



# Bernard of Clairvaux: On the Spirituality of Relationship

*John R. Sommerfeldt*

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## **Bernard of Clairvaux: On the Spirituality of Relationship** John R. Sommerfeldt

Bernard was surely one of the most important leaders of Christendom in the first half of the twelfth century. Indeed, it could be argued that, in the last half of his life, he was the most influential person in Europe. How is it that a monk dedicated to withdrawal from the world could have so much influence on the world? This book argues that Bernard could lead Europe politically, ecclesiastically, and spiritually because his life embodied so many ideals and values of his age, some of which had not crystallized until his coming. According to the author, "Bernard's ecclesiology is comprehensive. His views of the Church and of society include a sophisticated and splendidly thorough analysis of the functions and virtues of monks, clerics, and lay folk. And he does not neglect those whose theological positions or ecclesial status put them outside of the main stream of western and Christian society." Bernard's enthusiasm for all orders in the Church and society was matched by his confidence in the positive response of the members of each to God's invitation to perfection. Bernard was confident that a loving response to God's loving initiative will lead each person to his or her goal of happiness, no matter what order to which he or she belongs, no matter what path he or she follows.

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