

Fear the day of Judgement, quiver at the thought of hell, yearn for eternal life with all your soul.

Keep the possibility of death in mind at all times. Of Good Works, The Rule of the Poor Knights of Christ.

On Contemplation

St. Bernard wrote a series of parables that were taught as a part of the early formation of new monks. The parables Saint Bernard used would have been easily understood at the time, as they make allusions to various common customs, stories, or military matters that the men who joined the abbey (often times from noble families) encountered already in their lives.

The parable of *The Story of the Woman whom the King's Son Took as His Wife*, concerns a son who goes off seeking a bride and brings gifts with him as a sign of affection (and as was the custom at the time). The son represents Our Lord Jesus Christ and the bride represents the church. The gifts are the many things God bestows upon the Church from preaching to various virtues, various states of life, and so forth.

One of these gifts is a pair of gloves. St Bernard then uses these pairs of gloves to explain both how one should engage in contemplation and how we should judge our actions.

“The left hand, contemplation, likewise, has a glove divided into five. For there are five elements in contemplation: the consideration of sin and hell, scorn for the present combined with hope for future realities. Judgment and the kingdom, the state of the body after the resurrection and glorification, and finally the human spirit and the eternity With which it is to be united.” (Clairvaux)

Saint Bernard though wishes for us to look at the above realities though as through Christ's humanity which he describes as a window that opens in the wall to allow light to come through. It must also be viewed in a personal way. Saint Bernard stresses that we must not just view Hell in a general way, but our own personal hell, how we will be punished in the body and soul for our specific sins. When we should stir up contempt for present realities we should remember Christ's life upon on the earth, how he lived and how he was treated, and so on.

Below is an organization of Saint Bernard's words, with also the window we should look through of the life of Christ to consider personally.

1. **Consideration of sin and hell (Quotes from the Parable)** (Clairvaux)

- "Who enters contemplation first considers his sins. What crimes he has committed and how frequently?"
- "Such reflection is not of much utility unless he begins to experience a fear of being punished in hell for them."
- "Hence, it is important that he meditate not only on sin, but also on hell."
- Our full understanding of salvation came from the person of Jesus Christ.

2. **Scorn for the present combined with hope for future realities**

A Method of Contemplation with St. Bernard of Clairvaux – A Spiritual Exercise

- "in a mind so possessed by fear arises a scorn for present realities with which is associated a hope for the things of the future."
- "But to prevent this hope from rendering the mind undisciplined, it is restrained by judgment"

3. Judgment and the kingdom

- "The fear occasioned by the thought of judgment is balanced by the consolation which comes from the consideration of the kingdom."
- "So to the thought of judgment is added that of the kingdom in which we reflect on what we shall be."

4. The state of the body after the resurrection and glorification

- "Firstly, on the condition of the body, no longer subject to suffering and death,"
- "then on its glorification, when it will assume a splendor and beauty which beggar description"
- "as it is written, the just will be as resplendent as the sun."

5. The human spirit and eternity

- "after the soul's attitude is considered the soul itself and God with whom the soul is to be united, which is the end in consummation of everything"
- "how our spirit is to be united with God. How was it that this human being without any conveyance and without the help of any created thing has been lifted up and taken to another place only? through the Divinity which was united with him?"

Purpose of Contemplation: Reflecting on these five windows (incarnation, way of life, teaching, resurrection, and ascension) helps believers deepen their understanding of sin, hell, judgment, the kingdom, and ultimately, their union with God.

The Five Windows in Christ

- **Christ as a Window:**

- Humanity of Christ as a wall allowing the Divinity to shine through.
- Christ's incarnation, way of life, teaching, resurrection, and ascension as five windows.

1. Incarnation:

- Our Lord reveals the reality of eternal life and has come to save us from eternal damnation.

2. Way of Life:

- The Life of Christ teaches despising present realities and hoping for the future.

3. Teaching:

- The teaching of Christ speaks on how we will be judged and the kingdom of heaven.

4. Resurrection:

- The resurrection of Christ demonstrates the condition and glorification of the body. That whatever suffering we endure now in our bodies will be a source of glory later.

5. Ascension:

- Reveals the spirit's union with God.

Personal Hell:

The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man shall be betrayed: it were better for him, if that man had not been born. Matthew 26:24 see also Mark 14:21

How to live

Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth: where the rust, and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal. Matthew 6:19

For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. Galatians 1:10

Judgment

But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment. Matt 12:36

The State of the Body after the Resurrection

²⁰ But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself. Philippians 3:20-21

The Human Spirit and Eternity

- Revelation 7:16-17: "Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Bibliography

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