

Blurring the Boundaries: Monastic Values and Lay Conduct in the Anti-heretical Writings of Bernard of Clairvaux.

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Abstract

Bernard of Clairvaux's anti-heretical writings offer a unique opportunity to follow, as historiography has demonstrated, how he could construct solid boundaries between orthodoxy and heterodoxy. Moreover, this polemic is a moment of conflict that allows us to explore Bernard's complex approaches to laity, as it reveals a tension in the way that he envisioned the proper societal order. In his accusations against heretics monastic values, such as humility and obedience, play a central role. Having this as a point of departure, this study discusses their role by juxtaposing Bernard's polemic with his other works, in order to investigate how these monastic values could be imposed on non-monastic audiences through Bernard's anti-heretical writings. The overall aim is to explore how Bernard of Clairvaux could re-negotiate the boundaries and blur the lines between laity and clergy, while he fought against heresy.

Keywords: Bernard of Clairvaux; anti-heretical polemic; humility; obedience; monasticization

Introduction

Bernard, the renowned Cistercian abbot of the abbey of Clairvaux, has been portrayed as one of the most influential figures of the long 12th century, due to his role in the establishment of the Cistercian order, his theology, his works but also his activities outside the monastic walls.¹ One of these endeavors was the fight against groups and individuals who were labelled as heretics by the ecclesiastical authorities. In 1145 he joined Church's fight against heresy when he participated in a preaching mission in Southern France organized by a papal legate. However, his engagement with heresy had already begun probably around 1143/1144 when he composed two sermons of his famous commentary to the *Song of Songs* on the question (Sermons 65 and 66).² In front of his monastic audience, he expressed his profound concern for the appearance of heretics and based on Song of Songs 2.15, he famously described heretics as "little foxes who spoil the vines"³ an image that became one of the most important motives of the later Cistercian polemic.⁴ These Sermons were widely circulated even when Bernard was still alive, and thus massively influential.⁵

¹ The historiography on Bernard of Clairvaux is vast. See for example Leclercq, *Bernard of Clairvaux and the Cistercian Spirit*; Pennington, *Saint Bernard of Clairvaux*, McGuire, *The Difficult Saint*; Evans, *Bernard of Clairvaux*; McGuire, *A companion to Bernard of Clairvaux*; McGuire, *Bernard of Clairvaux; An Inner Life*.

² SBOp II, 172-188. Cf. *On the Song of Songs III*, 179-206.

³ *On the Song of Songs III*, 174; Cf. SBOp II, 169: "vulpes pusillas, quae demoliuntur vineas".

⁴ Kienzle, *Cistercians, Heresy and Crusade* 85; Sackville, *Heresy and Heretics*, 156.

⁵ SBOp II, xxiii-xxxi.

The Cistercian abbot was tormented as- in his eyes- the unity of the Church was under attack: "Women have left their husbands, and husbands their wives, to join these people. Clerks and priests, young and old, have left their people and their churches, and are to be found among those weavers and their women. Is this not great havoc? Is this not the work of foxes?"⁶ For Bernard heresy was a threat to the proper social order, as he described heretics as a cause of confusion of the social roles. He presumed that heretics sought to act in a way that was not suitable to their social strata. The heretics sought to preach, without having the authority⁷ and they claimed to live a chaste life, without belonging to a monastic order.⁸ The same pattern of argumentation against heresy appears in two of Bernard's epistles, written on the occasion of a preaching mission in Southern France, where he publicly preached against heresy in front of the local population.⁹ In these two letters, one written to the Count of Toulouse Alphonse Jourdain before the mission, and one to the people of the city, composed after the mission was completed, he repeated in agony his fear that those accused as heretics will devastate the Church's wellbeing: "Churches without people, people without priests, priests without the reverence due to them, and Christians without Christ. The Churches are regarded as synagogues, the holiness of God's sanctuary is denied, the sacraments are not considered sacred, and holy days are deprived of their solemnities".¹⁰ The fear of violation of the hierarchical order and the transgression of social boundaries that Bernard envisioned for his ideal society is also present in his letters. The accusation is again that they seek to imitate roles that did not comply with their social status.

Historiography has pinpointed Bernard's anxiety for what he thought of as heretics' intention to abuse of the social roles. Luis Biget in his contribution to the volume *Inventer de l' hérésie* described how the Cistercians abbots, among them Bernard, mistrusted those laymen, who seemingly wished to follow the precepts of the evangelical life without belonging to an ecclesiastical institution. As a result they accused these laymen as heretics.¹¹ According to Biget, by categorizing those laymen as heretics and thus constructing heresy, the Cistercians monopolized the right to evangelical life and carved clear and distinguished lines between clergy, monks and laity.¹² Beverly Kienzle in her study of the Cistercian anti-heretical polemic did not argue that heresy was a Cistercian fabrication, but she concluded that the Cistercians could see the heretics as competitors due to their way of life, that resembled life in a monastery.¹³ Moreover as she noticed, fear for the social order was one important rhetorical pattern that the Cistercian abbots frequently deployed in their discourse against

⁶ *On the Song of Songs III*, 186; Cf. SBOp II, 176: "Clerici et sacerdotes, populis ecclesiisque relictis, intonsi et barbati apud eos inter textores et textrices plerumque inventi sunt. Annon gravis demolitio ista? Annon opera vulpium haec?"

⁷ SBOp VIII, 129. Cf. *The Letters*, 390.

⁸ SBOp II, 174. Cf. *On the Song of Songs III*, 184.

⁹ Kienzle, *Cistercians, Heresy and the Crusade*, 81.

¹⁰ *The Letters*, 388; cf. Ep 241, SBOp VIII, 125: "Basilicae sine plebibus, plebes sine sacerdotibus, sacerdotes sine debita reverentia sunt, et sine Christo denique christiani. Ecclesiae synagogae reputantur, sanctuarium Dei sanctum esse negatur, sacramenta non sacra censentur, dies festi frustrantur sollemniis".

¹¹ Biget, "Les Albigeois", 235-7.

¹² Biget, "Les Albigeois", 235-7.

¹³ Kienzle, *Cistercians, Heresy and Crusade*, 103-104.

heretics. According to Kienzle, the Cistercians accused the religious deviants of appropriating behaviors and practices that were not in accordance with their social stratum and hence they threatened the social order. She noted more specifically about Bernard: "his anger emerges most strongly when dissidents lay claim to religious practices that were special reserve to monks".¹⁴ Finally, Karen Sullivan, building on Caroline Walker Bynum's arguments on Bernard's approach towards hybrids and monsters, has underlined that the Cistercian abbot was alarmed as heretics fail to comply with any social group but rather they mixed elements of religious and secular identity and by this way they were breaking down the social boundaries.¹⁵

The intention of this study is not to contradict the insight of the above-mentioned historians. From his writings, it is very difficult to argue that Bernard did not perceive heresy as a threat to social order. The aim of this study is, however, to modestly contribute to our understanding of Bernard's anti-heretical efforts and his ideas about hierarchy in society by directing the study of the Cistercian abbot's anti-heretical discourse in another direction. The main question is not how Bernard, through his anti-heretical polemic could shape clear borders and hermetic boundaries but on the contrary how he could blur the boundaries between the clergy, the monks and the laity. This inquiry emanates from a close look on Bernard's polemic that reveals that on one hand he was indeed accusing heretics of violating social boundaries but on the other hand the arsenal of Bernard's accusations against heresy included charges of arrogance and disobedience. In other words, the point that I would like to discuss is that it is not accidental that Bernard gave weight to humility and obedience, two crucial monastic values, which occupy a great place in the *Rule of Saint Benedict* and were particularly important for the Cistercian Order.¹⁶

Bernard's approaches towards laity: defending order or blurring the lines?

Historians who have studied the social theory of Bernard of Clairvaux, have argued that the Cistercian abbot envisioned a united Christian society, which consists of strictly distinct social groups, the monks, the clerics, and the laymen.¹⁷ These groups had a common aim: the spiritual progress of their members towards salvation.¹⁸ However, their function in society and consequently their needs and obligations were essentially different, so they were distinct from each other. Because of his belief in a strict social order with clear and impermeable lines between the different social categorizations Bernard was characterized as "a man of order".¹⁹ Historians have spotted inconsistencies in his work, as he sometimes employed

¹⁴ Kienzle, *Cistercians, Heresy and Crusade*, 90.

¹⁵ Sullivan, *The Inner Lives*, 36-39.

¹⁶ Berman, *The Cistercian evolution*, 20.

¹⁷ See for example Sommerfeldt, "The social theory", 35-48; Newman, *The Boundaries of Charity*; Constable, *Three Studies*.

¹⁸ Michael Voights has demonstrated how Bernard through his epistles to lay people could promote the idea of spiritual progression; Voights, *Letters of Ascent*, 140-142.

Moreover, in Bernard's crusade rhetoric as well as in his treatise *In Praise of the New Knighthood: A Treatise on the Knights Templar and the Holy Places of Jerusalem (Liber ad Milites Templi De Laude Novae Militiae)* the message for laity's spiritual progress is repeated. See for example, Newman, *The Boundaries of Charity*, 183.

¹⁹ Gillian Evans, *Bernard of Clairvaux* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 158.

twopartite images of social organization, namely laity and clergy, where clergy included both monks and clerics, and in his others works he used tripartite images. Nevertheless, scholarship has argued for the Cistercian abbot's adamant belief in the clear distinction among the social groups. For example, by using the biblical image of Daniel, Noah, and Job, in numerous of his works, Bernard sought to demonstrate the different and distinct roles, functions and obligations that each group hold and the clear lines among them.²⁰

The clear boundaries between the different groups are also expressed in sermon delivered in front of his monastic audience, where Bernard discussed how monks, priests and laypeople could gain salvation (*A Sermon to the Abbots: How Noah, Daniel and Job crossed the sea, each on his way: on a ship, by a bridge, by the swallows*). When it comes particularly to laity, he recognized that, unlike the monks and the clerics, the salvation of laypeople is more difficult to be achieved: "the third, the rank of the married men, I pass over briefly, as they have little to do with us. For they cross the mighty sea by the swallows, troubled and dangerous though they are, and the path they take is long, for they take no shortcut".²¹

Bernard's image of the perfect society is developed at length in his treatise *An Apologia to Abbot William (Apologia ad Guillelmum Abbatem)*, which was written in 1125 as an answer to William, abbot of St Thierry. Jean Leclercq characterized this tract as the first Bernardine work with a polemical character, as it deals with a controversy between the Cistercian Order and the monks of Cluny.²² While the Cistercian abbot defended his Order against the complaints from members of the Cluniac Order, he argued that there should be different and distinct strata in society by employing both bipartite schemes and the tripartite image of Noah, Daniel, and Job:

"we would have to take it for granted that celibate and married folk at a variance, simply because they lives are moderated by different Church laws, and that monks and regulars are always at odds due to differences in observances. We would never guess that Noah, Daniel, and Job share the same kingdom, since we know they followed very different paths of virtue. Finally, we would have to affirm that either Mary or Martha or both failed to please the Lord, since their efforts to do this were so very unlike".²³

In the same passage, Bernard continued by using the metaphor of Joseph's robe in order to demonstrate the plurality of the Church. "Therefore, let there be no division within the Church. Let it remain whole and entire according to its inherited right"²⁴ and then defending

²⁰ See for example, Sommerfeldt, *On the Spirituality of Relationship*, 1-13.

²¹ *Sermons for the Autumn Season*, 85-90. Cf SBOp V, 289: "Tertium igitur, coniugatorum videlicet ordinem, magis succincte transcurro, tamquam minus ad nos pertinentem. Ipse est qui maxime mare magnum vado pertransit, laboriosum prorsus et periculosum, etiam et longum habens iter, quippe qui nulla viae compendia captet".

²² Leclercq, "Introduction", 1-4.

²³ *An Apologia*, 38-39. Cf. SBOp III, 84-85: "Ergo et continents, et coniuges invicem se damnare putentur, quod suis Quique legibus in Ecclesia conversentur. Monachi quoque ac regulares clerici sibi invicem derogare dicantur, quia propriis ab invicem observantiis separantur. Sed et Noe, et Danielem, et Iob in uno se regno pati non posse suspicemus, ad quod utique non uno eos tramite iustitiae pervenisse cognovimus. Mariam denique et Martham necesse sit aut utramque, aut alteram Salvatori diplicere, cui nimirum tam dissimili studio devotionis contendunt ambae placent".

²⁴ *An Apologia*, 41. Cf. SBOp III, 86 "Non ergo dividatur, sed totam et integram hereditario iure sortiatur Ecclesia...".

the existence of many and distinct groups he wrote “one man is allotted one kind, one another, irrespective of whether he be a Cistercian or a Cluniac, a regular or one of the laity”.²⁵ One of the main conditions for the wellbeing of this society is- according to Bernard- that everyone, appropriately to his or her order, works to maintain the harmony of the Church.²⁶ The Cistercian abbot advocated in this treatise not only the strict ordering of society but also social stability in the sense that Christians should remain inside the frame of their class: “whatever path a man is taking, let him not be so concerned about alternative routes that he lose sight of his destination”.²⁷

Besides the clear distinction among the different social strata, historians have also argued that the contemplative and the active life were always in dialogue in Bernard’s work.²⁸ Moreover, John Sommerfeldt has demonstrated that Bernard envisioned a unified Christianity despite the differences among the monks, the priests and the laity. Furthermore, he eloquently concluded in his study of Bernardine social theory that for Bernard, there existed some fundamental values, that were common for every Christian regardless their social class.²⁹

Bernard’s social theory has been also explored by Martha Newman, who argued, in the same manner as Sommerfeldt, that Bernard believed in a unified Church consisting of distinct social orders. In her book, *The Boundaries of Charity*, she has argued that the Cistercian notion of *caritas* was the driving force behind the Order’s engagement in the world outside the monastic walls, as they wished to preserve the Church’s unity by encouraging the spiritual reformation of all, included the laymen.³⁰ The Cistercians in general and Bernard in particular seemed to be more interested in those laymen, who hold authority.³¹ Nevertheless, as Newman has mentioned “their advice for such men had implications not just for the behavior of rulers but for the development of a knightly ideology and a lay spirituality”.³² More importantly for this study, Newman argued that Bernard of Clairvaux’s praising of the Knight Templars “seemingly blurred the line between monastic and secular life that he usually tried so hard to keep distinct”.³³ However, she added that the Cistercian abbot did not wish to delete the boundaries between monks and laymen. In her introductory chapter of the English translation of the Bernardine treatise *On the Conduct and the Office of Bishops (De Moribus et Officio Episcoporum)*, she came to the same conclusion as Sommerfeldt, that Bernard believed that there are some universal values that every Christian, besides his or her order, should follow.³⁴ The more specific characteristics of these values were changing according to the particular needs and functions of every social group.³⁵

²⁵ *An Apologia*, 41. Cf. SBOp III, 86-87: “alius quidem sic, alius vero sic, sive Cluniacenses, sive Cistercienses, sive clerici regulares, sive etiam laici fideles”.

²⁶ SBOp III, 87. Cf. Bernard of Clairvaux, “*An Apologia*”, 41.

²⁷ *An Apologia*, 44. Cf. SBOp III, “Viderit autem quisque quacumque incedat, ne pro diversitate semitarum ab una iustitia recedat...”.

²⁸ Constable, *Three Studies*, 64.

²⁹ Sommerfeldt, *On the Spirituality*, 91.

³⁰ Newman, *The Boundaries*, 171-190.

³¹ Newman, *The Boundaries*, 171.

³² Newman, *The Boundaries*, 171.

³³ Newman, *The Boundaries*, 185.

³⁴ Newman, “*Contemplative Virtues*”, 14.

³⁵ Newman, “*Contemplative Virtues*”, 14.

Newman has described these values as monastic.³⁶ More importantly she traced in the Cistercian abbot's writings a tension between the contemplative and active lives, as no order should only be contemplative or active. Building on the works of Caroline Walker Bynum and Karl Morrison on Bernard's fascination in antithesis, Newman has suggested that the Cistercian abbot did not envisage that orders were either contemplative or active. However, as she pointed out, Bernard was not interested in creating a synthesis of the contemplative and active life as these two ways of life- in his mind-remained, despite the commonalities always separated and thus in tension.³⁷ She asserted that Bernard "did not wish to make the world into a monastery, but he did believe that all Christians needed to develop virtues which could best be learned in Cistercian life".³⁸

The issue of common values that according to Bernard all the social groups should demonstrate is further analyzed in the work of Michael Voigts. In his study of the Cistercian abbot's epistolary corpus, he illustrated how Bernard intended to promote, through his epistles, his ideal on spiritual reform to monks, clerics and laymen, as, mirroring Gregory the Great, he believed that the ascetic lifestyle could be followed by all Christians.³⁹ When it comes to his lay recipients, Voigts demonstrated how Bernard was emphasizing laymen's spiritual commitments to inner reform and obligations such spiritual responsibility and obedience similar to the ones of the monks.⁴⁰

Finally, the imposition of monastic values and obligation to non-monastic audiences has also been addressed by Christine Caldwell Ames, who argued that in the High Middle Ages a paradox took place, as while the boundaries between the clergy and laity were cemented, at the same time they were becoming more vague.⁴¹ Following the work of historians as M. C. Chenu, André Vauchez and Adolf von Harnack, she employed the phrase "monasticization of the world", in order to describe how monastic values could be diffused in the world outside the monastery resulting in the creation of a particular lay religiosity.⁴² Both the crusades as well as the anti-heretical struggle and most importantly the inquisition were vehicles for the fulfillment of this process.⁴³ In this framework, Bernard's plea to the Count of Toulouse to join the Church's anti-heretical fight is an example of how spiritual responsibilities, i.e. obedience to serve the Church and protect the hierarchical order, were imposed upon a secular lord in the same manner as similar spiritual duties placed upon his father, who took part in First Crusade.⁴⁴

These insights of historiography regarding Bernard's social theory can open new avenues in the study of the abbot of Clairvaux's anti-heretical discourse. Under this prism, the focus of inquiry is shifted from the question of how the Cistercian abbot could- through his anti-heretical efforts- defend the social order to how he could blur the lines between clergy and laity. By taking this direction our understanding

³⁶ Newman, "Contemplative Virtues", 27.

³⁷ Newman, "Contemplative Virtues", 13- 14.

³⁸ Newman, "Contemplative Virtues", 35.

³⁹ Voigts, *Letters of Ascent*, 18.

⁴⁰ Voigts, *Letters of Ascent*, 140-142.

⁴¹ Ames, "Monasticization", 2.

⁴² Ames, "Monasticization", 2.

⁴³ Ames, "Monasticization", 5-9.

⁴⁴ Ames, "Monasticization", 6.

of Bernard's approaches towards laity will be enriched, as we will follow how in Bernardine thought the boundaries between clergy and laity were more permeable and porous than consolidated positions in scholarly work on his anti-heretical discourse has shown.

One of the core themes of this study is the assumption that the Church's struggle against heresy represents not only a moment of conflict between clergy and laity but also an opportunity to shape religious mentalities and promote an (monastic) ideal. Therefore this examination is substantially influenced by scholarship that puts emphasis on the central political role that the anti-heretical struggle had in medieval society.⁴⁵ This inquiry is as well as in dialogue with historians who have connected the Church's anti-heretical fight with the churchmen's intention to create a particular orthodox identity, as the image of the heretic can operate as an anti-image or an anti-model, whose behavior should be avoided.⁴⁶ More specifically scholars, for instance Pilar Jiménez Sánchez has associated Cistercian endeavors against heresy to their efforts to impose crucial aspects of their monastic ecclesiology on the world outside the monastery.⁴⁷

Since the article seeks to discuss the role of monastic values in Bernard's anti-heretical polemic, the main focus of the analysis will naturally be on his works, where he engaged in the problem of heresy, namely Sermons 65 and 66 from the compilation *on the Song of Songs* and the epistles to the count of Toulouse and the people of the city (Epistles 241 and 242).⁴⁸ In the next step, I will juxtapose these texts with other works from the Bernardine *corpus* addressed to different audiences, which may look at first sight unrelated. However, the methodological premise of this study lies on the assumption that there is a common element that runs through all the Bernardine works, specifically his monastic ecclesiology, and by this way they are connected.⁴⁹ Sita Steckel's inquiry of the accusations of hypocrisy by comparing otherwise fragmented texts from criticisms and polemic (included Bernard's polemical texts) has furthermore been a point of departure for this study.⁵⁰ I would like to argue that by comparing the accusations for lack of humility and obedience to the discussion of these values in Bernard's other texts, we can understand how the anti-heretical discourse could be used not only to demarcate differences but also to renegotiate boundaries among monasticism, clergy, and laity.

The obligation to humility

Bernard of Clairvaux returned frequently to the image of the boasting and arrogant heretic in his polemic. However, the accusations of pride (*superbia*) against heresy are by no means a Bernardine novelty. As Herbert Grundmann authoritatively demonstrated the image of the arrogant and proud heretic, which has its roots in the polemical work of Augustine and the connection of the heretics with the *civitas diaboli*, became a stereotypical element in the

⁴⁵ See for example Patschovsky, "Heresy and Society, 23-44; Given, *Inquisition*, 5; Arnold, "Repression and Power", 346; John Arnold, *Inquisition and Power*, 11.

⁴⁶ Grundmann, "The Profile (Typus)", 17.

⁴⁷ Sánchez, *Les catharismes*, 263-276.

⁴⁸ SBOp VIII, 125-129, *The Letters*, 317 and 318, 387-391.

⁴⁹ See for example Bruun, *Mapping of Spiritual Topography*, 1-15.

⁵⁰ Steckel, "Critiques of Religious Movements".

medieval anti-heretical discourse of the later centuries.⁵¹ The German historian argued that the heretic who boasts, believes that he/she is better than others and dares to arrogate roles that belong mainly to clergy is a common “*topos*” in numerous medieval texts, where the ecclesiastical authors described the behavior of heretics and the place of heresy in the moral order.⁵² Bernard of Clairvaux’s anti-heretical polemic is certainly not an exemption. However, taking into consideration the central role that humility played in the abbot’s overall works, I believe that before we categorize the charges of pride and arrogance as “*topos*”, it is justifiable to compare these accusations to his ideas in the other works.

Turning our attention to Bernard’s overall oeuvre, it is not an exaggeration to claim that humility as an essential value of monastic life occupies a crucial role in his thought. Firstly, in his treatise *The Steps of Humility and Pride (De Gradibus Humilitatis et Superbiae)*, which was written in 1124 by a quite young Bernard as a reply to the abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Fontenay, Godfrey of Langres, the abbot of Clairvaux discussed in length the virtue of humility in monastic community. His departure point was the seventh paragraph of the Benedictine Rule (*Humility- De Humilitate*).⁵³ The importance of humility as one of the main foundations of monastic life appears almost everywhere in his works.⁵⁴ The Cistercian abbot not only highlighted the importance of humility for the life in the monastery, but he also examined carefully its different forms. For example in the Sermon 42 of his *Sermons of the Song of Songs*, he stated that “... there is a humility inspired and inflamed by charity, and a humility begotten in us by truth..”⁵⁵ However, for Bernard humility did not only belong to the monastic environment. As Sommerfeldt has argued, Bernard considered humility as a value with “universal character”, which all Christians regardless of their social status should strive to attain.⁵⁶ And indeed in his Sermon *Homily I*, which was composed shortly after the treatise on humility and pride,⁵⁷ Bernard praised Mary for her virginity and humility, and he compared the two virtues:

“Virginity is a praiseworthy virtue, but humility is by far the more necessary. The one is only counselled; the other is demanded. To the first you have been invited; to the second you are obliged. Concerning the first he said ‘he who is able to receive this, let him receive it’ (Mt 19:12), of the second is said, ‘Truly I said to you, unless you become like this child, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven’ (Mt 18:3). The first is rewarded; the second is required. You can be saved without virginity; without humility you cannot be”.⁵⁸

⁵¹ Grundmann, “The Profile”, 18.

⁵² Grundmann, “The Profile”, 18-21.

⁵³ Pennington OCSO, “Introduction”, 5, 11.

⁵⁴ See for example Bernard’s sermon In Adventu: De Triplici Inferno: Hoc ergo collum firmum esse debet et immobile, et supereminens sicut turris, cuius fundamentum debet esse humilitas, SBOp VI-1, 15. Cf. *Various Sermons*, 11.

⁵⁵ *On the Song of Songs II*, 214-218; Cf. SBOp II, 36: “quoniam est humilitas quam caritas format, et inflammat; et est humilitas, quam nobis veritas parit”

⁵⁶ Sommerfeldt, *On the Spirituality*, 91.

⁵⁷ Wadell, “Introduction”, xiv.

⁵⁸ “Homily I”, 9. Cf. SBOp IV, 17-18: Laudabilis virtus virginitas, sed magis humilitas necessaria. Illa consulitur, ista praecipitur. Ad illam invitatis, ad istam cogentis. De illa dicitur: QUI POTEST CAPERE, CAPIAT; de ista dicitur: NISI QUIS EFFICIATUR SICUT PARVULUS ISTE, NON INTRABIT IN REGNUM CAELORUM. Illa ergo remunerator, ista exigitur. Potes denique sine virginitate salvari; sine humilitate non potes.

Likewise, in his treatise *On Precept and Dispensation* (*De Præcepto et Dispensatione*), which was written in the years between 1141 and 1144 as an answer to two Benedictine monks of the monastery of Saint-Péren-Vallée on their questions about the obedience to the Benedictine Rule,⁵⁹ Bernard repeated the idea that humility belongs to the set of values that Christians are necessary to follow:

“But what is to be understood by the third kind of necessity, which I have called *fixed* necessity; [...] Under this heading falls that spiritual doctrine and teaching on charity, humility, meekness, and the other virtues [...] At all times and for all persons they bring salvation when they are kept and cause death when they are rejected”.⁶⁰

According to the abbot of Clairvaux humility was likewise necessary for the bishops, as it is demonstrated in his work *On the Conduct and Office of Bishops* (*De Moribus et Officio Episcoporum*). Writing in the end of 1130s decade to the archbishop of Sens, Henry Sanglier, in this work that has been characterized either as letter or a treatise, Bernard argued in detail (as Newman has noticed almost half of the composition is about humility) that it was necessary for the prelates to follow contemplative values such as charity, chastity and not least humility.⁶¹ For Newman the discussion about humility demonstrates one the one hand how contemplative and active life are in continuous tension, as monastic values should be followed by non-monks. On the other hand, Bernard, who was praising stability, in the sense that Christians should not leave their social stratum, seems to understand that every social group has its own different functions and needs, so he could reshape the monastic values according to his specific audience. When it comes more specifically to the bishops, the characteristics of humility that Bernard propagated, are compatible with their duty to serve their flock.⁶² In order to fulfill their duties and avoid seeking the domination of others instead of service, the abbot of Clairvaux warned them to be vigilant for arrogance and vanity.⁶³ In other words, they should avoid self-exaltation, thinking that they are better than others and demanding more privileges, rights, higher positions or praisings. In *Steps of Humility and Pride*, Bernard declared that “the only one who can instruct the brethren are those who are merciful, those who are meek and humble”.⁶⁴ Therefore, acquiring the monastic value of humility the bishops will have the necessary capacities to minister to their flock.

But if, following Newman’s conclusion, humility had a protean character in Bernard’s thought, the question that arises is what kind of humility Bernard promoted through his anti-heretical discourse. In the next paragraphs Bernard’s charges against the arrogant and proud heretic will be juxtaposed with his *Steps*, which is addressed to a monastic audience and *On the conduct and Office of Bishops*.

⁵⁹ Leclercq, “Introduction”, 73.

⁶⁰ *On Precept*, 110. Cf. SBOp III, 258: *Iam vero necessarium incommutabile quid accipi velim? [...] Sub hoc genere est omnis illa sermonis Domini in monte habiti spiritualis traditio, et quidquid de dilectione, humilitate, mansuetudine ceterisque virtutibus [...] Omni tempore, omni personae, mortem contempta, custodita salutem operantur.*

⁶¹ Newman, “Contemplative Virtues”, 22-23, 26-27.

⁶² Newman, “Contemplative Virtues”, 28-29.

⁶³ SBOp VII, 121-127. Cf. *On the Office*, 67-77.

⁶⁴ *The Steps*, 42. Cf. SBOp III, 26: *Instructio quippe fratrum pertinent ad misericordes, spiritus lenitatis ad mites.*

It is noteworthy that in both works, Bernard's aim is to promote humility but he- at the same time- stated that humility can be better understood through the examination of pride.⁶⁵ In his earlier work, he provided a definition of both humility and pride, which demonstrates the relation between those two poles: "For what else is pride but, as a saint defined it, the love of one's own excellence? We may define humility as the opposite: contempt of one's own excellence".⁶⁶ In the same work, the Cistercian abbot based on the seventh chapter of the Benedictine Rule and the description of the twelve steps to humility, identified the twelve steps of pride, as following: curiosity (*curiositas*), levity (*de levitate animi*), giddiness (*de inepta laetitia*), boasting (*de iactantia*), singularity (*de singularitate*), self-conceit (*de arrogantia*), presumption (*de praesumptione*), self-justification (*de defensione peccatorum*), hypocritical confession (*de simulata confessione*), revolt (*de rebellione*), freedom to sin (*de libertate peccandi*) and lastly, habit to sin (*de consuetudine peccandi*).⁶⁷ According to Bernard, the first six steps have to do with the monks' relation to their brothers, the next four with submission to the superiors and the last two with submission to God.⁶⁸ And also in the *On the Conduct and the Office of the Bishops* he stated that humility "subdues pride, the enemy of all grace and beginning of all sin"⁶⁹ and "pride is a passionate desire for own superiority"⁷⁰. In the same work the Cistercian abbot named two different kinds of pride: blind pride (*caeca superbia*) and vanity (*vana superbia*), where the former is the lust for one's own superiority and the latter is the desire to hear from other praises regardless of if they are real or not.⁷¹

Returning to Bernard's anti-heretical polemic, there is no definition or discussion of pride or humility as in his other two works. Nonetheless if we follow Bernard's methodology where the examination of the figures of the arrogant monks and prelates, illuminates the ideal of humility, it can be assumed that the descriptions of heretics can function as anti-models, which promote a specific humble behavior to the laity.

A closer look at the Cistercian abbot's polemic reveals that a recurrent allegation against heretics is that they boast about their way of life. Already in Sermon 65, Bernard rhetorically asked them: "In what passage of the Gospels, not even one iota of which you falsely boast you do not pass over (Matt 5:18), do you find this exemption?".⁷² Moreover, heretics, echoing the fourth step of pride in Bernard's treatise (boasting) were those who "boast" falsely about their "apostolic life" and their beliefs:

"I am not unaware of their boast, that they alone, are the Body of Christ. But since they believe this, they must also believe that they have the power of consecrating the Body and the Blood of Christ on their altars every day, to nourish them to become members of the Body of Christ. To be sure, they

⁶⁵ SBOp III, 37. Cf. *The Steps*, 56; SBOp VII, 114. Cf. *On the Office*, 58.

⁶⁶ *The Steps*, 42. Cf. SBOp III, 26: "Quid enim aliud est superbia, quam, ut quidam sanctus diffinit, amor propriae excellentiae? Unde et nos possumus dicere, per contrarium, humilitatem propriae excellentiae esse contemptum.

⁶⁷ SBOp III, 38- 55. Cf. *The Steps*, 57-78.

⁶⁸ SBOp III, 53. Cf. *The Steps*, 75-76.

⁶⁹ 57. Cf. SBOp VII, 114: Inimicam omnis gratiae, omnisque initium peccati debellat superbiam.

⁷⁰ t, 58. Cf. SBOp VII, 114: Superbia est appetitus propriae excellentiae.

⁷¹ SBOp VII, 114. Cf. 58.

⁷² *On the Song of Songs* III, 181. Cf. SBOp II, "De quonam mihi Evangeliorum loco producitis istam exceptionem, qui ne iota quidem, ut falso gloriamini, praeteritis?", 173.

confidently claim to be the successors of the Apostles, and call themselves apostolic, although they are unable to show any sign of their apostolate".⁷³

In this passage is presented Bernard's most common charge against heresy, namely that the heretics believe that they are superiors than the others. This accusation which recalls the fifth step of pride, the singularity or belief in own's superiority, is repeated quite often in Bernard's polemic. For example, he accused heretics of dismissing everyone else in the Church and they believe that they should keep their ideas secret from those who do not share the same ideas. Likewise, according to Bernard the alleged heretics claimed that they alone represent the true Church. Moreover, they did not seek to glorify God, as they were hostile against or jealous of God's glory. This accusation resembles the "blind pride" of Bernardine work addressed to the bishops, as those who fall into arrogance seek to glory themselves and not God.⁷⁴ Newman argues that the "blind vanity" corresponds to the "singularity" of *The Steps*.⁷⁵ In Bernard's categorisation the fourth and the fifth step represent how the proud monk acts against his brethren. As a result of his boasting the monk is not concerned about how he can help others: "His aim is not to teach you or to be taught but to show you how much he knows"⁷⁶, alleged Bernard. And for the monks who believe that they are better than the others, "the common rule of the monastery and the example of the seniors are no longer enough".⁷⁷ I would like to argue that it is not a coincidence that Bernard deployed these accusations against heresy. Like the monks who live in a community, so the heretics are part of the Christian society. And as the arrogant monk does not respect his brothers, the alleged heretics show disrespect towards their "brothers", the other members of the society. And if the heretics function as anti-models, whose example must be avoided, Bernard by utilizing charges that resemble these two steps of pride, promoted a humility where the members of laity not only have a low opinion about themselves but also are humble and tentative over each other. Thus, laymen as well as monks should protect their community by helping each other.

Another point of criticism in Bernard's polemic, which can be related to his description of the twelfth steps of pride, is the "stubbornness" of the heretics, who either do not admit their errors or they try to defend them. In his Sermon 66 of his commentary *on the Song of Songs*, while the Cistercian abbot discussed an episode which took place in Cologne, where heretics were caught by people and brought in front of the ecclesiastical authorities, provides an example of this behavior:

"When questioned on the points of their belief which are suspect, they have denied everything completely, as they always do, and when examined by the

⁷³ *On the Song of Songs III*, 198-199. Cf. SBOp II, 183: "Non ignoro quod se et solos corpus Christi esse gloriantur; sed sibi hoc persuadeant qui illud quoque persuasum habent, potestatem se habere quotidie in mensa sua corpus Christi et sanguinem consecrandi, ad nutriendum se in corpus Christi et membra. Nempe iactant se esse successors Apostolorum, et apostolicos nominant, nullum tamen apostolates sui signum valentes ostendere".

⁷⁴ SBOp VII, 114. Cf. 58.

⁷⁵ Newman, "Contemplative Virtues", 31.

⁷⁶ *The Steps*, 69. Cf. SBOp III, 48: Non curat te docere vel a te doceri ipse quod nescit, sed ut scire sciatur quod scit.

⁷⁷ *The Steps*, 70. Cf. SBOp III, 48: Proinde non sufficit ei quod communis monasterii regula vel maiorum cohortantur exempla.

ordeal of the water they have been found to be lying. But when detected and unable to make any further denial because the water would not receive them, they have taken the bit between their teeth, as the saying is, and instead of confessing their blasphemy freely and with penitence, they have declared it openly, alleging that it was true piety".⁷⁸

In juxtaposition with his treatise on the humility in the monastery, the abbot of Clairvaux claimed that the eighth step of pride (self-justification) represents "the stubborn and obstinate self-defence"⁷⁹, as the proud monk either denies or justifies his sins.⁸⁰ This step of pride (along with the next one with the title "hypocritical confession") deals with the issue of confession in the monastery. For Bernard those monks who out of arrogance do not accept their sins or defend them, violate the Benedictine Rule and its precept that the monks should humbly confess to their abbots both their thoughts and sins.⁸¹ An echo of this arrogant behavior can be found in Bernard's anti-heretical work, where in an imaginary dialogue an accused heretic neglects to accept his beliefs and mistakes by insisting on his innocence, although the catastrophic results of his actions are visible in the community.⁸²

In the tenth step of pride (revolt), Bernard detailed how the monk who has fallen to pride and as a result has shown disrespect over his brothers and his superiors, has revolted against his own community by causing scandal by his behavior.⁸³ "But if a monk refuses to live in harmony with his brethren or to obey his superior, what is he doing in the monastery except causing scandal?"⁸⁴ wondered Bernard. For him the result of such a conduct is that the arrogant monk has either to leave or be expelled from the monastery.⁸⁵ Comparing this paragraph with the Cistercian abbot's polemic, a similar accusation against the heretics can be detected. The heretics are causing, too, scandal in their community, namely the Church by their arrogant and disrespectful behavior: "when they dismiss everyone within the Church as dogs and swine (Matt 7:6), is this not an open admission that they themselves are not within the Church",⁸⁶ Bernard asks his audience and he continues in the same Sermon (65): Does the gospel not condemn the man who offends someone within the Church (Matt 18:6)? You scandalize the Church".⁸⁷ In Sermon 66, he concluded "If he will not listen to the Church", it says, "let him be to you as a stranger and a tax collector (Matt 18:17)"⁸⁸. The exclusion of the proud heretics from the Church is presented as both an anticipated and a self-chosen outcome in a way that is analogous to the expulsion of the

⁷⁸ *On the Song of Songs III*, 204. Cf. *SBOp II*, 186: "Quaesiti fidem, cum de quibus suspecti videbantur omnia prorsus suo more negarent, examinati iudicio aquae, mendaces inventi sunt. Cumque iam negare non possent, quippe deprehensi, aqua eos non recipiente, arrepto, ut dicitur, freno dentibus, tam misere quam libere impietatem non confessi, sunt, palam pietatem astruentes..."

⁷⁹ *The Steps*, 73. Cf. *SBOp III*, 51: Pervicax et obstinata defensio.

⁸⁰ *SBOp III*, 51, Cf. *The Steps*, 73.

⁸¹ *SBOp III*, 51, Cf. *The Steps*, 73.

⁸² *SBOp II*, 175-176. Cf. *On the Song of Songs III*, 185.

⁸³ *SBOp III*, 53, Cf. *The Steps*, 75-76.

⁸⁴ *The Steps*, 76. Cf. *SBOp III*, 53: Denique ubi fratrum concordiam ac magistri sententiam monachus spernit, quid ultra in monasterio, nisi scandalum facit?

⁸⁵ *SBOp III*, 53, Cf. *The Steps*, 76.

⁸⁶ *On the Song of Songs III*, *SBOp II*, 173: "At istud aperte fateri est, se non esse de Ecclesia, qui omnes, qui de Ecclesia sunt, canes censet et porcos".

⁸⁷ *On the Song of Songs III*, 184. Cf. *SBOp II*: "Qui scandalizaverit unum de Ecclesia, nonne Evangelium condemnat illum? Tu Ecclesiam scandalizes", 175.

⁸⁸ *On the Song of Songs III*, 187. Cf. *SBOp II*: "Si, inquit Ecclesiam non audierit, sit tibi sicut ethnicus et publicanus", 176-177.

proud monk from his monastery. The end of the monk who has been expelled from his community is tragic: "the monk has no longer a superior to fear nor brethren to respect, so with fewer qualms he can happily give himself desires which in the monastery fear and shame held in check".⁸⁹ The former monk does not feel fear for God anymore and "the plans of his heart, the ready words of his mouth, the works of his hands, are at the service of every impulse. He has become malevolent, evil-speaking, vile".⁹⁰ These passages are from the two last steps of pride (Freedom to sin and the habit of sinning). The destructive ending of the arrogant monk can be seen as a reminder for the importance of humility. The heretics are similarly those who chose to discard the Church and follow a sinful life. In his letter to the Count of Toulouse, Bernard describes how dangerous the heresiarch Henry of Lausanne, a former monk, who abandoned the monastic life, is as he "returned to the world and the filth of the flesh, like a dog to its vomit".⁹¹ In Sermon 66, the Cistercian abbot predicts: "The end of these men is destruction, fire awaits them at the last".⁹² The image of the heretics is an example to be avoided. It can be assumed that their ending, as Bernard vividly described it creating an atmosphere of fear, is a warning for the lay people that humility is a necessary and essential virtue.

This study of Bernard's anti-heretical polemic in connection to *Steps of Humility and Pride* and *On the Conduct and Office of Bishops* confirms the importance that the Cistercian abbot placed on humility for laymen, as an essential and "universal" value, which nevertheless had its origins in the monastic environment. The image of the heretic like that of the proud monk and the arrogant prelate, is the anti-model, that the Cistercian abbot deploys in order to promote humility to laity. The character of humility that he promotes to laypeople is significantly different from the one to the bishops. Whereas in his treatise on the prelates the Cistercian abbot focuses on the fifth and the six steps of pride (singularity and self-conceit), in his anti-heretical discourse indirectly stresses the fourth (boasting), the fifth and sixth but as well as the eighth (self-justification) and tenth (revolt) steps. The difference can be explained by the different functions and needs of the prelates and the laity: The bishops' main duty is to serve their flock, whereas laypeople should live harmonically in society by respecting others and their superiors to protect the unity of the Church. Therefore, it seems that Bernard promotes a kind of humility to the laity that has more similarities to the one to the monks in comparison to the one who promotes to bishops. The juxtaposition of the above texts reveals aspects of Bernardine ecclesiology. It can be assumed that Bernard thinks of the world in similar terms to his monastic community. From the analysis of the texts, we can speculate that the heretics resemble the arrogant monk who by boasting and believing in his own "singularity and superiority" not only sins but also violates the

⁸⁹ *The Steps*, 76. Cf. SBOP III, 54: per quam monachus, cum iam nec magistrum videt quem timeat, nec fratres quos revereatur, tanto securius quanto liberius sua desideria implore delectatur, a quibus in monasterio tam pudore quam timore prohibebatur.

⁹⁰ *The Steps*, 77. Cf. SBOP III, 54: sed quidquid in cor, in buccam, ad manum venerit, machinatur, garret, et operator, malevolus, vaniloquus, facinorosus.

⁹¹ *The Letters*, 389. Cf. SBOP VIII, 126: "... ad spurcitas carnis et saeculi, tamquam canis ad suum vomitum, est reversus".

⁹² *On the Song of Songs III*, 204. Cf. SBOP II, 186: "Horum finis interitus, horum novissima incendium manet".

harmonic relation with his brothers, where the one is supposed to teach and be taught by the others.⁹³ Moreover, as the monks who had fallen into the trap of pride and had caused scandal at the monastery broke their ties with their community, the heretics did not belong to the Christian society. As in case with his advice to bishops, in Bernard's anti-heretical writings, there are no accusations that resemble the first three steps of pride (curiosity, levity and giddiness). These three seems to be related exclusively to the life of monks in the monastery. The humility that Bernard promotes to the laity seems to be the one that importantly lays out the mutual respect of the members of society and equally the respect to the superiors, which ensure the harmonic coexistence inside the Church by and the well function of the world.

The obligation to obedience

Obedience played a central role in Bernard's thought, as he considered it as a crucial condition for the contemplative life.⁹⁴ If humility was the foundation of the life of the monks, obedience was the wall, which was protecting the monastic life.⁹⁵ The Cistercian abbot called his monastic audience to strive for true obedience, "a most powerful force"⁹⁶, by being submissive not only to God but also their superiors in the monastery.⁹⁷ "Perfect obedience knows no law. It can be held within no limits"⁹⁸ asserted the abbot to his monastic audience. And in order to illustrate them the dangers of disobedience, he provided the example of Adam, who after he ate the forbidden fruit and he failed to show any regrets, he was expelled.⁹⁹ The obligation to obedience originates in the Benedictine Rule, the abbot of Clairvaux repeats in his works the Rule's precept to "obey without delay" in order to show its urgency and gravity.¹⁰⁰ And even if the adherence to the Rule was a monastic obligation, Bernard argued in his tract *On Precept and Dispensation* that it would be beneficial for every Christian to follow its commands.¹⁰¹ Thus, the Cistercian abbot seems to open the way for the diffusion of the monastic values to the rest of society.

Moving back to Bernard's anti-heretical polemic the charges of disobedience, similarly to the accusations of arrogance are numerous. The image of the disobedient heretic cannot- of course- be attributed exclusively to the Cistercian abbot, as disobedience to God and to ecclesiastical authorities were keystones of the polemical discourse against heresy.¹⁰² However, as in the case of pride, the comparison of the anti-heretical discourse with Bernard's other works provides us the opportunity firstly to reveal how elements of his monastic thought

⁹³ The relation between monastic community and humility in Bernard's thought is also discussed by Caroline Walker Bynum, who argues that for the Cistercian abbot the communal life offers the opportunity to monks to learn how to be humble. Bynum, *Docere Verbo et Exemplo*, 129- 131.

⁹⁴ See Casey, "Introduction", xxix-xxxix.

⁹⁵ SBOp VI-1, 16. Cf. *Various Sermons*, 11.

⁹⁶ *Monastic Sermons*, 216. Cf. SBOp VI- 1, 246: "Fortissima res est oboedientia vera".

⁹⁷ SBOp VI-1, 246. Cf. *Monastic Sermons*, 216-217.

⁹⁸ *On Precept*, 114. Cf. SBOp III, 261: "Nam perfecta oboedientia legem nescit".

⁹⁹ SBOp VI-1, 10 Cf. *Various Sermons*, 5.

¹⁰⁰ SBOp VI-1, 249. Cf. *Monastic Sermons*, 219.

¹⁰¹ SBOp III , 255. Cf. *On Precept*, 106

¹⁰² Grubdmann, "The Profile", 18-19. Grundmann establishes a connection between arrogance and disobedience, as the latter is the result of the former; Nelson, "Society, theodicy and the origins", 74; Moore, *The Formation*, 64.

were introduced in his polemic and secondly to inquire how he could renegotiate the boundaries between active and contemplative life through the value of obedience.

In his Sermons 65 and 66 as well as his epistles to the Count and the people of Toulouse the charges of disobedience can be divided into three categories: the first is lack of obedience towards God/natural law, the second towards the Church and the third towards the clergy.

Beginning with the first category, the Cistercian abbot denounced the heretics of not following God's commands by refusing to reveal publicly their beliefs. "How long will you keep secret what God commands should be reveal?" wonders Bernard.¹⁰³ Obedience to God has a distinguished role in Bernard's thought. The monk's obedience to God is described as a "special obedience" (*oboedientia specialis ad Deum*) that "should never be neglected".¹⁰⁴ The image of the heretic, who discards this "special obedience" intensifies the threat of heresy and consequently the role of heretics as anti-models. Moreover, Bernard's anti-heretical polemic includes an interesting passage, which, I believe echoes his monastic thought. In the same Sermon, Bernard is attacking the heretics who are refusing to take an oath, by referring to a passage in Matthew (Matt 5:34-5): "What was given me as a counsel of perfection, "swear not", that is, they observe as minutely as if it were a positive command; but committing perjury, which is forbidden by natural law (which is unchangeable) they dismiss at will as unimportant".¹⁰⁵ In this passage, the abbot of Clairvaux seems to make a division between counsels and commands, that it is beneficial to be followed and rules that should be obeyed under any circumstance, as they have divine origins. The question about the proper obedience in the monastery and especially the limits of submission to superiors occupies a central place in Bernard's thought. In his works as the treatise *On Percept and Dispensation*, the Sermon "Concerning the Seven Steps of Obedience", where he sketches how obedience must be conducted, and his second letter to the monk Adam, where he expressed his condemn for the decision of the monks of the monastery of Morimond to follow their abbot and leave with the crusaders, Bernard constructed length and complicated arguments abbot the differentiation among degrees of obedience. However, when it comes to commands with divine origin, he was absolute: "God commands that we do good deeds; he orders us to abstain from evil deeds. The holy and unchangeable authority of this precept cannot be refuted in any way, because it is authenticated with the seal of the one who says, I am the Lord and I do not change (Mal 3:6)".¹⁰⁶ Thus, in his anti-heretical polemic, Bernard introduced the notion of "special obedience" who is dedicated to God or to natural law and that the degree of obedience can vary.

¹⁰³ *On the Song of Songs III*, 183; Cf. CS. SBOp II, 174: "Usquequo occultum tenetur, quod palam Deus fieri iubet?".

¹⁰⁴ *Monastic Sermons*, 216-217. Cf. SBOp VI- 1, 246.

¹⁰⁵ *On Song of Songs III*, 181. Cf. SBOp II, 173: "Quod ad cautelam consultum est, videlicet non iurare, hoc isti mandate vice tam contentiose observant; et quod immobili iure sancitum est, non periurandum scilicet, hoc tamquam indifferens pro sua voluntate dispensant".

¹⁰⁶ *Monastic Sermons*, 216. Cf. SBOp VI- 1, 246: "Bona praecipit Deus ut faciamus, a malis iubet ut absteineamus. Praecepti huius sancta et incommutabilis auctoritas non valet quoquo modo refelli, quia illius est caractere consignata qui dicit: EGO DOMINUS ET NON MUTOR".

The danger that heretics represent against the unity of the Church by their disobedience is one of the most common accusations of the ecclesiastical authorities. The abbot of Clairvaux, who believed at the unity of the Church was one of the conditions for salvation, highlighted this threat in his polemic: "If you obey the Gospel, you will not cause scandal, for the Gospel clearly forbids you to do so (Matt 18: 6-7). But this is what you are doing, by disobeying the precept of the Church".¹⁰⁷ Bernard defended the Church's unity in his letter to the monk Adam. Marko Jerković, in his analysis of this letter, underlined that for Bernard the monks the monastery of Morimond by their decision to leave their monastery without the approval of the Order's authority, caused a great scandal and jeopardized the unity of the Cistercian Order.¹⁰⁸ The abbot of Clairvaux reminded the renegade monks that by their choice offended and wounded charity, the mother of unity and peace.¹⁰⁹ In the same way, the heretics injure the well function of the Church. The superiority of the unity of the Church is illustrated in the Cistercian abbot's polemic, where he appealed to ecclesiastical authorities and urged them to expel the heretics:¹¹⁰ If the heretics did not show submission to the ecclesiastical authorities and by this way cause problems to the Church, they needed to be expelled as the unity of the Church in the same manner as the unity in the monastic community is crucial.

In the Cistercian abbot's discussion about the submission of the monks to their superior, Bernard is clear that "in disobeying one's abbot one also disobeys God".¹¹¹ And in his Sermon about obedience to his monastic audience, he reminded them: "This is common between God and humankind: that whatever obedience is shown to superiors is shown to him...".¹¹² In his anti-heretical discourse, the abbot of Clairvaux charges the heretics for disobedience to clergy, as they considered them as sinners and thus incapable of fulfilling their ministry. In Bernard's refutation of the heretics, he claimed:

"The Scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses's seat (Matt 23:2), and those who did not give them the obedience due to the bishops were guilty of disobedience, for the Lord himself gave this command when he said: "Whatever they say, do it" (Matt 23:2). It is clear that although they were Scribes and Pharisees, although they were great sinners, yet because of the seat of Moses, the saying which he uttered applies to them: "He that hears you hears me; he that despises you despises me" (Lk 10:16)"¹¹³

In his epistle to the letter to the people of Toulouse, Bernard exhorted that they should show obedience only to superiors and the

¹⁰⁷ *On the Song of Songs III*, 187. Cf. SBOp II, 176: "Si oboedias Evangelio, non facies scandalum; prohibet enim plane Evangelium scandalum facere. Facis autem tu, istam non amovendo iuxta constitutum Ecclesiae".

¹⁰⁸ Jerković, "(Dis)obedience", 509-512.

¹⁰⁹ SBOp VII, 31-32. Cf. *The Letters*, 26.

¹¹⁰ SBOp II, 176-177. Cf. *On the Song of Songs III*, 187.

¹¹¹ *On Precept*, 127. Cf. SBOp VII, 273: "et tamen in Deum nihilominus praeveraricatio fit, quoties abbatis iussio praeteritur".

¹¹² *Monastic Sermons*, 217. Cf. SBOp VI- 1, 247: "Communis est etiam ista inter Deum et hominem. Quia quidquid oboedientiae praelatis exhibetur, ei exhibetur qui dicit: QUI VOS AUDIT ME AUDIT".

¹¹³ *On the Song of Songs III*, 203. Cf. SBOp II, 186: "SUPER CATHEDRAM MOYSI SEDERUNT SCRIBAE ET PHARISAEI, et qui non oboedierunt eis tamquam episcopis, inoboedientiae rei fuerunt, ipso Domino praecipiente et dicente: QUAE DICUNT FACITE. Patet quamvis Scribae, quamvis Pharisei, quamvis videlicet maximi peccatores, propter cathedram tam Moysi ad eos quoque nihilominus pertinere quod item dixit: QUI VOS AUDIT ME AUDIT; QUI VOS SPERNIT, ME SPERNIT".

churchmen.¹¹⁴ The precept of the total submission to the ecclesiastical authorities, who- according to Bernard- represent the divine authority in earth, is similar to the abbot-monk relationship, as the abbot deploys similar argumentation. However, there is a substantial difference between his polemical discourse and his works addressed to his monks. Bernard admits that the monks should disobey their superior when the latter's commands are contrary to God's commands.¹¹⁵ This question is the subject of his letter to the monk Adam, where he makes similar conclusions.¹¹⁶ Examining this letter, Jerković has argued that the appeals to personal prudence and conscience in Bernardine work indicate a substantial shift that took place in the 12th century, which highlighted individual responsibility and choices according to personal conscience.¹¹⁷ In his anti-heretical discourse, obedience is not presented as a matter of personal conscience. On the contrary, the obedience that the Cistercian abbot propagated is an absolute one, without conditions or reservations. This omission might indicate that Bernard believed that the monks were more capable of making such decisions and depend to their conscience, where laity did not have such a capacity. Or there was no space for such nuanced argumentation in polemic works. Nevertheless, Bernard mentioned that the heretics refuse to obey, so their disobedient conduct was a result of deliberate choice.

Bernard's approach to the heretical disobedience illustrates that monastic elements, such as the different degrees of compliance according to the authority that issued a command, as well as the obedience as a touchstone of the unity of community, in similar way as in the monastery, were deployed in his anti-heretical polemic and promoted to the laity by showing heretics as anti-models. However, as with the value of humility, the message for obedience was shaped in relation to its recipient, in his discourse against heresy there were no nuances when it comes to the need to obey the superiors.

Conclusion

Bernard of Clairvaux has been described by modern historiography as a defender of the unity of the Church and the strict societal order, and as a fierce opponent of instability, since he believed that every Christian should remain in the frame of his/her group. His social ideas about the distinct groups were also expressed in his anti-heretical polemic. Faced with the challenge of heresy, Bernard of Clairvaux expressed his deep concern for the unity of the Church, as he considered heretics a threat to the social order and hierarchy. Thus, through his anti-heretical endeavors the gap between churchmen and layperson was becoming wider. The aim of this inquiry was to demonstrate that the Bernardine polemical discourse also has another function, namely, to blur the boundaries between the different social groups by imposing certain monastic values.

Based on the insights of historians as John Sommerfeldt, Martha Newman, Michael Voigts and Christine Caldwell Ames in this study I suggest an alternative reading of the Bernardine anti-heretical sources by juxtaposing them with works that there either addressed to

¹¹⁴ SBOp VIII, 129. Cf. *The Letters*, 390.

¹¹⁵ SBOp VII, 266-269. Cf. *On Precept*, 119-120.

¹¹⁶ SBOp VII, 33-35. Cf. *The Letters*, 28-29.

¹¹⁷ Jerković, "(Dis)obedience", 513.

a monastic audience or to prelates. Having as a reference point the monastic values of humility and obedience, I explored how these values appear in his polemic and his other works. And indeed, through these writings, Bernard could impose these contemplative values on the world outside the monastery. It is important to note that as for Bernard the social stability was crucial for the unity of the Church, the values of humility and obedience acquired different characteristics when they were propagated to monks, priests and laymen. The argument of this study is that even if these values were shaped to fulfill the needs of different audiences, nevertheless they were in their essence monastic. The image of the proud heretic, which can function as an anti-model, echoes the arrogant monk, who descending the steps of pride, places himself outside his monastic community. Regarding to obedience, the Cistercian abbot promoted the absolute submission not only to God's precept but also to the superiors, as the monks comply with the commands of their abbots. Both in his discussion of humility and obedience, the unity of the Church and the need to expel those who threaten it are being stressed. The comparison of these texts has showed that for Bernard the monastery as an ideal community and the monastic relationship between the monks and the abbot can be transferred to the world outside the monastic walls. Thus, the boundaries between laymen and monks, even if they were not erased, were becoming more permeable through Bernard's anti-heretical writings.

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Abbreviations

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