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The Franciscan Institute
St. Bonaventure, NY 14778

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Volume III of the Works of Bonaventure series

A translation with scholarly introduction by Zachary Hayes, O.F.M. Pp.280 (1979), paper, \$10.00 plus postage and handling.

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FRANCISCAN INSTITUTE PUBLICATIONS
St. Bonaventure University
St. Bonaventure, New York 14778, U.S.A.

The CORD

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

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Volume 32, No. 4

The CORD

A Monthly Franciscan Spiritual Review

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The CORD (ISSN 0010-8685) (USPS 563-640) is published monthly with the July and August issues combined, by the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, NY 14778. Editorial offices are at Siena College, Loudonville, NY 12211. Subscription rates: \$8.00 a year; 80 cents a copy. Second class postage paid at St. Bonaventure, NY 14778, and at additional mailing office.

The drawings for our April issue were furnished by Mr. Louis Padro, an artist who resides in Chicago.

Standard Abbreviations used in **The CORD** for Early Franciscan Sources

I. Writings of Saint Francis

Adm: Admonitions
BenLeo: Blessing for Brother Leo
CantSol: Canticle of Brother Sun
EpAnt: Letter to St. Anthony
EpCler: Letter to Clerics'
EpCust: Letter to Superiors'
EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful'
EpLeo: Letter to Brother Leo
EpMin: Letter to a Minister
EpOrd: Letter to the Entire Order
EpRect: Letter to the Rulers of People
ExhLD: Exhortation to the Praise of God
ExpPat: Exposition on the Our Father
Form Viv: Form of Life for St. Clare

Fragm: Another Fragment, Rule of 1221
LaudDei: Praises of the Most High God
LaudHor: Praises at All the Hours
OffPass: Office of the Passion
OrCruc: Prayer before the Crucifix
RegB: Rule of 1223
RegNB: Rule of 1221
RegEr: Rule for Hermits
SalBMV: Salutation to our Lady
SalVirt: Salutation to the Virtues
Test: Testament of St. Francis
UltVol: Last Will Written for Clare
VPLaet: Treatise on True and Perfect Joy
'I, II refer to First and Second Editions.

II. Other Early Franciscan Sources

1Cel: Celano, First Life of Francis 2Cel: Celano, Second Life of Francis 3Cel: Celano, Treatise on Miracles Fior: Little Flowers of St. Francis LM: Bonaventure, Major Life of Francis LMin: Bonaventure, Minor Life of Francis LP: Legend of Perugia L3S: Legend of the Three Companions SC: Sacrum Commercium SP: Mirror of Perfection

Omnibus: Marion A. Habig, ed., St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies. English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973).



Franciscans and Instant Solution

If SOLUTION MEANS loosening bonds, releasing fast holds, supplying answers to problems, solution itself often enough has been one of our biggest problems. Finding the ready explanation, seeking a way out, groping for an exit, paradoxically looking for light at the end of interminable tunnels; all this has exercised us for ages, and does not cease to be one of the chief job descriptions of human endeavor. How is it that when Solution Personified did come, there still remained the human problem, the moral problem, the religious problem, and so many others? For this is true, is it not? That when God intervened in human history and Christ came, he came as our Solution (salvation?): he was our solution of continuity in our away-from-God trajectory; he dissolved our solidarity in sin and death. He was the crucial solvent brought in the nick of time (and "in the fullness of time") by which our callousness melted into a graced and free-flowing stream. All that.

So, then? The course has surely been altered, victory has been decisively achieved, salvation (solution?) is not only a past act, but a present reality and a future sure hope. Yet the snag lies in the human feebleness of grasp; our forgetfulness, our lethargy, our poor cooperation, our non-receptiveness also our incredulity ("we can't believe it!").

Franciscans, like others, have sought to bring their graced ingenuity to bear upon the solution of human problems. They did so from the beginning: it is we who must do so now, and under inspiration from the efforts of earlier Franciscans. Not because they did it in the past, but because they did it in the past. They worked towards solutions in areas like peace and reconciliation, hardship alleviation, moral and religious formation of the popular mind, and especially in the winning of trust in an affective spirituality, as against any fear-gripped ethos. And yet, Franciscans, like where, get depressed, dejected, over seemingly fruitless attempts to find answers, or, over the frustration of their proffered answers. They may, at the time, spiritualize all this (to do so is valid) and see it as their self-emptying, the experience of poverty and of nothingness, and the strength of God invisible in human weakness. The one thing they should not do is seek the "instant solution." Modern people might be expected, tempted, to seek this-do they not belong to the age of "instant potato," "instant coffee," and whatnot? And their demoa can easily shift from the material to the spiritual!

Yet the instant solution is not all that modern; it is cited as a possibility in the gospels (Vis, imus et colligimus ea), though in fact ruled out. No, it is for us to champion the silent protest, the small, still voice; for us to foster the dynamics of simple presence. It is an alternative made feasible by belief in "spiritual radiation." Its conditions are long-term vision and endurance and, above all, simplicity and humility. It is therefore consistent with the Franciscan spiritual tradition. In this approach, the emphasis is upon being rather than doing, although the "being" is, in the end, the "doing." In our world, impatient and strident as it is, the humble and longanimous approach to problems can be highly significant, a good witness, although its forum would always be hard-won.

I do not suggest that mere theorizing is our allotted portion; nor indeed that a Franciscan is precluded by charism from taking practical steps in the face of difficult situations. We have always been known to be practical. (I hope this is because, like the small and poor man, the pilgrim and stranger, we had to be as wise as serpents and not miss a move.) All of us would want to be effectual at the point of greatest need. I think what is important is the methodology we adopt.

What could be more unlike an "instant solution" than Saint Francis' method (when you examine it attentively) of reconciling the mayor and bishop of Assisi? O yes, others had done nothing, and Saint Francis had worried a lot over this and over the scandal, and had spoken to the friars about it. But, in the end, what does he come up with? Two friars are sent to sing a song in a public place in the name of a poor little man who was too innocent to hold a conference, write out placards, or proclaim a demonstration. It worked. It worked because the gesture spoke louder than even the words. It was the silence of the gesture, the simplicity of it, and the risk involved in it, that made it into both an act of faith and a spiritually powerful gimmick. But the gesture, even though it had immediate effects, had no aura of instant solution about it; it pertained to an altogether different calculation.

Still, there will be those of us who worry about not doing enough. We rightly worry if Franciscans do not lead the field in rehabilitating the marginalized, restoring the broken peace, preserving the natural balance of creation, ceaselessly preaching "the charity that is God." Would that the singing of a canticle in the squares of Belfast or Salvador or the Middle East, restored the lost harmony! We should ourselves want to be innocent to dare it; we should want to be simple enough to risk it, faith-full enough to bring it off. Meanwhile we ought to derive consolation from the belief that the Francis solution is already long in operation, working imperceptibly in the field of the world and in the hearts of men (as Clare might have put it). Whenever we try to be, and grow into, the Love that God is, and that Francis knew, we inevitably produce a workable solution, although it be long awaited. Ω

Tregory Dhanahan, Mr.

The Mountain as Symbol in The Sacrum Commercium

JO THERESE FAHRES

THE SACRUM COMMERCIUM, as the reader doubtless knows, is ar allegorical mystery play portraying the love Saint Francis had for poverty and describing how the early community of brothers lived in the spirit of poverty. The story concerns itself with the brothers' desire for salvation and their journey toward the Father.

In the present article, I would like to explore the use of the mountain as a symbol of central importance in the Sacrum Commercium, but before doing so, I would like to present in summary fashion the biblical roots of the mountain-symbol—roots with which the anonymous author shows himself thoroughly familiar and with which he presupposes his readers are also familiar.

The Mountain in Scripture

THE MOUNTAIN has been a significant symbol to mankind since the beginning of Salvation History. It is the place where heaven and earth meet in clouded mystery. It was on Mount Sinai that Moses received the divine guidelines for life. The Prophet Elijah, while waiting and watching on a mountain, heard the Lord speak in the gentleness of a breeze (cf. 1K 19:8). A person would often climb the mountain to offer worship to El Shaddai, who would thereupon grace him with His Presence (1K 3:2). For the Psalmist the mountain stands as a figure of stability and power (cf. Ps. 121), assuring us that, even though the hills may topple and the earth quake, the mountain shall stand as a sign of God's omnipotence. Those who flee from evil find in the mountain a place of refuge and protection (cf. Ps. 10). During the exile of the Israelite people, the mountain represented a place where God

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would reveal himself. In Jeremiah (50:6), the mountain is a place for those who wander about like lost sheep without a shepherd. And finally, we read in the Book of Proverbs that God raised his voice "at the crossroads," and at the city gates "on the top of the heights," appealing to the "children of men" to accept his gift of Wisdom (cf. Prov. 8:1-11).

But El Shaddai was more than a God of the mountain. He was also a God who walked in the valley and longed to draw all his sons and daughters to himself. Lovingly, through the prophets, he called all of his people out of their darkness into the light of the mountain top so that they might behold the glory of creation. He became God to those who responded, and they became his people.

Jesus, of course, knew his Scripture well and availed himself, as no other, of the symbolism of his day. Not only was he familiar with the role of the mountain in Salvation History, but he himself was often to be found on a mountain top communicating with his Father. The New Testament writers show us Jesus atop a mountain tempted by the devil, praying, teaching, and being transfigured.

The mountain, then, was deeply significant for both the Old and the New Testament people. It was on a mountain that the God of love declared his fidelity to his people and jealously claimed them as his own. The mountain became known as the dwelling place of Wisdom because Truth was revealed there (Wisdom, of course, came to be understood as a growing awareness of the love God has for us). And sinally, it was on the side of a mountain that Jesus taught the way to fulfill the Covenant.

The biblical symbol of the mountain continued to be passed on from generation to generation. Its scriptural importance was common knowledge to the people of the Middle Ages, who were familiar with the use of biblical imagery in both written works and oral presentations. And so it is understandable and fitting that the Sacrum Commercium contains some sixteen references to mountains or high places.

The Mountain as the Dwelling Place of God



THE FIRST OF THESE appears when Francis and his brothers receive word from two old men (Isaiah and Paul) that Lady Poverty, whom they are seeking, has "gone up into the mountain where the Lord directed her to go" and that "she

dwells in the holy mountains because God loves her more than any dwelling of Jacob" (SC 10; Omnibus, 1555). It is significant that the first mention of the mountain appears in this context, because the brothers have just begun their search. Their knowledge of Jesus and their desire to follow in his footsteps establishes in their hearts a profound love of Poverty. They seek her because she is the key to salvation. God loves Wisdom, true, and places her above all other gifts because it is Wisdom that communicates his longings to man. But that he loves Poverty more than any other virtue is seen in that it was through and in Poverty that salvation came into the world. It was Poverty who invited Jesus, the Wisdom of the Father, to descend from the mountain of the Lord in order to proclaim good news to the people in the valley of sorrows. When Jesus was born, Poverty wrapped his naked body with her simplicity. In the temple when he was misunderstood, Poverty rested in his heart. When he was rejected by his own people, Poverty listened to his hurt, and on the cross, when all had forsaken him, Poverty, his Bride, faithfully stayed with and embraced him until he was home again. God loved Poverty more than any dwelling because in and through her, he, the Omnipotent, became incarnate.

In this passage, the mountain is the holy dwelling place of God. It is a place where God keeps his most precious gift, Wisdom—where Poverty, God's best loved virtue, resides. It is a place where God can express his love by bestowing on those who walk toward him the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The mountain stands to be climbed by those who seek the Lord. Those who desire salvation have no choice but to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and seek to embrace Lady Poverty.

But how does one go about entering into the way of salvation? What must one do to enlist Lady Poverty's assistance in this venture? The author of the Sacrum Commercium, speaking through the two old men, suggests this: ". . . if you want to get to her, remove the garments of your rejoicing, and put away every encumbrance and sin entangling you, for unless you are stripped of these things, you cannot go up to her who dwells so high above" (11; Omnibus, 1556).

The brothers are instructed to do penance. They are asked to put away everything that might be holding them captive. They are to discard past failures and guilt, that they may look with hope to the Lord. To ascend the mountain of the Lord, one must freely begin the climb. The ascent, moreover, is presented precisely as a continuous growth in that freedom, which enables God to embrace us in our sinfulness and enables us to embrace God in his holiness. The wise person knows that this is the meaning of Redemption.

The Mountain as the Growing Community

GROWING INTO FREEDOM, however, doesn't happen in a vacuum. A person grows only in relationship with others. So Francis, in his search for Wisdom and in his desire to embrace Poverty as a means to salvation, is warned not to journey alone: "Take with you some faithful companions that you may listen to their advice as you go up the mountain and be strengthened by their help, for woe to the solitary man! For if he should fall, he has no one to lift him up" (ibid.).

The road to Wisdom is not an easy one. It is a road that demands honesty, a road on which Poverty challenges man to strip away the mask he wears. It is very difficult to stand naked alone and see the truth of one's self. It is difficult, too, to stand in our nothingness before our God as well as to stand naked before and with others. That is why we need "faithful companions." Faithful companions are those who care for us, support us, and eagerly long to travel with us along , the road to Wisdom. In a word, they are the community.

The mountain in this passage therefore stands as the symbol of the growing community. It is as a fraternity that the brothers are to grow in their understanding and assimilation of the Good News. It is in the community that a brother is to find the support of the other brothers if he should fall from the path or become exhausted from the climb. Similarly, the mountain can stand as a symbol of accountability, for it is only in the honest, daily living of communal growth that one brother can lovingly challenge another to be faithful in his pilgrimage. Fraternity strengthens one in living the gospel counsels.

The Mountain as the Place of Covenant

SINCE THE PROCESS of embracing Poverty must be learned, reflection is an indispensable means: "When they had considered the way up the mountain from every angle, for it was extremely steep and rough, some of them said to one another: 'Who can ascend the mountain of the Lord and who can reach its summit?' " (SC 12; Omnibus, 1556). This text tells us that there are many ways to look at Poverty. The mountain seems in this instance to represent the formidable challenge inherent in conversion. The brothers question their ability to climb. Reflecting on the challenge before them, they experience fear in their hearts. Their doubts, however, negate neither the worthiness of their desire nor the importance of the ascent. It is important to note the response the author has Francis give them:

How narrow the gate, Brothers, and close the way that leads to life! And few there are who find it. Be strengthened in the Lord and in the might of his power, for whatever is difficult will be easy for us. Put off the burdens that weigh upon your wills and cast away the freight of your sins and gird yourselves and be valiant men. Forgetting what is behind, strain forward according to your abilities to what is before. I say to you that whatever place the sole of your feet shall tread upon will be yours. For Christ the Lord is the breath of our mouth; he will draw you to the summit of the mountain with the bonds of love [SC 13; Omnibus, 1556f].

Fear certainly can drive man away from the mountain where Lady Poverty dwells, so that only a few accept the invitation. Still, although the climb seems frightening, the Lord continues to promise his strength for the journey. It is the Lord's strength and only his strength that lifts man to the mountain. He who travels this path must discard all the unnecessary baggage he has accumulated. He must allow Jesus to be his hope.

The mountain, in this selection, is the place of covenant. As the Old Covenant was established on Mount Sinai; as the New Covenant of Love was sealed on the mountain of Calvary, so the brothers, following in the footsteps of Jesus, are to climb the narrow path up the mountain to seal anew in their lives the bond of God's love. And it is this love that moves them freely to embrace Lady Poverty in all her nothingness. The brothers know that they can ascend the mountain of the Lord because it is not by their own strength that they climb. Now they know by experience the meaning of poverty of spirit and utter dependence on their Lord.

The Mountain as a Place of Revelation

LEAVING BEHIND ALL the worries of this life, the brothers begin the climb. "Climbing toward the summit of the mountain with very easy progress," they see Lady Poverty standing at the mountain top and looking down its slopes (SC 14; Omnibus, 1559). Poverty, aloft above all things and aware of the activities of all, sees that the brothers were adequately prepared for the climb. They were vigorous because they were free. So impressed is she with their freedom, with their disposition to listen, with their yearning for Wisdom, with their longing for the message of salvation, that she dares to open her heart to them.

The mountain therefore becomes, at this point, a place of revelation. The text tells us that the brothers have come with haste "from the valley of sorrows to the mountain of light" (SC 15; Omnibus, 1560). They have given proof by their perseverance that they have chosen the way of salvation over the way of sin. Before Lady Poverty will speak to them, however, they must first clarify why they seek her and desire to choose her as their Lady.

They are seeking salvation, the brothers reply, and they plead with Poverty to help them: "Only grant us peace and we shall be saved, that he who redeemed us through you will also receive us through you" (SC 16; Omnibus, 1560). Thus they clearly see that Poverty is not the goal of their journey, but rather the means of salvation. They are conscious of the love Jesus had for Poverty and how he chose her for his Bride. They recount the ways that Poverty has been sought by many, only to be despised and forsaken. But this rejection, the brothers continue, "does you no harm, for you dwell upon the holy mountains by your own free will, in the firm dwelling place of the glory of Christ" (SC 18; Omnibus, 1561). The brothers cherish the freedom with which Lady Poverty clung to Jesus and he to her.

The Mountain as Symbol of Nothingness

IN SPEAKING WITH Poverty, the brothers have come to realize that a man who is poor has nothing to fear because he has nothing to lose, that only when one possesses something can he fear its being taken from him. The mountain is now a symbol of the nothingness that must be chosen freely if one dares to attain Wisdom. This "nothingness" is an emptiness that waits to be filled. Just as Poverty prepared a place for the Lord, so too do the brothers desire to empty themselves of all things so as to offer to the Lord of Glory a place to rest and dwell. It is in this discourse with Lady Poverty that the brothers share what has

been revealed to their hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit. It becomes evident to Lady Poverty that the Spirit of the Lord is operating in the lives of these men. The Wisdom that they manifest in expressing their longing for salvation gives proof of the intimate presence of the Holy Spirit.

The Mountain as the Arena of Truth

LADY POVERTY, responding to the brothers' proposal, explains that although people throughout Salvation History have attempted to put on the new man (cf. Eph. 4:24), they refused to strip themselves in the process. She speaks of those who lost faith and enthusiasm before the journey was over. She laments of those who rationalized and tried to make her less than what she is:

They spoke civil words to me, but they thought treacherously of me. And though the desolation of a city set on a mountain cannot be hidden, they nevertheless bestowed a name upon her, namely, Discretion or Providence, despite the fact that such discretion should rather be called confusion and such providence, the ruinous forgetfulness of all things [SC 39; Omnibus, 1576].

In this passage the mountain becomes the arena of truth. Poverty knows that people tend to rationalize when they are not secure in their actions. They call their confusion "discretion" or "providence," and in their continual rationalizing they show their fundamental mistrust of God's eternal providence. Since the message of Wisdom is precisely that God longs to provide for his children, it is only the foolish man who believes that he must provide for his own needs.

The Mountain and Medieval Chivalry

POVERTY IS CONFIDENT of her position in the eyes of the Lord, confident of his love, and ever conscious of the instruction he gave her: "Let your dwelling be in Jacob, and your inheritance in Israel, and take root in my elect" (SC 42; Omnibus, 1577). Poverty is to dwell with the chosen people of God. In the Sacrum Commercium, the brothers are the new people of God. Poverty's inheritance is the Kingdom, and the brothers, realizing that her task is to lead the chosen there, yield themselves to her guidance. The mountain now takes on the symbolism of medieval chivalry. The brothers have gone to the courts of the Lord and placed themselves at the service of their Lord and his Lady. At the same time, the brothers beg her support before Jesus so that in embracing her they may know him better.

Poverty decides to see for herself whether the brothers are truly following in the footsteps of Jesus. Not that she has any doubt that their hearts are intent on knowing her Spouse, but she wants to see whether they are actually living out their good intentions. They agree to show her their lifestyle, and, "going down from the mountain, they led their Lady Poverty to the place where they stayed; it was about the sixth hour" (SC 58: Omnibus, 1590).

It is interesting to note that the brothers "led their Lady Poverty" to their home. In this text we are shown that a pact has been initiated. Poverty has allowed herself to be embraced by the brothers who have climbed the heights in search of her. It is important to notice, also, that it is about the sixth hour, the hour of the Lord's crucifixion, when she descends from the mountain to dine with the brothers and accept their hospitality. During the Banquet Scene, Lady Poverty sees evidence of the poorness in which these men live. Convinced of their desire to follow the Poor Christ, she responds to their overwhelming simplicity and joy: "I beg of you, therefore, Brothers, by the mercy of God, for which you have been made so poor, do that for which you have come, for which you have ascended from the rivers of Babylon" (SC 69; Omnibus, 1596).

The brothers have reached the mountain of the Lord. They have traveled through the rough and rocky pathways to knowing Wisdom. They have experienced the joy of the heights and have enlisted the help of Lady Poverty in their search for salvation. By emptying themselves of all unnecessary burdens, they have become free to enter into the process of salvation. By searching together in truth, they have been enabled to grow into freedom as a fraternity of brothers who desired nothing less than to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. They had journeyed together from the captivity of their own Babylon into the freedom of the sons of God. Now they are commissioned by their Lady to go forth to all the world and proclaim the Good News of salvation.

Conclusion

THE AUTHOR OF THE Sacrum Commercium thus gives us an allegorical piece of Franciscan Wisdom literature that reflects the life of the early Franciscan community. He uses the mountain as a dominant image in his work. He presents it first as the dwelling place of Wisdom and as a symbol of the process of casting off the old man and putting on the new. He then shows this growth into freedom as a communal venture and presents the purgative nature of conversion in terms of the steep

and rough paths one is asked to walk. He further depicts the mountain as the place where Love revealed itself and sealed a covenant in the Blood of Jesus—a covenant that calls all people to embrace the nothingness of their own person and to prepare a dwelling place for the Lord's Spirit. By living in truth and simplicity of heart, he shows us, man is able to ascend the mountain of the Lord. In sum, he presents the mountain as a symbol of the process of salvation that every person, in virtue of his baptism, is asked to travel toward Wisdom.

The wise person knows that poverty is not an end in itself but a means to salvation. He also knows that Wisdom is not a gift one receives only for onself, that Wisdom demands of him the proclamation of the Good News. No individual must ever become poor for the sake of being poor. Rather, one empties oneself of godless things and senseless attitudes to be filled with the Spirit of God. Once a person accepts the call to climb the mountain, regardless of the risk, he or she truly is on the way to the Father. The brothers accepted the challenge, and the author of the Sacrum Commercium invites us to do the same. Ω

The Proof

O genius of the age, you test the Cloth, examine, analyze and probe its mystery to wrest the proof both doubt and faith would prize. Could I unfold my soul, reveal what it enshrouds, the marks unique, the Form and Face my own conceal—then you would have the proof you seek.

Sister Mary Agnes, P.C.C.

MONTHLY CONFERENCE

Saint Francis and Theology

ERIC DOYLE, O.F.M.

In these reflections I want to steer clear of the hoary question about Saint Francis' attitude to study. On this score let two remarks suffice. First, we can recall that he was quite happy for Saint Anthony to teach theology to the friars with the proviso that in doing so "he should not extinguish the spirit of prayer and devotion, as is contained in the Rule"; and that in the Rule of 1223 he warns the friars not to let manual work extinguish the spirit of holy prayer and devotion (c. 5). There are snares lying in wait for those who do manual work, just as there are for those given to study. Secondly, Saint Francis explicitly stipulates that we are to honor and reverence all theologians and those who impart God's holy words to us because they administer spirit and life (Test 13). We should note that these words in the Testament follow references to the Eucharist, the holy names of God, and the Scriptures. There is here, I believe, an embryonic theology of theologians!

It is a fascinating characteristic of the Franciscan Movement that it produced a Franciscan theology at all. Yet it is a fact of our history that there emerged quite quickly out of the primordial Franciscan experience a way of looking at God, humanity, and the world which medievalists have insisted on calling the Franciscan School. It says something of significance that in the academe the Dominicans have been identified as members of the Thomistic School, whereas we have been labelled followers of the Franciscan School. With us the founder predominated over the learned doctors; in the Dominican Order the learned doctor predominated over the founder.

The Franciscan School embraces a wide spectrum of thinkers. Though not technically in the School, Saint Anthony cannot be left out. He received some superb training in mystical theology which shows itself in his exposition of Scripture. No matter how far he

Father Eric Doyle, O.F.M., a Consulting Editor of this review, teaches at the Franciscan Study Centre in Canterbury. This is the eighth in our series of Conferences commemorating the eighth centennial of Saint Francis's birth.

travelled from the literal sense, Vigouroux still included him in the Dictionnaire de le Bible. There are the famous and not so famous names of friars to whom Paris, Oxford, and Cambridge will always owe a debt of gratitude: Haymo of Faversham, Simon of Sandwich (two places not too far down the road from us here in Canterbury), Alexander of Hales, John de la Rochelle, Saint Bonaventure, John Duns Scotus, Adam Marsh, Roger Bacon, John Pecham (buried in Canterbury Cathedral), Vincent of Coventry, William of Poitou, Eustace of Normanville, William of Ockham.



The fact of the matter is that Saint Francis has a magnetic attraction for the human intellect, especially fide illustrata, the intellect suffused with the light of faith. And had it been otherwise, it would not only have been

sad, but very disturbing. The intellect is also part of human nature, as much as the heart, the will, and the imagination. The life and writings of Saint Francis are far too rich to be ignored by the intellect. Anyone with the tiniest glimmer of theological acumen cannot fail to be impressed and inspired by the theological significance of his life and the theological content of his writings. The unity of orthodoxy and orthopraxy in his life is remarkable. Consider for a moment the effect Saint Francis' literal imitation of Christ had on Saint Bonaventure's theology. He saw that this was no mere moral or behavioristic patterning of his life on the model of Christ's, but an ontological conforming of his very existence to Jesus Christ whereby the divine activity becomes effective in the world.

His writings show he had a profound grasp of the meaning and import of all the great saving truths of revelation: the Trinity, Incarnation, creation, grace, the virtues, and eschatology. And having grasped them, he communicated them in drama, poetry, and above all by imitating Jesus Christ. He was a superb exegete. He observed the gospel literally—there was no sacrificing of the literal sense for him. Then penetrating further, he drew from it the message it has for faith, the directions it gives for life, and the hope it holds out for eternal life.

He lived the four senses of Scripture that formed the framework of medieval exegesis: the literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical. It would, therefore, have been a truncated development if his inspiration had been restricted to artists and poets. As it is, he inspired a theology whose best representatives became artists and poets in their theology, and of none is that truer than Saint Bonaventure.

Pervading his writings as an atmosphere pervades a room is the sublime theology of the centrality of Christ, which is the distinguishing feature of Saint Bonaventure's theology. In the most surprising contexts one finds the seeds of the great themes of Franciscan theology: the primacy of Christ, the meaning and value of creation, the primacy of charity, the unique dignity of every individual. Let us take one example. He writes in the Admonitions: "Consider with what great dignity the Lord God has endowed you. He created and fashioned your body in the image of his beloved Son and your soul in his own likeness" (V.1). Is this not a seminal expression of the doctrine of Christ's absolute primacy? His words recall a beautiful text in Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh:

Imagine God wholly employed and absorbed in it—in his hand, his eye, his labor, his purpose, his wisdom, his providence, and above all, in his love, which was dictating the lineaments of this creation, Adam. For whatever was the form and expression which was then given to the clay, Christ was in his thoughts as one day to become man, because the Word, too, was to be both clay and flesh, even as the earth was then... And God made man... after the image of God, in other words, of Christ, did he make him [c. 6].

Obviously, I am not maintaining that Duns Scotus' teaching was somehow in the mind of Saint Francis. But it seems reasonably certain that creation without Christ was inconceivable for Francis. It is the self-same love that redeems and heals, as perfects, fulfils, and sanctifies. To say Redeemer is a way of saying Divine Lover.

Saint Bonaventure had a unique understanding of the theological significance of Saint Francis. There is no doctor of the Church on whom the founder of an Order had greater influence. Bonaventure himself drew attention to the parallel between the early development of the Franciscan Order and the history of the ancient Church in his Letter to an unnamed master, 13 (Opera Omnia VIII, 336). And it is indeed striking that the Apologists presented the Crucified One of Calvary as the very wisdom the Greeks had sought for centuries. Saint Francis was a locus theologicus for Saint Bonaventure. It seems

beyond question that Saint Francis was a source of Bonaventure's Christian philosophy wherein reason takes its honourable place under the guidance of faith from the outset. This places natural theology and all philosophical theology in the context of the actual knowledge of the Living God revealed in Jesus Christ. These therefore become a moment in the movement of the mind, illumined by divine light, towards contemplative union with God. It was through the gift of faith and the insights that accompany it, that Saint Francis penetrated the mystery of existence and the meaning of all creatures.

So far from being against study, I fancy Saint Francis is whispering to us in the midst of our celebrations of the eighth centenary of his birth, that we should immerse ourselves in our theological tradition and enter into fresh dialogue with it, until it becomes part of the very air we breathe and forms the structures of our vision of God, humanity, and the world. This tradition has never had more importance than at present.

In an article in *The Tablet* recently on a debate about freedom and authority the author, C. J. Hamson, one-time Professor of Comparative Law at Cambridge, makes a noteworthy comment. I intend no offense to Saint Thomas in quoting Professor Hamson's words. My purpose is to stress the obligation incumbent on us to do all in our power to appropriate and share the rich treasures of the tradition to which we are so often neglectful heirs. Professor Hamson writes:

It is a pity that St Thomas Aquinas, whom I greatly admire, was so powerful a mind and so destructive a theologian: the world we inhabit today would have been, I think, less ferocious if more of St Bonaventure had managed to survive Aquinas—if some of the music of the spheres had survived Galileo and Newton [17 Oct. 1981, 1014]. Ω



New Life

The sun just up it stretches pink-streaked arms of light high above its mountain bed and wakes the day.

An orchestra of sound fills up the valley down below.
A million creatures tune their strings,
their music echoes in my ears
a million dancing tambourines.

The birds in chorus take their cue, their song is full of news; it travels through the busy rush of telegraphing trees.

The air is warm and fragrant as the sun begins to climb, wet with dew the grasses shine, each curling blade blinks back the light and wakens too.

And now the sun pours down its power;
A murmur from the garden says
the bees have come—they seek the flower.

Swaying gently on her stalk
a bud unwraps her sheltered bloom,
a movement imperceptible,
So silently, a rose is born.

Sister Edmund Marie, C.S.B.

Bonaventure's Tree of Life as a Contemplative Work—II

PATRICK F. O'CONNELL

SINCE IT IS OBVIOUSLY neither practicable nor particularly advisable to examine every section of the Tree of Life in detail, we will select certain especially significant meditations for reflection, while giving some indication of the nature of the intervening material. We will continue to direct our attention to the contemplative dimension of the treatise, and to Bonaventure's methods for developing this dimension from the more imaginative, affective, and moral concerns which would initially attract many of his readers.

One index of Bonaventure's sensitivity to his audience is the way he includes them in the meditative process gradually and progressively. Rather than taking the reader's commitment for granted, he works to awaken such a commitment where it is lacking and to deepen it where it is already present. The call to divine union in the Prologue is developed almost exclusively in terms of "the true worshipper of God and disciple of Christ," with no presumption that this description does nor does not apply to the reader. The principal demand made upon the audience is to use the imagination ("Picture in your mind a tree"), which constitutes, along with a couple of generalized references to "us" (Prol. 2, 6; pp. 119, 122), the only departure from the third-person format.

Bonaventure does begin the first section in the body of the treatise with a direct warning not to reduce the eternal generation of the Son to a human, temporal level, but to believe and contemplate it as a mystery; but neither here nor in the following section, on the historical preparation for the Incarnation, does he follow his usual

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procedure of moving from a description of the scriptural scene to a more personal application. Not until the third meditation, "Jesus Sent from Heaven," is the reader addressed conditionally rather than in the imperative:

Oh, if you could feel in some way the quality and intensity of that fire sent from heaven, the refreshing coolness that accompanied it, the consolation it imparted; if you could realize the great exhaltation [sic] of the Virgin Mother, the ennobling of the human race, the condescension of the divine majesty; if you could hear the Virgin singing with joy; if you could go with your Lady into the mountainous region; if you could see the sweet embrace of the Virgin and the woman who had been sterile and hear the greeting in which the tiny servant recognized his Lord, the herald his Judge and the voice his Word, then I am sure you would sing in sweet tones with the Blessed Virgin that sacred hymn: My soul magnifies the Lord . . .; and with the tiny prophet you would exalt rejoice and adore the marvelous virginal conception! [3; pp. 127–28].

The invitation to share Mary's experience is clearly being given, but only by indirection, lest an uninitiated reader be faced with expectations he cannt meet. Even the sequence of "if" clauses moves from the ideal, an intimate, immediate awareness of the divine Presence (feel the fire, the coolness, the consolation) to an intellectual apprehension (realize) to the more external level of the senses (hear, go with, see, hear), a progression of diminishing intensity and involvement. Yet Bonaventure's images ("fire sent from heaven," "refreshing coolness"-i.e., wind), taken not from the Annunciation account but from the Pentecost scene, the occasion when the Spirit was received by all the disciples, indicate that involvement, intense involvement, on the part of the audience is the aim underlying the imaginative representation. Equally important is the emphasis on participation at the conclusion, where the meditation is completed by an act of praise, by making one's own the words and roles of those who accept and welcome God into their lives.

The meditation on the nativity which follows does use the characteristic imperative, but not to address the reader:

Now, then, my soul, embrace that divine manger; press your lips upon and kiss the boy's feet. Then in your mind keep the shepherds' watch, marvel at the assembling host of angels, join in the heavenly melody, singing with your voice and heart: Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will [4, p. 129].

The appeal here may seem at first to be strictly affective, even sentimental; yet certain peculiarities should alert us to Bonaventure's actual intentions. The progression away from the apparent central focus, the crib, to more peripheral figures: the shepherds



and finally the angels, is actually a movement from an initial emotional engagement through an intellectual stance to a more spiritual response. As in the previous section, the act of praise is particularly suited for this first fruit, "His Distinguished Origin." Hugging the crib and kissing the babe are strictly imaginative re-creations of the past. whereas joining the angels in glorifying God is both supremely appropriate in the present and a foreshadowing of eschatological fulfillment, when all will sing "the heavenly melody" forever. Thus Bonaventure takes into account a variety of readers, from those attracted to simple, heartfelt devotion to those more inclined to "watch" and wait like the shepherds, and is able to encourage in them, still subtly and indirectly, a more mature response. Those already more familiar with the contemplative tradition are not neglected either. Earlier in this section Bonaventure had described Jesus as coming forth from the womb "like a bridegroom from his bridal chamber" (p. 128). Obviously inapplicable on a literal level, the quotation (from Ps. 19:5) suggests an underlying mystical dimension to the whole meditation, and particularly to the gesture of kissing Jesus' feet, which in Bernard's third Sermon on the Canticle symbolizes repentance and conversion, the first of three steps to mystical communion.12

Beginning with the second fruit, "The Humility of His Mode of Life," the meditations are addressed to an unspecified "you," which may be the reader or may continue to be the author's own soul. This ambiguity allows each reader to proceed at his own rate toward iden-

¹²Works of Bernard of Clairvaux, vol. 2: On the Song of Songs I, trans. Kilian Walsh, O.C.S.O. (Spencer, MA: Cistercian Publications, 1971), pp. 16-18.

tifying with the author's reflection and prayer and making them his own. Only with the tenth section, specifically written to "the disciple of Christ," does Bonaventure indicate that the audience is to join in the meditation (though for convenience' sake we shall refer to "the reader" in earlier sections as well).

After contrasting the humility of Jesus with the pride and hypocrisy of the sinner in the section on the circumcision, Bonaventure concretizes this opposition by focusing on the nature of true kingship in "Jesus Shown to the Magi." Kings themselves, the Magi must distinguish between "the humble king" Jesus and "the treacherous king" Herod. But as "a companion of the holy kings," who must also choose "not to follow Herod's pride" but to "adore, confess and praise this humble God" (6; p. 130), the reader too is implicitly regarded as a king and challenged to recognize the true marks of kingship. This claim to royalty is finally seen to be founded not on an imaginative identity with the Magi but on a real participation in the kingship of Jesus. The meditation concludes: "You will return to your country in the footsteps of the humble Christ" (p. 131), where the country to which we return is not Persia, or wherever, but the kingdom of God, and we no longer accompany the Magi but Jesus, who alone can properly be said to "return" to that country. His kingdom can be called "your country" only to the extent that his kingship, which is characterized by total humility, is shared by the disciple. Bonaventure is suggesting here what he will proclaim directly toward the end of the Tree of Life: "The kingdom of the most excellent King where all the iust reign with him . . . is not divided by the number of those who reign; nor lessened by being shared . . ." (45, "Jesus, King, Son of the King"; p. 169).

The section on the presentation which follows once again begins but does not remain on the affective level:

Rejoice, then, with that blessed old man and the aged Anna; walk forth to meet the mother and Child. Let love overcome your bashfulness; let affection dispel your fear. Receive the Infant in your arms and say with the bride: I took hold of him and would not let him go. Dance with the holy old man and sing with him: Now dismiss your servant, Lord, according to your word in peace [7; p. 131].

After the conventional expression of emotion, the quotation from Canticles (3:4) breaks through the imaginative construct and signals an entirely different metaphorical milieu, one singularly inappropriate to the literal sense (i.e., "Crazed old woman steals baby in Temple!").

Suddenly it is not the cute infant we are holding, but the Bridegroom of the soul, the Bridegroom of the Church. As he continually does throughout the treatise, Bonaventure has moved from $\chi \varrho o \nu o s$ to $\chi \alpha \iota \varrho o s$ —from historic, chronological time to the salvific moment. The setting of the encounter is no longer an imagined Temple of the first century but the presence of (the risen) Christ, here and now.

After this striking revelation, the reference to Simeon appears anticlimactic and out of order (Simeon precedes Anna in the gospel account). But upon reflection Bonaventure's mastery of his material is again demonstrated. The reference to the old man dancing, not in Luke's account, suggests David dancing before the ark, which here, as later for Dante (cf. Purgatorio, canto 10), typifies humility, and is particularly appropriate in the Temple context. Even more significantly, the "Nunc dimittis" betokens a humble confession that even a brief look, a momentary touch, is more than enough, which tempers the passion and apparent possessiveness of the verse from Canticles. It also prepares for the following section's humble awareness that the presence of Jesus is not a right but a gift, that like Mary seeking her lost Son, each Christian must search for Jesus unceasingly.

In the meditations on the public life, the third and fourth fruits, it becomes increasingly evident that the goal of these exercises is nothing less than union with God. In the baptism scene the reader is invited not only to experience regeneration in Jesus (the moral level) but through the opening of the heavens to "explore his secrets so that . . . you will be taken up into God" (9; p. 133). The meditation on the temptation which follows again urges the reader to "search into the secrets of solitude" in order to become "an imitator and sharer" of Christ's testing and triumph (10; p. 134). For Bonaventure these roles are not so much synonymous as sequential: the former, referring to the pursuit of the virtues and the development of the moral life, should prepare for and lead into the latter, a more intrinsic participation in the reality of Jesus, which involves not just a change of habit but a change of identity.

This progression is also basic to the meditation on the transfiguration:

So the soul devoted to Christ, strengthened in truth and borne to the summit of virtue, can faithfully say with Peter: Lord, it is good for us to be here, in the serene enjoyment of contemplating you. When heavenly repose and ecstasy are given to the soul, it will hear the secret words which man is not permitted to speak [12; pp. 135-36].

Here the affective dimension, represented by devotion to Christ, and the moral dimension of "truth" and "virtue" are treated not as ends in themselves but as integral stages in the journey to the mountain top of contemplation, to an ecstatic union where the "secret words" are not human speech but God's own self-communication. Though a foretaste of the final goal, the transfiguration scene here, as in the Gospels, is less a climax than an encouragement to perseverance. Even on the mount Jesus "foretold that he would be rejected in his passion" (p. 135), and succeeding sections present him as "the Solicitous Shepherd" who lays down his life for his sheep (13; pp. 136–37) and the "Fountain of all mercy" who weeps for the misery and depravity of mankind (14; pp. 137–38).

Even if less exalted in tone than the transfiguration, the meditation on the Last Supper provides a more satisfactory conclusion to the first major segment of the treatise, "On the Mystery of His Origin," because it brings together the dimensions of communion and sacrifice:

Here not only the paschal lamb was presented to be eaten but also the immaculate Lamb, who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). Under the appearance of bread having all delight and the pleasantness of every taste (Wis. 16:20), he was given as food [16; p. 139].

The repetition of the verse from Wisdom, already used in the Prologue, signals the close relationship of this sacramental section with the original description of the tree of life, where Christ was also presented as both redeemer and nourishment. Just as the fruits of the tree signified various "states, excellences, powers and works" of Christ (Prol. 4; p. 121), so "the marvelous sweetness of Christ's goodness." "the marvelous example of his humility," "the marvelous richness of his generosity," "the marvelous outpouring of his love" not only shine forth at the Last Supper, but are received by the disciple who receives Jesus in the Eucharist, and who finds them "full of sweetness." Yet as in the Prologue and the preceding meditations, the goal is not only " moral transformation but that deep union of persons symbolized by Jesus "offering to John his breast as a pleasant and sacred place of rest." Such intimacy inspires the spiritual journey of the true disciple. "who, having been called to so distinguished a banquet, runs with all the ardor of his spirit so that he may cry out with the Prophet: As the stag longs for the springs of water so my soul longs for you, O God!" But these springs, which recall the "ever-flowing fountain" that waters the tree of life in the Prologue (3; p. 120), are finally to be identified with "the fountain of living water springing up into eternal life" (30; p.

155) which flowed from the side of the crucified Christ. So we are brought to the Passion.

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THE NOTICEABLY DETACHED perspective which marks the early sections on the passion is emphasized by the impersonal introduction to the first meditation: "The first thing that occurs to one who wishes to contemplate devoutly the passion of Jesus Christ is the perfidy of the traitor" (17; p. 140). This muted tone is continued in the ostensible point of this meditation, the moral lesson provided by Jesus' "marvelous kindness" toward Judas: "This meekness was given as an example to mortal men . . . when exasperated by a friend." Yet in refusing to raise the level of emotional involvement too soon, Bonaventure is of course exercising firm artistic control, even as beneath the surface the groundwork both for the reader's complicity in the death of Jesus and for his redemption through it is being firmly laid. As the echo of the key word "marvelous" indicates, this section is actually the Last Supper meditation rewritten from the perspective of the passion. When Bonaventure says that Judas was so hardened "that he could not be called back from the evil he had conceived by the intimacy of the banquet, the humility of Christ's deference or the sweetness of his words," he is clearly referring to the descriptions of the Eucharist, the foot-washing, and the farewell discourse of the previous section. The quiet horror of the betrayal arises precisely from the realization that it was done by one invited, like the reader, to share in that intimacy of union with Jesus: "here was a man, another self, who seemed to be a companion and friend, who ate the bread of Christ and at that sacred supper partook sweet food with him." Here the phrase "another self" suggests Judas' apparent closeness to Jesus, and perhaps the disturbing similarity between his status and that of the reader as well. Bonaventure concludes the meditation by anticipating the actual scene of the betrayal:

This most mild Lamb did not refuse to apply with a sweet kiss his mouth in which no guile was found to the mouth which abounded in iniquity in order to give the traitor every opportunity to soften the obstinacy of his perverse heart.

Here the emphasis is not, as in the gospel, on the kiss of Judas, but on that of Jesus: the kiss of the mouth, the third step in Saint Bernard's

passage to mystical communion,¹³ has no effect on Judas, whose gesture is of course a total rejection of that communion even while conforming to it in appearance.

After sections on the agony and the arrest, which focus on Jesus' humanity and divinity, respectively, Bonaventure concludes the fifth fruit, "His Confidence in Trials," by returning to the figure of Judas. For the first time in the passion sequence there is an appeal to emotional involvement, but it is still indirect: "Finally, who could hear without grief how the cruel executioners laid murderous hands upon the King of Glory . . . ?" (20; p. 143). It is in effect an invitation to share the "sting of grief" which penetrated the hearts of his disciples,

when they saw their beloved Master and Lord betrayed by their fellow disciple and led to death, hands bound behind his back like an evildoer, and when that impious Judas, driven by remorse, afterwards was filled with such bitterness because of this that he preferred to die rather than live!

The grammatical parallelism both of verbs ("betrayed"/"led") and of clauses ("when they saw . . ."/"when that impious Judas . . .") emphasizes how much the "sting" is caused by their acute consciousness that one of their own number, a "fellow disciple," is the betrayer, so that the overall effect is to stress what Judas had in common with the apostles and by implication with the reader. If Judas is finally seen, in contrast to the disciple who "longs for the springs of water" (16), as "that man who did not return to the fountain of mercy," yet in him is embodied the very real option of refusing the invitation of Christ.

The reader's identification with the disciples becomes explicit in "Jesus Denied by His Own," the next section, where Peter's repentance of his denial is both a contrast to Judas' despair and a model for the reader, who is addressed directly for the first time since the fifteenth meditation:

O whoever you are, who at the word of an insistent servant, that is your flesh, by will or act have shamelessly denied Christ, who suffered for you, remember the passion of your beloved Master and go out with Peter to weep most bitterly over yourself. When the one who looked upon the weeping Peter looks upon you, you will be inebriated with the wormwood of a twofold bitterness: remorse for yourself and compas-

sion for Christ, so that having been cleansed with Peter for the guilt of your crime, ¹⁴ with Peter you will be filled with the spirit of holiness [21; pp. 144-45].

Here as elsewhere in this middle sequence, a focus on the reader's own sinfulness and complicity in the events of the passion is not intended to stir up guilt for guilt's sake. The forgiveness of Peter, whom "his kind Master looked upon . . . with mercy and grace," represents God's steadfast love for all sinners, whose remorse and compassion, signs of genuine repentance on moral and affective levels, respectively, lead them to "be filled with the spirit of holiness," to experience the new life of the resurrection. Even at this early stage of the passion account, Bonaventure uses the figure of Peter, who denied and was restored, to present the full effect of the redemption.

The emotional appeal of the call to tears, repeated indirectly in the prayers which conclude the next two sections, is again directed toward the reader's own culpability in "Jesus Condemned to Death": "And you, lost man, the cause of all this confusion and sorrow, how is it that you do not break down and weep?" (24; pp. 146-47). This accusation of responsibility for Christ's sufferings is the author's condemnation, not merely of the reader, the "other," but of himself as well, as he turns to his own soul: "Behold, he pays back for you what he did not steal. And you, my wicked and impious soul, you do not repay him with gratitude and devotion nor do you recompense him with compassion." Here at the very midpoint of the treatise, the affective dimension reaches perhaps its highest pitch, as the pointed contrast between Christ's generosity and the soul's ingratitude accentuates the awareness of guilt. Yet even at this point the basis for a more deeply contemplative approach to the passion is forming. The key word of this entire fruit is "compassion," used first in the section on the denial, then at the conclusion of the next meditation, where the soul's "inner compassion" (22; p. 145) leads to tears, and again at the end of this meditation. While it can and does refer to feelings of sorrow and pity, the root meaning of compassion is "to suffer with," i.e.,

¹³Cf. Ibid., pp. 19–20; this sentence is the first of a series of borrowings by Bonaventure from a meditation by the twelfth-century Benedictine Abbot Eckbert of Schonau, later attributed to St. Anselm and circulated under his name. See Patrologia Latina, ed. J.-P. Migne, vol. 158, cols. 748–61.

[&]quot;Cousins' translation of "expiatus cum Petro a reatu sceleris" (Decem opuscula, p. 157) as "having atoned with Peter for the guilt of your crime" is misleading here. The participial construction is clearly passive, and should be translated "having been cleansed (from)," since the expiation is done not by the sinner but by Christ, and since it is not the guilt but the crime which is atoned for. De Vinck's rendering, "relieved like Peter of the guilt of your crime" (p. 119) is better, but loses the traditional redemptive associations which the term "expiatus" carries.

to share in the passion. This definition, which suggests that feelings of grief are to lead to a death to self, which is also a participation in the death of Jesus, takes us back to the verse from Galatians which began the Prologue, and prepares us for the profound treatment of the crucifixion which is to come.

Bonaventure's psychological acuity is never more evident than in the subtle change of tone in "Jesus Scorned by All," which begins the seventh fruit. After the unflinching imputation of individual responsibility for the passion in the previous section, this meditation is addressed more generally and impersonally to the "pride of the human heart" (25; p. 147). This primal sin, that of Satan and of Adam, is both "the disease" Jesus came to heal and the one cause which can keep the remedy from taking effect. Those who "are lifted high in pride" not/ only contrast the humiliated Christ, "who is accounted as a leper and the last of men," but set themselves up as an alternate sign of salvation, a counterfeit image of the cross and resurrection. Refusing to acknowledge their need for redemption, they choose to align themselves with the tormentors and mockers of Jesus, "placing on display again the Son of God." This focus on pride, then, not only serves to universalize the guilt, but implicitly encourages the reader to admit his dependence on the saving power of Christ by dissociating himself from those who stubbornly cling to their self-righteousness.

If the previous section might be described as exemplifying Jesus' words, "He who is not with me is against me" (Lk. 11:23), the meditation on "Jesus Nailed to the Cross," the thematic center of the entire treatise, reveals just what the decision to be "with me" actually demands. After considering the process of crucifixion in detail, Bonaventure addresses the soul in the first person, a form which by this point functions not to distinguish but to unite author and reader:

See, now, my soul, how he who is God blessed above all things, is totally submerged in the waters of suffering from the sole of the foot to the top of the head. In order that he might draw you out totally from these sufferings, the waters have come up to his soul [26; pp. 148-49].

Here the passion itself is shown to typify the traditional baptismal symbolism of immersion and emergence as dying and rising: the physical sufferings ("from the sole . . .") and spiritual anguish (". . . up to his soul") of Jesus lead not only to his death ("totally submerged") but to new life for others ("draw you out totally"). The background for this imagery is obviously Jesus' own reference to his death as a baptism, which in one significant instance focuses on the

disciples' part in their Master's sacrifice: "Can you . . . be baptized with the baptism with which I must be baptized?" (Mk. 10:38); cf. also Lk. 12:50). For Paul as well, baptism is a passage from death to life for each Christian because it represents the passion: "When we were baptized in Christ Jesus we were baptized in his death; in other words, when we were baptized we went into the tomb with him and joined him in death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glory, we too might live a new life" (Rm. 6:3-4).

Thus Bonaventure's choice of imagery prepares the way for an explicit awareness that the invitation to union with Christ includes, indeed is founded on, participation in his death:

And then transfixed with nails, he appeared to you as your beloved cut through with wound upon wound in order to heal you. Who will grant me that my request should come about and that God will give me what I long for, that having been totally transpierced in both mind and flesh, I may be fixed with my beloved to the yoke of the cross?



Surely one of the most beautiful expressions of Franciscan passion-mysticism, this passage fuses the bridal imagery of Christ the Bridegroom, whose limitless love reveals him to be infinitely lovable, with the body imagery of being crucified with him. Job's cry of longing for death (Job 6:8) is placed in a totally new and positive context, which signifies that death to self is life in Christ, the soul's Beloved: the moment of crucifixion is also the moment of union. The key phrase "totally transpierced in both mind and flesh" ("totus tam mente quam carne transfodiar")¹⁵ not only applies to the

reader the same term used to describe the crucifixion ("transfixed" = "transfossus"), and parallels the dual reference to Christ's own mental and physical sufferings ("totally submerged," etc.); by repeating exactly the wording from the opening section of the Prologue ("tam mente quam carne")¹⁶ it reminds us that in sharing Christ's passion the basic purpose of the entire work, as expressed in the opening quotation from Galatians, is achieved. Yet the meditation ends not with a state-

¹⁵ Decem opuscula, p. 160.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 137.

ment but with a question: this participation is considered not as an accomplished fact but as a goal to be sought, as "what I long for." But if this longing has truly been awakened in the reader, Bonaventure is confident that no obstacle, even death itself, can stand in the way of its ultimate fulfillment.

By situating this crucial meditation closer to the midpoint than to the end of the passion sequence, Bonaventure has created for himself the formal problem of how to keep the succeeding meditations from being anti-climactic. His success in doing so demonstrates once again his mastery of tone and control of his material. By drawing our attention to the thieves crucified with Jesus, the next meditation immediately counters any presumptuous or self-inflating interpretations of the preceding section, since the first person to share the death of Jesus is not a just man but a notorious sinner-criminal, who nevertheless exemplifies that "however great a sinner you are" (27; p. 150), peace and pardon will be given "if you do not shrink from following the footsteps of the Lord God who is suffering for you." This section also moves beyond the fact of death by its triple repetition of the promise of Jesus, "Today you will be with me in paradise."

The concluding meditation of the seventh fruit shifts the focus to Christ's mother in what may appear to be typically medieval misproportion, but in fact the significance of Mary at Calvary lies precisely in her role as sharer in the passion of her Son: "You were present at all these events, standing close by and participating in them in every way" (28; p. 152). Physically seeing the external sufferings of Jesus and experiencing his interior anguish with the "eye" of her mind, Mary is described as being "more deeply pierced by a sword of compassion than if you had suffered in your own body." Here the word "compassion" is unquestionably used in its root sense, and is matched by Christ's own "compassion for . . . his most sweet mother," which adds to his "sadness and sorrow." The Christian's prayer to be "totally transpierced in both mind and flesh" has been realized in Mary: more profoundly than the repentant thief, she is the model for all who desire to share in the redemptive death of Jesus.

The general title of the eighth fruit, "Victory in the Conflict of Death," indicates that Bonaventure's major concern at this stage is to stress not the pathos of Christ's death but its salvific power. Consequently the first of these concluding meditations on the passion shows a relative neglect of realistic physical detail in favor of a more emblematic presentation of the figure of the dead Jesus, described both as the "Fountain of Life," now "dried up," and as "the true Sun of

justice" whose eclipse causes "the visible sun" to hide its rays "out of compassion for its Maker" (29; p. 153). The analogy between the earthquake, in which "hard rocks crack as if out of natural compassion," and the human heart, which should likewise be "struck with terror... moved with compassion... shattered with compunction... softened with devoted love," not only recapulates earlier references to hard-heartedness but suggests the process of transformation, through compassion, by which the old self is destroyed and the new self recreated in Christ.

The rich typology of "Jesus Pierced with a Lance" both reworks the emblems of the previous section and again links Bonaventure's teaching on the passion to the imagery of the Prologue. Jesus "sleeping on the cross" (30; p. 154) is the new Adam from whose side the Church is formed through the sacramental flow of blood and water. This "Fountain of Life" is no longer perceived as dried up, but as the source of living water restoring the cosmic harmony lost in Eden: "Apply your mouth to draw water from the Savior's fountains for this is the river arising from the midst of paradise which, divided into four branches and flowing into devout hearts, waters and makes fertile the whole earth." This association of the Tree of Life and paradise with the Church recalls that in the Prologue Eden itself is identified with the Church: "Picture in your mind a tree whose roots are watered by an ever-flowing fountain that becomes a great and living river with four channels to water the garden of the entire Church" (Prol. 3; p. 120). This association is reinforced by the reference to the Tree of Life in Rev. 22, where it is situated in the midst of the New Jerusalem, again alongside the stream of living water. Thus the image of the Tree is firmly fixed by Bonaventure in an ecclesial setting, which serves to counter an overly individualistic spirituality of the passion. Within the context of this primary relationship between Christ and the Church, the mystical communion of the individual soul with its divine Lover is properly situated: now it is Jesus who is the true rock, which will not shatter, in which the spear-thrust forms a "hollow place" where the soul can take refuge: "Rise, therefore, beloved of Christ, be like the dove that makes its nest in the heights in the mouth of a cleft. There, like a sparrow that finds a home, do not cease to keep watch; there, like the turtledove, hide the offsprings of your chaste love." The imagery suggests not only security but intimacy, both the resurrection and the heights of contemplation, where the virtues engendered in the soul, "offsprings" (or, changing the metaphor, "fruits") of this love, are protected and nurtured. The tone is no longer one of sorrow but of deep peace and secure hope.

After similar typological treatment of Christ's blood as "the priestly robe of red" (31; p. 156) and the garment of Joseph, sacrificed by his brothers, the final topic for meditation is ostensibly the burial of Jesus, but it is the figure of Mary Magdalene which Bonaventure uses to recapitulate his consideration of the passion. As a reformed sinner who not only "bathed the tomb with her tears" but was also "borne along by such a burning in her heart, moved by such sweetness of piety and drawn by such strong bonds of love" (32; p. 157), she unites in herself moral, affective, and contemplative responses, with the last predominating:

Ablaze with the fire of divine love, she burned with such a powerful desire and was wounded with such an impatient love that nothing had any taste for her except to be able to weep and to utter in truth those words of the Prophet: My tears were my food day and night, as they say to me day after day: "Where is your God?" (Ps. 41:4).

Though the context is one of sorrow, the choice of images indicates that this sorrow is about to be turned into the joy of the resurrection: the wound of love, which suggests Magdalene's own participation in Christ's sufferings, is also the traditional expression of mystical desire; references to food and tasting, now associated only with weeping, are reminders of the true nourishment provided by the tree of life; even the taunting question "Where is your God?" recalls Mary's own words to the angels at the tomb, "They have taken my Lord away and I don't know where they have put him" (Jn. 20:13). The very use of Psalm 41 parallels the quotation from the same source at the conclusion of the Last Supper meditation, which occupied the corresponding position at the close of the first part of the treatise: the suggestion is that, Magdalene's desire ("desiderio")¹⁷ makes her the true disciple of that earlier passage, who longs for ("desiderat")¹⁸ God alone.

Here, however, the meditation continues beyond the psalm verse to address Christ directly. The significance of this extraordinary prayer for a proper appreciation of the method and goal of the treatise cannot be overemphasized:

O my God, good Jesus, although I am in every way without merit and unworthy, grant to me, who did not merit to be present at these events in the body, that I may ponder them faithfully in my mind and ex-

Deliberately distancing himself from the time of the events, the speaker nevertheless asks to experience in himself the same response as those physically present "at the very hour" of the crucifixion. If this petition is taken seriously, as it must be, it expresses Bonaventure's belief that the compassion of Christ's mother and of Magdalene, the sharing in the passion and death of Christ by the innocent and the repentant, is available now, not merely as imaginative re-creation, but as a spiritual experience of the most profound import. Here, in the language of prayer, Bonaventure presents the fundamental theological insight on which the Tree of Life is constructed: the grace of redemption is appropriated, is made one's own, as the grace of participation. "With Christ I am nailed to the cross": for Bonaventure as for Francis this is not a metaphor but the divine gift of life in all its richness. Ω

The Seed

"Unless a seed falls to the ground and dies, it remains a single grain, but if it dies, it produces much fruit . . . "

My hard round self, dropped from I know not where, lands amid the craggy ground of darkness.

Oh heavy darkness! You invade me from every side and encircle me in your moist embrace.

What is this sweet attack? Good God, my being's cracked! I'm seeping away into this vast nothingness.

I'm little, growing ever less, lying on and in and through a thousand broken shells, older than my self.

But now I see,

l'm. . . .

And the brown broken land is bare no more, a tiny green carpet covers its nakedness and reveals its hidden wealth.

Philip Bruce, O.F.M.Cap.

¹⁷lbid., p. 166.

¹⁸lbid., p. 153.

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Course No.	Title	Credit	Days	Instructor
500	Bibliography	1	MWF	Sr. Mary McCarrick, O.S.F.
502	Sources for the Life of St. Francis	3	M-F	Fr. Wayne Hellmann, O.F.M. Conv.
504	Life of St. Francis (Pre-reg. 502)	3	M-F	Fr. Conrad Harkins, O.F.M.
506	Survey of Franciscan History	3	M-F	Fr. Lawrence Landini, O.F.M.
508	History of Franciscan Thought	3	M-F	Fr. Joachim Giermek, O.F.M.Conv
531	Women and the Franciscan Ideal	2	MWTHF	Sr. Mary McCarrick, O.S.F.
520	Spirituality and Writings of St. Francis and St. Clare	2	MTWF	Fr. Regis Armstrong, O.F.M.Cap.
509	History of Franciscan Spirituality	3	M-F	Fr. Cyprian Lynch, O.F.M.
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563	Theological Principles and Techniques of Spiritual Direction	2	MITTHE	Fr. Joseph Doino, O.F.M.
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Books Received

- Ellis, Marc H., Peter Maurin: Prophet in the Twentieth Century. New York: Paulist Press, 1981. Pp. viii-191. Paper, \$9.95.
- Maloney, George A., S.J., Alone with the Alone: An Eight-Day Retreat. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1982. Pp. 204. Paper, \$4.95.
- Matonti, Charles J., Celebrate with Song . . . Every Parish Can. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1982. Pp. 144. Paper, \$3.95.
- Shlemon, Barbara Leahy, Healing the Hidden Self. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1982. Pp. 127. Paper, \$3.50.