

"*Unity of the Spirit* is an invaluable resource, not only for Cistercian scholars, but for all students of spiritual theology, monasticism, and medieval history. Offering the best of current research on William of Saint-Thierry, this volume makes a significant contribution to the literature on this twelfth-century Cistercian Father. The authors present chapters furthering the scholarship on William's life, works, Christology, relationship with Bernard of Clairvaux, concept of the *unio mystica*, and spirituality. *Unity of the Spirit* makes a handsome tribute to retiring professor E. Rozanne Elder, whose life's work has greatly advanced scholarship on William and Cistercian studies worldwide."

—Dr. Glenn E. Myers
Professor of Church History and Theological Studies
Crown College

"Rosanne E. Elder, PhD, introduced William of Saint-Thierry with his profound theology and spirituality to the English-speaking world in a groundbreaking manner. This festschrift bears witness to her past and ongoing dedication to this twelfth-century monastic theologian. The essays in this volume present William, author of the *Vita Prima*, as an intimate friend of Bernard of Clairvaux. Along with Bernard, William's writings challenge us, today, to engage theology not only academically but also as a personal spiritual pursuit of deification into the mystery of God through *Unity of Spirit*. The contributors to this festschrift reveal various dimensions, 'treasures,' of William's teaching and inaugurate a vision for further scholarly research and spiritual growth."

—Abbot Thomas X. Davis, OCSO

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Unity of Spirit

Studies on William of Saint-Thierry
in Honor of E. Rozanne Elder

Edited by

*F. Tyler Sergent, Aage Rydstrøm-Poulsen,
and Marsha L. Dutton*

Foreword by

Bernard McGinn

Afterword by

John R. Sommerfeldt



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CONTENTS

Foreword vii

Bernard McGinn

Acknowledgments xv

Letters of Appreciation xvii

Dom Brendan Freeman, OCSO, and Fr. Luke Anderson, OCist

List of Abbreviations xxi

Introduction xxv

1. William of Saint-Thierry's Trinitarian Image
or Saint Bernard's Pre-Theological Self? 1

Emero Stiegman

2. The Prayer of Dom William: A Study
and New Translation 21

David N. Bell

3. A Fresh Look at William of Saint-Thierry's *Excerpts from
the Books of Blessed Ambrose on the Song of Songs* 37

Mark DelCogliano

4. Humility and Humiliation in William of Saint-Thierry's
Expositio and Bernard of Clairvaux's *Sermons on the Song
of Songs* 60

Rose Marie Tillisch

5. The Way of Descent: The Christology of William
of Saint-Thierry 78

Aage Rydstrom-Poulsen

6. Western Darkness / Eastern Light: William of Saint-Thierry
and the Traditions of Egypt 92

Benedicta Ward

7. Bernard Made a Covenant with His Eyes: The Saint
and His Biographer, William of Saint-Thierry 104
James France

8. Mediating a Presence: Rhetorical and Narrative Strategies
in the *Vita Prima Bernardi* 117
Marjory Lange

9. *Unitas Spiritus* and the Originality of William
of Saint-Thierry 144
F. Tyler Sergent

Afterword: Cîteaux at Kalamazoo: Rozanne Elder and
the Early Days of the Institute of Cistercian Studies and of
Cistercian Publications 171
John R. Sommerfeldt

Curriculum Vitae of E. Rozanne Elder 175

Bibliography of the Works of William of Saint-Thierry 185

General Bibliography 191

List of Contributors 203

Index A: Names of Ancient, Biblical, Patristic,
and Medieval Figures 206

Index B: Names of Post-Medieval Figures 209

FOREWORD

Bernard McGinn

In 1933 Étienne Gilson delivered a course of lectures devoted to Bernard of Clairvaux at the Collège de France. In the same year, he gave an English version of these talks at the University College of Wales in Aberystwith. The lectures, published as *La théologie mystique de Saint Bernard* in 1934 and translated into English in 1940, constitute a major moment in the evolution of what we have come to call Cistercian Studies. Along with his penetrating account of Bernard, Gilson included five appendices on themes and figures relating to the abbot of Clairvaux. The last was entitled “Some Notes on William of Saint-Thierry,” whom Gilson described as “a very great theologian, in whom firmness of thought goes hand in hand with a remarkable power of just expression.”¹

To be sure, Gilson was not the first to recognize William’s genius. As far back as 1908, the Jesuit Pierre Rousselot had given attention to William’s views on the relation of love and knowledge in the path to God in his noted *Pour l’histoire du problème de l’amour au moyen âge*. In 1923, the Benedictine André Wilmart wrote a study concerning the succession and dating of William’s works, and in 1932 another Jesuit, Léopold Malevez, dedicated two penetrating articles to William’s doctrine of humanity as made in the image and likeness of God. Gilson’s own student, Marie-Madeleine Davy, produced a study on the three stages of the spiritual life in William in 1933, the first of her many contributions to the study of the abbot.

¹ Étienne Gilson, *The Mystical Theology of Saint Bernard* (Sheed and Ward, 1940; Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1990), 198.

Nevertheless, Gilson's brief but insightful presentation of William reached a wide audience and helped alert students of theology and spirituality about a major, if neglected, star in the medieval firmament: William, Benedictine abbot of Saint-Thierry and later Cistercian monk of Signy.

Now, more than seventy-five years later, medievalists find it difficult, if not impossible, to neglect the imposing, though often difficult, thought of William, one of the greatest theologians of the twelfth century and, one can argue, of the whole of the Middle Ages. A long line of publications stretching out over more than seventy-five years since Gilson wrote has seen to this. In terms of critical editions of William's works, we no longer have to rely on the faulty texts of Migne's *Patrologia Latina* but can make use of excellent editions found in the Sources Chrétiennes series and in the *Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis*. Just as important has been the succession of publications by learned scholars, first in Europe and then in North America, who have provided us with insightful studies of William's life and thought. Their names will be familiar to all those interested in the medieval Cistercians—to cite but a few: Marie-Madeleine Davy, Robert Thomas, Jacques Hourlier, Jean Marie Déchanet, Odo Brooke, Theodore Koehler, M. Basil Pennington, Thomas Tomasic, David Bell, and Paul Verdeyen.

The purpose of this volume is to honor a scholar whose contributions to the study of William of Saint-Thierry have been second to none—E. Rozanne Elder. Because so many of Rozanne Elder's published works have dealt with William, it is especially fitting that the focus of the essays that follow concern the abbot of Saint-Thierry. This collection is a joyful occasion for saluting the long and stellar career of someone whose impact on studies of William, as well as on the wider world of Cistercian and monastic scholarship, has shaped the past generation.

As John Sommerfeldt points out in his lively reminiscence "Cîteaux at Kalamazoo" at the end of this volume, Cistercian scholarship in the United States has been intimately connected to Western Michigan University and its Institute for Cistercian Studies for more than four decades. The providential planning of John and the much-lamented Basil Pennington, OCSO, was essential for the

beginning of this still-lively chapter in the history of scholarship, as well as in the wider world of the retrieval of medieval spiritual traditions.

The recovery of the Cistercian message for the modern world owes more to Rozanne Elder than to perhaps anyone else due to her tenure as the editorial director of Cistercian Publications and director of the Institute of Cistercian Studies from 1973 to 2009. Although Rozanne has written much, especially on her beloved William of Saint-Thierry, her careful and generous work as editor for scores of volumes of translations, monographs, and collected studies constitute her most remarkable—one might even say unrivalled—contribution to contemporary Cistercian and monastic studies. It is somewhat astonishing to record that between 1976 and 2011 she edited no fewer than 179 books!

Rozanne's interest in William began, fittingly enough, at Kalamazoo in 1964 under John Sommerfeldt's tutelage, when she wrote a master's dissertation entitled "'And Yet I Have Loved Him': The Judgment of William of Saint Thierry on Peter Abelard." After two years of teaching at Kalamazoo, she went on to PhD work at the University of Toronto, where in 1972 she defended a brilliant dissertation on "The Image of the Invisible God: The Evolving Christology of William of Saint Thierry." (In the interests of total disclosure, I must admit that I served as the outside examiner for this dissertation—the first time I met Rozanne.) Her dissertation provided the firm starting point for a series of groundbreaking studies on William's view of the nature and work of Christ that appeared over the next few decades. A glance at the bibliography of Rozanne's publications found at the end of this volume, however, will show that her range of writings on William has gone far beyond the theme of Christology, extending over virtually the whole range of his theology. Rozanne has also written on other aspects of the history and thought of the early Cistercians, as well as on such topics as Marian devotion and the Anglican tradition.

The fact that we are finally getting a better sense of the full theological accomplishment of the abbot of Saint-Thierry is in no small part due to the cogent and penetrating work of Rozanne Elder. This is why it is so right that the essays in this volume focus on William

and the many facets of his career. Composed by colleagues, friends, and students of Rozanne, each of these papers pays tribute to her formative work in restoring William to his rightful place in the history of medieval theology. They touch on many aspects, though scarcely all, of William's varied thought: mystical theology (see the essays of Sergent, DelCogliano, Bell), monastic tradition (Ward), exegesis (Sergent, DelCogliano, Tillisch), Christology (Rydstrøm-Poulsen), spiritual anthropology (Stiegman), and hagiography (France, Lange). Altogether, the collection provides a good sense of cutting-edge research on the significance of William and on how much Rozanne Elder has done to shape this ongoing discussion.

Emero Stiegman, a scholar who has made many significant contributions to Cistercian studies over his career, presents a challenging comparison of William and Bernard in his essay, "William of Saint-Thierry's Trinitarian Image or Bernard's Pre-theological Self?" Stiegman argues that the fact that two of William's treatises (*On the Nature and Dignity of Love* and *On Contemplating God*) often circulated along with Bernard's *On Loving God* under the general title *The Book of Love* (*Liber de amore*) has resulted in a failure to see the real differences between William's doctrinal view of the progress of loving affection (*affectus/affectio*) based on humanity's being made to the image and likeness of the Trinity and Bernard's presentation of the universality of God's love found in the depths of the human self as the starting point for the progress of love to final union. Bernard, then, can be seen as "the prophet of experience," orienting the reader to the "destitute self" that must be filled by God, while in his early work *On the Nature and Dignity of Love*, William begins from a doctrinal view of the trinitarian image in humanity.

The name of David Bell needs no introduction to students of William of Saint-Thierry, since his book *The Image and Likeness: The Augustinian Spirituality of William of Saint Thierry* (Cistercian Publications, 1984) is justly admired as one of the classic modern works on William. In this essay, Bell provides a detailed study and a new translation of one of William's early works, the *Oratio*, a brief prayer (ca. 1122) that Bell convincingly argues is an abortive *meditatio* on pure, or imageless, prayer. Despite its brevity and perhaps unfinished character, the *Oratio* demonstrates one of the important

differences between William and his Cistercian contemporaries, such as Bernard and Aelred: his commitment to apophatic theology, perhaps shared only by Isaac of Stella among the other early Cistercians.

Mark DelCogliano's contribution, "A Fresh Look at William of Saint-Thierry's *Excerpts from the Books of the Blessed Ambrose on the Song of Songs*," deals with how William made use of the patristic tradition, specifically in his reading of the Songs of Songs, the *Magna Carta* of Western mysticism. DelCogliano's meticulous and illuminating study is a major addition to the study of the foundations of William's mysticism, as well as being a good illustration of the abbot's exegetical ingenuity. DelCogliano demonstrates how William mostly adheres to Ambrose's texts dealing with the Song, though with significant editorial adjustments, while employing the bishop of Milan's readings as preparation for his own subsequent brilliant interpretation of the biblical book of love in his *Expositio super Cantica Canticorum* of ca. 1135–1138.

The themes of descent, humility, and even humiliation are analyzed in Rose Marie Tillisch's piece on "Humility and Humiliation in William of Saint-Thierry's *Expositio* and Bernard of Clairvaux's Sermons on the Song of Songs." This ambitious comparative essay is both doctrinal and exegetical, showing how Bernard and William made use of texts from the Old Testament (especially Song 1:12) and from the New (Luke 7:36-50; Phil 2:7-8) to construct different, but complementary, understandings of the role of humility and humiliation in the road to salvation. The philological details of this perceptive reading cannot be given here. Suffice it to say that Tillisch's essay is a model for showing the role of comparative exegesis in the history of theology.

The essay of Aage Rydstrom-Poulsen is especially fitting for this volume because it takes up one of the central themes of Rozanne Elder's work on William, namely, his Christology. Expressing his indebtedness to Elder's 1972 dissertation and subsequent publications, Rydstrom-Poulsen pushes her argument further by stressing the centrality of the humble descent of the Eternal Word into human nature and the corresponding recognition of our need for humility, something often neglected in studies of William's theology of the

stages of the soul's ascent to God. As he summarizes, "According to William the gift of divine love and knowledge of God to humans also means a descent or a humbling of the human."

As Sister Benedicta Ward shows in her essay, "Western Darkness/Eastern Light: William of Saint Thierry and the Traditions of Egypt," there is a certain paradox in the appeals made by William and Bernard to the traditions of the ancient fathers of the desert. As coenobitical monks, the early Cistercians did not imitate the eremitical lifestyle of Antony, Macarius, and the other heroes of the first monasticism, nor did they really know that much about them. The sources for their "ideal of the desert" were Cassian and Athanasius's *Life of Antony*, not the *Sayings of the Fathers*, and their form of imitation was more internal than external. Oddly enough, it was Abelard, whom Bernard and William thought a failed monk at best, who really knew a good deal about the early monks of the desert, as is revealed in his correspondence with Heloise.

Two essays concern the relation of William as biographer-hagiographer to his friend Bernard as seen in the *Vita prima Bernardi*, the work that William left unfinished at his death in 1147. James France presents a study of illustrations taken from the *Vita prima* in his "Bernard Made a Covenant with His Eyes: The Saint and His Biographer, William of Saint-Thierry." The only two known medieval portraits of William are both found in initials at the beginning of manuscripts of the *Vita prima*, showing him along with his subject and friend, Bernard. The *Life* was also the source for many medieval and early modern portrayals of Bernard, as James shows on the basis of illustrations of Bernard's "chastity stories" found in two early sixteenth-century stained-glass programs from Germany.

Marjory Lange provides an insightful analysis of William's rhetorical skill as a hagiographer, or "sacred biographer," in her piece entitled "Mediating a Presence: Rhetorical and Narrative Strategies in the *Vita Prima Bernardi*." After a review of recent discussion of the meaning of the *Vita prima*, including the contributions of Rozanne Elder, Lange analyzes three rhetorical strategies William uses in presenting his picture of Bernard: (1) tactical use of contrasts, (2) gathering together similar events such as miracles in a nonchronological way to heighten their effect, and (3) including

himself in the story, so that “William becomes his own rhetorical device” for mediating the meaning of the saint. In short, Lange’s essay demonstrates that “William has made Bernard live, as man and as saint, through the strategies he has selected and molded so masterfully.”

F. Tyler Sergent’s essay on “*Unitas Spiritus* and the Originality of William of Saint-Thierry” provides a survey of one of the key terms of medieval mysticism, *unitas spiritus*, a phrase found in the Vulgate version of Ephesians 4:3 (*soliciti servare unitatem spiritus in vinculo pacis*). Sergent demonstrates that the patristic and early medieval Latin readings of this verse fall into three categories: (1) an interpretation concerning the unity of the Trinity; (2) a reading indicating the union of believers in the Body of Christ; and (3) a mystical reading dealing with the union of Christ and the soul. This last, apparently first found in William and Gueric of Igny, appears to have been created by linking the Ephesians text with 1 Corinthians 6:17 (*qui autem adhaeret Domino, unus spiritus est*). The phrase, as Sergent points out, expresses William’s view of deification.

This rich collection of stimulating essays proves that William studies are alive and well in the early years of the twenty-first century, not least because of the teaching, writing, editing, and mentoring of E. Rozanne Elder, to whom this volume is dedicated by her grateful friends, colleagues, and former students. *Ad multos annos!*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The editors thank all those who responded enthusiastically to the invitation to create a book honoring Rozanne Elder for all she has done for medieval and Cistercian scholarship, and to Liturgical Press and Cistercian Publications for the enthusiastic decision to publish this volume. It is entirely fitting that the press that Rozanne led so effectively for so many years, almost single-handedly bringing Cistercian authors and thought from the margins of contemporary scholarship into the center, should be the home for this book that celebrates her many distinguished achievements. We also want to acknowledge all those who generously gave papers in Rozanne's honor at the Cistercian Studies Conference of 2009 and those who revised their papers for inclusion in a 2011 issue of *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*, dedicated to Rozanne by the kind permission of its editor, Dom Mark Scott, OCSO.

Many others have assisted with the physical and intellectual work necessary to create the book, and we thank them in particular: José Antônio Brandão, Barbara Duncan, James France, Barbara Grueser, Elizabeth A. Kilburn, Kourtney Kline, Karen McDougall, Daphne Metts, David Smith, Susan Steuer, and Lorraine Wochna. In addition to these people, we thank the Interlibrary Loan Service at Berea College, the office of the Vice President for Research at Ohio University, OhioLink, and Ohio University's Interlibrary Loan Department, all of which made it possible for us to pursue editorial and authorial accuracy.

Finally, and above all, we three thank Rozanne Elder for all she has given each of us individually and communally. When Aage Rydstrom-Poulsen proposed this project to recognize all that Rozanne has done for so many, he invited Tyler Sergent and Marsha Dutton to join him in accomplishing it. Tyler and Marsha were both

honored and grateful at the opportunity, recognizing the way her support has helped to build our careers and valuing her long friendship. With this book we express our gratitude and our admiration for her and her work. May it convey in some small but significant way all that she has done and continues to do and the honor and gratitude due her.

LETTERS OF APPRECIATION

Dom Brendan Freeman, OCSO

No one is taught how to be a leader or administrator on entering a monastery. Rather, each new monk or nun is taught the values of humility, obedience, silence, and how to get along with others. So when I was elected abbot of New Melleray in 1984, I was ill equipped for the demands of the job—the learning curve was going to be steep. The US Regional meeting that year for the seventeen superiors of the Trappist and Trappistine monasteries was held at Gethsemani Abbey; to my surprise I was told that I would be on the board of Cistercian Publications. New Melleray, they told me, was the closest monastery to Western Michigan University, the headquarters of the Medieval Congress, the Institute of Cistercian Studies, and Cistercian Publications. In the communal mind this fact qualified me for the position—the learning curve got steeper.

My first board meeting was held in Kalamazoo, Michigan, in May 1984. Assembled for the meeting were some of the giants of Cistercian scholarship. My contribution to this meeting was to announce the time for the coffee break! After the meeting we would stay for the Cistercian section of the Congress. This event was then and still is organized by Dr. Rozanne Elder. There is nothing comparable to it, with something like forty-five papers given by scholars from around the world on every conceivable topic related to Cistercian monastic life. Many of these scholars, either before or after the Congress, would travel to various monasteries to lecture. Because of Rozanne, all of the monasteries in our region have profited from hearing some of the most renowned scholars in Cistercian studies.

Rozanne's contribution to Cistercian life is ongoing and profound. I believe she has visited all seventeen of our houses lecturing on William of Saint-Thierry. Every year she organizes and directs the Cistercian conference mentioned above. But her most profound contribution has come from her many years as editorial director of Cistercian Publications. This last is the greatest of all. Symposiums may cease, boards will change, but books endure. For us Cistercians, having access to our fathers in English translation was like opening the eyes of the blind. It is no exaggeration to say that those of us who entered before these works were available were blind to the richness of our spirituality. Thanks to Rozanne, a whole new world became visible to us. She and other scholars gave us a way to be formed by our heritage. We could find our experiences explained and verified in these books; it was like walking in the gardens, the meadows, and the fountains of delight. We could for once breathe in the pure air of our Cistercian heritage.

The garden of paradise is still growing; the music is still playing. New people are joining our monasteries, and they too will be taught to be humble and obedient and silent and how to be agreeable to their brothers and sisters, but their inspiration will come not from the *Spiritual Directory* or the *Book of Regulations* or Francis de Sales but instead from Saints Bernard and Aelred and William. We hope that they will be as bedazzled as many of us were on first doing *lectio* with these sacred texts and will learn humility by understanding to what a great vocation God has called us.

Thanks to Rozanne and scholars like her we can with the people in Psalm 149 "rejoice in their glory."

Fr. Luke Anderson, OCist

Faith seeking any understanding of the Cistercian charism greatly profits from serious, solid, and sustained scholarship. A mere glance at Dr. Rozanne Elder's resumé clearly manifests her tastes and talents as a fine and finished scholar. A long and faithful labor in fostering a fruitful understanding of Cistercian authors and their twelfth-century ambiance has been her inestimable scholarly benefit to many.

Three distinct audiences have profited from the scholarly prowess of Dr. Elder's industry. First, monks and nuns of the Cistercian Orders can now confirm, question, or correct their uses of their primary Latin sources. In the second place, lay men and women, some of whom are consecrated oblates in the Orders, have been given easy access to the treasures of Cistercian texts hitherto hidden from their use. Finally, academics, dedicated to teaching medieval studies, can direct students to primary sources in English translations otherwise unavailable.

Dr. Elder's initial approach to Cistercian study was her literary and theological examination of the works of William of Saint-Thierry. This led her, rather inevitably, to wider and deeper study of the Cistercian charism. In turn, she came to better understand and fondly appreciate the dogma and spirituality of this singularly vital school of twelfth-century Christianity.

With this admirable foundation, Dr. Elder became the longtime editorial director of Cistercian Publications. To this office she brought a panoply of talents: Latin competence, a discerning flair for distinguished and exact English, a keen and incisive but always kindly critical sense, and a meticulous, even scrupulous, respect for accuracy and intellectual honesty. Her vocation as an engaged professor honed her talents and fitted her well for her editorial tasks. Her intellectual gifts have brought Cistercian Studies to a high level of renewed intelligibility.

Dr. Elder has added to her mind a virtue especially dear to Cistercians, humility. Since humility is radically truth, this virtue enhances her mental acumen. On the one hand, Dr. Elder is deft to critique, to correct, or to reject scholarly foibles. On the other hand,

with sensitive and gentle persuasion, she is able to inspire and encourage fledgling efforts at ever bettering mind and spirit.

Cistercian monks and nuns, devout friends of the Orders, and many medievalists have been greatly enriched by Dr. Elder's monumental labors. She fully merits our gratitude and our profound admiration.

ABBREVIATIONS

ca.	circa, about
CE	Common Era
cf.	compare
chap(s).	chapter(s)
cod.	codex
CP	Cistercian Publications
d.	died
diss.	dissertation
ed.	edited by; editor; edition
e.g.	<i>exempli gratia</i> , for example
Ep(p)	<i>Epistol(ae)</i> , Letter(s)
esp.	especially
et al.	<i>et alia</i>
fig.	figure
fol(s).	folio(s)
i.e.	<i>id est</i> , that is
Lat	Latin
MA	Master of Arts
MS	Manuscript
OCist	Cistercian Order of the Common Observance
OCSO	Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance
Pr(a)ef.	<i>Pr(a)efatio</i> , preface
Prol.	<i>Prologus</i> , prologue
r.	recto
SLG	Sisters of the Love of God

S(s)	<i>Sermo(nes)</i> , Sermon(s)
UK	United Kingdom
v.	verso
Vlg	Vulgate
WMU	Western Michigan University

The Works of William of Saint-Thierry

Editions and translations of William's works are listed in the Bibliography of William's Works, below, p. 185.

Adv Abl	<i>Disputatio aduersus Petrum Abælardum</i>
Ænig	<i>Ænigma fidei</i>
Brev com	<i>Brevis commentatio</i>
Cant	<i>Expositio super Cantica Canticorum</i>
Cant Amb	<i>Excerpta ex libris sancti Ambrosii super Cantica Canticorum</i>
Cant Greg	<i>Excerpta ex libris sancti Gregorii super Cantica Canticorum</i>
Contem	<i>De contemplando Deo</i>
Ep frat	<i>Epistola [aurea] ad fratres de Monte Dei</i>
Exp ps	<i>Expositio psalmi</i>
Exp Rm	<i>Expositio in epistolam Pauli ad Romanos</i>
Med	<i>Meditatiuæ orationes</i>
Nat am	<i>De natura et dignitate amoris</i>
Orat	<i>Oratio domni Willelmi</i>
Sac alta	<i>De sacramento altari liber</i>
Spec fid	<i>Speculum fidei</i>
Vita Bern	<i>Sancti Bernardi vita prima</i>

Periodicals and Series

AC/ASOC	<i>Analecta Cisterciensia; Analecta Sacri Ordinis Cisterciensis</i>
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina

CF	Cistercian Fathers
<i>Cîteaux</i>	<i>Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses; Cîteaux in de Nederlanden</i>
Coll	<i>Collectanea cisterciensia; Collectanea o.c.r.</i>
CS	Cistercian Studies
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
CSQ	<i>Cistercian Studies / Cistercian Studies Quarterly</i>
NPNF	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers
PL	J.-P. Migne, <i>Patrologiae cursus completus, series latina</i>
RBen	<i>Revue Bénédictine</i>
RTAM	<i>Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale</i>
SBOp	Sancti Bernardi Opera
SChr	Sources Chrétiennes
S.J.	Society of Jesus
SSOC	Series Scriptorum Sacri Ordinis Cisterciensis

The Works of Augustine of Hippo

C acad	<i>Contra academicos</i>
Civ Dei	<i>De civitate Dei</i>
En in Ps	<i>Ennarationes in Psalmos</i>
Trin	<i>De trinitate</i>

The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux

Dil	<i>Liber de diligendo Deo</i>
Div	<i>Sermones de diversis</i>
SC	<i>Sermones super Cantica canticorum</i>

INTRODUCTION

When the will mounts on high, like fire going up to its place, that is to say, when it unites with truth and tends toward higher things, it is amor. When it is fed with the milk of grace in order to make progress, it is dilectio; when it lays hold of its object and keeps it in its grasp and has enjoyment of it, it is caritas, it is unity of spirit, it is God, for God is caritas.¹

With these words, the twelfth-century Cistercian William of Saint-Thierry articulates a core element of his spirituality, which has brought him increasing scholarly attention and admiration over the past forty years. Throughout his works, William intimately links God's humanity with the development of the human will, showing the human being finally able to approach so closely to God as to become one with God, joined in unity of spirit.

Fifteen years have passed since the publication of the most recent of the three previous English books centrally concerned with William, *Signy l'abbaye et Guillaume de Saint-Thierry*, and seventeen since the colloquium that produced the papers published in that volume. During that time, however, the international pace of William studies has increased rather than slowed. As Bernard McGinn notes in his foreword to this volume, throughout the twentieth century and now well into the second decade of the twenty-first, numerous editions, translations, and studies of William and his works have appeared, including at least eleven doctoral dissertations, with each new publication deepening scholarly awareness and knowledge of William's thought.

¹ William, Ep frat 235 (CCCM 88:276; CF 12:88).

A Biographical Overview

The basic chronology of what is known today of William's early life comes from the only surviving fragment of a late twelfth-century work known as the *Vita antiqua*, written by an unknown writer—probably a monk at Signy, where William spent the last thirteen years of his life—recording what he had been told by someone who knew William.² William's own treatises (especially his life of Bernard of Clairvaux, the first book of the *Vita prima sancti Bernardi*) provide additional information for the story. William was probably born around 1080 in the northern French town of Liège, now in Belgium.³ After studying at Reims or perhaps, though less likely, at Laon, he became a Benedictine monk at Saint Nicaise, in Reims, sometime between 1111 and 1118. In 1118 or 1119, while returning from a trip to the south of France, William and his abbot

²For what remains of the *Vita antiqua*, see Albert Poncelet, "Vie ancienne de Saint-Thierry," in *Mélanges Godefroid Kurth* (Liège: Vaillant-Carmanne, 1908), 1:85–96. The work was edited and translated into French with helpful notes by Freddy LeBrun, "*Vita Antiqua Willelmi Sancti Theoderici* d'après le manuscrit 11782 de la Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris," in *Signy l'abbaye et Guillaume de Saint-Thierry*, ed. Nicole Boucher (Signy: Association des Amis de l'Abbaye de Signy, 2000), 437–59 (hereafter *Signy l'abbaye*). See also Paul Verdeyen, *Guillaume de Saint-Thierry, premier auteur mystique des anciens Pays-Bas* (Turnout: Brepols, 2000), 137–52 (hereafter Verdeyen, *Premier auteur*). An introduction to the work and an English translation appear in David N. Bell, "The Vita Antiqua of William of St. Thierry," *CSQ* 11 (1976): 246–55. For helpful reconstructions of William's early life and discussion of the sources, see Verdeyen, *Premier auteur*, 9–63, and Stanislaus Ceglar, "William of Saint Thierry: The Chronology of His Life with a Study of His Treatise *On the Nature of Love*, his Authorship of the *Brevis Commentatio*, the *In Lacu*, and the *Reply to Cardinal Matthew*," PhD dissertation, Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 1971; Ludo Milis, "William of Saint Thierry, His Birth, His Formation and His First Monastic Experiences," in *William, Abbot of St. Thierry: A Colloquium at the Abbey of St. Thierry*, trans. Jerry Carfantan, CS 94 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1987), 9–33 (hereafter *William*); John Anderson, Introduction to *William of Saint Thierry, The Enigma of Faith*, CF 9 (Kalamazoo, MI, and Spencer, MA: Cistercian Publications, 1973), 1–31, here 1–7.

³For a brief overview of William's possible dates of birth, see Anderson, Introduction, 2; for a more detailed discussion, see Milis, "William," 16–20.

stopped over at the young Cistercian abbey of Clairvaux, where they met its abbot, Bernard.

That meeting transformed William's life. Recollecting it years later, William wrote of the immediate effect on him of Bernard's presence: "Had a choice been offered me that day, I would have wished for nothing so much as to remain there with him and serve him always."⁴ Of the consequences of that encounter, Paul Verdeyen says, "The meeting of Bernard and William can be considered as the beginning of a great friendship, to which they remained faithful throughout their lives."⁵ Indeed, that friendship shaped much of the rest of William's spiritual and intellectual life while pushing Bernard in new directions and helping to preserve and define his historical memory.

Although William returned to Saint Nicaise rather than staying at Clairvaux, his initial impulse remained. While obeying Bernard's refusal to let him leave the Benedictines for Clairvaux, through the remaining thirty years of his life William looked to Bernard as a model of monastic life and contemplative prayer and remained in close contact with him. In 1125, after William urged Bernard to defend Cistercian monasticism, Bernard wrote the *Apologia ad Guillelmum Sancti Theodorici*. In addition to William's occasional brief visits to Clairvaux, in the mid-1120s, when he and Bernard were both ill, the two of them spent a few months together in the infirmary at Clairvaux, with Bernard visiting William's bedside when his own illness had subsided.⁶ In between such personal encoun-

⁴Vita Bern 33 (CCCM 89B:58–59; PL 185:246CD; William of Saint-Thierry, *Bernard of Clairvaux: Early Biographies, Vol. 1 by William of St. Thierry*, trans. Martinus Cawley, Centennial Edition: 1090–1990, Guadalupe Translations [Lafayette, OR: Abbey of Our Lady of Guadalupe, 1990], 44 [hereafter Cawley, *Bernard*]).

⁵Paul Verdeyen, "Guillaume de Saint-Thierry Liège (Belgique), 1075—Signy l'Abbaye (Ardennes), 1148," in *Signy l'abbaye*, 409–10, here 409.

⁶Vita Bern 1.33 (CCCM 89B:58–59); Vita Bern 1.12 (CCCM 89B:74–75). Scholars do not agree on the date of this shared convalescence; Jacques Hourlier suggests after 1124 (*Guillaume de Saint-Thierry, La contemplation de Dieu, L'Oraison de Dom Guillaume*, ed. and trans. Jacques Hourlier, SCH 61 bis [Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1959; rev. ed., 1977; corrected ed., 1999, 2005], 18), while Ceglar settles on 1119–1120 ("William," 51–52).

ters, the two men corresponded, with William at least twice appealing to Bernard to express opposition to theological teaching that he judged dangerously unorthodox. Finally, he devoted the last two or three years of his life to memorializing Bernard in the *Vita prima Sancti Bernardi*.

In 1119 or 1120, the monks of the monastery of Saint-Thierry, on a bluff above Reims, elected William their abbot. There he remained until 1135, writing, participating in theological controversy, and working for Benedictine reform.⁷ Unfortunately, none of his personal letters survive. But scholars have speculated that some of this story—specifically his longing to move to Clairvaux and Bernard’s refusal—appears in his treatises. In notes to an English translation of William’s *Meditationes*, Sister Penelope Lawson explicates the eleventh *Meditatio* as a transparent exploration of the conflict between William’s wish and Bernard’s refusal.⁸ Happily, three or four letters from Bernard to William are extant, one of which supports the narrative of William’s requests and Bernard’s opposition to them.⁹ What is particularly clear in these letters is William’s growing desire to enter Clairvaux and Bernard’s consistent refusal. In one letter Bernard advises, “I say hold on to what you have got, remain where you are, and try to benefit those over whom you rule. Do not try to escape the responsibility of your office while you are still able to discharge it for the benefit of your subjects. Woe

⁷For William’s leading role in bringing about general chapters of Benedictine abbots, see Stanislaus Ceglar, “William of Saint Thierry and His Leading Role at the First Chapters of the Benedictine Abbots (Reims 1131, Soissons 1132),” in *William*, 34–112. This article includes critical editions of the documents from the first such chapter, including William’s *Responsio Abbatum*.

⁸“On Contemplating God,” in William of St. Thierry, *On Contemplating God, Prayer, Meditations*, trans. Sr. Penelope [Lawson], CF 3 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1977), 156–66nn12, 22, 26, 27, 32, 37, 38, 55, 88, and 91. N12 reads in part, “Here begins a certain amount of autobiography which William has woven into this *Eleventh Meditation*.”

⁹Epp 84 *bis*, 85, 86, and 327 in Bernard, *Epistolae*, ed. Jean Leclercq and H. M. Rochais, SBOp 7–8 (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1974, 1977) (SBOp 7:219–24, 8:263; Letters 87, 88, 89, and 236 in *The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux*, trans. Bruno Scott James [London: Burns and Oates, 1953], 124–29, 314–15).

to you if you rule them and do not benefit them, but far greater woe to you if you refuse to benefit them because you shirk the burdens of ruling them."¹⁰

In 1135 William finally achieved his wish to become a Cistercian, though not at Clairvaux. Instead, accompanied by his sub-prior from Saint-Thierry, he made simple profession at the new Cistercian abbey of Signy, thirty-one miles northeast of Saint-Thierry and one hundred eighty-five miles north of Clairvaux. Although the *Vita Antiqua* reports that the monks at Saint-Thierry, assisted by Renaud, archbishop of Reims, strenuously sought William's return, through prayer and God's grace William persevered at Signy, helping to build that young foundation by means of his own learning, experience, and appreciation for the rigorous peace of Cistercian life.¹¹ He spent his final years there, dying on September 8, 1148, five years before Bernard. He was buried in the monastery cloister, close to the chapter room. His reputation endured, however, and on January 12, 1215, the monks of Signy translated his relics to a shrine in an arcade cut into the wall of the cloister.¹²

William's Works

Unlike the other great Cistercian writers of the twelfth century, William left no body of sermons. Throughout his years as a monk at Saint Nicaise, Saint-Thierry, and Signy, he wrote eighteen works of spirituality, polemics, exegesis, and hagiography as well as five surviving letters. In the letter prefacing *Epistola ad fratres de Monte Dei*, he left a list of those works, with the theme of monastic life and understanding running through them.¹³ He first wrote to instruct members of his community at Saint-Thierry, offering them direction

¹⁰ Ep 86.2 (SBOp 7:224; #88 in James, *Letters*, 128).

¹¹ *Vita antiqua* 5–6 (LeBrun, "Vita Antiqua Willelmi," 448–51; Bell, "The Vita Antiqua," 249–50).

¹² Verdeyen, "Guillaume," 410.

¹³ William, Ep frat Pref. 7–13 (CCCM 88:226–27; CF 12:5–7); the *Vita antiqua* lists most of William's works, probably, LeBrun guesses, those in the library at Signy (*Vita antiqua* 10 [LeBrun, "Vita Antiqua," 452–55; Bell, "The Vita Antiqua," 251–53]).

as they sought to know and love God. He continued to write for the novices there—and in part, no doubt, for himself—until the end of his abbacy, with his first two treatises, *De contemplando Deo* and *De natura et dignitate amoris*, appearing between 1119 and 1122.¹⁴

In the early 1120s, initially as a private response to public controversy, William turned briefly to doctrinal argumentation. One traditional view of the nature of Christ's real presence in the Eucharist explained it as union between Christ and the substance of the bread analogous to Christ's taking on human substance in the incarnation. Although this explanation was an old one, some theologians of the time saw it as a theological novelty when expressed in the *De divinis officiis* of William's compatriot and near contemporary, Benedictine theologian Rupert of Deutz (d. ca. 1129). Between 1120 and 1125, perhaps out of concern not only for Rupert's understanding but also for his reputation, William wrote Rupert a letter on the subject, explaining to him the difficulties of some aspects of his argument and specifically the misunderstandings that might result from his phrasing. As Jean Châtillon has noted, in this first instance of three theological interventions, William wrote directly and irenically to Rupert rather than either joining or initiating a public controversy.¹⁵ At about the same time as writing the letter, however—in 1122–1123—William also wrote his formal treatise *De sacramento altaris* in opposition to Rupert's theological positions. This work provides the earliest treatise on sacramental theology by twelfth-century Cistercian writers.

¹⁴The dating of William's works in this summary depends on Paul Verdeyen's Introduction to *Expositio super epistolam ad Romanos*, CCCM 86 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1989), v–xxxi; and on *De sacramento altaris*, see John van Engen, "Rupert of Deutz and William of St. Thierry," *Revue Bénédictine* 93 (1983): 327–36. See also Jacques Hourlier, Introduction to William of Saint-Thierry, *On Contemplating God, Prayer, Meditations*, CF 3 (Spencer, MA: Cistercian Publications, 1971; Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1977), 11–13; André Wilmart, "La série et la date des ouvrages de Guillaume de Saint-Thierry," *Revue Mabillon* 14 (1924): 157–67.

¹⁵See Jean Châtillon, "William of Saint Thierry, Monasticism, and the Schools: Rupert of Deutz, Abelard, and William of Conches," in *William*, 153–80, esp. 160–69.

As abbot of a reforming Benedictine monastery, William was instrumental in organizing the first general chapter of the Benedictine abbots in the diocese of Reims in 1131, possibly even hosting the first chapter at Saint-Thierry. The efforts of William and his colleagues were not universally appreciated, and Cardinal Matthew of Albano, papal legate in France, reacted harshly.¹⁶ For the second general chapter at Soissons in 1132, possibly before the chapter met, William penned the *Responsio abbatum* to Cardinal Matthew.¹⁷ The *Responsio* seems not only to have fulfilled its aim of justifying the abbots' reforms but also to have garnered even greater support.

After this brief excursion into controversy, William returned to writing on contemplation and the love of God. Probably between 1128 and 1132 he wrote what would become a series of *Meditationes*, intended for his novices. In the *Golden Epistle*, he dismissed these works ironically as *Meditative Prayers, not entirely useless for forming the minds of novices for praying*.¹⁸ One manuscript of the *Meditationes* also includes a brief prayer generally known as the *Oratio Domni Willelmi*, which Jacques Hourlier dates to about 1122, though David N. Bell judges that date "perhaps . . . a little too specific."¹⁹ During the same period, between 1125 and 1135, William began to explore the Song of Songs and its dramatization of the mutual love between God and the soul. Perhaps considering himself not yet prepared to explore this great work of love poems on his own, he drafted the *Brevis commentatio*, probably consisting of notes drawn from his conversations with Bernard during their shared convalescence,

¹⁶ For Cardinal Matthew's letter, see "Responsio abbatum auctore Willelmo abbate sancti Theodorici," in *Guillelmi a Sancto Theodorico Opera Omnia, IV*, ed. Paul Verdeyen, CCCM 89:93–102.

¹⁷ "Responsio abbatum auctore Willelmo abbate Sancti Theodorici," in *Guillelmi a Sancto Theodorico Opera Omnia, IV*, ed. Paul Verdeyen, CCCM 89:103–11.

¹⁸ *Meditationes novitiis ad orandum formandis spiritibus non usquequaque inutiles* (CCCM 88:226; CF 12:6).

¹⁹ Jacques Hourlier, Introduction to William of Saint Thierry, *On Contemplating God, Prayer, Meditations*, trans. Sr. Penelope [Lawson], CF 3 (Spencer, MA, and Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1977), 77–86, here 83–86; for Bell's comment, see his chapter below (p. 22).

and then composed *florilegia* from the works of two patristic writers, Saint Ambrose of Milan (340–397) and Saint Gregory the Great (540–604).

In the first years after William entered the young abbey of Signy in 1135, he turned his thoughts for a while from contemplative prayer to theology and biblical exegesis. Thus his first two works as a Cistercian explored the relationship between human free will and God's grace. In 1137, he wrote the biblically grounded *Expositio super Epistolam ad Romanos* and later *De natura corporis et animae*, the latter work incorporating not only patristic theology but also recent Arabic studies.²⁰

At about the same time, William returned to the Song of Songs, finally beginning his own commentary—*Expositio super Cantica Canticorum*—ten years after his first attempts on the subject. Although he was never to complete what he may have conceived as his grand *opus*, at his death he left four treatises devoted to this work so central to twelfth-century Cistercian spiritual thought.

But even as William was beginning to write his commentary on the Song, he became troubled by the influence of the teaching of Peter Abelard on young men entering Signy. He thus put aside the commentary for what he surely hoped would be only a time, first to read Abelard carefully and then to write to Bernard and to Geoffrey of Lèves, the bishop of Chartres, about the theological errors he had found in Abelard's works and the danger they posed to the faith. Two years later, in 1140, after writing his *Disputatio adversus Petrum Abelardum* and addressing it to Bernard, he had the satisfaction of seeing Abelard's works condemned at Sens, and then in 1142—the year in which Abelard died—seeing those works publicly burned and Abelard himself condemned.²¹ A year later, still troubled

²⁰ See Bernard McGinn, Introduction to *Three Treatises on Man: A Cistercian Anthropology*, ed. Bernard McGinn, CF 24 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1977), 1–100, here 30–47.

²¹ For a brief yet substantive summary and analysis of William's involvement with Abelard's theology, see E. Rozanne Elder, Introduction to William of St. Thierry, *The Mirror of Faith*, CF 15 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1979), xi–xxxi, here xiii–xv.

by intellectual errors threatening young monks, William wrote another cautionary letter to Bernard, now attacking the teaching of William of Conches in the *Epistola de erroribus Guillelmi de Conchis*.

That letter was William's last polemical work. In the next few years he turned from attacking theological error to writing orthodox treatises of his own. In three doctrinal works written between 1142 and 1144, he instructed the monks of Signy, first in the now-lost *Sententiae de Fide* and then in *Speculum Fidei* and *Ænigma Fidei*.

Perhaps exhausted by these intellectual endeavors just when he had expected finally to be at peace for contemplative prayer, William spent a few months at the Charterhouse of Mont-Dieu, about thirty miles southeast of Signy. When he returned home, as a gift of thanks to his Carthusian hosts, he composed one of his most powerful works, the *Epistola ad fratres de Monte Dei*, which the great monastic editor Jean Mabillon retitled *Epistola aurea*. This work, directed to the novices at Mont-Dieu, began by linking the Carthusians to the spiritual traditions of the desert fathers, in whose spiritual fervor William perceived an early Christian antecedent for the way of life being lived at Mont-Dieu.

Between 1145 and 1147, apparently at the request of Geoffrey of Auxerre, who knew of the close friendship between Bernard and William, William began to record his knowledge of the man whom he had admired for so many years and through whom he himself had come to be a Cistercian. Although Arnold of Bonneval and Geoffrey himself later supplemented William's *Vita prima* with their own narratives of Bernard's life, William's ability to provide a clear and often candid vision of Bernard in all his humanity while also conveying his clear insight that Bernard was truly a man of God makes his work the central source for knowing Bernard.²² The *Vita prima* is not only an intimate portrait of Bernard, however, but also a source of knowledge about William's own life.

²² For an analysis of William's human portrait of the saintly Bernard in *Vita prima*, see E. Rozanne Elder, "Making Virtues of Vexing Habits," in *Studiosorum Speculum: Studies in Honor of Louis J. Lekai, O. Cist.*, ed. Francis Swietek and John R. Sommerfeldt, CS 141 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1993), 75–94.

For William's lifelong friendship with Bernard affected William's life as much as his theological training in the schools. William reveals that friendship in every sentence of the *Vita prima*, and Bernard reciprocates in his letters. In fact, their mutual attachment occasionally rose to a competition, as Bernard acknowledged in a letter:

You may be right when you say that my affection for you is less than yours is for me, but I am certainly certain that you cannot be certain. . . . But . . . although you love more than I do, you do not love more than you are able. And I too, although I love you less than I should, yet I love you as much as I can according to the power that has been given me. Draw me after you that I may reach you and with you receive more fully whence comes the power of love.²³

Would William have been the same man had he never met Bernard? Well, no. And of course, yes. Their meeting in 1118 changed both of their lives, but probably William's more than Bernard's. In that transformative moment, William recognized the spiritual figure he was to emulate for the rest of his life, and his final coming to rest as a simple monk at Signy resulted directly from Bernard's influence. At the same time, William's sharp intellect, academic training, and profound spiritual desire—all prominent in his writings—would certainly have flourished even without Bernard's influence. William was blessed by knowing Bernard and learning from him (and vice versa), but William's theological insight and passion and his works of spiritual guidance would have been equally powerful and influential even had he been deprived of that blessing.

A Brief Historiography

The last two decades of the twentieth century saw the publication of three books in English focusing on William's life and thought.²⁴

²³ Bernard, Ep 85:1, 4 (SBOp 7:220, 222; James, #88, *Letters*, 125, 127).

²⁴ These three were preceded by J. M. Déchanet's two books, which contributed significantly to bringing scholarly attention to William: *Guillaume de*

The first of these and the only monograph is David N. Bell's *The Image and Likeness: The Augustinian Spirituality of William of Saint Thierry*, published in 1984. This study, whose incisive discussion of the origins and development of William's thought make it essential for understanding William, shows not only how firmly grounded he was in Augustinian thought but also the ways in which his spiritual experience transformed what he had learned from Augustine. As Bell explains, that transformation is the core of William's spiritual understanding and helps to explain what William brought to Cistercian monasticism: "His spirituality is Augustinian in the sense that it is founded on precisely the same principles as Augustine's own spirituality—the image, likeness, love, and participation. . . . The *via mystica* of Augustine is the *via caritatis*, and the *via caritatis* is also the *via cisterciensis*."²⁵

The other two books—*William, Abbot of St. Thierry* (1987) and *Signy l'abbaye et Guillaume de Saint-Thierry* (2000)—emerged from colloquia held in France and contained papers originally delivered there. Most of the contributors in both cases were European scholars. *William, Abbot of St. Thierry* contains ten chapters that offer a useful exploration of William's life and career, especially from before he entered Signy, as well as a bibliography of his works and studies of those works. It is a helpful introduction to William and to some of the most important early scholars of his thought.

Only the final third of *Signy l'abbaye* directly concerns William; the first two sections examine the monastery of Signy and its site, providing a valuable context for understanding his thirteen years as a Cistercian. The final section begins with two chapters by Paul Verdeyen, one a brief overview of William's life and career and the other a survey of the developments in William scholarship since

Saint-Thierry. L'homme et son oeuvre (Bruges: Editions Charles Beyaert, 1942), and *Guillaume de Saint-Thierry: Aux Sources d'une pensée*, Théologie Historique 49 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1978). The earlier book was translated into English in 1972 as *William of St. Thierry: The Man and His Work*, trans. Richard Strachan, CS 10 (Spencer, MA: Cistercian Publications, 1972).

²⁵David N. Bell, *The Image and Likeness: The Augustinian Spirituality of William of Saint Thierry*, CS 78 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1984), 254–55.

the earlier colloquium, emphasizing the proliferation of editions and translations of William's works and the predominance of studies about William's spirituality and "t moignage mystique."²⁶ The following seventeen chapters analyze William's works and influence. E. Rozanne Elder contributed two of those, on William's role in creating the 1131 general chapter of Benedictine abbots and on his Christology.²⁷ This volume too contains a lengthy bibliography of William, divided into biographical studies, editions, and translations of William's works, and studies of individual works, sources, and influence.

In the fifteen years since *Signy l'abbaye*, all of William's works have become available in critical editions and most in vernacular translations in English, French, Spanish, and Italian, stimulating scholarship in numerous languages. The notable lacuna in this bibliography is a faithful vernacular translation of the entire *Vita Sancti Bernardi*, though the 2015 English translation of a manuscript of Recension B by Fr. Hilary Costello, OCSO, helps to fill that gap.²⁸ More than fifty studies have appeared in English and numerous European languages, including a number of dissertations and four monographs: a 1998 German volume on the human encounter with God, a 1999 French book on William's eucharistic theology, a 2006 Italian study of William's *Exposition on the Song of Songs*, and a 2009 French consideration of what William's sapiential theology reveals about his life as a monk.²⁹ Other recent books have also given se-

²⁶ Paul Verdeyen, "En quoi la connaissance de Guillaume de Saint-Thierry a-t-elle progress  depuis le colloque de 1976?" in *Signy l'abbaye*, 411–13, here 413 (this presentation from the colloquium first appeared in *Revue de sciences religieuses* 73 [1999]: 17–20).

²⁷ E. Rozanne Elder, "Guillaume de Saint-Thierry et le 'Chapitre G n ral' b n dictin de 1131," and "Christologie de Guillaume de Saint-Thierry et vie spirituelle," in *Signy l'abbaye*, 487–503, 575–87.

²⁸ William of Saint-Thierry, Arnold of Bonneval, and Geoffrey of Auxerre, *The First Life of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux*, trans. Hilary Costello, CF 76 (Collegeville, MN: Cistercian Publications, 2015).

²⁹ Kai G. Sander, *Amplexus. Die Begegnung des Menschen mit dem dreieinen Gott in der Lehre des sel. Wilhelm von Saint Thierry*, Quellen und Studien zur Zisterzienserliteratur 2 (Langwaden [Ger]: Bernardus-Verlag, 1998); Matthieu Roug ,

rious attention to William's thought.³⁰ A central concern of all of them has been William's spiritual theology, specifically his teaching about *unitas spiritus*.³¹

The importance of that doctrine to William and to his twentieth- and twenty-first-century readers has led the editors of this volume to make the phrase its main title. The growing numbers of publications on William make his growing international importance clear; this book intends not only to broaden knowledge about him but also to honor a person who has contributed significantly to understanding his spiritual teaching: E. Rozanne Elder, professor of history and director of the Center for Cistercian and Monastic Studies at Western Michigan University.

Unity of Spirit: Studies on William of Saint-Thierry in Honor of E. Rozanne Elder

William wrote many of his treatises—seven of eighteen—as a Benedictine, several of them for the guidance of the other monks at Saint-Thierry. Bell emphasizes the link between William's commitment to his community and his own spiritual pilgrimage: "his prime concern was that of an abbot for his monks . . . and of a monk for his soul."³² Indeed, William's yearning for the contemplative life characterizes most of those early works. William's spiritual and monastic journey also serendipitously mirrored that of

Doctrine et expérience de l'eucharistie chez Guillaume de Saint-Thierry, Théologie Historique 111 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1999); Cesare A. Montanari, "Per figuras amatorias": *L'Expositio super Cantica canticorum di Guglielmo di Saint-Thierry. Esegisi et Teologia*, *Analecta Gregoriana* 297 (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2006); Denis Cazes, *La Théologie Sapientielle de Guillaume de Saint Thierry*, *Studia Anselmiana* 148 (Rome: Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, 2009).

³⁰ Aage Rydstrom-Poulsen, *The Gracious God: Gratia in Augustine and the Twelfth Century* (Copenhagen: Akademisk, 2002); Carmen Angela Cvetović, *Seeking the Face of God: The Reception of Augustine in the Mystical Thought of Bernard of Clairvaux and William of St. Thierry* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012).

³¹ See Aage Rydstrom-Poulsen, "Research on William of Saint-Thierry from 1998 to 2008," *Analecta Cisterciensia* 58 (2008): 158–69, here 169.

³² Bell, *Image*, 254.

the founders of Cîteaux. Like him, Robert, Alberic, and Stephen Harding had begun as Benedictines and then, drawn by the Spirit and by desire for a more rigorous life of adherence to the Rule of Saint Benedict, came at last to live as Cistercians.

The spiritual longing that led the Founders to the New Monastery, Bernard to Cîteaux and Clairvaux, and William to Signy appears throughout William's works. While his learning and desire for theological orthodoxy emerged in polemical works, for the most part he, like the other Cistercians of his time, sang of the Spirit in works such as *De Contemplando*, *Meditationes*, four treatises on the Song of Songs, the *Epistola Aurea*, and finally the *Vita prima*. His written legacy is thus more obviously unified than that of many other twelfth-century Cistercian writers.

The chapters in this book, arranged roughly in the order in which William wrote his works, explore his spiritual and theological teaching and provide a glimpse of his intellectual range. They also reveal Bernard's influence, with five of the nine explicitly linking the two men. The other four chapters examine specific instances of William's spiritual and theological writing without reference to Bernard. Taken together, then, they provide an overview of William's development as a monk and a writer, his concern for the spiritual and theological understanding of younger monks, the breadth of his reading, and his years of yearning for a life of contemplation.

The intellectual relationship between Bernard and William is the context for Emero Stiegman's examination of William's two earliest works, *De contemplando Deo* and *De natura et dignitate amoris*, written soon after William and Bernard met in 1118 or 1119. These works' appearance beside Bernard's *De diligendo Deo* in the twelfth-century Paris MS. Bibliothèque Mazarine 776, which attributes all three to Bernard, has caused scholars through the centuries to conflate the two men's thought, with André Wilmart only in 1924 distinguishing between their works and crediting *De contemplando Deo* and *De natura et dignitate amoris* to William.³³ At that point the perceived theological identity of the three works began to unravel, but many scholars have still perceived them as expressing essentially similar perspectives.

³³ André Wilmart, "La série," 157–67.

Stiegman argues here that the works of the two men reveal “sharply different points of departure” and “different perceptions of what is essential in the mind’s discovery of God or in the manner of God’s self-revelation, a different reception, then, of religious doctrine itself.” By disambiguating the two men’s understanding of how humans may know God, Stiegman offers a new insight into the difference between William’s Augustinian emphasis on what the soul receives in faith and Bernard’s treatment of ordinary human experience as the starting place for faith.

Between 1125 and 1138, William turned to more explicitly contemplative writing, composing his twelve meditative prayers with a compellingly intimate voice. In the Mazarine manuscript, a single leaf immediately after *De Natura et dignitate amoris* holds a brief prayer titled *Oratio Domni Willelmi*, absent from the list of William’s works in *Epistola aurea*. David N. Bell identifies this prayer as “an abortive attempt at a *Meditation* that . . . needed elaboration,” elaboration subsequently achieved in *Meditationes* 6 and 10. After providing the close textual and theological analysis of the *Oratio* that leads to that conclusion, Bell offers a new English translation of the work, one correcting significant errors in the earlier translation of 1977. Bell’s translation is particularly valuable in allowing William’s own uninterrupted voice to be heard in this volume alongside those of his explicators.

At about the same time as writing the *Meditationes*, William began to explore the Song of Songs, perhaps inspired by his conversations with Bernard and by Bernard’s own sermon-commentary on the work. Mark DelCogliano here explores the prologue to William’s Ambrosian *florilegium*, showing how William selected, altered, and used passages from Ambrose’s works to focus on the incarnation and the human spiritual pilgrimage. Having previously examined the structure of William’s Gregorian *florilegium*, DelCogliano also identifies the significant differences between the two works and examines William’s reasons for shaping them so differently.³⁴

³⁴Mark DelCogliano, “The Composition of William of St. Thierry’s *Excerpts from the Books of Blessed Gregory on the Song of Songs*,” *Cîteaux* 58 (2007): 57–76.

DelCogliano suggests that in the case of the Gregorian *florilegium*, *Excerpta ex libris Beati Gregorii super Cantica Canticorum*, William created “a kind of running Gregorian commentary on the Song of Songs, a commentary whose thought is thoroughly and genuinely Gregorian.” But in *Excerpta ex libris Beati Ambrosii super Cantica Canticorum*, DelCogliano shows, William reveals some of his own doctrine by incorporating Ambrose’s words in such a way as to interpret the Song as being “principally about the mystery of the incarnation” and to explain “the stages of spiritual advancement that the Song teaches.”

By the time in about 1138 that William returned to the Song of Songs and began his own independent commentary on it, he was at last a Cistercian. His friendship with Bernard had continued to grow, enhanced by their correspondence and their time of shared convalescence at Clairvaux. One of the intellectual benefits of that shared time was the opportunity it gave them to compare their readings of Scripture, including the Song of Songs, and to explain their different understandings of ideas central to the faith. Rose Marie Tillisch examines the two men’s parallel treatments of Song of Songs 1:12 and two other biblical passages in William’s *Expositio super Cantica Canticorum* and in Bernard’s Sermon 42 on the Song of Songs.

From a close reading of the two men’s explorations of humility “through the lens of their view of Christ as the humble slave, man and God,” Tillisch concludes that “while William focuses on Christ as the humiliated one, Bernard focuses on Christ as humility.” By comparing William’s and Bernard’s use of identical biblical passages and written articulation of similar ideas, she teases out the distinctive elements of each one’s thought, so illuminating one aspect of their theological understanding while offering new insight into their mutual influence.

But even as William was writing his commentary on the Song of Songs, he began to hear about Abelard. When he read what he believed to be Abelard’s works of systematic theology (an edition of the *Theologia scholarium*, authentically Abelard’s, and the *Liber sententiarum*, compiled by a student of Abelard), he found himself so concerned about what he saw as their departure from orthodoxy

that he determined to take action against them and their author. Abandoning his commentary at Song 3:4, as he explained later in his preface to *Epistola aurea*, he wrote at length to Bernard, asking him to contest Abelard's errors.³⁵ While the story of Bernard's struggle against Abelard's teachings is a familiar one, Tillisch and Aage Rydstrøm-Poulsen both indirectly suggest that one effect of that struggle was its causing the two Cistercians to rethink, or at least rearticulate, certain aspects of their own theology. William's argument against Abelard in particular spilled over into works conventionally seen as exemplars of spirituality. Tillisch argues that in articulating their different perspectives on humility, William and Bernard were actually protesting what they saw as the lack of humility in Abelard's emphasis on human reason: "Perhaps *humilitas* was thus a common ground, a mediator between reason and affection, a concept important for them to define in their struggle against Abelard's unorthodox thoughts."

Rydstrøm-Poulsen approaches the issue from another angle, though still through the lens of humility. He examines William's Christology as grounded in Christ's humility, explaining that the descent of Christ into human life modeled for human beings both their own descent into humility and their ascent to God, in both cases following Christ, the form of poverty. Exploring William's development of this theme in both his argument against Abelard in the *Disputatio* and the *Epistola aurea*, Rydstrøm-Poulsen makes it clear that William's orthodox Augustinianism was at the core of his opposition to what he regarded as Abelard's Pelagianism. He thus emphasizes William's insistence on the necessity of humility in the Christian life: "Christ is the Savior, and the only relevant human attitude is humility." But humility is not an end in itself, not merely a matter of moral virtue. Instead, its culmination in William's understanding, Rydstrøm-Poulsen explains, is to become like God: "he calls the highest resemblance *unitas spiritus*, which 'makes the human one spirit with God.' . . . Consequently William

³⁵ William, Ep frat Pref. 9–10 (CCCM 88:226; CF 12:6). Bernard shows his initial reluctance in Ep 327 (SBOP 8:263; James, *Letters*, #236, 314–15).

can say about the soul that it really becomes one with the triune God."³⁶

The last of William's spiritual treatises, *Epistola aurea* is not only a valuable testimony to William's theological understanding, as Rydstrom-Poulsen shows it to be, but also a witness to his deep love for solitude and simplicity of life, those things that first helped to draw him to Cistercian monasticism and then later led him to admire the new Carthusian order. After an extended visit in the mid-1140s to the nearby Charterhouse of Mont-Dieu, William wrote this work for the benefit of the novices there and to thank the community for its hospitality to him. Benedicta Ward calls attention to what he saw there as a contemporary expression of ancient monastic traditions, as he praised the Carthusians for "their poverty, solitude, and zeal for God's glory," which he described as resembling that of the Egyptian fathers of the desert. When William goes on to make a similar comparison to Clairvaux, however, he presents the Cistercians not as imitating the external behavior of the desert fathers but instead as incorporating the inner meaning of the fathers' lives in a Gospel-centered monasticism.

Examining the origins of William's interest in Egyptian desert monasticism demonstrated in *Epistola aurea*, Ward concludes that he had probably read none of the primary sources available in twelfth-century Europe but relied instead on stories he had heard from sermons and the daily monastery readings of Cassian's *Conferences* and Athanasius's *Vita Sancti Antonii*. In fact, Ward suggests that in this way William himself was participating in the oral tradition. In contrast, she notes, as Abelard had read the *apophthegmata* and found in them a love of silence and solitude, he might well be considered "the true heir to the tradition of the desert fathers."

Having completed the *Epistola aurea* and apparently being content to leave his *Expositio super Cantica Canticorum* incomplete, William set out into what was for him new territory. It is perhaps evidence of his deep humility that after a lifetime of theological and spiritual exploration and argumentation he ventured into a

³⁶ Ep frat 262: *fit homo cum Deo unus spiritus* (CCCM 88:282; CF 12:95); Ep frat 263: *quia ipsa ipse est Spiritus sanctus, Deus caritas* (CCCM 88:282; CF 12:96).

new kind of writing, composing a narrative of Bernard's early life. His statement at the beginning of the *Vita prima* that he had considered waiting to write it until after Bernard's death indicates not only his anxiety about Bernard's probable reaction to such a work but also his own long desire to write it.³⁷ Although he left the *Vita* unfinished at his death, it continues to be perhaps the most widely known of his treatises and is still the source for much of what is known of Bernard's early life. Indeed, as James France shows here, two medieval manuscripts of this work preserve the only surviving images of William himself, one of which appears on the cover of this book. Each manuscript portrays William with Bernard in an image that is hieratic rather than naturalistic, and in each case Bernard dominates the miniature, with William subordinated to him in position and posture.

Many of the most powerful surviving images of Bernard are based on scenes from the *Vita prima*, as France shows from two sets of sixteenth-century glass representing William's stories of Bernard's youth.³⁸ As he explains, the stories in these windows exemplify the way the good-looking young Bernard learned to resist the appeal of women, even those actively seeking to seduce him, while at the same time signifying aspects of his quick wit and charm. And lest the images themselves be insufficiently clear about their origin and significance, each set included the words of the *Vita prima* painted onto the glass itself. Such images make it clear that the intimate conversation that Bernard and William shared over the years bore particularly rich fruit in the *Vita prima*, enabling William to memorialize otherwise hidden details of Bernard's life and character.

As Marjory Lange explains in her chapter, William's rhetorical skills not only created insight into Bernard's life and significance but also preserved the memory of the friendship between the two men. Through an exploration of the imagistic and narrative power of this work, Lange demonstrates William's thoughtful application

³⁷ *Vita Bern*, Prologue (CCCM 89B:31; PL 185:225AB; Cawley, *Bernard*, 1).

³⁸ See also James France, *Medieval Images of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux*, CS 210 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2007).

of his rhetorical skills, calling particular attention to the way he verbally shaped the work so as to reveal the meaning of Bernard's life while incorporating into that story their meeting and developing friendship. Lange's helpful discussion of medieval hagiographical conventions and the way in which William both used and departed from them makes it clear that he excelled even in this new genre, through which he bequeathed to history a portrait of a saintly man.

Having moved regularly throughout his life between teaching others and seeking personal understanding, William thus ended by stepping outside both modes of writing, or rather synthesizing the life of his spiritual model and dearest friend. Finally, of course, he wrote for himself, preserving his memories of Bernard's life while allowing others to share them and perceive their meaning.

The final chapter of this book does not adhere to the otherwise chronological format but points to the original and audacious spiritual doctrine that characterized William's thought and ran throughout his works. F. Tyler Sergent shows that William's development of the idea of human divinization, of the soul's capacity to become one with God, also led to his new use of a traditional Christian phrase to express his teaching of the unity of spirit possible between the human being and God. Sergent examines the patristic and medieval development of the phrase *unitas spiritus*, first found in the biblical letter to the Ephesians, which advises the Christians of Ephesus that they should "preserve the unity of spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph 4:3).

Fifteen authors from the fourth through the twelfth centuries use the phrase outside direct quotations of the Ephesians passage, Sergent shows, and with one exception their works always use it in reference to either the unity of the persons of the Trinity or the unity of Christian believers. In three cases William also uses it with this second meaning. But six times, in four works, William uses it to refer to the soul's union with God, first in his earliest work, *De contemplando Deo*, and finally in his last, the *Vita prima*. Thus not only did William newly define the relationship between God and humankind, but he also found a way to express that relationship with a traditional phrase newly understood.

So the body of this book ends with an examination of one of William's most distinctive contributions to Christian thought, confirming the theological, spiritual, and rhetorical gifts that the previous eight chapters showed. Coming from many different starting points, the nine contributors indicate the importance of William's role in twelfth-century Christian thought and the familiarity of his expression of Cistercian spirituality.

At the core of all that William thought and wrote stands his conviction that humans are able to become one with God through love. This insight runs like a golden thread throughout his works, leading his readers forward through reason and love, downward through humility and upward through grace and hope, finally to come to rest in God and fully one with God, "not only desiring what God desires . . . but unable to desire anything except what God desires."³⁹

Like the fathers of the desert, the founders of the New Monastery, and Saint Bernard—and indeed like Cistercians from those early days until today—William throughout his life recognized and followed God's call and his own desire to know and love God more fully. And even while longing for the place in which he could yield completely to God's call, he persisted in the work he had originally taken on, to lead his monastery, teach his novices, and work with and for other Benedictine abbots. Thanks to those years of committed service to those he longed to leave, when he finally became a Cistercian, he brought with him (again like the Founders) maturity, knowledge, experience, love, and confidence in God's call.

Honoring Dr. E. Rozanne Elder

It is an honor and indeed a pleasure to offer this *Festschrift* to Dr. E. Rozanne Elder on the occasion of her retirement. This traditional form of academic recognition is the natural way to demonstrate the sincere gratitude of so many for her significant contributions to learning. For five decades, her distinguished scholarship on the golden age of Cistercian thought, especially on

³⁹ William, *Ep frat* 257 (CCCM 88:281; CF 12:94).

William of Saint-Thierry, has earned her the admiration of scholars around the world.

Dr. Elder's recognized expertise on Cistercian authors and subjects has caused her to receive many invitations to lecture and lead workshops in North American and European universities. Additionally, the respect she has earned from Cistercian monks and nuns around the world has allowed her to visit and offer conferences to monasteries from Iowa and California to England, Norway, Nigeria, and Cameroon, leading symposia for juniors, giving workshops, and lecturing. Her work has enriched monks and nuns of both Cistercian orders, giving them a fuller knowledge of their ancestral tradition.

Dr. Elder's thirty-six years as director of the Institute of Cistercian Studies and five years as director of the Center for Cistercian and Monastic Studies, both at Western Michigan University, have opened the field of monastic studies—and specifically Cistercian studies—to many superb scholars who might never otherwise have taken that path. As editorial director of Cistercian Publications, she edited and published not only many fine English translations of and introductions to works from the early Cistercian tradition but also a long list of valuable studies of Cistercian writers, of the desert fathers, and of other patristic and medieval authors. Those who have worked with her in that capacity know how painstaking have been her efforts to make each book substantive, readable, and beautiful.

Even as Dr. Elder edited and oversaw these works by other authors and so advanced their careers, she herself continued to present papers at conferences and wrote and published articles and books. She has published thirty-two articles, book chapters, encyclopedia articles, and introductions, mostly on the thought of William of Saint-Thierry, and edited no fewer than one hundred ninety-one books, including seventeen as a named editor. She is a true scholar, a woman of deep and committed learning. In recognition for her extraordinary record, in 2014 Western Michigan University honored Dr. Elder by naming her a Distinguished Faculty Scholar.

Additionally, Dr. Elder's many years as an outstanding professor and scholar in the Department of History at Western Michigan

University have opened the eyes and minds of her students to the medieval world. She has directed at least fifteen theses and dissertations as well as serving as an external reader on numerous dissertation committees. None of those who have studied closely with Dr. Elder will ever forget the firm hand with which she steered them, requiring them to work in original languages and with primary texts and thereby making them able to do so. As her students past and present report, studying with her whether in class or in a tutorial is always both challenging and rewarding. From on-the-spot parsing of compound Latin words used by medieval authors in order to understand their nuanced meanings to scouring the massive *Acta Sanctorum* volumes for hagiographical details to analyzing archaeological reports on English Cistercian abbeys, students learn both *theoria* and *praxis*. Her demands for thoroughness and rewarding of diligence reliably impart both knowledge and the skills necessary for a scholar.

Beyond teaching, Dr. Elder's range of service to her university has been extensive. She has served on numerous search and admissions committees in the Department of History and beyond and repeatedly served on the Board of Directors of the Medieval Institute. She has also arranged for Western Michigan University's hosting of numerous visiting scholars and helped build the Institute of Cistercian Studies Library, assisting in the acquisition of many volumes essential to Cistercian scholars.

As a fitting complement to her extensive work as a scholar, teacher, and participant in university governance, Dr. Elder has long been an active ecumenist, representing the Episcopal Church locally in the Episcopal Diocese of Western Michigan, as well as nationally and internationally. In addition to serving on national ecumenical boards for the Episcopal Church, she was from 1983 to 1991 a member of the Anglican-Orthodox Theological Consultation, and from 1991 to 2001, one of only two Americans on the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Consultation, drafting documents for the Commission's consideration (including the document on the Marian dogmas), and serving on a team editing the central documents from the Anglican-Roman Catholic Consultation in the United States from 1983–1985. Appropriately, in 1995 Nashotah

House Theological Seminary awarded her a Doctor of Humane Letters *honoris causa*.

The work for which Rozanne Elder is probably most widely known and appreciated is her direction of the world's annual Cistercian Studies Conference, held each May jointly with the International Congress of Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University. The Conference, largely through Rozanne's meticulous organization and intensive personal oversight, has created a worldwide community of Cistercian scholars, including both monks and laypeople. For months before each year's conference, Rozanne works to request papers, select those to be presented and inform the presenters, organize sessions and invite section chairs, arrange for a spacious, sunny room for the meetings, order flowers for that room, design and print an elegant program and mail it out, design and print distinctive nametags for participants, and plan not only for the Saturday night banquet but also for the Sunday evening collation and Monday morning Mass and breakfast, which have become expected extensions of the conference. During each conference, Rozanne introduces the first session and attends all the others, listening to the papers given and frequently raising learned and provocative questions or observations that illuminate and inform speakers and listeners alike.

In addition to organizing the conference, Rozanne also schedules priests for each morning's Roman Catholic Mass and reserves the auditorium for the Sunday morning celebration as well as making arrangements for Sunday's joint Anglican-Lutheran Eucharist, sometimes inviting diocesan bishops as celebrants. She provides the vestments, wine, wafers, and liturgical booklets for each day's worship and arrives early each morning to be sure that everything is in place. And she plans and prints the liturgy for daily Evening Prayer and makes sure that a cantor and *schola* are ready each day.

Rozanne's careful planning and oversight, as well as her gift for gracious hospitality and her generosity in exercising it so apparently effortlessly, have over the years produced not just a center for an exchange of ideas about Cistercian history, thought, authors, art, liturgy, architecture, economics, and manuscripts (and so much more) but have built a community of scholars and friends. Because

of her, the papers given in Cistercian sessions are almost invariably strong, and because of her, the sessions attract people prepared to support and assist one another. Non-Cistercian scholars who drop in to hear a single paper are likely to return again and again to enjoy the supportive and well-informed company and to share in the intellectual energy in the room. Often, in time they return to offer their own papers on Cistercian subjects and to be warmly welcomed into the family.

All because of Rozanne's work. Cistercian scholars around the world owe her enduring gratitude for the community she has built and the welcome with which each year she welcomes them home again.

Because so many owe so much both professionally and personally to Rozanne Elder, the editors have created this book on their behalf. It therefore includes not only studies of William of Saint-Thierry, the twelfth-century writer who has been at the center of Rozanne's scholarly life, but also warm letters of appreciation from representatives of both Cistercian orders—Dom Brendan Freeman, OCSO, and Fr. Luke Anderson, OCist—and from lay scholars—Dr. Bernard McGinn of the University of Chicago and Dr. John R. Sommerfeldt of the University of Dallas—expressing admiration of and gratitude for Rozanne's teaching, scholarship, editorial acumen and perseverance, and gracious hospitality. They join in celebrating her contributions to Cistercian life and learning in the United States and around the world. The authors of this volume join in presenting it to her as a sign of the esteem in which so many hold her and in recognition of her immeasurable contributions to the academic world.

Unity of Spirit, this book's main title, of course expresses above all William of Saint-Thierry's central concept of the unity possible between humans and God. But it also here expresses the bond of spiritual unity between Rozanne Elder and all Cistercians, monastic or lay, wherever and however they live out the life that began in 1098 at the New Monastery.

For the most part, however, scholars will read this book to learn about William of Saint-Thierry rather than about Rozanne Elder, and that is entirely as it should be. As the first English book devoted to William's works since *Signy l'abbaye et Guillaume de Saint-Thierry*,

1 *Unity of Spirit*

this one aims to be useful, informative, reliable, and valuable for scholars of all stripes—Cistercians, historians, general monastic researchers, students of patristics, general medievalists, art historians, and simply *amici Guillelmi*. Otherwise it would not appropriately honor Rozanne.

Easter 2015

1

WILLIAM OF SAINT-THIERRY'S TRINITARIAN IMAGE OR SAINT BERNARD'S PRE-THEOLOGICAL SELF?

Emero Stiegman

For Dr. E. Rozanne Elder, whose devout dedication to Cistercian Studies and caring encouragement of its students have left generations in her debt.

Identifying the starting point of spiritual awareness could affect the value given to personal experience as distinguished from religious doctrine. Here I want to call attention to a submerged and implicit disagreement on this significant issue between two highly influential twelfth-century writers whom tradition has wrongly assumed to be in full accord. The question, transcending mere adjustments of the historical record, is not antiquarian; it confronts an issue more alive today than it was in the Middle Ages.

William of Saint-Thierry and Bernard of Clairvaux, for all that they have in common, are early Cistercian contemplatives with sharply different points of departure. William's theological mastery of doctrine and Bernard's insightful grasp of the nature of experience reveal a defining contrast, i.e., different perceptions of what is essential in the mind's discovery of God or in the manner of God's self-revelation, a different reception, then, of religious doctrine itself. Even while benefiting from William's superior theological education, Bernard claims that experience precedes doctrine.

2 *Unity of Spirit*

A brief study of these two figures, side by side at an early moment in their careers, can make the difference between them clear. It would be wrong to claim that what distinguishes one monk is simply lacking in the other. Yet a temperamental affirmation of one that suffers polite tolerance of the other would fail to put the reader or the devotee in touch with the integral Cistercian tradition. And, of broader importance, concern for the relationship of experience to doctrine or to institutional norms belongs as much to philosophical anthropology and its own demands for meaning as to the history of theology and spirituality.

William and Bernard will be found most easily and significantly separable (or better, distinguishable) precisely where they were once so fused together as to be taken as one author—i.e., in the twelfth-century *Liber de amore*.¹ As is known, that manuscript bundled two tracts by William, *De natura et dignitate amoris* and *De contemplando Deo*, with one tract by Bernard, *De diligendo Deo*, all three ascribed to Bernard.² Jean Marie Déchanet's suggested explanation for the omission of William's name seems most credible: Bernard's reputation would assure acceptance of William's unconventional theological views, "forestalling any suspicions of heterodoxy."³

For generations it seemed inevitable that Bernard's thought could be ascertained only in the context of two treatises that were not his. When William's authorship and genius were eventually recognized, it became necessary to reread the abbot of Clairvaux. I do not believe this necessity has been fully met. Experience (*experientia*)

¹Jacques Hourlier describes this document, saying nothing of how the Augustinianism of William might affect a reading of Bernard ("S. Bernard et Guillaume de Saint-Thierry dans le '*Liber de amore*,'" in *Saint Bernard théologien*, ASOC 9 (1953): 223–33.

²William of Saint-Thierry, Nat am (CCCM 88:177–212; PL 184:379–408; M.-M. Davy, *De la nature et de la dignité amoris*, in *Deux traités de l'amour de Dieu. De la contemplation de Dieu. De la nature et de la dignité de l'amour*, ed. M.-M. Davy [Paris: J. Vrin, 1953], 69–137 [hereafter, Davy, *Deux Traités*]; CF 30); Contem (CCCM 88:153–69; CF 3); Bernard of Clairvaux, Dil (SBOp 3:109–34; CF 13).

³Jean Marie Déchanet, "A Comment," in *William, Abbot of St. Thierry: A Colloquium at the Abbey of St. Thierry*, trans. Jerry Carfantan, CS 94 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1987), 255.

as presented in Bernard's tract is not a subset of doctrines as learned and explored by William. *On Loving God* remains a casualty of the confusion. Interpreters tend to absorb its central ideas into the Augustinianism of William's work. Without such absorption, a treatise that might have been recognized as innovative thinking has, after an initial era of popularity, lain fallow in Christian tradition, frequently read as mere pious exhortation when not censured, even by friendly experts.

William of Saint-Thierry, *De natura et dignitate amoris*

Properly to understand William's treatise and to evaluate it within the body of his works, one must not lose sight of two elements that may seem peripheral, though they are not. First, this is a very early work.⁴ Like all great writers, William grew.⁵ Second, the degree of mistrust in the physical found here was incited to a degree by William's abhorrence of the crude sensuality of Ovid's *Ars amatoria*. In the Neoplatonic philosophical assumptions underlying Augustine's *De trinitate*, William found intellectual grounding.

William had brought with him to the Benedictine monastery of Saint-Thierry the best humanistic and theological education available, as Déchanet insists.⁶ In his magisterial study of William, David N. Bell goes far beyond identifying elements that derive from or develop the Augustinian tradition. He explores the major themes

⁴E. Rozanne Elder argues that *Nat am* is William's first work ("William of Saint Thierry: Rational and Affective Spirituality," in *The Spirituality of Western Christendom*, ed. E. Rozanne Elder, CS 30 [Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1976], 197–98n22). David N. Bell sees the teaching of *Nat am* as revealing "a nascent and formative stage of William's thinking" (Introduction to William, *The Nature and Dignity of Love*, trans. Thomas X. Davis, CF 30 [Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1981], 17).

⁵For a survey of William's evolution from Benedictine abbot of Saint-Thierry to simple Cistercian monk at Signy to admirer of the Carthusians (as shown in *Epistola ad fratres de Monte Dei*), see E. Rozanne Elder, "William of St. Thierry: The Monastic Vocation as an Imitation of Christ," *Cîteaux* 26 (1975): 9–30.

⁶Jean Marie Déchanet, *William of St. Thierry: The Man and His Work*, trans. Richard Strachan, CS 10 (Spencer, MA: Cistercian Publications, 1972), 1–5.

4 *Unity of Spirit*

of Augustine's metaphysics as these generate clarity and conviction in William's spirit. Readers of the devout monk quickly dismiss as implausible any suspicion of philosophy's displacing prayer.⁷

The design of William's work is to establish first what is meant by being made in God's image and then to show that the full actuation of this image, the divine likeness, must be recovered through the progress of love.⁸ William offers an account of the soul's changing disposition, guided by biblical and patristic teaching—what is received in faith. Rozanne Elder, writing on William's disagreements with Abelard, identifies William's insistence on beginning in faith and describes him as "Chary of theological inquiry devoid of scriptural foundation." She goes on to say that "As William grounded the first stage [of development] in Scripture . . . , so at the second he relied more heavily on illuminating grace."⁹ This account of later works of William also describes the way he traces the development of love in this tract. Would not faithful Christians seek their point of departure in faith?

Growth in love goes on: "The will, according to the development of [its] virtue, grows into love, love into charity, and charity into wisdom";¹⁰ "Love is naturally implanted in the human soul by the author of nature."¹¹ However, only that which is as God creates it is natural.¹² Even as God is a Trinity, God's image in the human is

⁷David N. Bell, *The Image and Likeness: The Augustinian Spirituality of William of St. Thierry*, CS 78 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1984). Bell is sensitive to nuances (and to development) in William that demonstrate more than a mere duplication of Augustine.

⁸Robert Javelet, *Image et ressemblance au XII^e siècle. De saint Anselme à Alan de Lille*, 2 vols. (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1967), 1:188.

⁹E. Rozanne Elder, Introduction to *The Mirror of Faith*, by William of St. Thierry, trans. Thomas X. Davis, CF 15 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1979), xviii, xix.

¹⁰Nat am 3 (Davy, *Deux Traités*, 74; CF 30:53).

¹¹Nat am 2 (Davy, *Deux Traités*, 72; CF 30:48–49). Augustine saw love as a *naturale pondus*, a gravitational pull orienting the human to its proper "place" (Augustine of Hippo, Civ Dei 13.18; CCSL 48:400; PL 41:390). (See also Civ Dei 11.28 and Conf 13.9.)

¹²William held Ovid's *Ars amatoria* to be an example of unnatural love.

a “created trinity.”¹³ Most characteristic of William is the conviction that what is meant to shine through the human is not simply what is divine but (as Augustine knew) its trinitarian character. At creation (Gen 2:7) God infused into humankind “a spiritual power, that is, an intellectual power,” which holds memory. This is *memoria*, an ever-available awareness of its origin in God: “memory of itself begets reason, then both memory and reason from themselves bring forth the will,” reflecting the three divine Persons.¹⁴ Love is a “vehement, well-ordered will.”¹⁵

As William outlines the psychology of “the rational soul,”¹⁶ he focuses on one of his most used terms, the *affectus*: “The will, in itself, is a simple *affectus* . . . filled with good when it is helped by grace, with evil when left to itself.”¹⁷ *Affectio*, on the other hand, may denote merely an inner motion of early love, where the will works “as a blind person with his hands.”¹⁸

After long stretches of encouragement to an ascetical life, William first suggests that *affectus*, associated so insistently with the will, may have something to do with affectivity. He observes that in the satisfaction derived from the struggle for virtue, true *affectus* is not yet present. That will come only “when love has passed into charity.”¹⁹ Preparation for this moment arrives in the form of “sweet little affections” (*affectiunculas*).²⁰ The reader must not, then, confuse tender emotions about God with that *affectus* marking the entry of charity.

¹³Nat am 3 (Davy, *Deux Traités*, 76; CF 30:54). Bell points out that the idea of the soul as created trinity was the common Augustinian heritage of medieval writers (Introduction, CF 30:6–18).

¹⁴Nat am 3 (Davy, *Deux Traités*, 76; CF 30:54).

¹⁵William of Saint-Thierry, Contem 14 (CCCM 88:162–63; CF 3:54).

¹⁶William, Nat am 3 (Davy, *Deux Traités*, 76; CF 30:55).

¹⁷Nat am 4 (Davy, *Deux Traités*, 76; CF 30:56). Thomas X. Davis treats the meaning of *affectus* in William extensively in the appendix to his translation of *The Mirror of Faith*, CF 15:93–95. Bell discusses the often-confusing inconsistencies in this usage among twelfth-century writers (*Image*, 128–35).

¹⁸Nat am 9 (Davy, *Deux Traités*, 82; CF 30:61).

¹⁹Nat am 9 (Davy, *Deux Traités*, 84–85; CF 30:62).

²⁰*Insolitas quasdam et dulces affectiunculas incipit colligere* (Nat am 10 [Davy, *Deux Traités*, 86–87; CF 30:64]).

6 *Unity of Spirit*

William outlines the growth of love as three stages of life: youth, adulthood, and old age. He situates the use of the five spiritual senses in love's youth. Listing these five senses, he suggests that one "begin from the bottom one"—i.e., touch.²¹ In its closeness to the earth, touch holds relatively little spiritual promise. Caution often dominates expectation. In his lengthy treatment of the spiritual senses,²² William perhaps inevitably allows something of his personal needs to orchestrate the ensemble—particularly as such needs are linked to philosophical assumptions.

It is easy to fall into a simplistic anti-body interpretation of William. While avoiding that extreme, readers may also find it difficult to avoid what at times emerges as a trace of the Augustinianism that, in the words of Gilson, "falls heir first of all to the Platonic view of sensible things which, in the philosophical order, corresponds to the condemnation of the flesh in the religious order."²³ In the end, however, William's overall affirmation is that God reaches humankind through the body's animating soul. Elder offers an illuminating comment on the problem: "For William, the benedictine abbot longing to share the 'spiritual experience' of Bernard and the White Monks, being taken back to his physical being did not come easily. Paralyzed in trying to force a sense of experiential love, William very reluctantly realized that he could not skip over his physical faculties in his dash for spiritual experience."²⁴

With this statement, Elder ponders lines by William himself and argues not for one human faculty over another but for respect for the integral person as subject of religious experience. In another essay, she writes of an older and more mature William as he continues to reflect on the role of the body in the life of the spirit, when

²¹ Nat am 16 (Davy, *Deux Traités*, 96–97; CF 30:72).

²² Nat am 15–20 (Davy, *Deux Traités*, 95–100; CF 30:72–77).

²³ Étienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, trans. L. E. M. Lynch (New York: Octagon Books, 1983), 243. Gilson makes no reference to William of Saint-Thierry here.

²⁴ E. Rozanne Elder, "The Christology of William of Saint Thierry," RTAM 58 (1991): 103–4, esp. n146, a reference to William, *Vita Bern* 12.59 (CCCM 89B:74–75; PL 185:259C). Elder adds other texts by William.

he has observed that Bernard himself struggled personally to accept that identification with the body that he eloquently argued for in *On Loving God*.²⁵

William completes his presentation on love's middle phase, its growth in maturity, with remarks on the role of reason:²⁶ "The sight for seeing God, the natural light of the soul . . . is charity. There are, however, two eyes in this sight . . . love and reason."²⁷ Reason merges into the *affectus* of love.²⁸ However implicitly, the author distinguishes between reason and dialectics: in the school of charity, "solutions are arrived at not only by reasoning but by reason and by the very nature and truth of things and by experience."²⁹

An understanding of William's spirituality as weak in affective vigor (usually placing William beside his "mellifluous" friend Bernard) risks ignoring much of the text. Elder rightly reads (among other texts) the "two eyes" of the soul—reason instructing love and love illuminating reason—as the writer's insistence on a balance between rational and affective spirituality.³⁰

With this insistence, William has already moved into love's last phase, where charity becomes wisdom. One enters adulthood when "love begins to be strengthened and illumined, and to pass into

²⁵ Elder offers "an alternative reading" of that part of the *Vita Bern* in which William writes of Bernard's excessive and "indiscreet fervor" in ascetical attacks on the body. In William's words: "Why do we try to make excuses for what he admits. . . . He is not embarrassed to accuse himself of sacrilege" (William of Saint-Thierry, *Vita Bern* 1.41 [CCCM 89B:64–65; PL 185:251B; William of Saint-Thierry, *Bernard of Clairvaux: Early Biographies, Vol. 1 by William of St. Thierry*, trans. Martinus Cawley [Lafayette, OR: Abbey of Our Lady of Guadalupe, 1990], 54, hereafter Cawley, *Bernard*). See E. Rozanne Elder, "Making Virtues of Vexing Habits," in *Studiosorum Speculum: Studies in Honor of Louis J. Lekai, O. Cist*, ed. Francis Swietek and John R. Sommerfeldt, CS 141 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1993), 75–94, here 76.

²⁶ William, *Nat am* 21–23 (Davy, *Deux Traités*, 100–6; CF 30:77–82).

²⁷ *Nat am* 21 (Davy, *Deux Traités*, 100; CF 30:77).

²⁸ *Nat am* 22 (Davy, *Deux Traités*, 102–4; CF 30:78–82).

²⁹ *Nat am* 26 (Davy, *Deux Traités*, 108; CF 30:86).

³⁰ *Nat am* 21 (Davy, *Deux Traités*, 100; CF 30:90–91); Elder, "Rational and Affective Spirituality," 90.

the *affectus*"; "love enlightened is charity: a love from God, in God, for God is charity."³¹ The author elaborates: "love desires to see the God of faith and hope because it loves. Charity loves because it sees. It is the eye by which God is seen."³² "Wisdom," he writes, "is rightly placed in the mind. Since what is called mind is that which remembers or that which is eminent in the soul, . . . [we understand it as that] whereby we cleave to God and enjoy God."³³

Before a final reflection on the beatific vision, William gives ample development to the role of Christ who is the Wisdom of God. In studying William's Christology, Elder finds in it a growing incarnational dimension that best exemplifies William's identification with Cistercian spirituality.³⁴ Through the redemptive mediation of Christ, humans are able even in this life to "Taste and see that the Lord is sweet" (Ps 34:8).³⁵ *Sapientia* is the *sapor* of God. William writes, as a good Augustinian for whom the divine image is the *mens*, "To taste is to understand."³⁶ He declares, preponderantly in his later years, *Amor ipse intellectus est*.³⁷

To represent William's thought on divine love, it has been necessary to survey what *On the Nature and Dignity of Love* offers as his earliest version of a system—at least, to identify all the parts of the work. In all this, is there any systemic contrast to Bernard's *On Loving God*?

Saint Bernard's *On Loving God*

On Loving God is an epistolary tract responding to the question "Why and how should I love God?"³⁸ Bernard begins by bluntly declaring the question to represent the undeveloped religious mind

³¹ Nat am 12 (Davy, *Deux Traités*, 88; CF 30:67).

³² Nat am 15 (Davy, *Deux Traités*, 94; CF 30:72).

³³ Nat am 28 (Davy, *Deux Traités*, 110; CF 30:88).

³⁴ Elder, "Christology," 103–4.

³⁵ Nat am 28 (Davy, *Deux Traités*, 112; CF 30:88).

³⁶ Nat am 31 (Davy, *Deux Traités*, 116; CF 30:92).

³⁷ E.g., Ep frat 173 (CCCM 88:264; CF 12:68). Bell notes that this is "really what William's spirituality is all about" (Bell, *Image*, 221).

³⁸ Cardinal Haimeric, chancellor of the Roman See, was the correspondent. For details of the correspondence, see Emero Stiegman, "An Analytical Com-

of those lacking in authentic experience. These are the *insipientes*. The word is taken from Romans 1:14, where the Vulgate's *insipientes* means "unknowing people" or—in the biblical tradition of appeal to the spiritual senses—those who have no *sapor*, or taste, of the things of God, those who lack personal contact, i.e., experience. The commonly used and correct etymological sense of *insipientes*, then, refers to personal experience. The dialogue situation forces the abbot to speak to the unwise—as he will remark in a later setting—*aliter*, or in a different way.³⁹ Our weakened nature, he explains early, needs to "begin in the flesh."⁴⁰ He will start from every person's initial self-awareness, a state of consciousness as yet deprived of all revealed doctrine.

Bernard assumes this point of departure in his account of the first degree of love, where one loves oneself and only for oneself.⁴¹ Only when love's growth is complete, in Bernard's fourth degree—where one loves oneself but only for God—does one (and possibly Bernard's reader as well) recognize what divine goodness and beauty lie in that work of God that is the self, formerly ignorant of

mentary," in *On Loving God* by Bernard of Clairvaux, CF 13B (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1995), 49–50.

³⁹ Bernard begins his sermons on the Song of Songs with these words: "What is said to you, brothers, must be different from what is said to people of the world, or at least said differently" (*Vobis, fratres, alia quam aliis de saeculo, aut certe aliter dicenda sunt*) (SC 1.1 [SBOp 1.3; CF 4:1]). Understanding differences between the two tracts under discussion here can be aided by attention to genre. William seems to address his monks in what was probably a series of chapter conferences (Bell, Introduction, CF 30:16–17), while Bernard, whose work was read by monks, nevertheless takes a point of view from outside the monastic world.

⁴⁰ "Since nature has become more fragile and weak, necessity obliges one to serve it first," Dil 8.23 (*Sed quoniam natura fragilior atque infirmior est ipsi primum, imperante necessitate, compellitur inservire* [SBOp 3.138.12–13; CF 13:115]).

⁴¹ The *affectio naturalis* in Bernard's first stage of love has been often (if not generally) misunderstood, confused with William's more traditional Augustinian notion. The crux of the matter lies in how grace, in the *ordinatio caritatis*, will act on (and through) such an *affectio*—how this *eros* can be transformed by *agape* (see Stiegman, "Analytical Commentary," 105–8).

its true nature, which is now properly perceived as such. It is not belief in a doctrine that sets up this recognition.

What Bernard offers is an extended study of spiritual progress in those who have no Christian faith (or belief system) as historically revealed. He names these the *infideles*.⁴² Writing a work for Christians, he nevertheless considers Christians a special case in humanity, distinguishing their consciousness only in so far as it enjoys the *memoria Christi*. (Memory in Bernard is not the Platonizing metaphysical *memoria* of William's trinitarian image.)⁴³ When Bernard has Christians in mind, he carefully brackets his remarks to separate them from his reflections on the *infideles*, even when they occur in the same paragraph. For Christians, he uses biblical allusions and theological language. But the category that is the ground of the tract, or its point of departure—and I think we have failed to recognize this—is *infideles*. Here Bernard consistently refrains from any theological language. In “Why should I love God?” *I* and *God* form the axis on which love's development turns. The image-and-likeness anthropology itself, prominent in William's work, is wholly absent in *On Loving God*.⁴⁴ Bernard's *I* is simply the

⁴² In this context, the term implies an ignorance of Christian doctrine (“the faith”) as such while not excluding possibilities of a saving faith.

⁴³ Bernard seems to go out of his way to say what he does *not* mean by memory: “memory is for the continuing ages, presence is for the kingdom of heaven” (*Memoria ergo in generatione saeculorum, praesentia in regno caelorum*) (Dil 3.10 [SBOp 3.127; CF 13:102]).

⁴⁴ A remarkable absence. Jean Leclercq noted that image and likeness is, without doubt, the most frequently studied theme in Saint Bernard, from Gilson's *Mystical Theology* (Étienne Gilson, *The Mystical Theology of St. Bernard*, trans. A. H. C. Downes, CS 120 [1940; Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1990]) to the present (Jean Leclercq, *Introduzione Generale to Opere di San Bernardo* 4, ed. Ferruccio Gastaldelli, Scriptorium Claravallense Fondazione di Studi Cistercensi [Rome: Città Nuova Editrice, 1984, 1986], 50. Bernard cites Gen 1:26 once in Dil (2.6), leaving “image and likeness” as a Hebraic parallelism, i.e., without the anthropological dynamism that demands that image be completed by likeness (SBOp 3:123; CF 13:98). Only in his *On Grace and Free Choice* (ca. 1127), written after *On Loving God*, and in his subsequent works, does the image-and-likeness anthropology flourish as the great Bernardine theme that

self as perceptible by any human, never defined except as what is not God and what "seeks its own" in the illusory *proprium*. We may suspect that the type for this self-and-God dyad is the New Testament's flesh-and-spirit, but the compulsively biblical Bernard refrains from any such allusion.

To highlight the universality of God's loving action in humanity, Bernard (who often couples *philosophi et haeretici*) plays philosopher. What guides him through the consciousness of the *infideles* is a set of clearly philosophical categories. Allow me to gather these from the entire text: we see the person of no historical faith as, first, rational, then as free, driven by desire, subject to nature, capable of discerning laws in the human condition, pressed by necessity, and aware of possibilities—all philosophical concepts. (The era, like the world in which Christianity arose, did not question the existence of God.) In such a person Bernard traces the development of love. Love's maturing is not one thing for the Christian and another for the pagan; all humans are created to love God "with all their heart, all their soul, and all their might."⁴⁵

To be unaware of the universalizing intent of Bernard's philosophical approach would be to miss the direction of his work. He is writing about *homo rationalis* as such.⁴⁶ Modern anthropologists, archaeologists, and historians, on discovering that even our most distant human forebears were religious, tend to trace this fact to something more intrinsic to the human condition than one or another culturally inherited doctrine. Bernard's tract can offer an explanation in theology of what the anthropologist finds in science.

Leclercq observed. See Stiegman, "Analytic Commentary," 61–64. For a survey of image in Saint Bernard, see Maur Standaert, "La doctrine de l'image chez Saint Bernard," *Ephemerides Theologiae Lovanienses* 23 (1947): 118–21.

⁴⁵ *Proinde inexcusabilis est omnis etiam infidelis, si non diligit Dominum Deum suum toto corde, tota anima, tota virtute sua* (Dil 2:6 [SBOp 3:124; CF 13:98]).

⁴⁶ On reason in Dil, see Luke Anderson, "The Appeal to Reason in St. Bernard's *De Diligendo Deo* (II:2–6)," in *The Chimaera of His Age: Studies in Bernard of Clairvaux*, ed. E. Rozanne Elder and John R. Sommerfeldt, CS 63 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1980), 132–39, esp. 135.

The discourse situation of *On Loving God* makes clear that what Bernard is saying about all humankind is addressed not to those whom he designates as *infideles*—enfolded into the rationality of humankind—but to those (represented in his questioning correspondent) whom he has called *insipientes*, those lacking in inner experience. The universal validity of his argument from experience shows the condition of those who read him to be graver than that of those whom he describes, the *infideles*. Those who have no doctrine may love God, while Christians rich in doctrine but poor in experience—lacking the *sapor* of God—may go on searching for reasons. Saint Bernard’s theme is a love bound to the faith that transcends believing, a love divinely fostered in every rational creature. And the writer is rhetorician enough to leave all that quietly but powerfully implied.

Let me remark in passing that Bernard’s renown for relying on experience rests on epistemological sensitivity, well exhibited in *On Loving God*. The abbot never confuses mere empirical generalization—what is learned by trial and error—with either rational certainty or the voice of God. In the secular order, modern Western thought seems to justify his view through the Enlightenment (or Kantian) notion of experience as a synthesis of the factual and its human reception—part given and part made.⁴⁷ In Bernard, what occurs in one’s life becomes experience through reflections that open the soul to grace (as my conclusion claims).

The journey of experience in *On Loving God* continues: when love matures to the point of being wholly free, where one seeks not what is good for oneself but simply what is good, Bernard celebrates it in the language of Christian revelation: the lover seeks “Not what is his but what belongs to Christ, the same way Christ sought not what was his but what was ours, or, rather, ourselves.”⁴⁸ Here fi-

⁴⁷ The philosophical and psychological literature on experience is endless, as any general work will make clear. In my view, the most relevant resource is Raimundo Panikkar, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics: Cross-Cultural Studies* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 292–308. Panikkar cites Dil 7.22 from PL 182:987 (Panikkar, *Myth*, 227n73).

⁴⁸ Dil 9.26 (SBOp 3:141; CF 13:118).

nally “love is pleasing because it is free” (*gratus quia gratuitus*).⁴⁹ The biblical reminiscence clearly does not enjoin a doctrine upon the *infideles*. Even while briefly breaking the philosophical texture of his account with a reference to the *memoria Christi*, the author maintains the coolly rational tone he has reserved for arguing the universality of God’s saving action in the world.

If Bernard, explaining the universality of God’s love, holds experience to be the vessel of grace at the start of loving God—“in the flesh”—he does not limit the fruit of experience to its start. When William of Saint-Thierry admires Bernard’s experience, he knows it to be the full flowering of grace. But, again, what has received insufficient attention is the significance that *On Loving God* assigns to the beginning of love. Bernard writes, “The needs of the flesh are a kind of speech [*quaedam loquela*].”⁵⁰ He cites First Thesalonians 5:21 on the necessity to “test everything” and assigns this function to the mind.⁵¹ A process of reflection is opened.

As William argues from the trinitarian image in humans and Bernard from the universality of God’s loving action within all, it is also clear that the dynamism of both writers flows from what Déchanet called “an idea of man.”⁵² It is clear as well that both depend on doctrines. But there is a difference: Bernard sees the discovery of a loving God as starting in a consciousness deprived of all doctrine.

However valuable, these insights would add nothing essential to the comparison I am making to William of Saint-Thierry’s *On the Nature and Dignity of Love*. But two motifs that loom large in Bernard’s treatise can aid the comparison—his treatment of *causa* (the cause of divine love) and his attitude toward the body.

First Motif: Causa

To answer the question “Why should I love God?” Bernard begins by almost surreptitiously converting the demand for a “reason” into

⁴⁹ Dil 9.26 (SBOp 3:141; CF 13:118).

⁵⁰ *Est enim carnis quaedam loquela necessitas, et beneficia quae experiendo probat gestiendo renuntiat* (Dil 9.26 [SBOp 3:141; CF 13:118]).

⁵¹ Dil 7.20 (SBOp 3:136; CF 13:113).

⁵² Déchanet, “Comment,” 256.

an enquiry after the “cause” of our loving God. With this maneuver he can, to brilliant effect, employ the double meaning he finds in *causa*. (The lexical ambiguity of the word is not his invention.) The *causa diligendi Deum*—its motive, or reason—will be displayed as if it were the upper side of a tapestry woven by this psychologist, though he offers no such metaphor; at the same time the *causa*—eventually to be acknowledged as love’s cause rather than its motive—will form the unseen underside, kept in step-by-step coordination by this theologian. The progressive experience of God’s loveliness will draw the *infideles* on—inciting conscious motives—as an exemplary cause (*causa finalis*), while God’s action in the soul works, beyond human perception, as the efficient cause.⁵³

Second Motif: The Body

The sheer mass of discussion on the human body in *On Loving God* commands attention.⁵⁴ The author’s insistent use of *affectio*

⁵³ *Dixi supra: causa diligendi Deum, Deus est. Verum dixi, nam et efficiens, et finalis* (Dil 7.22 [SBOp 3:137; CF 13:114]). Bernard’s dwelling throughout his works on God’s loveliness as exemplary cause demands attention. Tomáš Špidlík observes that “the Western mind examines the efficient cause (*causa efficiens*) whereas the Eastern concentrates on the *causa exemplaris*, pondering the meaning of emerging facts” (Tomáš Špidlík, *The Spirituality of the Christian East: A Systematic Handbook*, trans. Anthony P. Gythiel, CS 79 [Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1986], 55). This comment invites a scholar to enquire whether the “Maximian ‘bloc’” detected by Gilson (*Mystical Theology*, 26) might be fruitfully enlarged—i.e., whether the anthropology of Maximus the Confessor (writing later than Augustine), in his difference from Augustine, may be playing a larger role in the tradition that inspires Bernard. See on the passions Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (New York: Routledge, 1996), e.g., “The Blessed Passion of Holy Love,” 40–42, and “Maximus’ Correction of Origenism,” 66–68, where “a fundamental rebuttal of Neoplatonism, with its ideas of emanation” seems applicable to elements of the Augustinian tradition resisted by Bernard (Louth, *Maximus*, 67). Inviting also is Bronwen Neil, “Two Views of Vice and Virtue: Augustine of Hippo and Maximus the Confessor,” in *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church 3: Liturgy and Life*, ed. Bronwen Neil, G. Dunn, and L. Cross (Sydney: St. Paul’s, 2003), 261–71.

⁵⁴ Though Bernard uses as one of his favorite biblical tags the lament from Wisdom 9:15, *Corpus quod corrumpitur aggravat animam*, rarely is a reader’s

naturalis as a label for love is his way of showing love's starting point to be in the soul as the "natural" animating force of the body (given in creation). At divine love's inception, a salvific grace possesses it. Love will then mature as grace increasingly informs this soul, but, even into a blessed eternity, it will remain the love of a human—i.e., *affectio naturalis*. Bernard writes of the soul in beatitude, "The soul mixes, with the divine wine, the tenderness of that *affectio naturalis* by which it desires to have its body back as a glorified Body."⁵⁵

There is nothing in *On Loving God* of the near-dismissive evaluation of human affections sometimes found in William of Saint-Thierry's tract, that *Antinasonem*, or refutation of Ovid. We find here no *affectiunculas*.⁵⁶ Bernard sees what is utterly human in a different light. He acknowledges that affections come "by the very law of one's desiring," *cupiditatis lege*.⁵⁷ He is not blind to risk in the will's exposure to *affectio*.⁵⁸ There is nothing lax or presumptuous

attention called to the fact that a mollifying reflection often accompanies this line—i.e., that it is the will and not the body that brings corruption, or that humans are often unjust to the body, or that the loss of the body in death will (in Bernard's unusual view) deprive us of our ability to love completely until the general resurrection.

⁵⁵ *Vino enim divini amoris miscet etiam tunc dulcedinem naturalis affectionis, qua resumere corpus suum, ipsumque glorificatum, desiderat* (Dil 11.32 [SBOp 3:146; CF 13:123]). Bernard dedicates five paragraphs (Dil 11.29-33) to a kind of worry that before being rejoined to the body in the general resurrection we will be, in our incompleteness, still unable completely to love God. A reader is entitled to find a theological problem in that understanding of our destiny in God, but in it the ascetical Bernard's sense of oneness with his body is extraordinary. Regarding a need to be united to the body for fully loving God, see a parallel example in Div 41.12 (SBOp 6/1:253, lines 11–12).

⁵⁶ Nat am 10 (Davy, *Deux Traités*, 13; CF 30:64: "unwonted and sweet little affections"). Elder, commenting on his distinction between *affectio* and *affectus*, writes: "This gives William an opportunity he frequently avails himself of, to contrast what is transitory and fickle (the feminine term) with what is steadfast and persevering (the masculine term)" (Elder, "Christology," 105n150).

⁵⁷ Dil 7.19 (SBOp 3:135; CF 13:112).

⁵⁸ Bernard writes, "There is an affection that the flesh begets, and one that reason controls, and one that wisdom seasons": *Sed est affectio quam caro gignit,*

in the asceticism that he holds to be necessary. Yet he depicts *affectio* as an instrument of grace. He writes, “God creates the affection”;⁵⁹ “He makes you desire, he is what you desire.”⁶⁰ In the Augustinian climate of William’s tract there is no such assurance.⁶¹

Bernard’s incarnational lyricism luxuriates in the whole range of sensory image—of the Beloved’s garden,⁶² of heaven as eternal inebriation,⁶³ and, in other works, of beauty in the bride of the Canticle.⁶⁴ Bernard can exclaim, “I recognize you, Lord Jesus, so beautifully formed [*formosum*] in my very form!”⁶⁵ Franz Posset recalls Luther’s remark “that there is ‘no friendlier word on earth’ than Bernard’s phrase about Christ being ‘bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh’” (Gen 2:23).⁶⁶

The William of later works will come to express longing for the kiss of the Bridegroom’s lips. The William found in the *Liber de amore*, with its three confusing tracts, is not there yet.

et est quam ratio regit, et est quam condit sapientia (Bernard, SC 50.4 [SBOp 2:80; CF 31:32]).

⁵⁹ Dil 7.22 (SBOp 3:137; CF 13:114).

⁶⁰ Dil 7.21 (SBOp 3:137; CF 13:114).

⁶¹ Cf. Bernard, SC 19.7 (SBOp 1:112; CF 4:144). Without mistaking William for his philosophical master and without overlooking what even an early acquaintance with Cistercian spirituality contributed to William, one tends to recall Gilson’s summary remark that “it is the Christian Creator Augustine adores but the creation he thinks of as a philosopher sometimes bears the marks of Plotinus’ metaphysics” (Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, 201).

⁶² Dil 3.7–10 (SBOp 3:124–27; CF 13:99–102).

⁶³ Dil 11.33 (SBOp 3:147; CF 13:124–25).

⁶⁴ E.g., Bernard, SC 19.7 (SBOp 1:112; CF 4:144–45).

⁶⁵ *Quam formosum et in mea forma te agnosco, Domine Iesu* (Bernard, SC 25:9 [SBOp 1:168; CF 7:57]).

⁶⁶ Franz Posset, “*Divus Bernhardus*: Saint Bernard as Spiritual and Theological Mentor of the Reformer Martin Luther,” in *Bernardus Magister: Papers Presented at the Nonacentenary Celebration of the Birth of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, Kalamazoo, Michigan*, ed. John R. Sommerfeldt, CS 135 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, and *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses*, 1992), 530. The author cites Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke; kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1883, 1911), 45:304, 1–3 (stenogram), lines 9–14 (print), in reference to Bernard’s SC 2.6 (SBOp 1:12; CF 4:12).

Conclusion

These texts show a rich variation in early Cistercian spirituality. William is not an intellectualized clone of Bernard, nor is Bernard a lyrical version of William. At the same time, a splendidly Cistercian dimension shared in the two tracts is the constant awareness that God works from inside the human: we encounter the human being as made in the trinitarian image, or as constant receiver of desires from the Lover whom we ultimately desire.

William the contemplative receives from Augustine the insight that the closest we can come to seeing God in human time is to see in ourselves the created trinity of the image. Throughout William's account of his prayer life, we hear an antiphon: the intellectual reiterates that the only *intellectus* reaching God is *amor*. In William we see Augustine bearing fruit at Cîteaux. By contrast, in *On Loving God* the Bernard who knows Augustine⁶⁷ initiates his search for personal identity not by contemplating the riches of a created trinity but by endlessly rediscovering the poverty and helplessness revealed in his primal self-awareness.⁶⁸

The appreciation of Bernard as prophet of experience—William knew him this way⁶⁹—depends on a certain construct of the

⁶⁷ Gilson called attention early to the importance of discerning what in Bernard is not Augustinian. The author's long endnote, a pocket lecture, is a classic, meriting to be an essential chapter of the study. While quickly recognizing William as the true disciple of Augustine and declaring that "St. Bernard [too] knew his St. Augustine admirably," Gilson expresses frequent and deep misgivings about interpreting Bernard's writings in an Augustinian manner. Regarding what had been his own assumption that the influence of Augustine on Bernard, as a writer of his era, was "preponderant," he writes: "nothing but a patient examination of facts has forced me to abandon this hypothesis, or rather this unreasoned opinion—to my great surprise, let me add" (Gilson, *Mystical Theology*, 220–21n24).

⁶⁸ My allusion is, of course, to Wordsworth's "Ode ('There was a time)': "Not in entire forgetfulness, / And not in utter nakedness, / But trailing clouds of glory do we come / From God, who is our home" (*William Wordsworth: Selected Poems*, ed. Sandra Anstey [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006], 91, lines 62–65).

⁶⁹ Note, for example, the admiration for the experience that William considered characteristic of Bernard (in his *Vita Bern* 1.59 [CCCM 89B:74–75; PL

individual as *subject* of experience—i.e., of a self initially unaware that it is “in the image,” a self that is less identified by beliefs than by a call to listen. Bernard surveys the raw material of what all rational creatures undergo in the course of their lives and couples it continuously with a prevenient grace awakening them to salvific reflections—e.g., to the demand of reason that those who share the self’s nature be loved⁷⁰ or to the evidence that despite its pretensions the self finds its necessities met by God alone.⁷¹ Through such reflection the loveliness of God is gradually revealed: *paulatim sensimque Deus innotescit*.⁷²

The divine giver is made known in God’s gifts, discovered first as sweet (*dulcis*) and then as given. In asserting that one who feels loved “will not have trouble in fulfilling the commandment to love his neighbor,”⁷³ Bernard suggests that God makes the rich traditions of religious doctrine (e.g., “the commandment”) accessible to those initiated in experience. “Love,” he writes, “is not imposed by a precept; it is planted in nature.”⁷⁴ From awareness of a helpless self, loving itself, a biblical monotheist looks for the soul’s advance to what may be later articulated as doctrines regarding the *image* of God; a Christian, specifically, sees the possibility of the soul’s introduction to the *memoria Christi*. On what grounds could the author change this scheme of salvation in the “law of love”⁷⁵ in regard to the existence of populations lying outside medieval Christendom’s awareness?

A succinct theology of experience lies at the heart of *On Loving God*. It is the justification for Bernard’s later expression, “the book of experience” (*liber experientiae*)—the abbot’s bold way of approximating *experientia* to the revelation of the Scriptures (the *liber Scrip-*

185:259C; Cawley, *Bernard*, 72–73]). Elder also calls attention to this admiration in “Making Virtues,” 78.

⁷⁰ Bernard, Dil 8.23 (SBOp 3:139; CF 13:116).

⁷¹ Dil 8.24–25 (SBOp 3:139–40; CF 13:116–17).

⁷² Dil 15.39 (SBOp 3:153; CF 13:131).

⁷³ Dil 9.26 (SBOp 3:141; CF 113:118).

⁷⁴ Dil 8.23 (SBOp 3:138; CF 13:115).

⁷⁵ Dil 12.34–35 (SBOp 3:148–50; CF 13:125–27).

turae).⁷⁶ And one searches his works in vain for what some later writers on mysticism—of great pastoral concern and an excess of caution—propose as distinctions between “religious” experience and what many thinkers in a secular mode claim for fully human experience.⁷⁷ Until events befalling the human being are met by a reflective opening onto the *sapor* of God, Bernard seems not to consider them *experientia*. Many such disjointed happenings color the lives of those whom Bernard addresses as merely *insipientes*.

How might proper attention to the principal themes of *On Loving God* affect current Christian theology? To focus on the author's insistent choice of the *infideles* as the type representing that humanity beloved of God would be to rearrange some of the furniture of current thinking on the theology of religions. And, more fundamentally, to understand his view of *experientia* as revelation, the beginning of an awareness of God, would explain his reason for so canonizing the *infideles*.

Beginnings are the subject of *On Loving God*. Bernard orients us to a destitute self rather than to a trinitarian image, not because this is of itself preferable, but because (beyond our preferences) this is where our human consciousness begins—not in a metaphysical *memoria* informing us of the divine source of our nature, but “in the flesh.” He is well past the middle of his book before he starts to sketch the ascent of love through four degrees. He has laid the theological grounds for alerting us to God's loving action within us—“where it ends”—in the Beatific Vision. And at this point he announces the objective of his treatise. “Let us now see,” he writes, “where our love begins.”⁷⁸

⁷⁶ *Hodie legimus in libro experientiae* (Bernard, SC 3.1 [SBOP 1:14; CF 4:16]). I have traced current scholarly appraisals of Bernard's *liber experientiae* in my “Bernard of Clairvaux, William of St. Thierry, the Victorines,” in *The Medieval Theologians*, ed. G. R. Evans (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 138–39 and notes.

⁷⁷ See Johannes Schuck, *Das religiöse Erlebnis beim hl. Bernhard von Clairvaux* (Würzburg: C. J. Becker, 1922).

⁷⁸ *Dicendum iam unde inchoet amor noster, quoniam ubi consummetur dictum est* (Bernard, Dil 7.22 [SBOP 3:138; CF 13:115]).

Tracking different points of departure in the spirituality of William and Bernard can open the observer to something fundamental in the very phenomenon of religion.