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FOR AND
AGAINST
ABELARD

THE INVECTIVE OF
BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX AND
BERENGAR OF POITIERS



Edited and Translated by
R. M. Thomson and
M. Winterbottom

FOR AND AGAINST ABELARD

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OF CLAIRVAUX AND
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Preface and Acknowledgements

In 1980 RMT, inspired by the presentation of Berengar's *Apologia* in David Luscombe's *The School of Peter Abelard*, edited his works with a substantial introduction attempting an explanation for their unusual features. After MW and RMT had edited and translated the last of William of Malmesbury's original works in 2015, they sought a shorter but similar enterprise, and RMT proposed a new edition plus translation of Berengar's satirical works. After discussion, it was decided to add to them the letters of Abelard and Bernard which revolved around the Council of Sens, and which to some extent explain Berengar's vituperation. MW is responsible for the texts and translations; for Berengar's works he has recollated the manuscripts. RMT is primarily responsible for the Introduction and notes to the translation. But each of us has visited the work of the other, and so the whole exercise is a joint one.

The editors wish to thank Sigbjørn Sønnesyn for help with Bernard's difficult Latin, and Constant Mews for patiently answering a barrage of technical queries about Bernard's theology and logic. The whole text was read by Profs Julia Barrow, Danuta Shanzer and David Luscombe. Finally, we wish to thank Richard Barber for his interest in accepting and reshaping the text for Boydell Medieval Texts.

Abbreviations

<i>Apol.</i>	Berengar, <i>Apologia contra Sanctum Bernardum</i>
BnF	Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France
<i>Cart.</i>	Berengar, <i>Epistola contra Cartusienses</i>
CCCM	<i>Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis</i>
CCSL	<i>Corpus Christianorum Series Latina</i>
Clanchy, <i>Abelard</i>	M. Clanchy, <i>Abelard: A Medieval Life</i> (Oxford, 1997)
CPL	<i>Clavis Patrum Latinorum</i> , ed. E. Dekkers (3rd edn, Steenbrugge, 1995)
CSEL	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i>
Luscombe, <i>Letters</i>	D. E. Luscombe, <i>The Letter Collection of Peter Abelard and Heloise</i> (Oxford, 2003)
Luscombe, <i>School</i>	D. E. Luscombe, <i>The School of Peter Abelard</i> (Cambridge, 1969)
MGH	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i>
<i>Mim.</i>	Berengar, <i>Epistola ad Episcopum Mimatensem</i>
PL	<i>Patrologia Latina</i>
RB	<i>Revue Bénédictine</i>
SBO	<i>Sancti Bernardi Opera Omnia</i> , ed. J. Leclercq, C. H. Talbot and H. Rochais (8 vols, Rome, 1957–77)
Scott James	<i>The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux</i> , trans. Bruno Scott James (London, 1953). Repr. with a new introduction by Beverly Maine Kienzle (Kalamazoo MI, 1998).

ABBREVIATIONS

- Stegmüller, *Repertorium* F. Stegmüller, *Repertorium Biblicum Medii Aevi* (11 vols, Madrid, 1950–80)
- Thomson, 'Berengar' R. M. Thomson, 'The Satirical Works of Berengar of Poitiers: An Edition with Introduction', *Mediaeval Studies* 42 (1980), 89–138; repr. in R. M. Thomson, *England and the 12th-Century Renaissance* (Aldershot, 1998), XIII, and additional notes, 4.
- Walther, *Proverbia* *Proverbia Sententiaeque Latinitatis Medii Aevi*, ed. H. Walther (6 vols, Göttingen, 1963–69)

Introduction

On 2 June 1140 or, more probably 25 May 1141, the Council of Sens was held.¹ Originally called by Archbishop Henry in order to solemnly display the relics of Saint Stephen and to deal with a few other minor matters, no other event could more arrestingly show the importance of clerical intellectuals in the Western European culture of the time, or the power of their writing. The Council did not enact reforming legislation; in fact, it was as famous for what it did *not* do as for what it was expected to do. Around it swirled a flurry of mandatory and condemnatory rhetoric, mainly from the pen of the most persuasive and, in some ways the most conservative, churchman of the day: Bernard of Clairvaux.²

In 1140 William of Saint Thierry, abbot of Cistercian Signy, a close friend of Bernard, had begun to read some works of Peter Abelard, notably his *Theologia* ‘*Scholarium*’ and *Sententiae*; his reaction to these works was so negative that in Lent of that year he wrote both to Bernard and to the papal legate in France, Geoffrey, bishop of Chartres, warning them of the threat posed by Abelard’s doctrines. He sent them the text of the two works to which he objected, and his own *Disputatio* criticising them.³ Bernard was so perturbed by the content of these that he began, in effect, a pamphlet war against Abelard, addressed to the pope and sundry cardinals. In reaction, Abelard appealed to Henry Sanglier, archbishop of Sens, calling for a council at which he could clear his name in debate with Bernard. As mentioned, a council was already imminent, and the great and good of the French Church and realm, from the king down, were to be present. But at that place, when the charges were read out, Abelard refused to debate them, instead appealing to Rome. The proceedings of the Council were halted, and modern

¹ On the Council of Sens, see Luscombe, *School*, esp. ch. 4, and J. Marenbon, *The Philosophy of Peter Abelard* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 26–32. Constant Mews argues for a revised date of 1141 in his ‘The Council of Sens (1141): Abelard, Bernard, and the Fear of Social Upheaval’, *Speculum* 77 (2002), 342–82.

² On Bernard, see E. Vacandard, *Vie de Saint Bernard, Abbé de Clairvaux* (4th edn, Paris, 1927); Watkin Williams, *Bernard of Clairvaux* (Manchester, 1935); P. Dinzelbacher, *Bernhard von Clairvaux: Leben und Werk des berühmten Zisterziensers* (Darmstadt, 1998). On Abelard, see Clanchy, *Abelard*; C. Mews, *Peter Abelard* (London, 1995), and *Abelard and Heloise* (Oxford, 2005).

³ The letter is edited by P. Verdeyen in CCCM 89A, pp. 13–15, the *Disputatio* at pp. 17–59.

historians have wondered why the experienced and charismatic theologian, then in his early sixties, refused this chance to show his prowess. But Constant Mews has shown that Bernard had by this time so influenced the bishops present that Abelard must have known that he was very unlikely to get a fair hearing, let alone a favourable verdict.⁴ Bernard's own reaction was to renew his literary warfare against Abelard with more letters to Rome, and it was in this context that an otherwise unknown former pupil of Abelard, one Berengar 'of Poitiers', wrote his *Apology*, a satire in defence of his teacher against the great Cistercian abbot. Nothing succeeds like mockery, and Berengar was later to claim that copies of his work were to be found all over France and Italy.⁵

Bernard's Invective

But Bernard's letters were immensely popular and influential, not least because of their white-hot language. Bernard was not a literary satirist by vocation, but he was Europe's best and best-known writer of satirical invective. His most famous productions in this vein were Letter 1, to his nephew Robert against the Cluniacs, his *Apology to William*, again against the Cluniacs, and Letter 190, against Abelard. We have chosen to edit and translate the last of these, together with Bernard's other effusions relating to Abelard and Sens, as well as Berengar's whole surviving satirical output: his *Apology* and his Letters to the Carthusians and to the bishop of Mende. It is in the light of Bernard's literary invective that we have to understand Berengar's *Apology*, the centrepiece of this volume.

The late eleventh and twelfth centuries were Europe's first age of pamphlet warfare, of invective and satire.⁶ The perceived failure, or at least hypocrisy, of its

⁴ Mews, 'The Council'; J. Leclercq, 'Les formes successives de la lettre-traité de Saint Bernard contre Abélard', *RB* 78 (1968), 87–105; repr. in his *Recueil d'études sur Saint Bernard et ses écrits*, 4 (Rome, 1987), pp. 265–83.

⁵ See below, *Mim.*, 16.

⁶ On which see e.g. D. Wiesen, *Jerome as a Satirist* (Ithaca NY, 1964); P. Lehmann, *Die Parodie im Mittelalter* (2nd edn, Stuttgart, 1963); J. Yunck, *The Lineage of Lady Meed: The Development of Mediaeval Venality Satire* (Notre Dame IND, 1963), J. Yunck, 'Economic Conservatism, Papal Finance, and the Medieval Satires on Rome', *Mediaeval Studies* 23 (1961), 334–51, repr. in *Change in Medieval Society*, ed. S. Thrupp (New York, 1964), pp. 72–85; J. Benzinger, *Invectiva in Romam: Romkritik im Mittelalter vom 9. bis 12. Jahrhundert* (Lübeck, 1968); H. Schüppert, *Kirchenkritik in der lateinischen Lyrik des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1972); U. Kindermann, *Satyra. Die Theorie der Satire im Mittellateinischen. Vorstudie zu einer Gattungsgeschichte* (Erlanger Beiträge zur Sprach- und Kunstwissenschaft 58: Nürnberg, 1978); R. M. Thomson, 'The Origins of Latin Satire in Twelfth-Century Europe', *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 13 (1978), 78–83, repr. in *England and the Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (Aldershot, 1998), XI; A. Murray, *Reason and Society in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 71–7 and following; V. I. J. Flint, 'The *Historia Regum Britanniae* of Geoffrey of Monmouth; Parody and its Purpose', *Speculum* 54 (1979), 447–68; J. Mann, 'Satiric Subject and Satiric Object in Goliardic literature', *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 15 (1980), 63–86; I. M. Resnick, "'Risus Monasticus": Laughter and Medieval Monastic Culture', *RB* 97 (1987), 90–100; R. E. Pepin, *Literature of Satire in the Twelfth Century: A Neglected Medieval Genre* (Leiston NY, 1988); M. Bayliss, *Parody in the Middle Ages: The Latin Tradition* (Ann Arbor MI, 1996);

new institutions – the new monastic Orders and the reformed papacy – gave rise to the phenomenon, and it was shaped by the study of grammar and rhetoric in the new Schools. Bernard may not have had an advanced, that is to say scholastic, education, but he was a master of biblically based Latin. When he chose to be satirical, it was not in the classical tradition of Juvenal or Persius, yet it was powerful and pervasive. Who can forget, in his *Apologia* of 1127, his satire on the Cluniacs, their church architecture adorned with unclean monkeys and misshapen beasts?⁷ Or his image, more than once employed, of Abelard as Goliath in full armour, supported by his page Arnold of Brescia?⁸

In the letters we have chosen for this volume,⁹ Bernard of Clairvaux inveighs against Abelard in ways that can be instructively compared to the invective directed by Berengar against Bernard. This may give us some idea of what Bernard might have said in answer to Berengar.

Bernard lacks, or chooses not to employ, Berengar's satirical colours. There is nothing in his letters comparable to the latter's wickedly funny account of the Council of Sens (*Apol.* 9 and following), of which Bernard naturally gives a very different picture (Letter 189. 4). Equally, he does not try to emulate Berengar's pungent characterisations, like that of the Roman cardinal, 'a fat camel, given a hunched back by a Gallic argument', who 'leaps over the Alps to inquire what is to be loved, as if he had no one at hand to give him a clue on this point' (*Apol.* 75). He does not make much display of his own learning, as Berengar does in several extended passages and in frequent quotations from or echoes of the classical poets. He does not spend time on literary criticism, unlike Berengar, for whom Bernard's stylistic shortcomings seem almost as offensive as his other faults.

For all these differences, though, Bernard builds up a formidably unfavourable portrait of Abelard. Like Berengar, but even more so, he is quick to draw parallels from the Bible, of which, says Watkin Williams, 'we need say no more than that they are embedded in his writings like shells in Purbeck marble'.¹⁰ To give one example (already mentioned above) from among many, Abelard comes forth as Goliath, accompanied by his squire Arnold of Brescia (Letter 189. 3; compare 330) to challenge

R. M. Thomson, 'Satire, Irony, and Humour in William of Malmesbury', in *Rhetoric and Renewal in the Latin West 1100–1540: Essays in Honour of John O. Ward*, ed. C. J. Mews, C. J. Nederman and R. M. Thomson (Turnhout, 2003), pp. 115–27; L. Kendrick, 'Medieval Satire', in *A Companion to Satire: Ancient and Modern*, ed. R. Quintero (Oxford, 2007), pp. 52–69. On Bernard of Clairvaux in satire, see J. Berlioz, 'Saint Bernard dans la littérature satirique, de l'*Ysengrimus* aux *Balivernes des Courtisans* de Gautier Map (XIIe–XIIIe siècles)', in *Vies et Légendes de Saint Bernard de Clairvaux*, ed. P. Arabeyre, J. Berlioz and P. Poirrier (Commentarii Cistercienses. Textes et Documents 5: Cîteaux, 1993).

⁷ *Apologia ad Guillelmum*: SBO 3. 81–108; much translated and anthologised.

⁸ See below, Letter 189. 3.

⁹ Nos 188–90 were written before the Council, 192, 193, 330 and 331 afterwards. We might also have included 332–6 and 338, but they are largely repetition of those we did include.

¹⁰ Watkin Williams, p. 368.

Bernard to single combat.¹¹ Classical echoes are far less frequent; but Abelard is seen as hydra-like: when one heresy is cut off, seven and more replace it (Letter 331).

Abelard is treated condescendingly (Letter 190. 2, 6; 331: ‘our theologian’), and his claims to philosophical subtlety are ironically dismissed (190. 5: ‘O second Aristotle’). He thinks that he knows everything (190. 1) and that he is capable of teaching the profoundest mysteries (190. 18), thinks that he is learned though he is not (190. 3), thinks that he knows more than others (190. 3–4). He is mad (190. 1, 4 [‘his ravings (I will not say his disputations)’], 24), laughs at wisdom as though it were folly (190. 21: ‘listen to his guffaws’), vomits up slander and invective (190. 23). But that does not mean he is not dangerous. His works are full of sacrilege and error (188. 2; 190. 2), ‘profane novelties of words and meaning’ (192): new doctrines (330), a new gospel (189. 2, 13), a new faith (189. 2; 330), a new heresy (190. 26). (Note that ‘new’ or ‘newness’ in the twelfth century could easily be negative (‘strange’), the very opposite of the word’s connotations in our own days.) Indeed, Abelard is a heretic to rival the famous heretics of yore, Arius (190. 2) and Pelagius (190. 23, 25); Nestorius is added in 192 (compare 330 and 331).

All this horrifies Bernard (190. 8: ‘I shudder even to hear the words, and I think that very shudder is sufficient to refute them’). He may pretend to conduct a dialogue with Abelard (190. 11–12), arguing against him at closer quarters, more technically and at a higher level than Berengar’s defence (e.g. 190. 3–7, 19–20). He calls him a blasphemer (190. 8, 12, 18), one unredeemed (190. 13), a man of perdition (190. 17), one who ‘either does not know of the Gospel or thinks it a fable’ (190. 9). He may coin cutting epigrams (e.g. 190. 10 ‘Sweating away here at making Plato into a Christian, he proves himself a heathen’), or abuse his enemy in extended passages of invective (notably in 192 and 193).

There is no doubt here, as there may be with Berengar, of the sincerity and seriousness of what is being said. Manner matches content, but does not overwhelm it. Whereas one may think that Berengar is sometimes merely expressing his indignation, Bernard is definitely trying to elicit a certain reaction from his addressees, as well as from the wider audience who were expected to read his letters.

Berengar ‘of Poitiers’

Nothing¹² is known of Berengar ‘of Poitiers’ apart from what can be learned from his own writings and their manuscript tradition.¹³ He is called *Pictavensis*

¹¹ See the Notes to the Translations for the detailed biblical allusions.

¹² What follows is an updated but also drastically shortened version of RMT’s 1980 article.

¹³ E. Vacandard, ‘Bérenger de Poitiers’, *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, 2 (1905), cols 720–2; O. Lottin, ‘Pierre Bérenger’, *Dictionnaire d’histoire de théologie et de géographie ecclésiastiques*, 8 (1935),

in two of the five manuscripts that contain collections of his works.¹⁴ Even so, *Pictavensis* is still vague enough to mean that Berengar was either born in or a temporary resident of Poitou. The meagre details of his career suggest the second alternative. These details consist of his contacts with people and places mentioned in his works. His earliest known writing, the *Apology*, names Abelard and Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, and contains extracts from the writings of both. Not long after this he wrote an open letter to the Carthusians, with particular reference to the community of the Grande Chartreuse itself. At about the same time he wrote a tract, now lost, against the allegedly heretical doctrines of a certain Benedict, monk of Marseilles.¹⁵ Later he sent a letter to Bishop William and the canons of Mende, in which he mentioned the cathedral of Maguelone and the canons of the collegiate church of Saint-Ruf at Avignon.¹⁶ The canons of Mende had been attacking him for his criticisms of their way of life. Evidently, for some time prior to the writing of this letter, he had been living in southern France, but the names in it suggest the Rhone valley and the frontier between Languedoc and Provence, not Poitou. Nor does it seem that he was born in Poitou. Near the beginning of the *Apology* he accuses Bernard of having once composed worldly songs. Of this a witness is *alumna tui, patria nostri sermonis* ('the foster mother of your speech, the homeland of ours', *Apol.* 2). Now Bernard was born in Fontaines-lès-Dijon, on the edge of modern Dijon, but grew up and was educated well to the north, in Châtillon-sur-Seine, from c. 1098 until 1111. So Berengar was born in Champagne, though his later years were spent further to the south.

Berengar's Writings

The *Apology* was written following the Council of Sens of 1140 or 1141, the latest datable event mentioned in it being the papal condemnation of Abelard on 16 July 1141.¹⁷ The fiercely passionate tone of the tract, which aims to discredit Saint Bernard for his actions against Abelard at the Council, suggests that it was written soon after this date, and so does the fact that Berengar fails to mention Abelard's death, which occurred on 21 April 1142. In the letter to the bishop of Mende Berengar refers to Abelard as *praeceptor meus* ('my teacher', *Mim.* 8), and he describes himself as having been *adulescens* ('a young man', *Mim.* 8), his beard not yet grown, at the time of the Council of Sens. Since he mentions this in

cols 379–80; R. Klibansky, 'L'épître de Bérenger de Poitiers contre les Chartreux', *Revue du moyen âge latin* 2 (1946), 314–16; Luscombe, *School*, pp. 29–49.

¹⁴ BnF lat. 2923 (=B), f. 43, and Bruges, Stadsbibl. 398 (=E), f. 17v.

¹⁵ *Mim.*, 18.

¹⁶ *Mim.*, 21.

¹⁷ *Apol.*, 23.

order to excuse his rash defence of Abelard, it should be received with caution, but allowing for exaggeration we might suppose him to have been in his late teens or early twenties in 1140 or 1141. In the same letter he describes the motives that led him to write the *Apology*: ‘I was minded, being a schoolboy, often to declaim on a made-up topic. But now that there opened the fair prospect of engagement in a real-life contest, I applied myself to getting Abelard acquitted and the abbot’s audacity refuted.’¹⁸ In other words, before and perhaps still in 1140–41, Berengar was a student of Abelard, presumably spending some time at Paris.

His only other (approximately) datable work is the same letter to Bishop William of Mende, written after the *Apology* (which it mentions), and before c. 1150, the date of the bishop’s death.¹⁹ Since he implies in the letter that he is a good deal older and wiser than he was when he wrote the *Apology*, it is reasonable to presume that the letter was not written long before the middle of the century. Two other works are mentioned in it, neither of which can be precisely dated, but as he was so young when he wrote the *Apology*, they were perhaps written after it. One of these is the *Letter against the Carthusians*, the other the lost treatise *De incarnatione Christi* against the canon Benedict.²⁰ In the letter to the bishop of Mende Berengar calls himself a *saecularis* (‘secular’, *Mim.* 9).²¹ Nothing further is known about what office he held or in what church.

The *Apology* is the only one of Berengar’s writings that has attracted attention from modern scholars, and it was probably always Berengar’s best-known piece.²² Fifty years ago D. E. Luscombe described and analysed it as a source for the proceedings at the Council of Sens, as a defence of Abelard’s teachings, and as an indicator of the kind of reaction displayed by Abelard’s *fautores* (‘partisans’) to his harassment by those whom he and they saw as envious and ignorant.²³ Although its tone alternates between the satirical and serious, *in toto* it must be described as a satire, although it has usually been ignored by modern studies of medieval protest and parody.

Berengar begins by damning Bernard with faint praise. He accuses him of having written licentious songs in the past, and of using his eloquence to distract attention from his false doctrine. Then comes the famous, ribald description of the proceedings at the Council, at which the prelates present are imagined drunk and

¹⁸ *Mim.*, 18.

¹⁹ The precise date of Bishop William’s death is unknown, but his successor Adalbert was elected in 1151.

²⁰ *Mim.*, 18.

²¹ A. Boureau, ‘Hypothèses sur l’émergence lexicale et théorique de la catégorie de séculier au XIIe siècle’, in *Le clerc séculier au Moyen Âge* (Publications de la Sorbonne, Série histoire ancienne et médiévale, 27: Paris, 1993), pp. 35–43.

²² See below, p. xxvi, and E. Gilson, *The Mystical Theology of Saint Bernard*, trans. A. H. C. Downes (London, 1940), pp. 167–9.

²³ Luscombe, *School*, pp. 31–47.

therefore incapable of delivering a rational verdict. Bernard's actions at and after the Council are seen as motivated by pure rancour. From this point on the rest of Abelard's assailants are forgotten, and Berengar confronts Bernard alone. First, he attempts to demonstrate that Abelard is *catholicus* by quoting from a purported letter of Abelard to Heloise, containing an orthodox credal statement. Next he attacks the list of alleged Abelardian heresies drawn up at Bernard's instance, the so-called *Capitula* (Chapters). Unfortunately he has to undercut this argument with the admission that while Abelard did not teach many of these heresies, he did teach some of them. From this point on Berengar adopts a less defensive posture, shifting away from Abelard's person and teaching, and moving in on Saint Bernard. He proposes to show that Bernard himself is in some senses a heretic.

First he attacks Bernard's *Homilies on the Song of Songs*. He begins jestingly: Bernard ought not to have written them at all, for he adds nothing to what the Fathers have already written; he breaks the ancient canons of literary propriety by introducing into an account of the marriage of the bride and groom a lengthy lament upon his brother's death (here Berengar indulges in a heavy and tasteless display of sarcasm, hinting that Bernard's affection for his brother was unnatural, and quoting Horace to prove that Bernard is breaking time-honoured literary conventions). Now comes his most serious point: that Bernard, following Origen and Pythagoras, has taught the pre-existence of the human soul. He ends triumphantly: 'If you had found madness of this kind among *Peter's* works you would, without any doubt, have placed it among the monstrous Chapters which you spawned.' Next, Berengar turns to another of Bernard's works, the *De diligendo Deo*, and makes outrageous fun of it, accusing Bernard of now saying the screamingly obvious, then becoming needlessly obscure. Finally, Berengar berates Bernard for being unmerciful towards Abelard, reminding him that even the greatest of the Fathers had sometimes lapsed into heterodoxy: 'Many Catholics have said things that deserved blame, but have not thereby been elected to the college of heretics.' He ends on a note of high seriousness, giving scriptural examples of God's forgiveness and mercy contrasted with man's hardheartedness. In conclusion he promises a second book which will contain a detailed philosophical defence of Abelard; this he never in fact began.²⁴

The letter to the Carthusians is short, pungent and without humour, a bitter and powerful piece of invective. Its message may be summed up in Berengar's glowing, scriptural language: 'What good does it do, brethren, to go into the desert, and in the desert to have an Egyptian heart? What good does it do to avoid the frogs of Egypt, yet yourselves croak with obscene slanders?'²⁵ He points to the

²⁴ *Mim.*, 15.

²⁵ *Cart.*, 8.

considerable hiatus that stands between their professed ideals and their actual lies, between the appearance and the reality of their behaviour. In particular he singles out as a target for criticism their passion for litigation.

The letter to the bishop of Mende is a defence against criticism by the bishop and his canons of Berengar's earlier writings. To these accusations Berengar makes a variety of replies, in some cases excusing himself on one ground or another, in others denying having made the statements attributed to him, in others claiming to have been misinterpreted, in others again defending his right to be a serious critic, even of one such as Saint Bernard. As with the *Apology*, the tone of the letter is ambivalent. Although Berengar is apparently anxious to clear himself of the charges levelled against him, and to remain on good terms with the bishop and his clergy, there is an underlying current of mockery running through the work that undercuts much of its apparent seriousness.

These three works are edited below, but they are almost certainly not the only surviving works by Berengar.²⁶

Why did Berengar write?

One overriding question will serve to focus discussion: how are Berengar's polemical writings to be characterised? Or, to put it differently, what were Berengar's intentions in composing them? The answer is by no means simple.

First of all, and perhaps most importantly, Berengar saw himself as writing in a prophetic tradition established by the pagan philosophers on the one hand and the Old Testament prophets on the other. For a Christian the tradition was best represented by the latter and by the early Latin Fathers. The tradition encompassed the ideas of warning, exhortation and criticism. In each of the three certainly attributed works of Berengar these ideas dominate and are usually expressed or accompanied by quotation from the ancient authorities. So, in the letter to the Carthusians, much is made of the pithy aphorism *cultus iustitiae est silentium* ('the service of justice is silence') from Isaiah.²⁷ In the letter to the bishop of Mende Berengar cites the precedent of Colotes who criticised Plato, as Berengar had criticised Bernard, even though Colotes was *mus ad elephantem* ('a mouse to an elephant') in comparison with the great philosopher.²⁸ Aristotle is supposed to have said *amicus est Socrates, sed magis amica est veritas* ('Socrates is my friend, but Truth is more my friend'): thus Berengar feels justified in saying, *amicus est*

²⁶ For the detail, see Thomson, 'Berengar', 93–4; R. B. C. Huygens, 'Textes latins du xie et xiie siècle', *Studi Medievali*, 3rd ser. 8 (1967), 493–502; J. Leclercq, 'Nouveaux témoins de la survie de saint Bernard', in *Homenaje a Fray Justo Pérez de Urbel* (Silos, 1977) 2, pp. 97–102.

²⁷ *Cart.*, 5, 6, 8.

²⁸ *Mim.*, 11.