



The Image and Likeness of God in Bernard of Clairaux's Free Choice and Grace (Cistercian Studies)

Luke Anderson

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We are made in the image and likeness of God. Bernard of Clairvaux, the versatile troubadour of Christian love, is no naive romantic. He understands that a series of moral changes must precede any exercise of this love. For him, the seat of love is the faculty of the human will (the Image). On the other hand, the uninhibited action of free choice (the Likeness) constitutes the perfection of the faculty. The Image, because of sin and consequent misery, has lost its Likeness to God. Only divine intervention, through the efficacy of grace, can restore Likeness and cleanse the blemished Image. The text is not a polemic, but rather an apologia rooted in Bernard's personal experience. The ardour of love springs from a flourishing freedom, the direct result of a double cause: divine grace and the restored union of Image and Likeness. Without free choice there is nothing to be saved; while without grace there is no salvation.

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