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CONTENTS

JESUS, TOTAL REDEEMER	282
<i>A Review Editorial</i>	
LOOK AT JESUS	283
<i>Charles van Corstanje, O.F.M.</i>	
WITH BONAVENTURE IN PRAYER	288
<i>Marigwen Schumacher</i>	
WALLS OF REFLECTION	300
<i>Sister Marie Joette Ebert, O.S.F.</i>	
MUSINGS ON CONTEMPLATION—II	302
<i>Conrad Schomske, O.F.M.</i>	
BOOK REVIEWS	310



COVER AND ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

The cover and illustrations for our October issue were drawn by Sister Mary Regina, P.C.P.A., except for the one on page 301, by Brother John Francis Tyrrell, F.F.S.C.

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Jesus, Total Redeemer

LOOK AT JESUS, Father Charles van Corstanje repeatedly and exquisitely exhorts us in the poem following this editorial. From Orbis Books come two new works urging us to do the same thing and providing some quite specific and effective help in doing so.

Jesus, the Stranger comprises 52 meditative sermons given by White Father Joseph G. Donders, a Dutch missionary who heads the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies in Nairobi, Kenya.

The sermons are divided into six main groups paralleling the periods of our Lord's life, from "Beginnings" through his public ministry, Passion, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, Pentecost and "beyond." Far from being simple expositions or dry instructions, they are replete with poetic imagery and concrete detail often supplied by the author's fertile imagination. They are, in fact, printed in verse form and abound in rhetorical devices, particularly frequent and extended repetition.

The book takes its title from the thirty-seventh sermon, entitled "Expatriate Jesus," in which the point is made that only the Lord himself can reveal himself to us, but he does so *from within*. Our belief in him bespeaks something present in us that enables us to "recognize" him. In widely varied ways and often with very specific reference to his African experience, Father Donders facilitates that recognition on every page of this exquisite book.

A work published in poetic format should receive detailed criticism of a literary sort—more so than is the case with prose; but rather than devote scarce editorial space to that in this forum, we are forwarding suggestions to the publisher for future editions. Here it is more important to concentrate on the author's underlying vision, which emerges frequently in the sermons but most explicitly in the twentieth and fiftieth: "Sins Are the Trouble" and "Advent or Utopia."

(Continued on page 309)

Jesus, the Stranger: Reflections on the Gospels. By Joseph G. Donders. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1978. Pp. viii-290. Cloth, \$8.95; paper, \$4.95.

Thy Will Be Done: Praying the Our Father as Subversive Activity. By Michael H. Crosby, O.F.M.Cap. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1977. Pp. viii-254, including indices. Cloth, \$8.95; paper, \$4.95.

Look at Jesus

CHARLES VAN CORSTANJE, O.F.M.

Just three words,
but in these three words is the mystery
of our existence.

See Heb. 12:2

Look at Jesus

in Holy Scripture, to learn who he is,
What he has done, what he gives, what
he asks of us.

There, in his actions, in his teaching,
in his commandments, in his promises,
we shall find our example, learn wisdom,
discover our happiness, enjoy the perfect
satisfaction

of all our needs.

If we look for him there, we shall find him
and be glad.

No one can be concerned with him in
faith

without being caught up by him,
for he is our gladness.

See Mt. 2:10; Lk. 1:14; 1:44; 2:10;
Jn. 3:29; 15:11; 16:20; 16:22; 16:24;
17:13

Look at Jesus

who was crucified
according to the Scriptures for our sins,
so that we can find peace and reconcilia-
tion in his cross,

for he is the Lamb who takes away all
our sins.

Jn. 1:29, 36

Look at Jesus

who rose again from the dead to obtain
for us grace and holiness.

We are unworthy and incorrigible,

but in him and with him and through him
we may turn
to his Father and our Father,
for he is our brother.

See Mt. 12:48; 25:40; 28:10

Look at Jesus

who was glorified
so that we might find our constant
intercessor in him
who lives to pray for us,
for he is our high priest.

See Heb. 4:14

Look at Jesus

who reveals himself to us through the
Holy Spirit
to banish darkness from our hearts
and calm our rebellious will,
so that we may go through life upright
and just,
for he is the light in our darkness.

See Jn. 1:4, 9; 3:19; 5:35

Look at Jesus

who makes us repent of our sins.
He who is without sin makes us pure
when we come into contact with him,
for he is the holy one.

See Jn. 3:19; Rev. 5:12

Look at Jesus

so that we can obtain from him every day
the strength that we need to carry out
our tasks,
for he is the power that reveals itself
in our weakness.

See Lk. 6:19; 9:1; 2 Cor. 12:9

Father Charles van Corstanje, O.F.M., is the author of Francis, Bible of the Poor. A member of the Dutch Province, he is a frequent contributor to Franciscan periodicals, including the Franciscan Herald, in which this beautiful meditation first appeared. It is reprinted here with permission.

Look at Jesus
 so that we can cease looking at ourselves
 and forget ourselves,
 so that our joy can be made holy and our
 sorrow pure,
 so that he can make us small and
 therefore great,
 so that he can make us sorrowful and
 therefore glad,
 so that he can take away from us
 everything that is worthless
 and give us what is lasting in its place,
 so that he can teach us how to pray and
 hear our prayer,
 so that he will let us live in his world,
 without being of it,
 so that he may show us
 how to make the little world of our
 everyday existence
 a little bit more like God's world
 and people will be able to recognize him
 in our words, in the way we look at them,
 in our judgments, in our brotherly love,
 for he is our teacher,
 our guide,
 our model.

*See Mt. 8:19; 10:24; 19:16; 23:8; 23:10;
 Mk. 5:35; Lk. 6:40; 22:11; Jn. 11:28;
 Mt. 2:6; 3:17; Jn. 13:1-15*

Look at Jesus
 who returned to his Father's house
 to prepare a place for us.
 He has overcome death.
 Beyond death we will meet him
 and be at peace.
 No power will be able to prevent this
 meeting,
 for his love is stronger than death.

See Jn. 17:20-26

Look at Jesus
 who will come again on the day and at the
 hour
 determined by the Father;
 who will come again soon—
 soon for those who watch out
 for him
 soon for those who are not
 expecting him,
 For he is faithful to his promises.

See Mt. 26:64; 1 Cor. 4-9; Heb. 2:17

Look at Jesus
 the foundation and fulfillment of our faith.
 He is our entire faith,
 he who goes before us, who supports and
 encourages us,
 men of little faith,
 until we have overcome sin and death
 in him and with him,
 for he is the great shepherd of the sheep.

See Heb. 13:20

Look at Jesus
 and at nothing and no one else.
 Look away from everything else. Look
 only at him.
 Do not think that this will set you apart
 from the world,
 apart from other people, apart from your
 earthly task,
 for he is the way, the only way, the
 right way.

See Jn. 14:6

Look at Jesus
 and not at yourself—your profound
 thoughts,
 your dreams of grandeur, your excellent
 taste,
 your noble aspirations, your ambitious
 plans,
 for he is the servant of God and the
 Most High.

See Phil. 2:6-12

Look at Jesus
 and not at the world,
 at what is to be desired, possessed,
 and enjoyed in it.
 Do not fear that this may make you seek
 flight from the world.
 Jesus did not seek flight from the world.
 No one has ever been so close to the
 world as he was.
 Desire, possess, and enjoy him.
 for in him all things were created in
 heaven and on earth.

See Col. 1:16

Look at Jesus
 and not at sin, at illicit pleasure,
 at the elation of the moment,

which only makes our loneliness sadder,
 for he is our glory.

See Jn. 15:10-11

Look at Jesus
 and not at systems,
 however evangelical they may be,
 however well thought they may be
 theologically,
 however up to date and new in their
 formulation.
 Faith that saves and sanctifies is not a
 rational assent
 to the teaching of the gospel,
 but a personal bond with the Redeemer.
 It is not enough simply to know who
 Jesus is—
 you must possess him.
 for he who has the Son has life.

See 1 Jn. 5:12

Look at Jesus
 and not at our prayers and talks about
 the Bible,
 our unforgettable meetings.
 These are all good and necessary,
 but we should not confuse them with
 the grace that is Jesus himself.
 They are ways in which he reveals himself
 to us.
 We must not overlook the one
 who has given content and meaning to
 all these things,
 for he is the head of the body,
 the Church; he is the beginning.

See Col. 1:18

Look at Jesus
 and not at the function you have in the
 Church,
 not at the education you have received
 and not at the respect that others have
 for you
 because of your piety—real or presumed.
 Some of those who prophesy in his name
 may hear him say: 'I do not know you.'
 but for his Father, he will recognize
 the least of those who looked at him,
 for he is our judgment.

See Jn. 5:30; 9:39; Mt. 25:31

Look at Jesus
 and not at your brothers,
 not even the best and most likeable of
 them.
 Do not think that this will make you go
 astray and become inhuman and
 unloving.
 Even my most beloved brother cannot
 say to me:
 'Live from me. Think, feel, and do as I do.
 Eat and drink me.'
 He can never be the basis of my
 existence.
 Only Jesus can be that,
 for only he is the living bread
 that came down from heaven.

See Jn. 6:33, 35, 48, 50

Look at Jesus
 and not at your enemies or his enemies.
 Only he can overcome hatred by his love,
 for he did not answer back when he was
 insulted
 and did not utter threats when he was
 made to suffer;
 by his wounds we have been healed.

1 Pt. 2:23-24



Look at Jesus
 so that we can cease looking at ourselves
 and forget ourselves,
 so that our joy can be made holy and our
 sorrow pure,
 so that he can make us small and
 therefore great,
 so that he can make us sorrowful and
 therefore glad,
 so that he can take away from us
 everything that is worthless
 and give us what is lasting in its place,
 so that he can teach us how to pray and
 hear our prayer,
 so that he will let us live in his world,
 without being of it,
 so that he may show us
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 who will come again on the day and at the
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which only makes our loneliness sadder,
 for he is our glory.

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 rational assent
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 the grace that is Jesus himself.
 They are ways in which he reveals himself
 to us.
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 Even my most beloved brother cannot
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 Only Jesus can be that,
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Look at Jesus
 and not at your enemies or his enemies.
 Only he can overcome hatred by his love,
 for he did not answer back when he was
 insulted
 and did not utter threats when he was
 made to suffer;
 by his wounds we have been healed.

1 Pt. 2:23-24



Look at Jesus
and not at our problems.
If you are surrounded by problems
it is all the more important to look
up at him.
We should not say too quickly:
'I am intelligent enough to solve all my
problems.'
We must use our intelligence,
but our problems surprise us, tire us, and
test us.
They come again and again, from dark
forces,
and cannot be overcome by our intelli-
gence alone—
only by Jesus,
for he will bring to light
the things that are now hidden in
darkness.

1 Cor. 4:5

Look at Jesus
and not at your own sadness, so as not
to be cast down.
not at your joy, so as not to be
blinded by it,
and not at the interest of your own
group
or at your own individual interests.
Seek his honor so that you will be able to
count on his favor,
for 'if anyone loves me, he will keep my
word
and my Father will love him
and we will come to him and make our
home with him.'

Jn. 14:23

Look at Jesus
and not at your own decisions, energy,
and inventiveness.
Rely on his love
and on the fact that your name resounds
in his heart,
for 'I have called your friends.'

See Jn. 15:15

Look at Jesus
and not at the law.
The law commands, but does not bestow
power.

Jesus is the fulfillment of the law.
He has the right to ask for our obedience,
and he claims our hearts and our most
secret thoughts.
But his yoke is easy and his burden
light.
Look at him
so that you will be able to understand
the breadth and length and height and
depth
of the love of Christ, which surpasses
all knowledge.

See Eph. 3:18

Look at Jesus
and not at what we do for him,
not at our successes or our talents.
We can so easily work hard with empty
hearts,
achieve results with no proof of blessing.
Talents are important
only if we use them for him who gave
them to us.
They do nothing to increase our own
value;
they only show the glory of the Giver.
Look at Jesus, who said:
'My food is to do the will of him who
sent me
and to accomplish his work.'

See Jn. 4:34

Look at Jesus
and not at the degree of your own
faith.
If your faith is weak, you can easily
be discouraged.
If your faith is strong, you can become
proud.
Our strength is to be found not in the
quality of our faith,
but in Jesus,
who said: 'Abide in me, and I in you ...
Apart from me, you can do nothing.'

See Jn. 15:4-5

Look at Jesus
Anyone who is full of him
will love his brothers and sisters,
tolerate his annoying brother or sister,

forgive his enemies.
He will be fully committed to a better
society.
He will be brave and magnanimous,
endlessly patient.
He will never despair.
He will see the light in the darkness.
He will understand the signs of God's
kingdom.
He will recognize Jesus's redemptive
love
through all the destructive powers of this
world.
He will be happy and at peace,
be a little piece of paradise,
a song in a pessimistic world—
a world wonderfully created by God.
A holy desire will grow in him
to go on pilgrimage with Jesus,
together with his brothers and sisters in
this world,
with a firm hope that he will experience
the hour
when we shall all be like him
and see him as he really is.

See 1 Jn. 3:2

Forgive, then, and you will begin to live. When Jesus
said, "Love your enemies," it was not so much for your
enemies' sake as for your own. For when you hate, you
become small and petty, and the worm of decay eats at
your heart, and the taste in your mouth is bitter. But when
you forgive and love those who persecute you, you grow
big and surpass even your own imaginings of what
you could become. Love is expansive and its taste is
sweet to the mouth.

—Murray Bodo, O.F.M., in
Song of the Sparrow, p. 11
St. Anthony Messenger Press

Look at Jesus
brothers and sisters, do not leave
Jerusalem.
Jesus died and was buried for us too
and is dead and buried again and again.
Every time we come into contact with the
suffering, the mockery, and the scandal
of the cross, we turn away, dismayed,
from him.
(We are, after all, only human.)
Stay in Jerusalem, until, praying and
purified by penance and conversion,
we see him again with the eyes of our
hearts.



We were on the way to Emmaus,
running ahead of him in flight,
looking for a more 'human' form of
spiritual life,
when suddenly, we shall recognize him
again
in the words of Scripture and the breaking
of the bread.
We shall know: The Lord is there.
He was there the whole time.
He will make our hearts burn within us.

With Bonaventure in Prayer

MARIGWEN SCHUMACHER

THERE ARE moments when one is gently led to confront the half-questions which lie restlessly and relentlessly below the daily surface of conscious thought and activity. Such a moment came upon me when I read—and as I re-read—Kieran Kay's honest and profound words about "Francis and Prayer" which appeared in the August, 1976 issue of *THE CORD*. Not only am I deeply moved by his experiential prayer-life, but I feel myself led to face, as seriously and as honestly as I can, similar questions about my own prayer-relationship with the Triune God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Although I have no canonical Franciscan affiliation, I have delved into Franciscan origins; walked with Francis and Bonaventure the hills and streets of Assisi, Bagnoregio, LaVerna; traveled to their abodes in Rome and Paris; entered into many of those forces which shaped and molded them as Heralds of the Great King. How, then, have I been molded and shaped by their witness?

Since I maintain that my interest in Bonaventure is spiritual as well as scholarly, I must look into what he says about prayer. How does he pray? What was his experience and method of prayer? But even more urgently, how does Bonaventure affect my prayer-life? What does he say to me about prayer? What is my prayer? What have I learned from him? Where do I now stand in prayer before my God? Do I grow more Christlike each day in responding to needs and graces and gifts, or do I stay safely uninvolved in efforts which would demand more of me than I am willing to give? How do I break through the layers of complacency, of protective coverings, to move into the radical Christianity demanded by the Gospel message? Wherein do I admire Francis and Bonaventure as Heralds of the Great King? Now is a time to face these questions: to look into my prayer, my priorities, my promises; nay, rather, it is a time to look deeply into what the Lord God Yahweh is saying to me in breeze, flower, scripture, person!

Miss Marigwen Schumacher is the author/translator of Bonaventure; Rooted in Faith (*Franciscan Herald Press*) and has contributed several articles on Bonaventure to *THE CORD*. Since 1975 she has served as Consultant in Humanities with the Indiana Humanities Project and currently resides in Richmond, Indiana.

It is a time seriously to listen to the Spirit who prompts and challenges, enfolds and nourishes, breathes in us new life, new hope, new love, new insight—that wondrous *novitas* which contains all the opposites of Ecclesiastes's *vanitas*.

Lord Jesus, you know that these ponderings are deep within my being, that they are infused there by your Holy Spirit entering into me to bring about your will in my life and to lead me constantly towards that tremendous moment when you will gather me into your arms and bring me into the home of our Father. Enter into me now that I may see and feel and taste and know you in Bonaventure's belief and prayer and thus be more open and touched by your wondrous presence in my every moment. Let the words of my heart and the touch of my fingers create tribute of praise to the glory of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

In considering how Bonaventure prays and what he tells us about a life that is prayer, I do not intend to provide an exhaustive trip through the *Opera Omnia*. I should, however, like to ponder upon a very few excerpts from his writings and through them try to enter into his experience of prayer—or, more accurately, my experience of his experience of prayer. This method involves risks of being

unscholarly, biased, personal; but for me there is no other way but to risk that kind of directness and involvement with what I am seeking with prayer-filled quest. It is easy enough to go through Bonaventure's collected writings to cull his statements on prayer and prayer-forms. It is much less easy to enter into significant passages in order to experience in them what Bonaventure experienced. Can we meet the personal Bonaventure through and beneath his roles as teacher, Minister General, retreat director, pastor?

We all know that Bonaventure rarely speaks in the first person. However, a prayerful reading of his recorded words brings one to sense something of his personal prayer-stance. Probably the most clearly expressed text is found in the small letter to a friar-friend—the *epistola continens XXV memorialia* (VIII, 491-98). Bonaventure wrote the letter in response to the repeated asking ("mihi instantissime supplicasti") of this friar-friend for a handy outline, a brief compendium, for everyday living in prayerful stance before God. In his reply, Bonaventure shares some personal reflections, attitudes, practices about prayer and his own prayer-life. In the Prologue, he writes:

I am writing you, however, not any special suggestions but rather

those unpolished and straightforward guidelines which I have been intending to gather together for myself [VIII, 491a].

Again, at the end of the letter, Bonaventure repeats this personal tone:

I have written these, dear friend, not because I thought you needed such a list, but because these are the very same ones that I had gathered together for my own self . . . and I thought to share them with you as a trusted teammate [VIII, 498a].

Thus it seems reasonable to accept the letter and its "memorialia" as a very direct statement from Bonaventure concerning his own prayer-practices. Continuing in the Prologue, we read:

No one, as experience certainly shows, can serve God perfectly unless he takes care to free himself completely from the pressures of this world. We should strive, then, that unencumbered by earthly concerns, we may, with unshackled footsteps, follow after our Redeemer . . .

Never, therefore, let us allow our heart to be anxious about any created thing except in so far as it enkindles our awareness of the warmth and passion of divine love. Reflecting unduly upon the myriad variety of ephemeral things troubles the spirit and sunders the agreeable quiet of one's tranquil mind. Moreover, by creating in our spirits phantasms of turbulence and affliction, uneasiness strikes violently against us. Much better

to lay aside the heavy burden of worldly concerns and, with no slowing impediment, to run towards Him who invites us, in whom is sumptuous refreshment and total peace which is far beyond human understanding (Phil. 4:7) [VIII, 491b].

At this point, Bonaventure moves into that direct prayer which flows so easily from what he is speaking of, reminding us that prayer is not that which we talk about but that which we do as naturally as we breathe and as constantly:

"Come to me," he says, "all you who labor and are heavy-burdened, and I will refresh you" (Mt. 11:28). O Lord, whom do you need? Why do you call? What is common between us? O wondrous consideration of our God! O unutterable Love! Lo! He invites enemies, urges culprits, charms cynics! "Come," he says, "To me, all of you, and learn from me; take my yoke upon you, and you will find rest for your spirits" (Mt. 11:29). O honeysweet words, fragrant, God-formed! Wake up, now, O Christian spirit, to love such intense friendship, to taste such sweet pleasure, to breathe such spritely fragrance! Take fire now, my spirit. Grow rich, be sweetened in the compassion of your God, in the gentleness of your God, in the love of your Betrothed. Blaze with the passion of your Beloved. Grow rich in his love. Be sweetened by his food. Let no one hinder you from walking in, taking possession, and enjoying this feast [VIII, 491a-92b].

It is almost impossible to capture in translation the rich lushness of word-choice and physical sensation of Bonaventure's dialogue. Instinctive and deliberate are the words—e.g., *inardescere*, *pinguescere*, *dulcescere*; i.e., become on fire, be growing fat/rich, come to know sweetness, etc. Such fullness of practical imagery increases the reality of his conversation with God and asks us to share the same everyday yet end-of-life intimacy with our God, Beloved, Nourisher, Creator, Companion.

Feeling deeply drawn by such a call, yet I seek for some easy "how to do it" guide, especially in my 20th-century fragmented life. There is a brief insight in Bonaventure's *De Triplici Via*, §5: ". . . that the loving spirit be always saying to the Lord: 'I am seeking you, I hope in you, I desire you, I stand in you, I receive you, I exult in you, and I cling to you for all time'" [VIII, 15b].

Still needing "specifics"—how

Freed from all things and desiring nothing of this earth,
disregarding all creatures, with great force of mind and fervor of desire,
stretch towards your Creator
so that, forgetful of all lesser objects
whatsoever you do,
wheresoever you stand,
with whomsoever you engage in affairs,
day and night,
every moment and every hour,
have God always in your thought,
trusting and considering

did Bonaventure manage to be "always saying to the Lord" in his busy, activity-oriented life?—I turn again to the *epistola continens XXV memorialia*. In one of the longest sections of this letter (§22), Bonaventure gives us a vivid glimpse into the life that is prayer. Accepting his words as personal testimony from his maturing prayer-life (even though we cannot precisely date the letter), I feel drawn into the intensity of his experience and am swept into closeness, challenge, loving warmth and wonder. The series of vignettes provides a rich source of *in situ* meditative prayer moving through all the phases of prayer-types and through the whole panoply of doctrine and of human experience. Once again his words are vibrant, creedal, emotive, and powerful. Surely there is sufficient wealth therein to fit every need and whim, mood and action of my life and enable all to be immersed in prayerful communion with my God. Listen with me to Bonaventure's charge:

that you are most really in his Presence,
and reflecting that he catches sight of you
from all sides.

With great reverence and respect and with pulsing attention,
with the greatest discernment and most ardent love,
reflect upon these postures:

- now prostrate before the feet of his immense Majesty, keep asking pardon for sins;
- now pierced by the sword of compassion for the most sacred Passion of the Son of God, appear beside him, wounded and tear-filled;
- now imagine the course of his whole life as a line of straightness for your twisting path;
- now devote yourself to acts of thanksgiving as you think about his innumerable and immeasurable gifts;
- now stung by the touch of his most ardent love, gaze upon him in all his creatures;
- now observing his power, now his wisdom, now his goodness and mercy, praise him exuberantly in all his works;
- now drawn by longing for our heavenly home, come to him with heavy sighs;
- now seeing around us the inner secrets of his inestimable love, surrender to him with joy-filled and overflowing wonder in heart and spirit;
- now feel yourself running towards him, now fleeing, now God holding you, uplifting and drawing you towards himself;
- now see yourself ungrateful in everything, even though the ineffable secrets of divine compassion are opened for you, and give yourself totally to him, releasing your whole self in tears;
- now indeed adore him in all things with the greatest love, reverence and respect, faithful and constant, alert, suppliant and humble, carefully considering the evidences of his justice—evidences which are so secret, deep, honor-filled, so special and so wonder-filled.
Beyond all else, bear in spirit and body a constant living memory of his most sacred Passion [VIII, 496a-b].

So many words, phrases, scenes of our Lord's Passion is well known to all who are even vaguely acquainted with his work —e.g., *Lignum Vitae*, *Officium de Passione Domini*, *Vitis Mystica*,

et al. I am struck by word and phrase reminders of the several steps of the *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* written on LaVerna in 1259 and possibly the best known of all Bonaventure's treatises.

Opposed as I am to capsulized versions which rob the life-blood from the original text, I now find it expeditious to use just such a capsule of the *Itinerarium* in order to share my reaction. Ex-

- | | | |
|-------------|----|---|
| —extra nos: | 1a | per vestigia eius in universo
(through the indications of him in the universe) |
| | 1b | in vestigiis suis in hoc sensibili mundo
(in the indications of him in the animal world) |
| —intra nos: | 2a | per suam imaginem
(through persons created in his image) |
| | 2b | in sua imagine
(in persons restored by his grace) |
| —supra nos: | 3a | per eius nomen primum, quod est "esse"
(through his basic name, that of Being") |
| | 3b | in eius nomine, quod est "bonum"
in his name, that of "Goodness"
(cf. <i>Itinerarium</i> , list of chapter headings, V, 296). |

It is in this context that I find myself when I encounter his suggestion, cited earlier, "now stung by the touch of his most ardent love, gaze upon him in all his creatures; now, observing his power, now his wisdom, now his goodness and mercy, praise him exuberantly in all his works." The interweaving of God in Love, in creation, in power, wisdom, goodness, and being is the finite, tangible yet ineffable reality upon which Bonaventure based his life-love.

It is to the *Itinerarium* that I

plaining that we move "into God" in a threefold subdivided series of "illuminationes scalares"—i.e., steps by which our understanding is moved from consideration of things "Extra nos" through those "intra nos" until we finally stretch towards comprehension of Him who is "Supra nos," Bonaventure presents, as steps up the ladder, this outline for consideration of God

owe my first association with Bonaventure. In 1968, I read/taught it in a college Latin course for young future Franciscans. How little I then appreciated the vast riches contained therein, and how much these recent years have brought me to realize that the *Itinerarium* is a lived experience and not just an intellectual study! The ladder-sequence does, indeed, move in just that line of progression—or at least it has for me—unplanned and unprogrammed. Now, reflecting, I can see bits and pieces which

indicate the sometimes momentary, sometimes steady growth “in Deum” that has become part of my life. Not that the progression is ever finished or that one step is finalized before another begins; they slide back and forth like an escalator or the angels on Jacob’s ladder “ascending and descending.”

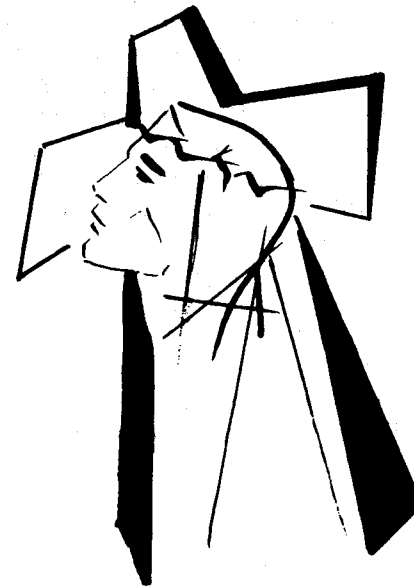
Flowers and mountains and sunsets and all have long spoken to me of the glory of God; so there was no problem in the initial “per vestigia eius in universo.” But I vividly remember a moment some six years ago when the Presence of God “in vestigiis suis” became suddenly tangible for me. It was early spring, after several days of cold, gray rain, and the sun began shyly to shine through. I was walking alone through the lovely Japanese garden at the Motel-on-the-Mountain at Suffern, New York, delighting in the pure simplicity of the arrangement of rocks and plants. As I gazed at the little spring flowers brightly in blossom, there came, with unexplainable suddenness, an understanding experience of “knowing” that GOD IS BEAUTY and that Beauty, in the abstract *eidōs/idea* of philosophers from Plato on, is a reality and a God-reality to our world. Beauty, then, IS God, and the touches, glimpses, snatches of beauty which surround us are, indeed, sparks scraps, *scintillae*, *vestigia*,

images, mirrors, minuscule microscopic bits of that divine *Eidōs* who is God. I had never before understood the philosophers’ abstractions; for mine is not the “philosophical mind.” But from this insight into Beauty, I have become at least a little able to fathom the related ideas of Good, Truth, Love, Being. It was at this time that the statement in the Creed, “one in Being with the Father,” began to take on untold dimensions of reality and awe as I proclaim it in public liturgy and in private prayer. Understanding comes slowly to those of us conditioned to rational thought and logical reasoning. But God is patient with our slowness, and “surely his Goodness and Truth will pursue me all the days of my life” (Ps. 23).

In other ways, through the myriad identity crises of these years which have brought about a maturing awareness and self-acceptance, I have become able to see God both “per suam imaginem” and “in sua imagine” in myself and in those persons who touch my life. “Love others as you love yourself” becomes possible only as I learn to love myself because God is in me and I am his witness to this world just as every other person is, who also bears his image. And occasionally there are those gift-given moments of touching—although in a very surface-scratch fashion—that which is “supra

nos”—“per nomen eius,” that of “Being,” and “in nomine eius,” that of “Goodness.” These are fleeting insights, and yet some tiny residue remains to strengthen and encourage, steady and support me through the difficult darkness towards the Light eternal.

“Every good gift and every perfect gift comes down from the Father of Lights.” This text from James 1:17 is often used by Bonaventure in lectures and homilies and is the opening scriptural quotation for the *Itinerarium*. Gift-given grace and God-gifted insight/understanding are the twin bases for our individual *itineraria in Deum*. This dual focus of openness of heart and concentration of intellect is Bonaventure’s characteristic posture



in the LaVerna event as throughout his life. He tells us that he was in prayer, in solitude/silence, pondering upon Francis’s experience of the seraphic Christ, when “suddenly it became obvious to me what ‘visio illa’ of Francis presented” (*Itin.*, Prol., 2). In a passage in the *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*—that significant lecture series interrupted by the summons to Lyons in 1274—Bonaventure tells us:

Discernment is needed “in visione.” Unless the word [Word] sounds in the ear of the heart, His brightness shine in the eye, unless the warm breath of the Almighty be in his nostrils, His sweetness in his taste, foreverness fill his spirit, no one is ready “ad intelligendas visiones” [III, 22; *Opera Omnia*, V, 347a].

To understand fully interior and exterior vision-reality demands the confluence of mind and heart. There is a oneness of our cognitive and affective faculties moving back and forth, blending and integrating. Apparent dichotomies reveal themselves as analogs: mind and heart, disciplined and spontaneous, probed and prompted, active and passive, forming and fashioned, reflective and perceptive, observing flower and seeing beauty, studying scripture and knowing Wisdom, searching truth and learning humility, touching another’s hurt and being healed within, facing frustration and

finding faith. All these join in the unity of God-gift to me this moment and always.

What else does Bonaventure teach me of prayer? In one of his homily outlines, developed on the text, "My house will be a house of prayer" (Lk. 19:46), he leaves us some rich sources for meditation and prayer.¹ Although we have only the barest indication of Bonaventure's expansion of the text in the actual moment of preaching, we are fortunate in that the manuscripts do preserve some sense of his introduction and the outline of his development with the scripture quotations used. These alone provide us with a feast of Old and New Testament scenes and situations of prayer and parallels for our present-day ailments and their remedies. But it is the basic image-metaphor of his homily which captures and challenges me most poignantly:

... the whole effort of our salvation stresses the proper and consistent practice of prayer. In this regard, there are three things necessary for prayer to be pleasing and welcome to God. These are:

1. *Praeparatio*—a "making ready" must lead the way to prayer.

2. *Attentio*—attentiveness must accompany prayer.

3. *Exsultatio*—passionate joy must follow close after prayer. These correspond to the three actions of prayer: scrubbing, brightening, and polishing [pp. 7-8].

Again Bonaventure uses such ordinary language, developing a deep prayer theme around daily life routines of housewifely chores or medical practice. How can I, then, separate my prayer from my daily round of duties, chores, routines? His subdivisions and their scriptural support offer much nourishment for my oft-repeated question, "How should I pray?" How many times I rush right into prayer, demanding of the Lord without any—or very little—*praeparatio* to enable me to wind down from anxieties and activities and properly to focus on Him whom I approach. How carefully do I maintain that *attentio* on God alone during my prayer-time, ruthlessly casting aside all the distractions and concerns which haunt me? Because I so often fail in these two considerations, is that the reason that I all too seldom experience Bonaventure's *exsultatio* after my prayer? By definition, "exsultare" denotes

a passionate, uncontrolled joy... The *exsultans* shows this by a voluntary, full resignation of himself to joy, which displays itself, if not by skipping and jumping, at least by an indiscreet outbreak of joy bordering on extravagance.²

Bonaventure tells us in the homily-outline we are now considering (p. 13) that "this joy is welcome and is an awareness

God of joy,
you're in your essence
(the way you're justice and peace)
because you're love
and because love is supreme joy.

.....
You're my joy, Lord,
my joy as a person,
because you've made me capable of joy,
capable of your joy;
and because my thirst for infinite joy
can be slaked only in your eternity.

Forgive me, Lord, for all my blasphemies
against your joy,
and for the arid days
when I lost Faith in it.

.....
And accept the hymn of praise which I send up to you,
so that it may blend
with the eternal song of your joy:
"Amen!" "Alleluia!"³

The quality of joy, so vital to our love-song with God, is far too often unknown in our pray-

of blessing.... This exuberant joy develops from the enjoyment of Presence This joy must be alive with that deep sense of protection." And John records Jesus's words: "that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete" (Jn. 15:11).

I seek to sing, in the words of Joseph Folliet:

life. But when I believe in Bonaventure's directives, I find myself constantly challenged to invite

¹Dom. IX post Pentecosten, sermo 2, preached in Paris at the house of the Dominicans. This is translated from the Latin of *Opera Omnia*, IX, 390-92, in Marigwen Schumacher, *Bonaventure: Rooted in Faith* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1974), pp. 7-13.

²Doderlein's *Hand-Book of Latin Synonyms* (Andover: Warren F. Draper, 1869), p. 92.

³Joseph Folliet, *Invitation to Joy* (Ramsey, NJ: Newman Press, 1968), pp. 28-29.

joy in, *to let joy be*—in me and splash forth as God's witness upon others.

Another facet of prayer is the use of the prayer-phrase. This aid to praying constantly is as ancient as the Eastern Oriental mantra forms and the Eastern Christian tradition of the Jesus prayer from the writings of the *Philokalia*. It continues in Charismatic prayer and in certain strands of Quaker prayer. As far as I know, Bonaventure does not specifically mention such prayer, but I speculate that it was a part of his prayer-life. Certainly the prayer-phrase is rooted in Scripture—in Psalm refrain especially—and in the oft-repeated formulae of liturgical prayer. Francis is remembered for his repeated "Deus meus et omnia" as recorded in the Fioretti, which expands upon the account, found both in Celano and in Bonaventure, of Bernardino's hosting of Francis. In the magnificent chapel at St. Bonaventure University, the central terra cotta reredos depicts the twin experiences of Francis and Bonaventure on LaVerna with the seraphic Christ. With Francis in ecstasy of vision are the words, "Deus meus et omnia"; with Bonaventure, the book which becomes the *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* and the words taken from the *Collationes in Hexaëmeron* (I, 17—V, 332b): "Domine, exivi a te summo, venio ad te

summum et per te summum" (Lord, I came forth from you, I come to you, and through you, Most High). In context, these words are a prayer of empathy patterned after those of Jesus himself in John 16:28. I have come to realize the appropriateness of their choice for the reredos scene and to feel in them a true Bonaventurian prayer-phrase even though I know there is no "proof" for such a statement. To me, at least, the statement is basic to his prayer, basic to his life, basic to his witness in just the same way that Francis's words are for his. I think we could also discover the central prayer-text of other spiritual friends and be aided by them to move closer on our journey into God. For example, I have come to believe that Mary's joyous words to Elizabeth, "My whole being rejoices in God my Savior," continued to be her prayer throughout all those years through Calvary and Resurrection. I see her saying them still, gathered with the others, at the moment of Pentecost. Surely Luke must have heard them from her lips in many situations where pure joy mingled deep with faith that the joy would someday be completely and definitely perfected. Somehow these expressions, lived in their totality, make tangible for us that special giftedness of individuals who lived constantly and deeply in the

awareness of the Presence of the Trinity. They are a real gift for us of the quality of awareness of the individual and myriad gifts of Creator to creation in creature. "I have come forth from you, Most High Lord; I am coming towards you, Most High God, through your help."

In other smaller but still significant ways, I acknowledge that my life in God has been nourished through my contact with Bonaventure. From reading many of his lectures and various treatises, but especially from his *Sermones*, I have garnered treasures of his scriptural exegesis that remain fresh and stimulating as I re-encounter them in Psalm text and liturgical selection. His vast command of both old and New Testament has caused me to learn much in the course of my translating. My response to his delicacy of word-choice and nuance of meaning sharpens my own acumen, and the vivid vignettes of his metaphors persist in my memory. The special charism of Francis and Bonaventure has touched me in the many friars who are my friends and whose sharing in PAX et BONUM continues to give an added dimension to my life. Entering into Bonaventure's life and work and environments, probing parallels between the 13th and the 20th century, surrounded by new insights of simplicity, by God-given moments of sentness,

by my own struggles to accept/avoid givenness, I am healed, helped, held.

Since I am so at home in the academic world and because I have travelled in Italy and France, it is easier for me to feel a kinship with Bonaventure that I am not as able to feel with Paul and Peter, whose lands I have not visited and whose professions I do not share. This ability to transfer from my own experience into his, and conversely from his into mine, is a compelling reality which affects my prayer and deepens my merger into Bonaventure's "visio."

I know myself to be troubled—tormented—at times by problems and decisions which I cannot solve and by the difficulties of my friends. At these times my attempts at prayer become strained, minimal, and unsatisfying—until I recall:

Never let us allow our heart to be anxious about any created thing except in so far as it enkindles our awareness of the warmth and passion of divine love. Reflecting unduly upon the myriad variety of ephemeral things troubles the spirit and sunders the agreeable quiet of one's tranquil mind. Moreover, by creating in our spirit phantasms of turbulence and affliction, uneasiness strikes violently against us [cf. above, p. 290].

Indeed, I know how much "un-

easiness strikes violently against” me! And so I am reminded that I must “seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things will be given unto” me. As the breathing eases and the muscles relax and tensions calm, there comes again that experience of the “warmth and passion of divine love” which lifts and uplifts and strengthens and provides—and prayer flows. *Oratio enim hausorium est.*

Where do I now stand before

my God? Rooted somewhat more strongly in faith, lifted a little taller in hope and joy, stretched wider in caring, sharing love, acquainted with the blossoms of ardent longing,⁴ repeating with Bonaventure, “Domine, exivi a te summo; venio ad te summum et per te summum,” and yet, even more aware of the truth of Francis’s words: “Let us begin, for up until now we have done nothing.”

⁴Marigwen Schumacher, “Bonaventure; The Power of Metaphor,” THE CORD 21 (1971), p. 293.

Walls of Reflection

And the people worked together
in order to build the fine structure . . .
its foundation,
strong and firm,
was based on the kind of love
that grows when people do
. . . they built the tower,
not so much out of the great blocks
of clay and mud,
but out of conviction,
promises,
and hope. . . .
. . . days and days,
years and years. . .
they passed,
as did the conviction
to attain a definite goal
based on a combined effort.
And one day,
it took but a single individual



to begin a new fire burning
No longer did they build out of love
and concern for each other,
no longer did they struggle together
in order one day to share
in the accomplishments
of many hands
. . . their song of unity
became a cry for expediency.
Soon, each heart was possessed
with only the tower's size and height,
rather than the splendor of its beauty.
There was no one to call by name,
to smile with,
to comfort. . . .
. . . each was known by his ability,
his usefulness.
At last,
when the tower reached high for all to see,
there were walls,
and nothing left to say.

Sister Marie Joette Ebert, O.S.F.

Musings on Contemplation—II

CONRAD A. SCHOMSKE, O.F.M.

IT IS FRUITLESS—a waste of time—to try clearly and adequately to separate or even distinguish God's role from our own in the building up of the life of contemplation. But it is possible, and I hope helpful, to describe the various aspects of that life and to characterize some of them as more markedly our own responsibility, and others as perhaps more directly involving the divine initiative.

Thus, while I want to emphasize the ultimate inadequacy of this distinction, I like to think that the four "purities" discussed last month are for *us* to cultivate, whereas the trials sent to purge us, the experience of God's presence in solitude, and the divine guidance given us through spiritual direction—all to be discussed briefly in the following pages—are somewhat less under our own control.

Trials

THE REFINEMENT accomplished by the "four purities" is so important, then, that it is sometimes taken by the Lord into his own unerring hands. He achieves this by the insights he gives us into ourselves, telling us what to do to come closer to him as well as what not to do. But he also accomplishes it by sending trials into our lives—or at least allowing them to come. Through trials he makes our love for others and for him more genuine. By trials, we mean anything that is difficult for us, anything that is hard on us. These trials may come from ourselves, from other people, from our work, from the events of everyday life, from sick-

ness, from dryness in prayer, or from temptations.

Sometimes we ourselves are the cause of our trials insofar as we have a rather difficult personality. We may be hard to live with. Maybe we are too irritable, too fussy, too hard to please, too sensitive, hurt too easily, stiff, uncommunicative, a loner. For any one or for several of these reasons, we may find ourselves clashing with other people. In this sense, having a difficult personality can be a great trial. Needless to say, we should do what we can to correct ourselves and to smooth out the rough edges of our personality. If necessary, we should get professional help.

Maybe the answer is deceptively simple: e.g., we just need more sleep. In any case, besides all the human means we can employ to become a more pleasant person, we should turn more earnestly to God. Our problems should make us realize our own weakness and should therefore spur us on to look to God for special help. In this way, the trial of a difficult personality can do two things for us: It keeps us humble, reminding us of our own shortcomings and inadequacies; and besides, it makes us pray more, asking God daily for the help we need to become more like Jesus in his patience, understanding, magnanimity, and long-suffering. This is the way the Lord uses the trials coming from a difficult personality to bring us closer to him: they keep us humble, and they make us pray more earnestly and honestly.

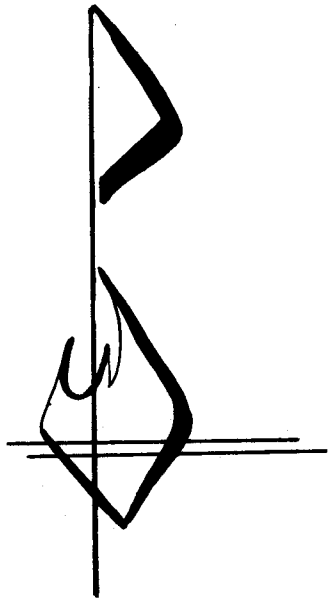
At times, the people around us can be the trial which brings us closer to God. If these people are hard and cold, lacking understanding, sympathy, and compassion; if they are revengeful, unappreciative, spiteful, envious, catty, they can be very trying on us. These people may be members of our family, people we live with, people we work for, people we work with. Further, if we happen to be of an overly sensitive nature, some people can be all the more of a trial for us. They may get on our nerves,

get under our skin, drive us up a wall. Such a trial can bring us closer to God in that it offers many opportunities to practice genuine, selfless charity and real forgiveness. Besides, these people's behavior makes us pray more insistently for the help we need to deal with them as Jesus would. And this extra praying and dependence on God inevitably brings us closer to him.

Then there is the trial of work. If we are not all that inclined to work in the first place, or if the work assigned to us is boring, disagreeable, not challenging; or if we have no special talent or attraction for it, then such work can be a real trial. To stick with it day after day can be an outstanding means of self-denial. It can teach us to work only for the love of God and neighbor, rather than for self-satisfaction. It is this kind of selfless love which is required for contemplation.

Trials coming from the various events of everyday life can further purify us for contemplation. These events may be major happenings such as the death of a dear one, or they may be mirror occurrences such as plans gone awry. In any case, they help us to realize our own helplessness as human beings. They bring home to us the transitoriness of our earthly life and remind us not to sink our roots too deeply in it because our true home is heaven.

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When we become seriously ill with cancer, arthritis, ulcers, a heart condition, diabetes, or the like, we realize, perhaps for the first time in our lives, our own weakness and helplessness. Before that, perhaps, we strutted with overconfidence and self-esteem. But when we are brought low in sickness, lying flat on our back, we realize that we are only flesh and blood after all, and that we need God. This tends to make us humble, and it seems that God is more inclined to give his gift of contemplation to the humble. Even as he exalts us in a sense with the graces of contemplation, he keeps us humble with some such trial as sickness. And as we come to feel annihilated—emptied of self—in sickness, God can come to fill us with himself. Then too, as we come to experience our helplessness in times of sickness, we learn to cast our cares upon the Lord and to pray to him more fervently. We come to love the Lord in spite of the pain he allows us to suffer. As we do so, our love becomes more genuine. We gradually get to the point where we love the Lord simply and purely for himself, not for his gifts (which in fact seem to be taken away in sickness—at the very least, the gift of good health). As love for God increases, love for self decreases. It is this kind of pure, genuine, selfless love which the Lord demands before

In all of these things, if we turn more and more naturally and spontaneously to God our Rock and our Salvation, and cling to him more tenaciously with an ever stronger love, then the trial has served its purpose of bringing us closer to God. It is this closeness to God, this intimacy with him in unshakable trust, that contemplation is all about. Sometimes the Lord uses painful events of daily life to wean us away from ourselves and this passing world and to draw us tightly into his protective, loving, and fatherly arms.

Sickness is another trial the Lord uses to purify us for more intimate love with him in contemplation. This may be our own sickness or that of a dear one.

he gives the grace of contemplation. And so it is in this way that sickness helps accomplish the self-emptying or kenosis which seems to be a condition for contemplation.

The sickness of a dear one can achieve the same results for us, especially if we personally have to care for the sick person for weeks, months, even years. In all of this, our love for others becomes more real and less self-centered. We have to give up self in so many ways, in order to care adequately for a very sick person. All virtues, moreover, can be tested in the sick room: our patience, kindness, charity, forgiveness, humility, self-restraint. All these virtues have to be there in an eminent degree, if we expect to grow in contemplation. In fact, we can measure our growth in contemplation precisely by our growth in these virtues. Insofar as these virtues are not evident, we should indeed wonder whether we are growing in contemplation at all.

This, then, is the purpose of the trial of sickness: it helps purify us for contemplation by purging us of much selfishness and hidden pride; and it helps us grow in selfless love for God and trust in him even when his hand lies heavy upon us. We learn to love him for himself, rather than for his gifts. And finally, sickness keeps us humble and down to

earth, lest the gift of contemplation puff us up.

Dryness in prayer is another trial the Lord uses to help us grow in the prayer of contemplation. This may seem contradictory. We would think that to help us grow in prayer, the Lord would make prayer easy for us, so as to encourage us. We would think he would make his presence felt the more strongly, so as to attract us to him. In the beginning of our prayer life, in fact, he usually does do this; we call this period "first fervor." But as time goes on, the Lord tends to withdraw from us. There are days—even weeks and months, in some cases even years—when we cannot perceive his presence at all. He seems so far away; he seems not to care. Try as we will, we cannot seem to make him real in our lives. This, we call dryness. Its purpose is to make sure we are loving God only for himself, not for the satisfaction we may get out of experiencing his presence—for the latter is no more than a hidden kind of self-love.

Considering God's status as Creator, and our own as creatures, we owe him precisely this kind of love: homage, respect, reverence, and adoration—regardless of what we personally get from our periods of prayer. God, not self, has to be the complete and total object of our prayer. To drive this point home to us, God

does at times seem to go away from us. We can't seem to make contact with him any more. But precisely by seeking him in these times of dryness, we learn to love him for himself alone. This is pure, genuine, selfless love for God—the kind of love he demands from contemplatives. As we learn to give him this kind of love and try our best to love him for himself, even though he seems as though he couldn't care less about us, he tends to "visit" us with his presence. Suddenly he makes us very much aware of himself, even outside times of prayer. This is contemplation. He teaches us that we cannot bring it about by our own efforts, that all we can do is humbly and gratefully acknowledge his presence and realize that he and he alone is the Giver of all good gifts. We can't force him; he doesn't have to come when we whistle. But when we are in this attitude of humble, frank awareness of our own helplessness and weakness, the God of creation comes to us in all his splendor, touching our hearts with his powerful yet gentle presence. The trial of dryness thus helps us prepare for contemplation and disposes us to appreciate it all the more when it comes.

Strange as it may seem, temptations also purify us and make us more fit for contemplation. There is of course a big difference between temptation and sin. No

matter how severe temptations may be, it scarcely needs to be pointed out, there is no question of sin. To avoid *all* sin, however, we must pray for God's help. Also, of course, it is presupposed that we are not *looking for* or inviting temptations by flirting with occasions of sin. In addition, we must not knowingly and willingly close our hearts to anyone out of pride, hatred, or envy. Temptations remind us of our weakness and proneness to sin. In that, they keep us humble and force us to pray for God's help. Jesus said, "Without me, you can do nothing," but he also said, "Ask, and you shall receive." If we humbly acknowledge our weakness and turn in loving trust to the Lord for help, while growing in humility we also grow in prayer—two necessary conditions for contemplation.

We might even say that sin itself can serve this same purpose. The bold paradox of such a statement must be clearly understood, however: there can be no question of approving of sin, and certainly we are not speaking here of completely deliberate or habitual sin. Rather, we have in mind the sort of sin that comes from just plain human frailty, over-confidence, carelessness, even perhaps a growing lukewarmness. While such sin is in itself deplorable, it can have the salutary effect of reminding us of our lack of love for the God who

loves us so much. As the Breviary says (Office of Readings, Saturday of II Week): "Grant that where sin abounded, grace may more abound, so that we can become holier through forgiveness and be more grateful to you." We will find too that as our love for God grows by constant fidelity to prayer through thick and thin, in good days and bad, in dryness and fervor, our temptations as well as our sins will, little by little over the years, diminish. God's love experienced in contemplation just seems to consume our human weakness and heal the wounds of our past sins. Truly, his mercy is above all his works!

These, then, are some of the trials we experience on the road to contemplation which is the awareness of God present to us—an awareness reinforced by his loving touches on our souls and by his "visits" to us reminding us that he is very near—in fact, within the very depths of our being.

Sometimes these trials are called purifications or purgations, because through them our love for God and our faith in him are purified and made stronger, more enduring, and more genuine. At the same time, through these trials we are being purged of much self-love: made to realize our weakness and the need to cast our care upon the Lord. We learn also that truly he alone is our All. We depend less and

less upon others and upon ourselves and more and more throw ourselves into the Lord's arms, surrendering to him without reserve, without conditions. The self-love, pride, self-sufficiency hidden in the corners of our hearts gradually melt away. We learn to face ourselves realistically, honestly admitting that it is true: we cannot do anything by ourselves. At the same time, we acknowledge that our experience has taught us that we can do all things in him who strengthens us. Both the distrust of self and the trust in God gradually become part of us—almost second nature. We become godly, God-like, holy. We put on the Lord Jesus. God becomes a living reality for us—the be-all and end-all of our lives. He becomes everything for us, and the rest doesn't matter any more. This is contemplation; and it becomes a state of our being rather than an isolated, sporadic contact with God.

Sometimes these trials or purifications are referred to as a "dark night," because when we are going through them we are often not sure in which direction to go. We feel we are losing our spiritual moorings. We wonder whether we are moving toward the Lord or away from him; whether the Lord really loves us or not. It's like being in a dark room, unsure of oneself, not knowing where the door is. This uncertainty shakes our com-

placency and independence; it makes us reach out, almost in desperation, for a sure hand to guide us. It makes us cast ourselves totally upon the Lord. The very darkness itself, then, leads us in the night of trials more securely to the Light which is God.

Sometimes, however, what seems like darkness is really the overpowering brilliance of God. It's like looking up into a dazzling sun and being momentarily blinded. As we come closer to God, the light of God's ways and the darkness of our own clash. The more we cling to our ways, the less able we are to see God's. Only in faith can we clearly see and appreciate God's way of thinking and acting. Eventually we come to believe that God really can write straight with crooked lines (sickness, dryness,

etc.). Humanly speaking, these things do not make sense to us. As far as our human understanding is concerned, we are in the dark; hence the expression "dark night." The brilliance of God's way of acting is just too much for our limited way of thinking. In that sense, his light blinds us, leaving us in the dark. Little by little, we come to realize that the only way we can find the path through this darkness is by the light of faith. Leaving aside our human way of judging, we come to believe, in pure and simple faith, in God and his way. Our faith becomes genuine, without props or supports: the kind of faith Jesus demanded of Peter if he were to walk on the water.

Next month we shall offer some concluding reflections on solitude and on the role of the spiritual director.

ONCE AGAIN . . . we find ourselves forced by continually rising production costs to increase the price of a year's subscription, this time from \$5.00 to \$7.00. This increase will take effect beginning with 1979 subscriptions. We do hope that the increase will not prove an excessive burden to our faithful readers, and we look forward to continuing to bring you enlightening and inspiring Franciscan essays, poems, and reviews.

1979 subscription to THE CORD — \$7.00

Jesus, Total Redeemer

(Continued from page 282)

The vision in question is central to Orbis Books' publishing apostolate: it sees Jesus as come to save not only human individuals as such but whole classes of people, societies, and nations—in short, to do away with the old order of things fraught with sin and oppression, and inaugurate the Kingdom of God, in which all things are made new.

If you recognize this as "liberation theology," you are of course correct. But tags and labels are not very helpful. It's better not to use them—i.e., not to use preconceived axiological categories to interpret what an author has written and thus run the danger of missing the cogent premises supporting his message, or even his message itself.

The prophetic emphasis mentioned two paragraphs ago receives a somewhat more systematic development in Capuchin Father Michael Crosby's commentary on the Our Father, *Thy Will Be Done*. Here too there is an unmistakable, crystal clear synthetic vision that can do without facile labels. The triune Godhead is seen as the primordial Community, model for every human community, in which there is complete access to all "resources" and an effective imaging of God in oneself and to others. Jesus has come into the world to overturn the unjust order in which these two ideals are unrealizable.

Thy Will Be Done is not your ordinary commentary on the Lord's Prayer. Under the rubric of each of its

petitions, the author hammers home his basic theme. To some readers this may seem to entail excessive repetition, but after prolonged reflection, I've concluded that the theme, radical and controversial as it is, can use all the support and repetition it can get. And it does get extensive support, not only from the work of other theologians, but much more importantly, from the Bishops' Statement of 1971 and above all from not one but several pronouncements of Pope Paul.

Father Michael Crosby speaks from a good deal of first-hand experience, pastoral, political, and economic—including personal involvement with corporate boards and legislative bodies. He urges that we transcend the "childish" level of spirituality, prayer, and ministry (preoccupied with the individual) as well as their "adolescent" level (restricted to the smaller community), and try through serious, persevering prayer to become identified with the Lord on the third, "adult" level where we recognize and combat "the sin of the world," which infects society's major institutions, religious as well as political and economic.

In the painstaking development of this exhortation, the author uses charts and detailed categorical systems which cannot be done justice in this space. His exposition is quite clear and competent, however, and deserves the sympathetic, unbiased attention of every reader (and this should be every Christian) who is serious about attaining (or maintain-

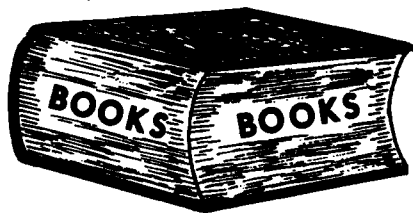
ing) a balanced, fully mature life in Christ.

But religious? What has this to do with religious, who form the majority of our readership? Again, I had to wrestle with this question before deciding to devote an editorial to it. What first nudged me in a positive direction was the fact that the author himself writes of his province's *communal* involvement in this prophetic mission. In the second place, there is the obvious fact that even those of us who are not directly engaged in economic and political work have to be straight on what a fully balanced and mature Christianity means. Finally, this vision which permeates both *Thy Will Be Done* and *Jesus, the Stranger* includes an under-

standing of poverty to which we shall return in great detail next month: material penury is no ideal, any more for a religious than for the untold millions of lay people who are now forced by unjust structures to live it.

But what most recommends both these books is neither rhetorical persuasion nor sustained argument (whether dialectical or empirical). It is the insistence of both authors that only a life of deep prayer can bring about in us the needed conversion. We can, that is, be "other Christs" and true prophets only by an ongoing, resolute, unflagging effort to "look at Jesus."

Fr. Michael D. Mailach, OFM



A History of the Controversy over the "Debitum Peccati." By Juniper B. Carol, O.F.M. Franciscan Institute Theology Series, St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1978. Pp. xiii-260. Paper, \$7.00 plus postage and handling.

Reviewed by Father Dominic J. Unger, O.F.M. Cap., Associate at St. Charles Church, St. Louis. Author of many studies on the Primacy of Christ, Father Dominic is continuing his research in Mariology and on St. Irenaeus.

For some years, Father Juniper Carol, who had been so active in publishing books and scientific articles, seemed to have gone into permanent retirement. The present volume demonstrates that he had been silently hard at work in research. He presents us with a scholarly history of the thorny problem about whether Mary had any debt to contract original sin. Often the book is merely an outline of authors for or against the debt, but it does contain a careful analysis of the principals in the controversy. Father always writes in a clear style, which makes it easy to read the book.

Too often in the past, as Father notes, too many authors, especially of manuals, made a generalized statement that the majority favored a debt in Mary. They simply did not

make an investigation of the authors. Father Carol made that investigation for all of us; and it will no longer be excusable to make sweeping statements that authors generally hold that Mary had a debt. Father Carol researched the problem from its beginnings in the twelfth century (ch. 1), through the debates of Toledo, Alcalá, and Seville (ch. 2), through the golden age when the absence of a debt was defended by Franciscans, Jesuits, and Carmelites, as well as by others (ch. 3), through a period of decline (ch. 4), through the century of the Immaculate Conception (ch. 5), and finally through the period of resurgence in modern times (ch. 6), when the majority of theologians are holding that Mary had no debt. For the rest one must read the book to get the full impact of how generally the non-debt opinion was held through the centuries.

It is very interesting, to this reviewer quite naturally, of how generally the Absolute Predestination of Mary, with Jesus, was used as an argument against any debt in her. Mary, who was predestined before Adam and unconditioned by Adam's sin, could not have been in debt to Adam's sin. And so, an indirect fruit of this study is the revelation of many defenders of the Absolute Primacy who did not treat the matter *ex professo*.

One of the biggest objections to the opinion that Mary had no debt to sin is that then she could not truly have been redeemed by Jesus. Some complicated systems have been thought up to solve this riddle. It seems the final solution for this will be as simple as it was for the Immaculate Conception itself: Mary

was redeemed in the most perfect manner by being preserved from original sin and by being free of all debt to contract it, in virtue of the merits of her Son and Savior. Father Carol (p. 238) promises a book on this very point soon. We await it eagerly.



Living Our Faith after the Changes.

Edited by Jack Wintz, O.F.M. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1977. Pp. viii-112. Paper, \$1.95.

Reviewed by Father Daniel A. Hurley, O.F.M., M.A. (Phil.), Coordinator of Alumni Services at St. Bonaventure University.

In 1973 the St. Anthony Messenger Press began publishing a monthly bulletin for parishes under the title *Catholic Update*. Later the decision was made by the publisher to collect these bulletins and put them out in book form for those who might want a more permanent copy of the series. The third volume of this series is entitled *Living Our Faith after the Changes*. In this volume the different authors present in nine chapters an explanation of and some personal reflections on the practice of the Catholic faith in the light of the Second Vatican Council.

As in the previous two volumes, so also in this third volume the authors demonstrate a sympathetic awareness of the anxiety of sincere

Catholics who feel threatened or confused in the practice of their faith because of the changes resulting from the Council. Emphasizing the unchanging character of the traditional teaching of the Church, the writers explain the changes as adaptations to the mind and culture of people living today. Citing present social customs and contemporary thought, they show how the teaching of our faith and the practice of our faith can be "updated" for people living in today's world.

This volume deals with Catholic doctrine and practice in such areas as rules and regulations, conscience, assisting at Mass, the sacraments of Penance, Anointing, and Matrimony, and popular devotions. Special importance is given to the tendency in today's society to emphasize individual responsibility. This personalism or individualism is seen to have had a tremendous influence on the teaching and practice of our faith today. In general, the changes in the Church are explained by these writers as primarily a change in emphasis, a change in personal attitude, rather than a change in doctrine. Changes in practice are the natural result of such change in emphasis and in attitude.

Like the previous two volumes in the *Catholic Update* series, *Living Our Faith after the Changes* is a short, direct, simply expressed presentation of Catholic doctrine. It is written especially for Catholics who might be anxious or confused by

reason of some of the changes in Catholic practice and discipline in the last fifteen or twenty years. The authors do not explain away the changes; rather, they show the changes as proof of the vitality of the Church and its readiness to adapt to the needs of the people of every age. Saint Paul explained Christ's message so that the people of the first century could understand it; Saint Thomas Aquinas explained the same truth to students of the universities in the thirteenth century in a way suited to their situation; the Council of Trent taught and decreed for the faithful, in the sixteenth century, who were recovering from the shock of the Reformation; finally, the Second Vatican Council taught and declared the same message of Christ in a pastoral fashion to meet the needs of the followers of Christ living in the latter part of the twentieth century.

This third volume of the *Catholic Update* series is strongly recommended to all Catholics, especially those who are trying to understand for themselves and to teach others the doctrine of the Catholic faith. It is recommended to all those who find change difficult to understand or to accept. It is recommended to all who are sincerely trying to practice the faith in imitation of Christ and of all those who have set the example of loyal and faithful devotion to the Church that Jesus Christ founded for the salvation of all men.

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