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### A WORD FROM BONAVENTURE

The coming of Christ occurred in the time of the law of grace, as a fulfillment of the promised mercy, and at the beginning of the sixth age. Each of these circumstances indicates a fullness: the law of grace fulfills the written law; the giving of what was promised fulfills the promise; and the sixth age – the number six symbolizing perfection – is in itself a sign of fullness. That is why the coming of the Son of God is said to be in *the fullness of time*: not because it brought time to an end, but because in it the mysteries of the ages were fulfilled.

Brev IV, 4:5

THE CORD

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# THE CORD

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1. Mss should be submitted in Microsoft Word in electronic format (CD, flash [thumb or travel] drive or as an email attachment.) Please include name, mailing address and brief bio information.
2. The University of Chicago Manual of Style, 14th ed., is to be consulted on general questions of style.
3. Titles of books and periodicals should be italicized. Titles of articles should be enclosed in quotation marks. Please do not use single quotes except when it is a quote within a quote.
4. References should be footnoted except Scripture sources or basic Franciscan sources. Scripture and Franciscan source references should be identified within parentheses immediately after the cited text, with period following the closed parenthesis. For example:

(1Cor. 13:6). (2C 5:8). (ER 23:2). (4Lag 2:13).

A list of standard abbreviations used in *The Cord* can be found inside the back cover. Franciscan sources used should be noted in the first reference in a ms and should be taken from *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents* or *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*.

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## FOREWORD

By now most of our readers have recognized the reason for receiving what seemed to be two copies of the July/September issue of *The Cord*. It was with dismay in late August that I realized there were missing pages in the first delivery. We are blessed, however, in working with a local printer who, when the mistake was pointed out, reprinted and mailed a complete copy to our readers at no cost to us. While I know that the printer has taken internal steps to make sure this does not happen again, so also has my office.

I mention this problem because, while it is in no way a factor in the decision, we must again raise our subscription prices. Our current rates are just not keeping up with rising postage costs. While the goals of publishing *The Cord* do not include making a profit, it is not wise to allow its production to become a drain on Franciscan Institute Publications which also produces two other journals – *Greyfriars Review* and *Franciscan Studies* – as well as the Bonaventure Texts-in-Translation series, Spirit and Life series, the CFIT Heritage and WTU Symposium series, and numerous monographs. I know this rate increase will give pause to many who are experiencing fallout from the current economic downturn, but let me assure you that it is not going to salary increases. Our goal simply is to cover the cost of printing and postage so we can continue our mission of educating and inspiring members of the Franciscan family. The new domestic subscription rate is \$30 and the international rate is \$35. Invoices for subscription renewal will follow before year's end.

The line-up in this issue contains some familiar names: Daniel Horan, Ruth Agnes Evans, and Zachary Hayes share insights into the Incarnation, Francis's *Second Letter to the Faithful* and Bonaventure's *Itinerarium*, respectively. New writers, AnnMarie McLeod and Shannon Schrein join Barnabas Hughes and John Ost diek in plumbing other aspects of the Franciscan tradition. The annual index concludes this issue. Happy Reading!

*Daria R. Mitchell, O.S.A.*

## REVISITING THE INCARNATION: WHY THE 'FRANCISCAN THESIS' IS NOT SO FRANCISCAN AND WHY IT DOES NOT REALLY MATTER

DANIEL P. HORAN, O.F.M.

## INTRODUCTION

Generalization and caricature are, in many ways, part and parcel of the history of theology. Because theological theses and various doctrines are difficult to grasp, in addition to being manifold, simplified versions are often drafted in order to more easily pass the faith along to subsequent generations and make complicated lines of thought more accessible. This is not to suggest that generalization and caricature are always bad. On the contrary, oftentimes a simple glimpse is all that is needed or called for in a given context. If one is not a specialist in the particular theological field, it is doubtful that he or she would be bothered by a generalization that is more or less accurate, yet accessible. However, there is something to be said for clear *and* accurate overviews of doctrines that are at the same time accessible.

The Franciscan tradition is not exempt from the history of theological generalization and caricature. One of the most generalized themes in the Franciscan theological tradition is the so-called "Franciscan" view on the necessity of the Incarnation.<sup>1</sup> Given as an alternative to the standard atonement-

<sup>1</sup> Even some of the most notable writers on the Franciscan tradition have generalized the doctrine of the absolute predestination of Christ, often implying that it is a universally held position among Franciscan thinkers across many centuries. Other times, authors conflate the work of different Franciscan theologians, taking part of the thought of Bonaven-



based model of the reason for the Incarnation, this "Franciscan Thesis" is presented as if it (a) were universally held by Franciscan thinkers, (b) finds its origin in the Franciscan intellectual tradition and/or (c) is based on the writings of Francis of Assisi. In this article I will show how these presuppositions are not completely accurate. The idea of a "Franciscan Thesis" about the necessity of the Incarnation is simply a generalization and caricature of a more nuanced and, as we shall see, not-necessarily-Franciscan argument. We will also see that there is an understandable source for the creation of this term, for major medieval Franciscan thinkers did play significant roles in the way this Christological approach has been passed down through the centuries.

The reason for this article is twofold. The first reason is the need to clarify a position that has been generalized by many Franciscans and non-Franciscans in recent years. While seemingly minor, if a not-so-accurate theological synthesis is passed along as such, it will eventually be taken to be accurate. The second reason is my conviction that those thinkers who have been overlooked or neglected by those positing a "Franciscan Thesis" deserve to be recognized for their contributions, originality and role in the formation of the doctrine of the absolute predestination of Christ. In this way, it is my hope that this article helps the reader to better understand the history of this doctrine. The more we know about our theological tradition, the more we can appreciate the true gift such a tradition presents to the Church and the world. It is my hope that a more nuanced appreciation for the development of the doctrine of the absolute predestination of Christ to become incarnate might better inform our

ture and Scotus (for example) and offering a hybrid position that is viewed as authentically "Franciscan." For some recent examples of this see Kenan Osborne, *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition: Tracing Its Origins and Identifying Its Central Components*, Franciscan Heritage Series vol. 1 (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2003), esp. 53-69; Ilia Delio, *The Humility of God: A Franciscan Perspective* (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2005), esp. 49-65; and Ilia Delio, "Revisiting The Franciscan Doctrine of Christ," *Theological Studies* 64 (2003): 3-23. See also notes 11 and 12 below.

own theological and spiritual outlook, while also providing us with the resources to draw others into a less sin-centered perspective to embrace God's gratuitous gift of love.

This article is divided into five parts, each highlighting an aspect of the development of the doctrine of the absolute predestination of Christ. First we will look at what is generally held to be the standard position on the reason for the Incarnation. Next we will briefly examine what has often been referred to as the "Franciscan Thesis." In the third section we will explore the origins of this supralapsarian argument in the work of Rupert of Deutz and Robert Grosseteste. In the fourth section we will briefly look at the writings of Francis to see what his views on the Incarnation were. Finally, I will close with some thoughts on how this understanding of the Incarnation, while not exclusively or originally Franciscan in the strict sense, remains both important and pastorally relevant for us today.

#### THE STANDARD VIEW ON THE REASON FOR THE INCARNATION

The question "Why was the Incarnation necessary?" has been around as long as Christianity has existed. It certainly dates back to the early Church and the first Christian communities in Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria and the missionary territories of Paul.<sup>2</sup> Like all dimensions of Christology, the question of the motive for the Incarnation finds its origin in soteriological concerns. In other words, all questions about Christ – including the Incarnation – are ultimately about the

<sup>2</sup> For a good introduction to the early Christological questions of the nascent Christian communities through the first councils, see Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation: The Faith of the Early Church*, ed. Andrew Louth (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1993). With regard to the Pauline communities, see Marinus de Jonge, *Christology in Context: The Earliest Christian Responses to Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1988), esp. 33-52 and 112-29; Charles Puskas, *The Letters of Paul: An Introduction* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1993); and Raymond Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, The Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1997), esp. 407-680.



doctrine of salvation. The increasing need for clarification of such matters was the impetus for the earliest councils of the Church, often referred to as the Christological Councils. In fact the first seven ecumenical councils all dealt with, in some way or another, the Incarnation.<sup>3</sup>

The effort to clarify Christological doctrines did not stop the subsequent and ongoing exploration and elucidation of the meaning of the beliefs. For centuries (and now millennia) theologians of every age have examined the creedal statements of Christianity and have attempted to explain them in such a way that the faithful might better understand the mysteries of God. One of the most popular doctrines to be investigated by many medieval philosophers and theologians was the necessity of the Incarnation.

Arguably, the paragon of medieval theologians who have considered the necessity of the Incarnation is Anselm of Canterbury (c. 1033 – 1109). In his text, *Cur Deus Homo*,<sup>4</sup> Anselm puts forward an argument for the necessity of the Incarnation based on the feudal model of satisfaction.<sup>5</sup> This project was grounded in his desire to produce an original justification for the doctrine that would prove the rational-

<sup>3</sup> A new introduction to these councils has recently been published. It provides an accessible overview of each of the earliest ecumenical councils and their significance in the formation of Christological doctrine. See Stephen Need, *Truly Divine & Truly Human: The Story of Christ and the Seven Ecumenical Councils* (London/Peabody, MA: SPCK/Hendrickson, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Anselm of Canterbury, "Why God Became Man [*Cur Deus Homo*]," in *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*, ed. Brian Davies and G. R. Evans (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 260-356 [hereafter cited as *Anselm of Canterbury* followed by page number].

<sup>5</sup> For more see Anthony Kenny, *Medieval Philosophy, A New History of Western Philosophy*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 43; and G. R. Evans, "Anselm of Canterbury," in *The Medieval Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Medieval Period*, ed. G. R. Evans (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 99.

It should be noted that while most Anselmian scholars uphold this concept of *debitum* and satisfaction, there exists a strong tradition that contests the influence of feudal society and legislation on Anselm's soteriological impulse in *Cur Deus Homo*. For more see Richard Campbell, "The Conceptual Roots of Anselm's Soteriology," in *Anselm: Aosta, Bec and Canterbury*, ed. D. E. Luscombe and G. R. Evans (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 256-63.

ity of the argument to both Christians and non-Christians alike. He makes his case in two parts. The first part seeks to demonstrate that without the Incarnation human salvation is impossible. The second part contains his argument that God's intention for the human race is salvation.<sup>6</sup> Anselm focuses on the role of sin and the fall of humanity as the fundamental motivation for God's needing to become human. It is because of the dishonor caused to God through human sinfulness that satisfaction is needed in order to restore "the most precious piece of workmanship," that is humanity and creation, that is now completely ruined.<sup>7</sup> Anselm's argument concludes that neither humanity nor anything less than God – like an angel or "superman" or anything else – is capable of restoring the honor of God diminished by human sin.<sup>8</sup> The ultimate conclusion drawn by Anselm is that the Incarnation is necessary inasmuch as there is no other logical way by which humanity could have been redeemed and God's honor have been restored, thereby returning creation to its rightful degree of fittingness and order.

Anselm's position has long been the standard understanding for the necessity of the Incarnation. It is this theology of the Incarnation from which we get the famous Easter *Exsultet* line: "O happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam, which gained for us so great a Redeemer!"<sup>9</sup> This is also the sort of theological perspective that has saturated much of popular Christian culture and art. Perhaps the most famous case in recent years is Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*.<sup>10</sup> It is the approach that summarizes or represents the thought of most Christian thinkers including Augustine, Thomas Aqui-

<sup>6</sup> John Calvin, "Jesus Christ," in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, vol. 1, ed. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John Calvin (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1991), 277.

<sup>7</sup> *Cur Deus Homo* bk. 1, chap. 4 (*Anselm of Canterbury*, 270).

<sup>8</sup> Evans, "Anselm of Canterbury," 99.

<sup>9</sup> The International Commission on English in the Liturgy, *The Roman Missal* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Company, 1985), 179.

<sup>10</sup> *The Passion of the Christ*, DVD, directed by Mel Gibson (New Market Films, 2004).

nas and even Bonaventure.<sup>11</sup> However, this is not the only theological perspective on the reason for the Incarnation, even if it has been the predominant view.

### THE ARGUMENT FORMERLY KNOWN AS "FRANCISCAN"

Often associated with the Oxford Franciscan John Duns Scotus (c. 1266 – 1308), there is another approach to understanding the necessity of the Incarnation that has frequently

<sup>11</sup> Bonaventure adopts the Anselmian approach in his *Breviloquium* IV. I. 1-3, ed. Dominic Monti, Works of St. Bonaventure vol. IX (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2005), 131-32. "And so it was most fitting that the restorative principle of all things should be God Most High. Thus, just as God [the Father] had created all things through the Uncreated Word, so he would restore all things through the Incarnate Word" (*Breviloquium* IV. I. 2).

Zachary Hayes notes that Bonaventure's affinity to Anselm's satisfaction argument is most strongly found in his sentence commentary (III Sent. d. 18-20). See Zachary Hayes, *The Hidden Center: Spirituality and Speculative Christology in St. Bonaventure* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1992), 152. See also, Christopher Cullen, *Bonaventure* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 141-42; Alexander Gerken, "Bonaventuras Konvenienzgründe für die Inkarnation des Sohnes," *Wissenschaft und Weisheit* 23 (1960): 131-46; and Marilyn McCord Adams, *What Sort of Human Nature? Medieval Philosophy and the Systematics of Christology* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1999), 24-28.

Delio (see note 1, 372) offers a different perspective in her "Revisiting the Franciscan Doctrine of Christ." I suggest that her reading of what she calls "The Franciscan doctrine" as exhibiting continuity between Bonaventure and Scotus is more accurately explained as conflation by proximity. Her conclusion expresses hesitancy about the authentic affinity of these two thinkers, akin to what I am suggesting. She writes: "Although it is Scotus who provided a clear and explicit articulation of the primacy of Christ, Bonaventure described a theology of primacy that underscores the mystery of the fullness of Christ" (23). Yet, in a positive way, she suggests that, read together, Bonaventure and Scotus offer an "understanding of the Incarnation that is broad, dynamic and inclusive" (23). On the first point, I do not believe Delio makes a clear enough distinction between the two thinkers' respective uses of "primacy of Christ," thereby suggesting a synonymous definition. On the second point, I could not agree more. The case of Bonaventure is complicated by passages in his work that allude to support of a supralapsarian argument, but in the end he remains in the anthropocentric camp.

been labeled the "Franciscan Thesis."<sup>12</sup> Generally speaking, each version of the "Franciscan Thesis" invokes the name and work of Scotus in some form to propose an alternate theological conceptualization for the necessity of the Incarnation. Scotus's approach can be summarized as follows:

The Incarnation is the summation of Salvation History, not viewed as atonement for the grievous sin of humanity, but as the most concrete sign of God's infinite love and goodness ... Scotus asserts God's unconditional love in Christ, stating that Jesus would have been born regardless of human sinfulness. Even if humanity had never sinned, the Word would still have become flesh. Scotus radically shifts the focus from us to God; from debt to gift; from sin to love.<sup>13</sup>

The so-called "Franciscan Thesis" of John Duns Scotus is indeed an alternative view to that of Anselm and his sin-centered colleagues. Béraud de Saint-Maurice has, in place of using a term modified by "Franciscan," described these two alternative approaches to understanding the reason for the Incarnation as the "anthropocentric" and "Christocentric" schools of thought.<sup>14</sup> The anthropocentric school asserts the subordination of Christ's Incarnation to the fall of humanity.

<sup>12</sup> The term varies by author, but is synonymous with the moniker "Franciscan Thesis." For example, see Peter Dillard, "A Minor Matter? The Franciscan Thesis and Philosophical Theology," *The Heythrop Journal* 50 (2009): 890-900; Richard Rohr, "The Franciscan Opinion," in *Stricken by God? Nonviolent Identification and the Victory of Christ*, ed. Brad Jersak and Michael Hardin (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2007), 206-12; and Maximilian Mary Dean, *A Primer on the Absolute Primacy of Christ: Blessed John Duns Scotus and the Franciscan Thesis* (New Bedford: The Academy of the Immaculate, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> Daniel Horan, "Praying with the Subtle Doctor: Toward a Contemporary Scotistic Spirituality," *The Cord* 58 (2008): 232-33. See also John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, dist. 7, q. 3, trans. Allan Wolter, "John Duns Scotus on the Primacy and Personality of Christ," in *Franciscan Christology*, ed. Damian McElrath (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1994), 148-51.

<sup>14</sup> Béraud de Saint-Maurice, *John Duns Scotus: A Teacher For Our Times* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1955), 241-42.



Another way to understand this is that Christ enjoys only an occasional or conditional predestination that is reliant on human sinfulness. The Christocentric school holds that if Adam had remained faithful and not sinned, Christ would have still become incarnate. This Christocentric position maintains the absolute predestination of Christ to become incarnate. It has also been described as the "supralapsarian" approach.<sup>15</sup>

Given that Scotus was in fact a Franciscan friar and that his argument for the absolute predestination of Christ is indeed fittingly associated with Saint-Maurice's Christocentric school, what is the problem with calling this the "Franciscan Thesis?" There are several problems with this term. The first is that nearly no other Franciscan thinker prior to Scotus espoused this approach.<sup>16</sup> As we have seen above, Bonaventure, the most significant Franciscan theologian and philosopher before Scotus, ultimately adhered to the standard Anselmian-anthropocentric model. In this respect, Bonaventure was closer to Aquinas than to Scotus, like most Franciscan thinkers of the time. The second problem is that Scotus is not the first to propose such an approach. In fact neither of the two theologians most famous for considering a form of the absolute predestination of Christ argument prior to Scotus were professed members of the Franciscan Order. The first to discuss the concept was Rupert of Deutz (c. 1075 – 1129/30), a monastic writer. The second was Robert Grosseteste (c. 1168 – 1253), a secular master. The final problem is the lack of conclusive evidence that Francis himself espoused this view.

<sup>15</sup> Edwin Chr. van Driel, *Incarnation Anyway: Arguments for Supralapsarian Christology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>16</sup> The one exception to this claim is Alexander of Hales, the Parisian secular-master-turned-Franciscan. It is his unique theological starting point that allows him to consider a supralapsarian argument for the Incarnation. See Kenan Osborne, "Alexander of Hales: Precursor and Promoter of Franciscan Theology," in *The History of Franciscan Theology*, ed. Kenan Osborne (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1994; rep. 2007), 1-38, esp. 30-32.

## RUPERT OF DEUTZ AND ROBERT GROSSETESTE

### *Rupert of Deutz and the Origin of the Supralapsarian Argument*

Rupert of Deutz was a Benedictine monk and a contemporary of Anselm, although two decades his junior. Rupert is credited as the originator of the hypothetical query that has for so long been associated with the "Franciscan Thesis" namely, "would Christ have become incarnate if humanity had *not* fallen in sin?" In his text, *De Gloria et honore Filii hominis Super Mattheum*,<sup>17</sup> Rupert reconsiders the cause and necessity of Christ's Incarnation.<sup>18</sup> It is in the last book (XIII) of this text that Rupert develops his original insight on the theme.

This book was, most scholars believe, the product of a commission that was given to Rupert by Rudolph of St. Trond around 1127. St. Trond asked Rupert to address disputed questions on the Trinity, the proper exegesis of Genesis 49:10 and the necessity of the Incarnation.<sup>19</sup> In addition to the denial of the Incarnation by the Jews,<sup>20</sup> Rupert was motivated by two problems he saw in the previous work on the Incarnation. His first problem with earlier expositions is that many authorities believed that to demonstrate the necessity of the Incarnation one inevitably concludes that God must have willed evil.<sup>21</sup> The second problem is that if God did

<sup>17</sup> See Rupert of Deutz, *De Gloria et honore filii hominis super Mattheum*, ed. Hrabanus Maurus Haack, *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* 29 (Turnholt: Typographi Brepols, 1979). Hereafter CCCM followed by the volume number will be used.

<sup>18</sup> John H. Van Engen, *Rupert of Deutz*, UCLA Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 355.

<sup>19</sup> Van Engen, *Rupert of Deutz*, 354.

<sup>20</sup> Rupert enjoyed a degree of interaction with Jewish thinkers to a degree that other theologians of the time may not have. It is precisely the Jewish denial that motivates Rudolph of St. Trond and the Abbot Cuno, Rupert's two commissioners, to request Rupert's investigation into the doctrine.

<sup>21</sup> Van Engen, *Rupert of Deutz*, 355; and Rupert of Deutz, *De Gloria*, 13 (CCCM 29:412).



not will evil, then the Incarnation represented something of a "plan B" (*nouum concilium*), which seemingly contradicts the nature of an omnipotent and immutable God.<sup>22</sup>

These two concerns, while they play a prominent role in the development of his thought in *De gloria et honore*, appear to have been of interest to Rupert earlier in his career as well.<sup>23</sup> In *De gloria et honore* Rupert seeks to rebut these two positions. Rupert's response is that "God intended all along to have the second person of the Trinity assume a concrete, earthly role in the divine plan for His chosen people."<sup>24</sup> This was not an alternate plan or the result of God having willed evil, but a reflection of God's foreordained plan to "rejoice among men as their incarnate King."<sup>25</sup>

Rupert's position offered an alternative to the previously held views that he found so problematic. Rupert asserted that Christ's Incarnation was foreordained and necessary, but that his sacrificial atonement was not. In other words, the manner in which Christ suffered and died – or the particular manner of any other form of his earthly life – was the result of the Fall, but the Incarnation itself was not. In this sense Rupert reconfigured the question to make the Incarnation the centerpiece of God's plan. Rupert is the first to stand aside from the crowd of authorities that had for so long argued for the necessity and fittingness of the Incarnation on account of the condition of human fallenness. After Rupert, the hypothetical question and its assertive response went unnoticed until Robert Grosseteste posed a similar question.

<sup>22</sup> Van Engen, *Rupert of Deutz*, 355.

<sup>23</sup> These themes appear in his *Commentary on Genesis* and his *Commentary on John* (c. 1114-1116). See Van Engen, *Rupert of Deutz*, 355.

<sup>24</sup> Van Engen, *Rupert of Deutz*, 356.

<sup>25</sup> Van Engen, *Rupert of Deutz*, 356.

### Robert Grosseteste, *Scripture and Speculative Theology*

Robert Grosseteste is perhaps best remembered as a biblical exegete.<sup>26</sup> As true as that characterization is, it remains insufficient and superficial since he was so much more. His interests were wide ranging and his intellectual output reflects his multifaceted mind and career. As a *magister in sacra pagina* it would be expected that the study and teaching of scripture would have occupied much of his time. Grosseteste is known for his adherence to the Bible as a teaching text in the classroom, and the presence of scripture throughout his written corpus is ubiquitous.<sup>27</sup> It makes sense, then, that scripture would be the starting point for Grosseteste's exploration of the necessity of the Incarnation. Although Grosseteste begins with scripture, he is quickly forced to sidestep a normal exegetical path because his trajectory leads him into uncharted theological territory. Likewise, Grosseteste's investigation required that he forego the standard appeal to authoritative sources, if only because no one else – to the best of Grosseteste's knowledge – had ever explored this avenue.<sup>28</sup> This seems to suggest that Grosseteste was unaware of Rupert's earlier work on the matter.

Grosseteste's treatment of the necessity of the Incarnation is found prominently in three texts: *De Cessatione Legalium*,

<sup>26</sup> See Beryl Smalley, "The Biblical Scholar," in *Robert Grosseteste: Scholar and Bishop*, ed. Daniel Callus (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 70-97 and James McEvoy, *Robert Grosseteste* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 96-112.

<sup>27</sup> McEvoy, *Robert Grosseteste*, 96-97 and Daniel Horan, "Light and Love: Robert Grosseteste and John Duns Scotus on the How and Why of Creation," *The Cord* 57 (2007): 248-49.

<sup>28</sup> Robert Grosseteste, *De Cessatione Legalium*, Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi VII, ed. Richard Dales and Edward King (London: The British Academy, 1986); hereafter cited as *De Cessatione Legalium* followed by *particulae*, chapter and paragraph number with edition pages in parenthesis. *Verumtamen, an Deus esset homo etiam si non esset lapsus homo non determinant aliqui de sacris expositoribus in libris suis quos ego adhuc inspexerim, nisi fallat me memoria mea.* (*De Cessatione Legalium* III.1.2 ABMA, 119). See also McEvoy, *Robert Grosseteste*, 106, 127-28.

*Exiit Edictum* (a Christmas homily), and *Hexaëmeron*.<sup>29</sup> Recent scholarship has examined the Christological and Trinitarian implications of Grosseteste's *Expositio in Epistolam Sancti Pauli ad Galatas*, including the initial development of his understanding of the necessity of the Incarnation.<sup>30</sup> All four of these texts are developed within an explicitly scriptural context. The manner in which Grosseteste explores the theme of the Incarnation in these scripturally oriented works is largely exegetical in nature. He sees the theme of promised blessing, found in Genesis 12:3 and 18:17-18, as a blessing that only God is capable of fulfilling. He also believes that the prophecy calls for the best of humanity (*optimus hominum*). For Grosseteste, this seems to imply that this would necessitate the coming of the God-man.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, Grosseteste – like Rupert before him – considers Jacob's prophecy in Genesis 49:10. Here Grosseteste asserts that the one for whom the tribes of Israel were awaiting (*expectatio gentium*) is none other than the God-man in the Incarnation.<sup>32</sup> He concludes his scriptural exploration into the reason for the Incarnation with an examination of the fourth song of the suffering servant in Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12.

<sup>29</sup> These texts are first transcribed and studied in this context in Unger, "Robert Grosseteste Bishop of Lincoln," 1-36. Subsequent critical editions of *De cessatione legalium* (for the critical edition of *De cessatione legalium* see n. 27 above) and *Hexaëmeron* have been published. See Robert Grosseteste, *Hexaëmeron*, Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi VII, ed. Richard Dales and Servus Geiben (London: The British Academy, 1982); an English translation of the *Hexaëmeron* was published by C.F.J. Martin, *Robert Grosseteste: On The Six Days of Creation* (Oxford: The British Academy, 1996), hereafter cited as *Hexaëmeron* followed by part and chapter numbers with translation, edition page number in parenthesis.

<sup>30</sup> See Ian Levy, "Trinity and Christology in Robert Grosseteste's *Expositio* of Galatians," *Communio* 26 (Winter 1999), 875-91. The *Expositio* can be found in Robert Grosseteste, *Expositio in epistolam sancti Pauli ad Galatas*, ed. James McEvoy, in *Opera Inedita Robert Grosseteste*, vol. 1 (CCCM 130).

<sup>31</sup> *De Cessatione Legalium* II.2.1-II.2.2 (ABMA, 78-79).

<sup>32</sup> *De Cessatione Legalium* II.3.1-II.3.5 (ABMA, 82-83). This is further emphasized in a representation of the biblical genealogy of Jesus in II.3.5-II.3.12 (ABMA, 84-88).

While Grosseteste sees Scripture as the source of his inquiry, he quickly discovers it necessary to move beyond the *Sacra Pagina* and those views that have already been established by the Fathers of the Church and other authorities. He, faithful as he is to Scripture and tradition, does not find a satisfactory answer in either. It is at this point that Grosseteste begins to engage the hypothetical question by way of reason. Having inquired as to whether or not the Incarnation would have taken place regardless of sin, and responding in the affirmative, Grosseteste presents his case to defend his affirmative hypothesis.<sup>33</sup>

The arguments Grosseteste lines up to support his affirmative position, that Christ would have indeed become incarnate regardless of human sinfulness, number nineteen in all.<sup>34</sup> In recent years scholars of Grosseteste's work have sought to organize and categorize these nineteen arguments, a process that has resulted in the presentation of five general themes. The two scholars who have done the most work in this respect are James McEvoy and James Ginther.<sup>35</sup> Each offers a slight variation from the other in their respective classifications of Grosseteste's arguments. However, I suggest that McEvoy's organizational pattern provides the more comprehensive and succinct map of Grosseteste's approach. What follows is taken largely from the work of McEvoy.

Grosseteste makes his first argument from the concept of God's goodness.<sup>36</sup> Borrowing from the ontological argument found in Anselm's *Proslogion*,<sup>37</sup> he reasserts that God

<sup>33</sup> See *De Cessatione Legalium* III.1.2 and *passim* (ABMA, 119).

<sup>34</sup> James McEvoy, "The Absolute Predestination of Christ in the Theology of Robert Grosseteste," in 'Sapientiae Doctrina' *Mélanges de théologie et de littérature médiévales offerts à Dom Hildebrand Bascour O.S.B.*, *Recherches de Théologie ancienne et médiévale* n° spécial 1 (Leuven: Peeters, 1980), 213; and McEvoy, *Robert Grosseteste*, 127.

<sup>35</sup> I have previously made reference to several of McEvoy's studies. See also James Ginther, *Master of the Sacred Page: A Study of the Theology of Robert Grosseteste* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2004).

<sup>36</sup> *De Cessatione Legalium* III.1.3-III.1.4 (ABMA, 120).

<sup>37</sup> See Anselm of Canterbury, "Proslogion," in *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*, ed. Brian Davies and G.R. Evans (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 82-104.



is a "greater good than can even be thought." In addition to Anselm's argument, Grosseteste appears to borrow the notion of "self-diffusive goodness" as found in the work of Pseudo-Dionysius. From this combination of antecedent works on goodness and God, Grosseteste posits that God created the universe in such a way that it was capable of receiving God's goodness. Not only could creation receive God's goodness, but God also intends the perfection of creation through its participation in God's infinite power, wisdom and goodness.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, God does not withhold any good the universe is capable of receiving and communicates as much good as it has potential to receive. Grosseteste then makes the assertion that the Incarnation is the highest and primary example of creation's reception of God's goodness. What, for creation, could be a greater good than the union of the divine and human? Since creation is obviously capable of receiving the God-man – and it already has – God must have always intended for creation's reception of the Incarnation.<sup>39</sup>

Moving from the concept of God's goodness and creation's ability to receive and participate in this goodness, Grosseteste asserts that a lower good could not be the cause of a higher good. What he means here is that because the Incarnation is the highest good that creation is able to receive, a lower good – or, more specifically, a privation – such as sin could not possibly be the cause for the coming of the God-man.

The next argument Grosseteste makes is perhaps one of the most original. He distinguishes between the human need for redemption and justification. For most medieval thinkers the concept of justification was associated with the process of salvation. However, Grosseteste sees the process of salvation as tied up with the notion of sanctification. As such, justification has nothing to do with sin, so that Adam and Eve would have still required the Incarnation regardless of the Fall.<sup>40</sup> Justification would have always required the In-

carnation, because humanity was always (even before sin) destined for sanctity.

Drawing on his understanding of Christ as head of the Church and the dignity of the Sacraments, Grosseteste's next argument is made from a position of the fittingness of the Incarnation. Christ as head is elaborated on in his *Hexaëmeron* where Grosseteste draws on Ephesians and cites 1 Corinthians 11:3 to highlight the revelation of this fact in scripture,<sup>41</sup> although his primary concern here is that of the Sacraments. Using the examples of marriage and the Eucharist, he argues that the dignity of these institutions could not rely on the Fall of humanity.<sup>42</sup> This is even more the case when one examines the metaphor of marriage between Christ and the Church. Grosseteste held that "God intended Christ and His Church even before the fall of Adam was in His mind. [Therefore] the absolute existence of the Church and Christ did not depend on the fall of man."<sup>43</sup> Considering the hypothetical implication of this position, it would be absurd to presume that the union of Christ to the Church and the establishment of the sacraments (marriage, which Grosseteste argues, existed before Adam and Eve sinned) were part of the contingent order. The only logical end to this argument is the absolute predestination of Christ to become Incarnate.

The final argument that Grosseteste puts forward comes from his understanding that creation is essentially united. For everything that is united there must be a uniting principle. Grosseteste explores whether or not the unifying principle could be anything other than the incarnate Christ. He considers, like Rupert, angels, humans, other aspects of creation and so forth, only to conclude that the unifying principle could not be another creature. Grosseteste finally considers God in God's self. While God is in fact the principle of all things, God's transcendence places God beyond par-

<sup>38</sup> McEvoy, "The Absolute Predestination of Christ in the Theology of Robert Grosseteste," 214.

<sup>39</sup> *De Cessatione Legalium* III.1.9 (ABMA, 122-23).

<sup>40</sup> Ginther, *Master of the Sacred Page*, 133.

<sup>41</sup> *Hexaëmeron* I.12.1 (ABMA [1982], 68).

<sup>42</sup> *De Cessatione Legalium* III.1.18-III.1.21 (ABMA, 126-28).

<sup>43</sup> Dominic Unger, "Robert Grosseteste Bishop of Lincoln (1235-1253) on the Reasons for the Incarnation," *Franciscan Studies* 16 (1956): 32.



ticipation in any species or genus directly.<sup>44</sup> The only thing remaining that could serve as the absolute unifying principle is the union of the God-man in the incarnate Christ.

The so-called "Franciscan Thesis" has quite the history of development before any professed member of the Franciscan Order began considering similar possibilities. It is worth noting that there are early Franciscan intersections in the history of the development of the absolute predestination of Christ. The most noticeable is found in the role Grosseteste played in the early years of the friars' history in England. Grosseteste was the first theological instructor of the newly arrived friars from across the English Channel.<sup>45</sup> To what extent he influenced those first British friars remains unstudied.<sup>46</sup> It is fair to say, though, that the first Friar Minor to seriously explore this trajectory, John Duns Scotus, does not begin his contribution to the history of this doctrine until after the death of Grosseteste.

### FRANCIS OF ASSISI AND THE INCARNATION

There is a temptation in the Franciscan world to label a multitude of things "Franciscan" without significant reflection on what Francis of Assisi actually thought, wrote or did. Not that this happens frequently, but it does happen. It seems that such might be the case with the establishment of the "Franciscan Thesis" in reference to the absolute predestination of Christ to become incarnate.

The starting point for much of Francis's reflection on the event of the Incarnation, and by extension the motive, is always the dialectical paradox of the humility of God found in the contrast between the supreme glory of God alongside

<sup>44</sup> McEvoy, "The Absolute Predestination of Christ in the Theology of Robert Grosseteste," 216; and Ginther, *Master of the Sacred Page*, 137.

<sup>45</sup> For more see Horan, "Light and Love," 243-45.

<sup>46</sup> I have been working on a study currently in preparation that addresses precisely this question. To the best of my knowledge, no other examination of this sort has been published.

the birth of Jesus Christ and the Passion of Christ at the end of his earthly life. His starting point is not, as it had been for the other figures that we have examined, the reason, fittingness or necessity of the incarnation. For Francis, the humility and gratuity of God are the foci of reflection on the Incarnate Word. What captured the imagination and prayerful devotion of Francis was, as Norbert Nguyễn-Van-Khanh writes, "[Jesus's] glory and majesty on the one hand, and on the other, His free choice of a life of human poverty."<sup>47</sup> It is precisely the humility of God exhibited in the Incarnation that Francis turns his attention toward. In other words, it is the factual consideration of the Son of God's birth and death that occupy the thought of the Seraphic Saint. Thomas of Celano wrote: "Indeed, so thoroughly did the humility of the Incarnation and the charity of the Passion occupy his memory that he scarcely wanted to think of anything else."<sup>48</sup>

There is little to suggest that he deviated from what we have already outlined above as the "standard view on the reason for the Incarnation." Namely, that the primary motive for the Incarnation was salvific and restorative. This is emphasized in what we can discern of Francis's spiritual outlook. Nguyễn-Van-Khanh summarizes this point well:

In reality, there are not two different subjects: the incarnation and the passion. For Francis, the passion is situated along a line that leads logically from the incarnation; it is a consequence of the fact that the Son of the Father accepts the human condition to the very end. The incarnation is this movement of descent; it is not a static situation that ends in the passion and death. Therefore, in the mind of Francis, the passion is intimately linked to the birth.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Norbert Nguyễn-Van-Khanh, *The Teacher of His Heart: Jesus Christ in the Thought and Writings of St. Francis* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1994), 104.

<sup>48</sup> Thomas of Celano, "The Life of Saint Francis" 1:84, *FA:ED I*, 254.

<sup>49</sup> *The Teacher of His Heart*, 109-10.

It is not that Francis would object to the doctrine of the absolute predestination of Christ to become incarnate. It is just that Francis never appears to have concerned himself with such an inquiry. He took what was factual or axiomatic – namely, the reality of human sinfulness and the truth of the Incarnation – and focused on those points. It is from his gaze upon these facts that Francis began to develop his rich insight into the humility of a God that would come to dwell among us. What we do not see emerging is a Christological perspective that departs from the atonement model that had been accepted by most medieval thinkers of his time.

With a dedicated focus on the humility of the Incarnation and the deeply relational outlook Francis had, I believe that – had he been aware of the position of Rupert of Deutz – he would very likely have adopted it himself. However, to imply that Francis would have responded to the counterfactual question, “would God have become incarnate if Adam had not sinned?” with an affirmative answer is misleading.

#### WHY ALL OF THIS DOESN'T REALLY MATTER FOR FRANCISCANS

Two words: *sine proprio*! Along with the rightful attribution of these theological ideas as they have developed over the centuries comes the admission that we, as Franciscans, cannot take credit (at least exclusively) for the Christocentric argument for the absolute predestination of Christ. The development of this approach, as surveyed above, has clearly germinated close to the Franciscan intellectual tradition. Both Alexander of Hales, who should be credited with clear supralapsarian leanings in his often overlooked work, and John Duns Scotus, who history has recorded as the champion of the “Incarnation anyway” approach, have both contributed to the school of thought as we inherit it today. This should not be understated. However, the credit deserves to be spread more widely.

From this broader perspective, I suggest that the lack of exclusive attribution to the Franciscan tradition should not

prevent the adoption of this theological perspective. Alexander of Hales and Scotus both adopted this position and “made it theirs.” Like them, we too have the opportunity to adopt this Christocentric view of the Incarnation and make it ours. I believe that we can do this in three particular ways.

The first way we can adopt this tradition is through our preaching and teaching. Those called to be ministers of the Word as preachers should be attentive to the way that this view of the Incarnation can inform one’s homilies. Scripture read through the lens of the absolute predestination of Christ can look very different from the way it appears under the optic of the anthropocentric-atonement perspective. While we Franciscans do not have exclusive rights to this argument, we do have a natural inclination toward recognizing the gratuitous love of God in the humility God has modeled for us in the self-gift of the Incarnation. Even Francis recognized that. We have an obligation to reflect that image of God to the faithful who listen to us to break open the Word and look to us for edifying catechesis.

The second way we might adopt this tradition is in our pastoral encounters with others. Sin-centered discourse is the last thing that should ground a pastoral conversation. I am not suggesting that this occurs often in any explicit way, although it does happen. Rather, I believe that too many of the Church’s ministers operate from a place that is implicitly sin oriented. As such, the ability to reveal the compassionate face of God becomes inhibited by the need for rectification, penance, culpability and so on. A theological foundation rooted in God’s intention from all eternity to share in our earthly life by becoming incarnate offers a theological anthropology rooted in love. This is what Jesus has sent us to do after his example: “to bring good news to the poor ... to proclaim release to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18-19, NRSV). How can we fulfill this mission if our operative paradigm for Christ’s coming into the world rests on our sinfulness?

A third way we might adopt this tradition is in our own prayer lives. It does not take much imagination to consider

the stark contrast in spiritual outlook between a prayer life that is built on a sin-centered Christology of atonement and one centered on a Christocentric understanding of the necessity of the Incarnation. Reflecting on a God who from all eternity desires to be one with us and return all of creation back to God in glory leads one to contemplate the inherent dignity of both humanity, in which God participated fully through the Incarnation, and all of creation. Such a perspective could lead one to consider the implications for our lives based on our orientation toward a God who calls us back to God's self, with others and with all of creation. Our own world view could begin to shift toward one that is more optimistic and communal.

So while the "Franciscan Thesis" might not actually be as Franciscan as we have previously been led to believe, it does provide Franciscans with a powerful alternative view of God, Christ, humanity and creation than one rooted in sin. In the end, like Scotus, we might make this perspective our own and spread the good news of a loving, caring and deeply relational God.

## **FRAGILITAS OR THE CAPACITY TO BE BROKEN**

**RUTH AGNES EVANS, O.S.C.**

Editor's note: The following is a meditation on Francis's *Second Letter to the Faithful*.

*Istud Verbum Patris tam dignum, tam sanctum et gloriosum nuntiavit altissimus Pater de caelo per sanctum Gabrielem angelum suum in uterum sanctae ac gloriosae virginis Mariae, ex cuius utero veram recepit carnem humanitatis et fragilitatis nostrae. Qui, cum dives esset super omnia, voluit ipse in mundo cum beatissima Virgine, matre sua, eligere paupertatem. Et prope passionem celebravit pascha cum discipulis suis et accipiens panem gratias egit et benedixit et fregit dicens: Accipite et comedite, hoc est corpus meum. Et accipiens calicem dixit: Hic est sanguis meus novi testamenti, qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum. Deinde oravit Patrem dicens: Pater, si fieri potest, transeat a me calix iste. Et factus est sudor eius sicut guttae sanguinis decurrentis in terram. Posuit tamen voluntatem suam in voluntate Patris dicens: Pater, fiat voluntas tua; non sicut ego volo, sed sicut tu. Cuius Patris talis fuit voluntas, ut filius eius benedictus et gloriosus, quem dedit nobis et natus fuit pro nobis, se ipsum per proprium sanguinem suum sacrificium et hostiam in ara crucis offerret; non propter se, per quem facta sunt omnia, sed pro peccatis nostris, relinquens nobis exemplum, ut sequamur vestigia eius. Et vult ut omnes salvemur per eum et recipiamus ipsum puro corde et casto corpore nostro.*



*Sed pauci sunt, qui velint eum recipere et salvi esse per eum, licet eius iugum suave sit et onus ipsius leve.*<sup>1</sup>

This Word of the Father, so deserving, so holy and glorious, the most high Father of heaven has announced through his holy angel Gabriel into the womb of the holy and glorious Virgin Mary, from whose womb he received the real flesh of our humanity and our weakness. Who, although he was rich above all things, he himself wanted in the world, together with the most blessed Virgin, his mother, to choose poverty. And near his Passion he celebrated the Passover with his disciples and taking bread he gave thanks and blessed it and broke it saying: "Take and eat, this is my body." And taking the chalice he said: "This is my blood of the New Testament that will be poured out for you and for many in remission of sins." Then he prayed to his Father saying: "Father, if it can be done, let this cup pass from me." And his sweat became as drops of blood flowing down on the earth. Nevertheless, he placed his own will in the will of his Father saying: "Father, let your will be done; not as I will but as you will." His Father's will was such that his blessed and glorious Son whom he gave to us and was born for us, should offer himself through his own blood as sacrifice and victim on the altar of the cross, not for himself, through whom all things were made, but for our sins, leaving behind an example for us, so that we can follow in his footsteps. And he wants us all to be saved through him and to receive him with our heart pure and our body chaste. But there are few who want to receive him and be saved by him, although his yoke is sweet and his burden light.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kajetan Esser, O.F.M., *Ad Fideles II: Opuscula S. Francisci Assisiensis* (Rome, 1976), 115-17; <http://www.franciscan-archive.org/patriarcha/>.

<sup>2</sup> Francis of Assisi, *Second Letter to the Faithful*, my translation.

The Umbrian twelfth century cross which spoke to Francis at the beginning of his conversion<sup>3</sup> in San Damiano shows a Christ who is impassive and triumphant. His blood is shown to have infinite redemptive value, but the cost of shedding it is not depicted. Crosses like this acted as a visual teaching aid for the faithful. The portrayal of Jesus as unmoved by his own suffering was consistent with a tendency to under-emphasize the fact that in Jesus God had become a real man with genuine weakness. The Church of Francis's day placed an emphasis on the glory of Christ as God and his omnipotence,<sup>4</sup> attributes which are both clearly present in the quoted description of the Word of God written by St. Francis.

Francis wrote in continuity with, not in opposition to, the presentation of Jesus that was prevalent at his time. However, he shows his own understanding of the humanity of Jesus.<sup>5</sup> This insight is consonant with what we know about Francis's own conversion and subsequent life. Having encountered the person of Jesus in his conversion, the rest of Francis's life can be understood as a dedicated attempt to deepen this relationship, and to explore the ways in which he had a sense of encounter with Jesus. We know from Francis's writings that he believed Jesus' human vulnerability to be central to this encounter. It is not surprising, therefore, to find Jesus' vulnerability occupying a key place in this passage from Francis's second *Letter to the Faithful*. Awareness of the understated aspect of Jesus was a discovery arising

<sup>3</sup> See L3C in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, The Founder, Volume II*, ed. Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., J.A. Wayne Hellmann, O.F.M. Conv., William, J. Short, O.F.M. (New York: New City Press, 2000), 76; hereafter *FA:ED* followed by volume number and page(s).

<sup>4</sup> See Norbert Nguyen-Van-Khanh, O.F.M., *The Teacher of His Heart: Jesus Christ in the Thought and Writings of St. Francis* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1994), 20-29.

<sup>5</sup> Before Francis, St. Bernard of Clairvaux and many others had turned to the human life of Jesus as a way of meditating upon God, sensitive to the fact that Jesus had lived and suffered as a man and using the emotions this elicited to nourish their love for God. Francis followed this direction with his own powerful insights and realism.

from the heart of Francis's self-discovery in Christ and is the subject of this article.

The power and poignancy of the story of Francis's conversion derives in part from the fact that Francis's desire to know Christ more deeply created profound and understandable inner tensions. The unconverted Francis had a strong natural desire to affirm and protect himself, colorfully illustrated by his liking for fine clothes, popularity and his avoidance of lepers. Before his conversion, Francis had already experienced what it was like to be powerless through an experience of imprisonment that probably lasted from 1202 to 1203 during the war between Perugia and Assisi.<sup>6</sup> Upon his release, Francis once again immersed himself in the experiences and values with which he was familiar. After another attempted military expedition was thwarted by a strange spiritual dream and message,<sup>7</sup> he returned to Assisi and the pleasures of banqueting and easy company. Once again, his attempt to direct his own path was interrupted by a spiritual experience, this time an astonishingly intense experience of divine tenderness.<sup>8</sup> As Francis began to enter this encounter with Christ, breaking through his own reluctance step by step, his conversion story becomes increasingly gripping and stirring. He hands over more and more of himself in the act of following Christ, including the vulnerabilities that he most fears. He is both attracted to these requirements and afraid. It is no coincidence that one of the decisive, dramatic moments in his struggle to liberate himself is when he takes off all his fine clothes in public and stands naked.<sup>9</sup> The incident externalises Francis's conflict with the inherited values of his father and his struggle to rediscover himself as a son of God. The decisive harshness of Francis's behavior towards Pietro di Bernardone shows how deep the conflict between son and father had become. And it also indicates the depth of Francis's struggle within himself, a struggle in which self-

conquest was becoming tantamount to a departure from every form of security. Francis experiences his natural urge to place limits on his own vulnerability as an obstacle to union with Christ. Another decisive moment in the struggle comes when Francis feels that God asks him to include lepers, the most forsaken members of society, in his love for Christ.<sup>10</sup> Lepers were stripped of all social rights and were believed to be highly contagious.<sup>11</sup> The requirement that he forgo the security of self-protection is so painful and abhorrent to Francis that it seems almost unbearable. Nonetheless, he obeys the divine prompting.

The Lord thus gave me, Brother Francis, to begin doing penance: for when I was in sin, it seemed too bitter for me to look at lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and I showed mercy with them. And when I left them, that which had seemed bitter to me was converted into sweetness of soul and body, and afterwards I lingered a little and left the world.<sup>12</sup>

What happens between Francis and the leper is more than an act of mercy. Their contact can only be fully understood in the light of Francis's entry into the mystery of Christ. Francis was coming to understand the Incarnation as the revelation of a God willing to depart from the security of his own ascendancy out of love for his creatures. Celano and Bonaventure dramatize the significance of what happens between Francis and the leper by substituting Christ for the leper at the end of the encounter.<sup>13</sup>

Francis's struggle to admit his own human weakness and defenselessness into his life of Christian love and to abandon the privileged and secure life of an attractive young merchant gives the saint insight into the condition that the Word ac-

<sup>6</sup> L3C, FA:ED II, 69-70.

<sup>7</sup> L3C, FA:ED II, 70-71.

<sup>8</sup> L3C, FA:ED II, 71-72.

<sup>9</sup> L3C, FA:ED II, 80.

<sup>10</sup> L3C, FA:ED II, 74.

<sup>11</sup> See Arnaldo Fortini, *Francis of Assisi*, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981), 206-12.

<sup>12</sup> Francis of Assisi, *Testament*, my translation.

<sup>13</sup> 2C in FA:ED II, 248-49 and LMaj, FA:ED II, 533-34.



cepted for our sake. Francis was motivated by the quest for this understanding of Jesus. To look at someone vulnerable is to see a person without advantages, without the security of power. Francis writes as one well acquainted with vulnerability when he states in his *Letter to the Faithful* that the Word of God willingly accepted the quality of defenselessness that belongs to us. The Word of God, as described by Francis in this passage, freely chose our weakness, with all its implications, before this weakness became part of who he was. Significantly, Francis is writing this letter while he himself is ill. His reason for writing is, as he states at the start of the letter, because he is prevented from visiting its recipients, *propter infirmitatem et debilitatem mei corporis*, "by the weakness and infirmity of my body." The letter was written to the Christian faithful at some point between 1216 and Francis's death in 1226. Clearly, Francis is suffering from deteriorating health. The vulnerability of this situation would have been made more acute by his unprivileged nomadic life.

Francis in the quoted passage is preoccupied with the choices and acts of volition made by the Word of God when he became incarnate and by the way these acts of volition, including the choice to be weak, are salvific responses to the will of the Father. Francis looks at the close bond between Jesus and us, stressing that the humanity Jesus took is real and frail like ours. This means that in Jesus we can look at someone with our own nature. Francis is preoccupied with Jesus' relationship to the Father, indicating that it is only in the context of this relationship that Jesus' choices and relationship with us can be understood. It is in Jesus that the Father lives and acts.

In the opening words of this passage, Francis creates a viewpoint from which Jesus' human life and choices as a human being are to be considered. Before he looks at Jesus within time, he considers the Word outside of time, in the light of his divine origin. Everything subsequently said about the man Jesus is to be understood from this original viewpoint. The perspective of the Word of God in the act of becoming human is unique. Since the Word's relationship with God and divine state precede his Incarnation, he alone has from

the outset purpose and volition regarding his own conception as a human being. He alone enters the world voluntarily and committed to the work of God. His conception alone has the character of a personal choice. The Word is dedicated and dedicates himself in the event of his own conception. His act in becoming man is astonishing in view of his dignity as God.

Jesus comes into the world from his intimacy with the Father. He is *Verbum Patris*, the Word of the Father. He belongs to the Father. He is with the Father who is *de caelo*. His environment before the Incarnation is heaven, with the Father. The Father is *altissimus*, most high. The Word exists in relation to the Father. As expression of the Father, who is God, the Word possesses an identity that proceeds from this relationship and he knows the Father. In order to say something about this pre-incarnate condition of the Word, Francis chooses certain adjectives. The Word is *tam dignum, tam sanctum et gloriosum*, "so deserving, so holy and glorious." His majesty as God outstrips anything we can imagine. This acts as a poignant counterpoint in the passage to the poverty that he assumes. Life and glory with the Father whose fullness he expresses are the supreme wealth of the pre-incarnate Word. Francis is preoccupied in this densely woven and evocative passage with the nature of the relationships that arise as a consequence of the Incarnation and the relationship out of which the Incarnation comes. *Nuntiavit* is the verb Francis chooses for the Father sending the Son into the created world. The Father has announced his Word into Mary's womb. This carries a sense of solemn declaration, a sense that the one who sends is expressed and communicated in the act of sending his messenger. The verb has a paradoxical beauty that expresses the unassuming character of Jesus' self-disclosure. *Nuntiavit* suggests a public proclamation. But the conception of Jesus in Mary's womb takes place in privacy and silence. We have been told already that Jesus



is the Word of the Father. A *nuntius*<sup>14</sup> was an envoy sent out to fulfil the work of the one who sent him. The Word brings his relationship with and loyalty to the Father with him into this created world. His acts and choices will illumine the Father. The Father will be present in what happens to him. A *nuntius* has to be sent to someone, to a people. Repeatedly, Francis draws attention in this passage to the link between the Word and us, to the fact that he comes to us and for us. Consequently, the Father and humanity are brought into relationship with one another through the envoy. The intimacy between Word and Father, seemingly so remote from and irrelevant to our life on earth, comes into the created world through the Word and is articulated in him and by him. As a man, Jesus lives in relation to and in obedience to that intimacy.

Throughout the passage, Francis is very concerned and precise about the acts of volition made by the Father and by the Son. He is careful not only to tell us when these acts of volition occur, but also to describe their character, the way in which they are expressed, the way that they impact on the human life of the incarnate Word and, through him, on the lives of other human beings. Francis looks in detail at the way the relationship of Father and Son is articulated by the reciprocity between their acts of volition. The will of the Father to announce the Word in Francis's text is placed before Francis's description of the surrender of the Word to a human destiny, a sequence making clear that the Word acts in obedience to the will of the Father. The life of the incarnate Word is not an independent enterprise. The shared volition between Word and Father is expressed through and by Jesus' life as a human being. God now expresses himself visibly and definitively in the created world. The relationship between Father and Son is never defeated by the experiences of being a man, although Jesus encounters fear and anguish. Francis's passage illustrates how Jesus defends and preserves

his relationship with the Father at all costs. To achieve this, Jesus brings his human volition into union with his obedience to the Father. In Jesus, a human will belongs totally to God.

In the first sentence of the passage the One who, as God, possesses all things and needs the assistance of no man or woman chooses human life, a state in which he experiences dependency. The Word, as Francis describes it, *veram recepit carnem humanitatis et fragilitatis nostrae* from the womb of the Virgin. He "accepted the real flesh of our humanity and our weakness." And so he enters a world of human relationships, a world in which human beings understand one another within a shared experience of vulnerability. God is shown choosing to express himself within weakness. *Recepit*, can be translated as he accepted, assumed, received, and took. The verb inconspicuously indicates the gulf that has been crossed. God does not need. But the Word of God is now, along with the rest of humanity, someone who does. As a tiny embryo, Jesus receives his life from a woman. He needs her cooperation, tenderness, her patient love, the time that she gives him within her womb. He is with her in the way that an unborn baby has to be with his mother. It is clear from the outset of the passage that the Word takes on humanity in an act of solidarity with us. The condition that he accepts belongs to others before it belongs to him. The humanity and frailty that he accepts are ours. The Word of God freely enters an existing humanity. Francis's description points to the unconditional surrender of this readiness, as the Word gives himself over to all the implications and possibilities of assuming human life and its frailty. His humanity, from the moment of conception, is orientated towards our good. He is born, we are told later, for us. Francis's use of the word, *recepit*, for the act of volition made by the Word in this event indicates humility, since the Word gives himself over to a defenselessness that he did not have. Even his capacity to receive, in the human sense of the word, is dependent upon the condition that he has accepted. He depends for his vulnerable condition upon a woman, who shares human nature with him. God lives in a fulfilment of life in which no poten-

<sup>14</sup> See Laurent Gallant, O.F.M. and Andre Cirino, O.F.M., *The Geste of the Great King* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2001), 230-31.

tiality is unrealised. But as an unborn child, Jesus is in a state of being formed and his potential is dependent on his mother. He receives his human body from hers. The humility of this first act of volition anticipates and characterizes the disposition of Jesus throughout his earthly life, including his acceptance of suffering and the cross. He expresses himself in his humanity through a willingness to depart from glory. This is implicit in Francis's choice of the word *fragilitas*, a word that suggests need, a far cry from possessing the full honours of being God. The physical reality of this engagement with Mary is stressed by Francis's use of the word *utero*, womb. Significantly, the humanity and frailty of the Word are portrayed as leading to relationship with others, first of all with his mother. The Word surrenders himself and is surrendered to her.

The pre-incarnate Word is described as *sanctum* and *gloriosum*. The Virgin is *sanctae* and *gloriosae*. These identical adjectives stress that a likeness between the Word and the Virgin exists even before he is incarnate. Her mirroring of his attributes stresses her worthiness to fulfil her role and strikes a reassuring note. Her womb, for which he exchanges heaven, is an appropriate environment for him to enter. Mary's consent is implied in Francis's text by the fact that the Word receives his humanity from her, since he could not receive in the full personal sense from a subject who was not a free agent. It is her consent, notably, that makes the humanity he receives her own gift. From the will of the Father and from this consent on both sides, the one who conceives and the one who is conceived, the Incarnation proceeds. The astounding generosity of the Father is expressed in the fact that he gives all that he has to Mary in an irrevocable act. The gift is clearly meant for all, since the humanity that Jesus takes from his mother is our humanity.

Jesus is able to exemplify obedience for other human beings with an authority and validity that come both from his knowledge of the Father and his true possession of our nature. The use of the words "the real flesh of our humanity" stresses that he assumes a real human nature and that it is like ours. This means that Jesus had human hopes, hu-

man desires and needs, a human longing for his life to have meaning and go well. It means that Jesus can fully represent us and act as an example for us, since he endured and contended with our condition, a point that Francis will go on to illustrate. Francis says that Jesus receives *fragilitatis nostrae*, our frailty or brittleness. *Fragilitas* is an interesting choice of word. In describing the humanity of Jesus, Francis had a range of words to choose from, all of which would have been theologically accurate. He could have said that Jesus took on our mortality, our limitations, our suffering. These would all have expressed the generosity of Christ's choice. Why then did Francis choose the word *fragilitas*? To be frail or brittle means to have the capacity to be broken.

The quality of *fragilitas* belongs originally, not to the Word of God, but to us. Before the Incarnation, *fragilitas* was not part of the nature of the Word. This capacity – *fragilitas* – is, indisputably, part of being human and a trait from which we all shrink in its concrete manifestations. It is the part of ourselves that lays us open to threat, to the fear that our hopes will be thwarted, our life destroyed. We naturally protect ourselves from contacting our own *fragilitas* whenever and wherever possible. *Fragilitas* makes Jesus vulnerable as a human being and in a way that God is not. The word points out, almost brutally, that through becoming a man Jesus was exposed to pain and that he could feel threatened. He was vulnerable in all the ways that we are vulnerable. Although he did not cease to be God, becoming a man fundamentally altered his experience of himself and what could happen to him. Later in the passage, the harsh and lonely implications of this condition become clear. At the start of the passage, in heaven, he enjoys an all-sufficing intimacy as God with God. In Gethsemane, Jesus sees reality from the perspective of a persecuted man and has to make an extreme effort to align his will with the will of the Father. Not only does he share our *fragilitas*, but his relationship with his own weakness is human. And so he shrinks from suffering.

The fact that Mary, with Jesus, elects poverty, stresses that the likeness existing between them before his conception develops within their human relationship, in their choices.



He chooses poverty *cum*, "with," Mary. Through this simple word, Francis touches on the freedom that exists between the son and his mother. Jesus interacts with her, is involved with her, is in a sympathetic dialogue with her. Their relationship illustrates one of the striking consequences of the Incarnation. The Word who was with the Father now acts with other human beings. He is able to communicate with them, choose with them, orientate his earthly life in a direction that he shares with them. This choice of poverty, with his mother, illumines the disposition of the Word in his incarnate state. The word *paupertas* means the actual hardship of poor circumstances. Christ's choice of poverty is in direct contrast to and yet mysteriously informed by the wealth that he once enjoyed, a wealth that made him rich above all things. That Mary chooses poverty with him emphasizes that she identifies with and supports her son in his departure from security. At his conception she is the means by which he departed from his heavenly glory. But her surrender extends far beyond that moment to touch the deepest recesses of her mature relationship with him. She is able to identify with his departure from the limited, temporal securities that he could have established for himself and shared with her. Having surrendered the glory that he previously possessed, he chooses to surrender without privileges to the human state that he has accepted. First, he is circumscribed in Mary's womb. Then he is circumscribed in his earthly environment, *in mundo*, by poverty. His poverty is characterized by his desire for that poverty. Francis says that Jesus himself *voluit*, wanted to be poor. This desire and choice is the second act of volition made by the Word of God within the passage. Francis goes on to demonstrate that what Jesus wanted when he came into the world was to be poor, not simply in a material vulnerability to hardship but in his acts of volition, in the authenticity of his service and human obedience. This unprivileged human poverty is the earthly expression of his eternal conformity with the Father. Once again, Mary's support and love strike a reassuring note. We are reminded that, like every human being, Jesus' journey through life is subject to the responses that he receives. Beginning with Mary, Francis is describing

how Jesus is able to draw and direct humanity into union with his own relationship with God.

In the next sentence Jesus celebrates the Last Supper with his disciples, illustrating again how as a consequence of the Incarnation he is a man among others. He celebrates with them, eats with them, and shares his life and experiences with them. They are his followers, they belong to him and he proceeds to give himself utterly to them. Francis moves from Jesus' desire to be poor, to his gift of himself in the Eucharist. Like his entrance into Mary's womb, the gift is unassuming. Jesus gives himself away in the bread and wine, his third act of volition in the passage. *Fragilitas* is central and necessary to the gift. The body that can be broken will in fact be broken; the blood that can be shed is about to be shed for the forgiveness of sins. *Corpus* means more than the physical body. It includes the whole person, the very self. *Sanguis* means life-blood or life, blood that is shed in sacrifice. Jesus, at supper with the twelve, anticipates the mystery of salvation. He holds up his body and blood in their *fragilitas* and eternal significance as offering, expiation, salvation, gift. Francis adds the phrase *pro vobis*, for you, to the quote from the Gospel of Matthew<sup>15</sup> as Jesus presents the chalice, a phrase which intensifies the sense of relationship between Jesus and his disciples and emphasizes Francis's theme of the bond between Jesus and ourselves. The sacrifice is for all humanity and that includes those who are immediately known and loved. Francis's text follows this offering immediately with Gethsemane.

In this next passage the limitation and self-limitation of the Word of God are described in relation to his approaching death. Francis describes Jesus suffering in an agonizing, prescient awareness of his own vulnerability and the suffering to come. He is circumscribed now, not only by his obedient willingness to be poor like us, but by persecution. As a man he knows his own fragility and he knows what other people intend to do to him. The worst sufferings of *fragilitas*

<sup>15</sup> Matt 26:27.



include awareness of our own helplessness and exposure to destruction. As a man, he has to struggle to defend his mission and the integrity of his relationship with the Father. His acceptance of our condition means that in his abandonment and need he is left with the fragile resources of a human being. And these are placed under a terrible strain by the situation. The scene shows the humility and humiliation of the Word as he shrinks from and struggles with the demands of the divine will. This is the very will of which he is the perfect expression and *nuntius*. But the will of God offers him no escape. He obeys, sweating drops like blood. He remains at the disposal of the Father, meaning he is to be at the disposal of men. The human will of Jesus undergoing this trial remains poor, leaving the Father free.

In Gethsemane, the will of the man Jesus subjects itself and is subjected to the will of the Father, abandoning the request for an escape that is not united with the will of God. Francis shows here that Jesus, having renounced the privileges of his Godhead in the Incarnation, goes on to renounce the request for a concession to the needs of his humanity. Having become a man, he reacts to imminent torture and death as a man. He endures his own terror. He suffers because his human life with all its potential and possibility is to be destroyed. The responsibility for others willingly incurred at the Incarnation now comes to bear relentlessly upon him. The scene in Gethsemane has had a profound impact on Christian imagination as a point of sympathetic, imaginative contact with Jesus. It is not possible for anyone to proceed far in imaginatively reconstructing what it meant to the Word of God to leave heaven and become human. We can never imagine the experience or sacrifice of such a transition. But we can reconstruct at least something of what it meant for the adult man, Jesus of Nazareth, to face the cross.

Francis's passage points not only to the salvific, sacramental aspect of the sacrifice but its implications for Jesus, a human desire not to suffer so terrible that it cannot be overcome without passing through a crisis, a crisis that is voiced in a human plea not to let it happen. Jesus fears his fate, to the point of asking God if there is a way out. "Father,

if it can be done, let this cup pass from me." Francis gives weight to this request by creating a narrative pause before Jesus surrenders his will and life to the Father. This pause does not appear in the Gospel of Matthew<sup>16</sup> from which Francis is quoting, or in fact any of the Gospel accounts. It prevents Francis's reader or listener from moving on too quickly to the resolution of the crisis and overlooking the struggle. Francis invites the reader to look at Jesus' appeal for a reprieve in all of its naked humanity. The description of the sweat like blood is a quotation from the Gospel of Luke.<sup>17</sup> Even though he is using Matthew's account, Francis turns to Luke, the only evangelist to record this disturbing fact. It is out of his sweat that Jesus goes on to say that he is prepared to surrender what he wills to the will of the Father. His acquiescence is so costly that it is not expressed in the first person. He does not say that it is his own will. The surrender is expressed as reverence for and acceptance of the will of the other who is loved: "not as I will but as you will." At the Last Supper, the motive Jesus gives is that the sacrifice is for others. The motive that he now voices is obedience.

Francis illustrates the necessity that the will of the Father is for Jesus. He draws attention to the significance of what is happening by describing in detail what happens within Jesus as he surrenders. He says that Jesus literally places his own will inside the will of the Father. In this crucial phrase, which marks the culmination of the passage, Francis describes the relationship between the will of the Father and that of the Son in its now earthly context. The Son's surrender of his human will to that of the Father is the fourth act of volition made by the Word of God in the passage. The insertion of one will into the other is depicted explicitly because it costs so much. Francis's stark phrase suggests the effort made by Jesus. Francis's description of this interior act of heroism gives weight to the surrender that is then articulated, indicating the courage needed to voice the surrender. The fact that Francis describes this act of will in such detail gives it

<sup>16</sup> Matt 26:39.

<sup>17</sup> Luke 22:44.

stature and dignity. The qualities ascribed to the Word in the first sentence of the passage are now demonstrated in the context of defenseless human experience. The scene forms a distressing contrast with the pre-incarnate security of the Word. Conformity to God now means a willingness to accept the extremes of human degradation and pain. As Francis asserts that it is the volition of the Father at this moment for his Son to offer himself, he again emphasizes the immeasurable dignity of the Son. The Son is *benedictus* and *gloriosus*, "blessed and glorious," a reminder of the earlier, *tam dignum, tam sanctum et gloriosum*. The love of the Father for the Son is asserted at the moment of the Son's appalling vulnerability, since the blessedness and glory of the Son are the Father's gift. We are reminded of the Son's supremacy and omnipotence. He is the one *per quem facta sunt omnia*, "through whom all things were made," an echo of the earlier, *dives esset super omnia*, "rich above all things." Francis recalls the Son's supreme wealth as he depicts the extent of his poverty.

Having described the surrender of Jesus, Francis informs the reader what the will of the Father at this moment is. The explanation is necessary because without this act of volition from the Father the struggle of Jesus does not make sense. The Father wills that the Son "should offer himself through his own blood as sacrifice and victim on the altar of the cross." Jesus is to offer his blood and suffer the personal horror of what this means for him. (We know that he has a living mother.) The sacrifice is carried out in agony, out of boundless love for the Father. The sacrifice asked of the Son is not for himself. There is no inner necessity within the nature of the Son, Francis reminds us, for him to need to suffer in this way. On the contrary, everything in the passage up to this point has stressed the dignity of the Son, his worth, and the astonishing condescension of his gift of himself to us. What happens to him is explained as a sacrifice for us who commit sin. Through suffering, Jesus fulfils his role as our representative and Savior. Francis describes how his obedience becomes an example for us, "so that we can follow in his footsteps." What has been accomplished for us is to be

accepted by us. The obedient sacrifice of Jesus extends itself to us in the form of an invitation. The Father wants us all to receive his Son. The verb here, *recipiamus*, is the same verb Francis used to describe the Son's loving and obedient receiving of human life at the beginning of the passage. The verb can mean to make welcome, have room for, be willing to accept. The Son of God's readiness to accept our life should find its answer within our readiness to accept him. But Francis stresses in the final line of the passage that this is often not the case, adding another depth to the suffering of Jesus. His offering of himself for and to us, in the *fragilitas* of our own humanity is subject to the freedom of human relationships. It can all be ignored.

Francis suggests that there is a lack both of reason and of love in the failure to respond and to receive Christ's sweet yoke, his light burden.<sup>18</sup> Through the sacrificed human body of Jesus, God offers salvation to us. Jesus' acceptance of our humanity for our sake, so well described by Francis, means that to neglect him is to neglect the most deserving member of our own race. The human links between Jesus and ourselves in the passage abound. To ignore the sacrifice offered by him in the real *fragilitas* of our nature is to deny our own capacity to receive him and be bonded to him.

In his dense, and theologically rich passage, Francis describes how the Father sends his Word into the world as a human being. The glorious divine nature of Jesus is faithfully described. But Francis also portrays Jesus as a real man. The surrender of the man in referring his life back to the Father is depicted in tremendous depth. As the passage develops, Francis shows how the Word of God moves deeper and deeper into a state of vulnerability, utterly different from his former safety and glory with God. First, he takes from the Virgin his humanity and the capacity for being broken. Then he enters into the implications of that choice, through poverty. He breaks his body in the Eucharist, publically accepting and proclaiming the sacrifice of his body in the Passion. Francis's

<sup>18</sup> See Matt 11:30.

passage stresses the terrible human implications of that sacrifice. In the agony of Gethsemane, Jesus suffers from weakness both in his mind and his body as he anticipates the cruelty of his death. The opening words of Francis's passage make it plain that this vulnerability, the burden of accepting pain in pursuing our good, was not part of Jesus' original experience as Son of God but something that he received when he was conceived as a human being for our sake. Our task is to respond. The humanity and frailty of Jesus create an opportunity for us in our own human frailty, through which we have a true access to him and through him to the Father. In taking our humanity, he becomes the truth about our humanity. This insight was lived out with extraordinary honesty in Francis's own painful and dedicated life.

## THE METAPHYSICS OF EXEMPLARITY AND THE *ITINERARIUM*

ZACHARY HAYES, O.F.M.

The year is 1273. The place is the city of Paris, near Sainte-Chapelle, and in the shadow of the cathedral of Notre Dame. These are two medieval masterpieces that stand yet today among the most impressive examples of the art of stained glass. One can hardly enter either of these Gothic masterpieces on a sunny day without being overwhelmed by the orgy of light and color displayed in both of them. The patterns of colored glass reach to the top of the Gothic arches in all the walls of the buildings. As the sun-light pours through the glass, it casts the most remarkable patterns of color on the floor. Everywhere you look, you are surrounded by glass illumined by the glorious sun outside.

The speaker is Bonaventure of Bagnoregio. He is addressing a group of university students and professors. Among other topics, he is speaking to them about the mystery of God's created universe. He knows well the cosmology of Aristotle and Ptolemy. He knows the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. Above all, he is immersed in the theological riches of the biblical tradition. When we think of the medieval fascination with the physics and the mysticism of light, it is easy to come to the conclusion that Bonaventure may well have had these two buildings with their elaborate displays of stained glass in mind when he said to his audience:

In every creature something of the divine exemplar shines forth, but it is mixed with darkness; hence there is a sort of darkness mixed with the light. There is, then, in every creature a pathway leading to the



exemplar. As you notice that a ray of light coming in through the window is colored according to the different colors of the many glass panes, so the divine ray of light shines differently in each creature and in the various properties of the creatures. (*Hex* 12, 14.)

Light is a metaphor for the divine reality. The colored window with its myriad shapes and colors is a metaphor for the created cosmos. Thus, as the colored patterns in the windows and on the floor of the building are generated by the physical light pouring through the glass, so the remarkable patterns of created things are generated by the divine creativity which shines through differently in each individual thing and in each property of each thing. The cosmos is, as it were, a window through which an awareness of the divine is mediated to creatures. And the rich variety of creatures with their specific qualities is a reflection of the depth and richness of the mystery of the divine itself.

We have seen one powerful metaphor – that of the window – which Bonaventure uses to highlight the symbolic nature of the created world. Elsewhere, in the *Itinerarium*, he wrote:

Creatures are shadows, echoes, and pictures of that first, most powerful, most wise, and most perfect Principle.... They are vestiges, representations, spectacles proposed to us and signs divinely given to us that we might come to the contemplation of God (*Itin* 2, 11).

He continues:

These creatures are ... exemplifications presented to souls still untrained and immersed in sensible things so that through the sensible things they see, they will be led to intelligible things which they do not see as through signs to what is signified (*Itin* 2, 11).

Bonaventure was a person who could operate easily at many levels. We have just heard him speaking in the language of imagination and metaphor. But in his mind, this matter can be seen at a more philosophical level. At this level, he employs the language of exemplarity which saw all the

objects encountered in this world as temporal and changing realities while certain knowledge must relate to the intelligible or ideal world. This raises the issue of the Platonic theory of ideal forms that transcend the material objects of our sensible experience. What the actual view of Plato might have been originally is a matter of debate among historians of Greek philosophy. Aristotle seems to say that Plato's original teaching was distorted by some of his disciples. And it is from this distortion that we take what we think is the Platonic theory of Ideas. The fact is that the view of Plato seems to change from the early dialogues to the late dialogues.

We will not attempt to resolve this debate but simply wish to point out that, whatever the historical origins of the theory of exemplarity might have been, what we think of as the Platonic tradition – whether it is Plato's or not – has a long history among Christian scholars. This is particularly true in the case of St. Augustine, and perhaps more so later in the case of St. Bonaventure. Early in his student years, Bonaventure was concerned with the fact that, as he read the Stagirite, Aristotle had rejected the Platonic theory of exemplarity. For Plato, spatio-temporal objects and their relations reflect or participate to a greater or lesser degree in the eternal Ideas or Forms that establish the basic structure of the real world; or at least so thought Bonaventure. By way of contrast, at the end of the first book of the *Metaphysics* Aristotle writes:

But the assertion that these forms are exemplars, and that the rest of entities participate in them is to speak vain words and to utter poetic metaphors. For in what respect, may I ask, does an operating cause look toward the ideas as a model? (*Bk. I*, c. 9ff.).

Departing from what is commonly thought of as the Platonic theory, Aristotle goes on to describe a metaphysical theory of matter and form in which forms are internal to the material objects and do not involve any transcendent reality. Bonaventure had discussed this in the second book of his *Sentence Commentary* (*Sent.* II, d.1, p.1, a.1, q.1 <II, 17>). There he states his clear preference for the view of Plato on

this matter and his wonderment that Aristotle could have been wrong on such an important issue.

In a Christian context, what we think of as a Platonic Idea is taken to be a transcendent form that is reflected in a limited way in an empirical being. More specifically, what we think of as the Platonic Ideas are commonly situated in the divine mind and come to be known as the divine Ideas. When this theory is used by a Christian theologian such as Bonaventure, it is used to express the conviction that all of created reality is grounded in the transcendent mystery of God's knowledge and love, and manifests something of that mystery in the created realm to a limited degree.

Bonaventure's theological explanation of this begins with his sense of the immense richness of the goodness of God. This is expressed first internally within the Godhead in the mystery of the Trinity. God is not simply a static, monadic being. Rather the mystery of the trinity suggests that the divine reality is a mystery of productive love. When this divine love flows outward it is the free, loving act whereby God calls into being the created cosmos. And this cosmos, in Bonaventure's understanding, is thoroughly drenched with the mystery of God. All created reality manifests, in a variety of ways and levels, the richness of the divine life from which it flows.

In the same set of lectures of 1273, Bonaventure says the following:

This is the whole of our metaphysics: it is concerned with emanation, exemplarity, and consummation (*Hex* 1, 17).

To paraphrase that for our purpose here, his metaphysics is concerned with how all creatures take their origin in the creative love of God; how they reflect something of the richness of the divine reality in the created order; and how they will be brought to their final fulfillment in loving union with the God from whom they have come.

The most emphatic statement of Bonaventure appears in his final work, the lectures mentioned in the opening of this presentation, namely, the *Collations on the Six Days of Cre-*

ation. There he argues that the primary metaphysical question is that of the exemplar in whose likeness all created things are formed. Again we hear his inclination toward the Platonic philosophical tradition, and the echoes of his early problem with Aristotle's rejection of the Ideas. Speaking of the relation of the first Cause to the exemplars, Bonaventure writes:

For some denied that exemplars of things existed in this Cause: the leader of these seems to have been Aristotle who, in the beginning and end of his *Metaphysics*, and in many other places, strongly condemns the ideas of Plato. Therefore he says that God knows only Himself, and does not need the knowledge of any other thing ... But this supposes that God knows nothing, or no individual being... And the reasons he gives for this are worthless (*Collations on the Six Days of Creation*, col. 6, #2ff).

But even more important for our concern here, he argues that the answer to the primary metaphysical question raised, indeed, by philosophy, is finally answered in the area of Christian faith and theology. It is a christological answer, for it is Christ who is the temporal, historical embodiment of the eternal, divine exemplar in the fullest sense. Specifically he writes:

From all eternity the Father begets a Son similar to Himself, and expresses Himself and a likeness similar to Himself, and with this, He expresses the totality of His power. He expresses what He can do, and most of all, what He wills to do. And He expresses everything in Him, that is, in the Son or in that very Center, as in His Art. And this Center is Truth (*Collations on the Six Days*, col. 1, 13ff).

The role of exemplarity is pervasive in Bonaventure's theology. It enters into his theology of creation as a way of distinguishing between the action of an agent that produces an effect simply and purely by reason of its nature and hence out of a type of necessity, and the action of an agent that pro-



duces something *by way of art* (*Collations on the Six Days*, col. 5, 141). The first possibility is the sort of understanding that hides behind the Avicennan view of an eternal and necessary world. If God is thought of as the eternal, unmoved mover, and if the mover is eternal and unchanged, then the movement must be eternal. And if that is the case, then the effect of the movement is both necessary and eternal. Therefore, if God is thought of in this way, the conclusion seems inescapable; the world is necessarily eternal. Thus, the metaphysics of Avicenna.

Bonaventure contrasts this with the possibility that God, the Creator, be thought of not as one who produces simply by virtue of the divine nature as such, but as one who acts intentionally, or *per artem*, and therefore not simply as *agens* but as *agens et volens*. And if God acts intentionally – and not necessarily – then it is more reasonable to assume that God produces not randomly but in accord with some Idea, much as a sculptor produces a statue, or as a painter produces a picture.

The doctrine of exemplarity, at this level, becomes a means of explaining both the freedom and the purposiveness of God's creative activity. Bonaventure thus avoids the Avicennan dilemma of the eternal necessity of God's activity with respect to the world by developing the doctrine of the trinity as a way of showing how God can be thought of as supremely self-communicative without the necessity of communicating being to the created world. The supreme instance of the divine self-communication resides within the mystery of the triune, relational, love-life of the trinity. That being the case, it is quite possible to see that God can be God without needing a world. And the divine self-communication to the world can be seen not as something that God must do by reason of the nature of the Good, but as free, and thus to see the world as radically contingent.

Exemplarity, furthermore, becomes the means of elaborating the symbolic nature of the cosmic realm. For the whole of the created universe is, as it were, a language system external to God, the meaning of which is the content of the world of the Ideas immanent to the divinity itself in as far

as that can be expressed in something that is not divine. In Bonaventure's own language, the Word is the "book written within" while the created cosmos is the "book written without."

Flowing out from God is a hierarchically structured universe of creatures. This is laid out in considerable detail in the text of the *Itinerarium*. God is the supreme Artist, and all created things reflect that Artist in some way. Think of this in analogy with the great *G-minor Fantasy and Fugue* of J. S. Bach. The mere experience of hearing this work of art tells us something of the artist who composed it, even if we know no details of his personality, his historical situation, or his intention in composing it. But the more we know about the details of the composer's life, the richer is the experience of hearing the music. In a similar way, all created things can awaken some sense of the divine Artist in the human person experiencing the created world. But not all do this to the same extent. Some may be like footprints in the sandy beach. They tell me that someone was there; that the person had medium-size feet; and that the person probably was not too heavy, since the sand is very dry and the prints are not deep. Beyond that, I cannot sense much of what the person was like. In an analogous way, even the lowliest creature, such as non-living things like rocks, are at least vestiges or footprints of the divine. They can alert us to some dimensions of the mystery of the divine Artist, but they will probably not carry us very far.

This is the concern of the first two chapters of the *Itinerarium*. The entire world of sensible realities is seen there as a ladder by which we can ascend to God, or "as a mirror through which we may pass over to God, the Supreme Creative Artist." At this level, certain attributes of the divine shine through all created things. The rock, the tree, the animal: each is like a footprint in the sand that points beyond itself to the Creative Artist who has made all things.

Not only is the entire universe, to some degree, a vestige of the divine, but humanity reflects the divine in a particularly significant way. It is created not only as a vestige, but also as an image of the divine. It has the divine not only as



its creative cause but also as the object of all its desire for the true, the good, and the beautiful. In such a world, which at every level mirrors the mystery of God, humanity mirrors the divine in a particular way. We have the task of embodying the creative love of God among all creatures at the level of conscious freedom. That is what is distinctive about human beings. Bonaventure was convinced that it is in the creative love of God that we live and move and have our being. But, this is true not only of a particular individual, but also of all other human beings, and of all the things we meet in the world around us. In this sense, we can say that in the theological development of Bonaventure there is an expression of something basic to the preaching of Jesus himself: the universal, loving Fatherhood of God.

It is at this third level of reflection in the *Itinerarium* that Bonaventure, like Augustine centuries before him, leads us into the world of interiority. He uses the structure of the Temple of Jerusalem to express his thought. He asks us to leave the outer court of the temple (=the external world) and to enter the inner realm of the tabernacle. That is, into ourselves, where we will see God in a fuller way, for the light of truth shines like a candelabrum in our minds. What is it like to be a created spirit? Is it possible to see in the experience of our created spiritual being an even richer reflection of the mystery of the Uncreated Spirit that is God? Here Bonaventure takes us through a remarkable analysis of the diverse faculties and functions of world within us, arguing that in this area we can see more explicit analogies for the mystery of the trinitarian nature of God.

The soul, then, when it considers itself through itself as through a mirror, rises to the speculation of the Blessed Trinity, the Father, the Word, and Love; three persons co-eternal, co-equal, and consubstantial...."  
(*Itin* 3, 5).

This level of reflection comes to an end in reflections on the way in which all the sciences which inform the human mind can provide greater richness to the symbolism involved.

And intelligent beings are in essence a potential for a yet deeper realization of similarity to God which is realized in the transformation of grace. At this level, they are called not just an image, but a likeness (=similitude) of God. This involves the gift of grace and the virtues and all the spiritual gifts by which the human spirit is brought into its proper place in the hierarchical structure of reality.

But for Bonaventure, within this universe which reflects the divine exemplar in a variety of levels, the person of Jesus Christ in his particular history is the pre-eminent embodiment of the divine exemplar, as we have seen above. In his *Apologia pauperum*, Bonaventure describes Christ as the conjunction of the eternal and the temporal exemplar. The exemplarity of Christ's human life, therefore, is not limited to the fact of being a good moral example for his followers. His historical existence is the real, symbolic mediation of that mystery of the divine life in which everything "other" than the primal source (=the Father) is grounded.

This is the context in which Bonaventure develops his symbolism of Christ as the Center in its most intense form in a great example of the coincidence of opposites. Christ is the conjunction of the uncreated and the created; the absolute and the relative; the eternal and the temporal; the center of the Godhead and the center of creation, both of its nature and of its history. The Word-centered vision of Bonaventure's earlier *Johannine Commentary* now becomes an explicitly Christ-centered vision with the focus on the *identity* of the eternal Word, the incarnate Word, and the inspired Word.

As we have seen, the roots of Bonaventure's exemplarity are found in his early writings. But in his final writings this issue is brought to a fever-pitch of intensity. It is the key to his understanding of the unity of Christian wisdom. Within such a framework, it is possible for him to engage all the human arts and sciences and draw them into relation to this center. This he had done already in his *De reductione artium ad theologiam*. Now at the end of his literary career, he does it with a thoroughness unequaled in the history of Christian thought. All the arts and sciences have something to contribute to the human journey, but never may any of them,

including the best of philosophy, be allowed to replace the center or to stand alone as a self-sufficient account of the nature of reality.

In the Christianized, Platonic-sounding language of Bonaventure the metaphor of the artist and the work of art is basic. For Plato, as we have seen, the richest dimension was found in the transcendent reality of Ideas. All things encountered in the empirical world are but limited embodiments of those transcendent Ideas. Already in the theology of St. Augustine, the Ideas were placed with the divinity and were seen as the self-knowledge of God in which God sees all that the mystery of the divinity is within itself, and all that God can call into being outside the divinity. And the multiplicity of Ideas was compacted into the one eternal Word, that is, the second person of the divine trinity. This tradition, going back to Augustine, was taken up by Bonaventure. At the level of God's Primal Word of self-expression there is but one Word. And in that one Word is contained all that the divine is within itself and all that can come to be, should the divine determine to communicate itself externally. Thus, internally and in terms of logical denotation, there is but one divine Word. But in terms of logical connotation, that single Word expresses the plurality of creatures in the cosmos external to God. It is for this reason that we speak of a plurality of Ideas, even though, in the most basic sense, there is but one Idea. And this is what stands behind Bonaventure's metaphysics of emanation, exemplarity, and consummation.

This is a vision in which we can say that the world of creation has its own truth and beauty. But this is not the entire story. To stop at this level could leave us with a form of empiricist positivism. Beyond this, each creature and the whole of creation, in its truest reality, is an expressive sign or symbol pointing to the glory, the truth, and the beauty of God. Only when it is seen in these terms is it seen in its most profound significance. Bonaventure was fully aware of the scientific understanding of his time and place. But he was convinced that, important as such knowledge might be, it must be held open to the religious vision in which we discover – beyond the factual information of the sciences – a

framework of value and meaning that is not accessible to the sciences as such, but is crucial for the successful living of human life.

The exemplaristic doctrine of creation, then, is a technical way of expressing the conviction that God is a mystery of creative love. And the sense that all that is not identical with God is totally dependent on God and in some way reflects something about the mystery of the divine. This is what all creatures have in common. It is significant that Bonaventure can see this sense as the foundation of the spiritual journey, not only for friars, but for everyone who desires to make the spiritual journey to God. And, even further, he can identify this sense of createdness with humility. It is not a mere play on words to point out that the Latin word for humility is derived from the Latin word for earth: *humus*. In this sense, *humility* in its most basic sense is a recognition of our earthy roots. This is not unlike the Hebrew name which the book of *Genesis* uses for the first human being: *Adam*, the one taken from the earth. We are of the earth, yet called to an exalted destiny with God.

If we were to translate this vision of creation into a general principle, it might be the following: To be is to be-in-relation. We are tempted to think of this as Bonaventure does in terms of another metaphor used already by St. Augustine. The created order may be seen as a great "song of God." But anyone who understands music knows that a well-crafted melody is not simply a series of notes in juxtaposition. It is a series of notes that move to a goal, and each of the notes carries a particular weight in carrying that movement to its conclusion. Thus, the created order is not simply a collection of individual things unrelated to each other. It is rather an order of beings, all of which are somehow interrelated. Brother Sun shines, certainly, but not simply for himself; and rivers flow, but not for themselves. All things are, but not simply for themselves. In some way each thing is for others as well. Can we say that, in this sense, something of the divine, self-giving, creative love emanates throughout the whole of the created order as Bonaventure saw it? And just as some degree of dissonance helps to highlight the deeper beauty of



a melody, so the beauty of God's creation is emphasized by some degree of cosmic dissonance.

The final dimension of Bonaventure's metaphysics is the return of all things to their source. This raises the question of finality or purpose. This can be discussed at two levels. First, as seems clear in the text of the *Itinerarium*, there is the question of how the human person can rise to God through various levels of knowledge to arrive at the level of contemplative and transforming union with the God of love from whom all things have come. The idea of seeing the world of created things as a ladder on which the human person might ascend to the mystery of God is found already in the early biographies of St. Francis. For example, speaking of St. Francis, Thomas of Celano writes: "He (=Francis) made for himself from all things a ladder by which to come even to His (=God's) throne." (Habig, *Omnibus of Sources*, 1972, 494-95.) Bonaventure employs the same metaphor in the structural layout of the *Itinerarium*.

Any discussion of this matter takes us into the area of his epistemology. To go into that in any detail would be the task of another presentation. But for our purpose here, we wish to point out that, while Bonaventure saw some truth in the Aristotelian empirically based doctrine of abstraction, he did not see that as an adequate account of all that seems to be involved in the human experience of knowledge. Together with a modified form of abstractionism which maintains some tie into the truth of our relation to the world of sense objects, Bonaventure holds to a form of Illumination which provides a way of explaining how it is possible for humans to come to make judgments about sensible objects that go beyond the experience of mere sense data. We might take as an example the experience of sound which we judge to be a beautiful sound. Where do we come to the principles that allow us to make such a judgment? The example is given in the *Itinerarium*. The answer to the question takes us back to Augustinian illumination which sees some form of enlightenment coming from the divine archetypes. Beauty is defined in terms of the Pythagorean theory of number; and "number

is the principal exemplar in the mind of the Creator." (*Itin.* 2, 10, quoting Boethius, 1 *De arith.* 1ff.) Thus, number

makes God known in all bodily and visible things when we apprehend numerical things, when we delight in numerical proportions, and when we judge irrefutably by the laws of numerical proportions." (*Itin* 2, 11.)

To a great extent, much of Bonaventure's discussion of this issue relates to what a post-Kantian philosopher might call the "a-priori" dimensions of knowledge. For Bonaventure, it is a question of the basis of our convictions concerning the correctness of first principles of logic, mathematics, and other such elements in the cognitive process which seem not to be learned from empirical experience, but which seem to be involved when we come to make judgments about such experiences. For those of his contemporaries who found the Aristotelian epistemology adequate, the full knowledge of an empirical object could be explained by an understanding of sensation and the process of abstraction by the agent intellect eventually leading to a judgment. For Bonaventure, the ideal knowledge of concrete things involved not only the reality of sensation and the impact of the sense images on the cognitive power; it involved also the presence of the eternal archetype to the mind as a kind of light which gives guidance and direction to the knowledge of the material creature.

This ideal knowledge, which involves seeing the sense object in the light of its eternal archetype, is, for Bonaventure, the full knowledge of the object. To know it simply in its physical reality is seriously incomplete. To know the sense object as a symbol of that which it reflects is to bring human knowledge of created things to what, in Bonaventure's view, is the *plena resolutio*. This may be a way of understanding what Bonaventure means by the term "contuition" which appears frequently in his writings. Somehow the light of the divine archetype illumines the experience of the sense object. Yet, like the light in which we physically see things, when we turn to see this mysterious light, it is as though we see nothing. Yet it is precisely in that transcendent light that we see



the truest reality of creation. Puzzling as this may seem to be, it should not be taken to mean any direct vision of the divine. But we can say that, in essence, it means learning to see all the objects of the created world as signs pointing to a mystery beyond themselves. The eternal archetype, therefore, is seen indirectly in what Bonaventure calls *contuitio*.

Unlike the empiricism of Aristotle, this is an epistemology that suggests the possibility of seeing things in a way that begins with sense experience, but moves to seeing things in terms of their deepest significance as grounded in the Eternal Art. Each individual thing, and particular qualities of each thing are symbolic of the Archetype. So also is the universe as a whole symbolic of the richness and fullness of the creative love of God.

It is principally in this sense that the *Itinerarium* sees the journey of the mind to God. There is, however, another sense in which Bonaventure sees the return of creation to God which is discussed in his early *Sentence Commentary* but does not seem to play a role in the *Itinerarium*.

This has to do with the way in which all the elements of the created universe or macrocosm are contained within the microcosm that is humanity. Matter, which exists at the lowest level on the hierarchical scale of creation, is not an inert reality. Deep within matter is a dynamic appetite to be united with spirit. This, of course, takes place in humanity – the synthesis of created matter and created spirit. And this level of creation is open to yet another level of fulfillment; that is, when created matter and created spirit are united with the uncreated spirit – the Word that becomes incarnate in Jesus Christ (*De reduc.* 20).

This Christological orientation is developed further in a sermon that relates the mystery of the Transfiguration to the Resurrection, and then to the final goal of the whole created order. In a remarkable passage, Bonaventure says:

All things are said to be transfigured in the transfiguration of Christ in as far as something of each creature was transfigured in Christ. For as man, Christ has something in common with all creatures. With the

stone he shares existence; with plants, he shares life; with animals he shares sensation; and with angels he shares intelligence. Therefore all things are said to be transformed in Christ since, as man, he embraces something of all creatures in himself when he is transfigured (Second Sunday of Lent, Sermo I).

This Christological statement is related to Bonaventure's view of matter and its relation to spirit. There is in matter a tendency to rise to higher forms. As we have seen above, the material world is inclined to union with the world of spiritual reality. It reaches a remarkable level within history in the form of humanity: the incarnate spirit. This means that the human being is not only the highest form of material creation, but it also recapitulates all the lower levels of creation. Since this is the case, it follows that all the lower levels of material creation can participate in the destiny of humanity and so share in the final glory of creation as it is led back to God. When this is viewed in terms of the discussion of eschatology in the *Sentence Commentary*, it seems to say that in the final fulfillment of creation, we are not dealing simply with disembodied spirits or souls. And the material world is not left behind, but is taken up and transformed in the final consummation of creation through the power of the Spirit.

## CONCLUSION

The philosopher, A. N. Whitehead, once commented that Christianity is not first of all a metaphysical system. It is first of all an historical, religious experience in search of its own proper metaphysical understanding (*Religion in the Making* [New York, 1926; pbk Cleveland, 1960], 50). I have long been inclined to see this as a summary of the dynamism of Western Christian intellectual history.

Christianity does, indeed, begin with a form of historical, religious experience that bears all the marks of a specific time and place. But if that experience is to be seen as something more than a particular experience or more than an empty fantasy, then, at some point, Christians will wish

to search out what this experience must mean if it is taken to offer genuine insight into the nature of reality. Christians will attempt to spell this out in terms of some form of metaphysics and ethics. The intellectual tradition has commonly done this in the past by engaging itself in critical conversation with a variety of philosophical systems in the effort to come to a more critical self-understanding of the implications of the creative experience that lies at the base of the tradition.

This might be a helpful way to view the work of Bonaventure. There can be no doubt that the consistent point of departure for his intellectual work is to be found in what might be called his Christological *a priori*. The ultimate meaning of all created reality is encoded in the mystery of Christ who stands at the heart and center of reality. It is the task of the Christian to live in the light of this mystery. It is the task of the Christian intellectual to spell out the metaphysical and ethical implications of the same mystery. The Christian may use any resources available to carry out this task. But the Christian may never replace that Center with another center. To do that is to undercut the reflective process from the start. On the other hand, the attempt to do this seriously and consistently may well lead to fundamentally new metaphysical insights. Without the basis of Christian faith, the theology of Bonaventure would lose its starting-point. But given that starting-point, the theologian can make use of any resources available to carry out this task. Thus Bonaventure, looking back to the great philosophers of antiquity, could assess both Plato and Aristotle in terms of their strengths and weaknesses. And he was convinced that Plato had truly raised the most important philosophical question: that of exemplarity. What is the original after which all the copies have been shaped? But he had not found an adequate answer to the question. It is only in the light of the history of Jesus Christ that Christians may come to an appropriate answer to the question raised by Plato. And with this, the history of metaphysics is brought to a new level.

**POVERTY AND CONTEMPLATION:  
A FRANCISCAN MARRIAGE  
ACCORDING TO ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA**

**BARNABAS HUGHES, O.F.M.**

As an Augustinian Canon in Portugal, Fernando (as Saint Anthony of Padua was named at baptism) had earned the title of Master of Sacred Scripture, the equivalent today of a Doctorate in Sacred Theology. Later, as a friar minor and called Antonio, he set up a school of theology for the friars near the University of Bologna in 1222. The next year he taught theology to the friars at Toulouse and Montpellier in Southern France. In 1227 he was elected Provincial of the Province of Romagna in northeastern Italy that includes Venice, Padua, and Milan. About this time he was asked to write on theology. Instead he wrote a manual of sermons, a resource book for preachers and other interested persons. These were not sermons to be preached. Rather any preacher could go to them and get material for his own sermons. When I refer to what Saint Anthony had to say, I am either quoting or adapting from what he wrote. Also, with due respect for sexual differences and having to live with the lack of adequate pronouns in the English language, I beg my readers' indulgence for my use of he, him, and his instead of an unwieldy mixture with she, her, and hers [the generic they, them and their for a single person is unacceptable]. First I discuss poverty and then contemplation as understood by Saint Anthony. His thinking is drawn from his sermons.<sup>1</sup> The occasional interjection

<sup>1</sup> G. Tollardo, *I Sermoni di Sant'Antonio di Padova* (Padua: Edizioni Messaggero, 2005), 4th edition. For the Latin edition see L. Frasson, J.



of certain events from his life will assist in understanding his twinning of poverty and contemplation.

In his sermon for the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, Anthony chose for his leading text a statement of St. Peter, "We have given up everything and followed you" (Matt 19:27). He remarks that the reason they had given up everything is because

Jesus is so rich and he will enrich us. There are, however, some religious who are very miserable because while they have given up everything, they do not follow Jesus. They suffer a double loss: neither external nor internal consolations. While people in the world may lack interior consolations, they are consoled with worldly goods.<sup>2</sup>

Anthony makes it clear: follow the Lord and you will be filled with his riches. But first you must give up everything. This is clearly Anthony's thinking on poverty as he remarked further on in the same sermon, "If you wish to follow [Christ] and take the consequences of following him, then you must give up yourself."<sup>3</sup> The bottom line for living in the world of the twenty-first century, however, is the sense of being able to take care of oneself. If a religious thinks this way, then she or he has not given up everything.

Giving up oneself, the final step in embracing poverty, was something that St. Anthony learned the hard way. Fernando was a brilliant, pious, young Canon Regular of St. Augustine in the cathedral at Coimbra, Portugal. He was qualified to start his own school of theology. Yet he had done nothing but complete his studies, prayed, and preached occasionally as any young religious priest would. Somehow he

Luisetto, and P. Marangon, eds., *S. Antonii Patavini Sermones dominicales et festivi ad fidem codicum recogniti*, 3 vols. (Padua: Edizioni Messaggero, 1979). References to the Latin edition are marked by S followed by volume and page numbers. All translations are mine.

<sup>2</sup> S III 84.3; *Sermoni*, 1146.3.

<sup>3</sup> S III 85.4; *Sermoni*, 1147.4.

had heard about the friars (they were not called Franciscans then) who were going to Morocco to convert the Moslems. The next thing he knew about them was that they had been martyred in Morocco and that their bones were on display in the cathedral in Coimbra. The sight of these holy relics inspired Fernando to join the friars. In donning the habit he took the name of Antonio from the name of the community of friars that gave him the habit. Then he sailed for Morocco to die gloriously for Christ. Such was his goal.

God had other plans. Anthony became so ill (probably with rheumatic fever) that nobody wanted to kill him. Finally he was put on a boat to go back to Portugal. But God blew the ship off course to Sicily. There an apparently recovered Anthony joined the friars who were going to Assisi for the Chapter of Mats of 1221. He took what came. Anthony had learned to give up himself, to trust only in the providence of God. At the Chapter he mixed with others but did not push himself. He probably met St. Francis. When the Chapter was over, he was left pretty much by himself. He did not belong to any province or friary. Seeing that he was without direction, Brother Graziano the Provincial of Romagna in northern Italy asked if he were a priest. Anthony's reply was simple, "Yes, I am." "Good," said the Provincial. "You can go to Campo Sanpaulo where the friars in the hermitage need a priest. You can offer Mass for them." So Anthony went, offered Mass, and did whatever chores were needed. A short time later he accompanied the friars to nearby Forlì to attend the ordination of one of the friars. At the festive dinner afterwards when the Provincial could not get any other priest to say a few appropriate words (they pleaded that they had no time to prepare), he told Anthony to speak. He preached as no one had ever heard before. All, including the bishop, were astounded at his eloquence and learning. The rest is history.

He became the "Hammer of Heretics" and the founder of the first School of Franciscan Theology at the University of Bologna. After a year teaching there, he went to Southern France to combat the heretics and teach theology at Toulouse and at Montpellier. Returning to Romagna Anthony was elected Provincial even though a friar for only seven



years. Later the General Minister appointed him to a commission that would visit with the Pope to determine the relationship between the *Testament* of St. Francis and the Rule of St. Francis. During his eleventh year as a friar on June 13, 1231, Anthony abruptly died – most probably from a return of rheumatic fever. Eight months later he was canonized by Pope Gregory IX.

This was not the way Fernando had planned his life. He wanted martyrdom. Instead sickness and menial chores awaited him, then the charge from St. Francis himself to instruct the friars in theology, being sure that “they not lose the spirit of prayer and devotion.” Anthony had learned that poverty meant to give up oneself, one’s aspirations, one’s wishes, one’s inclinations, and to await directions from God. Then he could act; and so he did. He gave himself up and received the riches of Jesus in return, as promised to Peter.

At this point a question is necessary: in the early years as a friar after the famous ordination ceremony when he was recognized as a brilliant preacher, what material things did Anthony have or soon acquire for his simple use? First of all, I have not discovered any record of what he had at hand or possessed. Secondly, circumstances describing his life as a friar suggest these answers. He had at least one habit and probably sandals. Since all representations of St. Anthony show him as clean-shaven, he used shaving equipment. As a priest he had a breviary. As a preacher and teacher he eventually collected or had access to numerous books on the Bible, the works of the Fathers, and the writings of contemporary theologians, not to overlook the decisions of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. Parchment (very expensive) and writing materials were provided so he could compose, as the friars had requested, a set of Sunday and Festive sermons. A scanning of his resources may testify to a prodigious memory, but it also suggests a remarkable library. He had or obtained the tools necessary for his work. In view of his ministry in northern Italy and southern France, he either walked or hitched a ride on a passing wagon. Other friars provided for his board and room. An intense spiritual life (many vestiges of this are in his sermons) was provided by the Blessed

Trinity with whom Anthony was in daily contact. It is also certain that he connected poverty with the spiritual life for he wrote, “The desert of exterior poverty creates the delights of interior sweetness.”<sup>4</sup> If a modern follower of St. Francis wishes to adopt the thinking of St. Anthony and other friars who were contemporaries of St. Francis, then he or she accepts his dictum that external poverty is necessary for one’s spiritual life. External poverty completes the interior spirit of poverty that permits one to seek Jesus above all. The catch, of course, is: what is this external poverty?

(Here I must narrow the window of my remarks. Writing from my lived experience as a First Order Friar, I would ask Second and Third Order readers to adapt what follows about poverty to their own lived charism.)

The simple answer is that external poverty today flows from the spirit of poverty adopted by the friars who pledged themselves to follow the *Approved Rule*. What do I mean by “to follow the *Approved Rule*?” The opening statement of the *Approved Rule* consists of a single sentence, “The rule and life of the Friars Minor is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ through a life in obedience, without anything of one’s own, and in chastity.” Everything that follows in the *Approved Rule* tells anyone interested how to become a friar, how to stay a friar, and what he can do as a friar. That single sentence has never changed nor can it change. It is the essence of our identity as friars. But the rest of the *Approved Rule*, the circumstances: getting in, staying in, and doing whatever have changed, with two exceptions: the promise of obedience to the successors of St. Francis (and hence to our Holy Father in Rome) and the Spirit of Prayer. These two must be safeguarded by each friar.

The circumstances surrounding the lives of friars in the United States in the early twenty-first century are entirely different from those in which the friars in Europe lived even into the twentieth century. A history of the friars and poverty in the nineteenth century, the prelude to the life of the friars

<sup>4</sup> S II 987; *Sermoni*, 907.14.

today in Europe and the United States, has been told elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> Today the General Constitutions and Statutes together with the Provincial Ordinances assist us in observing the spirit of the Rule. In practice we have to make decisions about how we observe the gospel ourselves. St. Anthony has some suggestions for us about external poverty.

Recall that Anthony discussed St. Peter's statement, "We have given up all and followed you." First Anthony investigates the meaning of *all*, asking, "What did [Peter] mean by 'all'?" And he answers,

It means exterior and interior things. That is, things we can possess and the will to possess them. [He gave up all] in such a way that absolutely nothing remained ... that can be called *mine* or *yours*. Christ has destroyed in the apostles not only the *name* but also the *remnant* of proprietorship, that is, the inclination to have and its root, the will to possess. Blessed are the religious who have destroyed these things, because then they too have the right to say, 'We have abandoned all.'

Amid an elegant description of pigeons flying through great clouds to their dovecotes, Anthony continues with a description of the positive aspects of leaving everything.

Having left the weighty thing of this world, the apostles fly on the wings of love toward Jesus. Job had said, 'Do you know the ways of the great clouds and perfect knowledge?' (37:16). To give up everything is the way. It is a narrow way in the pilgrimage of life, but it is broad and grand at the end. Perfect knowledge is to love Jesus and to follow him. This is the way the apostles knew.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> S. Scherfenberg, *Gregor Janknecht and the Franciscans in Nineteenth Century United States and Europe* (Berkeley: Academy of American Franciscan History, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> S III 84; *Sermoni*, 1145–1146.

In short, what friars have is for their use, hence for their care because it is not their own. While the use of things in one's ministry must fit the needs of the ministry, what is for personal use must reflect upon a person who owns nothing because he is poor. A friar easily determines how poor he is by listing where he shops, where he eats outside the friary, and where he recreates.

After describing in greater detail and imagery what it means to give up everything, Anthony looks more closely at the second part of Peter's remarks and asks the meaning of "and we have followed you." This question at first seems redundant because has it not been answered: the way is to follow Jesus out of love? The first part of his answer seems to confirm this: "We have left everything for you and become poor. Now because you are rich, we have followed you so that you can make us rich too." Here Anthony makes a sharp turn in his discussion. He says,

Now the most miserable of all men are those religious who have given up everything but have not followed Christ. They suffer a double loss: they are deprived of every external consolation and they don't have any internal consolations. People in the world, while they may lack interior consolation, certainly have external consolations.

Then Anthony gets back on track and speaks of the wonders that come to the followers of Christ, ending with an enlargement upon a quotation from Baruch. Those who give up everything will receive in turn "wisdom, prudence, strength, understanding, longevity, nourishment, and peace" (3:12.14).<sup>7</sup>

But he has not quite finished with "giving up everything." He says,

<sup>7</sup> S III 84.3; *Sermoni*, 1146.3–1147.

*The Cord*, 59.4 (2009)

There are many who have given up everything but have not yet followed Christ, because so to say they have held on to themselves. If you wish to follow Christ and take the consequences of following him, then you have to let go of yourself also. A follower does not look at himself but at the guide whom he follows. To let yourself go means to put no trust in yourself for any reason.<sup>8</sup>

And that is rough sledding for anyone in the twenty-first century. Anthony learned it the hard way. Remember: he wanted to die for Christ but he got so sick that nobody wanted to kill him. Then the boat returning him to Portugal was blown off its course and he ended up in Sicily, and so on. Anthony had learned to let himself go and to put no trust in himself for any reason. Thereby he was able to suffer the sickness, endure the frustration, and live with the change in his plans.

This does not mean that a follower of St. Francis does not develop whatever talents are latent within one. As an Augustinian Fernando had developed his spiritual life and intelligence to a high degree. As Anthony he went further, both in prayer and meditation. He used what he had to combat the heretics of his time. When asked to write out his thinking on theology, he complied in his own way. He composed a resource book for preachers in three volumes. From these tomes a modern manual on dogmatic theology was drawn.<sup>9</sup> While more attention is given today to a friar's preference in ministry, he is not excused from developing talents that others see in him. By accepting direction the friar is letting go of himself.

How was Anthony able to do this, give himself up so completely? He had begun when, as an Augustinian Canon, he sought Jesus in prayer, to be described below. This change of direction, or perhaps rising above is a better description of

moving from prayer to contemplation, took place shortly after he left the Canonry in Lisbon for Coimbra. In his hometown he was often visited by family and friends. The environment was not the best for realizing his goals in religious life. At Coimbra he could devote himself more quietly to study and prayer. He was willing to make the sacrifice of external conditions to develop internal conditions. He had come to realize how important it was to love God. As he would write later,

... the more a person loves God, the more he has from God and in God. In fact the psalmist says, 'The person who draws near to the sublime heart exalts God' (Ps 63:7-8). The sublime heart is the heart of one who loves, of one who seeks God, of one who contemplates him, of one who despises inferior things. You acquire this kind of heart if you walk the path of devotion. God becomes exalted, not in himself but in you. His exaltation depends on the intensity of your love from a mind lifted on high. So, lift yourself to arrive, to touch, even to possess in as much as is possible him who is entirely above yourself because he has been proclaimed 'Exalted' (Isaiah 2:22).<sup>10</sup>

In other words, a person can strive for contemplation, but it comes only to the person who has completely given up everything including oneself.

Anthony's remarks prompt two comments about contemplation itself. The first is that contemplation is not a form of prayer. If it were, then Anthony would have included it among two lists of prayer that appear in his sermon for the Sixth Sunday after Easter. But he did not. In the first he exhorts people to pray, "I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be made for all people," a list he took from St. Paul's first letter to Timothy 2:1. The only word that seems out of place here is "prayers." Anthony explained what he means: "Prayer itself arises from a certain

<sup>8</sup> S III 85.4 - 86; *Sermoni*, 1147.4.

<sup>9</sup> D. Scaramuzzi, *La figura intellettuale di S. Antonio di Padova* (Rome: Tipografia Agostiniana, 1934).

<sup>10</sup> S III 201.12; *Sermoni*, 1183.11.



confidence whereby one can speak familiarly but respectfully to God."<sup>11</sup> But this is not contemplation, for if it were he would have included it in his list, but he did not. Further, contemplation is an act of the will not of the intellect. Further on, he expands on the meaning of the word prayer.

Remember that there are three forms of prayer: mental, vocal, and manual. Of the first Ecclesiasticus says, 'The prayer of the humble pierces the heavens' (3:21). Of the second the psalmist sings, 'My prayer comes before you' (87:3). Of the third St. Paul admonishes us, 'Pray without ceasing' (I Thess 5:17). A person continues to pray who continues to do good works."<sup>12</sup>

Thus Anthony covers the daily life of a friar, 24/7. It was in this sense that a biographer described Saint Francis "not so much as a man at prayer but as a man become a prayer" (*Non tam orans sed oratio factus*).

The second aspect of contemplation follows from the basic requirement that a person has given up everything. In short, she or he has completely emptied oneself of any desire to possess. The state of raw poverty conditions a person to become capable, better receptive of contemplation. In Anthony's words,

Contemplation does not come from our own willful efforts but as a gift of God. He gives the sweetness of contemplation to whom he wishes, when he wishes, and how he wishes.<sup>13</sup>

Contemplation is God's gift. Anyone can become a contemplative provided the internal condition is satisfied, raw pov-

<sup>11</sup> The Italian is more elegant: "L'orazione invece è il sentimento dell'uomo che si mette in rapporto con Dio, un pio e familiare colloquio, la sosta della mente illuminata per fruirne, per quanto è possibile" (*Sermoni*, 310). For the entire passage see S I, 331-35.

<sup>12</sup> S I 363-3; *Sermoni*, 331.9.

<sup>13</sup> S II, 232; *Sermoni*, 700.8.

erty. With this preparation, what is contemplation? Again there are two aspects, the contemplative and contemplation itself.

Anthony recognizes two kinds of contemplatives. One is the person who is actively engaged in the welfare of those with whom he works. Anthony advises such a person to give oneself entirely to whatever the good works are as long as he is involved with the project. I take this to mean whatever one's job is, to do it completely. Then when the day's work is done, he returns to contemplation and yields oneself entirely to God who will do with him as he pleases. The second kind of contemplative is the person whose entire life is that of prayer. Such a religious is no longer so involved with others. He simply abandons himself to God and awaits his good pleasure.<sup>14</sup> While the first is actively engaged with others and has less time for contemplation, the second is not ordinarily engaged with others outside the friary and hence has more time for contemplation. However, the second needs to remind himself of what St. Francis a far greater contemplative than he had written in his *Testament*, "The Lord [gave] me brothers." So the Lord gives brothers to both of these contemplatives. The needs of one's brothers must be taken care of before turning to await, to encounter the sensible love of the Most Blessed Trinity. In short, as St. Anthony stated elsewhere, "one cannot spend his life continuously in contemplation."<sup>15</sup>

The remark "the Lord gave me Brothers" merits attention. What was Anthony like with friars?<sup>16</sup> The force of his personality certainly impacted student friars to whom he lectured on theology at Bologna in 1223 - 1224 and the next several years in Southern France. Furthermore, he became custos of the friars at Limoges in 1226, founded a friary at Brive,

<sup>14</sup> S II, 232; *Sermoni*, 700-01.

<sup>15</sup> S II; *Sermoni* 1083.4.

<sup>16</sup> Most of what follows apart from my conclusions is drawn *passim* from four works of Vergilio Gamboso, all published by Edizioni Messaggero Padova: *Vita prima o "Assidua"* (1981), *Giuliano da Spira Officio ritmico e Vita secunda* (1985), *Vite "Raymundiana" e "Rigaldino"* (1992), and *Antonio di Padova Vita e spiritualità* (1995).

and became guardian at Le Puy in 1227. This last assignment was brief because he was elected Provincial of the Province of Northern Italy in 1227 with headquarters in Milan. Shortly into this three year task he acquired a companion friar, Luca Belludi<sup>17</sup> who became a fast friend and remained with Anthony till the latter's death. Friar Luca kept records, ran interference before over enthusiastic people, and was instrumental in having the first life of St. Anthony written, the *Assidua*. Two other friars are mentioned as friends, Ruggero and Vito. Not to be overlooked are two close friends who were not Franciscans: Tomaso di SanVittore, Abbot of San Andrea in Vercelli, with whom Anthony spent many hours in conversation on spiritual matters, and Tiso IV Count of Camposampiero, who personally build a special hermitage for Anthony somewhat away from the friary there. In short, these vignettes suggest that Anthony with his sense of poverty and practice of contemplation was very acceptable to his confreres.

Contemplation itself is something that happens, an experience. "The contemplative person in so far as possible," St. Anthony writes, "encounters 'God in his beauty' (Isaiah 33:17)."<sup>18</sup> God is the object of contemplation.<sup>19</sup>

"The contemplative has God alone, his unique joy, as the object [of his attention]."<sup>20</sup> "When the mind of a person stands face to face with God and contemplates his beauty and tastes its sweetness, then he is truly in the garden of delights."<sup>21</sup> "The [contemplative] rests on his beloved when he presumes nothing from his own strength, attributes nothing to his own merit, but owes all to the grace of his beloved."<sup>22</sup> "The contemplative is taken mentally to the third heaven (2 Cor 12:2)

<sup>17</sup> He is venerated as Blessed Luca with feast day on February 17. See S. Bracci and A. Pozzebon, *Frați Minori Santi e Beati* (Rome: Postulazione Generale OFM, 2009), 74-77.

<sup>18</sup> S I 21; *Sermoni*, 33.20.

<sup>19</sup> S I 300; *Sermoni*, 280.14.

<sup>20</sup> S I 21; *Sermoni*, 38.21.

<sup>21</sup> S I 146; *Sermoni*, 143.17.

<sup>22</sup> S III 187; *Sermoni*, 221.9.

where he contemplates the glory of the Trinity in the depths of his spirit. He hears with the ears of his heart what cannot be expressed in so many words, what the mind cannot comprehend."<sup>23</sup>

Anthony's reference to the third heaven is to a reality to be experienced rather than a literary device to be appreciated. This is clear where he develops St. Paul's remark, "We belong in the heavens" (Phil 3,20). Anthony wrote,

Note that he said 'in the heavens' and not 'in heaven.' There are three heavens: [to possess a] sharp intellect, [to wield] clear justice, and [to enjoy] sublime glory. In the first we contemplate truth, in the second we love fairness, in the third we experience the fullness of eternal joy. In the first ignorance is dissipated, in the second selfishness is extinguished, and in the third misery evaporates. When the light of truth illumines you completely, you are in the first heaven. When the flame of love burns within, you are in the second. And when you savor a certain interior sweetness, you have been admitted to the third heaven. This tasting is what unites spouses. 'Who cleaves to God is one Spirit' (cf. 1 Cor 6:16).<sup>24</sup>

The experience of contemplation is what it feels like when a person suddenly understands something completely, or when he sees the solution to a problem, or when it dawns upon him that he is loved by another person. There seems no passage wherein Anthony taught that a person had to experience the three heavens in succession, much like the purgative way being necessary for the illuminative and this for the unitive way, the thrice nested stages in the spiritual life. Rather God leads the contemplative toward the goal most suited to his own will. In short, we best take what we get.

The possibility that Anthony was referring to the three-fold way has received attention by some authorities. In a

<sup>23</sup> S I 36-37; *Sermoni*, 50.12.

<sup>24</sup> S III 64; *Sermoni* 1011.

sermon for the Fourth Sunday of Advent, St. Anthony remarked, "Observe that a good person will progress through three states: beginning (*incipienti*), on the way (*proficienti*), and whole hearted (*perfetti*)."<sup>25</sup> Quoting this statement and a similar one Blasucci maintains that the Evangelical Doctor was referring to the three stages of the spiritual life, *via purgativa*, *illuminativa*, and *unitiva*.<sup>26</sup> He then offers quotations that seem to support his thesis, seems to because in themselves the quotations only refer to prayer and good works without any reference to contemplation. The same thinking for the most part can be found in Fanton,<sup>27</sup> for the most part because he is aware of a passage in another sermon that does not support the threefold way. There St. Anthony likens the four points of the compass to beginners (*east*), on the way (*south*), whole hearted (*west*), and others (*north*). Without describing further the beginners and those on the way, he states that the whole hearted are those "who are totally dead to the world" (obviously religious) and the others are "fine married people and good Christians who patiently endure numerous tribulations and sorrows."<sup>28</sup> In his sermon for the Fourth Sunday of Lent St. Anthony characterizes "the penitent soul in ... the three stages of penance: bitterness [over sin] belongs to the beginners, change [to a life of good works] belongs to those on the way, and the palm [of glory in the hereafter] is the reward of the whole hearted."<sup>29</sup> Clearly our Evangelical Doctor preferred to adapt his figures of speech to the contingencies of the sermon. In other words, he apparently had no intention of writing a tract on spirituality. Rather there were certain figures of speech that fit diverse situations and he employed them at will. Where re-

<sup>25</sup> S II 517; *Sermoni* 932. See also S II 89; *Sermoni* 621.

<sup>26</sup> A. Blasucci, *La Theologia Mistica di Sant'Antonio* in AAVV, *S. Antonio Dottore della Chiesa* (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 1947), 199.

<sup>27</sup> A. Fanton, *Spiritualità* in E. Carlli, ed., *Dizionario Antonio Dottore e Spiritualità dei Sermoni di Sant'Antonio* (Padua: Edizioni Messaggero, 2002), 779-81.

<sup>28</sup> S II 570; *Sermoni* 1044.

<sup>29</sup> S I 166-67; *Sermoni* 157.

marks about things spiritual were appropriate he inserted them. To expect consistency seems too modern for someone creating a manual for preachers.

## CONCLUSION

The overarching purpose of this analysis of the marriage of poverty and contemplation has been to demonstrate that a follower of St. Francis cannot perfectly fulfill one's purpose in life without poverty and contemplation. (The word *perfect* is used in its Greek sense, *complete*.) Whatever one's ministry, be it spiritual or secular, it is done better by the poor contemplative. St. Anthony is clear about this. "The preacher ought first to strengthen within himself the desire for heavenly beauty in contemplation. Then he will be able to feed others and himself more fervently with the bread of the word of God."<sup>30</sup> Again, where he uses the word preacher, we may substitute our own ministry; similarly with the concluding phrase. What St. Anthony is writing about becomes clearer, if we consider the mental/spiritual/operational framework he proposes. It begins with spiritual reading (*lectio divina*).

Spiritual reading in the monastic or canonical sense means to commit to memory a scriptural text so that it may occupy the whole mind and prompt the will to act upon it. Hence reading leads to meditation. In meditation the monk or canon pondered the biblical quotation to tease out its significance, to discover its meaning perhaps from other biblical quotations, to find applications to better one's own living. Meditation in turn leads to contemplation. This is the ordinary end for the monk or canon. The sequence then is reading, meditation, contemplation.<sup>31</sup> Preaching to the public was not ordinarily a part of his life because he had

<sup>30</sup> S II 78; *Sermoni*, 611.1.

<sup>31</sup> The threefold sequence here and below is taken from A. F. Frias, *Lettura Ermeneutica dei "Sermones" di Sant'Antonio di Padova Introduzione alle radici culturali del pensiero antoniano* (Padua: Centro Studi Antoniani, 1995), 74.



committed himself to the monastery or canonry, not to the faithful. Preaching belonged to the bishop and parish priest. (This commission changed after Anthony proved himself a forceful preacher.) Anthony's position is that spiritual reading and mediation are complementary. As a unit they lead to contemplation that in turn prepares a person for preaching. This implies a different sequence: understand the Scripture, make oneself available to God in contemplation, and then preach as the Holy Spirit prompts. This mirrors again what Anthony wrote,

[The preacher] must apply himself to the study and practice of Holy Scripture, precisely to be able to practice what he preaches.... The preacher must first exercise himself in a contemplative environment, desiring heavenly things, so that afterwards he can more avidly nourish others with the bread of the word of God.<sup>32</sup>

In short, meditate, contemplate, preach.

The modern friar does well to discover how to apply this trilogy to his own ministerial life. Thereby he maintains the Spirit of Prayer, to which he committed himself when he accepted the Rule of the Friars Minor as his norm for living.

<sup>32</sup> S II 78; *Sermoni*, 611.1.

## DISCOVERING FRANCIS

ANNMARIE McLEOD

In the summer of 2009, the National Endowment for the Humanities sponsored a six-week seminar in Italy for school teachers. The topic was "The Lives of St. Francis of Assisi." The task was to examine the visual and written texts about Francis to study his evolution through history. Under the tutelage of SUNY<sup>1</sup> Geneseo's Dr. Bill Cook, fifteen teachers from all over the country gathered in Italy. We represented a broad continuum of educators: Ivy League theologians, Scripture scholars, classicists and English, reading, and social studies specialists. For some, Francis was simply an unknown quantity. For others, he was the harbinger of change in the church, an anti-intellectual environmentalist. For all, there was something of a mystery around him, the texts, and the time period. There was one goal: effectively navigate the visual images, the manuscripts and the physical terrain of Francis to see him more clearly. Ultimately, there was one effect: to allow Francis and his message to challenge today's world and our own lives.

We spent six weeks crouching before dossals and stretching to read frescoes, six weeks examining the fundamentals of construction, the integration of symbols and the role of historical context in the development of medieval art. We learned that art breathes life into the corpse of history and sustains the vision of a previous generation. And so it was

<sup>1</sup> SUNY is the organizational acronym for the system of State Universities of New York.

with the evolution of Francis from a dossal figure to his position at the feet of Jesus on the cross to his central role in the Basilica and the frescoes. The stylistic features of the artwork gradually lost significance as the historical context became more clear.

Tucked into medieval churches and tiny museums are the pieces that tell and re-tell the story of Francis. Generations of human beings have paused before each one, and we were simply part of that stream. Each one reflects the centrality of Francis in medieval life and spirituality. There are pieces that tell a series of stories like the dossal in Florence's Santa Croce. Francis, of course, is the central figure but he is surrounded by small, detailed panels that relate a wide variety of stories about his life and activities. The smaller image housed at Orte also shows Francis in the center. But in contrast to Santa Croce, this dossal has only four stories, relegated to each corner. And so the observer is invited to fill in the blank stretches of gold with stories about Francis. Far from static, these medieval works became highly interactive. Once we understood how to read them. The images danced with energy. Francis became more real, not as a commercial product of the modern era, but as a medieval figure addressing each of us.

Through the written texts, we gained insight into the depth and dimension of the person of Francis. Poring over the work of the biographers Thomas of Celano and Bonaventure, we struggled with the reality of the texts. There were comparisons, stories which appeared once in Celano and were re-done in Bonaventure's flowing prose. For educators, there was agonizing over the passages on learning and books. There were gaps and omissions, and many many questions. For instance, exactly how did Francis come to know Lady Jacoba? What actually happened between Francis and his parents after the incident in the cathedral? What responses did his father have? Did they ever resolve such pain between a parent and child?

There was rigorous dissection of translations and wording which added to our puzzled confusion. We sought the comfort of literary criticism, an understanding of the author and

perspective, and we looked for who we thought Francis was. But the texts, both visual and written, gave Francis a mantle of flesh. He garnered the humanity that we each possess, the humanity that icons and saints are routinely denied. His visual images and his textual story began to represent a serious challenge.

In some instances, Francis was hard to like and easy to label as "inconsistent." In the stripping at the cathedral, the relationship with his father and Lady Jacoba, Francis provoked indignation, curiosity and concern. Here was a saint who failed to meet twenty-first century American norms and expectations. There were parents who were appalled by the grief Francis caused his father, and adult children outraged by the seeming cruelty of the parents. There were the romantics searching for the sensual elements in his relationship with Lady Jacoba. And there was the revelation that medieval experiences cannot be evaluated effectively with twenty-first century lenses. More was required.

Even so, the remarkable abuse administered to his body remained troubling. Clearly a violation of contemporary norms, the choices Francis made were examined more closely. Celano confides his lack of understanding of such denial, but he does not diminish Francis for that. So the texts remained provocative: just as Francis evoked questions and frustrations and deep reactions in the thirteenth century, he was doing the same for us in the twenty-first.

Somehow, Francis was fully engaging a group of American school teachers just as he had his own contemporaries. He was becoming a human being with the contradictory impulses that characterize all human behavior. He was at once compassionate and demanding, caring and frustrating. In a masterful move, Bill Cook pushed his students past the confines of contemporary thinking. And then, he conducted a series of site visits to more fully examine the terrain that Francis traversed.

In the quiet of Greccio, we reread Celano's description of the Christmas story aloud. And the resonance of the words drew us into silence. We were treading past the merely academic. Here, there was the mystery of Incarnation presented

in a way both familiar and brand-new. Then there was Gubbio, and the story of the wolf. We shifted from questioning the plausibility to wonder at the scope of the story and centuries of its repetition. And in each place, there were the pilgrims, the people praying. The force of Francis's presence was undeniable, especially in the quiet. Finally, there was LaVerna.

We had labored over the descriptions of Francis and the stigmata. We had compared images and biographers and sought clarity, looked at all the possibilities and entertained the improbable as well. And then, between the hard cold rocks of LaVerna, we sat and re-read the story of the stigmata. As at Greccio, we drifted apart for personal reflection. This time, it was not about the vocabulary or translations: it was about relationships, choices and decisions. This time, the lesson was not just from the text but from the land itself. In the shade of the mountainside, captivated by the vastness, we found our finite lifetimes somehow confronting far more than the texts. As the texts spoke and challenged, LaVerna inspired.

We re-grouped, returned to Assisi. The saint who re-framed the meaning of sanctity in the Catholic Church had become more real to each of us every day. And the ignorance with which we had begun yielded to the grasp of fundamental concepts. The texts, visual and written, clearly convey that Francis related to people, drew them, and inspired them. Stories about him in visual and literary texts drew successive generations. But it was never really about Francis himself: it was always about Christ. With the unraveling of each text, the message seemed to become more powerful, more personal, more disruptive to neatly arranged twenty-first century lives.

But there was more. There was personal testimony all around us. Francis's story is still being retold in contemporary visual texts. There was the elderly man in Santa Chiara, struggling with his crutches, bending on the hard wood kneeler with a Poor Clare nearby to assist him. Then he humbly awkwardly angled to the line for Communion, his faith clear in his actions. There were the Spanish-speaking pilgrims praying the rosary through the streets of Assisi. They

were led by a child whose soft cadence drew them closer to San Francesco with every step. There were the young people praying in silence at the Carceri, and there was the friar, all alone, praying before the cross at Arezzo. There was the Mass without a choir until a rich baritone swelled at Communion. There were the notes in the crevices of rocks at LaVerna. And at LaVerna, there was Bill Cook seated in the cave, still and reflective. For the participants in the seminar, these were living documents, breathing life into an American understanding of Francis.

The seminar concluded at the end of July. Francis's story had been explored, re-told, and re-examined. Through the texts, Francis evoked passion, inspired reflection, forced serious consideration of ideals and principles and behaviors. And for fifteen school teachers, his story proved unexpectedly demanding.





**MAY GOD GIVE YOU PEACE:  
A FRANCISCAN VIEW OF FORGIVENESS,  
RECONCILIATION AND PEACEMAKING**

**SHANNON SCHREIN, O.S.F., PH.D.**

For many people, Francis of Assisi is the consummate "animal lover" frequently pictured with birds and other humble creatures. But it is clear that he is so much more, his life models radical Gospel living. Francis was a passionate disciple of Jesus Christ and this is evident in both his life and his writings. Franciscan scholar, Jean François Godet-Calogeras says of Francis's writings, "They literally distill the marrow of the Gospel: love of God, love and care of neighbor—particularly the poor, the weak and the outcast—love and respect of creation."<sup>1</sup> In his radical living of the Gospel, Francis has much to teach about forgiveness, reconciliation and peacemaking.

***A Life of Conversion***

A brief look into the life of Francis focusing on four significant conversion moments demonstrates how Francis understood and practiced forgiveness, reconciliation and peacemaking. Francis was born in Assisi in 1181 (1182) to Pietro and Pica Bernardone. They were a reasonably well-off mercantile family, Francis's father being a cloth merchant. Francis was raised in relative wealth but his education was meager, most likely he learned from the parish priests of

Shannon Schrein

*San Giorgio*. His biographers seem to agree that he was not a model of piety and virtue. He appears to have been a typically indulged, wealthy, spoiled, adolescent. In his early twenties, he showed some signs of growth in his decision to go to war with his comrades against Assisi's ancient enemy Perugia (1202). In the end he was captured and held prisoner until his father negotiated his release by paying a ransom. He was ill from his captivity and so came home to recuperate. During this time he dreamt of being a knight and so when he was well he decided to take up arms as a knight, desiring to join the Crusades under the call of Pope Innocent III. However, after only a day's journey to Spoleto, something happened to cause Francis to turn back. Whatever it was, Francis was changed. He abandoned the chivalric ideal and returned to his home. Some of his biographers see this as a precursor to his conversion.

When did Francis's conversion begin? There is a reported incident in the early legends that he met a leper when he was out riding his horse and gave the man alms out of a sense of pity. At the time the lepers were the most ostracized persons in medieval society. There were five leper camps outside of Assisi. Statutes in Assisi forbade lepers from walking in the town. At the same time there was a deeply embedded concern for lepers because of the Gospel call to care for the least members in society. The dread of lepers at the time of Francis was similar to the feelings expressed toward them at the time of Jesus. Jesus reached out to lepers sounding a clear Gospel call to care for these outcasts. In one of his own writings, the *Testament*, Francis noted that the change in his life came from his encounter with the lepers.

The Lord gave me, Brother Francis, thus to begin doing penance in this way: for when I was in sin, it seemed too bitter for me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and *I showed mercy to*

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in the Preface of Thaddée Matura, O.F.M., *Francis of Assisi: Writer and Spiritual Master* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2000), ix.

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them. And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body.<sup>2</sup>

The journey had begun. Francis's next transformative encounter captured the Saint completely. While praying before a crucifix in the small rundown chapel of San Damiano, Francis heard the Lord's instructions "Francis, rebuild my Church." He took the words quite literally and set out to gather the money and materials he would need to actually repair the little chapel. Francis's father was not pleased to see his son working like a common laborer and still worse, he was using Pietro's money to fund the repairs. He responded by locking up his son, who was eventually released by his mother. In desperation Pietro brought Francis before Bishop Guido. Was he hoping to "knock some sense" into Francis or to retrieve his mishandled money and goods? Whatever Pietro's motivation the result was unexpected. Before the Bishop and the citizens of Assisi, Francis stripped naked and returned all that he had to his father declaring that God alone was his father. The Bishop encircled Francis with his cloak. From that day forward Francis took up the robes usually worn by the hermits: a rough gown held at the waist by a leather belt and sandals for his feet. Francis exchanged his natural paternity for the embrace of the Church. Francis stripped himself completely before God and the people. He is now clothed in a "new self" "casting off darkness and putting on the armor of light" (Romans 13:12).

### ***Embracing the Gospel Way of Life***

About two years later (1208) another significant event propelled Francis forward on his journey to holiness. On the Feast of St. Matthias Francis heard the priest read from the Gospel of Matthew.

<sup>2</sup> *The Testament*, 1-3 in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, The Saint*, ed. Regis Armstrong, J.A. Wayne Hellmann and William J. Short (New York: New City Press, 1999), 124.

As you go proclaim the good news.... You received without payment; give without payment. Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for the laborers deserve their food (Matt 10:7-10).

Francis immediately took off his sandals and removed his leather belt replacing it with a simple cord. He chalked the cross on the back of his tunic and set forth on the journey of a life time.

Later, when Francis was joined by companions and the first community of Franciscans began to take shape, Francis wrote a rule of life based on the Gospel message. The story is told that Francis asked a priest in the church of St. Nicholas to open the scripture three times and each time to read the message. These are the words Francis heard: "If you seek perfection, go, sell all your possessions, and give to the poor. You will then have treasure in heaven" (Mark 10:21). "Take nothing for the journey" (Luke 9:3) and "If a man (person) wishes to come after me, he must deny his very self" (Mark 8:34). Francis received this word with an open heart and it became the direction for his life and for those who would follow his way.

Francis, like many reformers before him, initiated a movement within the Church intended to lead people back to living a true and authentic Gospel life. This life was in contrast to the opulent life of nobility/aristocracy. It was a counter culture movement. Lawrence S. Cunningham summarizes the vision of Francis for his Friars Minor:

Francis wanted his followers to live in poverty after the example of the poor Christ. He wanted them to preach the Gospel and he wanted them to be makers of peace and missionaries of goodness.... Their devotional focus would be intensely Christological and their missionary strategy would be to preach the Gospel everywhere and to all who had not heard of Christ.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Lawrence S. Cunningham, *Francis of Assisi: Performing the Gospel Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 124.

**FRANCISCAN FORGIVENESS, RECONCILIATION  
AND PEACEMAKING**

***Compunction: Sorrow for Sin and the Gift of Tears***

The four moments of conversion described above direct the path for Francis's life and for those who became his companions on the journey: the encounter with the leper, the call to rebuild the church, his separation from his father and the world of materialism, and the Gospel commission to trust God completely for all of his needs. Through the encounter with the leper Francis learned about compassion and mercy which led to reconciliation. Through poverty he came to know that "we have nothing of our own except our vices and our sins ..." and therefore, he understood his great need for God's forgiveness and compassion. Finally, in the call to rebuild the church Francis understood the need for peacemaking which reconciles people to one another and to God. Forgiveness, reconciliation and peacemaking bring about God's kingdom here and now. Francis's life and his writings reflect his radical living of the Gospel and his commitment to forgiveness, reconciliation and peacemaking.

In an article titled "Blessed are They Who Mourn: Tears, Compunction, and Forgiveness," Elizabeth Dreyer reflects on the manifestation of "compunction" in the way of Francis. Compunction is not a word that we hear very often. Coming from the Latin term *compunctio* it means the "sting or prick of conscience." It is regret for one's sins or misdeeds, that is, genuine sorrow for sin. The key elements of compunction are obvious in Franciscan spirituality and have been articulated by the great Franciscan scholar St. Bonaventure. They include tears, poverty, penance, humility, pardon for sin, peace, joy, and the emphasis on community life.<sup>5</sup> Frequently,

<sup>4</sup> Earlier Rule, 17, v. 7 in *FA:ED* 1, 75.

<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth A. Dreyer, "Blessed Are They Who Mourn: Tears, Compunction, and Forgiveness," in *Franciscan Leadership in Ministry: Foundations in History, Theology, and Spirituality*, Spirit and Life 7 (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1997): 186.

the sorrow one feels for sin results in tears. Tears are a sign of personal grief and mourning. They reflect the depths of a person's feelings and the genuine regret that comes from broken relationships. Tears come from knowing our woundedness and a lack of loving compassion. They come from the recognition that everyone is in this together and have need of each other more every day. Tears come from knowing the suffering Christ in this world evident in the lives of those around us. They come from our own suffering. Tears cleanse the heart. Francis was known to shed tears over the gift of Christ's passion and in the face of his own failure to love before the one who has loved us all so well.

When Francis encountered the leper he was moved to respond in loving compassion. He got down from his horse so that he could embrace the leper and offer him the kiss of peace. He received a kiss in return and for the first time did not experience revulsion at the sight and smell of this poor brother. There must have been tears. Francis's own sin was exposed and he felt the sting of sorrow, for in refusing to embrace the leper in his life, he had refused the love of Christ. When he was in sin, he tells us, he was unable to see the lepers; he felt only bitterness and fear. Conversion of heart began when the Lord led him among the lepers. Suddenly, through the love of Jesus what had seemed bitter was now sweet. Francis wept tears of sorrow for his sin followed by tears of joy in recognizing the face of Christ in this suffering person.

Francis's heart was converted by the encounter and he was changed. When he took the message of the Gospel to the people, he was moved with passion and the conviction that God calls us all to repentance. In his biography of Francis, Bonaventure speaks of the effects that Francis's words had on his hearers when he fervently preached the Gospel. Francis's words struck, pierced, stirred, and moved the hearts of his listeners. The hearers were changed and this conviction of the heart led them to repentance. Compunction, sorrow for sin, is that initial movement of the heart. Regis Armstrong notes that the image of the heart appears fifty-five times in the writings of Francis—it is the symbol of the depths of the



human person.<sup>6</sup> Francis understood that our hearts strive to see the Beloved. In the movement toward God we must be continually converted. We must be open to God and open to the other, so that our hearts will be changed. When Francis allowed the leper into his heart, he was transformed. The leper, too, was drawn into Francis's embrace and in that moment experienced the love and mercy of God.

Francis understood what it meant to be sinner and how significant it was to receive the grace of forgiveness. He understood the need for mercy and instructed his brother friars in ways to show mercy to one another. In Francis's *Letter to a Minister* he gives a clear vision of his approach to sin and forgiveness. In the Franciscan tradition the Minister was the leader of a small community of brothers; he was the one who had responsibility for the other brothers in his community. In many religious congregations the term used was Superior, but this went contrary to the way that Francis envisioned the interaction between the Friars. The leader was the servant minister—the servant of all. When he writes this letter he speaks about the mercy to be shown to a brother who has sinned and is in need of forgiveness.

... there is not any brother in the world who has sinned—however much he could have sinned—who, after he has looked into your eyes, would ever depart without your mercy, if he is looking for mercy. And if he were not looking for mercy, you would ask him if he wants mercy. And if he would sin a thousand times before your eyes, love him more than me so that you may draw him to the Lord: and always be merciful with brothers such as these.<sup>7</sup>

Francis insists that it is mercy not condemnation that God requires of us. Later in the same letter in speaking of

<sup>6</sup> Regis J. Armstrong, "If My Words Remain in You ...": Foundations of the Evangelical Life," in *Francis of Assisi: History, Hagiography and Hermeneutics in the Early Documents*, 64-89, ed. Jay M. Hammond (New York: New City Press, 2004), 75.

<sup>7</sup> Francis of Assisi, *A Letter to A Minister*, 9-12, in *FA:ED* 1, 97-98.

the imposition of a penance upon the brother he says "And let them not have the power to impose any other penance on them except this: Go and sin no more."<sup>8</sup>

The best way we can show God our sincere regret is to turn from sin. Go and sin no more—the words are simple, the lived reality is difficult. Our hope comes from knowing the unconditional love of God. In acknowledging our sinfulness before God we can receive God's loving forgiveness. The experience of forgiveness is pure gift offered to us by God who loves us unconditionally. In imitating God's way we offer the gift of forgiveness to others. Our forgiveness should not be based on anything other than the generous love given to us by God. It is not a matter of a person deserving our forgiveness, or of their appropriate sorrow and repentance. Forgiveness is given out of love.

But this is a very difficult challenge for us. We hold back, nurse our hurts, look for those who will sympathize with our great suffering and support our righteous indignation. But this is not the way of the Gospel. Jesus forgave his enemies and he expects nothing less from us. Forgiveness is essential in our lives because it enables reconciliation with God and with God's people.

Another significant element of Francis's life was his decision to live simply and in poverty like the poor Christ. In choosing poverty Francis acknowledged his utter dependence on God. Francis held that possession is not possible for we have nothing of our own; all belongs to our gracious God. Francis believed that nothing belongs to us except our sin and vice, for this alone we can claim ownership. In surrendering all to God, we receive everything as gift. Matthew's Gospel tells us "Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all things will be given you as well" (6:33). The way of poverty is an invitation to continuous conversion. We are called to turn from the egoistic tendency to affirm ourselves as self-sufficient and instead to turn our hearts toward

<sup>8</sup> LtMin, 20.

God in love, adoration, and praise. In turning to God we are also able to turn outward to our brothers and sisters.

Reconciliation promotes the fundamental values of the human community. Franciscan theologian Gabriele Uhlein says our lives are about relationships and these relationships are "thick." The richness of our relationships is worth every difficult step we take toward forgiveness.<sup>9</sup>

Francis lived a humble life of penance in order that he might be one with God and with his brothers and sisters. His life reflects his awareness of sin and his total dependence on God's gracious mercy and compassion.

### **Reconciliation**

Francis listened to the Gospel message and chose to embrace poverty as the truest way to follow in the footsteps of his Lord. In acknowledging that all is gift, Francis was able to see all of creation as a reflection of God's love. Every element of creation was therefore, brother and sister to Francis. The sun, the moon, the stars, all living things were created to praise God and glorify God's Holy Name. The reverence that Francis had for all creation was evident in everything he did. Legends that surround the life of Francis tell us that he spoke to a wolf as a brother, he preached to the birds encouraging them to sing the praises of their creator. He blessed God for the gift of water and air and fire. And he had great reverence for all of life especially for God's people. Francis wrote *The Canticle of the Creatures* and expanded it during the final years of his life. It is thought to be the one of the earliest poems written in the vernacular, Italian. In it he praised the wonder and beauty of all creation.

Scholars recount one time in particular when Francis added a verse to the Canticle. This happened when he be-

<sup>9</sup> Gabriele Uhlein, "Seeking Connections in a Fragmented World: What Does Our Franciscan Tradition Offer?" in *Franciscan Identity and Post-modern Culture*, Washington Theological Union Symposium Papers, ed. Kathleen A. Warren, CFIT/ESC-OFM Series 2 (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2003): 109-22.

came aware of a civic rift between Assisi's mayor and bishop; he added the following verse to the Canticle:

Praised be You, my Lord, through those who give pardon for Your love, and bear infirmity and tribulation. Blessed are those who endure in peace for by You, Most High, shall they be crowned.<sup>10</sup>

Francis then instructed that the entire Canticle be sung in the presence of the bishop and mayor. The moment initiated a religious zeal in both leaders so that with great kindness and love they embraced and kissed one another. Francis seized every opportunity to bring peace and reconciliation between the people and especially with their God.

So many stories in the life of Francis reflect his deep sense of community and the constant need to be reconciled with one another. Consider this, the story is told that one night as the brothers were sleeping one of their members began to moan and groan in his sleep because he was hungry. The brother cried out "I am dying." Their fasting caused this brother pain. Francis went to him and in discovering that the friar was hungry, he woke all of the brothers and told them to set the table so that they might all eat with the brother who was hungry. In this way, the brother would not feel any remorse over breaking his fast.<sup>11</sup> Francis turned this moment into one of joy and fellowship within the community.

Forgiveness is an act of God. Reconciliation is a community affair. Being forgiven leads to compassion; being reconciled leads to inclusion. When the burden of our sin is lifted from us we are reconciled with God and the experience of God's compassion leads us to be reconciled with our brothers and sisters. Like the sobbing woman at Jesus' feet in the Gospel of Luke, we can love much because we are forgiven much (7:36-50). As we are forgiven, we are empowered to forgive.

The desire for all to be reconciled in Christ Jesus was no more apparent than in Francis's decision to visit with the

<sup>10</sup> *The Canticle of the Creatures*, v. 10, in *FA:ED* 1, 114.

<sup>11</sup> *The Assisi Compilation*, 50, in *FA:ED* 2, 149.

Sultan. In the thirteenth century Christians were engaged in the Crusades. They went to war with the Muslims in order to recapture the Holy Places, especially the city of Jerusalem. They not only attempted to wrest the Holy Places from the "pagans" but they also hoped to keep the Muslim world at bay. There was no love lost between medieval Europeans and the Muslims. Francis longed to preach the Gospel to the Muslims and he also viewed this as an opportunity for martyrdom. He understood that violence and military conquest was not the way. At grave risk to himself he decided to go among the Muslims. With great fervor Francis made two initial attempts to travel to where he could preach to the Muslims. In both cases he was prevented from actually completing the mission. During the Fifth Crusade in 1219, Francis tried again and this time was successful. He went to the crusader camp outside the city of Damietta. While in the camp, Francis witnessed the fate of several Muslims soldiers who had been captured. They were brutally tortured and killed by the Crusaders. Francis was all the more determined to bring peace into the midst of this suffering and horror. It is not clear if he met with the caliph before or after the Christian victory over the city (scholars have differing opinions). Whatever the case regarding the chronology of the event, Francis did meet with the Sultan Malik al Kamil. Brother Illuminato accompanied him. He preached to the caliph who listened attentively to Francis. In the end, he returned Francis to the Christian camp with reverence and security. Gifts received by Francis from the Sultan are kept today in the Basilica of San Francesco.

While the details of the encounter cannot be definitively described, what seems certain is that Francis gave an example that was rare in his day. He confronted the sultan armed only with the cross of Christ. Driven by the desire for martyrdom and for the opportunity to evangelize, Francis achieved a dramatic moment of reconciliation. These two men entered into conversation. Their dialogue was a significant witness to the world.

To be reconciled is to be drawn back into harmony. It was Jesus who brought about the fullness of reconciliation ~

Shannon Schrein

through his life, passion, death and resurrection. This fragmented world desperately needs connections. Our efforts toward reconciliation reveal a profound belonging together. The Franciscan tradition derives its life from the gift of the Incarnation. The Word who was with God and who is God has become flesh and made his dwelling among us. Jesus becomes one of us in every way. His life gives witness to our unity. We are all members of the body of Christ. The Franciscan way calls us to minister within the world. We can bring to the world a radical sense of connection for we are all one in Christ. A Gospel centered life translates into action and is grounded in *fraternitas*, the bonds of community living.

### Peacemaking

Francis's favorite greeting was "May God give you peace." He encouraged his brothers to use it. To understand what is meant when Francis speaks of peace, it is important to first consider what he says about perfect joy. His biographers write that Francis's joy never left him. At times, Thomas of Celano writes,

he would pick up a stick from the ground and putting it over his left arm, would draw across it, as across a violin, a little bow bent by means of a string and going through the motions of playing, he would sing in French about his Lord.<sup>12</sup>

In writing his rule for the community, Francis held that the "new knights" were always to be joyous in the Lord.

They should let it be seen that they are happy in God, cheerful and courteous, as is expected of them, and be careful not to appear gloomy or depressed like the hypocrites.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Thomas of Celano, *The Treatise on the Miracles of Saint Francis*, XC, 127 in FA:ED 2, 331.

<sup>13</sup> ER, VII, 16, in FA:ED 1, 69.



*The Little Flowers of Francis* contains one of the most famous stories told of Francis and Perfect Joy. In the story Francis and Brother Leo were talking as they were walking along. Francis begins to question Leo about Perfect Joy. Francis tells Leo that if all the Friars Minor in the entire world were to give a great example of holiness, integrity and edification—perfect joy is not in that. If the Friars serve as healers giving sight to the blind and curing the lame, perfect joy is not found in that. Francis cries out again brother Leo if a Friar Minor had all wisdom and knowledge, perfect joy is not in that. And again if a Friar was able to speak with the voice of an angel and knew the courses of the stars and the treasures of the earth perfect joy is not in that.

After Francis is silent for a while Brother Leo begs him in God's name to tell him where perfect joy is found. Francis responds this way.

I come to the gate and, after I've knocked and called for some time, a brother comes and asks: 'Who are you?' 'Brother Francis,' I answer. "Go away!" he says. "This is not a decent hour to be wandering about! You may not come in!" When I insist, he replies: 'Go away! You are simple and stupid! Don't come back to us again! There are many of us here like you – we don't need you!' I stand again at the door and say: "For the love of God take me in tonight!" And he replies: 'I will not! Go to the Crosier's place and ask there!'

I tell you this: If I had patience and did not become upset, true joy, as well as true virtue and the salvation of my soul, would consist in this.<sup>14</sup>

Francis had embodied the Gospel message of love. For Jesus said,

Love your enemies and pray for your persecutors....  
If someone hits you on the right cheek turn and offer him the left.... If someone demands you accompany him for a mile, go two.... If he demands your coat give

him your cloak as well.... In this way we are perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect (Matt 5: 44, 39, 41, 40, 48).

Reconciliation and joy create Peace. Peace comes from the heart and if peace can transform from within, then it will guide us in our ministry in this world. Francis instructed his brothers to announce peace by their lives. Tradition has associated with Francis the beautiful Prayer for Peace. While it was most likely written by someone other than Francis, yet it reflects well the life he led.

The Beatitudes tell us "Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God" (Matt 5:9). In commenting on this beatitude Francis wrote, "Those people are truly peacemakers who, regardless of what they suffer in the world, preserve peace of Spirit and body out of love of our Lord Jesus Christ." Francis's life teaches that peace requires an enduring determination and always works for justice. Francis lives the Gospel message of Jesus.

Two years before his death while praying and fasting on Mount La Verna Francis felt the hand of God upon him. His body was imprinted with the wounds of Christ Jesus. He embodied the Gospel message in every way. In perfect joy and peace he united himself with the Christ crucified. The sign that he originally chalked on the back of his robe was now etched into his body.

<sup>14</sup> *True and Perfect Joy* VIII, in *FA:ED* 1, 166-67.

## ANOTHER FRANCISCAN FOUNDATIONAL VIEW OF CREATION

JOHN L. OSTDIEK, O.F.M.

To begin this reflection, consider life as a metaphor. Imagine a huge room with all of us humans in it, surrounded by all of creation. Life in this imaginary room proceeds under certain obligatory – emphasize: “no exceptions” – conditions. These conditions could be listed in several ways but **time, space, things, relationships** are commonly understood categories for our purposes. These four form the “matrix,” the structure of our lives. They involve every human, no matter our individual race, creed, sex, status, or any other criterion. The four apply also to everything that is non-human. Everything in creation exists in each of these four components every moment of existence here.

Surely, any reasonable adult human wonders about fundamental questions – Who created all this? How? Why? How do we live in a sustainable fashion? What will happen to my children, grandchildren, etc.? In what kind of world will they be forced to live? What happens when I die? What do I do to die happily? Is there an afterlife? What is it? And on and on

... We can see the list of questions as fitting in a triple framework of life: natural, religious, and specific. Natural: i.e. human life apart from religious beliefs and practices. Religious: i.e. based on the key relationship we have, our relationship with God. Specific: i.e. our particular state of life, our culture, our profession, our place of residence, our wealth, our education, and a myriad of other differences. Together these form a lens, as it were, through which one views the world.

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I, for example, look at the world of time, space, things and relationships through the lens of a Catholic priest with a Franciscan filter on it. Which is to say that I can't be a good Franciscan priest if I am not a good Catholic Christian. And I can't be a good Catholic Christian if I am not a good human person.

As any adult asks the life-questions listed above, he/she wants truth. The kind of truth that comes accurately from reality. A truth which meshes with other truths at all levels. And truth that is workable and livable, that can be communicated. One truth especially all of us need to keep in mind: We can't always arrive at a definitive, absolute conclusion. Sometimes we will need to say, “Maybe ...”, “It probably ...”

Having set the table, so to speak, now let's weave the thoughts of a scientist<sup>1</sup> with those of Horan and Mulholland, whose articles appeared in the July-September 2007 issue of *The Cord*. Starting from the fact of creation, Daniel P. Horan, O.F.M. looked to the medieval Franciscan school of theology at Oxford to shed light on the Franciscan view of why God created. He then used that historical view to ground our present-day need for stewardship of creation. Springboarding from present-day ecological concerns, Seamus Mulholland, O.F.M. found foundational answers in two tenets taught by B. John Duns Scotus: the primacy of Christ and haecceitas (“thisness,” i.e. each person, each thing is individual). Our task today is to add ideas from science with thoughts from scripture to mesh with the Franciscan views Horan and Mulholland advocate.

In his life, preaching and writing, St. Francis of Assisi developed a lifestyle and spirituality centered on the gospel life. Simultaneously, Robert Grosseteste in England preferred scripture as a university classroom text. Happily these two threads met when Grosseteste taught Franciscans in Oxford. The resultant ripples still shape our heritage seven centuries later.

<sup>1</sup> John L. Ostdiek, O.F.M. is a retired professor of biology with a research background in ecology. He taught human anatomy/physiology and embryology and had adjunct experience in the medical field.

Like Grosseteste, we turn to the creation story in the first chapter of Genesis. We read that God said, "Let us make man in our image ..." (Gen 1:26). In the word "image" we can hear God saying two things: who we are and what God wants us to do.

Imaging God, a person has the ability to think and to choose, can reflect on meaning, can love. Using the concept of imaging God as an answer to the question what does God want us to do requires a little more reflection. Again, in metaphorical language, how would a king, in the days when Genesis was written, rule over a vast kingdom? Travel was slow, without the cars and airplanes of today. Communication was also delayed without the telephone, radio, fax and internet communications of today. Many of the ancient kings erected statues in their likeness in each region, or sent trusted officials to govern in their place. They minted coins with their image on them and outlawed all other coins. In other words, they put their images in every corner of the realm.

But in this sentence from Genesis, is not God giving us the task to be **his** image to all of creation? To use it, to pass it on to the next generation as the gift from God it truly is? The Genesis word "image" is biblically where love of neighbor and respect for creation begin. So we must ask ourselves: what sort of image of God are we to all the people we meet and to creation surrounding us? Do we treat them as God wishes? Do we love God? And in loving God, do we love what God loves and in the way God loves?

We exist because God loves, for God is love (1 John 4:8), and whatever God does, e.g. create, is done out of love. A loving act is a gift. So our life is a gift. The ability to love is a gift – in fact, as Paul points out (1 Cor 13:13), love is the greatest gift. And because God is love, the ultimate gift to us is God giving self to us. God did/does this in the "Word made flesh" (John 1:14). The Word of God taking on human form ("emptying" Paul would say in Phil 2:7) then is God's ultimate gift to us and all creation. In his *Vespers of the Lord's Birth* St. Francis prayed, "For the Most Holy Child has been given to us.... Glory to God in the highest." Francis really meant "given." Jesus, to Francis, had to be the most important person

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in his life, because in Jesus God had found a way to be with all creation as a gift from God. Later Scotus, showing the reasonableness of Jesus' presence in the world, would phrase this as the "primacy" of Christ.

So how can we respond to this gift?

Again, Jesus describes himself, in the Scriptures, in metaphorical language: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness" (John 8:12). And "I am the way ..." (John 14:6). Besides being "gift," Jesus explains ("light") how ("way") we ought to use the gift ("follow me"). And to follow his way, Jesus insists we must, in a nutshell, "Love God ... love neighbor" (Matt 22:37 and Mark 12:31). Jesus, Word of God, has thus embellished the meaning of the Genesis task of "image" of God, and clarified how we should carry out the mission to creation which God assigned to us.

Francis modeled appreciation for the gift of creation, not by going from creation to God, but by going to God as Father – "... all good, supreme good, totally good ..." – in the *Praises* and then asking all creation to join in praising God in the *Canticle of Creatures*. Though many of us may come from an understanding of creation to admiration/praise, gratitude to the Creator, Francis still stands tall as our mentor in our God-given mission as "image of God" to creation.

We join in praying, "Praised be you, my Lord with all your creatures ..."



## BOOK REVIEW

***The Simple Way: Meditations on the Words of Saint Francis***, by Murray Bodo, O.F.M. (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2009), 132 pages.

Best selling author and scholar, Fr. Murray Bodo, O.F.M., is a good friend of the Franciscan Institute and St. Bonaventure University, having taught for the School of Franciscan Studies, and spent a semester in residence at SBU in the fall of 2003. He is very well known to, and beloved by, Franciscans for his lyrical and meditative poetry and writings on Clare and Francis of Assisi. Indeed, his latest book, *The Simple Way: Meditations on the Words of St. Francis*, "... is meant as a help to meditation ... to pray with, and as a personal notebook" (1). Fr. Murray believes that "... literature and life are deeply entwined"<sup>1</sup> and in keeping with his philosophy, this little book is small enough to be carried around easily, and used daily.

The book is divided into five sections and 116 meditations, each with an introductory story about Francis or a translation of Francis's own words from the Latin or Italian. In the introduction, Fr. Murray instructs us on how to pray with the book, telling us that we should read the words of Francis "... slowly and prayerfully"; "Enter into a short time of silence with one thought that struck you in the words of Saint Francis or in the meditation"; and thank God for inspiration on each given day (1). The contemplative practices are paired with practical ones: the author also asks the reader to

answer the questions asked and then write a resolution that begins with, "Today I will ..." (1).

Section One: A Simple Way to Love God – 30 meditations. In this section, Fr. Murray gives us an introduction to who Francis was by using biographical information and the saint's own words. He also invites us to enter more deeply into who God is, by contemplating the Passion and the Holy Eucharist, and meditating on the Incarnation, the Our Father, the Holy Trinity, and remembering all that God does for us. He asks us to ask ourselves how we see the world, and how we respond to the presence of evil. He speaks about the importance of having reverence for the written word of God (as Francis did), and to not only *feel* joy, but *share* that joy with others.

Section Two: A Simple Way of Living – 34 meditations. This section invites us to leave the hustle and bustle of the world, and return to the simple joys that may be found in life and deep contemplation. We are told that Francis's "Little Portion" was where he found peace and silence, and that we too, can find our own Little Portion when we need to commune with God. We also learn that the early Franciscans worked with their hands and that simple work is beautiful. In "Embracing Gospel Poverty" Bodo tells us that "... St. Francis gives us his reason for embracing a poor life as his way to God: He was following in the footsteps of the poor Christ" (44). He also tells us that it is not only important for us to live simply, but to think about our reaction to the poor themselves: "What is my reaction to the very poor, to those unlike me, to those whose brokenness makes them seem repulsive?" (53).

Section Three: A Simple Way to Love One's Neighbor – 19 meditations. These texts and meditations encourage us to think about our place within a larger community. We are also prompted to meditate on our own sinfulness, and to extend mercy to others. Fr. Murray uses the example of Francis's "Letter to a Minister" in which Francis says that even those who have sinned grievously should be forgiven, and never leave us without being forgiven (76). We are also led to think about "community" in the body of Christ, and relate to each

<sup>1</sup> <http://imagejournal.org/page/artist-of-the-month/murray-bodo-ofm?comment=479>

other as Saint Paul instructed us (77). The importance of religious tolerance is also introduced, primarily through the example of Francis's visit with the Sultan. We soon discover through these meditations and the examples Fr. Murray gives to us, that peace is at the center of living in community. We are reminded that Francis not only preached peace, but lived peace: "The Lord revealed to me this greeting, that we should say, 'the Lord give you peace'" (86).

Section Four – A Simple Way of Prayer – 17 meditations. As the title of this section suggests, Fr. Murray helps us to understand how important prayer was for Francis and gives us meditations to help us to discover the profound joys that prayer can yield. One of the loveliest meditations in this section is "A Safe Haven," which tells us that "Francis's safe haven was prayer, not prayer for a few minutes, or empty, presumptuous prayer, but prolonged prayer.... Whether walking, sitting, eating or drinking, he was rapt in prayer.... That was how, by God's Grace, he overcame many fears and anxieties" (96). In this way, Francis himself became a "living prayer" (104). The importance of silence is discussed, as is simple and direct prayer to God.

Section Five: A Simple Way to Love God's Creatures – 16 meditations. This section begins with a reminder of Francis's love for all creation, and asks us to question our own detachment from the natural world. Have we removed ourselves from nature? Do we nurture and protect nature in a world full of violence? We are reminded that Francis viewed all of Creation as a gift from the Creator and that he found great joy in contemplating all of God's works. Fr. Murray reminds us that communicating with God's creatures is not sentimentality – it means that we are in tune with all around us.

Compliments to Fr. Murray on the entry of "Brother Fish." So often in Franciscan discussions of "Creation," animal suffering is not mentioned, and their sacrifices not acknowledged, but here, Fr. Murray asks us: "How reverent am I toward the animal world? Do I take them for granted when they're served up as food for me?" (127). He also reminds us of the Native American reverence for our animal brethren, and how they ask forgiveness of each animal before they take

its life for food, clothing, or shelter. This section also recounts Francis's compassion and care for animals, and in instances such as his freeing a rabbit from the hunter's trap, highlights his ability to let them be true to their God-given nature, free of domination at human hands.

The book ends with the text of *The Canticle of the Creatures*, and some historical background on that beautiful literary work. Fr. Murray Bodo asks us to think of this poem as, "... a song of the soul's journey into God. Though we no longer have the music that Francis sang to this extraordinary poem, we have the original Umbrian words ... Pray it, say it, sing it, live it" (132). This lovely and practical book, though small in size, packs a real contemplative punch. It serves as a wonderful handbook for Franciscans and all those who desire to deepen their contemplative and prayer experiences; indeed, it may be commended – and recommended – for its ability to help his readers find "... the meditative space where grace can make us whole."<sup>2</sup>

Andrea F. Barone, SFO  
Franciscan Institute

<sup>2</sup> <http://imagejournal.org/page/artist-of-the-month/murray-bodo-ofm?comment=479>

## BOOK REVIEW

***Light in the Dark Ages: The Friendship of Francis and Clare of Assisi***, by Jon M. Sweeney (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2007), xii + 204 pp., \$16.95 paper.

Jon Sweeney is perhaps best known in Franciscan circles for his 2004 edition of Paul Sabatier's biography, *Road to Assisi: The Essential Biography of St. Francis* (Paraclete Press). Since the publication of the Sabatier text, Sweeney has authored two prayer books on Francis and Clare in addition to *Light in the Dark Ages* (all three also from Paraclete Press). It is important to note from the outset that Sweeney is neither Catholic<sup>1</sup> nor a professed Franciscan, and, to the best of this author's knowledge, he holds no advanced degree in the theology or Franciscan studies. The absence of these credentials is significant in situating this text in both the context of similar books and in the larger category of spiritual biography. It seems that Sweeney delves into the world of *Franciscana* driven by his personal interest in the saints from Assisi that have fascinated him for some time.

His own motivation is expressed in the introduction where he summarizes the book's thesis, while attempting to distinguish his text from the others. After acknowledging

<sup>1</sup> As I write this review, it has come to my attention that Jon Sweeney has made it publically known that he has begun the RCIA process to be received into full communion with the Roman Catholic Church (the process which began in Spring 2009 according to: <http://jonmsweeney.wordpress.com/about/> [accessed 9 September 2009]). I have chosen not to change this comment in the review because I believe this fact about Sweeney, not officially Roman Catholic at the time of his authoring *Light in the Dark Ages*, helps explain the context out of which he writes his book.

that there have been more books written about Francis than any other person beside Jesus, Sweeney argues that none of them have allowed readers the chance to "assess what Francis actually did that was so extraordinary" (11). A bold claim that is difficult to evaluate.

The book is organized into sixteen chapters that roughly span a century-long chronology. In the appendix he includes a "cast of characters" (175-181) as well as a "chronology and calendar of important remembrances," which provides a convenient outline of the early Franciscan movement. Sweeney is selective in what subjects and historic figures receive more or less attention, although he focuses most often on Francis and Clare. The first five chapters are generally concerned with the early history of the Franciscan movement from the perspective of Francis's own conversion. Chapters six through eight focus on the early establishment of the Franciscan Orders and the entrance of Clare into public religious life. Chapter nine is interesting for the threefold thematic approach Sweeney takes. He presents a different view of medieval mysticism with his opinion on how Francis and Clare were mystics unlike their contemporaries. Additionally, he takes up the question of creation and liturgical environment. Sweeney makes inferences about figures (e.g., Clare and Anthony of Padua) based on the hagiographical accounts of other figures (e.g., Francis) at the end of this chapter without a clear correlative method. It is difficult, even with a significant insertion of endnote references, to trace how Sweeney is arriving at some of his conclusions.

Chapters ten through twelve address the last years of Francis's life, while thirteen through fifteen provide a hodgepodge of post-Transitus fraternal politics and tales of division. The whole of chapter fourteen is dedicated to the Spiritualist movements. Sweeney closes his book with a series of reflections on the contemporary relevance of the lives of Francis and Clare. Here he includes his adaptation of the famous apocryphal Franciscan quote "preach the Gospel at all times, if necessary use words." Sweeney's paraphrases: "They [Francis and Clare] showed God's presence not by argument or even by teaching so much as by the way they



embodied it" (171). The two closing lines of the book demonstrate Sweeney's view that the lives of Francis and Clare remain prophetic and revolutionary today. "To live in the spirit of Francis and Clare today is to model Christ in ways that will cause you to be dismissed as a fool, forgotten like the poor, reviled for your optimism, and yet, somehow, remain enormously attractive to the rest of the world who are seeking peace and meaning" (174).

Overall the book leaves much to be desired in terms of historical accuracy and solid scholarly foundations. Sweeney's prioritization of sources raises questions about his familiarity with the history of Franciscan scholarship, especially with regard to contemporary secondary sources. Of particular concern is his reliance on Paul Sabatier's 1894 biography of Francis, although, it should be noted that Sweeney does make passing reference to Jacques Dalarun, Ilia Delio, John Moorman and others. This leads this reviewer to suspect that the problem with Sweeney's method has less to do with access to sources than to accurate reading and incorporation of them. While the book is, generally speaking, without grievous error, there are numerous inconsistencies throughout that threaten the credibility of the text. These take the form of historiographical conflation, speculation and poetic license by way of fictitious elaboration. However, Sweeney is to be praised for his effort to help draw attention to the value of Franciscan *ressourcement* for citizens of our contemporary society and cultures. His general position that the prophetic nature of Francis and Clare's lives provides a resource for all Christians to embrace in an effort to bring about God's Kingdom in our world is well put. Sweeney calls this, "the sort of revolution we need today" (174).

Daniel P. Horan, OFM  
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*The Cord*, 59.4 (2009)

**SHANNON SCHREIN, O.S.F., Ph.D.** is a Sylvania Franciscan, Professor and Chair of Theological Studies and Director of the Master of Arts in Theology at Lourdes College. She earned a Doctorate in Systematic Theology from Marquette University and a Masters in Theology from the University of Dayton. She is the author of *Quilting and Braiding: The Feminist Christologies of Sallie McFague and Elizabeth A. Johnson in Conversation*, published by the Liturgical Press, 1998. She is a contributor to *The Saint Mary's College Study Bible*, 2007. She has shared her Franciscan way of life and her love of Jesus and the Scriptures with her students for thirty-eight years.

**JOHN L. OSTDIEK, O.F.M.** is a member of the Sacred Heart Province of the Order of Friars Minor. Fr. John holds degrees in philosophy, theology, education and biology with a focus on ecology. His writings have been wide-ranging, from scientific reports to more than 300 articles on spiritual subjects. He currently writes a weekly column that appears in *The Catholic Times*, the newspaper of the Springfield, IL diocese. Two books are also in process: *The Door*, which treats life, death, and afterlife from the natural, Christian, and Franciscan viewpoints, and *Biblical Sites for Biblical Cites*, based on his large collection of photographs from his pilgrimages to the Holy Land.

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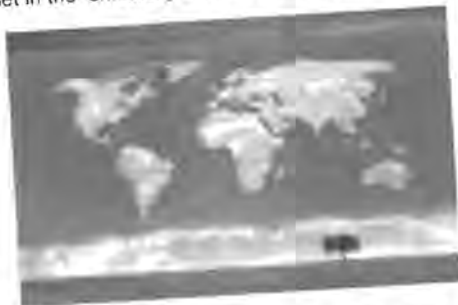
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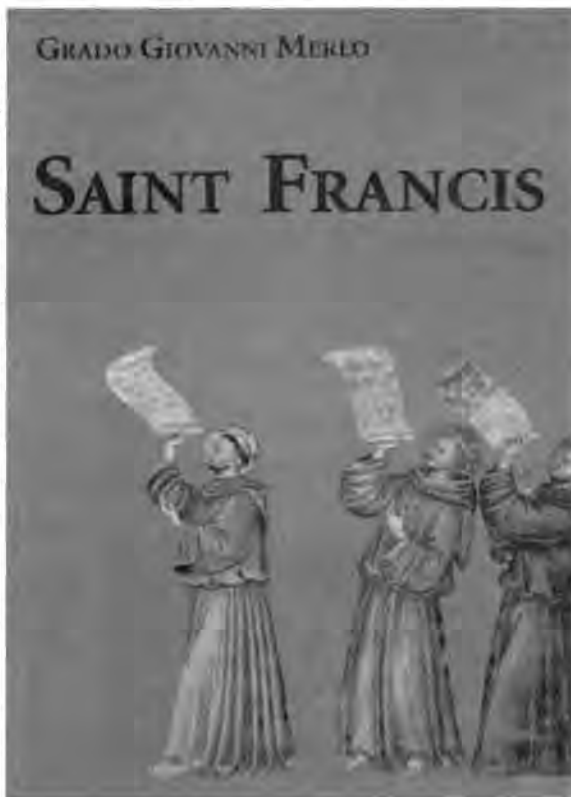
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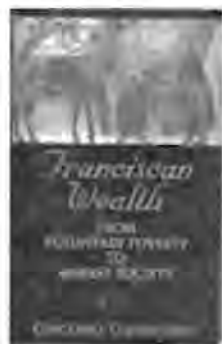
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### **ABBREVIATIONS**

#### *Writings of Saint Francis*

Adm	The Admonitions
BIL	A Blessing for Br. Leo
CtC	The Canticle of the Creatures
CtExh	The Canticle of Exhortation
1Frg	Fragments of Worchester Manuscript
2Frg	Fragments of Thomas of Celano
3Frg	Fragments from Hugh of Digne
LtAnt	A Letter to Br. Anthony of Padua
1LtCl	The First Letter to the Clergy (Early Edition)
2LtCl	The Second Letter to the Clergy (Later Edition)
1LtCus	The First Letter to the Custodians
2LtCus	The Second Letter to the Custodians
1LtF	The First Letter to the Faithful
2LtF	The Second Letter to the Faithful
LtL	A Letter to Br. Leo
LtMin	A Letter to a Minister
LtOrd	A Letter to the Entire Order
LtR	A Letter to Rulers of the Peoples
ExhP	Exhortation to the Praise of God
PrOF	A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father
PrsG	The Praises of God
OfP	The Office of the Passion
PrCr	The Prayer before the Crucifix
ER	The Earlier Rule (Regula non bullata)
LR	The Later Rule (Regula bullata)
RH	A Rule for Hermitages
SalBVM	A Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
SalV	A Salutation of Virtues
Test	The Testament
TPJ	True and Perfect Joy

#### *Franciscan Sources*

1C	The Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
2C	The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul
3C	The Treatise on the Miracles by Thomas of Celano
Lch	The Legend for Use in Choir
Off	The Divine Office of St. Francis by Julian of Speyer
IJS	The Life of St. Francis by Julian of Speyer
VL	The Versified Life of St. Francis by Henri d'Avanches
1-3JT	The Praises by Jacopone da Todi
DCom	The Divine Comedy by Dante Alighieri
TL	The Tree of Life by Ubertino da Casale
1MP	The Mirror of Perfection, Smaller Version
2MP	The Mirror of Perfection, Larger Version
HTrb	The History of the Seven Tribulations by Angelo of Clareno
ScEx	The Sacred Exchange between St. Francis and Lady Poverty
AP	The Anonymous of Perugia
L3C	The Legend of the Three Companions
AC	The Assisi Compilation
1-4Srm	The Sermons of Bonaventure
LMj	The Major Legend by Bonaventure
LMn	The Minor Legend by Bonaventure
BPr	The Book of Praises by Bernard of Besse
ABF	The Deeds of St. Francis and His Companions
LFI	The Little Flowers of St. Francis
KnSF	The Knowing of St. Francis
ChTE	The Chronicle of Thomas of Eccleston
ChrJG	The Chronicle of Jordan of Giano

#### *Writings of Saint Clare*

1LAg	First Letter to Agnes of Prague
2LAg	Second Letter to Agnes of Prague
3LAg	Third Letter to Agnes of Prague
4LAg	Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague
LEr	Letter to Ermentrude of Bruges
RCI	Rule of St. Clare
TestCl	Testament of St. Clare
BCI	Blessing of St. Clare