COVER AND ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

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the CORD

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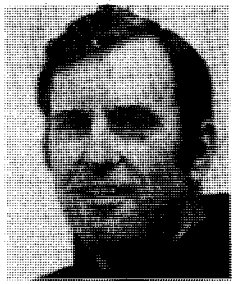

"Closet Religious"

RECENTLY, WHILE SPEAKING with a friend, I got onto the topic of faith and its public profession. My friend felt that many of our contemporaries are really believers but reluctant to manifest this commitment. It struck me that not only are there lots of "closet believers" around, but some "closet religious" too.

By "closet religious," I mean a person in religious life who in his heart believes in the values behind the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience he or she has professed. His or her conscience is still troubled at times of retreat when the words "God has as much place in your heart as he has in your schedule" are uttered, or when reminded that "you come to religious life to do what God wants, not what you want." Yet when time of community chapter or visitation or just ordinary conversation in a serious vein comes around, the "closet religious" expresses no dissatisfaction with the ever-diminishing prayer life of his fraternity, the decreased availability of confreres who are elsewhere, the multiplication of automobilies, the larger concern for money, to name a few things which in our own day run counter to the thrust of our religious vocation. The "closet religious" just goes about living in community without giving any input into the quality of religious living, whether by suggestion, by vote, by complaint, or by observation. I suspect that anyone who has never been on the losing side of a community vote is a "closet religious."

Why is it that people let what is most dear to them—community life—crumble or dissolve or get sick before their very eyes? Native timidity is one explanation. But likely more to the point is that "Human respect" we were all cautioned about at the beginning of our religious life. Words like "pre-Vatican II," "conservative," "fearful," "closed," are barbs which can bother even the most thick-skinned of us. Or perhaps we dread more the condescending attitude of those who think community "happens" or view religious life as the place where *I* work out a destiny *I* have chosen. Although some of us have the name of "minors," we do not like at all being looked down upon.

Another factor which makes us "closet religious" is the momentum of the "liberty" band-wagon which we have all more or less jumped upon. We are used to our own way quite a bit more than we were ten years ago, and we have acquired a few fringe benefits we are reluctant to surrender. Then too, we don't want a return to the "mickey mouse" of the 50s, and so let the chaos and confusion of the late '60s settle into the "every man for himself" of the '70s.

In the field of educational theory you are all reading about "back to the basics" and increased prevalence of a fuller core curriculum as schools look toward the '80s. As in education, so in religious life, time-honored structures were abandoned in the interest of freedom, and the unfulfilled expectation that good advice is almost inevitably taken. The educators have realized their mistake. Are we in religious life going to come out of our closets (*comfortable* closets) and *work* for a return to the basics, *speak out* for the core values of community prayer, community togetherness, and *common* life which are our deepest expectations, and which we know just don't happen when evervone does his thing?

F. Julian Davies, ofm

The Garden of the Sun

A plant—once giant height—now dwarfed and
weathered
praises the Owner of the field in which it
rests in death
and calls by name all things green and brown
and wondrous surrounding it
although it cannot see these beauties any more.

Diminished in stature with its gnarled and twisted
limbs
it yet produces seedlings of delicate hue
which wave breathlessly in its shadow
harbored yet beneath the dying father.

The most fragrant and brilliant of all shoots
blessed her father and makes for him
coverlets of her own leaves
thus Clarifying the Canticle which all creatures
hear in the garden of the sun at San Damiano.

Sister M. Thaddeus, O.S.F.

God Alone Is Good

BERARD DOERGER, O.F.M.

IN HIS BOOK, *Transformation in Christ*, Dietrich von Hildebrand describes the humble person in the following words:

> The humble man is not interested in values as an instrument of "decorating" his own self and enhancing his dignity; he understands, and responds to, their importance in themselves. He is interested in the good for its own sake. He finds the cause of his joy in the *magnalia Dei*, the glory of God as mirrored and signified by the cosmos and its wealth of values, including in particular, the values he discerns in human beings other than himself. Not subject, as we have seen, to the urge of "counting for much," he neither boasts of his virtues nor takes pleasure in their contemplation. He knows that he has received whatever good there is in him from God, and attributes nothing to himself. He says with St. Paul: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14). He does not feel in any way superior to others; even, say, in regard to criminals, his first thought will be, "Who knows what might have become of me, had the grace of God not protected me, or had I been exposed to the same temptations." He considers himself the least among his fellow men, more sinful and unworthy than anyone else.[1]

Von Hildebrand makes no reference to Saint Francis of Assisi in this chapter on humility in his book; yet the description that he gives of the "humble man" seems to fit perfectly the picture of the "poor man of Assisi" as we meet him in his writings and the early sources of his life.

And at the root of Francis's humility is his conviction that "God alone is good,"[2] and that whatever good there is in creatures comes from God and must be attributed to God, with nothing attributed to oneself except one's failings and sins and sufferings.

In the following pages, by examining the writings of Saint Francis and those of his early biographers, we shall attempt to trace this concept of God as the source of all good and to spell out some of its ramifications and applications in the life of Francis and also hopefully in our own.

[1]Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Transformation in Christ* (New York • London • Toronto: Longmans, Green & Co., 1948), pp. 142-43.

[2]Rule of 1221, ch. 17, *Omnibus*, p. 45. Subsequent references to early sources with page numbers only are to be found in this edition.

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God, the Only Good and Source of All Good

"GOD ALONE is good."[3] These words of Christ found in St. Luke's Gospel are three times cited by Francis in his writings when he speaks about the goodness of God.[4]

Francis expands on this scriptural quotation in a variety of ways in different contexts. In Chapter 23 of the Rule of 1221, for instance, we find: "He alone is true God, who is perfect good, all good, ever good, the supreme good, and he alone is good."[5] Similar expressions are found in the Praises of Francis as he prays to God: "Lord, God, all Good, You are Good, all Good, supreme Good, Lord God living and true." Or again in the Letter to the Faithful Francis proclaims: "He is our power and our strength, and he alone is good, he alone most high, he alone all-powerful, wonderful, and glorious; he alone is holy and worthy of all praise and blessing for endless ages and ages."[7]

The eighth Admonition specifies that God who is good is also "the only *source* of every good,"[8] and the seventh, in a similar way, speaks of "God, to whom belongs all good."[9]

Goodness in Created Beings

SINCE GOD alone is good and the source of all good, then it follows that all good found in the created world is a participation in and a reflection of God's goodness.

Francis, it seems, had a very clear perception of this truth. As Celano writes in his *Second Life of Francis:*

> . . . he used it [the created world] as a very bright "image of his goodness." In every work of the artist he praised the Artist; whatever he found in the things made he referred to the Maker. He rejoiced in all the works of the hands of the Lord and saw behind things pleasant to behold their life-giving reason and cause. In beautiful

[3]Luke 18:19.

[4]Rule of 1221, ch. 17; p. 45; Letter to All the Faithful, p. 97; Rule of 1221, ch. 23; p. 52.

[5]Rule of 1221, ch. 23; p. 52.

[6]The Praises before the Office, p. 139.

[7]Letter to All the Faithful, p. 97.

[8]Admonition VIII, p. 82; emphasis added.

[9]Admonition VII, p. 81.

things he saw Beauty itself; all things were to him good. "He who made us is the best," they cried out to him. Through his footprints impressed upon things he followed the Beloved everywhere; he made for himself from all things a ladder by which "to come even to his throne."[10]

Saint Bonaventure writes in a similar vein of Francis's attitude toward the created world in referring all good in creation to God:

> His attitude toward creation was simple and direct, as simple as the gaze of a dove; as he considered the universe, in his pure, spiritual vision, he referred every created thing to the Creator of all. He saw God in everything, and loved and praised him in all creation. By God's generosity and goodness, he possessed God in everything, and everything in God. The realization that everything comes from the same source made him call all created things—no matter how insignificant—his brothers and sisters, because they had the same origin as he.[11]

According to Bonaventure, then, Francis perceived the intimate relation between the Creator and all His created works, realizing that all created good came from the one and same source. This realization, notes the Seraphic Doctor, led Francis also to recognize the unity and brotherhood of all created things.

But not only is God the source of all good in the created world; he is also the source of all good that a human being possesses or accomplishes by word or deed. Especially in the Admonitions of Francis do we meet this conviction of the Saint. " . . . the good that God says and does in him,"[12] ". . .the good that the Lord says and does through him,"[13] ". . . when God accomplishes some good through him."[14]

The sometime-considered "illogical" Francis was not confused or unclear on this point: God was the only good and source of all good, and hence all good that was found in Francis himself or any human being came from God. "God has given and gives us everything," Francis insisted: "body and soul and all our life; it was he who created and redeemed us and of his mercy alone he will save us; wretched and pitiable as we are, ungrateful and evil, rotten through and through, he has provided us with every good and does not cease to provide for us."[15]

[10]2 Celano, 165; pp. 494-95.
[11]St. Bonaventure, *Legenda minor*, 6; p. 808.
[12]Admonition II, p. 79.
[13]Admonition VIII, p. 82.
[14]Admonition XII, p. 83.
[15]Rule of 1221, ch. 23; p. 52.

BECAUSE GOD is all good and the source of all good in his creatures, Francis's immediate response was to give thanks and praise to God for the good that he found in creatures or the good that God accomplished in him or in any other person.

> Because all good comes from God [Francis wrote,] we must thank him for it all. May the most supreme and high and only true God receive and have and be paid all honor and reverence, all praise and blessing, all thanks and all glory, for to him belongs all good and no one is good but only God.[16]

Francis himself composed several such prayer or hymns of praise and thanks to God from whom all good comes and to whom belongs all good. There is the Canticle of the Sun,[17] which he composed, says the Legend of Perugia, as "his way of inciting the hearts of those who would hear this canticle to give glory to God *so that the Creator would be praised by all for all his creatures.*"[18] Then there are the Praises of God, which Francis wrote for Brother Leo and the original copy of which, in Francis's own handwriting, is still in existence. "Blessed Francis . . . made and wrote with his own hand these Praises," recorded Brother Leo on the manuscript, "*giving thanks to the Lord for the benefits conferred upon him.*"[19]

Finally, there is the prayer that Francis composed and recited before each Hour of the Office, which prayer is usually called "The Praises before the Office." It is a song of praise and glorification to God for all his works, made up of passages from holy Scripture and the Liturgy. It ends with this beautiful oration:

> All-powerful, all holy, most high and supreme God, sovereign good, all good, every good, you who alone are good, it is to you we must give all praise, all glory, all thanks, all honor, all blessing; to you we must refer all good always. Amen.[20]

[16]Rule of 1221, ch. 17; p. 45.
[17]Canticle of the Sun, p. 130.
[18]Legend of Perugia, 51; p. 1029; emphasis added.
[19]Cf. *Omnibus*, p. 124; emphasis added.
[20]The Praises before the Office, pp. 138-39.

THE LAST LINE of the above oration mentions another theme that Francis uses frequently in his writings: referring or ascribing all good to God who is the source of all good. "We must refer every good to the most high supreme God, acknowledging that all good belongs to him."[21] writes Francis in the Rule of 1221. In a similar vein, Francis says, "Let us bless our Lord and God, living and true; to him we must attribute all praise, glory, honor, blessing, and every good for ever."[22] "In this should we glory," Celano quotes Francis as saying, "that we give glory to God, that we serve him faithfully, that we ascribe to him whatever he has given us."[23]

The person who "ascribes all the good he has to his Lord and God" is indeed "blessed," promises Francis in one of his Admonitions.[24] If someone attributes anything to himself, however, Francis goes on to say that he is like the wicked servant in the Gospel (Mt. 25:18) who hid his master's money. He is hiding the gift of the Lord "in himself," comments the Saint very insightfully, and "even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him."[25]

Our knowledge, too, is a gift or good that we receive from God, and so all that we know we must refer or ascribe to God. Francis brings out this point in commenting on the words of Saint Paul: "The letter kills, but the spirit gives life" (2 Cor. 3:6). A person is killed by the letter, explains Francis, when he wants to know the Scriptures only so others will think he is learned. "On the other hand," he continues,

> those have received life from the spirit of Sacred Scripture who, by their words and example, refer to the most high God, to whom belongs all good, all that they know or wish to know, and do not allow their knowledge to become a source of self-complacency.[26]

In this connection, Francis also shows great insight regarding the good that God works in others than ourselves. This good, too, is from God, and so we must not envy others, for that would be like blaspheming God. In Francis's own words:

> Saint Paul tells us, "No one can say Jesus is Lord, except in the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:3), and "There is none who does good, no, not even one" (Rom. 3:12). And so when a person envies his brother the good God says or does through him, it is like committing a sin of blasphemy, because he is really envying God, who is the source of every good.[27]

Francis returns to the point of the good that God works in others in a later Admonition, but with a different emphasis:

> Blessed the servant who is no more elated at the good which the Lord says and does through him, than at that which he says and does through someone else. It is wrong for anyone to be more desirous of receiving from his neighbor than he himself is desirous of giving to the Lord God.[28]

Here Francis again states that all good that we do or that others do has its source in God, and hence we should not take any more credit for the good that God works through us than in the good that he works through someone else. It's the same God working through all. We are blessed if we have such an attitude. On the contrary, it is wrong if we are more concerned about receiving praise and admiration from others for the good done through us than of giving praise to God who accomplishes every good in us.

Nothing of Our Own

SINCE WE MUST ascribe all good to God, is there nothing we can attribute to ourselves? "Nothing," Francis would answer. "Nothing. . . except our vices and sins." "We must be firmly convinced that we have nothing of our own, except our vices and sins."[29]

An episode that illustrates this conviction of the Saint is found in Celano's Second Life of Saint Francis and is repeated with some alterations in the Legend of Perugia and the Mirror of Perfection. Francis had preached to the people in the city of Terni, and after his sermon the Bishop, who had been listening to the sermon, spoke some words of exhortation to the people. Pointing at Francis, the Bishop said: "In this latest hour God has glorified his church in this poor and despised, simple and unlettered man. For this reason we are bound always to praise the Lord, knowing that 'he has not done thus for any other nation.' " Later, as Francis was entering the church with the Bishop, he fell at the feet of the Bishop and said:

> In truth, lord Bishop, you have

[21] Rule of 1221, ch. 17; p. 45.
[22] The Office of the Passion, p. 142.
[23] 2 Celano, 134; p. 471.
[24] Admonition XIX, p. 84.
[25] Ibid., quoting Luke 8:18.
[26] Admonition VII, p. 81.
[27] Admonition VIII, p. 82.
[28] Admonition XVII (author's translation; cf. p. 84).
[29] Rule of 1221, ch. 17; p. 45.

done me a great favor, for you alone kept the things that are mine unharmed, whereas others take them away from me and say: He is a saint! Thereby they attribute glory and holiness to a creature and not to the Creator. You, on the contrary, have separated, I say, the precious from the worthless, giving praise to God and ascribing to me my worthlessness.[30]

The Legend of Perugia and the Mirror of Perfection follow this episode with the Bishop of Terni with other comments that Francis would make when he was praised and called a saint. I like the following comparison of ourselves to a wood-painting:

> In a picture of our Lord and the Blessed Virgin painted on wood, it is the Lord and the Blessed Mother who receive honor, while the wood and the paint claim nothing for themselves. God's servant is like a painting: a creature of God, through whom God is honored because of his blessings. He must not claim any credit for himself, for in comparison with God he is less than the wood and the paint; indeed, he is nothing at all. Honor and glory must be given to God alone. The only thing we must retain for ourselves, as long as we live, is shame and confusion, for as long as we live, our flesh is always hostile to the grace of God.[31]

In the above comparison, as well as in the following Admonition, Francis hits upon one of the fundamental attitudes that must characterize our relationship to God: acknowledging that what a man is, before God, that he is and no more; that is, acknowledging our true condition as creatures and servants who belong entirely to God and who have received everything from God, the "Great Almsgiver".[32]

> Blessed the servant who has no more regard for himself when people praise him and make much of him than when they despise and revile him and say that he is ignorant. What a man is before God, that he is and no more.[33]

The Greatest of Sinners

IN THE paragraph from Dietrich von Hildebrand used in the introduction to this article, that author stated that the humble man "does not feel in any way superior to others; even, say, in regard to criminals his first thought will be, 'Who knows what might have become of me, had the grace of God not protected me, or had I been exposed to the same temptations.' He considers himself the least among his fellow men, more sinful and unworthy than anyone else."

Francis of Assisi certainly fits this description of a "humble man" in this respect. "In his opinion," writes Saint Bonaventure, "he was the greatest of sinners, and he believed that he was nothing more than a frail and worthless creature."[34] When he was praised by others for his virtues, says Celano, he would answer with words like these: "I can still have sons and daughters; do not praise me as being secure. No one should be praised whose end is yet uncertain. If ever he who has lent these things to me would wish to take back what he has given me, only the body and soul would remain, and these even the unbeliever possesses." "Such things," continues Celano, "he spoke to those who praise him. But to himself he said: 'If the Most High had given such great things to a robber, he would have been more grateful than you, Francis.' "[35]

At the root of this humble opinion of himself, then, was again the conviction that all the good and holiness that was in Francis was from God and that without this grace and favor of God, Francis could boast of nothing. Francis did not deny the gifts which God had granted to him nor the fact that he possessed certain advantages in a higher measure than his fellow man. It was just that he was so keenly aware of the gratuitousness of these gifts and graces. And so he measured the state of his holiness, not by the criterion of what he had received from God as such, but by the distance between what he had received from God and what he actually accomplished. The more Francis received of the goodness of God, the more clearly he perceived the abyss that separated him from the infinite goodness and holiness of God. His humility was not a fake humility, and he could in all sincerity pray: "Who are You, my dearest God? And what am I, your vilest little worm and useless little servant?"[36]

▲

WE HAVE tried to show in this study that Francis was indeed a humble man and that his humility was based on his keen awareness that God alone is good and that all good in the created

[30]The version given here is the author's combination of of 2 Celano, 141 (p. 476); Legend of Perugia, 103 (p. 1080); and Mirror of Perfection, 45 (p. 1170).

[31]The version given here is the author's combination of the Legend of Perugia, 104 (p. 1080) and the Mirror of Perfection, 45 (p. 1170).

[32]2 Celano, 77; p. 427.

[33]Admonition XX, p. 84.

[34]St. Bonaventure, *Legenda minor, 4; p. 807.*

[35]2 Celano, 133; p. 471.

[36]Little Flowers of St. Francis, Third Consideration on the Holy Stigmata; p. 1444.

world and in his own personal life came down from the Great Almsgiver.

In this humble recognition of the source of all good, Francis was of course only imitating his Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, whose constant claim as the Son of Man was that his Father alone was good (Lk. 18:19) and that he was completely dependent upon his Father for all that he said and did, claiming nothing as his own: "The Son cannot do anything by himself, he can do only what he sees the Father doing."[37]

[37]John 14:10; cf. also John 5:19; 6:57; 7:16; 8:27; and 17:24.

A Poor Man's Dream is a Mountain of Remembrances

Past . . . Present . . . Future . . .
Remembrances . . . Realities . . . Hopes . . .
Ideals and Dreams . . . .
The common and mundane
Become precious and sublime.
Person and community with all their failings
Are returned as an offering and a gift
Fit for the Body of Christ—
THE BODY OF CHRIST.

Hearts cold and damp
Are warmed with a holocaust of love.
All the sins of man from time infinite
Can never erase
The Perfect Joy,
The Irresistible Command:
Do this in remembrance of me.

The Poor Man now becomes Time's mediator
Between the sufferings of the cross
And the Loving Bread of the Kingdom
Both experienced NOW
By all poor men of faith
"In remembrance of me."

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

A Commemorative Reflection:

The Canonization of Saint Francis

DONALD GRZYMSKI, O.F.M.CONV.

> To the praise and glory of Almighty God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and of the glorious Virgin Mary and of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and to the honor of the glorious Roman Church, at the advice of our brothers and of the other prelates, we decree that the most blessed father Francis, whom the Lord has glorified in heaven and whom we venerate on earth, shall be enrolled in the catalogue of saints and that his feast shall be celebrated on the day of his death.[1]

WITH THESE WORDS Pope Gregory IX (Francis's friend Cardinal Ugolino) canonized the Little Poor Man in his hometown of Assisi on July 16, 1228, the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost. Accounts further tell us that the Cardinals and the friars present then joyfully intoned the *Te Deum.* Outside the people shouted and the soldiers sounded trumpets, while the Pope prostrated himself at the tomb and then celebrated Mass. Seven hundred and fifty years later we should ponder what prompted this action of Pope Gregory which seems so much to have pleased the faithful of that day. We might further ask what its implications are for us who follow the Rule of Saint Francis in another age.

We know that Francis and his way of life had been accepted by the Church and the people of his hometown even before his death, and that there was great concern as he lay dying that his remains would not be returned to Assisi. Still, the momentum increased after his death.

> He immediately became famous for the numerous and extraordinary miracles which were worked through his intercession because God looked with favor upon him. In his lifetime his sublime holiness was made known to the world in order to show people

[1]1 Celano, 126; *Omnibus*, p. 340. Subsequent references to early sources with only page numbers are to be found in this edition.

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how they should live by the example of his perfect uprightness. Now that he was reigning with Christ, his sanctity was to be proclaimed from heaven through the miracles worked by God's power, to strengthen the faith of the whole world. All over the world the glorious miracles and the wonderful favors which were obtained through his intercession inspired countless numbers to serve Christ faithfully and venerate this saint.[2]

Brother Elias had acquired the site for the basilica even before the canonization, a sign of the town's esteem. In the deed transferring the property, "Francis is already spoken of as *sanctus*, although he had not been officially canonised."[3] The Pope himself gave Thomas of Celano the duty of writing a biography, though whether or not the author was present at the canonization is not known.

All these events indicate the effect a simple holy man can have on the People of God. The consensus is expressed in Celano's *First Life*, where Francis is depicted standing "at the throne of God and [devoting] himself to furthering effectually the concerns of those he left behind upon earth."[4] The people of Assisi were enthusiastic not only because Francis was a native son of their town, but also because of what his sainthood meant for them. Pope Gregory captured this mood and stated in his homily on that day:

> Having confidence that through the mercy of God, we, and the flock committed to our care will be assisted by his prayers, and that we shall have him for our protector in heaven who was our friend on earth. . . .[5]

The canonization added official approbation to the growing popular acclaim. By it the Church stated publicly that Francis's life was exemplary, that miracles had been credited to his intercession,

[2]St. Bonaventure, *Legenda Major*, XV, 6; p. 744.

[3]John R. H. Moorman, *The Sources for the Life of St. Francis of Assisi* (Manchester: University Press, 1940), p. 61.

[4]1 Celano, 119; p. 333.

[5]P. DaMagliano, ed., *Francis of Assisi* (New York: P. O'Shea, 1867), p. 264.

and that he may be venerated. Authors writing of the canonization have always made clear that the Pope and Cardinals approved of the ascribed miracles and decided on his canonization. According to Bonaventure, Pope Gregory IX

> had the various miracles worked by the saint recorded in writing and approved by witnesses, in order to convince the whole world that Francis had been glorified in heaven. Then he submitted them to be examined by the cardinals who seemed to be least favorable to the process and then they had checked them carefully and agreed unanimously he decreed that Francis should be canonized.[6]

At the canonization Gregory IX also spoke of the influence of Francis that was to remain so powerful a force in the world:

> Francis, this noble prince, bears the royal standard, and assembles the nations from all parts of the earth. He has organized a threefold army to fight against the powers of the dragon, and disperse his internal hordes.[7]

For Francis's followers the canonization was another formal approval of his way of life as a valid and valiant way to imitate Christ.

As the friars, sisters, and people rejoiced on that Sunday in 1228, so the Poverello's followers can rejoice in 1978. His Order has grown and expanded around the world, as had been prophesied. The spirit of Francis is alive in Assisi, in his followers; and this spirit is spread to those whose lives are touched by his sons and daughters. The miracles of physical wonder and spiritual renewal continue through the Saint's intercession. As we commemorate the Church's official recognition of Francis's sanctity, we keep in mind his devotion and respect for the Church, and we renew our own pledge to serve Jesus on earth. We rejoice, knowing that so many people around the world still venerate Francis and are inspired by his ideals. As Pope Gregory and Celano and others have pointed out, we who follow Francis take comfort in the assurance that he is in heaven and is continually interceding for us. We are humbled to realize that in imitating Jesus and Francis we are called to a life of perfection and holiness.

> Of Saint Francis it could be said, as of Samson, that he killed many more by his death than he had when alive. It is a certain fact that our holy Father Saint Francis is alive in the life of glory. May we be brought to this same life of glory through his merits who lives for all eternity. Amen.[8]

[6]St. Bonaventure, *Legenda major*, XV, 7; p. 745.

[7]DaMagliano, p. 264.

[8]Legend of the Three Companions, XVIII, 73; p. 955.

The Spirit of Francis in the *Divine Comedy*

MARA HUBER

THE SPIRIT of Saint Francis of Assisi exercises its influence throughout Dante's *Divine Comedy* like that of no other saint. The name of the *poverello di Dio* is heard everywhere from Hell to Heaven.

The first time he is mentioned is by Guido da Montefeltro in one of the most dramatic episodes of the *Inferno*.[1] Already here Francis stands for a life that will ultimately lead to salvation, and had Guido not strayed from his way, "it would have served."[2]

Although there are no Franciscans to be found in Purgatory, there are present in the memory of the penitents a number of Franciscans who are already in Paradise and give them hope by their perfection. All three Orders are represented: the Friars Minor by Marzucco degli Scornigiani,[3] the Tertiaries by Pier Pettinagno,[4] and the Poor Ladies by Piccarda Donati.[5] All of them exemplify Christian virtues that had become very rare in the Church before Saint Francis and his Orders gave it new spiritual strength. Marzucco stands for the love of peace, which is one of the main Franciscan ideals. By forgiving the murderers of his son, Marzucco prevented a chain reaction of *vendetta* that would have come close to a civil war in Pisa, and so truly lived up to the Franciscan greeting, *pax et bonum*. Peter the Combseller, a Tertiary, helps Lady Sapia purge her envy through his prayers. In him we find the humility and faithfulness that charity brings, and the deep and loving insight into human nature that Saint Francis himself had. Piccarda, although she was forced to break her vows, stands for those who long for God only. Her memory sets an example for those who were captives of their fleshly appetites. This is the first hint at the mystic and ascetic element in Franciscanism, which has come to perfection in Saint Clare, whom Piccarda praises in Paradise.[6]

Paradise is where Francis himself lives in the highest bliss, right at the center of the celestial rose. Together with John the Baptist, he is closest to Christ.[7] Here Francis's faithful followers, like the Friars Illuminato and Agostio, have eternal peace and joy in the friendship of God.[8] And here Franciscans and Dominicans compete only in praising one another: Saint Bonaventure, famous Minister General of the Friars Minor one generation after their Founder, honors Saint Dominic; and the Dominican theologian Saint Thomas Aquinas tells Dante the story of the bridegroom of Holy Poverty. Saints Thomas and Dominic are seen as the two champions of Christ's bride,[9] and the two wheels of her chariot as serving one Lord with diverse gifts: the one with seraphic love, the other with Cherubic intelligence.[10]

The account of Saint Francis's life is much more poetic than that of Saint Dominic. "His" Canto is full of love-imagery, while the one on Saint Dominic is dominated by soldierly images. The reason for that lies in the Saint's personality. Not only did Francis write outstanding poetry, as the "Cantico del Sol" proves but his entire life was one beautiful poem:

> St. Francis made his whole life one sacred poem, not written but lived, a poem in which the mystical marriage with Poverty and the reception of the Stigmata are the most lyrical passages. In his life the allegorizing spirit of the Middle ages took living form.[11]

John D. Sinclair takes Saint Bonaventure's Legend of the Blessed Francis for Dante's source of the Saint's life.'[12] It

[1] *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, with translation and comment by John D. Sinclair (New York, 1939), *Inferno* XXVII. Edmund Gardner calls this Canto the most dramatic of the entire *Comedy*; see his study, *Dante and the Mystics* (New York, 1968), p. 203.

[2] *Inferno* XXVII, l. 84.

[3] *Purgatorio* VI, l. 18. The full name is mentioned by Gardner, p. 205.

[4] *Purgatorio* XIII, ll. 124-29.

[5] *Purgatorio* XXIV, ll. 13-18.

[6] *Paradiso* III, l, 97ff.

[7] Gardner, *Dante's Ten Heavens* (Westminster, 1898), p. 239: "It will be observed that next to the Precursor of Christ comes his closest and most perfect imitator." The reference is to *Paradiso* XXXII, l. 35.

[8] *Paradiso* XII, l. 130.

[9] *Paradiso* XII, l. 43ff.

[10] *Paradiso* XII, l. 106ff.

[11] Garner, *Dante's Ten Heavens*, p. 97.

[12] *Paradiso*, commentary on Canto XI, p. 172.

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need not, however, be the only one. True, Bonaventure suppressed the original Vitae in favor of his own, for the sake of unity in the Order. But the material Dante uses, and the emphasis he places on poverty, are also in keeping with the earlier Legends, like the "Tres Socii" of Giovanni of Ceprano, and the Legends of Thomas of Celano and Brother Leo. Dante might very well have known some of this literature. Francis enjoyed such popularity among Dante's contemporaries, moreover, that the story of his life was passed on by oral tradition as well. The collection of the "Fioretti" is dated only a little later than the *Comedy*. Consequently, Canto XI of the *Paradiso* need not be just a "transcript in Verse" of passages from Saint Bonaventure's Legend.[13]

Saint Francis was called "the mirror of Christ," a mirror which increased the amount of light by reflecting it. His appeal to popular piety was infinitely larger than that of Saint Dominic,[14] probably because his emotionality was generally more accessible than Saint Dominic's intellectuality and also much more lovable, more humane. While Dominic saw the earth as field of the battle between the faithful and heretics, Francis had the vision of the oneness of all creation. The two Orders stand for love and knowledge, both essential to Dante to the point where they are the main themes of the *Comedy*.[15] The perfection of the two Founders stands in sharp contrast to the decrepit condition of their Orders, and through Bonaventure and Aquinas Dante expresses his concern and dismay over their corruption.

Saint Francis's influence is in no manner limited to the few Canti on Franciscans; it pervades all of the *Comedy* in many ways.

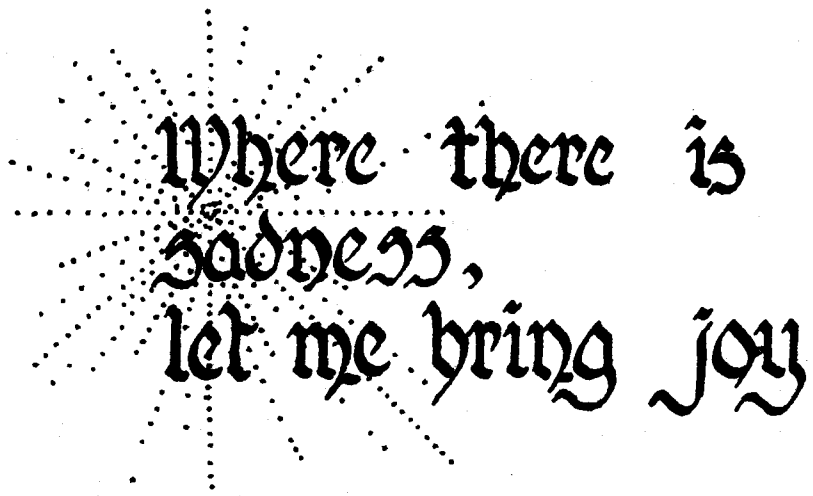
Francis seems to me the sign of the end of the Dark Ages. His great achievement is that he "solved in his own fashion the great problem of Christian piety: to conquer the world without debasting it."[16] He showed that not only the wayof renunciation leads to the perfect love of God: with him the way of affirmation had its breakthrough. Love for created beings was no longer a damning thing that lured the soul away from God; it could be love of God through loving what he had created: realities to which he had

[13]Ibid.

[14]Karl Federn, in his *Dante and His Time* (Port Washington, NY, 1969), p. 141, proposes not to "follow Dante in considering these two men equal."

[15]Gardner, in his *Dante's Ten Heavens*, p. 98, holds a similar view.

[16]Karl Vossler, *Medieval Culture* (New York, 1929), vol. 1, p. 68.



given some of his own qualities. Creation was a manifestation of God, and as such no longer seen as inherently evil, but even salutary, if it directed man's thought toward the infinite Goodness from which it had its being. The immediate general enthusiasm for this way shows that the time was ripe for its introduction. In this sense Dante clearly was a disciple of Saint Francis, as is shown in his answer to Saint John in the examination on love: "The leaves with which all the garden of the eternal Gardener is embowered I love in the measure of the good He has bestowed on them."[17] Indeed, only the love of creation makes the love of the Creator perfect.

This new way made it possible for men to accept their own humility: to be good Christians, they did not have to try to become superhuman and thus run the risk of becoming in reality only inhuman. "Francis has loosened the tongues and opened the eyes of the Italian people, dispersing the choking fumes of anxiety and hatred which surrounded them."[18] Religion thus gained new strength and became attractive once more. It had grown rather superficial and secularized, to say the least; but now a new emotional dimension was added to it. New forms of popular piety came into being, like the Stations of the Cross and the Rosary. The sudden development of veneration of the Virgin and the increased emphasis on preaching and instruction—indeed, a reform of the entire Liturgy—all

[17]*Paradiso* XXVI, ll. 64-66.

[18]Friedrich Heer, *The Medieval World* (New York, 1961), p. 229.

this was in large part due to the influence of the Poverello.[10] The Third Order enjoyed such popularity that Pier delle Vigne is reported to have said that there was hardly a man in all Italy that did not belong to it.[20] Soon "the same ecstasy pervaded the religious life of the people which appeared in the feelings and expressions of love of the refined."[21]

Through the life of Saint Francis the mystical element of Christianity also received new attention, particularly the notion that "certain men, in the living body and in a state of ecstasy, have been permitted to behold the future world of Hell and heaven."[22] Far from "forsaking human society," as Vossler would have it,[23] Francis made it more human. His poetic as well as his religious genius played a part in this.

Francis was deeply influenced by the Minnesong of the troubadours of Provence, and in joyous moments he would break out into song, praising the Lord in Provencal. His "Cantico del Sol," in Umbrian dialect, is the first and at the same time a superb instance of Italian vernacular poetry; and among the followers of "God's minstrel" "we should naturally look for the composers of spontaneous religious poetry."[24] Some of the finest poetry of the time was indeed by Franciscans, in the vernacular as well as in Latin, as the "Stabat Mater" and the "Dies Irae." The name of Jacopone da Todi is particularly illustrious in this context.

The Franciscan spirit was one that greatly encouraged artistic expression,[25] and it was much more in touch with the people than were the earlier forms of monasticism, as is indicated by the establishment of the Third Order. Saint Francis firmly believed in uncloistered Christianity,[26] and hence the tendency of Franciscan literature to "address itself to the comprehension of the unlearned, to get more into touch with actual life."[27] by the use of the vernacular. Jacopone da Todi's Italian poetry was very

[19]For a detailed analysis of Franciscan influence on the Liturgy of Dante's time, cf. Olaf Graf, *Die Divina Comedia als Zeugnis des Glaubens* (Freiburg, 1965), pp. 76ff.

[20]Lonsdale Ragg, *Dante and His Italy* (London, 1907), p. 108.

[21]Federn, p. 152.

[22]Vossler, p. 313.

[23]Ibid., p. 70.

[24]Charles Grandgent, *Dante Alighieri* (New York, 1916), p. 163.

[25]Cf. George Zarnecki, *The Monastic Achievement* (New York, 1972).

[26]Cf. Heer, p. 226.

[27]Gardner, *Dante and the Mystics*, p. 184.

widely read and proved that "the purest mysteries of faith and the loftiest speculations of philosophy could be fitly expressed in the idiom of the people."[28]

All of this first made the "dolce stil nuovo" possible:

> That profoundest peculiarity of Dante's art, the entire supernatural sense of the *Commedia*, no matter how truly it is the personal creation of the poet—all this, but for the previous Franciscan movement, would have been an incomprehensible, unnatural innovation. Even the courage to force such a preeminent ecclesiastical and religious content into a secular, earthy vernacular would have appeared, without the Franciscans, an unexampled anachronism.[29]

Without the Franciscans, a concept like that of the "Donna Angelicata," or an account of the ascent of a soul through Paradise would have been regarded as nonsensical or even blasphemous by most of the public. But since Saint Francis had provided both a precedent for "unsensualized" love and actual union of the soul with God in his relationship with Saint Clare and in the Stigmatization, the group was broken for Dante and his *Comedy*.

Because the spirit of Saint Francis is so much alive throughout the *Comedy*, and because of some rather uncertain evidence, Dante has often been thought a Franciscan: ". . . his sacred poem, and his others, came from the pen, wingborne—for his surname, Alighieri, means the "wing-bearer"—of a Franciscan Tertiary; let us be humbly proud of this fact."[30] I understand and share with Benjamin Musser the wish to claim the greatest poet of the Middle ages for our Order; yet there does not seem to exist enough evidence to verify that he was at any point in his life either a Tertiary or a novice of the First Order.[31] His having been buried in the Franciscan chapel at Ravenna might have had other reasons, and whether he was buried in the Franciscan habit or not is not certain. Opinions also vary on the question of whether the Tertiary in Giotto's fresco in the lower church of San Francesco of Assisi really represents Dante. Neither need the cord with which he girds himself upon arriving at Mount Purgatory[32] be the Franciscan cord that is part of

[28]Frederick Ozanam, *The Franciscan Poets of the Thirteenth Century* (Port Washington, NY, 1914), p. 294.

[29]Vossler, vol. 2, p. 89.

[30]Benjamin F. Musser, *Franciscan Poets* (Freeport, NY, 1953), p. 174. Federn, p. 152; Ragg, pp. 76 and 356; Vossler, vol. 2, p. 86; and others have similar, if more detached, arguments.

[31]Gardner, *Dante and the Mystics*, p. 200.

[32]*Purgatorio* I, 11. 94-96; 133-36.

the habit of all three Orders.

It is certain, however, that Dante was educated by the friars of Santa Croce, and thus was closely in touch with Franciscan ideals during those young years when he was most likely to be formed by his teachers. Vossler imagines this process thus:

> An overheated monastic atmosphere of sensitiveness and dramminess environed and weakened his all too emotional spirit. A sensuous and supersensuous love, morbid, intensified by fashion, took hold of him.[33]

The Spirit of Saint Francis, however, as well as the *Comedy*, clearly has nothing to do with weakness, morbidity, or dreaminess. On the contrary, it strengthened, healed, and awakened much that had been unhealthy and inactive in the Church and society in the century that opens around the year 1215. "It looked out freshly upon a fresh world,"[34] full of audacity and simplicity. It is the strength of affirmation that truly makes Dante's *Divine Comedy* a poem in the spirit of Saint Francis.

[33]*Medieval Culture*, vol. 1, p. 315.

[34]G. K. Chesterton, *St. Francis of Assisi* (Garden City, NY, 1924), p. 152.

Breath of Spring

Mary, Mary, mother of all men,
let me fall in love with you.

The winter winds of weakness and
evil blow through my mind with a
touch of death.

Breath of Spring, spotless Beauty
of all Creation, warm this child
of yours! Melt this heart of ice,
merge it, lose it in your own
torrent of love for God.

If they had hearts and knew you.
would the flowers not hide if you
would turn away? Would the birds
not die if you turned away?

Turn not away, O Breath of Spring,
First flower of the Lord.
Come, Breath of Spring, through
whom all warmth and graces pour.
Lead us forth in honor of the
living God.

Charles Goering

Salve Sancte Pater

These reflections are reprinted with permission from the Bulletin of the Province of the Immaculate Conception of the Order of Friars Minor in England, Wales, and Scotland, Vol. 41, n. 4 (April, 1978).

WHEN Francis of Assisi embraced Sister Death on that evening of 3rd October 1226 beside the Portiuncula which he loved as the birthplace and center of his brotherhood, the friars and the citizens of Assisi knew that they would have to act quickly to prevent his body becoming a prize to be despoiled (especially by the Perugians). We read how the very next morning, 4th October, they set out in solemn and well-guarded procession up to the city of Assisi with the body. They made a special detour past San Damiano, so that Saint Clare and her Sisters could embrace the body through the grill through which they normally received Holy Communion and so take their tearful leave of their Father. The body was laid to rest temporarily in the church of St. George, where Francis had first gone to school and where later he had preached his first sermon.

The fame of Francis of Assisi soon made his grave an object of veneration by enormous crowds of pilgrims seeking favors and miracles. Less than two years later, on 16th July, 1228, his great friend Cardinal Hugolino, now become Pope Gregory IX, made the veneration official by canonizing him. At the same time, he laid the foundation stone for a church, on land given by the citizens of Assisi, to be the permanent tomb and memorial of the Saint, entrusting the task of building it to Brother Elias, who completed the task in only two further years. So the body of Saint Francis was transferred to the new church—now the lower church—on 25th May, 1230, less than four years after his death, the friars having gathered in Assisi to celebrate their General Chapter.

We read that the procession on this occasion gathered together in Assisi a great number of people of all degrees and was one of great splendor, so that in the narrow streets perhaps not everyone realized until it was all over that Brother Elias had forestalled any attempt to rob Assisi of its treasure by shutting the doors of the new church as soon as the body had entered it and secretly burying the Saint in a place which was to remain a matter of conjecture for centuries.

From that day to his, only once have the remains been sought, found, and examined. Six hundred years after Elias had hidden the body, in 1818, a search revealed the body of the Saint buried in the rock under the altar of the lower church, and after an official "recognitio," the remains were gathered inside a new metal coffin, replaced in the stone, and the place around it rebuilt as a

chapel, almost constituting a third church underneath the lower church.

Until this day, I said.

In January of this year it was noticed that the grave needed repair, various fittings being loose. One thing led to another and eventually a request was made to the Holy See, which has wisely reserved to itself jurisdiction over the remains of Saint Francis, for the remains to be removed temporarily so that a thorough repair of the tomb could be carried out. The Pope set up a commission to carry out a canonical "recognitio" once more (which was done on 24th January, 1978), our own Minister General being one of the members, with various lay experts to help establish the characteristics of the remains and the best way to preserve them. It was decided, after every bone had been examined, to seal the remains inside a perspex-glass case, to replace this inside the metal coffin, and to relocate both in the stone once the tomb had been rebuilt. In the meantime, the perspex case was placed in a room of the Sacro Convento and guarded there. As more and more groups of people were admitted to view the body, it became evident that the secret could not be kept much longer.

On 27th February, during a normal session of the Plenary Council of the Order then meeting in Rome in the General Curia, Father General said he had an announcement to make. It fell to me to translate this simultaneously into English, like so many routine announcements before. I found myself recounting the above history and the details of the historic *recognitio* in which Father General had taken part, finishing with the suggestion on the part of Father General to the Plenary Council that we should suspend our work for one day, 2nd March, to travel to Assisi and grasp this historic opportunity of seeing the remains of Saint Francis before they were reburied (for ever?) two days later. Needlessly to say, the suggestion was enthusiastically taken up, and the pilgrimage duly took place.

And so it happened that two members of our Province were privileged to stand beside the bones of our holy Father Saint Francis in Assisi that day, namely Father Paschal Rowland, who represented at the Plenary Council all the friars of Africa (with the exception of certain territories in the North), and your Editor, who was one of two interpreters at the Council for the English-speaking Conference.[1]

Those bones which the experts could recognize were laid out in skeleton form, the remaining fragments gathered together at the foot in a perspex box placed within the whole perspex case. Even allowing for the shrinkage of the centuries it was easy to see that Francis had been indeed "pusillus," as described by his biographers. The skull was damaged because Elias had placed a stone under the head to raise it, and in the course of the centuries this had penetrated the skull. Of the stigmata it was impossible to see any evidence, since the bones in question had split or disintegrated.

[1]American friars present at this event: Fathers Charles V. Finnegan (Minister Provincial, Holy Name), Francis Muller (Holy Name; Definitor General), John Marie Cassese (Immaculate Conception), Mel Brady (St. John the Baptist), John Vaughn and Brian Flynn (both St Barbara).

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It is difficult to describe the feeling of awe which overcame me as I found myself within touching distance of the mortal remains of the Poverello who had fired my imagination since boyhood, and I hope that the prayers which we offered in that deeply felt moment will bring blessings on the whole Order and on our Province.

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Franciscan Study Centre
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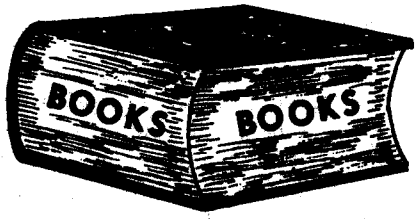

Saints for All Seasons. Edited by John J. Delaney. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978. Pp. x-205. Cloth, $7.95.

Reviewed by Father Julian A. Davies, O.F.M., Ph. D., Associate Editor of this Review and Head of the Philosophy Department at Siena College, Loudonville, NY.

Seldom have I read an anthology of such even excellence. The twenty essays by some of the leading Catholic literary figures over the past couple of decades do, as John Delaney's preface suggests, show that the saints are "real flesh and blood people . . . with an inner strength and purposefulness that can serve as examples to us today . . ." The book begins with an account of "Mary, Mother and Friend," which any mother will be able to relate to, and closes with an account of "The Unknown Saint," by Fulton Oursler, Jr., with which any adult can identify.

In-between, we find capsulized the spirit of the giants of the faith like Peter, Paul, Augustine, Patrick, Francis, Dominic, Ignatius Loyola, Vincent de Paul—and also lesser known and less flashy, perhaps, people like Francis de Sales, John of the Cross, Anthony Claret, and Ann-Marie Jehouvey (a lady of whom I had never before heard). The essays, particularly those on people who lived since the 15th century, sparkle with detail and offer a perspective on the life of a saint which enables the reader to see sanctity as the labor of a lifetime.

Among the other saints included are Saint Jude, Thomas a Becket, Joan of Arc, Thomas More, and the two Theresa's. An omission I noticed on reflecting on the book's contents will perhaps suggest material for another book: *Scholar-saints for All Seasons,* and will let us get a glimpse of Bonaventure, Aquinas, and Bellarmine, to name a few. And maybe by that time *Saints for All Seasons* will

be an Image Book and get the wide circulation it deserves.

Jesus and You. By James Finley and Michael Pennock. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1977. 2 vols., paperback: text, pp. 223, $3.50; teacher's manual, pp. 111, $1.95.

Reviewed by Brother Michael Montgomery, O.F.M., Religion teacher at Roger Bacon High School, Cincinnati.

High school religious educators can now rejoice in the fact that there is a text which effectively introduces the high school student to the person and message of Jesus. Authors James Finley and Michael Pennock together have produced a realistic and teachable approach to the problem of introducing the student to the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth.

In the past, the problem for the religious educator has been how to introduce Jesus effectively to the students without becoming unrealistic in approach so that students might find the person and style of Jesus believable. The authors of *Jesus and You* do this "through a careful blend of tradition, history, scripture, and contemporary media."

The first three chapters of the text develop the concept of the historical and human Jesus. The person of Jesus is contrasted with the times and culture of the Roman world as well as Jewish life and tradition in Palestine. Thus the reader perceives Jesus as really human and believable in his encounters with his contemporaries.

The next six chapters deal with the Christ of faith in an endeavor to elicit a personal commitment from the student. We are shown the faith of the early Church in regard to the resurrection of Jesus, the paschal mystery, how the early Christians viewed Jesus in their lives. Misconceptions about Jesus's humanity and divinity which arose in the Church are adequately discussed and explained in these chapters.

The last chapters propose contemporary images of Jesus and discuss their popularity and their relationship to the images of the early Christian communities. The chapters explore the images of Christ as given in the media, such as Jesus Christ Superstar, Godspell, and other movies and recordings in an attempt to guide the student to the Jesus of Scripture and not the Jesus of fad and popularity.

The text is primarily geared for the junior and senior levels, but in my experience I have found the material accepted enthusiastically by sophomore students. Many exercises and activities are suggested for use as homework assignments and/or discussion material.

The Teacher's Manual is excellent for both new and experienced teachers. Each chapter begins with a short theological survey of the chapter. The chapter is then outlined step by step for use as a semester course, a full-year course, or twelve one-hour CCD sessions. Additional resource references are available in the form of bibliography and audio-visual materials.

Never before have I been excited over the subject matter of a text as I have with *Jesus and You.* Student response to the book is enthusiastic and enjoyable. I highly recommend this book for all secondary religious educators as well as adult discussion groups.

The Resilient Church: The Necessity and Limits of Adaptation. By Avery Dulles, S.J. Garden City. NY: Doubleday, 1977. Pp. x-229, including Index. Cloth, $7.95.

Reviewed by Brother Dennis E. Tamburello, O.F.M., a second year theology student at the Washington Theological Union.

In *The Resilient Church,* Avery Dulles confronts several themes of renewal in contemporaty ecclesiology. Dulles hhas shown himself to be a good synthesizer, both in this book and in his previous work, *Models of the Church.* He situates each issue by briefly sketching its historical context and describing the main lines of current thought on the subject. In contrast to *Models,* he is much more opinionated here, taking specific stands on each issue, sometimes to the point of slipping into a rather "preachy" tone.

Underlying Dulles's approach is a *sacramental* model of the Church. He makes it clear, in fact, that this is his preference (p. 26). While this is an important model (and an appealing one for Roman Catholics), I believe that at times Dulles stresses it too much here, almost to the exclusion of other images such as the ones he himself describes in *Models.*

For example, in Chapter One (*"Rethinking the Mission of the Church"*), he makes the surprising statement that "the Church is no more subordinate to the Kingdom than the Kingdom to the Church" (p. 18). He dismisses as "theologically awkward" the idea that the Kingdom is a "wider" concept than the Church, without really defending this position with evidence. The fact is, this view of the Kingdom which he somewhat flippantly rejects has been around for a long time in our tradition. Saint Augustine once declared: "Many whom God has, the Church does not have." In my opinion, Dulles is carrying sacramentalism to an extreme in making this assertion.

This position seems to be a carryover from *Models,* where the author makes the point (over against several leading theologians) that the Church is not just "provisional" until the coming of the Kingdom but in some sense will continue to exist in the eschaton. This is plausible enough. But now he comes dangerously close

to asserting that the Kingdom and the church are *coextensive*. The Church is, indeed, a sacrament or visible sign of God's presence and activity in the world; but this is not to say that God's grace is not efficacious elsewhere, even prescinding from such awkward conceptions as "implicit" membership in the Church. The Kingdom of God, I would insist, is a symbol and cannot be reduced to the Church, even though I would agree that the Church is an essential element.

I am slso a little hesitant about accepting Dulles's conception of "mission" as he describes it in this chapter. Although he does not ignore the social dimension of the gospel, he seems to put it in a secondary place when he says that the Church's "first and foremost task is to call people to a new life in God—a life mediated especially by faith and worship" (p. 24). It should be noted that his major concern here is that "mission" should not be conceived in a purely secular sense (e.g., the cult of human progress, revolution in the socio-political order), but must relate to the transcendent dimension of existence, particularly the promise of eternal life. While this is a perfectly valid concenr, it can be equally argued that the command to love is at the heart of the gospel and that the Christian affirms the transcendent precisely through living a life of loving service as Jesus did. My impression is that Dulles tends to separate the mission of the Church from that of Christians. I would ask the crucial question: Is the Church an entity to which Christians *belong*, or is the Church *constituted* by its believers?

In Chapter Two ("Church Reform through Creative Interaction") Dulles makes a good case for a more dialectical approach to Church reform, based on the Church's relation and response to the environment in which it finds itself. "It is a matter," he asserts, "of doing what is required in order that the gospel may remain living and effective" (p. 34).

His discussion of polarization is an example of the "preachy" tone to which I referred earlier. He comes down hard on the more radical reformers of the sixties (in general, he does not seem to look kindly upon this era). In addition, I would question his assertion in this chapter that the average Christian is "uninterested in the reforms most cherished by the liberal clergy" (p. 42). He goes on to suggest that the rank-and-file Christian should be only marginally involved in Church reform, on the premise that public opinion is unstable and that authority knows best. This leans heavily on the side of an institutional model of Church. It is true that many Christians are misinformed or uniformed, but if there is to be a dialectical approach to reform, it should not just happen in the upper echelons of the Church's structure. Rather, people should be informed so that *they can participate* in the renewal. Otherwise, the polarization that Dulles is trying to eliminate will only be perpetuated.

Chapter Three ("Doctrinal Renewal") does not suffer from the imbalances I noted in the first two chapters. His "situationist view" of dogma is well presented and is based on a solid contemporary hermeneutic.

Chapter Four ("The Critique of Modernity and the Hartford Appeal") is largely an apologia for the Hartford Appeal, an ecumenical statement which, in essence, deplores the loss of a sence of the transcendent in contemporary theology (the text of the Appeal appears in the Appendix). Here Dulles lashes out at such "secularist" theologians as Langdon Gilkey and David Tracy. In gneral, I think Dulles is on the mark when he attempts to debunk the theory that the world should set the agenda for the Church. Nevertheless, I detect an excessively alarmist tone in this chapter. There is also an obvious defensiveness about the Appeal (he signed it). I found the Hartford Appeal much more appealing *before* I read this chapter than after.

Chapters Five through Nine, in my opinion, return to Dulles's more balanced approach, and I do not have major problems with the positions he espouses here. Chapter Five ("Doctrinal Authority for a Pilgrim Church") suggests a "pluralistic theory" of doctrine which recognizes an interchange between various sectors of the Church (scripture, tradition, magisterium, and the "generals ense of the faithful"). Chapter Six ("Toward a Renewed Papacy") stresses the "Petrine Function" (i.e., the fact that Peter was given responsibility for the mission and unity of the Christian community) as a more ecumenical way of speaking of the papacy and advocates a more "sacramental" view of the pope, as one who is endowed with charism and moral authority, as opposed to a "juridical" view. Chapter Seven ("Changing Concepts of Church Membership") emphasizes a "communion" model of membership in which the criterion is *conversion* with its fruits in Christian living and which thus avoids an extrinsicist conception of membership.

Chapter Eight ("Eucharistic Sharing as an Ecumenical Problem") is particularly impressive. While recognizing the very real problems of intercommunion, Dulles suggests that within given parameters Eucharistic sharing can be a sign of the growing unity of the Church of Jesus Christ. The Eucharist is not seen, then, as a reward for a state of "perfect Christianity" (if this were the case, how could *anyone* partake of the Eucharistic meal?).

Finally, Chapter Nine ("Ecumenical Strategies for a Pluralistic Age") takes a slightly hesitant but perhaps more realistic view of ecumenical dialogue. Dulles recommends that the Christian Church should strive to be a "heterogeneous community of witnessing dialogue" (p. 181). He positis unity as an ideal but does not deny that there are real theological differences which remain to besolved.

To sum up, I would say that this book contains many good insights. I found the first half (except for Chapter Three) to be somewhat variable, especially in the tone of "preachiness" which occasionally surfaced. Its main strength, as exemplified in the later chapters, is that it situates the issues well and gives concise historical background. I believe that this book can be a good source for theological discussion, both in the "professional" sphere and in more informal settings; its style is such that it can be understood by the average Christian reader.

Gospel Poverty: Essays in Biblical Theology. By Augustin George, Jacques Dupont, O.S.B., Simon Légasse, O.F.M., Philip Seidensticker, O.F.M., Beda Rigaux, O.F.M. Trans. Michael D. Guinan, O.F.M. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977. Pp. xvii-150. Cloth, $6.95.

Reviewed by Ms. Barbara Nauer, a free-lance writer living in New Orleans, and author of a memoir of Catholic life in the 1960's, Rise up and Remember *(Doubleday, 1977).*

These days it is very unlikely that a work published under Catholic auspices and with the title *Gospel Poverty* would be anything but another liberationist harangue, thinly veiling some more pro-Marxist and anti-U.S. propaganda as exegesis or "liberation theology." So this book is a welcome surprise.

Capably translated from the 1971 French edition *La pauvreté evangélique,* the work offers a collection of five papers on aspects of the subject announced in the title, papers originally delivered at a Rome meeting in June of 1970. The authors are all academics and scripture specialists, and they have carefully examined the subject of poverty the way it resides in the Old and New Testament.

Augustin George's opening essay defines clearly the meanings of *poverty* and some equivalent terms in the biblical languages, and then he goes on to show that in the Old Testament, human wisdom saw poverty as the consequence of laziness or disorder, whereas faith saw it as either a divine punishment, a scandal, or a call to discover certain religious values.

Jacques Dupont's chief concern is the New Testament. He draws upon the Gospels and Acts to show that Jesus changed the concept of poverty to a religious one. For our Lord, "the poor" signified all who were in distress, not merely the economically poor. And when Jesus encouraged his followers to be poor, he meant for them to trust perfectly in the Father's loving care.

Simon Légasse analyzes carefully Jesus's call to the rich young man (Mark 10:17, Mt. 19:21, Lk. 18:18) and challenges the traditional interpretation, the one pointing to a "lower" and "higher" form of Christian life. The *sequela Christi,* he convincingly shows, is for all Christians.

Philip Seidensticker agrees with Dupont that in the New Testament, poverty is a religious idea which does not necessarily include economic poverty, and that it involves total dependence on God. His important contribution is to show how Saint Paul departed from the older biblical spirituality in giving minimal attention to human poverty and maximum attention to the "richness of Christ."

The most memorable essay in *Gospel Poverty* is the final one, by Beda Rigaux, on "The Radicalness of the Kingdom." It reminds us that our "Lord's expectations of his followers flew in the face of traditions then current. Continence, carrying the cross, not burying one's father, leaving wife and family—all these were radical demands. Rigaux's penetrating commentary makes it plain that Jesus bound his followers to himself

with the same kind of radical interdependency that marked his own relation to the Father.

Gospel Poverty, though it has some physical flaws—typos abound—is a fine exegetical treatment. All of the selections are free of the "hobby horse" mentality that has disgraced so much Catholic scholarship since the 1950's. The writers come at the Scriptures bootless, as it were, willing to listen carefully to whatever the inspired writers appear to be saying, and not merely to prove some prior theories of their own. And from this very poverty of theirs derives their richness.

Juan de Cartagena, O.F.M. (1563-1618), The Mariology of His Homiliae Catholicae and Its Baroque Scripturism. By Sabino A. Vengco. St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1978, Pp. 335, incl. bibliography. Paper, $10.00.

Reviewed by William Kraus, O.F.M. Cap., a graduate student in Franciscan Studies at St. Bonaventure University.

"Theology does not labor somewhere high above the foundation of tradition, as though Church history began today. . . . In order to serve the community of today, theology must itself be rooted in the community of yesterday." With this wisdom from Karl Barth, Vengco introduces his book on the Mariology of Juan de Cartagena and suggests its value to the contemporary church (p. 4). Vengco claims that in studying the works of the past theologian, we learn both the positive contributions and the mistakes of his theological method and conclusions. And just as important, we understand better the relationship of his theology to the historical period in which it developed. We see how the theological language and method, the use of Scripture, the manner of preaching, and the whole cultural *Weltanschauung* of a time influence and shape that period's Christian thought. Therefore Sabino Vengco has written this work not only to acquaint us with the Mariology of Juan de Cartagena, but also to allow the lessons of Cartagena's theology in dialogue with its historical milieu to teach and serve theology today.

In this three-part book, Vengco presents in a very thorough and scholarly way Cartagena's life and works, his Mariology, and his use of Scripture in preaching and teaching. Our author seeks first to clear up much of the confusion about Cartagena's life, background, and theological career. Through a careful study of all the available records Vengco establishes Cartagena's Spanish origins and culture—important in their influence on his religious expression and Baroque style—and then traces his history as a Jesuit and Franciscan, as a recognized and sometimes controversial preacher and teacher, and as a strong papal advocate. Vengco includes in these historical data a comprehensive detailed listing of all Cartagena's known works and the Western European and North American libraries in which they can be found. He then analyzes Cartagena's typical works, drawing out their literary characteristics and the biblical, patristic, and ecclesiastical sources they use

Part Two of the book is the longest and most important, a presentation

of Cartagena's Mariology as found especially in his four-volume collection of homilies, the *Homiliae Catholicae*. In discussing the three central Marian doctrines of the Immaculate Conception, the Assumption, and Mary's perpetual virginity, Vengco considers two points: first, Cartagena's systematic teaching about Mary; and then, his use of Scripture in support of his teaching. Vengco finds in this 17th-century theologian a capable if not innovative teacher and preacher of the Mariology inherited from earlier centuries. But Cartagena is quite original in much of his biblical exegesis and his use of Scripture to support and enhance the developing Marian doctrines. Typical of his time, he is caught up with the *sensus mysticus* of Sacred Scripture and is a master at applying the spiritual and mystical interpretations of biblical passages to his Mariology. Vengco demonstrates the fertility of Cartagena's imagination and his imitation of fellow authors in mystically interpreting animals, plants, buildings, historical persons and events, and numerous other images and types and metaphors—mostly from the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament—to prove his Mariological conclusion. Here Vengco takes a critical look at the interpretation of Scripture prevalent in Cargagena's time and cites instances of its often labored and irresponsible use in preaching and theology.

In the third part, Vengco concludes from the foregoing discussion that Cartagena was both a product and a proponent of a theological-cultural style of expression he calls "Baroque." The Baroque in art and literature was characterized by the practice, indeed the passion, of reaching to the extremes of the allegorical and climbing to the heights of the symbolic, of preferring the most profound and obscure to the more obvious and literal. In his Baroque homiletics and scripturism, Cartagena carries the mystical and spiritual biblical exegesis of the Middle Ages to its extreme imaginative and symbolic application. He justified such exegesis by the "silence" of Sacred Scripture regarding the Marian mysteries, a silence which he says does not deny the presence of Marian doctrinal arguments in the Scriptures but rather challenges the theologian to find these arguments in the deeper mystical understanding of the Bible. Vengco shows that this scriptural use, and sometimes abuse, exemplifies well the "Baroque" theology and preaching of the time.

Vengco's work is clearly organized and well written and is an attractive volume appearing as No. 8 in the Franciscan Institute Theology Series. The book will not have a wide appeal, but it should have a strong one for the theologian interested in the development of Mariology as well as for the historian of theology interested in the homiletics and scripturism of the post-Reformation and Spanish Baroque periods. To those scholars we recommend this study of Juan de Cartagena and his *Homiliae Catholicae*. How valuable Cartagena and his thought are to the theological past's service of the present will ultimately be decided by the readers of this book. For his part, Vengco has done his work well.