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The emergence of devotion to the name of Jesus in the West

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Used on its own, 'Jesus' is not a term of address frequently used in the Bible. As it is a common name among Jews, it is necessary for the Gospel writers to address 'Jesus' by either adding his origin, 'of Nazareth', or to attribute some of his specific titles, such as 'Lord', 'Saviour', 'Son of God'. In fact, the name 'Jesus' on its own, sometimes accompanied by a special title, is used as a direct form of address only by demons and people outside the circle of Jesus's direct disciples. For contemporary Jews, 'Jesus' therefore has no particular greatness and is not a spiritually significant name. The Gospel Passion episodes (Matthew 27; Mark 15; Luke 23; John 18) are good cases in point as they depict the audience in front of Pontius Pilate having to make a choice to save either the seditious 'Jesus' Barrabas or 'Jesus' of Nazareth.¹ In fact, Jesus's opponents and some pagans are the exception in making use of 'Jesus' without a qualifier, demonstrating their rejection of the divine and salvific nature of Christ by this linguistic act, while the apostles instead use qualifiers (Acts 2:22: 'Jesus whom you have put to death', or 'Christ', for instance).²

The New Testament is therefore scarce in its use of the name 'Jesus' as a term that shows recognition of its spiritual power. Only in a few instances does one detect a positive attitude towards 'Jesus' as in the case of the story of Bartimaeus (Mark 10:47 and Luke 18:38) and in Paul's letter to the Philippians (Phil. 2:6–11). The first passage narrates the story of the blind beggar Bartimaeus calling upon Jesus and saying, 'Fili David Iesu miserere mei' ('Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me'). The invocation of the name 'Jesus' by Bartimaeus is semantically loaded within this particular context. Following a rebuke by his accolytes, Jesus cures Bartimaeus of his blindness because of his faith, which finds expression in the invocation of the Name.

Perhaps even more importantly, St Paul's letter to the Philippians stands as a very substantial testimony to the importance of both

the invocation of 'Jesus' and the 'Name of Jesus' within the Bible. In view of the importance that this passage holds in later developments of the devotion to the Name of Jesus in late medieval Europe, it is worth quoting it in full here:

qui cum in forma Dei esset non rapinam arbitratus est esse se aequalem Deo sed semet ipsum exinanivit formam servi accipiens in similitudinem hominum factus et habitu inventus ut homo humiliavit semet ipsum factus oboediens usque ad mortem mortem autem crucis propter quod et Deus illum exaltavit et donavit illi nomen super omne nomen ut in nomine Iesu omne genu flectat caelestium et terrestrium et infernorum et omnis lingua confiteatur quia Dominus Iesus Christus in gloria est Dei Patris. (Phil. 2:6–11)

(Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause, God also hath exalted him and hath given him a name which is above all names: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth: And that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father.)

The passage from the epistle establishes a critical link between the humble act of Christ's taking human shape and posits it as an essential aspect of divine agency. As part of this representation, St Paul's promotion of 'Jesus' as the name above all other names is more than fitting. The ordinary name 'Jesus' stands therefore as the quintessential symbol for divine humility and requires reciprocation by means of humility before the name on the part of all Christians: 'Ut in nomine Iesu omne genu flectat caelestium et terrestrium et infernorum'. The reverence towards the name of Jesus that St Paul requires authoritatively and firmly from the Philippians finds its logical cause in the humble gesture that God undergoes in his humanity and death on the cross. The name of 'Jesus' therefore in St Paul's passage is loaded with semantic meaning. Jesus as a name is now associated with, and indissociable from, one of God's qualities, humility.

Both passages contain in essence the seeds of conflating devotional practices that appear as early as the late eleventh century in the West. The Bartimaeus episode (Mark 10:47 and Luke 18:38) makes a case for the power of the invocation of the name 'Jesus', on its own or accompanied by brief qualifiers. The episode stands

as an *exemplum* demonstrating the power of the invocation, as the character Jesus responds to it by miraculously curing Bartimaeus on the grounds of his unreserved faith. The letter to the Philippians instead offers a theological consideration of the nature of the Trinity and the nature of the incarnation, exemplifying the importance given by God to the 'nomen Iesu', which therefore requires veneration from all of God's creation. One can trace on the one hand a continuum between the Jesus prayer and the invocation of 'Jesus' by Bartimaeus, and find on the other multiple manifestations of the influence of the reference to the power of the Name of Jesus. So, even if the simple invocation of 'Jesus' and the more complex reflection on the power of the 'Name of Jesus' initially derive from different religious attitudes, with different origins and specific idiosyncrasies, the slow process of transformation that each undergoes enables mutual influence and ultimate conflation in some late medieval texts. This chapter discusses the emergence and transformation of the devotion to the Name of Jesus from the time of Origen of Alexandria up to the twelfth century.³ It demonstrates how knowledge about the power of the Name of Jesus developed incrementally and in parallel to its devotional practice during these centuries.

Origen of Alexandria (184/185–253/254), perhaps more than most other Church Fathers, shows an ongoing interest in the name 'Jesus'.⁴ In *On the Principles (Peri Archoni)* and *Contra Celsum*, Origen shows awareness of and interest in the many names given to Christ and makes a strong case for the omnipotence of both the Father and the Son, using St Paul's letter to the Philippians (Phil. 2:10–11) as biblical evidence.⁵ In *Contra Celsum*, composed around 250, Origen debates hypothetically with a certain Celsus, who flourished in the second half of the second century.⁶ In this treatise Origen makes a case for the power of the Name, against Celsus's allegation of the use by Christians of demonic names to subdue or drive out demons.⁷ Further, in the same treatise, Origen argues for the effect the name of Jesus has on the soul, without however suggesting a particular meditative practice underlying his statements.⁸

Origen's interest in the name of Jesus culminates in his commentary and homilies on the Song of Songs, which became available to the West in the Latin translation provided by Rufinus around 410.⁹ Origen perceives the commentary as dramatic composition, imagining characters on stage coming in and out, so that his entire perception of the biblical book, and his response in the form of a commentary, are permeated by a strong performative dimension.¹⁰

While Origen is among the first commentators to offer an allegory of the soul in dialogue with God, it is one that is strongly embedded in a Christological setting. Christ in his humanity acts as mediator between the soul and God in the account of the possible union that can take place between them. Such an ambitious spiritual consideration accounts for the strong and innovative affective tone of the commentary that has been noted by translators and editors.¹¹

One should therefore not be surprised to discover Origen using a robust affective tone when discussing the humanity of Jesus, and more specifically when offering a commentary on the power of the Name of Jesus. As much as the narrative of the Song is carried by the voices of the different characters, so is the commentary performed in similar fashion, with the literal and anagogical voices moving in and out of the commentary frame, giving the commentary a crisp and vivacious speed. Origen's commentary of Cant. 1:3–4, 'Unguentum exinanitum nomen tuum' (the *Vulgate* reading is 'Oleum effusum nomen tuum'), offers an initial historical (literal) explanation followed by an exploration of its mystical potential, applied first to the church, and then to the soul. Origen's identification of the voice of the Bride as the one uttering the words 'Unguentum exinanitum nomen tuum' is instrumental in empowering the 'Name of Jesus' expression. The oily and easily spreadable consistency of the unguent becomes an apt metaphor to convey the way in which the Name will spread over the four corners of the world, emanating a sweet smell everywhere. Origen makes a careful distinction between the power of the name and that of the divine self itself, using the Song of Songs verse that makes reference to running towards God (Cant. 1:3), rather than being united to him. Although the word 'Jesus' is not used, the humanity of Jesus is stressed as part of this empowering process and plays a significant role in the emergence and transformation of a practice that has its roots in St Paul's letter to the Philippians, with its insistence on the power the Name should exert. Origen has identified a very specific function for the name, one that is concomitant with, but distinct from, the role played by the character Jesus.

Even greater importance is given to the Name in Origen's two homilies on the Song of Songs, available from the Latin translation by St Jerome:

'Unguentem effusum nomen tuum'. Propheticum sacramentum est. Tantummodo 'nomen' Iesu venit in mundum et 'unguentum' praedicatur 'effusum' [...] 'Unguentum effusum nomen tuum'.

Quomodo 'unguentum' ad effusionem suam odorem longe lateque dispergit, sic Christi nomen effusum est. In universa terra Christus nominatur, in omni mundo praedicatur Dominus meus; unguentum enim effusum est nomen eius. Nunc Moysi nomen auditur, quod prius Iudaeae tantum claudebatur angustiis; neque enim Graecorum quispiam meminit eius neque in ulla gentilium litterarum historia de illo seu ceteris scriptum aliquid invenimus. Statim ut Iesus radiavit in mundo, eduxit secum legem et prophetas et vere completum est: 'unguentum effusum est nomen tuum'.

(4. **THY NAME IS AS PERFUME POURED FORTH.** These words foretell a mystery: even so comes the name of Jesus to the world, and is 'as perfume poured forth' when it is proclaimed [...] 'Thy name is a perfume poured forth'. As perfume when it is applied scatters its fragrance far and wide, so is the name of Jesus poured forth. In every land His name is named, throughout all the world my Lord is preached; for His 'name is as perfume poured forth'. We hear the name of Moses now, though formerly it was not heard beyond the confines of Judea; for none of the Greeks makes mention of it, neither do we find anything written about him or about the others anywhere in pagan literature. But straight away, when Jesus shone upon the world, He led forth the Law and the Prophets along with Himself, and the words, 'Thy name is as perfume poured forth', were indeed fulfilled.)¹²

Other biblical passages such as the anointing at Bethany as found in Mark 14:3, John 12:3 and Luke 7:37 convey further the function Origen gives to the action of pouring forth, of spreading, of circulating and disseminating the power of the Name via the image of the perfume. The Bethany episode also qualifies the activity of pouring forth with regard to the moral qualities of the human agents acting upon it. Origen's differentiation between the sinful woman pouring forth the perfume on Jesus's feet with the one who pours it over Jesus's head, points also to a performative action linked to the name that is qualified according to one's own moral standing. Although devotional acts are not explicitly stated, nor are instructions for devotional practice provided, they nevertheless underlie Origen's reflections. Bernard of Clairvaux was inspired by Origen in his own formulation of a devotion to the humanity of Christ that uses His body as a devotional map over which one progresses according to one's own moral capacity, moving from Christ's feet up to His head as one improves in moral standing and devotional ability.¹³

Origen and several other writers contribute significantly to the transformation of attitudes and knowledge about the powerful

potential of the name 'Jesus' as an object of veneration and a devotional tool.¹⁴ However, Byzantine liturgy with its 'Office of the most sweet Jesus', marked by the persistent invocation, 'O sweet Jesus' ('Iesous glykytate'), is also instrumental to this process of transformation, making the name 'Jesus' a catalyst for an affective response. The office is attributed to the ninth-century hymnologist Theoctistus of the Studium (died around 890), disciple of Theodore of the Studium (759–826), from Constantinople. A more cautious dating based on the existence of the office in a twelfth-century manuscript, Vienna, MS Vindobon. Theol. Gr. 299 (olim 78), makes the eleventh century the *terminus ad quem* for its composition. The office in this manuscript is found among the canons of John Mauropus (around 1000–1070).¹⁵

The 'Office of the most sweet Jesus' is suffused by tenderness towards Jesus that is unparalleled in eleventh-century Western and Eastern Christianity, not to mention the early centuries. The thirty-six stanzas that comprise the hymn repeat the name 'Jesus' one hundred and sixteen times, with the first three stanzas beginning 'O most sweet Jesus', and with the qualification of 'my Jesus' in many of the other stanzas. The office invokes Jesus in a spirit of compunction and purification, asking for his mercy and benevolence, so that the 'I-voice' may find a privileged location to the right of Christ at the Last Judgement:

O most sweet Jesus,
glory of the monks!
Merciful Jesus,
joy and ornament of ascetics!
O Jesus, save me,
Jesus, my Saviour,
my Jesus so merciful!
tear me away, O Jesus my saviour
from the dragon's claws;
deliver me from his pitfalls
O Jesus my saviour.
Take me away from the infernal abyss
O Jesus my saviour,
and count me, O Jesus,
among the sheep placed to your right.¹⁶

The office posits an 'I-voice' that needs to acknowledge its sinful nature and show compunction. All of the stanzas are based on that scenario, without moving from this particular state to one of higher spiritual achievement. The overwhelming presence of the name

'Jesus' within the office fulfills two specific functions. One elicits introspection and recognition of the self's impure state, while the other, although recognising the self's state of imperfection, nevertheless triggers hope of a salvific gesture on the part of Jesus. The office as a whole therefore is not a recipe for comprehensive psychological introspection. Instead it prompts an awareness of the psychological state of the performing individual, acknowledging the need for penitence, which is the first step towards psychological transformation:

Most sweet Jesus, O Christ,
 O Jesus, open for me
 the doors of penitence,
 O Jesus, friend of men,
 welcome me, bowing in front of you
 and fervently imploring
 O Jesus, my savior,
 the forgiveness of my sins.¹⁷

The characteristic tenderness of Jesus towards humankind, and the imploring 'I-voice', point to an uneven distribution of agency between the performer and Jesus. The eight Marian stanzas (7, 11, 16, 20, 24, 28, 32, 36), evenly distributed within the office, further accentuate the intercessory mode of the office, looking to Mary as a mediator between the 'I-voice' and Jesus. The poem ends by insisting on the role of the Virgin Mary as 'theotokos', as the mother who may bend the will of Jesus so that he demonstrates his kindness to humankind.

The qualifier 'glykytate' for Jesus, in its vocative form, is used in the first line of the first six stanzas of the poem, and is repeated once again in stanza fourteen, line two.¹⁸ The evidence provided by Mary Carruthers on the use of 'dulcis' as a significant term for the history of affective piety, which translates Greek 'chrestos', may need a slight readjustment in the light of the use of the less ambiguous, more sensuous 'glykytatos' to qualify 'Jesus' in the Greek office.¹⁹ Situated temporally between Venantius Fortunatus's sixth-century hymn, *Pangue lingua gloriosi lauream certaminis*, one of the first Christian poems 'to exploit the terrible paradoxes inherent in the aesthetic quality of *dulcis/suavis*',²⁰ and the Cistercian rhetorical and effusive elaborations on the sweetness of God, the 'Office of the Most Sweet Jesus' plays therefore an as yet unacknowledged role in the history of affective piety. It also gives unprecedented weight to the role of the name 'Jesus' in

the early history of affective piety, one that manifests itself in the form of communal and liturgical affective responses. The evidence provided by the Greek office suggests the practice of affective piety was centred upon the name 'Jesus' in the Eastern Church. Although it probably manifested initially as an individual, perhaps not fully fledged practice, by the early Eastern fathers, it took the form of a liturgical practice possibly as early as the ninth century, which was to be continued successfully in the orthodox church up to this day. When considering the Eastern practice, one is confronted from the ninth century onwards with an affective piety that did not come in waves, but which rather manifested its presence in a more or less continuous manner and contributed to its spread and knowledge in the West.²¹

The liturgy played a significant role in the development of interest towards 'Jesus' and his Name. The commemoration of the circumcision celebrated by the Greeks before the sixth century was adopted in the West, as it travelled via the Mediterranean to Southern Italy, Spain, Gaul and then reached Rome to spread throughout Christendom.²² The Gospel passage chosen for the occasion of the commemoration of the circumcision allowed the preacher a discussion on the name given to the infant born in Bethlehem. The Venerable Bede (c. 673–735), in his homily upon the feast of the circumcision, assumes a performative dimension in the repetition of the name 'Jesus'.²³ Elsewhere he attributes to the name 'Jesus' some of the qualifiers found in the Old Testament linked to the notion of salvation, thus reiterating some of the literary practices developed by the early fathers.²⁴ Bede's contribution to the development of the devotion to the name 'Jesus', like the Greek 'Office to the Sweet Name of Jesus', takes place in a liturgical setting, and is therefore experienced as a communal event.

Anselm of Canterbury's (c. 1033–1109) contribution to the devotion to the Name in the West may have been influenced by earlier liturgical and homiletic uses. The *Meditatio ad concitandum timorem* is part of a collection of prayers and meditations written by Anselm between 1070 and 1080, while he was at the monastery of Bec, in Normandy.²⁵ Although the prayers and meditations are not suitable for liturgical use, their devotional tone relies heavily on the liturgical tradition of private devotion. According to Southern, the prayers are more subtle and daring than anything produced in the West up until the moment of their composition, with a heightened poetic emotion that triggered the call for a new

rise of affective piety in the West.²⁶ The prayers and meditations were written at the request of Countess Mathilda of Tuscany, who became a major agent for their dissemination.²⁷ Despite their innovative individual devotional element, Anselm does not provide substantial information about how to practise them. He only mentions in his prologue that they are meant to stir the mind out of its inertia, and that they need to be practiced in solitude, with compunction of heart.

Of all of Anselm's meditations, *Meditatio ad concitandum timorem* is the only one to give the name 'Jesus' such a prominent place as part of the meditative process. Anselm's contribution is a first, but powerful, foray into the potential the name 'Jesus' can generate. It is innovative, as it moves the name 'Jesus' out of the liturgical context to offer it for personal devotional practice. In a similar mode to the Greek 'Office to the Sweet Name of Jesus', a stress on compunction pervades the first part of the meditation. The opening lines (1–22) call upon the performer to react to and reflect upon his life, its state of sin and its unfruitful, damnable aspect. If the meditation asks for serious introspection, it does so in the larger frame of salvation history, alluding to the Day of Judgement as a threat for the unrepentant, sinful soul. The text attempts to stir up the languid soul by prompting responses to the following question: 'Quid dormitas, anima tepida et digna evomi, quid dormitas? Qui non expergiscitur, qui non tremat ad tantum tonitruum, non dormit, sed mortuus est' ('O man, lukewarm and worthy to be spewed out, why are you sleeping? He who does not rouse himself and tremble before such thunder, is not asleep but dead').²⁸ To sum up, the first part of the meditation asks its performer whether the text, in forcing a face-to-face with his own sinful nature, will succeed in generating an emotional reaction manifested by tears and groans. If performed genuinely, as an act of faith, the performer has no other option but to give in to the emotional demands made by the text, which adds: 'Auge ergo, peccator, auge superioribus aerumnis pondus, adde terrorem super terrorem, ululatum super ululatum' ('O sinner, increase the weight of wretchedness, add fear to fear, wailing to wailing').²⁹

No other text linked to the devotion to the name 'Jesus' before Anselm's works so carefully in creating a representation of emotional excess, which one needs to confront directly and personally. Anselm brings the emotional potential of the meditation to a climax, with a series of aggressive, pointed and

simple three-to-four word questions (note the repetitive use of 'quid', 'quis' and 'qui'), bringing the performer to a paroxysm of anguish:

Quid, quid tunc, quid erit tunc? Quis eruet de manibus dei? Unde mihi consilium, unde salus? Quis est qui dicitur "magni consilii angelus", qui dicitur "salvator", ut nomen eius vociferer?

(What will happen then? Who will deliver me out of the hands of God? Where shall I find counsel, where safety? Who is he who is called Angel of mighty counsel, who is called Saviour, that I may call upon his name?)³⁰

The remaining part of the meditation is entirely focused on emphasising the power of the Name. No other text prior to this one instils so much spiritual and psychological potential into the invocation of 'Jesus' as a healing practice. The meditation brings the performer to a critical psychological point that requires an immediate remedy, so as to redirect his affective energies and operate an inner transformation. This virtuosic exercise is configured to operate as part of a redemptive practice, a process of self-analysis that is aimed at redirecting the will towards spiritual matters following a process of purification.

There is no antecedent in the West for such a carefully crafted affective script that places the invocation to 'Jesus' and the devotion to his name as fundamental triggers to religious introspection. Anselm's meditation fuses the invocation of 'Jesus' from Mark 10:47 and Luke 18:38 with the reference to the power of the name from Phil. 2:6–11. The last twenty lines of *Meditatio ad concitandum timorem* combine eleven 'Jesus' invocations with five references to particular attributes given to the Name, amalgamated in a remarkable and effective fashion:

IESU, IESU, propter hoc nomen tuum fac mihi secundum hoc nomen tuum. IESU, IESU, obliviscere superbum provocantem, respice miserum invocantem. Nomen dulce, nomen delectabile, nomen confortans peccatorem et beatae spei! Quid enim est IESUS nisi salvator? Ergo IESU, propter temetipsum esto mihi IESUS.

(Jesus, Jesus, for your name's sake, deal with me according to your name. Jesus, Jesus, forget the pride which provoked you, see only the wretchedness that invokes you. Dear name, name of delight, name of comfort to the sinner, name of blessed hope. For what is Jesus except to say Saviour? So, Jesus, for your own sake, be to me Jesus.)³¹

The tone of the meditation oscillates between love and compunction, with the qualifiers 'dulce', 'delectabile' contrasting with the sterner 'confortans peccatorem' attached to the 'nomen' that follows. The blending of these two para-liturgical practices makes the meditation one of the most significant hallmarks for the development of the devotion to the Name in the West. *Meditatio ad concitandum timorem* stands as the first Jesus-centred devotional exercise for private lay use.

The way in which Anselm's complex process of accommodation and transformation of knowledge on the Name as found in the Greek 'Office to the Sweet Name of Jesus' and in the Greek tradition more broadly, escapes us, so that a direct line of borrowings and influences between Eastern and Western traditions is difficult to discern.³² Anselm's innovative contributions are nevertheless manifold: first the invocations to 'Jesus' and to the 'Name of Jesus' are inserted into a devotional programme based on triggering an affective response as a reaction to the performer's understanding of God's mercy towards his act of compunction and request for help; secondly, the form the performance takes makes it unsuitable for liturgical, communal use, and requires solitude; thirdly, although born out of Anselm's immersion within monastic life and spiritual practice, the meditation is written at the instigation of a female lay patron, for her personal use.³³

Anselmian compunction and fear of God as preconditions for the use of the Name of Jesus and the 'Jesus' invocation are textually absent from the Cistercian tradition of reverence for the Name. Bernard of Clairvaux's (1090–1153) first sermon for Christmas Eve and the first sermon for the Feast of the Circumcision show his interest in the Name, which is developed further in sermon fifteen from the Song of Songs.³⁴ The declamations by Bernard on the name of Jesus in his first sermon for Christmas Eve are inspired by the verse of the Christmas martyrology, which would have been sung at the chapter house by the monks on the morning of the Vigil, and followed by a prostration. In the sermon, Bernard insists on the power of a brief invocation, emphasising not so much the 'Jesus' invocation on its own, but rather the power of short prayers in general:

'Iesus Christus, Filius Dei, nascitur in Bethlehem Iudae'. O breve verbum, de Verbo abbreviatio, sed caelesti suavitate refertum! Laborat affectio mellifluae dulcedinis copiam latius effundere gestiens, nec inveniens verba. Tanta siquidem gratia est sermonis huius, ut continuo incipiat minus sapere, se vel 'unum iota' mutavero.

('Jesus Christ, Son of God, is born in Bethlehem in Judea.' This word, which talks about the abbreviated Word, is indeed brief, but it is filled with heavenly sweetness! Love is at pains expressing the overabundance of this honeyed sweetness, but it cannot find the words. So great is the beauty of this simple sentence that it immediately loses its taste, if I were to change but only a small part.)³⁵

One finds Bernard in a state of wonder as he considers the power that this sentence contains and the knowledge it can convey to whoever ponders over it: God's incarnation into the second person of the Trinity marks the beginning of his salvific mission, his greatest gift to humankind. Bernard here is not so much interested in analysing the rhetoric qualities of the phrase, but rather the powerful message of divine love that it contains. The verse is repeated seven times in the course of the sermon and Bernard conveys and shares in his usual carefully crafted affective style his personal response to this divine visitation. The 'oleum effusum nomen tuum' imagery of Cant. 1:3–4, which receives full treatment in sermon fifteen on the Song of Songs, plays a crucial role here in bringing up the topic of Jesus as saviour. Interestingly, Bernard's insistence on the salvific role of Jesus in his humanity is rendered exclusively as a joyful demonstration, completely devoid of considerations about human's sinfulness as the cause for this divine mission. As Bernard states, such a wonderful event leads his soul to venerate the Holy Name. The blessing of the Holy Name, which is borrowed from Psalm 102:3, is strongly focused upon the person of Jesus in this passage, and seems to suggest that Bernard has already developed and pondered the veneration to the 'Name of Jesus'.

Bernard takes an active role in discussing the function of naming in his first sermon on the Circumcision, which begins with Luke 2:21, 'Postquam consummati sunt dies octo, ut circumcideretur Puer, vocatum est nomen eius Iesus' ('And after eight days were accomplished, that the child should be circumcised, his name was called JESUS').³⁶ After regarding the act of Jesus's circumcision as another divine altruistic gesture, to be aligned with his Passion and Crucifixion, Bernard moves on to more linguistic considerations based on the semantic potential of the name, which holds special status as the name above all other names, a name that holds special power in the way it urges reverence via the physical action of kneeling. However, Bernard's religious and linguistic considerations lead him to consider further the power of the name Jesus via the

metaphor of the 'oil poured out'. All names in a sense carry the semantic load contained within the name 'Jesus', but in a scattered way:

Magna quidem nomina; sed ubi est 'nomen, quod est super omne nomen', nomen Iesu, 'in quo omne genu flectatur'? Forte in his omnibus unum illud invenies, sed expressum quodammodo et 'effusum'. Nempe ipsum est, de quo sponsa in Cantico amoris: 'Oleum', inquit, 'effusum nomen tuum'.

(Great, indeed, are these names, but where is the 'name that is above all names' the name of Jesus 'in front of which all kneel'? Perhaps in all these names you will find in fact only this unique name of Jesus, but uttered and dispersed, as it were. It is indeed this name that the bride pronounces in the song of love: 'Your name is oil poured out'.)³⁷

Bernard offers a powerful rumination upon the semantic content of the name of Jesus, one which takes a pervasive approach, firstly considering its function as the linguistic point of convergence to which all names refer, and secondly viewing it as a container, heavily loaded by God's salvific intent for humankind, which works therefore as a powerful magnet comprising all the events of the Passion and Crucifixion.

Sermon fourteen on the Song of Songs further develops various hermeneutic perspectives given by Bernard to the oil imagery and makes an essential preliminary to sermon fifteen in which the bride's name of the Song of Songs is compared to oil.

My contention is that Bernard, by aligning himself within the scheme of Christian salvific history, is fully aware of the historic moment he is inventing by creating a context and settings for a new devotional practice towards the Name. The sermon therefore reveals the mechanics that contribute to the construction of the devotion, and demonstrates on the part of its author an acute awareness of the psychological, cultural and historical paradigms that create the ideal ground for its full invention. The following passage shows Bernard to be fully aware of his own role within the history of Christian salvation in triggering the rise of this devotion. Bernard profits indeed from circumstances favourable to devotional monastic practice to contribute an aspect of knowledge on the devotion that is momentous:

Nec miror si, cum venit plenitudo temporis, facta est effusio nominis, Deo quippe quod per Ioelem promiserat adimplente, et effundente de Spiritu suo super omnem carnem, cum tale aliquid et apud hebraeos olim contigisse legam.

(Nor am I surprised if, when the time has fully come, there is an outpouring of Jesus's name as God fulfils what he has promised through Joel, an outpouring of his Spirit on all mankind, since I read that a similar event took place among the Hebrews in former times.)³⁸

However individual the practice of the devotion to the Name of Jesus can be, Bernard does not shy away from describing it as a powerful tool for the dissemination of Christian doctrine among pagans. Jesus as a name becomes a flagship for Christianity, one which when pronounced aloud, pours itself out and wins over pagans and infidels. His metaphoric use of the 'oleum effusum nomen tuum' verse in the context of the second crusade demonstrates the political and ideological implications of the veneration to the Name.³⁹ The suffering of Christ during the Passion and Crucifixion, followed by the resurrection, make possible the pouring out of Christian doctrine over the multitude that will then re-echo the words of the Song of Songs, 'oleum effusum nomen tuum'.

If the political implications linked to the spread of the veneration of the Name of Jesus are given brief but serious consideration at this stage by Bernard, they are part of a larger scheme that seems to work its way from an outward to an inward movement by means of the three properties given to the oil that figure as the major metaphorical tools used by Bernard to define the power of the name Jesus. The three properties of the oil as fuel for light production, as a food ingredient, and finally as medical unguent are discussed in detail by Bernard as part of his sermon on the practice of the devotion to the Name. The light imagery linked to the oil enables him to discuss the spread of the Christian faith throughout the four corners of the world. The food ingredient imagery allows Bernard to display his views on linguistic utterances and the way in which each of his writings, and those of his fellow monks, should be impregnated by the powerful resonance of the name Jesus, whether the latter is explicitly rendered or not. As Bernard writes:

Aridus est omnis animae cibus, si non oleo isto infunditur; insipidus est, si non hoc sale conditur. Si scribas, non sapit mihi, nisi legero ibi Iesum. Si disputes aut conferas, non sapit mihi, nisi sonuerit ibi Iesus. Iesus mel in ore, in aure melos, in corde iubilus.

(Every food of the mind is dry if it is not dipped in that oil; it is tasteless if not seasoned by that salt. Write what you will, I shall not relish it unless it tells of Jesus. Talk or argue about what you will, I shall not relish it if you exclude the name of Jesus. Jesus is to me honey in the mouth, music in the ear, a song in the heart.)⁴⁰

Each characteristic of the name addresses different aspects of the Christian life. Light serves to point out the benefits received by the Christian community and insists on its role in disseminating them further afield to the pagans. Oil as a food ingredient highlights the role of the monastic community in its production of texts devoted to strengthening the soul in its Christian beliefs fed by the pervasive meaning given to the name 'Jesus'. The final characteristic of the oil, that of medicine, which is discussed in part four of sermon fifteen, brings Bernard to address the psychological disposition of the monks and is central to his sermon in support of the devotion to the Name. At this point, the external functions that had been imparted to the Name are displaced by advice about how to use the name in a personal way. The care with which Bernard imagines specific psychological dispositions that monks may be prone to, and the judiciousness with which he advocates the use of the name with regard to each of them, are evidence of the practice of the devotion to the Name and its power as a spiritual medicine. Letting the name come into one's heart and letting it out through the mouth, Bernard says, dispels darkness and makes a cloudless sky. Bernard even contends that the invocation of the name by those who have suicidal thoughts may bring one back to a state of joyful desire for life. The final part of sermon fifteen is totally devoted to the psycho-spiritual effects that the name of 'Jesus' has on those who utter it. Bernard's concise, but precise, explanations deal with the multiple effects of using the name and show his awareness of its rich semantic potential: it may recall all the events linked to the humanity of Jesus while also invoking the divine figure due to the Trinitarian nature of the Christian God. Bernard therefore depicts the inner visual and emotional landscape that the evocation of the Name of Jesus may trigger within the mind of its performer. One should not overlook the programmatic aspect of sermon fifteen on the use of the Name by Bernard. The latter posits visuals that help configure a morally perfect human being while at the same evoking the 'all-powerful God': 'Haec omnia mihi sonant, cum insonuerit Iesus' ('All these re-echo for me at the hearing of Jesus's name').⁴¹ Sermon fifteen is less an account of Bernard's spiritual experiences triggered by the invocation of the name than a set of instructions for potential users. The shared cultural monastic assumptions between Bernard and his audience make possible a shift from 'I' to 'you', without having to be too prescriptive.

Medical terminology is aptly used to construct the dynamics that define the soul's engagement with the performance of the name and its multiple referents:

Sumo itaque mihi exempla de homine, et auxilium a potente: illa tamquam pigmentarias species, joc tamquam unde acuam eas; et facio confectionem, cui similem medicorum nemo facere possit.

(Because he is man I strive to imitate him; because of his divine power I lean upon him. The examples of his human life I gather like medicinal herbs; with the aid of his power I blend them, and the result is a compound like no pharmacist can produce.)⁴²

Bernard suggests the use of the name of Jesus as a container for the soul, so that it can hide within it as in a receptacle, which will act both as preventative and corrective medicine. The name offers a cure to one's own affections, guards against their corruption, or returns them to wholeness if they have been damaged by one of the deadly sins.

Following the accretion of spiritual benefits one should come out of one's own contemplative and interior world and speak words inspired by the name during the canonical hours. The Bernardine configuration of the devotion to the Name of Jesus takes place within the enclosed walls of the monastery and seems to be confined to use by monks. Despite that confinement, sharing his knowledge of the devotion's spiritual power with his Cistercian readership has a significant bearing on the way in which it will spread in the West.

The particular intimate monastic setting that Bernard uses as context for his delivery enables a non-prescriptive tone that possibly veils in part the programmatic nature of his writing. Added to the powerful affective tone that is one of Bernard's stylistic characteristics, one could easily remain oblivious of the depth of his reflections upon the timely use of the devotion to the Name of Jesus in his day and age. If Bernard posits *experientia* as fundamental to his investigation of the religious life, and makes the Song of Songs the ultimate object for its exploration, nevertheless he contributes a carefully planned programme for the practice of the devotion to the Name.

My exploration of the emergence of a new religious attitude towards the name of Jesus brings me to the following conclusions. The name 'Jesus' used on its own had no particular appeal as an object of veneration to the apostolic fathers and the early Christians. The transformation towards veneration, followed by the emergence of a devotional practice, was slow and haphazard, so far as we can tell. Perhaps more interesting, existing evidence suggests the affective response to the name of Jesus had its first lease of life in the Eastern liturgical context, possibly as early as

the ninth century, so that our presuppositions about the emergence of affective piety in the eleventh century require a serious rethink. Anselm's *Meditatio ad concitandum timorem* remains of course a very important witness to a personal form of devotion outside of a monastic setting for a lay female audience. Yet, however significant it may be for our understanding of affective piety, the existence of the Greek 'Office of the Most Sweet Jesus', which expresses an astounding tenderness towards Jesus, demonstrates that affective piety can be codified within a liturgical context and therefore performed within a communal setting. It also reveals that its practice was not initially conceived to satisfy the needs of female lay or religious individuals.

Finally, although I am not trying to deny Bernard's participation in a form of religious experience in which the reformation of affective dispositions stands at the core of his concerns, it seems to me that too pointed a focus on this aspect may deter us from understanding the broader purpose behind his sermons and other prose texts. My reading of sermon fifteen demonstrates that Bernard was very much aware that cultural and political circumstances were ideal for triggering an interest in the devotion to the Name, which fulfilled several functions. When used communally, the repetition of the name 'Jesus' serves to instil fear in pagans and is used as a rallying banner for all Christians. The name also serves to assess the spiritual quality of theological writings and speaks in favour of a theology that combines faith in the Name and rational exploration. Thirdly, the personal devotion to the Name that Bernard advocates as the third aspect of his sermon shows his awareness of the significance of affective piety centred on the Name.

Therefore I would like to suggest that we read Bernard's contribution as one which is primarily concerned to *promote* performative engagement with the devotion to the Name of Jesus. Although affectively charged, Bernard's writings offer aspects of knowledge about the devotion that engage with past usage and transformation and that attempt to circumscribe a multiplicity of functions. The erroneous attributions to Bernard of a large number of hymns, prose texts and meditations on the Name of Jesus, including the well-known 'Iesu dulcis memoria', is recognition of his major influence in developing the devotion. Yet, unlike Anselm, we have no evidence that Bernard himself provided poetic texts intended for performative use. In the context of this study on the development of the devotion to the Name of Jesus, Bernard's contribution is more

pertinent if considered as part of a well-conceived scheme promoting and refining the devotion to the Name of Jesus.

Notes

- 1 *Biblia Sacra. Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, 2 vols, ed. R. Weber (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1969; 2nd edn 1975). All following references to the Bible are to this edition. English translations are from the following internet page: www.seebs.net/bible.cgi (accessed 25 July 2014).
- 2 I am summarising I. Hausherr, *The Name of Jesus*, trans. C. Cummings, Cistercian Studies Series, 44 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1978), pp. 5–12.
- 3 This chapter is part of a book project tracing the development of the devotion to the Name of Jesus in England and beyond from the eleventh century up to the end of the fifteenth century. Its tentative title is *Name Above Names: Devotions to the Name of Jesus in Late Medieval England*.
- 4 St Irenaeus (early second century–202), Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius's reflections on language's difficulty at conveying the reality of the divine have a bearing on medieval understanding of the power of the name of Jesus. For Irenaeus, see Hausherr, *The Name of Jesus*, pp. 18–20.
- 5 See Hausherr, *The Name of Jesus*, pp. 20–9; see also Origen, *On First Principles: Being Koetschau's Text of the De Principiis translated into English, together with an Introduction and Notes*, ed. G. W. Butterworth (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1936), p. 25.
- 6 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, trans. H. Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953; 3rd edn 1979).
- 7 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I.6, p. 10.
- 8 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I.67, p. 62.
- 9 See Origène, *Commentaire sur le Cantique des Cantiques I (Livres I–II): Texte de la version latine de Rufin*, ed. L. Brésard and H. Crouzel, in collaboration with M. Borret, Sources Chrétiennes, 375 (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1991); see also Origène, *Commentaire sur le Cantique des Cantiques II (Livres III–IV): Texte de la version latine de Rufin*, ed. L. Brésard and H. Crouzel, in collaboration with M. Borret, Sources Chrétiennes, 376 (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1991). See also *The Song of Songs: Commentary and Homilies*, trans. R. P. Lawson (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1957).
- 10 For a detailed study of Origen's commentary within the larger tradition, see A. E. Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), pp. 20–48; see also A. W. Astell, *The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press,

- 1990). For a close study of Origen's commentary and the homilies, see J. C. King, *Origen on the Song of Songs as the Spirit of Scripture: The Bridegroom's Perfect Marriage-Song*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
- 11 See Origène, *Commentaire I*, p. 53.
- 12 See *The Song of Songs*, trans. Lawson, pp. 272–3; *Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der Ersten Drei Jahrhunderte. Origenes*, vol. 8, Homilien zu Samuel I, Zum Hohelied und zu den Propheten, Kommentar zum Hohelied in Rufins und Hieronymus' Übersetzungen, ed. W. A. Baehrens (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1925), pp. 33–4.
- 13 See M. Simon, 'Saint Bernard à l'ombre du Christ: une mystique de l'incarnation rédemptrice', *Collectanea Cisterciensia*, 72 (2010), 111–16.
- 14 See Hausherr, *The Name of Jesus*, pp. 18–61.
- 15 See S. Salaville, 'Un office grec du "Très Doux Jésus" antérieur au "Jubilus" dit de Saint Bernard', *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, 25 (1949), 247–59; see also Hausherr, *The Name of Jesus*, pp. 79–86.
- 16 See Salaville, 'Un office grec', p. 251; the English translation, which is mine, is based on Salaville's French translation of the Greek text.
- 17 Salaville, 'Un office grec', p. 252, stanza 5.
- 18 I am grateful to Prof. A. F. Morand (Université Laval), who provided me with this information in a private correspondence dated 18 February 2014; 'glykytatos' is the superlative, meaning 'the most sweet', the vocative case is 'glykytate'.
- 19 See M. Carruthers, 'Sweetness', *Speculum*, 81 (2006), 999–1013.
- 20 Carruthers, 'Sweetness', 1012.
- 21 See Carruthers, 'Sweetness', 1008, who quotes F. J. E. Raby, *A History of Christian Latin Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), p. 419. In her defence, and that of Raby, one must acknowledge that their focus is on the Western tradition.
- 22 See M. Viller, with the assistance of J. Guibert and F. Cavallera (eds), *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité Ascétique et Mystique: Doctrine et Histoire*, vol. 8 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1974), col. 1114; also available at www.dictionnairedespiritualite.com/ (accessed 25 July 2014).
- 23 See Bede, *Homiliae*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL, 122 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1955); see also Bede, *Bede the Venerable: Homilies on the Gospels*, trans. L. T. Martin, Cistercian Studies Series, 110 and 111 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1991).
- 24 *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, 8, makes reference to homily five; see col. 1114.
- 25 See *S. Anselmi Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi Opera Omnia*, vol. 3, ed. F. S. Schmitt (Edinburgh: T. Nelson et Filios, 1946); for the English translation, see *The Prayers and Meditations of St Anselm*, trans. B. Ward (London: Penguin Books, 1973).

- 26 See *Prayers and Meditations*, Foreword, pp. 9–15.
- 27 See *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 10.
- 28 *S. Anselmi*, p. 77, lns 27–8; *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 222, lns 33–58.
- 29 *S. Anselmi*, p. 78, lns 63–4; *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 223, lns 80–1.
- 30 *S. Anselmi*, p. 79, lns 77–9; *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 223–4, lns 100–3.
- 31 *S. Anselmi*, p. 79, lns 83–7; *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 224, lns 108–12.
- 32 For an attempt at discerning such a route, see K. Ware, 'The Holy Name of Jesus in east and west: the Hesychasts and Richard Rolle', *Sobornost*, 4:2 (1982), 163–84; see also R. E. Sinkewicz, 'An early Byzantine commentary on the Jesus prayer: introduction and edition', *Medieval Studies*, 49 (1987), 208–20; see J. Munitiz, 'A Greek "Anima Christi" prayer', *Eastern Churches Review*, 6 (1974), 170–80. I am grateful to J. Hirsch, from Georgetown University, for pointing my attention to Munitiz's article. I am also grateful to him for sharing his interests in exploring Eastern influences on Western spirituality, which in the case of the devotion to the Name are still to be fully understood.
- 33 Although written for Mathilda, the meditations could of course have been used also within Anselm's monastic milieu.
- 34 Bernard de Clairvaux, *Sermons pour l'année*, vol. I.1 (Avent et Vigile de Noël), trans. M.-I. Huille, intro. M. Lamy, notes A. Solignac. Sources Chrétiennes, 480 (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 2004); Bernard de Clairvaux, *Sermons pour l'année*, vol. I.2 (De Noël à la Purification de la Vierge), trans. M.-I. Huille, intro. M. Lamy, notes A. Solignac, Sources Chrétiennes, 481 (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 2004). The English translation, which is mine, is based on the Latin and the French facing translation.
- 35 Bernard de Clairvaux, *Sermons pour l'année*, vol. I.1, pp. 198–9.
- 36 Bernard de Clairvaux, *Sermons pour l'année*, vol. I.2, p. 92.
- 37 Bernard de Clairvaux, *Sermons pour l'année*, vol. I.2, pp. 98–9.
- 38 *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, vol. 1, ed. J. Leclercq, C. H. Talbot and H. M. Rochais (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1957), p. 83; Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux*, vol. 2, *Song of Songs I*, trans. K. Walsh (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1971), p. 106.
- 39 For Bernard's involvement in crusading ideology, see his letters to the eastern Franks and Bavarians, written in 1146, as well as his letter to the duke and people of Bohemia, written in 1147, see Bernard of Clairvaux, 'Epistolae', *PL*, 183, cols 565–7; for a modern English translation, see L. and J. Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: Idea and Reality, 1095–1274* (London: Edward Arnold, 1981), pp. 95–6; Bernard of Clairvaux, 'Epistolae', *PL*, 182, cols 652–4; for an English translation, see Riley-Smith, *The Crusades*, pp. 97–8; see also Bernard of Clairvaux, 'De laude novae militiae', *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, vol. 3,

- ed. J. Leclercq, C. H. Talbot and H. M. Rochais (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1957–74), pp. 214–15 ; for an English translation, see Riley-Smith, *The Crusades*, pp. 101–3.
- 40 *S. Bernardi Opera*, vol. 1, p. 86; Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux*, vol. 2, p. 110.
- 41 *S. Bernardi Opera*, vol. 1, p. 87; Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux*, vol. 2, p. 111.
- 42 *S. Bernardi Opera*, vol. 1, p. 87; Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux*, vol. 2, p. 11.

7 'Ther are bokes ynowe': texts and the ambiguities of knowledge in *Piers Plowman*'

Kath Stevenson

Let the mind, therefore, know itself, and not seek itself as if it were absent; let it fix the attention of its will, by which it formerly wandered over many things, upon itself, and think of itself. (Augustine, *De trinitate*, X.viii.11)²

'[T]her are bokes ynowe' (B.xii.17), states the personification Ymaginatif to Will, the narrator of William Langland's complex, hortatory fourteenth-century allegory, *Piers Plowman*.³ The implications of his comment have a profound resonance throughout the poem, raising questions as to the nature and validity of textual authority, the pre-eminence or otherwise of knowledge over experience, the role of learning in Christian salvation and, ultimately, the spiritual legitimacy of a life spent 'med[ding] with makynge' (B.xii.16). Langland's anxious engagement with these issues is manifested throughout his poem, and forms an integral part of the work that J. A. W. Bennett once described as 'the supreme English testament of Christian faith'.⁴

How then did Langland, a poet and clerk steeped in books and learning,⁵ whose poem nevertheless suggests a paradoxical ambivalence over the efficacy of texts, resolve these issues? There are, it seems, two interwoven strands of *Piers Plowman* in which these concerns are explored. The first is the poet's concern with the role of abstract knowledge in the scheme of salvation, which is painstakingly considered in the often frustrating experiences of Langland's initially stumbling, stubborn, and at times wilfully obtuse dreamer.⁶ The second, more complex, issue is the pertinence of the conclusions reached by Will for the project in which the poet is himself involved: it is this reflexive examination that engages most interestingly with the question of knowledge, as it is conveyed by texts, in *Piers Plowman*.