendations and attitudes on the way to the ideal of the mature and well-formed monk.

Humility and truth

The first sector of this educative way of humanism is the truth of human condition. A man recognizes in it his own condition and his own misery. It is the misery of fallen existence and fallen nature. The most important Bernard's work, which treats the way of humility, is *De gradibus humilitatis et superbiae*.²¹ The knowledge of himself is a necessary condition of personal development and renewal of his human nature. What is the gate to true knowledge? According to Bernard the humility is the necessary way to true knowledge. He asserts that a man who wants to know himself must eliminate pride because pride obscures the light of knowledge (*De gradibus humilitatis et superbiae* 15).²² Humility is an attitude in which a man recognizes his own deteriorated condition. He describes the twelfth grades of humility, in antithesis toward twelfth grades of excessive pride and vain glory (*superbia*). Consequently, a human being lives in ignorance because he neglects the knowledge of himself. Bernard wrote in his commentary on the *Cantique of cantiques*:²³

Audi ergo sponsus liquid et aperte in anima etiam animae ignorantiam condemnantem, Quid enim dicit? Non utique si Deum, sed "Si ignorans te inquit, et cetera. Patet ergo quia ignorans ignorabitur, sive se, sive Deum ignorare contigit" (*Sermones in Cantica canticorum* 35, 9).

The fact is that humility guides a man to the truth, but there are three levels of truth. The first level of truth is to know himself and also recognize his own misery and the state of deterioration. The second level of truth is to recognize the misery of his neighbor, but not to condemn him. This grade of truth calls a man to feel empathy and compassion with his neighbor. The third level of truth is to purify his heart to watch God self.

But this watching guide us to another sector of humanism. Humility has its place in the monastic tradition. Gregory the Great developed in his writing the concept of compunction. It means the recognition of his own sin. Gregory emphasised the *compunctio cordis* (compunction of heart) and *compunctio*

²¹ Bernard z Clairvaux, *O stopniach pokory i pychy*, tłum. S. Kiełtyka, WAM, Kraków 1991, pp. 34–36.

²² Bernard z Clairvaux, *O stopniach pokory i pychy*, pp. 34–36.

²³ Bernard de Clairvaux, *Sermons sur le Cantique*, vol. 3, pp. 100–102.

amoris (compunction of love).²⁴ Both initiate the desire of God, which guides a monk to personal contact and unity with God.

Considerationa and contemplation

Bernard in his work *De consideratione* researched the problem of vision and recognition of God.²⁵ Bernard distinguishes two ways of cognition: the consideration and the contemplation and creates exact definitions: The consideration is a mind's effort to research truth. The contemplation is the truly and sure cognition of an object or the direct and sure cognition of truth. Both stay in a strong relationship.

But it is necessary to recognize the context of the theory of prayer, which is considered. The work is addressed to pope Eugene, so the author respects his tasks and engagements. This is practical work to support the papal service and help him in his spiritual life. He is aware: it is impossible in this life to contemplate directly the essence of thing and to contemplate directly God. Therefore, he must consider invisible God as a visible creature. However, consideration in its three grades guides the human person to the contemplation of God in his nature. The first grade is ordering consideration, which discerns things by senses. The second grade is evaluating consideration, which judges every created thing and evaluates it as a tool of God's cognition. The third consideration is speculative consideration, which unite a person through grace with God self (*De consideratione* V, 4). Contemplation is one of the most splendid activities of man, but there is also something important that marks human nature. This is love. The contemplation lets us be touched by love.

The consideration is in relationship with the activity, which is described and displayed in the Rule of saint Benedict. These are *lectio* and *meditatio*. A monk, whose life is totally dedicated to God practiced reading of Bible and its commentaries and meditated on its content. In fact, he was giving his thought to the Word of God, and he directed his mind to divine realities revealed in the text.

²⁴ See J. Leclercq, *L'amour des lettres et le désir e Dieu. Initiation aux auteurs monastiques du Moyen Age*, CERF, Paris 1957, pp. 34–36; J. Leclercq, *Miłość nauki a pragnienie Boga*, trans. M. Borkowska, Tyniec Wydawnictwo Benedyktynów, Kraków 1997, pp. 40–42 (Źródła Monastyczne, 14).

²⁵ Bernard de Clairvaux, *De la considération*.

However, meditation was only some stage of this spiritual activity, which guided the contemplation of God.²⁶

God's love and man's love

This particular question marks the first paragraph of Bernard's work *De diligendo Deo*²⁷: "Why God merits our love? Why we have to love God" (*De diligendo Deo* 1). He gave a direct and simple answer. We are called to love God because God has loved us as his own enemies. He loved them only out of mercy. The mercy and grace free given are God's motivation for love. We have to love God because he merits to be loved by human persons. We also need to love God because he is a supreme good, and he grants us goods we need in every stage of our life (*De diligendo Deo* 1).²⁸ Therefore, it is possible for man to love God, but only with his support and his assistance. So, Bernard designed a pedagogy of love for the human person. In fact, according to Bernard, there are four stages of love. The first stage is love, when a man loves himself only for his won sake. This stage of love also summons the love of his neighbor (*De diligendo Deo* 23, 24).²⁹ The second stage of love is to love God because of the benefits a man receives from him. A man in oppression is touched by the generosity of God who grants him his support and his help (*De diligendo Deo* 26).³⁰ The third stage consists of loving God for the sake of God. In fact, a man experiences the goodness of God and love him because he recognizes his nature (*De diligendo Deo* 26). The fourth stage of love is to love himself because God loves him. In this regard a man recognizes that God loves him as a first. When a man loves God, he loves also himself for the sake of God (*De diligendo Deo* 27–29).³¹

This is the highest level of love, but it doesn't exclude a particular way in which a human being starts to progress in this way of love. It does not eliminate the gradual growth of human love. The most important inspiration of human love is the human nature of Christ and the human body of Savior.

²⁶ See J. Leclercq, *Miłość nauki a pragnienie Boga*, pp. 20–24.

²⁷ Bernard de Clairvaux, *L'amour de Dieu. La grâce et le libre arbitre*.

²⁸ Bernard de Clairvaux, *L'amour de Dieu. La grâce et le libre arbitre*, pp. 60–62.

²⁹ Bernard de Clairvaux, *L'amour de Dieu. La grâce et le libre arbitre*, pp. 116–122.

³⁰ Bernard de Clairvaux, *L'amour de Dieu. La grâce et le libre arbitre*, pp. 125–127.

³¹ Bernard de Clairvaux, *L'amour de Dieu. La grâce et le libre arbitre*, pp. 128–130.

Love and the relationship between God and soul, or person are rooted in the patristic and monastic traditions. In fact, Origen's commentary on the Song of Songs put in emphasis the body, the members of the body, but recognize in it the soul. Consequently, he studied love, understood as a desire of Christ achieved by the Word of God.³²

3. Christ the man and human body of Christ

Bernard in the 7th paragraph of *De diligendo Deo* introduces us to the economy of love and shows us the object of love. This is the crucified Jesus. In fact, the crucified Jesus revealed the love of God. Bernard displays the Church as the Bride, who stays before our eyes. In fact, the bride looks at Jesus, the only begotten Son, who is flagellated and bears the cross. He is insulted, nailed to the cross, and pierced by a spear. Jesus in the end gave his soul for his friends. The Bride—the Church and the soul observe all these actions and enter the garden of the Bridegroom. She desires to meet him, and she picks up red apples and white flowers—symbols of death and resurrection. So, we discover how important and fundamental is the body of Christ in the experience of God's love.

There is also another image and metaphor. Bernard reveals the particular relationship in sermon 61 of *Sermones in Cantica canticorum*. He reported the conversation between the bride and groom and between someone mysterious and the Dove. The Dove hides in the *foramina petrae*—in the cleft of rock. The cleft of rocks is the wound of Christ. Practically, the mysterious person—the bride is the Christ, who is wounded and crucified. The dove is conscious of her own sinfulness, but she searches for mercy in the wounds of Christ. More, the wounds open access to the entrails of Christ, which are displayed as a symbol of mercy and salvation.

³² See D. Robertson, *Lectio divina. The medieval experience of reading*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MI 2011, pp. 159–163.

Bernard states:

Patet arcanum cordis per foramina corporis

Patet magnum illud pietatis sacramentum

Patet viscera misericordiae dei nostri (Sermo 51, 4).³³

This fragment and also the text of *De diligendo Deo* and *Sermones super Cantica Cantocorum*, considerable works of Bernardian mystics, convince us that the human nature of Christ plays an indispensable role in the development and in the ways of growth of human person. The three stages of humanistic, monastic pedagogy—Humility and Truth, Consideration and Contemplation, God's love, and man's love conclude in the humanity of Christ and in his corporeality. The writings of Bernard inspire us to make a particular statement. The development of human nature and his completion out of the relationship with human nature of Christ is impossible.

Thus, in this regard, the experience of the human body and human nature of Christ is the core of humanism of Bernard. But the human body of Christ and the human body of monks have in the context of Bernardian humanism a particular ability to create an image.

4. Christ's and Cistercian body pictured

We discover that the consequence of humanist thought and spirit is the creation of pictures. Someone could assert that it is only creations in the margin. But if we analyze some examples of pictures painted in the Cistercian books, we need to revise our point of view.

The initial Q(*uamvis omnem scientiam*) 9r, from *Moralia in Iob Sancti Gregorii magni* from Cîteaux collected in Dijon (Dijon, Bibliothèque Municipale, 173) comprises the letter Q, which is composed of two bodies—the body of dragon and the body of man.³⁴ A man is fighting with dragon—a dangerous creature that is trying to devour a man. A role of the human body is fundamental in this

³³ Bernard de Clairvaux, *Sermons sur le Cantique*, vol. 4: Sermons 51–68, texte latin de s. *Bernardi Opera* par J. Leclercq, H. Rochais et Ch. H. Talbot; introd., trad. et notes par P. Verdeyen, R. Fassetta, CERF, Paris 2003, p. 250 (Sources Chrétiennes, 472).

³⁴ Cf. Y. Załuska, *Manuscrits enluminés de Dijon*, CNRS, Paris 1991, pp. 60–61, fig. C.

situation. In fact, a man using his abilities tears the dragon's maw, defending himself. His body is full of tension, but his gesture is appropriate and efficient. The man is determined to fight an evil.

This is the initial A(*d te levavi*) 2r from the Cistercian gradual from Lubiąż (Wrocław, University Library IF 411).³⁵ The sophisticated bush of tights is the network, where we discover three human person, who have a human body. The behaviors and gestures of the body are fundamental features because they reveal the situation of this person. We gaze at a man, who fights with the monsters, trying to devour him and catch his right leg. In the center of the network, we discover David, a harpist and singer, proclaiming the praise of God. In the left corner of the letter above, we notice a monk kneeling and praying with risen hands. But we can more precisely remark, that this man is levitating in the highest.

The Cistercian initial displays the splendid paradigm of spiritual development and growth. In fact, a man is passing from the entanglement to evil by meditation on the Word to the highest contemplation of divine realities.

We find also another model of contemplation. This initial A(*n tertio regni*) from Jerome's commentary (Dijon, Bibliothèque Municipale, 132) contains an image of the prophet Daniel among lions.³⁶ In the middle of mortal danger sits a man in prayer sitting among the animals. In fact, his attitude ensures it. He is quiet, but he is determined to stay in contact with God.

There is also an extraordinary picture, who corresponds with the main idea of Bernard's humanism and his concept of monastic education. *Legenda sanctae Hedvigis*, a famous manuscript, including some texts concerning Saint Hedvig of Andechs-Meranien (Malibu, Cal, The J. Paul Getty Museum, 83. MN. 126) gives us a double miniature on one side.³⁷ The first part above represents saint Bernard sitting before the desk and writing. The second part depicts saint Bernard among the young monks. Two pictures visualize not only the contemplation but also the teaching and sharing of contemplated things. They show us also the process of teaching and education. Theological content of contemplation has been transformed in the moment of teaching in the particular tools of education and formation.

³⁵ Cf. D. Tabor, *Iluminacje cysterskich kodeksów śląskich XIII wieku*, Księgarnia Akademicka, Kraków 2004, pp. 104–105.

³⁶ Cf. Y. Załuska, *Manuscrits enluminés de Dijon*, pp. 71–74.

³⁷ See *Der Hedwigs-Codex von 1353: Sammlung Ludwig*, ed. W. Braunfels, vol. 1: Faksimile der vollständigen Handschrift, Gebr. Mann, Berlin 1972.

We discover in the same manuscript of Saint Hedvig another miniature. We decipher two events: Mission of Gabriel imposed by God the Father and Annunciation to Mary. A little, difficult to realize element of this picture is a little body of Christ Baby. Naturally, we have a paradigm of the Incarnation. The body of Christ and his human nature are the central reality of this image. In this moment, we can ask: Is the human nature of Christ part of Bernard's concept of pedagogy? In order to mark some possibilities of solution, it could be very useful to show another picture.

The miniature Baptism of Christ, from the famous Psalter of Trzebnica (Wrocław, University Library IF 440), is one of the series of full-page miniatures of this psalter, written and depicted in the years 30. of 13th century.³⁸ This miniature depicts the episodes of three Christological cycles—the cycle of the Incarnation, the cycle of the Passion and Resurrection, and the cycle of the Glory. Christ is the central protagonist of every miniature. We have before our eyes the representation of baptism. In fact, the nude body of Christ emphasizes the importance and excellence of the human nature of Christ in his mysteries. When we analyze another miniature, we can assert that the body of Christ is also the central reality of these episodes, and the human nature of Savior is highlighted. Thus, we can consequently affirm that Cistercian images bring confirmation: In fact, the human nature of Christ is an integral part of Bernard's humanism, and the emphasis on the body of Christ is the fruit of Bernard's mystics.

Conclusions

We found the answer to the fundamental question: What is the concept of humanism in the Bernardian thought and spirituality. But to achieve this answer, we had to study his concept of human nature. It has been described in three stages: noble nature, fallen nature, and revived nature. The nobility of human nature consists of the image of God and its similarity to God. The fall of a human being is due to vain glory and ignorance. Concerning the restoration and recovery of human nature, cognition of himself and humility are the core of the process of recovery. In fact, human nature has been dynamically described, but

³⁸ Cf. D. Tabor, *Beatus vir: chrystologiczny Psalterz trzebnicki w Bibliotece Uniwersyteckiej we Wrocławiu (IF 440) wobec egzegezy biblijnej i duchowości cysterskiej XIII stulecia*, Księgarnia Akademicka, Kraków 2020.

this is a description of mystic and contemplator. The consequence of this concept of humanity is the series of recommendations and design of some spiritual way, which is practically monastic pedagogy. It is able to transform human person and reconstitute his dignity. This is humanism, which Bernard created and applied in the procedure of monastic formation. This is humility and truth, consideration and contemplation, love of man, and love of God. All three compose the system for human growth and human development, but it is rather recommended to the monastic Cistercian milieu.

The most valuable consequence of Bernardian program of human growth is appreciation of the humanity of Christ and attribution of his human nature in the process of personal development. Although we attribute the humanity of Christ to the process of human growth and development, we put the question of the place of Christ's body in Bernard's humanism. Is it part of christology or belongs to anthropology? Why the body of Christ, it means that the human nature of Christ was so necessary and important in Bernard's experience? Where comes the contemplation of the suffering body of Christ? The answer is fundamental because we study the role of image in Cistercian culture.

But in this moment, these are the problems, which should be the object of serious research.

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Fig. 1. Initial Q(*uamvis omnem scientiam*) 9r, *Moralia in Iob Sancti Gregorii magni* from Cîteaux (Dijon, Bibliothèque Municipale, 173).



Fig. 2. Initial A(*d te levavi*) 2r, the Cistercian gradual from Lubiaż (Wrocław, University Library IF 411).

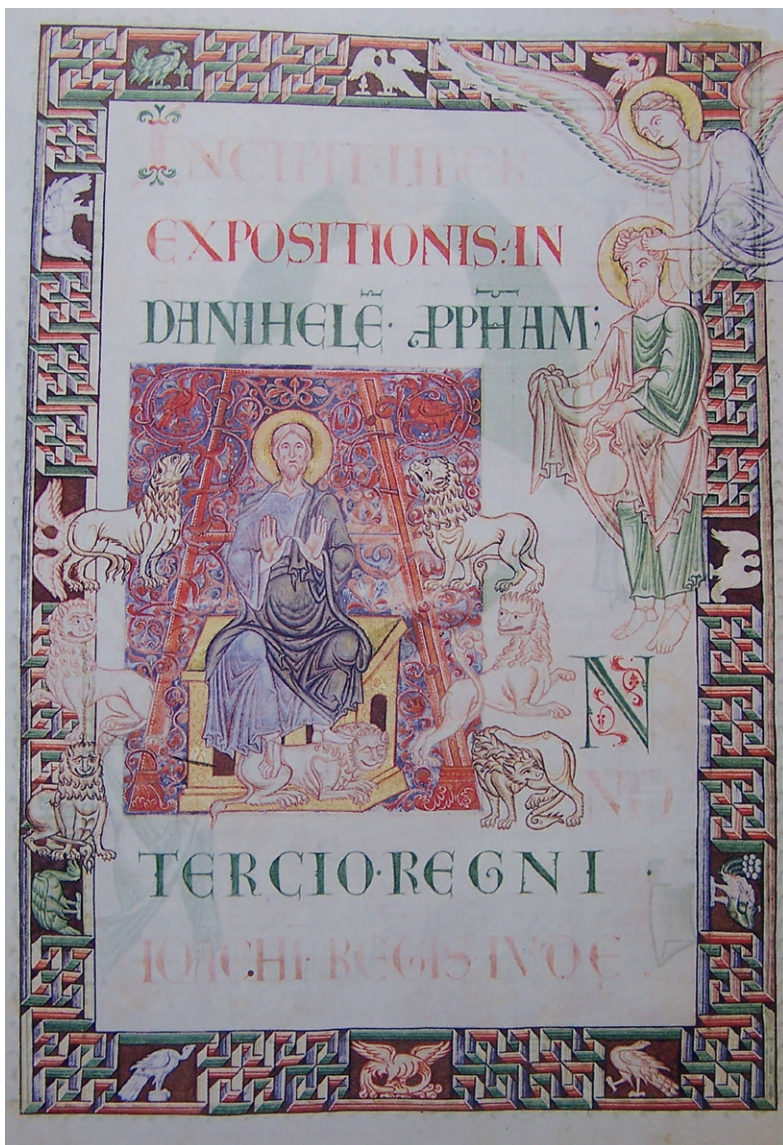


Fig. 3. Initial A(n tertio regni) 2v, Hieronimus sanctus, *Commentarii in Daniele*; *Commentarii in Prophetas minores*; *Commentarii in Ecclesiastem* (Dijon, Bibliotheque Municipale, 132).



Fig. 4. Miniature *Saint Bernard writing and teaching*, *Legenda sanctae Hedvigis*, 167r (Malibu, Cla, The J. Paul Getty Museum, 83. MN. 126)



Fig. 5. Miniature *Mission of Gabriel imposed by God the Father and Annunciation to Mary*, 167v *Legenda sanctae Hedvigis* (Malibu, Cla, The J. Paul Getty Museum, 83. MN. 126)



Fig. 6. Miniature *Baptism of Christ*, 7v, Psalter of Trzebnica (Wrocław, University Library IF 440)

