

BOOKS RECEIVED

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- De Rachewiltz, Patrizia, *Songs of the Peacock*. Illustrated by Tien. Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1977. Pp. 160. Cloth, \$9.95; paper \$5.95.
- Esser, Cajetan, O.F.M., *The Rule and Testament of St. Francis: Conferences to the Modern Followers of Francis*. Trans. Sister Audrey Marie, O.S.F. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1978. Pp. viii-226. Cloth, \$7.95.
- Harrington, Wilfried, O.P. *The New Guide to Reading and Studying the Bible*. Introd. by Donald Senior, C.P. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1978. Pp. xx-172. Paper, \$5.95.
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- Juliana of Norwich, *Showings*. Trans. and introd. by Edmund College and James Walsh. Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978. Pp. x-369, including index. Cloth, \$9.95; paper, \$6.95.
- Peter of Alcantara, St., *A Golden Treatise of Mental Prayer*. Edited by G.S. Hollings, S.S.J.E. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1978. Pp. vi-179. Cloth, \$2.95.
- Rezy, Carol, *Liturgies for Little Ones: 34 Celebrations for Grades One to Three*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1978. Pp. 160. Paper, \$3.95.
- Ripple, Paula, F.S.P.A., *The Pain and the Possibility*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1978. Pp. 143. Paper, \$2.95.

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Poverty: Spiritual and Material?



LIVE TODAY as Francis and his brothers did at Rivo Torto? A friar responding recently to this question, in the course of a conversation, shook his head slowly, thoughtfully, and somewhat wistfully. "I'd be in the hospital with pneumonia within a week," he explained. "We not only live in a different society today, but even our physical and mental constitution as individuals has changed from what it was in the Order's early days."

The friars' life at Rivo Torto differed in many ways, to be sure, from our own; but perhaps the most fundamental difference can be said to be in the literal practice of material poverty. The two main articles in this issue are addressed to this perennial issue of Franciscan living, and further discussions on it are planned for the future. It may not be inappropriate, therefore, to offer in this space some reflections of our own which may serve to stimulate still further thought on the subject.

One frequently met approach, these days, is that of deploring the progressive "spiritualization" of the Franciscan ideal of poverty through the Order's history. As we imply in the title of this editorial, there can be no question of the need in every Franciscan's life for *spiritual* poverty: The real question is whether that detachment should receive an uncompromisingly literal expression in the material sense.

Thus phrased, of course, the question is too complex to be given a single, global answer. It must be broken down into other, more specific and concrete questions. Without pretending to give an exhaustive list of these, much less a definitive answer to any of them—and without claiming that any of them is new or original, we do want to express the main ones here in a more or less systematic way.

We all know that the apostolic work most Franciscan religious are engaged in today demands a considerable stock of material goods clearly at the personal disposal of each individual. Our first question, then, is this: ~~What is the~~ renouncing every other form of work, to revert completely to the lifestyle of the original twelve friars—be nothing but itinerant preachers of the Good News, totally dependent on alms for even life's basic necessities? Unless one answers this question in the affirmative, we think he should drop all pretense to be advocating "uncompromisingly" literal observance of material poverty. And we believe, moreover, that both the example of early friars after the twelve (Anthony and Bonaventure

in particular come to mind) and a hard look at the limitations imposed by life in the contemporary world preclude that affirmative answer.

But accepting the negative reply leads to two more specific questions: viz., (1) for our institutions and (2) for individual religious, is renunciation of ownership in favor of dependent use a mere legal fiction, or is it a real and desirable option today? Our suggestions here are that (1) modern economic reality has precluded dependent use as a realistic possibility for our communities or institutions, but (2) dependent use not only can but must remain the only possible choice for individual religious.

Again, accepting this second suggestion leads to a gamut of further specifications. Accept it we must, of course; otherwise what meaning would be left to the vow of poverty? But what does its serious acceptance imply, beyond the obvious impossibility of a religious holding legal title to property? The extreme spiritualization of the vow so widely criticized today would maintain that "anything goes" as long as there is the (quite theoretical) velleity that, should some really cataclysmic event take place—and one thinks that for some people this could be only the Parousia—one would be willing to relinquish possession and use of one's items. We mention this, not as a purely hypothetical "pure extreme position" to round out our systematic synthesis of questions, but because it does in fact seem to be the mentality of some religious.

A second approach would also accept the contemporary de facto liberalization of the observance of poverty. But with every effort being exercised to maintain interior detachment, people in this category would insist that *in addition* there must be some "pinch" felt in the way of privation of exterior goods. There are many who would have such privations legislated; but we think this would be a mistake. Rather, we feel that within reasonable limits (and the line here would have to be drawn, ultimately, by those in authority) the individual mature religious must be left to express poverty in his own way, in prayerful communion with the Spirit.

Finally, it is not only possible, but actually a spreading reality in our day, for individuals to do what we said at the outset the institution cannot do: revert to the primal Franciscan ideal of itinerant preaching or hermitage life—ideally, a rhythmic movement between the two. In this age of personal choice, where not only apostolate but even place of residence is left to the individual's specification in so many cases, it has become quite feasible for an individual religious to embrace the most austere of lifestyles. A sounder theology, as well as better medical and psychological information, than was had in the Middle Ages would, of course preclude wild excesses; but short of them, one could voluntarily choose the apostolate and the residence which would make it possible to subsist on only the real necessities of human life.

It hardly needs to be said, in conclusion, that whether an individual chooses the second or the third approach to poverty (the first, we rule out as unconscionable for any serious religious), the emphasis must be

on what we referred to as prayerful communion with the Spirit. So many rationalizations have been defended by an appeal to disillusionment with community life. "I entered this life envisaging the loving support of my brothers (sisters), and all I've seen is backbiting, thinly- or non-veiled contumely, etc. So you can hardly blame me for falling back on material possessions and avocations as a compensation for what I've experienced as a complete lack of human support." This plea, for which it is difficult not to feel *some* degree, if not of acceptance, then at least of sympathy, overlooks that it is the Lord—not human respect or even support—that we have chosen as our inheritance. It is easy to nurture the misconception that the inheritance is something we come into only after death; but this is not the case. Rather, it is a *hundred-fold in this life* that we have been promised, and eternal life *besides*.

In this matter as in all others, we must be careful not to set about judging everyone else. Rather, as Francis advises, "let each one judge himself." If within the depths of your heart there is no longer any real attempt to maintain prayerful communion with the Spirit of Jesus—not just from time to time, but very often and even continually through each day—then any attempt to regulate mechanically the amount of goods you possess and use will be either a stoic striving for self-perfection or an exercise in futility. But if you "work in a spirit of faith and devotion," not "extinguishing the spirit of prayer and devotion" (1 Rule, 5), the Lord will himself be your support and you will have little danger of becoming enmeshed in undue material concerns. This—and only this—can be the meaning of poverty vowed out of love for and in imitation of the poor Jesus.

Fr. Michael D. Mailach, OFM

i am poor, Lord, and lowly;
 there's nothing i can call my own—save my sins.
 my material needs are satisfied through your goodness;
 my spiritual longings soothed by your love.
 no matter how much i multiply words in prayer,
 their end is the same—you, my God, my All.
 hear this prayer, then i ask you, all-loving Father, in your mercy
 but not for any merit of its own—it has none,
 for i am poor, Lord, and lowly
 and there is nothing i desire to call my own—
 save you, my God and my All.

Timothy James Fleming, O.F.M.Conv.

The Plan for Franciscan Living Service

ANTON R. BRAUN, O.F.M.

SERVICE IS the key to the ministry of the friars as they move about in the world among the People of God. At times the question may well arise in the lives of the friars: "Who serves us? Who is there to minister to us?" We have, of course, our brotherhood, which is essentially our vocation, and our service flows from that. Yet there is a deep and genuine need that each friar be the receiver of ministry and service, that he be challenged to grow, that he be healed and restored.

The *Plan for Franciscan Living*, the Rule and General Constitutions of the Order of Friars Minor, would remain a very impressive document even were it left to itself. There is a need to have these Constitutions come alive for every friar, to become a living and vibrant part of his life. Reading and meditation on the *Plan for Franciscan Living* certainly serves, to some degree, to meet this need; but still more is needed for each friar.

With these needs in mind, and with the encouragement of the Minister General, who asks that the Constitutions become the living resource of each friar, the Plan for Franciscan Living Service came to life in 1974. In May of that year the English-Speaking Conference of Friars Minor gathered together to formulate an interprovincial Renewal Project under the Directorship of Maury Smith, O.F.M. This English-Speaking Conference is made up of the first-ranking Minister of each of the ten Provinces, two Vicariates, and six Custodies of the United States, Canada, England, Ireland, and Malta. The plan for Franciscan Living Service (hereafter referred to as PFL Service) became the practical and applied arm of the Renewal Project as teams of friars experienced in all aspects of Franciscan living began formulating a comprehensive plan of renewal.

The PFL Service is available to serve the friars in formulating

Father Anton R. Braun, O.F.M., a member of the Sacred Heart Province, is Administrative Director of Alverna: a Center for Human and Spiritual Growth, in Indianapolis. Part of Alverna's Mission is the dissemination to the various Provinces of up to date studies on Franciscan Life. The two papers on poverty in this issue were originally distributed through its facilities, and we hope to make available more such contributions in the future.

programs on Franciscan spirituality, discernment, prayer, friary chapters, community-building workshops, dialog, decision making, design of provincial chapters, and many other programs pertinent to renewal. The varied services are available to every friar, local minister, community, or province. One of the key ways the PFL Service is valuable to every community is the *Resource Service*, which is sent to every friary every other month. This is a valuable help to the local community, especially in making the house chapter an occasion of spiritual discussion and growth. Each *Resource* item provided has a three-part content: a presentation relevant to the friars, a worship service (liturgy or paraliturgy),

and suggestions for growth in a particular area. The areas the *Resource Service* covers are both varied and pertinent: the friary chapter, prayer, brotherhood, community living, and poverty.

The full scope of this Service is presented and developed in the Franciscan *Resource Directory*, already in its second edition. This 90-page book provides both a list of resource personnel and programs to serve the friars' needs in practically every conceivable area of ministry and growth. The subjects include areas from Fine Arts to Ethnicity to Spirituality to Woodworking. The *Directory* contains a comprehensive listing of qualified friars and programs to serve the cause of renewal in community as well as in our external ministry.

But the *Resource Directory* is more than a compendium of men and programs; it captures the spirit of ministry and service that is so very much a part of what Franciscanism is about. It is the mutual cooperation, the linking together of friars from many provinces, joining hands and heads in the effort of renewal and growth. There is ability and expertise available in so many areas ready to be tapped and utilized so that Franciscan spirituality may be more of a living reality in the world today.

The religious renewal that has been called forth by Vatican II, as

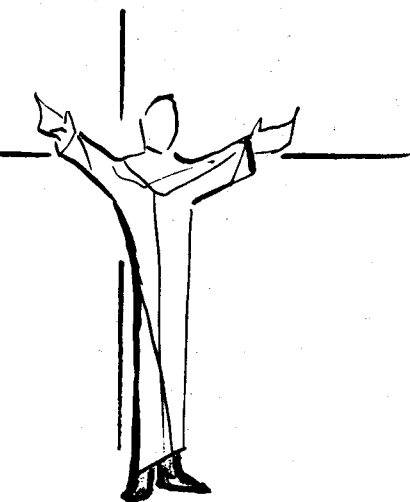
well as the renewal of the Order that our *Plan for Franciscan Living* demands from us, is something that comes about gradually and takes time. Maury Smith, O.F.M., the Conference Director of the PFL Service and its moving force, considers the results thus far to be a "realistic, solid kind" of renewed spiritual life growing from within rather than merely external. The PFL Service is a vital force in this growth. As the friars come to understand the implications of the new Constitutions and attain closer touch with their prayerful roots, the PFL Service plans to be there available to serve them on their journey. As the friars grow in their recognition that they must be an ever growing community of men of prayer, the PFL Service will be with them on their pilgrimage to help provide for the needs that will arise.

The friars are men of ministry in many ways. This is their calling. But very often they find themselves in need of ministry—in need of others' kindness and concern. They find themselves in need of being called forth, of being challenged to grow, to find new paths or new depths. They may well be in need of healing, as they themselves have helped to heal so many. The PFL Service is here to meet these needs of the friars and to actualize "from paper to life" the vision of the friars in the post-Vatican II Church.

That is how the Franciscan Minister General, Constantine Koser, O.F.M., likes to phrase the friars' renewal.

In 1977, when the PFL Service grew and became more a part of the friars' lives, the Ministers Provincial of the Franciscan Conference appointed in each of their respective jurisdictions a director to work in conjunction with the PFL Service Director. This would provide a close link between the central office and each of the locations where English-speaking friars reside. These men were selected "on the basis of [their] quality as friars, . . . dedication to Franciscan renewal, and . . . interest in serving the friars in Franciscan Renewal." Each of them will work to help the friars clarify Franciscan values today. They are to challenge and support their own Provincials and other friars in examining their Franciscan life-style. Most or all of them are to bring to life the fundamental idea of *service* itself in the PFL Service, in that they make available the resources of the Plan for Franciscan Living.

The Provincial Directors are Paul Reczek, O.F.M. (Assumption Province), Kevin Mackin, O.F.M. (Holy Name Province), Frank Hanudel, O.F.M. (Immaculate Conception Province), Tom Speier, O.F.M. (John the Baptist Province), Geoffrey Bridges, O.F.M. (Santa Barbara Province), Martin Wolter, O.F.M. (Sacred



Heart Province), Bernard Barry, O.F.M. (Christ the King Province), Matthew Brozovic, O.F.M. (Vicariates and Custodies), George-Albert Robert, O.F.M. (liaison for England, Ireland, and Malta). Other friars involved in the PFL Service program are Theodore Zaremba, O.F.M., Assumption Province Provincial, who serves as liaison between the English-Speaking Conference and the Conference Director, Maury Smith, O.F.M.; and Augustine Hellstern, O.F.M., of the Sacred Heart Province, who is responsible for public relations and communications.

The PFL Service came into being to meet the needs of the friars in as many ways as possible. Some of these are in areas where there is lacking a specific ministry, such as a deepening of Franciscan spirituality, or where a project is too demanding or too extensive for the resources of a single province. Last April, e.g., two of the Provincial Directors of the PFL Service, Matthew Brozovic and Frank Hanudel, coordinated an interprovincial day of renewal of vows in the Pittsburgh area; this was well received by the friars.



Our Lady Speaks to Her Beloved Priests An Important Clarification

A book was listed as received in our May, 1978, issue: *Our Lady Speaks to Her Beloved Priests*, distributed privately by the National Headquarters of the Marian Movement of Priests. Recently we received notification of a letter written at the direction of the Cardinal Archbishop of Milan, where Father Gobbi began the "Movement." The letter explains that though the book contains no doctrinal errors, it does contain "an ambiguity of language and character . . . and an excessive sentimentalism which finds no firm basis in good theology and psychology." The book was refused an imprimatur, and the Movement does not enjoy official approval.

Franciscan Poverty in Today's World—I

ELOI LECLERC, O.F.M.

THE THEME of poverty is destined to reappear continually on any Franciscan agenda. It affects the very core of the Franciscan genius at its origins, and therefore has to do with its deepest identity. We are fully aware of the role played by poverty in the religious itinerary of Saint Francis of Assisi. We realize its fundamental bearing on his project of Gospel living. At a very early stage, poverty impressed itself on Francis as the indispensable foundation and framework of any authentically complete evangelical lifestyle. And for this reason he embraced poverty with stern inflexibility, but also with the sublime madness of a great love. He adopted the categories of chivalrous devotion, that of the troubadours for their ladies; he desired to be the dedicated knight of Lady Poverty, who had been abandoned by men but who had been the beloved spouse of the Most High Son of God.

Captivated by his example, we

too have made this choice. We too have promised to live in poverty, following the footsteps of the Poor Christ. The very existence of the Franciscan family, its special vocation in the Church and its capacity to spread its influence in the world, hangs utterly and completely, today as yesterday, on this choice and on this promise. If the Franciscan way of life is not a continuous and realistic return to the Gospel, it is nothing. And this return to the Gospel inevitably begins with a rediscovery of poverty: the kind of rediscovery, in fact, which we must of necessity make in our world of today.

The world in which we live does not facilitate our task. It is certainly true that poverty has always been regarded as an evil, as a source of misery and degradation. Men have always striven to escape it, as far as possible. But modern society seems to have set as its goal the total elimination of poverty, once and for all. The instinctive and long-lasting

Brother Eloi LeClerc, O.F.M., presented this paper to the General Chapter of the Order of Friars Minor, held in Assisi in 1976. The English version was first distributed in the Dec. 1977-Jan. 1978 Resource of the Plan for Franciscan Living, a consultation service directed by Father Maury Smith, O.F.M., the work of which is described elsewhere in this issue. It is reprinted here with permission.

repulsion against poverty which has always existed has been reinforced in our own day by a conscious and determined will to rid the world of poverty.

This will is based on various factors. There is our exalted concept of human dignity. There is an increased consciousness of human dignity. And there is the optimistic conviction, born of the progress of science and technology, that we are finally capable of combatting poverty effectively, both on the level of nations and that of individuals.

The Church too is engaged in this struggle against poverty. In the name of social justice and of the Gospel ideal of brotherhood she feels bound to assist the poor to liberate themselves from their poverty and misery. No Christian can afford to disengage himself from sharing this fight against a poverty which is merely an oppressive burden to be endured.

Here a difficulty presents itself. How can we reconcile a necessary sense of solidarity such as this with the choice of poverty as an ideal to be embraced? Where can we assign a place to our option of evangelical poverty in this context of a struggle against poverty?

This, however, is not our difficulty. Things would be relatively easy to resolve if there were not, underlying this struggle, a certain social model which strives to extend its influence

everywhere. The model in question is that of the consumer society. It offers itself as the universal panacea for all indigence. Let us frankly acknowledge it for what it is. Everywhere this model of society has taken root, it has succeeded in putting at the disposal of the greatest possible number of people "objects" which would otherwise remain the privilege of the more fortunate: the refrigerator, e.g., the washing machine, all kinds of domestic appliances, automobiles, etc. It has developed proper hygiene and provided means of cultural enrichment. The consumer society has not only created all kinds of riches, it has also distributed them more equitably. To this extent it has contributed towards easing the harsh lot of peoples and has achieved a genuine human development. All this is undeniable and must be set down to the credit of this type of society.

The problem is, however, that the consumer society does not stop there. Far from being content with satisfying the real needs of people, it contrives through carefully orchestrated publicity to multiply needs artificially. Its aim is to induce people to consume more and more, and to do so more and more rapidly, by continually displaying new objects and thus arousing an ever-increasing greed.

Since it is able to offer people more and more facilities and a growing degree of comfort, and since it is careful to anticipate their desires, this civilization inculcates the impression that, thanks to material progress and with the help of money, man is capable of everything. He may now allow himself to expect everything. He can resolve all his problems: those of health, of security, of culture, of social relationships, etc.

Such is the society in which we live. This is the world in which we embark on our project of Gospel poverty. In this situation we can adopt various attitudes. The first and most common is that of adaptation and compromise. A certain kind of realism, allied with the urge towards efficiency, leads us very naturally to use what the consumer society offers us and to profit from all its advantages. This holds with regard to our activities as well as our possessions—our professional/economic as well as our leisure pursuits. To put it in a nutshell, we fit in. Sometimes very well. Now we must admit that all realities are nuanced, rather than black and white. But we surely must also admit that it is fatefully easy, even for people who have professed evangelical poverty, to be gradually and unwittingly mastered by the environment which surrounds us. And the end

result is that we install ourselves comfortably in the consumer society. The adaptation can even be so wonderfully successful that we don't even stop to question ourselves about it. We simply allow ourselves everything. There are Friars Minor about today who move in this society like fish in water. But then what is left of our basic sense of identity? We are no more than consumers, like everybody else.

This kind of mentality is made all the more plausible as a result of a certain kind of religious formation of a strictly juridical nature. This has perhaps accustomed us to thinking of our poverty, and living it, in terms of legal observances. Poverty was simply fidelity to a clearly determined set of rules. These rules and determinations go back to situations which no longer obtain and are irrelevant in our situation. The fact is that the matters they envisaged have lost all value and are seldom met with any more. The result of this is that we now feel ourselves completely free as far as the law is concerned with regard to the mass of new objects which engage our cupidity. An effective desire to be poor can no longer be sustained by depending on clear regulations, as if one could consult a list of things allowed and things forbidden. It must necessarily go beyond a juridical framework and bear the stamp of free decision.

Some may be tempted to invoke, as a remedy for this free-wheeling attitude, a completely spiritual ideal of poverty. No doubt poverty is chiefly qualified by its spiritual dimensions. But it is also true that poverty cannot be evangelical, or Franciscan, or even spiritual, if it neglects the economic dimension. And this dimension necessarily involves restriction in material goods, a restriction which comes from our free will and not merely from being deprived of the possibility of doing otherwise.

But is a mere appeal to liberty adequate to answer the question of poverty? What is going to motivate our liberty, to give it wings, as it were? Our desire to be poor people, if it is to become effective in practice, needs to recapture its original inspiration and its pristine enthusiasm. This inspiration and this enthusiasm are the only things capable of providing the needed thrust. Some among us seem to have grasped this fact. They become the prophets of a great return to the prophetic radicalism of Francis himself. Their attitude would take concrete form in an approach of contestation, even of revolution, with regard to the society in which we live. This stance has the merit of reacting against a facile and supine adaptation by which we should love our identity. And even if the heralds

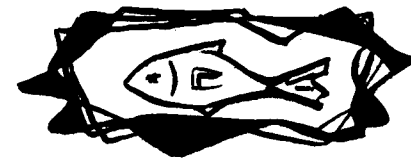
of this radicalism stop short all too often with verbal radicalism, yet they point out for us a way towards saving our vocation. They do this on one condition, though: that of not misinterpreting the prophetic radicalism of Francis. His radicalism is not that of the sects which proliferated in his own day: Waldensians, Cathars, Humiliati, Poor Men of Lyons, etc. All of these waved the banner of the most absolutely radical poverty in accordance with the Gospel, and they saw in it the only possible way of salvation for the Church, the way towards genuine spiritual freedom. And yet, between this radicalism and that of Francis there are enormous differences. The basic cleavage lies in their inspiration. And for this reason it is of the utmost importance to understand accurately the inspiration and source of Francis's poverty.

Contrary to widely held opinion, the radicalism of Francis in this matter of poverty does not trace its origin to a sense of reaction. It is not a reaction against a particular social state of affairs. Neither is it a form of protest against the State or the Church of the time. Undoubtedly, his style of poverty could not but have a massive impact and a liberating influence on his social milieu. It swept vigorously like a prophetic wind through the conscience of Christianity, and even the Institution itself swayed

under its power. But the intention of Francis's poverty had not had as its deliberate and carefully planned end such a change in society. When Francis chose the most absolute poverty, he was launching a crusade against nobody. He never set himself up as the judge of any individual or any institution. He voiced nothing which might be construed as a protest; he didn't even envisage teaching anybody anything. And this is where the profound chasm lies between him and the swarm of sects who busied themselves in a violent attack against the Church and her hierarchical representatives. Francis's radicalism is devoid of all aggressiveness, of any taint of iconoclasm, and finally of any apologetic preoccupation.

The novelist Georges Bernanos understood this very well. In this book *Frère Martin* he sketches a comparison between the Poverello of Assisi and the Father of Protestantism. "It is possible," he observes,

that Saint Francis was not a whit less disgusted than Luther with the debaucheries and the simony of prelates. In fact it is certain that he suffered more exquisitely from them, because his natural fibre was so different from that of the monk of Weimar. But Saint Francis did not defy iniquity. He did not attempt to confront it. He simply flung himself into utter poverty and lived it as thoroughly as he could, along with his



followers, plunging into it as the source of all pardon and of all purity And under the gentle caress of this beggar the heaps of gold and of luxury burst into a froth of blossom like a hedge row in the month of April

The sober fact is that, in the entire corpus of Francis's writings, one does not find one line expressing an attitude of contestation or the slightest tinge of polemic with regard to society or the Church. The very opposite is true. We encounter passages where Francis is very explicit in putting his friars on their guard against this kind of crusading mentality. We read in chapters 2 and 3 of the Rule of 1223, for example, the following exhortations:

I warn and implore my brothers not to despise or judge those whom they see clothing themselves with excessive luxuriousness in color or in the quality of the fabric, or those who show an exaggerated fastidiousness in what they eat and drink, but let each one rather judge and despise himself.

When my brothers pass through the world, I advise, warn and exhort them, in the Lord Jesus Christ, to avoid wrangles and conten-

tions and never to judge others. Let them rather study to be friendly and peaceful, meek and humble, and courteous towards everybody

This is a far cry from the waspish aggressiveness of the sects. Francis saw abuse in the Church just as clearly as the next one. But his evangelical poverty flowed from a much deeper source than a mere desire to register a protest. Far from being the expression of resentment or revolt, it was the overflow of his interior plenitude. Nietzsche makes a character declare that truly noble beings do not allow their conduct to be dictated from outside themselves, as a movement of reaction to a given situation. Rather they act as an expression of what they are in themselves, and not under external dictation. Their action is never the negation of anything, but the affirmation of the fullness of life in which they share. This is a perfect description of the case with Francis.

In his case the fullness of life which overflows into activity is essentially the fullness of contemplation. His Gospel radicalism runs as deep as that. And this is what we desperately need to understand. Let it be said immediately, however, that to claim that the roots of Francis's evangelism are contemplative is in no way to diminish their vigor and creative force. The exact opposite

is true. If Francis succeeded in creating, as a result of his disconcerting simplicity, a zone of limpid freedom in the Church which can do without the leaden apparatus of human structures and blithely escape hierarchical rigidity in its organization and power-politics and grab-mentality throughout its membership—in short, a zone of liberty and of evangelical communion—if Francis did all this, then it was because his entire being not only mirrored the depth of his contemplation, but also exploded under the pressure of this ecstatic experience.

It has been written that to contemplate is to become. Francis became what he had not ceased to contemplate. His poverty, and indeed his entire life, sprang from the depth of his vision. We must draw for ourselves the consequences of this fact. For it would be useless to desire to return to Francis's radicalism without encountering it at the point of his profound contemplation. So our first enterprise is to find out what was the nature of this contemplation.

Francis's contemplation was essentially a gazing upon God. His writings—especially the prayers he composed—reveal a man ravished by God's sovereignty: a sovereignty which is neither domineering nor destructive, but gracious and beneficent, a sovereignty in the order of

the Good. God appeared to Francis as "sovereign Good," "total Good," the One "from whom comes all Good." These repeated expressions pervade the *Praises*. They convey Francis's vision of God. He is the Lord of Goodness, since he is its only source. Good is his sovereign domain.

This vision led Francis to a radical disappropriation which extended to all goods, of whatever kind. He kept himself free of all ownership, material or spiritual. And this disappropriation meant for Francis a restitution to God of what belongs by right to him alone. It is no more or less than a recognition of God's sovereignty as the unique source of all Good.

To this contemplation of God must be added Francis's vision of the mystery of Christ. In fact the two are intimately united. Francis saw God when he contemplated Christ. And here he discovered the poverty of his Lord. He himself has crystallized this vision of Christ in the following phrase of his Rule: "The Lord made himself poor in this world for our sake." And he writes in the "Letter to All the Faithful": "He who was richer than all others chose to live in poverty." Francis always had before his eyes this mystery of love: that the Most High Son of God had been urged to love to divest himself of divine glory and assume the poorest human state, and all this so as to

enrich us with his own life. "He kept nothing for himself," Bonaventure has Francis say of Jesus, "but gave up everything to save us."

Here we must make an important point. The poverty of Jesus, as contemplated by Francis, is inseparable from the mission of the Son of God who leaves the Father's glory to come, in the greatest self-emptying, to save human beings. The Gospel of poverty is here intimately linked with the Gospel of mission. At the starting point of Francis's vocation to Gospel poverty we find the Gospel of the mission. This is the account of the sending of the disciples: it tore Francis from his eremitical life and caused him to plunge himself, utterly devoid of means, into wandering the roads of the world. And when, later, he had qualms about what kind of life he should embrace, it was again the thought of the mission of the Son of God, sent by the Father to mankind, which confirmed him in his vocation as a wandering missionary preacher.

So the notion of mission, in its deepest sense, is at the heart of the poverty of Francis and of his evangelical radicalism. His ideal of poverty is not that of the primitive Jerusalem community, after Pentecost: a stable group, closed in on itself, focused on the Temple, on worship and liturgical prayer, in which each member

gives up his goods for the sake of the collectivity. Francis's is rather the poverty of the community of the Apostles and disciples, sent throughout the world by the Master in imitation of his own example. This community is essentially itinerant and missionary; it cannot exist in ponderous and permanent establishments. It is incompatible with all forms of fixed property, whether collective or personal. This is the kind of apostolic community which continues the mission of the Son, announcing the Kingdom and living from the generosity of those who receive the message.

The root of this poverty is mission, in its double sense: the aspect of the message to be transmitted, and that of solidarity with those to whom the message is directed. To be sent is to leave everything in order to be at the service of the Word. It is also to enter into total sharing with those for whom the Word is destined—in the first instance, the poor. And it is also witness, by the quality of this sharing, to the truth of the Word announced. "If he has sent you throughout the entire world," Francis writes in the Letter to a General Chapter, "it is so that you may, by word and action, bear witness to his Word. . . ."

Poverty, as Francis conceived it, is all one with this missionary

dynamism as we see it in the life of the Son of God, stripping him of the Father's glory, entrusting him with the word, and binding him intimately to the most humble human condition—that of *homo viator*. This same missionary dynamism forced Francis, in Jesus's footsteps, to renounce everything and to throw himself, bereft of everything, onto the ways of the earth to live his poverty in solidarity with the poorest of the poor.

The last point must be examined: solidarity with the poor. It is indeed true that Francis was not satisfied with merely being poor. He wished to be with the poor, to mix with them and share their lot. He wished to live his poverty in communion with theirs. He writes in the first Rule: "The brothers should rejoice when they find themselves among those of humble condition and the despised, among the poor and the infirm, the sick and the lepers, and those who beg by the wayside" (IX, 3).

But how did Francis live out this solidarity with the poor? Here we must beware of projecting our categories and our modern preoccupations into the past. There is no question but that the class struggle was already rampant at that time, even though under different forms. Feudal society knew the opposition between serfs and lords. The communes knew that between

minores and *majores*. But Francis did not take part in this class struggle. If he wished to be among the humble folk of towns and countryside, it was not in order to espouse a social war or to stir up a spirit of vengeance. He never set the poor against the rich. In fact, he even goes so far as to write: "Where there is poverty with contentment, there is neither greed nor avarice" (Adm. 27). But it would be a glaring mistake to suppose that he preached resignation. Nobody ever took up the cause of the poor as Francis did, but on the deepest level. Certainly not in the style of a political leverage, but by the very irradiation of his life. His very being emitted such spiritual power that social relationships were simply forced to change. By his manner of being poor and being with the poor, Francis awoke the Christian conscience of his age. He caused it to discover the eminent dignity of the poor. Francis revealed this dignity to the poor themselves, but also to the masters. He led the rich and the powerful to take the poor into account. He made them realize that their riches and their power did not belong to them, but were confided to them by God so that they could put them at the service of the poor and the weak. He taught them that the rich and powerful were simply the servants of the poor. Everywhere he went, Francis, by

the inspiration of his poverty, forced the dialectic of the master and the slave to capsize; he forced the master to honor the slave and serve him as if he were the master. This is how Francis espoused the aspirations of the poor, and how he became for them, in his own original way, a force for liberation. He proposed to the people of his age a new path of brotherhood.

Now, what do we conclude from all this?

First, it is necessary for us, if we wish to rediscover the evangelical dynamism of poverty, and therefore our very sense of identity, to open ourselves, beyond any reference to legalistic categories, to the primal inspiration of the Franciscan charism. This is the only way to prevent our legitimate concern with adaptation to modern society from degenerating into abject compromise. Our life as Friars Minor has inscribed within it a built-in tension (which is constant and fruitful) between necessary adaptation and fidelity to the evangelical radicalism of Francis. It is only in this way, moreover, that our primal inspiration can impart anew to the Order today a new youthfulness and a new power of persuasion: by breathing into it a new enthusiasm.

In the second place, it would be the height of folly to expect to rediscover the basic inspira-

tion of Francis unless we join Francis himself in the depths of contemplation. Francis's evangelical radicalism springs completely and utterly from his constant and burning contemplation of the mystery of God, who is all Good, and of the mission of his only begotten Son. One can be a Friar Minor, a Poor Clare, a Franciscan, without being learned, but never without being a contemplative. Eliminate the contemplative dimension, and by the same stroke you wipe out Francis's Gospel spirit and its proper expression.

Thirdly, it is impossible to separate Franciscan poverty from the missionary impulse. We have shown that this impulse is the dynamic aspect of Francis's poverty. For his poverty is that of the disciple who is sent, in the image and after the footsteps of the Son of God. We have already cited the passage from the "Letter to the General Chapter": "The Lord has sent you into the entire world, so that by word and action, you may bear witness to his word." Mission and service of the Word are essential. Francis writes at the beginning of the "Letter to All the Faithful": "Since I am the servant of all, I am obliged to place myself at the service of all and to minister to you all the sweet-smelling words of my Lord. . . ."

A fourth point: this missionary poverty makes us stand by the

poor. This real solidarity urges us to feel responsible for the poor of the world. We must become for them a force for liberation, but according to the mind and style of Francis: in other words, by the witness and influence of the way we live. Gandhi once wrote: "My religion teaches me that in every place where suffering is such that it cannot be assuaged, I am obliged to fast and pray." Francis's solidarity is of this order. Some Friars Minor, who are missionaries in South America, once asked me to what degree a Franciscan can, out of his solidarity with the poor, enlist with the querilleros. Francis never enrolled in any militia. His life was, by and in itself, a superior force. And undoubtedly it is because we lack just this mystical force that we are tempted to search elsewhere for effectiveness.

Finally, we do well not to forget that Francis's poverty entails a will to universal communion. It is an unbounded area of welcoming acceptance. By the very fact of refusing all particular attachments, Francis left himself free to love all creation. He was unhampered by any defensive reaction or by any kind of aggressiveness. Louis Lavelle writes of him: "Everything which was withdrawn from him broadened his horizon." When understood in this way poverty is a true expansion of affectivity. Our

capacity for sympathy and communion, instead of centering on narrow areas of interest, is open to the universal values of being and life. We remember the episode recounted in the "Sacrum Commercium": Lady Poverty, having been received among the friars, asks to see their cloister. The friars lead her to a nearby hill, and there showing her a splendid panorama, they tell her: "Our Lady, this is our cloister."

This wonderful cloister, whose dimensions are those of the universe, is not merely a spectacle to be contemplated. It is life: life in whose development we share, that of the world in its deepest becoming. We can share in the very act of creation itself if, free from all will for possession and domination, we are in sympathetic harmony with all that exists and all that lives. We are free to love all beings, without limits.



Franciscan Poverty in Today's World—II

DISMAS BONNER, O.F.M.

THE DEVELOPMENT in this paper while retaining the basic theme of the Extraordinary General Chapter,¹ goes considerably beyond the ideas offered there—in some cases even adopting a contradictory stance. It may be described as an attempt to set forth some reflections of American friars

¹This paper, originally presented to the Spring, 1977, meeting of the English Speaking Conference of Ministers Provincial, is the result of several currents of thought. The basic theme is that presented to the General Chapter of 1976 in Assisi by Brother Eloi LeClerc, O.F.M., in a paper published in this issue of THE CORD. It also incorporates ideas on poverty presented to the English speaking friars at the Chapter by Father Ignatius Brady.

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on Franciscan poverty and its meaning in the contemporary scene. Hopefully it will provide the basis for honest discussion and dialogue that will lead to a realistic and livable ideal of poverty.

I. Jesus and Poverty

A. In What Sense Was Jesus a Poor Man? Granted the difficulties involved in trying to ascertain the life style of the "historical Jesus," it does seem that we can sketch at least the broad outlines of his way of life. The Gospel does not at all present a picture of Jesus as a man who belonged to the class of the destitute poor. We see rather a member of a class who had to work with their hands for a decent living, an itinerant preacher who had no permanent place to lay his head and who lived from a common purse. There is no mention that he or his followers begged. The Gospel presents the image of a man whose attitude towards material goods was one of complete freedom. His first concern was to preach the good news of the King-

dom to the poor—whatever might be the consequences of this mission for his relationship to material things.

B. Who Were the Poor to Whom Jesus Preached the Kingdom? In the first place, Jesus preached the good news of liberation to those who were economically poor and oppressed. This is the original meaning of the term *anawim*, those of whom Luke says, "Blessed are the poor," i.e., the materially poor and disadvantaged. And why are they blessed? Not because this kind of poverty is a virtue in and of itself; it is rather an evil, an affront to God's justice, and God wants to put an end to it. It is no more a virtue or an ideal than is blindness, lameness, or captivity. Nor are these poor blessed because of their spiritual disposition. They are blessed simply because of God's attitude toward them. He will give them mercy and justice. This is what the Gospel is saying. It proclaims the end of affliction for the persecuted, lepers, the blind and the deaf, and the cripples—and for those who are really poor.

However, the basic theme as outlined at the General Chapter has been substantially modified in the light of subsequent discussions with other American friars, particularly members of the Franciscan community at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. Most especially, this presentation has been influenced by Father Michael Guinan, O.F.M., of the Franciscan School of Theology at Berkeley, whose article, "Gospel Poverty and Religious Life" is the source of many of the ideas in the first part of this presentation.

Did Jesus preach to others besides, to those who were poor in a different way? Indeed, he did reach out to those who admitted their sinfulness and need, those who, like the publican and like Zacchaeus, emptied themselves before God and thus shared in what may be called the spirituality of the *anawim*. The notion of *anawim* later acquired a religious and spiritual meaning: those who fear and seek the Lord, those who are humble before him and open to him. They are the "poor in spirit" of whom Matthew speaks, thus transforming poverty into a Christian virtue. He transforms material poverty into poverty of spirit, the meekness and humility of Jesus. This is a different level from that of material poverty, the level of the spiritual values and dispositions of the Kingdom. Jesus calls all to seek this attitude, to be converted, to open themselves to God and to recognize their need and dependency. And those who are called to this kind of life are in turn invited by Jesus to join in and continue his work of bringing the good news to all—to the materially poor by working to put an end to material poverty and suffering and want, and to others who, though not materially poor, are desperately in need of the good news of the Kingdom with its spiritual values and the disposition of the poor in spirit.

C. Some Theological Reflections on Gospel Poverty. This kind of poverty points first of all to a radical faith in God, the spirit of the *anawim* which places one's whole life in his care. This amounts to total availability to the Lord. Gospel poverty also points to charity which finds expression in active preaching of the Kingdom, in concern to put an end to material poverty, hunger, and oppression, and in willingness to share all one has so that no one suffers basic need.

Here it is possible to see how concern for material things fits into the picture. Some mistakenly try to make a virtue out of the lack of material things. As Murphy O'Connor remarks, "They make a consistent effort to strip themselves of worldly goods in order to attain the state of insecurity that characterizes the truly poor. This rests on a radical misunderstanding of the gospel message." The real problem that must be faced is that material things, good in themselves, can and do present a strong and very common distraction from the radical faith in God and from the charity and total giving that are necessary to follow the Gospel. And Christians must be ready to sacrifice anything that becomes an obstacle to following this Gospel call in radical faith and charity. This kind of detachment is the indispensable condition for following Christ and flows from

the positive need to be totally available to the Lord. Thus poverty comes down to total faith in God, putting self completely in his hands; it is total dedication to charity, concern to put an end to material poverty and the suffering of others, regardless of the consequences for our own relationship to material possessions. It is an attitude of complete freedom in regard to material things, the attitude which was characteristic of Jesus.

The ultimate basis for all of this is the call to follow the Gospel by sharing in Christ's own life with the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Son's whole existence is received from the Father, and he freely gives it all back to the Father in love. The bond of this love is the Holy spirit. Both aspects—receiving and giving—are reflected in the Incarnation. "Being rich he became poor," completely open to receive all from God, an attitude expressed in the images of crib and cross. "He emptied himself," and so was filled with his Father's will, giving himself so that we might become rich by his poverty. In this connection, Ignatius Brady remarks: "Christ embraced poverty not for its own sake, but because he was so deeply centered on his Father that no earthly thing held any attraction. Total surrendering of self to his Father and total emptying of all external signs of his

divinity are the roots of the external poverty of Christ."

It is this kind of life to which Christ invites his followers, a life characterized by openness of faith to receive God's gift of the Spirit which calls us to the attitude of the *anawim* and to discipleship dedicated to spreading the Kingdom of justice. Thus, to sum up, Gospel poverty is defined, not primarily in terms of material things, but of God and our attitude toward him. Poverty is the manner in which our living of the life of the Father in the power of the Spirit, the life opened to us in and through Jesus our brother, bears consequences in our relationship to material things. Plainly, true faith and charity are bound to affect the way we use what we have.

II. Francis and Poverty

A. The Source of Francis's Poverty. Brady points out that, although Francis was at first attracted by the external poverty of Christ, he grew to understand its inner meaning. This he did by contemplating the mystery of Christ and the good news of the Kingdom—God the sovereign and all that He has done for us in Jesus Christ. In no sense was the poverty of Francis a crusade or a protest; it was not intended to be a reaction against the evils of society or the corruption of the Church. "Still," observes Leclerc, "his poverty

had a massive influence and impact on society. It swept vigorously like a prophetic wind through the conscience of Christianity, and even the institution itself swayed under its power." Why and how? Simply because this poverty was the expression of what Francis was in himself. He literally became what he contemplated, and so his poverty sprang from the depth of his contemplative vision. It was not merely a negation of corruption in the Church, but rather an affirmation of the fullness of life.

B. The Radical Poverty of Francis. The poverty of Francis was radical in the sense that it went right to the root, the theological heart of poverty as he saw it in Christ and his relation to the Father in the Spirit. It was radical also in its expression, which amounted to a complete disappropriation of all goods and ownership for himself and his brothers. This radical charism was the unique witness of Francis, particularly suited to the situation and needs of the day in which he lived. It was a time when there existed an abundance of heretical sects who turned away from the Church, which was corrupted by attachment to the material. Francis too turned away from possession of material things—but in an entirely different spirit. He affirmed the goodness of God's creation as few other men have succeeded in

doing, at the same time remaining grounded in the firmest of loyalty to Christ's Church. He witnessed to the goodness of God's creation by his complete openness to receive all from the Father and to give all back to him—to empty himself in a very radical expression—and this in faithful respect and obedience, indeed the deepest of love, for the Church and its authority. Total faith in God and dedication to charity had these consequences for Francis and his relationship to material things—and he responded with wholehearted generosity.

The radical poverty of Francis was coupled with a call to active preaching of the Kingdom. The inseparable link between poverty and mission in Christ tore Francis from a solely contemplative and eremitical life and sent him into the world to fulfill his mission as did Jesus. There is a double aspect to this mission, including both the Gospel message to be transmitted, and a solidarity with those to whom the Gospel message is directed. To be sent is to leave everything in order to be at the service of the Word; it is also to enter into total sharing with those for whom the Word is destined, principally the poor. In fact, the quality of this sharing serves as a powerful witness to the truth of the word itself. This explains Francis's determination not only to be poor, but to share

their lot in imitation of Christ. Neither by preaching revolution nor by acquiescing passively in the fate of the poor, but by the power of his life, Francis and his followers forced social relationships to change. He awoke the Christian conscience of his age and caused it to discover the eminent dignity of the poor.

C. Connection between Poverty and Mission. When LeClerc turns to Sacred Scripture to illustrate the connection for Francis between poverty and mission, he writes:

So the notion of mission, in its deepest sense, is at the heart of the



²On June 18 of this year, CBS radio broadcast a feature on its regular series, "The World of Religion," documenting the contention that the early Christian communities described in Acts were not, in fact, "Communists," holding all goods in common, but owned property and were expected to contribute only their fair share to the common fund for the poor. Interested readers can probably still obtain a copy of the script from CBS in New York [editor's note].

poverty of Francis and of his evangelical radicalism. His ideal of poverty is not that of the primitive Jerusalem community, after Pentecost: a stable group, closed in on itself, focused on the Temple, on worship and liturgical prayer, in which each member gives up his goods for the sake of the collectivity. Francis's is rather the poverty of the community of the Apostles and disciples, sent throughout the world by the Master, in imitation of his own example. This community is essentially itinerant and missionary. It cannot exist in ponderous and permanent establishments. It is incompatible with all forms of fixed property, whether collective or personal. This is the kind of apostolic community which continues the mission of the Son, announcing the Kingdom and living from the generosity of those who receive the message.²

This understanding of matters seems to be a misinterpretation which can cause us no little mischief. Actually, according to modern commentators on the Acts of the Apostles, the context of the Jerusalem community texts is quite apostolic in character. According to the *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, for instance, Luke

used the technique of "summaries" such as the description of the life of the Jerusalem community to fill in gaps and to create the impression of continuous history. There is a characterizing and generalizing function by which single incidents of the adjacent narrative such as Peter's discourse, conversions, and the cure of the cripple are shown to be usual, typical, and continued. In fact, the summaries in Chapters 4 and 5 seem to be the same material as in Chapter 2 and are more explicitly apostolic in nature, clearly setting the life of the community in the context of apostolic witness to Christ. In this same connection, Guinan points out that there is

broad consensus among scholars that Luke is less interested in presenting accurate historical description than he is in offering an ideal of Christian life. Notions like "sharing all things in common" and "of one heart and mind" convey the Greek notion of friendship, Christian agape love. This is the sense of shared faith, worship, prayer, and goods. The community is called through active caring and sharing to go out of itself to continue Christ's work of putting an end to the evils of poverty so "no one was in need."

Now, this is hardly a picture of what LeClerc labels "a stable group closed in on itself." Nor can it be called a "ponderous and permanent establishment."

Rather, there is a strong missionary thrust, since the very life of the community is to announce the Kingdom and to live on the generosity of those who receive the message. It is, in short, not all that different in essence from the life led by Christ and his apostles which LeClerc describes as the ideal of Francis. There was, of course, some ecclesial development in the external form of the life, as is expected and necessary. Only the most naive fundamentalism would see this as incompatible with the kind of life led by the original apostolic band in union with Jesus.

It must assuredly be granted that, at any stated time in history, certain forms of apostolic community may appear which set up a workable life style that is not compatible with fixed property. Evidently such an apostolic community can continue the mission of the Son, announcing the Kingdom and living from the generosity of those who receive the message. This indeed was the charism and the vision of Francis. Perhaps Francis even understood the life of the Jerusalem community as something quite different in essence from the life style of Christ and his Apostles. But given the status of current biblical scholarship and the contemporary understanding of Acts, it is apparent that the external style of life of Jesus and his

Apostles is not the only kind of apostolic community which can carry on the mission of announcing the Kingdom and living from the generosity of those who receive the message. There are other models. It must be asked: Does LeClerc's misinterpretation of the Jerusalem community in Acts lead to a kind of "Franciscan fundamentalism," a conclusion about Franciscan life style that was necessary and divinely inspired for Francis in his day, but is no longer necessary and possible for the Order as a whole? Another way to put the problem: What is the relationship between the charism of Francis and that of the Franciscan Order in the contemporary world?

III. The Franciscans and Poverty

A. Expression of Poverty in Franciscan Life. LeClerc states:

Our desire to be poor people, if it is to become effective in practice, needs to recapture its original inspiration and its pristine enthusiasm. This inspiration and this enthusiasm are the only things capable of providing the needed thrust. Some among us seem to have grasped this fact. They become the prophets of a great return to the prophetic radicalism of Francis himself.

Surely, radicalism is in place today in the sense of a return to contemplation of the heart of poverty in Christ and his rela-

tion in the Spirit to the Father, his mission to spread the Kingdom. This is where Francis began. As LeClerc concludes: "It is necessary for us, if we wish to rediscover the evangelical dynamism of our poverty, and therefore our very sense of identity, to open ourselves to the primal inspiration of the Franciscan charism."

But what about the material expression of this poverty? Is radicalism truly a realistic concept today, especially when we espouse it in the face of so many material things, buildings, and grounds in which we are deeply involved? Is the radicalism of expropriation in common tenable in the face of our obvious involvement with ownership before the civil law? All the canonical dispositions and legal fictions in the world do not destroy the fact that civil ownership is true ownership which carries with it rights and responsibilities that are enforceable at law.

Perhaps the futile attempt to apply these radical notions distracts us today, and indeed has distracted us for a long time, from the search for truly effective expressions of poverty. Perhaps it is most eminently sensible to recognize that early developments in the Order under Bonaventure toward more stable houses were necessary and good, that we are at

present quite inextricably involved with the management of substantial assets for the service of God's people, and then get on about the business of searching for the expression of our charism at the present time. Maybe there are ways to live poverty and mission that are quite compatible with our contemporary situation, especially if we do not adopt too narrow a concept of the kind of life which carries on the mission of Christ and his apostles. What a tragedy it could be to miss many opportunities for the practice of genuine poverty in our Franciscan lives because we are too engrossed in our search for the kind of life style that was once livable in the Order at large, but now may be largely idyllic and unattainable for the majority of friars.

B. Charting Our Course Today. As LeClerc points out, "our life has inscribed in it a built-in tension which is constant and fruitful between necessary adaptation and fidelity to the evangelical radicalism of Francis." There are, to be sure, misunderstandings and temptations of which we must be aware. For instance, a sense of realism and efficiency can lead us to fit into the consumer society and become consumers like everybody else. We can come to the point where we don't even question our use of

material goods, as we rely confidently on legal rules about situations that no longer pertain to real life. We can thus be free from any challenge about things that really engage our cupidity. Thus we let material goods become an obstacle to faith and complete openness to God.

Or we can develop a completely spiritual idea of poverty—to the fatal neglect of any economic dimension which involves free restriction of ourselves in material goods. Such an attitude adopts in practice the naive position that there is never a time when material goods are an obstacle to complete openness in faith.

In deciding the course of the Order today in its practice of poverty, we must keep in mind the fact that the New Testament definitely recognizes that riches and possessions can be one of the greatest obstacles to faith in God. Surely they are not bad in themselves, but they can easily become idols in which we put our security instead of in God. To the extent that material possessions are an obstacle to faith in God and to our mission of charity, a choice must be faced: God or mammon? Material goods can't be permitted to limit our perspectives, and they must be put aside if and when they do. In fact, the material things we as an Order have may

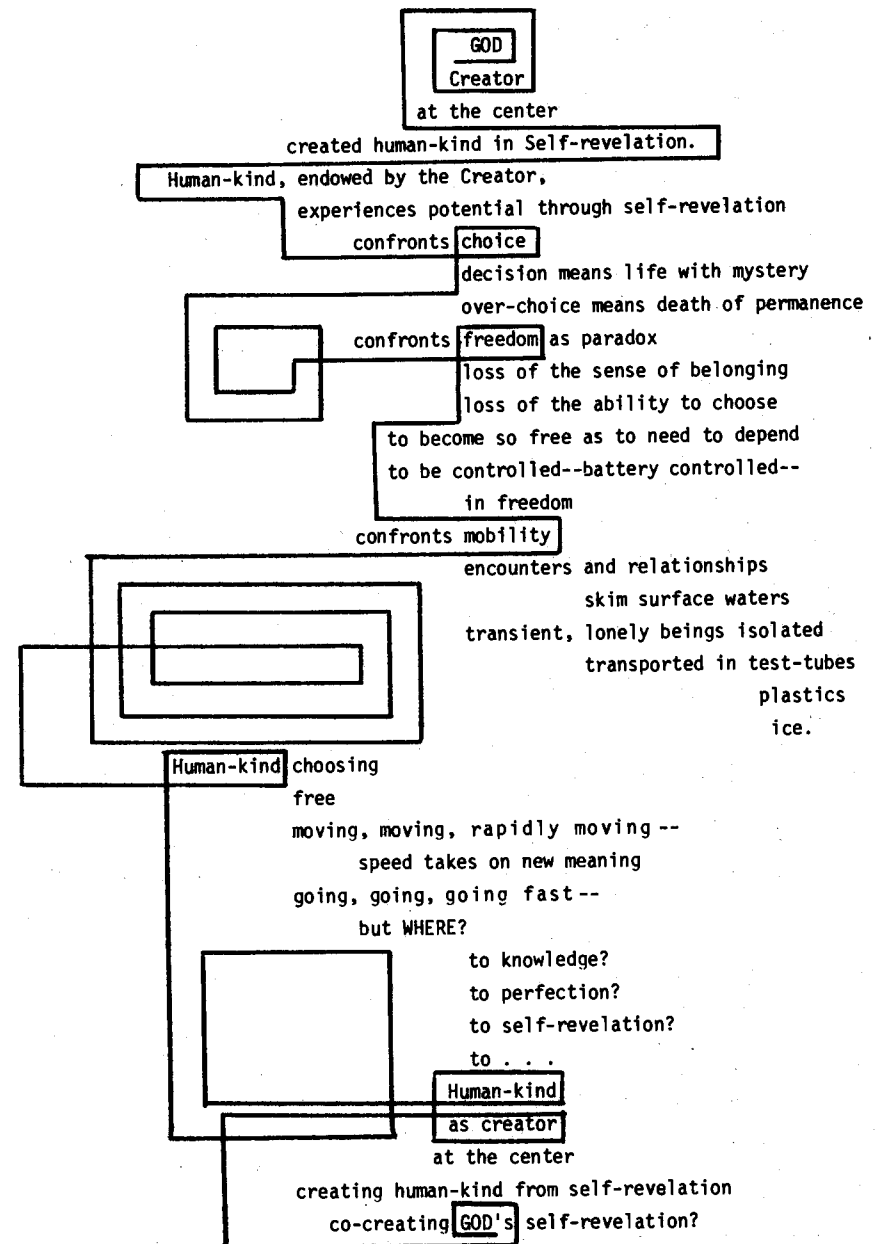
well be necessary means to alleviate poverty and oppression, and then we must be prepared to make them available. Herein lies the problem for the expression of Franciscan poverty today. Francis's charism led to a radical expression of poverty for himself. What are the truly effective expressions of poverty that can help us to give a genuine Franciscan faith witness today? To what extent do they help us express our faith?

primary emphasis on material poverty, the notions of renunciation and detachment, we are starting from the wrong end. If there is material expression of poverty, and indeed there must be in the context that material things are hindering our total availability to the Lord and his service, and because these goods are needed for others. This was the movement in the life of Francis. We know what it required of him. Can we now discern what is demanded of us today?

In any case, if we place the

Franciscan Bibliography Available

A Bibliography of Modern English Works on Five Themes of Franciscan Spirituality by Sister Linda Brandewie, S.F.P. The five themes are: the following of Jesus; poverty, obedience, living the Gospel, and Brotherhood. She has compiled a Bibliography on each of these themes consisting of periodicals dated between the years of 1960 to 1978. A book list also includes these five elements. Copies can be obtained from the Formation Office, St. Clare Convent, 60 Compton Road, Cincinnati, OH 45215. Cost \$2.00.



Sister Mary Anne Heine, S.S.N.D.
Sister Maureen Riley, O.S.F. (art)

Musings on Contemplation—III

CONRAD SCHOMSKE, O.F.M.

ALREADY discussed in preceding segments of this article have been, mainly, the “four purities” the human subject can cultivate and the trials sent by God to purify him.

Solitude

ANOTHER indispensable condition for the gift of contemplation is the silence attainable only in solitude. Obviously it is up to us to provide the time for such solitude in our lives; yet the practical and active character of the suggestions made in the following paragraphs might prove destructively misleading if we did not insist here at the outset that the whole point of being alone and silent is to *give God the chance to speak to us and act in us.*

Presupposing this important clarification, we may go on, now, to discuss our own seeking of solitude in which God may lead us to ever growing union with him. Obviously the hermit is the outstanding example of Christian seeking for life alone with God. He provides for solitary silence quite simply by living alone with no one to talk to but

the Lord. Some may be full-time hermits, living alone in what we call a hermitage. Others may be part-time hermits, living in a convent, monastery, or friary while spending whole days at a time, or parts of a day, in a quiet place off by itself. Some, like St. Catherine of Siena and St. Rose of Lima, lived in the same house with their families but had their own room apart by themselves, where they spent many hours in prayer. In our present work-a-day world, there are people who, before leaving for work in the morning and upon returning from work in the evening, spend time alone in silence and prayer. I knew a mother of five who spent about an hour and a half each morning in prayer and spiritual reading before the rest of the family got up. Again, a young man who works for a county social services department insists that he needs a period of meditation before going to work in the morning and another one upon returning so as to maintain his spiritual equilibrium and his sense of the divine presence, during the day

Father Conrad A. Schomske, O.F.M., a member of Holy Name Province, recently resigned as guardian of the House of Prayer in Cedar Lake, Indiana, to accept an invitation to establish a ritiro for the new Japanese Province.

at the office and then in the round of after-hours activities necessitated by his work.

However we do it, whatever arrangement we make, it seems that we must set aside time, daily if at all possible, but at least on weekends, for silence and solitude. The reason is that “God is not in noise.” This has always been true, but in our fast-moving age we are bombarded by the noise and rush of cars, busses, planes when outside our homes and by radio, TV and hi-fi when inside them. All these things somehow divert our attention from the Lord and make it more difficult, or almost impossible, to center just on him—to rest in him alone.

There have, of course, been exceptions to this general rule: people who maintain that they can, in the hustle and turmoil of the Streets, find God and relate to him. My own reaction is that even these people, unless they have almost instinctively (and hence perhaps without realizing it at the time or remembered it later) attuned themselves to God in moments of silence and solitude, they too would find it very difficult—even impossible—to “tune in” on God in the noise of the streets, the office, the factory.

Weekend retreats are a widely used, popular means to expand from time to time the effects of the more frequent but less protracted periods of silence in our

lives; and still longer retreats, so strongly recommended throughout the Church’s long history, still deserve serious consideration by those who can fit them into their lives.

It’s not that God cannot get through the noise; he can get through thunder, and even if need be through a rock concert. But surely no small degree of presumption is involved in expecting him to do so. With our eyes and ears and attention pulled in all directions, have we the right to expect God to pull them to himself with extraordinary, forceful means?

If, on the contrary, we do what is in our power to empty our consciousness of distracting sights and sounds (and we should, as stated above, do this on a regular, persevering basis), then we do, as it were, set the stage for a personal encounter with the Lord. It is crucial, at such times, to avoid “pre-programming” the entire period with spiritual activities of our own choosing. Some opening prayer or meditative reading is certainly in order, but such *means* for opening ourselves to the divine initiative cannot be allowed to become *the end*—the whole reason for being of the time spent in solitude. Rather, God must be allowed to lead us along his own path. Much of what he does with us at such times will itself prove to furnish its own

self-authenticated enlightenment; but on the other hand, the mysterious and delicate nature of this encounter bespeaks the need for a spiritual director, whose role I shall discuss briefly in the remaining section of this article.

To sum up what has been said, first, about silence in solitude: (1) such periods of silence are absolutely necessary in our lives if we are at all serious about growing in contemplative prayer; (2) shorter periods of silence should be provided for at frequent intervals, and longer ones from time to time; (3) the attempt to "practice the presence of God" amid the turmoil of daily life will prove fruitless without the support of formal periods given over in

silence exclusively to prayer; and (4) such silent periods spent alone in God's presence must provide for docile *listening* to God, rather than being filled up with our own planned activities.

Spiritual Director

THE ROAD to contemplation passes through many strange waters, many untrodden paths, many unfamiliar obstacles. An experienced guide is therefore no luxury, but an invaluable, indispensable help lest we get lost along the way, head down a dead-end, or just give up in discouragement. A spiritual director should preferably be someone who has walked this road himself, has studied it carefully from the experts, and has worked closely with others as they experience the ups and downs of the road. Just going it alone, without the help of such a guide, can be very difficult at times, frustrating, and even precarious.

This is hardly surprising. If most arts and sciences require a knowledgeable, experienced teacher, the way of contemplative prayer should be expected to need one all the more because it deals with spiritual, intangible realities that cannot be measured in grams, cannot be viewed in a microscope, cannot be observed with the human eye.

Such guides are around. But choosing or finding one is an

important procedure which should not be taken lightly. We have to pray to find one, and then search and inquire. If we cannot, for a time, find one, then we can and must rely on the Holy Spirit alone, who is after all *the* Guide of souls. Assuming that we have taken every reasonable and prudent step to seek competent human help and have been unable to find it, the Spirit will guide us directly in the depths of our being—but also indirectly through books on prayer, some of which were mentioned in the early part of this article.

MUCH HAS been said in the foregoing pages about contemplation. Contemplative prayer, we have said, is being aware of God who makes his presence felt within us and around us. It is having "God-sense"—a sixth sense for God, a special sensitivity to him.

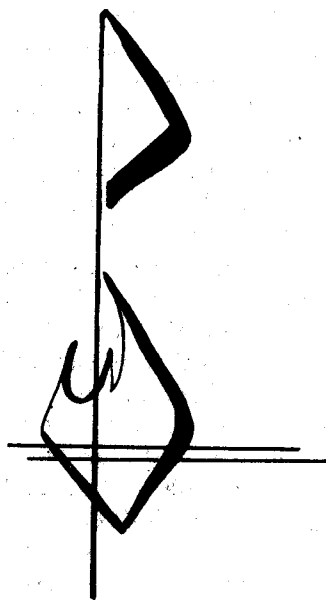
We said, too, that this is a gift of God, but one for which we can and must prepare ourselves

by desiring God, by spending time in prayer, by reading about God, by striving to keep a pure conscience, pure mind, pure heart, pure will. And we pointed out that we must in all of this allow free play to God's own initiative by accepting trials as sent by him for our purification, by opening our hearts and minds to him in periods of silent solitude, and by allowing him to speak to us through a competent guide or spiritual director.

It should hardly be necessary to emphasize, in conclusion, that the reader must not be misled by the complexities of this discursive exposition, into overstressing the multiplicity of stages, facets, etc., to the neglect of the dynamic, unified, simple, living reality itself: that life in union with our loving Creator for which he has made us. To persevere and succeed in the contemplative life is to begin already here below the indescribably ecstatic, beatific life of the world to come.

A Reminder

As announced last month, we have been forced to raise the 1979 subscription rate to \$7.00. Single copies will be 70 cents.



Feel Free

the wind—

*awakening a summer's morning
with its breath of new life—
sings to me, "feel free!"*

the sun—

*slowly making its way round the earth
from the quiet dawn to fading sunset—
commands me, "feel free!"*

the birds—

*endlessly filling my world with song,
in constant, soaring flight—
laugh at me, "feel free!"*

the clouds—

*lazily journeying in scattered directions
toward unknown destinations—
challenge me, "feel free!"*

the captive—

*trapped and imprisoned,
caught eternally in a hopelessness beyond control—
warns me, "feel free!"*

the poor man—

*needing to give love
and to be loved—
begs me, "feel free!"*

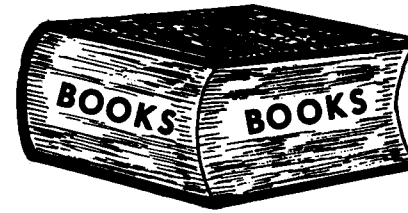
my friend—

*sharing faith, life, and love,
gently urging me to grow—
calls to me, "feel free!"*

i — accepting a God-given ministry,

*letting go of all for HIM
must learn to "feel free!"*

Sister Diane Huck, O.S.F.



Of Sacraments and Sacrifice. By Clifford Howell, S.J. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 3rd rev. ed., 1977. Pp. 197. Paper, \$3.95.

Reviewed by Father Vincent B. Grogan, O.F.M., J.C.D. (Catholic University of America), a member of the faculty at Christ the King Seminary, East Aurora, New York.

Put directly, this book is an attempt to explain in simple, easily comprehensible terms, the meaning and the rationale of Christian worship and liturgy. Really to understand the why and wherefore of this present edition, one must familiarize himself with its genesis and subsequent developments. The original edition (published in 1952) was a compilation of articles written for *Orate Fratres*, forerunner of *Worship* magazine. The Second Vatican Council's Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy prompted an extensive revision which appeared in 1965. With the promulgation of the *Missale Romanum* (1970) and the revised rituals of Penance and Anointing of the Sick (1973 and 1974 respectively), the need for further updating appeared obvious to the author—thus, the present work, the third revised edition. In his preface to this edition, Father Howell states that with the

recent completion of the revision of the major liturgical books, a new edition of his own work will not be necessary in the foreseeable future (perhaps, wishful thinking on his part, for only time will attest to the accuracy of this statement).

The book pursues its topic in two clearly defined segments; the first of these discusses the meaning and principles of worship, and then each sacrament except the Eucharist, while the second part concentrates on the Mass.

The author makes several telling points in his initial chapters: the necessity that man interiorize his worship, with his life thus reflecting what he professes when he worships. The liturgical renewal is an attempt to enable Catholics actively and intelligently to participate in the Sacred Action, from which participation a beneficial influence might, ideally at least, be expected to result in one's conduct. A further significant reality emphasized by the author is this: the Catholic growth in his religion has not kept pace with his physical and intellectual advancement; i.e., Catholics have not built upon nor developed the fundamentals of their Faith learned as children. I believe this fact must be taken into consideration in all contemporary endeavors of Church renewal, liturgical or otherwise. Thirdly, the failure truly to understand worship and the newness of life conferred by Baptism has so frequently distorted Christianity into a neat system of do's and don'ts.

Father Howell's explanation of the Sacraments is well done. They possess a threefold chronological dimension if you will: the past—the Paschal Mystery as the cause of grace; the present—our sanctification here and now; and the future—man's ultimate destiny of eternal life. The Author likewise stresses the necessity of avoiding an overly mechanistic approach to the Sacraments based on the concise traditional definition. To counteract this danger, it might have been helpful if Father Howell had adverted to the approach to the Sacraments that has been popularized in recent years: that of the personal encounter with Christ.

The section devoted to the Mass contains several worthwhile contributions: that rigid stability in the Mass ritual came only with the Council of Trent; that the Tridentine Fathers made their decisions vis-à-vis the Liturgy with a knowledge of the history of the Mass that did not extend beyond the eleventh century. The final chapter succinctly delineates the reason why the conciliar reforms of Vatican Two initially met with indifference, misunderstanding, even opposition—the laity had been nurtured on an overly individualistic piety and spirituality, centered more often than not on the saints rather than on Christ.

Of Sacraments and Sacrifice, however, is not without its deficiencies, some minor and some major. Among the former are cited antiquated terminology: solemn high Mass, with deacon and subdeacon (p. 162); the word *Collect* rather than *Opening Prayer* (p. 151); the ascription of the Letter to the Hebrews to Saint Paul (p. 56); and the statement that great

numbers fail to receive Communion at Sunday Mass (true enough prior to Vatican Two—pp. 153-54).

More serious difficulties arise from an apparent failure sufficiently to nuance or incorporate theological/liturgical thought beyond the 1950's: for example, the author's treatment of the doctrine of the Mystical Body, which could have been enriched by more extensive treatment of the People of God theme from *Lumen Gentium*; his explanation of Redemption as a price paid to Satan; and his seeming denigration of an unbaptized person's natural state of existence when discussing grace and elevation to the supernatural.

Given the conciliar emphasis on the centrality of the Eucharist, perhaps a better arrangement would have been to reverse the two sections of the book: sacrifice and Eucharist, and then the other Sacraments as in some way relating to the Eucharist. While the author was about revising his work, a chapter on Eucharistic adoration and on popular devotions in light of Vatican Two liturgical renewal would have been appreciated.

Given the fact that to this reviewer at least, so little has been revised from the original, and the fact that the bulk of the theological-liturgical principles and quotations come from *Mediator Dei*, with Vatican Two documents given inadequate recognition or poorly incorporated into the various chapters, and the fact that the author includes no references to the post-conciliar literature on worship and the Sacraments, one is forced to ask—why a revised edition? Undoubtedly, the book in its original form (especially with its discussion

questions which concluded each chapter and which are retained in the present edition) could still serve as an elementary introduction to the study of Liturgy. That is as far as this reviewer cares to go vis-à-vis any positive recommendation to a prospective reader.

Silent Music: The Science of Meditation. By William Johnston, S.J. New York: Harper & Row, 1975. Pp. 190. Cloth, \$7.95.

Reviewed by Sister Mary Seraphim, P.C.P.A., a regular contributor to The Queen as well as to this periodical, who resides at the Monastery of Sancta Clara in Canton, Ohio.

Silent Music is a book that is intriguing because of the dimension that brainwave tests and biofeedback have added to man's understanding of what goes on in a meditator. Although some of the facts uncovered through electronic observation are helpful toward promoting a receptive state of mind for meditation, Father Johnston clearly states that the *content* of meditation is not subject to such analysis. Pictures of meditators wired up to EEG machines which measure brainwaves provoke an ambiguous response. How far does supernatural influence pervade the measurable phenomena of man's mind?

The section on Consciousness compares the various religions' explanations of what happens when one enters more and more deeply into the meditational process. Zen Buddhism, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, and *The Cloud of Unknowing* are quoted and compared to

show their essential agreement but also their points of divergence. This is an area where Father is eminently qualified to give trustworthy answers to the many questions which arise concerning Western man's profitable use of techniques from the East.

"Healing," the third section, is perhaps the high point of the book. Here Father discusses the possible use of the meditational process for therapeutic purposes through the generation of passive energy. The healing of the body and the mind are treated with respectful caution—meditation cannot be considered a panacea for all ills. The "Deeper Healing"—that of the wounds to the human spirit caused by sin—is the more direct object of meditational processes, and here Father steers more directly into the Christian stream. The final chapter in this section, "Cosmic Healing," is profoundly inspiring. Father Johnston speaks of the mystic as "next to God the most influential person in the cosmos." He presents his views not only from the faith angle, but also in light of the natural ties with the universe that man has and his power to affect it for good or for ill. The Teilhardian overtones are very clear.

Silent Music intrigues one by the questions it raises, distracts one by the scientific insight it presents about supposedly very intimate states of mind, and inspires one by the vast horizons it opens to anyone who will allow the power of love to be dominant in his life. I would recommend this book to everyone who is serious about expanding his spiritual life.

An Introduction to the Franciscan Literature of the Middle Ages. by John V. Fleming. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977. Pp. 274. Cloth, \$10.95.

Reviewed by Father George Marcil, O.F.M., Associate and Theology Series Editor of the Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University

One of the high points of attending a scholarly convention is the opportunity to browse around the display of new books. At the recent medieval conference at Kalamazoo, Michigan, it was particularly pleasant for one already interested in Franciscan studies to see a new book on Franciscan literature getting attention. The book was picked up and set down a number of times. The agent in charge of the book had a number of copies on hand, and they sold quickly. The new book seemed to have a ready market.

The content of the new book on early Franciscan literature does not take us by surprise. There has already been a good deal of research into the early years of the Franciscan movement in the last decade or so. The Vatican Council has sent all religious into a deep state of self-analysis. Before, during, and especially after the Council, religious men and women—and this definitely includes Franciscans—have been scurrying back to their earliest sources to rediscover the defining characteristics of the orders and congregations they belong to. For the Franciscans the light has been focused primarily on the writings of Francis and on the earliest biographies of the saint. The current interest in the spirituals is not

unrelated because the so-called spirituals made special claims as to what were the prime intentions of Francis.

John Fleming's book is affected by the accumulation of the above-mentioned research despite the fact that his own purpose is very different. He even touches in his first chapter some of the writings of Francis, though these have nothing—or very little—to do with his literary theme. The author is trying to connect the Franciscan movement and the development of vernacular and secular literature in the 13th and 14th centuries. Strangely enough, he spends all of his time analyzing Franciscan writings, including those of Francis himself, even though most of these writings are not literature in the usual sense of the word.

The author creates the expression, "Franciscan literature." He defines it to make it cover "primarily those works of poetry, fiction, song, and the historical and visual imagination which are related, stylistically and ideologically, to the great Franciscan movement of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Europe" (p. 2). The problem created by this definition is what it means to include and what it will exclude. The definition makes trivial sense when the author mentions the *Canticle of the Sun*, the *Fioretti*, and the *Laude* of Jacopone da Todi (p. 7), but these works do not get any truly extended treatment in the book. The author is aware of his problem, for he states: "Franciscan literature thus conceived of course does not include all books written by medieval Franciscans, nor

is it limited to works written by them only" (p. 2).

We have to sit back and wonder as to which set of a priori notions will help to determine who the real Franciscan happens to be and what constitutes a piece of literature. As to the first, Fleming is certainly not very didactic. He seems to be adopting the cliché that something (or someone) is Franciscan when it (he) accentuates the popular, the explicitly emotional, and in particular when it refers to Jesus in such a way as to dwell on his very human side. This may be very interesting and colorful; yet it may badly oversimplify. Saint Bernardine of Siena may be the ideal type of Franciscan preacher. He may fit all of the above characteristics, but he has some other serious traits that are being passed over. In a word, the above traits all too easily create a caricature.

As to what gets included under the rubric, "Franciscan literature," this reviewer has the impression that the works most often quoted were the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, the *Apologia Pauperum*, and the *Sacrum Commercium*. It is difficult to find any unifying link between them. They are all interesting works, but for very different reasons. The *Meditations* is the only one to have been composed first in the vernacular. The *Sacrum Commercium* is the only one of the three to be a piece of literature in the usual sense of the word. The *Apologia*, which is not one of Bonaventure's more attractive writings, seems to be especially fascinating to Fleming. When considered together, these three works make us wonder whether the rules for the game that is being played here have been well

thought out.

As to what gets excluded from the book, a number of things come to mind, and some of these need mentioning. John Duns Scotus is absent. True, the author does argue that he wants to exclude philosopher-theologians whose impact was felt primarily in the Latin scholarly tradition. But can he do this, can he make this dichotomy without impoverishing his subject? Has he considered the significance of the principle of individuation, the notion of the primacy of Christ, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception? Don't these themes appear in some guise or other in popular preaching? Roger Bacon is missing too. The authority on the Franciscan notion of nature in Fleming's mind is Bartholomaeus Anglicus. We have no reason for minimizing the latter's importance, but we do feel that Roger Bacon deserves some space. What the author is doing, of course is excluding from his concept of Franciscan the academic and the scholarly. This reviewer believes he is mistaken and that his book needs another chapter besides the one on Bonaventure to show some of the developments at the universities of Oxford and Paris. To ask this, however, may be to question the very viability of the thesis implied by the book as a whole.

It is in chapter one that Fleming first explains his purpose. He then gives an abbreviated introduction to the writings of Saint Francis. As we said, Franciscan scholars are wont to begin their research here as well. Fleming doesn't find much pure literature here, but he does manage to say a

few things about the Testament, the Canticle, and a few of the letters. In chapter two, Fleming does a bit of a dodge. He wants to treat and yet avoid the intricacies of the Franciscan Question. And so, he reviews the early biographies of Saint Francis, doing a fair job of it. He pays a bit more attention to the *Fioretti* than is usual today. He finds that this biography makes particularly good use of descriptive technique.

In chapter three Fleming ambles through a great amount of material on the poverty question. He appears to make use of the excellent book by M. D. Lambert, and he handles scholarly as well as poetic references to develop the theme. Fitting the entire debate under the title, "The Poetry of Poverty," takes some straining which may not have been worth the effort. Francis could wax poetic after the wars on poverty were won in his private life. Getting poetic in the middle of the legalistic and divisive debates of the last quarter of the century was more difficult. In this chapter, the author gives most of his attention to the *Apologia Pauperum*, but regrettably he is not to the point on the issues of dating and setting (p. 85). The *Apologia* is a response to Gerard of Abbeville and not to the earlier work by William of Saint-Amour.

Chapters four and five are perhaps the best of the book. In the former, Fleming studies the theme of preaching, setting the general historical scene quit well. He accentuates the importance and the influence of Franciscan preaching at that time and describes the hoard of material that preachers used in getting together their rather lengthy and

entertaining sermons. The sermon here is the principal piece of literature. In chapter five, despite the fact that the organization of material leaves much to be desired, Fleming still touches some rather classical pieces in the mystical library of that time. He puts Bonaventure in center stage, but James of Milan, David of Augsburg, and Ubertino are not neglected. Some hasty remarks would need correction: book five of the *Arbor Vitae* (p. 230), e.g., is not the longest section of the tome.

In chapter six the question is style. The author gives his best attention to the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*. Making comparisons with previous and future centuries, he attempts to clarify what he means by Franciscan style. The questions he raises are admittedly broad and difficult.

On the whole, then, this reviewer has to confess his puzzlement. On one level, the book reads like a type of literary overview. At this level, it is interesting and challenging. The author shows a very broad knowledge of the Franciscan classics of the more readable kind. On another level, however: that of the very concept of the work, the book is very inadequate. If the author really was trying to connect the Franciscan identity and the burgeoning vernacular literature of the time, we do not believe he has succeeded. Nonetheless, we wish the book and its author well. We hope it will continue to sell and that its readers will pursue the work already started here. If the work goes into a second printing, we hope the author will make the corrections and additions suggested here.

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