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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[1]
EpCust: Letter to Superiors[1]
EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful[1]
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
FormViv: 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

[1]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).

EDITORIAL

The Inner Eye

EVEN BEFORE FRANCIS was named the patron of ecology he was known by people all over the world as the "saint who loved nature." He was truly a lover of creation, one who felt at home among the beauties of the created world. He felt such a deep bond with all of creation that he addressed each element as brother or sister. He knew intuitively the inherent bonds shared by all creation from the tiniest atom to the image of God . . . the human person.

Celano, his first biographer, tried to convey to us Francis' feeling and gratitude for creation, but in the end he queried: "For who could ever give expression to the very great affection he bore for all things that are God's?" (1Cel 80). So it was not that he found God within the created world, but that it reminded him of God.

In that same biography, Celano demonstrated this through his comment about Francis' reflection upon flowers. "He used to turn the eye of consideration immediately to the beauty of that flower that comes from the root of Jesse and gives light in the days of spring and by its fragrance has raised innumerable thousands from the dead" (1Cel 81).

So everything, every part of creation, led Francis to reflect on the person of Jesus.

This kind of sensitivity which allowed Francis to be drawn toward Christ is born out of his deep contemplation, his own interior union with the Lord. One does not come to see the beauty of the created world as revealing Christ unless by grace. This kind of beauty is seen only by the "inner eye." It is not simply the vision of the trained aesthetic; it is the vision of the mystic whose eyes have been given the gift of sight.

Francis found God within himself. The Lord made a dwelling place of his heart and filled Francis with a light that illumined his vision. This was his life's work: to make a fitting dwelling place within himself for the Lord. He encouraged all his followers to do the same in chapter 22 of the Rule of 1221: "We should make a dwelling place within ourselves where he can stay, he who is the Lord God almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

It was because he met the Lord within his heart that he was able to find signs of God's presence everywhere else in the world, but especially among the outcasts of society. All that he once found bitter was transformed into sweetness once he allowed himself to come under the Lord's influence. He tells us this in his Testament: "When I was in sin, the sight of lepers nauseated me beyond measure; but then God himself led me into their company, and I had pity on them. When I had once become acquainted with them, what had previously nauseated me became a source of spiritual and physical consolation for me." This consolation, or what we have come to call "sweetness," transformed his whole way of viewing life and all of creation. It was this new-found sight that allowed him to see the beauty of persons and things even when they were not that pleasing to the physical eye.

Through this revolution that took place within his heart he realized his own dignity in Christ and, therefore, the dignity of all persons regardless of their physical appearance, their position in society, or their possessions. It was especially in poor people that he always found Jesus, because Jesus himself had a predilection for the poor, for those ordinarily overlooked by others. It was among the poor that God chose to send his Son, and Francis took his example from the Lord himself.

Francis called his community to share in this preference for the poor and to be poor themselves. He gave them this reason for their poverty: "And there is no reason why they should be ashamed, because God made himself poor for us in the world" (RegB 6).

Throughout his life Francis was open to the Lord's inspiration, and the Spirit trained his heart to see traces of the Lord's face in all of creation. But it was in the faces of his brothers and sisters, especially the poor, that the heart of Christ was revealed to him. And so his life became an endless rhythm for the journey within and the journey outside of himself.

Because we share in his charism, we also share in this journey. The witness of his life and the integrity of his words challenge us to be persons intent on providing the Lord with a dwelling place within our hearts so that we may see his love present in the world. Then our contemplation will be more than some aesthetic exercise, and our action will be more than the expansion of our ego. There will be a wholeness in our lives which reveals Christ within us and changes our vision so we can find him everywhere at work in the world. Ω

Madge Karecki, SSJ-TOSF

Becoming Empty: The Core of Franciscan Spirituality—I

SISTER SUZANNE THERESE HALFEN, O.S.F.

I. Indifference and the "More"

KARL RAHNER REFLECTS upon the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius in his own book entitled *Spiritual Exercises*. While Rahner deals extensively with the entire process of the Exercises, this paper will focus on one key aspect of the spiritual journey—the experience of indifference and the "More" (Rahner, p. 23). In studying this concept of the "More," it is apparent that one cannot come to an understanding of it without first grappling with what Rahner refers to as "indifference" (Ibid.). Rahner prefaces his statements regarding the "More" with a fairly extensive explanation of indifference, which he describes as "a kind of removal or distance away from things that makes true vision possible and is required for a proper decision" (Ibid.).

Indifference, then, is that stance in relation to all created things which leaves us in relationship to creation and yet free from it. It exists in the core of our being and is a precondition for any truly radical experience of the indwelling presence of God. This is not to say that indifference is a "state" which we reach in all its totality and, having captured the essence of it, are then capable of moving to the next step in our journey to the Holy. Rather, becoming indifferent is a life-long process in our journey in the Lord. It is a process which demands everything and transforms all that is given. As Rahner states, "Indifferent is what we must become. But this does not come about through good will alone, or by saying that I am indifferent; for indifference is something that must enter into the nerves and the very marrow of the bones" (Ibid., p. 24).

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This indifference is a gradual process of letting go. We begin by identifying those obvious things which hold us "captive" by virtue of our tenacious grasp on them. We begin by emptying ourselves, stripping ourselves of all that does not seem to be necessary. We struggle to free ourselves of those things which have become the focus of our hearts, so that we may begin to focus clearly on the "More" which beckons to us. Rahner speaks of the process of freeing ourselves from our encumbrances when he writes:

> This distance from things is a goal that must always be re-won again and again. . . . We love things, we have confidence in them because of the immediate relationship to our own corporality, we have tasted them in sweetness and in sorrow, we have absorbed them in love or in fear. Therefore, we need the courage to undertake ever new beginnings, and we need the power to break loose from that which holds us [Ibid.].

Yet this indifference is not achieved merely by our own "letting go." In fact, we still possess a great deal when we have the control of our own emptying. As we grow more deeply in the mystery of God's presence within us, we begin to know that we are called to let go of *all*, to give him the reins of our heart, *to allow him to empty us according to his will* or, as Rahner states, "This active indifference is surrendered and protected by man's humble handling over of himself to God's good pleasure" (Ibid.).

It becomes clear, then, that this process of becoming indifferent leaves us more and more acutely aware of and concerned with all things of life. For it is in the dailiness of our lives that the Spirit moves within us to purify and empty us, leaving us ever more ready to welcome him in the space created within us.

Rahner brings us then to his concept of the "More," which is the purpose of indifference. "Indifference does not exist for its own sake, but for the choice of 'what is more conducive to the end' " (Ibid., p. 26). That is, we empty ourselves and allow ourselves to be emptied for the sole purpose of enabling ourselves to enter into a clear and uncluttered relationship with Jesus, who continually calls to us

from the core of our being and invites us to come closer, to enter more deeply, to know more profoundly the fullness of his presence. Because we are creatures, however, the prospect of entering into such a dynamic and penetrating experience of relationship with the triune presence in our own hearts fills us with more than a little fear! We are inclined to cling fast to what we know, rather than risk the possibilities of the Unknown. And so Jesus beckons to us, little by little. He draws us beyond ourselves. He invites us to stretch beyond our present experience. He draws us through the longings of our hearts to make space for the "More" that he is, and to be receptive to the "More" he longs to give. Finally, all this can happen only if we place ourselves in his hands, if we rest in him and allow him to fashion us according to his will. We grasp at nothing, not even ourselves, in order that he may hold us firmly. Rahner describes this experience:

> Essentially, what I am saying is that we have here no lasting city, that God is the always-greater One, that he will respond to us if we remain supple and do not direct ourselves in one way and one way only. We should protect ourselves from that inner hardening that can be observed sometimes in the so-called "patent ascetics." We should remain elastic—always ready for that call of God that will lead us to higher things. The more we love God, the more we will experience his ever greater distance from us, and the more we will want to be in awe at the holy unconditionedness of his demands [Ibid.].

We fall into him with the recklessness of faith through which we are able to lose all for the sake of the "More."

The Dynamics of Indifference and the "More"

Johannes Metz, in his book *Poverty of Spirit*, describes the dynamics of Rahner's indifference and the "More." He speaks about poverty of spirit as being that which is essential if we are to become what we are called to be, and if we are to discover God in the secret of our hearts. He speaks of poverty of spirit in much the same way that Rahner speaks of indifference.

In considering the nature of the human person Metz identifies the invitation of the More as an inherent element of our humanness:

> Man, however, is challenged and questioned from the depths of his boundless spirit. Being is entrusted to him as a summons, which he is to accept and consciously acknowledge. He is never simply a being that is "there" and "ready made," just for the asking. From the very start, he is something that can Be, a being who must win his selfhood and decide what he is to be. He must fully *become* what he *is*—a human being. To

become man through the exercise of his freedom—that is the law of his Being [Metz, pp. 5–6].

We are, by our very nature, intended for the "More." The experience of entering into relationship with the Holy as God calls us to give more that we may know more of *him* . . . this experience is not intended for the few. It is part and parcel of being human, and fidelity to God as he draws us beyond ourselves is essential to our own becoming. It is in openness to the "More" that we discover the essence of our call to be human. Metz speaks of this, and of Jesus as our model in becoming:

> . . . we are at once so needy and yet so noble that we discover ourselves, with our deepest and intensest potentialities, not by deducing the latter from a static notion of human nature, but by seeing them reflected in the free, gratuitous action of God on our behalf. God did not reject us or stay aloof from us; he treated us with self-sacrificing love. In giving us his Son, he showed us what our existence is; he showed us the true nature of our humanness, and he showed us the proper spirit to have in becoming a human being: the spirit of poverty [Ibid., p. 24].

Not only do we find our *model* for becoming human in Jesus; in addition, it is Jesus and *his Spirit* within us that *makes it possible* for us to realize our full potential. It is God present within us who makes sense of the emptiness in us, and it is he who makes it holy. He is the "More." He identifies with us and in this way becomes Enabler, the Way, the One through whom we know the fullness of our own humanity.

> God has come to us in grace. He has endowed us with his life, and made our life his. In doing this, he did not mitigate or eliminate our innate poverty; he actually intensified it and outdid it. His grace does not cause estrangement and excess, as sin does. It reveals the full depth of our destiny . . . which we could not have imagined by ourselves [Ibid., p. 25].

The more deeply we experience the "More," the more profoundly we know our own poverty. Faith and hope become essential for fidelity in the midst of apparent absurdity. For the irony of God's presence is that we know it most deeply when we are most empty. As Metz says, "A man with grace is a man who has been emptied, who stands impoverished before God, who has nothing of which he can boast" (Ibid.).

It seems that we have a very clear choice. We can choose to embrace

our humanness, and in so doing abandon ourselves to the movement of the Spirit as he empties us for and through the "More" . . . or we can live our lives attempting to deny our very nature. We cannot know and experience fully the depths of our potential as persons without encountering and grappling with this mystery of poverty of spirit (indifference) and the "More." Metz describes the result of our attempts to avoid this encounter:

> He cannot successfully hide for long his mysterious Being. If he attempts this, the truth of his Being haunts him with its nameless emissary: anxiety. This becomes the prophet of the repressed mystery of his Being; with its alienation, anxiety takes the place of the scorned poverty [Ibid., pp. 30–31].

The alternative to this anxiety lies in letting go, in allowing ourselves to be emptied by God, to rest in his arms: "Man is a creature whose being is sheltered and protected only insofar as he opens himself up to intangible, greater realities. He is at peace in the open, unconquerable precincts of mystery" (Ibid., p. 28).

Biblical Expression of the "More"

Since Jesus is our model for becoming most fully human, it is appropriate that we look to the Word for a deeper understanding of the experience of this becoming. The whole process of becoming fully human is found in the context of the life and death of Jesus. It is a process that calls for total involvement through letting go of all for the sake of the "More." Paul describes this process in Romans 8:18–27: ". . . from the beginning till now the entire creation, as we know, has been groaning in one great act of giving birth; and not only creation, but all of us who possess the first fruits of the Spirit, we too groan inwardly as we wait for our bodies to be set free."

It is the experience of all creation to struggle in the effort to free that life which is within us. We suffer in giving birth, as we stop clinging to those things which are obstacles to Life in us. We let go of what is, to give birth to the "More."

The *fundamental dynamics* of this life-long experience are found in Philippians 2:6–7: "His state was divine, yet *he did not cling* to his equality with God, *but emptied himself*. . . ."

We must recognize those things to which we cling for our identity. We all create our own image of ourselves, with which we feel at home, or at least somewhat in control. Most often it is an image which has been born through many sufferings and which is strengthened by our

own unique defenses. At the heart of our relationship with God is our readiness to empty ourselves, to let go of our deepest sense of ourselves. The image we have grown accustomed to is a distortion of the God in whose image we are created. The "More" bids us lose ourselves in order that we may find ourselves. We realize this most often, not in any huge act of letting go; rather, in the gradual letting go of all those things which support our "self-image," as we discover them in the dailiness of our lives. Therefore, throughout the New Testament we hear the Word calling us to let go, leading us through the same experience which Jesus himself initiated when he "did not cling . . . but emptied himself."

Let us consider a few of the many examples of the Lord's invitation to the "More."

In John 12:20–28 Jesus tells us clearly that we must let go of our very lives if we are to have Life: "I tell you most solemnly, unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain, but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest." Jesus' word is clear. If we cling to ourselves, and to the image which we see, we will never become life that will nourish others. We must let go of what we know of ourselves to become what God knows us to be.

Jesus gives the conditions of following him in Mark 8:34–38: "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake and for the sake of the Gospel, will save it."

The invitation of the "More" clearly involves leaving all . . . not only all possessions which can be sold, but renouncing *self*, that self which we create for our own comfort. We must renounce this self, and we must pick up our cross and be like him. Again, we cannot cling to anything or anyone. We must lose our life if we are to save it.

It is one thing to recognize the call to leave all, to cling to nothing, and quite another thing to recognize *how* this is actualized in our own lives. Jesus focused on this process in the heart of all those he met. In Mark 12:41–44 we hear him tell us *how* he asks us to give: ". . . she from the little she had has put in everything she possessed, all she had to live on." So it is with us. In responding to the invitation of the "More" we are called to give not from our excess, but from our want. It is not in our wealth that we experience being emptied. Rather, when we give from our poverty . . . in those very areas where we feel we have the least to give, this is when we experience the "More." For example, it is a good thing to be gentle with those we love, and in whose

presence we are not threatened. However, the "More" enters our hearts most profoundly when we respond in gentleness to the violence of others. When we ourselves are threatened and feel vulnerable we are most likely to cling to the security of our tried and true defenses. The invitation of the "More" would have us empty ourselves of these defenses and give from the poverty of our vulnerable hearts a gentleness which must come from God.

This same experience is found in 2 Corinthians 12:9–10, where Paul speaks about his own weakness: ". . . but he has said 'My grace is enough for you: my power is at its best in weakness.' So I shall be very happy to make my weakness my special boast so that the power of Christ may stay over me. . . . For when I am weak, then I am strong.

It is the folly of the cross that claims strength in weakness. It is absurd to anyone whose reason is sound! Yet, in emptying ourselves of our own image we let go also of that reason which makes sense of all things and therefore finds the Cross absurd. It is only with the heart emptied of self and filled with the "More" that a person can be at peace in weakness. This has radical implications in terms of our daily relationships with others and the degree to which we can allow others to be *fully* human, not only in their strengths, but most especially in their weakness, neediness, and defenses.

Jesus concretized this invitation of the "More" in Matthew 5:17–48. It is especially clear in verses 20–48 where he advises those who would follow him that it is not enough to abide by the Old Law. There is More. The New Law does not contradict the Old; rather, it draws us beyond the old law to a stance toward life which is beyond what had been expected before. And so the "More" does not rest at living according to the law of the world. It demands a standard of relationship which goes to the heart of each person and requires a conversion of attitude and thought.

. . . as we grapple within ourselves in our effort to become most fully human, we must allow God to touch those parts of us that are most bruised and vulnerable.

As we grow in this "letting go" of ourselves we enter into a more intimate experience of the Word as he makes us more his own. We move from *emptying ourselves* to being probed and *emptied by him*. This necessitates the painful process of touching the hidden wounds of our being—those areas we keep hidden and protected. This experience is shown in Genesis 32:22–32, where Jacob is described as wrestling with God. God finally strikes Jacob at the most vulnerable spot of his hip, on the sciatic nerve. In this way Jacob comes to know his weakness before the Lord, who applauds him for struggling in his weakness and being strong.

Similarly, as we grapple within ourselves in our effort to become most fully human, we must allow God to touch those parts of us that are most bruised and vulnerable. We must allow him to strip us of all the ways we protect our wounded selves, for we cannot be totally open to the invitation of the "More" while we are carefully keeping covered any part of ourselves. The action of the Word in this process is stated clearly in Hebrews 3:12–16:

> The word of God is something alive and active, it cuts like any double-edged sword but more finely; it can slip through the place where the soul is divided from the spirit, or joints from the marrow; it can judge the secret emotions and thoughts. No created thing can hide from him; everything is uncovered and open to the eyes of the One to whom we must give an account of ourselves."

When we feel we have given all we have to give, when we would say to God, "Enough, already!" then the Word penetrates and pierces the most hidden places of our hearts and brings into the light everything hidden there. There is nothing which he cannot touch in the darkness of our secret hearts. There is no part of us left hidden as we grow in our experience of and response to the "More."

Not only are we called to emptiness, but we are also told in what manner we are to rest before God. Sirach 2:4–6 describes the stance we are called to adopt: "Whatever happens to you, accept it, and in the uncertainties of your humble state, be patient, since gold is tested in the fire, and chosen men in the furnace of humiliation." And so we see that it is not in passivity that we are to be given for God's will, to be made empty and uncluttered. Rather, we are called actively to embrace the darkness and uncertainties of becoming humble. We are called to wait and to trust.

Of course we must consider the *agony in the garden* if we are to enter fully into the way of Jesus. For it is here, while we experience the

darkness that tears our hearts and while we know the fear of totally losing ourselves, that the Father asks "More." He asks that we actively choose to drink of the cup of our own dying, and in that choice we enter most deeply into the "More" where we know the heart of Jesus in all his poverty and there see our own heart.

Even at this we cannot say "Enough." In John 21:15–19 we find Jesus confronting Peter with the "More." Here, Peter has walked with Jesus throughout his life. He has proclaimed his love for him and then denied him. He has returned to him and watched him die. Now Jesus says that is not enough. It is not enough for Peter to love Jesus. And it is not enough for Jesus to know Peter loves him. If Peter is truly going to love Jesus, then he must feed his people. Jesus says three times, "Feed my sheep." Peter is called to give himself, broken and weak as he is, to feed those who hunger for Jesus. Metz describes this when he says:

> Poverty of spirit does not bring man from men to God by isolating these components into separate little packages: God-Me-Fellow (men). It operates through the radical depths of human encounter itself. In total self-abandonment and full commitment to another we become completely poor, and the depths of infinite mystery open up to us from within this other person. In this order we come before God [Ibid., p. 36].

Finally, the all-encompassing Word, the most profound experience of the "More," and the purpose of the journey is to know in truth his Word: "Make your home in me, as I make mine in you" (Jn. 15:4, Jerusalem Bible). We grapple with our own insecurities and defenses, we enter into dialogue with the Spirit within us, we wrestle with the angel of the Lord and beg God finally to *empty us so that we may rest in him uncluttered and allow him to make a home*, to find a space, to move freely within us. When we know our poverty, when we have nothing left to lose because we cling to nothing, then we can be totally available for him to move freely within us. And in so doing we become a home for others. We allow the "More" to draw others to himself, at home within us.

Of course this is all a tremendous journey that makes up the "stuff" of our lives. We are always becoming human, and we can never say we have arrived. We can know, however, that we are living authentically the life for which we have been created:

> Our infinite poverty is the shadow-image of God's inner infinity; in it, thanks to God's grace and mercy, we are able to find our full existence.

> We discover in its unremitting demands upon us the unmistakable interpretation of God's will. His is no arbitrary will that sweeps across our being without appeal to our freedom. It is within our very being that the claims of this will find their lettering. That is why the individual guises of this poverty are the possibilities bestowed on us by God, the opportunities enabling us to become real human beings. They are the chalice that God holds out to us; if we drink it, we allow his holy will to work on us [Metz, p. 47].

Thus, in encountering the Word we move from clinging to our self-image and all that protects and enhances it, through the stripping and emptying of indifference, to the embrace of the "More," where we know for the first time who we really are:

> Only prayer reveals the precipitous depths of our poverty. . . . We are so poor that even our poverty is not our own; it belongs to the mystery of God. In prayer we drink the dregs of our poverty, professing the richness and grandeur of someone else, God. The ultimate word of impoverished man is: "Not I but Thou."
>
> Only when man commits himself without reserve to the recognition of this "Thou" does he hear himself endlessly called to the full taking possession of that priceless, irreplaceable "I" whom he is meant to be. In the great hours of a man's life this "I" announces itself, not as achieved reality, but as the possibility man is endlessly called to realize. It is when man, in the poverty of his worshipping spirit, treads before the face of God's freedom, into the mystery of that impenetrable "Thou"—it is then that he finds access to the depths of his own Being and worth [Ibid., p. 52].

Through the process of becoming indifferent we thus come to experience and know the "More" who dwells within us, and from whom we take our name. He reveals to us that truth which sets us free: "I have called you by name—you are mine" (Is. 43:1). Ω

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I Must Confess . . .

I must confess . . .
Sometimes I reject an inner calm
Anxiously searching for the kingdom
And forgetting it lies within.

I must confess . . .
Trying to achieve justice
By judging the wrongs of others
Or just their "annoying" habits,
Rather than healing their wounds
By loving them beyond the veneer of unlovableness.

I must confess . . .
Allowing myself, indulging myself
In the hurts from not being loved,
Forgetting I am already loved
Infinitely more than I can comprehend.

I must confess . . .
You mean more to me
Than any element of your creation.
Put my sins behind me once again
And draw me more deeply
Into your loving embrace.

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

Our Lady and Saint Francis

PETER D. FEHLNER, O.F.M.CONV.

EVEN A FLEETING ACQUAINTANCE with the writings and work of Saint Francis must impress one with the major place which the Virgin Mother of God occupied in his life. To her he attributed his every grace, in particular the grace of his vocation. Not only was her intercession as the Mediatrix of all grace the reason Christ crucified asked Francis to repair His Church, and conformed him so perfectly to Himself; it was with her help and counsel at St. Mary of the Angels that Francis achieved clear insight into the nature of that new way of life revealed to him by Christ and into the character of his vocation to be the founder of a new Order in the Church. Whether we consider poverty and penance, joy and mercy, devotion to Christ present in the Eucharist and loyalty to the hierarchy of the Church, Francis' central point of reference for purposes of interpretation is neither an ideology nor a romanticized experience; it is always the Mother of God—in Bethlehem, in the Temple, at the foot of the Cross, in the upper room with the apostles awaiting Pentecost.

Celano writes: "To St. Francis, the Blessed Virgin's greatest claim to honor was the fact that she was the Mother of God . . . [he] rendered special praise and poured forth praises and offered his devotion to the Mother of Jesus—how many and in what ways, it is not humanly possible to tell" (2C 198). Francis himself is witness to the exceptional role she played in his life. He writes in the *Antiphon for the Office of the Passion*: "Holy Virgin Mary, there is none like you born in the world among women." In a word she is unique, incomparable, to be compared only to her Son. It is certainly fair to say that her place in his life far transcends that of any other person but Christ's, and that the marian dimension of his vocation and that of his Order can be placed on a footing only with his christocentrism. We are accustomed, when we recall the multiple evidences of this fact, to meditate on the precise nature of Mary's role in his life and what it should be in ours.

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Undoubtedly profitable as such reflections have been and are, there is, however, another, more basic manner of assessing the relation between Francis and Mary suggested by the life, thought, and work of a great contemporary son of Francis, Blessed Maximilian Kolbe. We should ask first, not what place Mary had in Francis' life; rather what place did he occupy in her thoughts, affections, and concerns for her Son and for His Church. Such a point of departure does accord well with that of Francis in explaining his relations to the crucified Lord Christ, with whom alone he compared the Virgin Mother: no man showed me what to do, but the Most High revealed to me that I was to live according to the form of the Holy Gospel (Test). Such a parallel, resting as it does on the complementarity of the New Adam and New Eve at the heart of the history of salvation, instances a principle laid down by Cardinal Newman: that at every critical juncture in the history of the Church and of theology Mary has subtly and firmly intervened to draw attention in some special way to herself, thereby assuring the clarification of her Son and of his will in the Church, and advancing in some significant fashion the "upbuilding" of the Church in view of the final coming of her Son (*Discourses Addressed to Mixed Congregations*, no. 17).

We should ask first, not what place Mary had in Francis' life; rather what place did he occupy in her thoughts, affections, and concerns for her Son and for his Church.

Given the perspective, several facts assume deeper significance in our understanding of Saint Francis and our Lady. First, Francis was deeply attached to our Lady under her title of Queen of the Angels, and at a shrine dedicated to her under that name, and popularly known as the "Little Portion," for as Saint Francis said it had been prophesized of old that this shrine would become the inheritance of those who desired to have nothing of this world, and it had been revealed to him that of all the churches dedicated to her Mary had a special love for this one (2Cel 18–19). Apoc. 12 is the most obvious

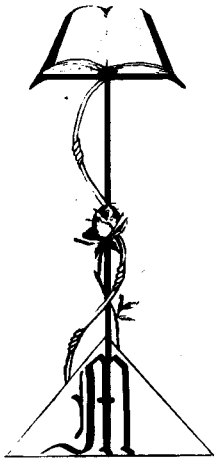
passage of Scripture one commonly associates with this title of our Lady. The woman of Apoc. is without doubt the woman foretold in Gen. 3:15 to crush the head of the serpent, and who is addressed by the Archangel Gabriel with the name "full of grace."

With hindsight one can hardly avoid the rather strong suggestion of the Immaculate Conception. That this is not merely hindsight, that the mystery of Mary's Immaculate Conception is very much at the heart of her concerns in obtaining for Francis his vocation and then enlightening him as to its meaning (1Cel 106; LM 2.8; 4.5), is apparent when we recall that of all the privileges of Mary this one is most characteristically and distinctively associated with Francis' Order, in all its branches and for the greater part of its history.

There is, however, one rather striking piece of evidence, provided by Francis himself, little considered except in the thought of Blessed Maximilian, that does seem clearly to indicate the distinct purpose of Francis and his Order from Mary's point of view. It is found in the same Antiphon cited above, worth pondering in its entirety:

> Holy Virgin Mary, there is none like you born in the world
> among women!
> Daughter and handmaid of the Most High King and heavenly Father,
> Mother of our Most Holy Lord Jesus Christ,
> Spouse of the holy Spirit,
> Pray for us
> with St. Michael and all the virtues of heaven
> and all the Saints
> to your most beloved Son, our Lord and Master!

In this antiphon Francis, who described himself as academically "illiterate," manifests an astounding theological precision and indeed "originality." The uniqueness and incomparability (in respect to all other creatures) is formulated in terms of our Lady's relations to the three divine Persons. In this formulation Christ holds the middle or central position. As Francis often said, her greatest claim to honor is the fact that she is the Mother of God the Son. Thereby she is not wife of the Father; rather she is his most perfect daughter, because most perfectly his obedient handmaid, i.e., most perfectly by her obedient *fiat* actively accomplishing his will. Her *fiat* is the crowning complement to the original *fiat* of creation, bringing to be the most perfect work of God: viz., the Incarnation and redemption. How is it that she is at once handmaid and mother; that she pertains in so unique a fashion to the order of the divine Persons? Because she is "Spouse of the Holy Spirit."



In simple, yet profound fashion Francis has expressed the core of what later scotist mariologists will discuss under the heading of belonging to the order of the hypostatic union in virtue of being predestined to be the immaculate Mother of the Word. Mary in no way belongs to the order of the first Adam; she is preserved from all taint of original sin. She is full of grace, the Spouse of the Holy Spirit. She is the most perfect fruit of the most perfect redemption, without which her Son would not enjoy the most perfect, absolute primacy as firstborn of creation, as firstborn of the dead. And since our Lady is Spouse of the Holy Spirit from the first moment of her existence, her love for God is the perfect complement in creation to the eternal love of the Holy Spirit for the Father and the Son. Blessed Maximilian succinctly states the sense of this title when he writes: "Just as from eternity the Holy Spirit is the purest fruit proceeding from the love of the Father and the Son and in whom they love each other, so Mary Immaculate (*qua* Immaculate) in time is the purest fruit proceeding from the love of the Father and the Incarnate Word and in whom they love each other." In the Immaculate we discover the fullest and most concrete exemplification of that love that for Francis is the very essence of his spirituality, and for which he prayed (with the encouragement of the Spouse of the Holy Spirit): "Grant that I may die for love of thy love who didst deign to die for love of my love."

Although the title has been used with increasing frequency since the days of Saint Francis (sometimes to imply erroneously that Mary is the wife of the Holy Spirit), reputable historians tell us that, however much its meaning is implicitly contained in the earlier tradition, the formulation itself appears to be completely original with Francis. And as the reflections of Blessed Maximilian suggest, the oddness of its formulation stands on a par with the answer Mary Immaculate gave Bernadette at Lourdes as to her name: I am the Immaculate Conception—and not merely immaculately conceived. Both ways of speaking indicate in their subject a unique way of pertaining to the order of the divine Persons. As the name given Bernadette was given in a revelation from Mary Immaculate, is it unreasonable to suppose that Mary revealed the other title to Francis? Whatever the solution, the two titles neatly frame the entire process that culminated in the dogmatic proclamation of the Immaculate Conception in 1854.

What then were our Lady's aims in securing for Francis the grace of his vocation (and ours), and then counseling him in its elaboration? Once again Blessed Maximilian provides a succinct answer: our Lady was first to draw explicit attention to herself as the Immaculate, so as to secure the clear and explicit affirmation of the absolute primacy and kingship of her Son in the Church. In many ways this first end has been achieved. But there is another goal for which the first is but the preparation: to rebuild, to renew the Church as the immaculate spouse of her Son, readied to greet Him on His final return, and properly prepared for that intense struggle with the forces of the Prince of this world that will precede His coming. Far from being limited to the exigencies of the Church in the middle ages the Franciscan way of life, associated so intimately with the Woman who is the New Eve foretold in Gen. 3:15, has a role to play especially in those final days of the triumph of the Church. Herein we can discover the reason Francis received the promise that his Order would last until the end.

The profession of this way of life, then, is aptly described as a total consecration to the Immaculate—that is why our spirituality has always been known as christocentric in a special way; and as an instrument completely at the disposition of Mary Immaculate for the renewal of the Church as the immaculate spouse of Christ. When Saint Anthony describes Mary as the Sanctuary of the Holy Spirit, he is also describing quite aptly what we as Franciscan contemplatives consecrated to Mary Immaculate must aspire to with her help. And when Saint Bonaventure states that the fullness of grace already completely realized in one single person, viz., Mary, is gradually being realized in the Church under her protection, he is not merely anticipating the point of departure of *Lumen Gentium*, c. 8, and the title Mother of the Church; he is enunciating in principle the nature of an apostolic life whose principal coefficient is Mary Immaculate.

In recalling the place of Mary Immaculate in our origins—and what could be more appropriate in the context of the eighth centenary of Saint Francis' birth?—we can gain deep insight into the purpose of our continued existence in a time variously described as the age of the Church and the age of the Holy Spirit. For in coming not only to understand, but to live in union with Mary Immaculate, so uniquely related to our Lord because she is the Spouse of the Holy Spirit, we shall also come not only to understand, but to live more deeply the mystery of the Spirit in the Church. And in this we shall find a powerful motive and stimulus for our own spiritual renewal and that of our

Order. Blessed Maximilian foretold that to the extent that we realize more perfectly the specific marian dimensions of our profession, to that extent all the friars and all branches of our Order, without losing any of their positive charisms, will become more one and more effective an instrument, with Michael the Archangel and the heavenly hosts, in overcoming the father of lies and in winning all for the heart of Christ, so that there will be but one flock and one shepherd, that all believers may be one as the Son in the Father and the Father in the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Ω

The Chapel

She's a medieval maiden.
She wears her stone-grey garb in humble beauty.
Lifting twin spires high in praise
she greets the sun;
the day begun.

A sparrow-choir sings her morning service
and the flanking trees bend reverently in prayer.
A holy pilgrim mounts her steps in rhythmic hope;
she draws his leaping heart.

Her world within is grace,
marble cool and altar pure,
with rainbows flashing on the walls
and arches framing rows and rows of dim glass lights,
stars in her celestial dome.

She is God's home; an architectural poem.

Sister Edmund Marie, C.S.B.

Bonaventure's *Tree of Life* as a Contemplative Work—III

PATRICK F. O'CONNELL

AFTER THE INTENSITY of the passion meditations, Bonaventure may seem to be risking an emotional, if not a theological, anti-climax by allotting a full third of the *Tree of Life* to "the Mystery of his Glorification." In fact the tripartite structure might appear to sacrifice content to the requirements of a formal, somewhat artificial symmetry: certainly the details of Jesus' life, and even of his death, are more abundant in the Gospels and more accessible to the reader than any account of the life beyond the grave to which Jesus now passes. The dangers of padding the description, either with the familiar, which would trivialize the mystery, or with the esoteric, which would render it incomprehensible, are quite evident. Yet if the purpose of the *Tree of Life* is precisely to lead the reader to share not only the death of Jesus but his risen, glorified Life, any other proportion would distort the author's intention and misrepresent the fullness of the Christian message of salvation.

Clearly, Bonaventure's task at this stage is to do justice both to the "wholly other" quality of heavenly life, which "no eye has seen, nor ear heard" (1 Cor. 2:9), and to the passage from life through death to Life as a single dynamic movement in which each reader is already engaged. As he suggests in describing Easter Sunday, "which in the cycle of the week is both the eighth and the first" (34; pp. 159–60), the resurrection is at once end and beginning, the completion of Jesus' own earthly life and mission and the start of a process drawing all creation to share the new Life of which he is "the first fruits" (1 Cor. 15:23), the "firstborn" (Col. 1:15, 18). The Incarnation continues, both

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in Jesus' bodily presence at the right hand of the Father and in his spiritual presence as the head and heart of the Church. For Bonaventure these two dimensions, eternity and history, are not merely juxtaposed: in the risen Jesus they are related as fulfillment to promise. Far from being too restricted, the scope of Bonaventure's vision in this final segment must encompass both the depth of eternity and the length of history, until the two merge into one at the consummation of all things.

> [The] . . . final meditations not only represent a convergence of piety and philosophy; they paradoxically restore the intensely personal tone generally lacking in the post-Resurrection segment.

To begin this sequence, Bonaventure literally transports the reader into another world, a transcendent world differentiated from human experience through the use of mythic language. The opening meditation on "Jesus Triumphant in Death" describes the victory of Christ in epic terms, as "the bloody dragon and raging lion" is overthrown in the midst of his presumption by "our strong *Lion of the Tribe of Judah*" (33; p. 159). Despite the title of the eighth fruit, "Victory in the Conflict of Death," this traditional presentation of the passion as a combat between Christ and Satan had been conspicuous by its absence from the middle segment of the treatise, where it would have run counter to Bonaventure's intent by making the reader more a spectator than a participant. By reserving the imagery of battle until now, when the struggle is over, Bonaventure not only diminishes the stature of Satan as antagonist, but evokes that domain of completion, of harmony, of perfection, which is to predominate throughout the rest of the work.

Though this cosmic triumph of Jesus elicits a response of awe and adoration on the part of the reader, rather than any direct involvement in the scene, the communal implications of the event, far from being neglected, are recognized as central: the effect, and in a sense even the cause, of Jesus' victory over Satan is the rescue of "the

prisoners from the pit." Christ descends into hell so that they may ascend, with him. He "broke down the gates of hell and bound the serpent . . . so that he who had no right over the Head which he attacked, also lost what he had seemed to have over the body."

Succeeding meditations confirm what the use of the head-and-body image here suggests, that this act of liberation is a paradigm for the sharing of all the redeemed in the glorification of Jesus. Thus the resurrection of Jesus is first presented as both exemplary and efficient cause of each person's own passage from death to life:

> Christ, *the power and wisdom of God* (1 Cor. 1:24), with the author of death lying prostrate, conquered even death itself and opened to us access to eternity, when he raised himself from the dead by his divine power in order to make known to us the paths of life (Ps. 15:11) [34; p. 160].

But as the "most beautiful *flower of the root of Jesse*" which "blossomed again in the resurrection so as to become the beauty of all" (35; p. 160), Jesus is not only "an example of the beauty destined for the risen human bodies" but the source of that beauty. The marvelously ambiguous conclusion of this meditation, a promise that "you will be truly *happy if there will be remnants of your seed to see* both interiorly and exteriorly that most desired splendor," does not specify whether the reference is to seeing Christ physically and spiritually, or to seeing him both outside the self and within the soul, or to seeing the splendor exteriorly in Christ and interiorly in oneself. But actually these are not distinct alternatives, but facets of one reality, since to perceive the glory of Christ is to be glorified oneself: the risen Jesus, the fullness of glory, is the "beauty of all" in which the just will share.

But combined with the future tense, the conditional form, even the rather peculiar phrasing of the verse quoted from Tobit, the ambiguity also serves to keep the reader at some distance from the fulfillment described. The goal is glimpsed, not achieved; as with the meditation on the Transfiguration, this anticipation of ultimate union with Christ becomes an incentive to responsible activity in the world. The eschatological perspective is immediately complemented by the historical orientation of "Jesus Given Dominion over the Earth." Even as it summarizes the cosmic scope of the ninth fruit by citing Paul's declaration "*that in his name every knee should bend of those in heaven, on earth, and under the earth*" (36; p. 161), this meditation makes clear that the apostolic mission of the disciples is also a participation in the life of the risen Jesus, and is in fact the means by

which he establishes his kingdom. Succeeding meditations continue this careful integration of transcendent and temporal, of awe at the glorification of the only Son with love for the human Jesus who invites all to share that glory. Thus the heroic, victorious figure of "Jesus, Leader of his Army" (37; p. 162), who "hid himself from the view of men" as he ascended, is nevertheless familiar and approachable as "so great and so faithful an advocate" (38; p. 162) for sinful humanity, who continues to plead the cause of mankind by showing "to the glorious face of his Father the scars of the wounds which he suffered for us."

This pair of meditations on the heavenly Lord is balanced in turn by two sections on his continued presence to and in the Church, which span the course of history from Pentecost to the Last Judgment. The Pentecost meditation, "Jesus, Giver of the Spirit," is as it should be the key presentation of the interpenetration of eternal and temporal, though the first impression it makes is that of a stylistic *tour de force*. Beginning with the triple effect of the tongues of fire, which appropriately give "speech to the mouth, light to the intellect, and ardor to the affection" (39; p. 163), Bonaventure includes no fewer than five triadic formulas in this one brief section. Yet far from being an instance of the author's uncontrolled enthusiasm for the number three, the meditation is a carefully nuanced teaching on the twofold mission of the Spirit to bring believers into the life of the Trinity and to send them as witnesses into the world. The transformation of the disciples is subtly developed by the shifting grammatical structures of the successive phrases: the Spirit as active subject, "who taught them all truth and inflamed them with all love and strengthened them in every virtue," is followed by the Spirit as agent in a passive participial construction ("aided by his grace, illumined by his teaching, and strengthened by his power"), which modifies the new active subject, the disciples, who establish the Church "partly by their fiery words, partly by their perfect example, partly by their astonishing miracles." In the final, culminating instance of this Trinitarian motif, the Church herself is the subject, the Bride of Christ who journeys to union with her divine Spouse by the *triplex via*, the three steps of the mystical pathway: "Purified, illumined, and perfected by the power of the same Holy Spirit, the Church became lovable to her Spouse and his attendants for being exceedingly beautiful and adorned *with* a wonderful variety." Here participation in divine beauty, seen earlier from the perspective of eternity, is presented as the result of a process of transformation in time, through the presence and power of the Holy

Spirit.

Yet significantly, Bonaventure's final image of the Church in this tenth fruit is not the perfect bride but the body in need of continued purification. The perspective of eternity is again balanced by the realistic evaluation of history:

> And since sins are cleansed in the fire of tribulation, therefore, just as God exposed Christ, the head of the Church, to the waves of suffering, so he permitted his body, that is, the Church, to suffer tribulation in order to be tested and purified until the end of the world [40; p. 164].

Far from being out of place, this sober meditation on "Jesus Freeing from Guilt" is a reminder that for each generation, for each individual, tribulation becomes a summons to share Christ's death, the only suffering which has the power to remove sin. This reversion from perfection to purgation, by returning the focus to the present condition of the Christian in the world, reestablishes contact with the reader's own experience. As the meditation ends he is invited once again to discover his own place on the common path to God which the most exalted of saints shares with the humblest believer: "as many as have been pleasing to God have passed through many tribulations and remained faithful and so will all the chosen members of Christ until the day of judgment." Finding, or hoping to find, himself among "all the chosen members of Christ," the reader shares with the saints not only present tribulation but the promise of future union with Christ. Here, as throughout the treatise, the cross is the only gateway to glory.

The concluding reference to the day of judgment is also a reminder, though, that this pathway has an alternative, the broad way which leads to destruction. To this possibility Bonaventure now turns. Though the three meditations on judgment in the eleventh fruit, with their emphasis on divine wrath and their rather grisly descriptions of "the reprobate" (43; p. 167), are undoubtedly the least attractive to the modern reader, their inversion of the entire process of identification with Christ makes them an integral and effective

"negative," or counterstatement, to the central theme of the treatise. Thus the terrible irony of judgment for the damned is that the one way the soul now "images" Christ, the fleeting, ephemeral congruence between them, is by "giving similar testimony" (41; p. 165) that it has rejected him. The consequence of this choice is then revealed to be isolation not only from God but from all other creatures: the geography of damnation involves total separation, absolute disunity: "On high the wrathful Judge will then appear; below, hell will open up as a horrible chaos. On the right will be the accusing sins, on the left, countless demons. Thus surrounded, where will the sinner flee?" (42; p. 166). Their destiny is presented as a horrible perversion of the images of divine union, the body and the bride: the lost are described as those who identified with the Beast and "accepted its image" (43; p. 167), and therefore share its fate; they have become prey "of the demons who had seduced them through deceit," the ultimate "consummation" of an illicit union based not on truth but on lies.

After this picture of utter fragmentation, the vision of ecstatic eschatological union which concludes the eleventh fruit is all the more compelling in contrast. Like its title, "Jesus, Adorned Spouse," the meditation combines the familiar body and bride images to suggest the perfect fulfillment of humanity with and in Christ. "Clothed with a double stole," the gifts of the beatific vision and the glorified body,[19] the Church has put on what she sees, has become the glorified image of Christ. In turn, "Christ will be clothed with all the beauty of the elect as if *with a many-colored tunic* in which he will shine forth richly adorned as if covered with all manner of precious stones." That is, the glory of Christ incorporates and shines through the rich diversity of all the members of his body. This metaphor of reciprocal clothing frames the nuptial image, according to which the love of Christ and the Church is consummated "in so intense a covenant that bride and groom will become one *spirit*." By affirming that this covenant relationship has a personal as well as a corporate dimension, that not only

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[19]This identification comes from the seventh part of Bonaventure's *Breviloquium*, chapter 7: "The consubstantial reward is bodily glory, the second robe ("quae secunda stola dicitur": *Decem Opuscula*, p. 175, n. 4) which, when assumed, permits the blessed soul more perfectly to tend "to the highest heaven": de Vinck, *Works*, vol. II (1963), p. 303. There are numerous points of contact between the last section of the *Breviloquium*, Bonaventure's brief summa, and the final part of the *Tree of Life*, though nowhere else is there need for an explanatory gloss. For another example, see n. 24, below.

the Church as a whole but each of "*the virgins who were prudent and ready will enter into the nuptials with the Spouse*," Bonaventure concludes the meditation by inviting the reader to identify with the bride. In so doing he also suggests the rationale for the *Tree of Life* itself, which is intended to develop in his audience that awareness and sensitivity which would make them "prudent and ready" for the Lord.

This vision of the heavenly wedding feast, echoing as it does the final chapters of the final book of the New Testament, would seem to be not only an appropriate but a necessary conclusion to a series of meditations on the person of Christ. By extending his treatise through four additional meditations Bonaventure again seems to be risking a final letdown; but once more he proves to be master of his material as he synthesizes in these last sections the seemingly disparate elements of speculative philosophy and intimate personal address.

The twelfth fruit is structured first of all according to the divine attributes of power, wisdom, and goodness. "Jesus, King, Son of the King" is described as one "*whose power is an everlasting power that shall not be taken away*" (45; p. 169). But according to the next meditation, "Jesus, Inscribed Book," for the perfection of the Kingdom "there is required not only exalted power but also resplendent wisdom. . . . And this wisdom is written in Christ Jesus as in the book of life" (46; pp. 169–70). In "Jesus, Fountain-Ray of Light," Jesus is presented as the mediator of "*all good and perfect gifts*" (47; p. 170), a description amplified in the final meditation, "Jesus, Desired End," where he is "the fountain and origin of goods that are both natural and gratuitous, both bodily and spiritual, both temporal and eternal" (48; p. 172). In Bonaventure's thought these attributes are not merely generally descriptive of God; they are "the key to understanding how God could create,"[20] and are also reflected in the various properties of all created beings, as explained in the first chapter of the *Itinerarium* (pp. 63–67). In these meditations, the divine power, wisdom, and goodness are seen primarily as characteristics of the Kingdom, the fulfillment of creation in the risen Jesus. Thus Bonaventure unobtrusively provides a philosophical framework for his devotional and contemplative reflections, particularly as these last meditations form a sort of *inclusio* with the very first sections of the treatise proper, where Jesus is called "the power and wisdom of the Father" (1; p. 126), and

[20]Efrem Bettoni, *St. Bonaventure*, trans. Angelus Gambatese, O.F.M. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964), p. 47; for further clarification, see pp. 51–52.

where the divine goodness was revealed in the "heavenly mercy" (2; p. 126) given to sinful humanity through the promise of a savior.

In considering Jesus as divine Wisdom, Bonaventure also incorporates into the *Tree of Life* an even more profound and integral aspect of his thought. When he declares that the Kingdom of God is directed "by the brilliant rays of the eternal laws emanating without deception from the light of wisdom," identified with Christ (46; pp. 169–70), Bonaventure means that the order of perfected creation corresponds to and realizes in the created realm the eternal order of the divine Mind. Here, from the perspective of fulfillment, is the essence of Bonaventure's entire system, in which Christ the Logos, perfect image of the Father, is the source, the model, and the goal of all created reality. Each of these dimensions, according to his last great work, the *Collations on the Six Days*, corresponds to one aspect of the Word:

> . . . the key to contemplation is a threefold understanding: of the Uncreated Word by whom all things are brought forth; of the Incarnate Word by whom all things are restored; and of the Inspired Word by whom all things are revealed. For no one can have understanding unless he considers where things come from, how they are led back to their end, and how God shines forth in them.[21]

These same terms are used to describe Jesus as Wisdom in this meditation:

> Therefore, the only-begotten Son of God, as the uncreated Word, is the book of wisdom and the light that is full of living eternal principles in the mind of the supreme Craftsman, as the inspired Word in the angelic intellects and the blessed, as the incarnate Word in rational minds united with the flesh. Thus throughout the entire kingdom *the manifold wisdom of God* (Eph. 3:10) shines forth from him and in him. . . .

Again in the final meditation, the Word is both origin and ultimate fulfillment of creation: "As all things are produced through the Word eternally spoken, so all things are restored, advanced, and completed through the Word united to flesh" (48; p. 173).

Without substituting abstract philosophical terminology for his concrete images of Jesus as book, both eternal repository and eschatological completion of reality, and as light, "*pure effusion of the brightness of the power of the omnipotent God*" (47; p. 171) and source of life and order in creation, Bonaventure has incorporated the essential dynamic of his system here at the conclusion of the *Tree of*

[21]De Vinck, *Works*, Vol. V (1970), p. 42 (*In Hex.* III.2); cf. also *Itin.*, IV.3 (p. 89).

Life. Yet far from being intrusive, these reflections bring the whole movement of the treatise to its proper culmination, the recapitulation of all things in Christ, the "metaphysical Center" on whom, according to a famous passage in the *Collations*, the "sum total" of Bonaventure's system depends: "emanation, exemplarity, and consummation, that is, illumination through spiritual radiations and return to the Supreme Being"; what is seldom noted is that in the same passage "this Center" is also described as "the Truth, that is, the Tree of Life": "the Word expresses the Father and the things he made, and principally leads us to union with the Father who brings all things together; and in this regard he is the *Tree of Life*, for by this means we return to the very *fountain of life* and are revived in it."[22] For speculation as well as for devotion, Bonaventure finds Christ to be "the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end" (48; pp. 172–73).

Yet these final meditations not only represent a convergence of piety and philosophy; they paradoxically restore the intensely personal tone generally lacking in the post-Resurrection segment. Now that all the dimensions of Christ's glorification have been described, the stance of the speaker moves from relative detachment to passionate engagement, an explicit consideration of the relevance of this culminating phase of the mystery of Christ to his own life and that of his reader. Thus the meditation on the Book of Life concludes with a fervent personal wish: "O, if only I could find this book," for "whoever finds this book will *find life and will draw salvation from the Lord*" (46; p. 170). Despite the conditional form and the first-person address, the implications of this wish for the reader of the *Tree of Life* are quite evident. Among its other referents, the "Inscribed Book" suggests the book the reader now holds in his hands, and he realizes that the one, like the other, lies open before him. The purpose of the *Tree of Life* has in fact been to reflect in human words the divine Word which incorporates all created reality, to serve as an analogue, an image, like that of the tree itself, for the only Book ultimately worth reading. If the author has succeeded (an evaluation he cannot make himself), then the reader, to the extent that he has made the preceding meditations his own, has already encountered the "single Word," "uncreated" yet "incarnate," who is the Book of Life. Though the ability to comprehend this Word will be incomparably enhanced in the Kingdom, the image of Book indicates a continuity between the knowledge of Christ in this life and in the next.

[22]De Vinck, *Works*, V, pp. 9–10 (*In Hex.* I:17).

A similar corrspondence is evident in the penultimate meditation, where the reader, now addressed directly, is urged to "run with living desire to this Fountain of Life and light" (47; p. 171). The imagery recalls the directive to "apply your mouth to *draw water from the Savior's fountains*" in the meditation on "Jesus Pierced with a Lance" (30; p. 155), and particularly the conclusion of the eucharistic meditation, when the soul "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!*" (16; p. 139); but now the banquet is not sacramental but eschatological: "From this Fountain flows the stream of *the oil of gladness*, which *gladdens the city of God*, and the powerful fiery torrent, the *torrent*, I say, *of the pleasure* of God, from which the guests at the heavenly banquet drink to joyful inebriation and sing without ceasing hymns of jubilation." Again earthly sign is transposed into heavenly fulfillment; but the goal, and the way, have not altered. In fact the concluding prayer is a request that the eschatological gifts just mentioned may be received now: "Anoint us with this sacred oil and refresh with the longed-for waters of this torrent the thirsting throat of our parched hearts so that *amid shouts of joy and thanksgiving* we may sing to you a canticle of praise, proving by experience that *with you is the fountain of life, and in your light we will see light*." In this *cri de coeur*, spoken by author and reader with a single voice, we hear the authentic note of mystical longing, that "living desire" to experience the presence of the Beloved as fully as possible in this life. This prayer expresses Bonaventure's conviction that rising with Christ is a present as well as a future event: the meditative process which has brought about a progressively deeper participation in the life and death of Jesus, is thus intended to culminate in a deeply contemplative intimacy, by which the believer, through direct personal experience ("experientia teste probantes"),[23] comes to know and praise Jesus as the source of life and light.

To begin his final meditation, "Jesus, Desired End," Bonaventure reverts to the sober tone of the philosopher, but only to provide a firm rational foundation for the concluding expression of mystical desire. Already, in quoting Boethius' definition of happiness as "a perfect state with the presence of all goods" (48; p. 172),[24] he prepares for his

[23]*Decem Opuscula*, p. 178.

[24]*De Consolatione Philosophiae*, III, prosa 2. This same definition is quoted in the *Breviloquium*, Part VII, ch. 7 (de Vinck, *Works*, II, p. 305).

last prayer, since "perfectus" in Bonaventure's terminology describes the final stage of the spiritual journey, explicitly defined in the following sentence as "an ultimate union with him" who is the source of all good. Such a union is made possible only through the Incarnation, "the Word united to flesh" through whom "all things are restored, advanced, and completed." Here of course is epitomized the aim of the *Tree of Life* itself, the conversion, growth, and fulfillment of "the true worshipper of God and disciple of Christ" (Prol. 1; p. 119). This summary leads directly into the final prayer, whose ecstatic rhythms can be appreciated only in their original language: "In te igitur ut finem omnium credens, sperans et amans, *ex toto corde, ex tota mente, ex tota anima, ex omni virtute* ferar, desiderate Iesu; quia tu solus sufficis, tu solus salvas, tu solus bonus et suavis es te requirentibus et *diligentibus nomen tuum*."[25] A remarkable integration of action and passivity, of total commitment and total dependence, this prayer focuses all the speaker's faith, hope, and love: his entire mind, heart, soul, and strength, on Jesus, yet recognizes that it is divine grace—God's action, not his own—which carries him "in te . . . ut finem omnium"—"into you as the goal of all things."[26] Since the verb form "ferar" can be translated both as a subjunctive ("may I be carried") and as a future ("I will be carried"), the prayer expresses at once the speaker's fervent desire for union with Jesus and his confident assurance that his prayer will be answered.

In his final description of Jesus as "suavis"—"sweet"—the author returns to the image used to describe the fruit of the tree of life in the Prologue.[27] This *inclusio* or frame device is made more explicit in the litany which brings this last meditation to a close. Borrowing, as he has not infrequently done in earlier sections, from a meditation by

[25]*Decem Opuscula*, p. 179.

[26]Translation mine. Cousins' version doesn't capture the full richness of this extremely important passage. Besides omitting to translate the phrases "*ex tota anima*" and "tu solus salvas," the translation blunts the dynamism of "in te" by rendering it simply "to you" rather than "into you," which has the same unitive implications as the full title of the *Itinerarium*, which Cousins rightly renders "The Soul's Journey *into* God" ("in Deum"). The same difficulty is found earlier in this meditation, where "per ultimam resolutionem in eum" becomes the weaker "by an ultimate union *with* him."

[27]Cousins' translation of "suavis" as "pleasing" misses the connection with the Prologue, where the noun form "suavitas" is repeatedly used to refer to the fruit of the tree: cf. *Decem Opuscula*, pp. 138–39.

Abbot Eckbert of Schonau,[28] Bonaventure brilliantly grafts onto his own prayer a series of progressively more elaborate descriptions of Jesus, culminating in images which contain all that has gone before: "For you, my good Jesus, are . . . the sublime fruit of the virginal womb, the abundant fountain of all graces, *of whose fullness we have all received*." Here the fountain sums up the final set of meditations, the "sublime fruit" recapitulates the basic imagery and structure of the entire treatise, and the final quotation declares, as it does in its original context in the prologue to John's Gospel, that the fulfillment, the perfection, the ultimate divine union the speaker prays for, is already given in the Incarnate Word: in this simple awareness of Fullness received, of Presence unchanging, the perspective is that of eternity: the "desired end" is reached, and the *Tree of Life* is complete.

AT THE CONCLUSION of the *Itinerarium*, Bonaventure calls Christ "the *way and the door*" to divine union, and says that whoever "beholds him hanging upon the cross . . . makes the Pasch, that is, the passover, with Christ." He goes on to relate this insight to the stigmatic experience of Francis, who "passed over into God in ecstatic contemplation and became an example of perfect contemplation . . . so that through him, more by example than by word, God might invite all truly spiritual men to this kind of passing over and spiritual ecstasy" (*Itin.* 7:2; pp. 111–13). In considering the divine invitation through Francis as "more by example than by word," Bonaventure seems to be defining not only the vocation of Francis but his own, which is to preserve and hand on the message of his spiritual father by articulating it: his work too is an invitation, but "by word," to "this kind of passing over." This is certainly what he did in the *Itinerarium* itself, with its exploration of the meaning of Francis' vision of the seraph, but we might be permitted to wonder if Francis himself would not recognize his experience more readily in the scriptural reflections of the *Tree of Life* than in the sublime intellectual

[28]See above, n. 13. These borrowings go beyond those indicated in the English translations, and include material found in Meditations 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 31, 36, 38, 47, and 48. Bonaventure's use of Eckbert should be distinguished from two other quotations of meditations attributed to Anselm, a sentence in section 42 taken from a genuine work of Anselm, and a phrase in section 9 from a meditation actually written by Aelred of Rievaulx.

structure of the *Itinerarium*. We can at least say with assurance that the one treatise, like the other, has as its goal not merely a pious appeal to the emotions,[29] but a most demanding, and rewarding, goal: to "be totally transferred and transformed into God" (*Itin.* 7:4; p. 113). The reader of the *Tree of Life* is urged to be, not an observer but, like Francis, a participant in the mystery of the God-man, the crucified and risen Savior. Here, as in the *Itinerarium* and all Bonaventure's work, the same call is heard: "With Christ crucified let us pass out of this world to the Father, so that when the Father is shown to us, we may say with Philip: *It is enough for us*" (*Itin.* 7:6; p. 116). Ω

[29]The integration of reason and affectivity, of intellect and will, in the process of sanctification is of course a hallmark of Bonaventure's teaching. See Bettoni's chapter, "Knowledge and Wisdom," pp. 29–36, for a concise summary.

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Books Received

Habig, Marion A., O.F.M., *Francis of Assisi: Writer (Supplement to the Omnibus)*. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1981. Paper, $2.00.

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Line, Francis Raymond, and Line, Helen E., *Man with a Song: Some Major and Minor Notes in the Life of Francis of Assisi*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday Image Books, 1982. Pp. 143. Paper, $6.95. **See review in our April, 1980, issue, pp. 125–26.**

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Set Your Hearts: A Celebration in Song at the Time of the 800th Anniversary of the Birth of St. Francis. Granby, MA: Conventual Franciscan Publications, 1981. 12-inch LP, $8.00; cassette, $8.00; music book, $5.00.