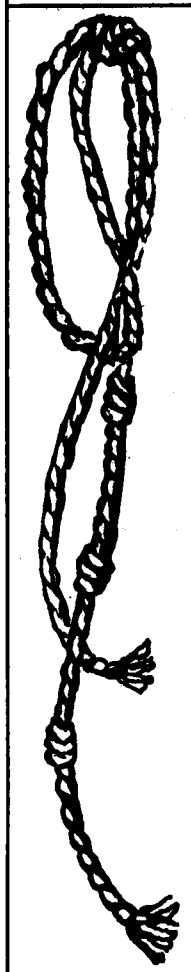
JANUARY, 1989

The CORD

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW



Volume 39, No. 1

The CORD

A Monthly Franciscan Spiritual Review

Editor: Fr. Joseph Doino, O.F.M.

Associate Editor: Fr. Julian A. Davies, O.F.M

Editorial Board: Fr. Regis Armstrong, O.F.M.Cap.; Fr. Peter D. Fehlner, O.F.M. Conv.; Fr. Thaddeus Horgan. S.A.; Donna Marie F. Kaminsky, S.F.O.; Sr. Madge Karecki, S.S.J.-T.O.S.F.; Fr. Thomas Murtagh, O.F.M.; Fr. Dominic F. Scotto, T.O.R.; Fr. Gregory Shanahan, O.F.M.; Fr. David Temple, O.F.M.; Sr. Frances Ann Thom, O.S.C.; The Staff of the Franciscan Institute, Fr. Conrad L. Harkins, Director. Cover Design by Sister Kay Francis Berger, O.S.F.

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.

Subscription rates: $12.00 a year; $1.20 a copy. Second class postage paid at St. Bonaventure, NY 14778, and at additional mailing office.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to **The CORD,** P.O. Drawer F, St. Bonaventure NY 14778 USA.

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
CL: Legend of Saint Clare
CP: Process of Saint Clare
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).

AB: Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M.Cap., and Ignatius Brady, O.F.M., ed., *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

EDITORIAL

A Time Of Purification

Within recent months the Church has witnessed an event which has caused great sadness to the Holy Father and to all catholics in good faith, namely, the heresy and schism of Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre and his followers. While many bishops may now be breathing a sigh of relief that Lefebvre's Pius X fraternity is not going to receive legitimization within their dioceses as once seemed likely, nevertheless, there is great regret that now the long threatened schism has finally taken place. This has caused deep divisions between those catholics who were sympathetic to the Archbishop's movement and the vast majority of others who remain completely loyal to the successor of Peter and to the Church. Denying such truths as the supremacy of the Holy Father and the authority and nature of a universal council of the Church to make decisions to which all catholics must give assent Lefebvre's schism has sought to create a church formed in its own misguided image and in doing so has caused untold damage to the Body of Christ.

Closer to home and of more recent vintage is the release of the film "The Last Temptation of Christ" and the great furor it has caused among catholics and non-catholics alike. While the Cahtolic bishops have expressed their opposition to this blasphemous and theologically flawed film and have been joined by many christians of other denominations in their opposition, the film has been viewed by thousands and is now making a great deal of money. Both of these events clearly demonstrate that the divisions, the persecutions and the vilifications experienced by Christ and his Church down through the ages continue in our own day and age.

Understandably catholics and others of good faith are offended and scandalized by these events and rightfully so, but we know that God can always work good out of evil. Can any good come to the Church out of these events? As we study Church history we see that since its foundation the Church has always been under some form of attack not only from without but all too often from within. Heresies and other assaults have abounded but out of them all the Church has always emerged stronger. It becomes a time of trial but also a time of introspection, conversion and purification. And so it should be now for us.

Both Archbishop Lefebvre's schism and "The Last Temptation of Christ" as well as all the other attacks which continue to occur should cause the Church and the faithful certainly first of all to protest and to make very clear to all the Church's true position on these issues, but most of all it must cause the Church to look within, to use these moments as opportunities for introspection, and yes even of conversion and purification. We need these moments to remind ourselves of who we are as catholics, who we should be and what a great treasure we possess in our common faith. There is always room for improvement and there is always that tendency to take for granted that which we have and even to slowly and often imperceptibly drift from the truth. It is moments such as these that should act as a shock treatment, so to speak, bringing us back to reality, the reality of our true faith and how we should be living it.

God can always bring good out of evil. Hopefully these two events will cause the Church and all the faithful to look not only outward in protestation, but inward as well and draw forth from this examination a renewed strength and vigor in faith and action. Ω

Fr. Dominic F. Scotto, TOR.

Fr. Dominic is a member of the Editorial Board of **THE CORD.** *He is a well known retreat master and is currently assigned to St. Anthony's Friary in Fairless Hills, PA.*

Towards an Unfolding of the Structure of St. Bonaventure's *Legenda Major*

REGIS J. ARMSTRONG, O.F.M.CAP.

Bonaventure's *Legenda major* originates, as we know, from a decree of the Chapter of Narbonne in 1260 when the friars mandated the Minister General to compile a new legend based on those already in existence. Six years later, at the Chapter of Paris, the work was reviewed by the friars and so favorably accepted that all pre-existing legends were ordered destroyed. With the rediscovery of the biographies of Thomas of Celano in this century, however, historians have developed critical judgements of the *Legenda major* and have viewed it as a purely political weapon that used the earlier material of Thomas and Julian of Speyer to either achieve peace in the Order or to water down the message of Saint Francis. A. G. Little, for example, wrote:

> The official life [Celano's], omissions and modifications, preserved too much of the primitive spirit and gave too much support to the contentions of the zealous upholders of the Rule to suit the new times . . . [The *Legenda*] of Bonaventure was compiled mainly with a view of pacifying the disorders in the order. It adds little that is new, and its chief historical value lies in its omissions and in its subsequent influence.[1]

This same judgement has been made by Bishop John H.R. Moorman who claims that Bonaventure "never really understood the Franciscan ideal" and, more recently, by the biographer Anthony Mockler who added to the pejorative statements concerning the *Legenda major* and characterized it as biased, misleading, and "fit merely for the wastepaper basket."[2] These critics have failed to see the *Legenda major* as the literary accomplishment of a profound mystical theologian who accepted the responsibility given to him although inexperienced in writing medieval hagiography.

The author, internationally known lecturer and writer, serves on the editorial board of **The CORD.** *Besides professorial duties in Rome, he teaches in the summer graduate program of the Franciscan Institute. His latest book, soon to be published, will provide the english-speaking Franciscan world with a rich resource for scholarship on the spirituality of Saint Clare.*

In light of the tremendous advances in Franciscan research, especially in knowledge of the writings of St. Francis and the early biographies, it is opportune to develop a more sophisticated methodology with which to study the *Legenda major*. While such a development cannot overlook the historical circumstances out of which Bonaventure's work arose, it should concentrate more on a literary analysis which would highlight the unique theological contributions of the author. A first step in this has been taken by the friars who edited the text of the *Legenda major* in the *Analecta Franciscana*. They took as their starting point in approaching the text the mandate of the chapter of Narbonne, that is, the request made of Bonaventure *to compile* a new *legenda,* that is, to work from the already existing *legendae* of Thomas of Celano and Julian of Speyer so that an official synthesis could be presented to the Church and the Order. Thus the friars presented an extremely detailed edition of the *Legenda major* in which the words of Bonaventure are clearly visible alongside of those of Thomas and Julian. A second step in this study was taken with the publication of the *Corpus des Sources Franciscaines* in which a computerized analysis of the text, together with those of the other biographies of St. Francis, was offered to scholars. With the help of this invaluable tool, as well as that of the *Analecta Franciscana,* it is now easy to perceive Bonaventure's approach to the life of Saint Francis and to ascertain the main lines of this thought.

What becomes evident, in light of such research, is the fact that Bonaventure was not writing a biography that followed the traditional lines of medieval hagiography as those found in the *Vita prima* of Thomas of Celano or the *Vita S. Francisci* of Julian of Speyer.[3] He was, rather, presenting a work in which life became spirituality or, in the words of contemporary popular theology, story became theology. As a theologian, Bonaventure approached the figure of Saint Francis, understood him as a paradigm of the human person, and told the story of his life using those earlier biographies according to his own theological principles. The validity of Bonaventure's interpretation or judgements on his understanding of the charism of Saint Francis can only be responsibly made in light of this perspective.

Parameters

What parameters, then, should be established in attempting to understand the theology underlining the *Legenda major*? We believe there are three to be observed and adhered to:

1. A proper analysis of the *Legenda major* should be limited to the fifteen chapters that deal with the life, death and canonization of Saint Francis. This excludes the remaining ten sections of the work that deal

with the miracles brought about through his intercession. No doubt these passages are important in knowing the details of Francis' life, but their presence in a totally different context suggests that Bonaventure considered them as extraneous to the theology of the spiritual life underlying the first fifteen chapters of his work.

2. The examination of the text of the *Legenda major* should be limited to those sections dependent on the earlier biographies. This will narrow the study to the portraits of Thomas of Celano (the *Vita prima,* 1229; the *Vita secunda,* 1246 - 1247; the *Tractatus de miraculis,* 1250 - 1253) and Julian of Speyer (the *Vita Sancti Francisci,* 1232 - 1235). In this way the nuances of the Bonaventurian text will more easily surface in contrast with those of Thomas and Julian.

This does not diminish in any way the importance of the writings of Saint Francis which influenced in some way those earlier biographies. Nevertheless, as Kajetan Esser observes, "the writings retain their own special value only when we interpret them in themselves and in their total context, and not — as has happened so often and still does — in the light of the later Franciscan tradition."[4] Therefore, it is wise to set the writings of Francis aside, except where they are explicitly quoted by Bonaventure, and to leave comparisons to other areas of scholarship.

Moreover, although an appreciation of the so-called "Franciscan Question" centering on the sources for the *Vita secunda* of Thomas of Celano is of primary importance for ascertaining an accurate portrait of St. Francis, it too should be left to other endeavors. Were we to include in a study of the *Legenda major* the "non-official" sources for the life of St. Francis, that is, those involved in the "Franciscan Question," we would run the risk of losing sight of our goal of discovering the theological principles operative in the *Legenda major*. It would be far better to concentrate on an analysis of the text of the *Legenda* itself without the distractions, important as they might be of other textual difficulties.

3. Finally, only those writings of Bonaventure that can be determined as prior to or contemporary with the *Legenda* should be considered. In this regard, a more conservative approach should be taken in the hope that the Franciscan ideal may be more clearly seen in the works established as belonging to Bonaventure's early years. These writings may be divided into three broad headings: (A) those of Bonaventure's years at the University of Paris (1248 - 1257); (B) those of his early years as Minister General (1257 - 1263); and (C) those sermons on Saint Francis written during these periods.[5] Thus:

A. **The University of Paris:**
   a. The Four Books of Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard (1250 - 1253)

b. The Biblical Glosses or Postillae (1248 - 1254)
   — in evangelium Lucae
   — in evangelium Ioannis
   — Collationes in evangelium Ioannis in Ecclesiaten
c. The Disputed Questions (1255 - 1257)
   — de evangelica perfectione
   — de scientia Christi
   — de mysterio Trinitatis
d. The Letter concerning three questions to an unnamed master

B. **The Minister General**
   a. The First Letter (April 23, 1257)
   b. Breviloquium (1257)
   c. The Ninth Letter (September - October 1259)
   d. Itinerarium mentis in Deum (September - October 1259)

C. **Sermons on Saint Francis of Assisi:**[6]
   a. The Fifth Sermon (October 4, 1255)
   b. The Fourth Sermon, evening *collatio* (October 4, 1262)

Obviously, there are important writings of Bonaventure missing from this list, writings that could be most helpful in understanding the theology of the *Legenda major*. The *De triplici via,* for example, is a fundamental text for understanding Bonaventure's hierarchical view of spiritual growth, a quality that would make it extremely helpful in our study of the *Legenda major*. Despite the judgement of some scholars that the work comes from that early period at the University of Paris, it is very difficult to date the work with any certainty and, since we have suggested a more conservative approach to these writings, it must be left aside. The same may be said of the *De Reductione artium ad theologiam* which seems to come from that same period; it too remains a text most difficult to date and, therefore, should not be included as prior to the *Legenda major*.

The Text of the Legenda Major

After setting these parameters, then, we may proceed to an examination of the fifteen chapters of Bonaventure's work. Methodologically, however, we must keep in mind the theological principles Bonaventure follows and recognize his manner of weaving together the texts of Thomas and Julian. Even a superficial glance at the chapter headings reveals a twofold approach: six chapters that are strictly historical in nature (I, II, III, IV, XIV, XV) and eight that are concerned with the virtuous dimension of Francis' life (V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII). That leaves only the chapter concerning the Stigmata (XIII) as ambiguous in nature. But its inclusion among the chapters concerned with virtue becomes apparent when it is seen as visible proof or evidence for the saint's life of virtue. In fact, a passage from the *Legenda minor* is helpful here: "What are all these virtues of Francis, all of his Christlike (*christiformi*) virtues, except so many ways in which he was made like to Christ, ways in which he was prepared to receive the very marks of the sacred stigmata"?

We may well ask if there is any correlation between the two approaches and in so doing discover an important Bonaventurean principle that unlocks the treasures of the *Legenda*. "From the visible to the invisible" Bonaventure maintains throughout his writings, or, in this case: the historical, observable events of Francis' life lead us to an understanding of the mysterious, hidden ways of God.[8] An application of this principal leads to an understanding of the entire work in which biography becomes a tool of theology or a means of comprehending Francis' manner of spiritual development. The opening lines of the *Legenda* suggest its revelatory and symbolic aspects: "The grace of God our Savior has appeared in his servant Francis. . ." Bonaventure's compilation, it would seem, is held together with the unifying theology of grace in which all the events of Francis' life reveal the unfolding of the mysterious power of God's grace.

Based on these principals, then, the *Legenda major* could be seen according to this framework:

Phase One:		
I. Francis' Manner of Living while in the dress of the world		V. Austerity
	parallels	VI. Humility & Obedience
II. His Perfect Conversion		VII. Poverty
Phase Two:		
III. Founding of Order		VIII. Piety
	parallels	IX. Charity-Desire of Martyrdom
IV. Confirmation of Order		X. Prayer
Phase Three:		
XIV. Transitus		XI. Love of Scripture-Prophecy
	parallels	XII. Preaching-Healing
XV. Canonization		XII. Stigmata

The fifteen chapters, examined from an historical perspective and a virtuous one, are broken down into three major sections in which the historical resonates with the virtuous.

A Hierarchical or Vertical Approach

When we begin with the concept of grace, as Bonaventure's opening phrase of the *Legenda major* suggests we should, we soon discover, that its dynamic unfolding is threefold in nature. In the fifth section of the *Breviloquium* we find:

> "Grace is a gift that cleanses, enlightens, and perfects the soul; that vivifies, reforms, and strengthens it; that lifts it up, makes it like to God, and unites it with Him, thus rendering it acceptable to Him."[9]

In his commentary on Luke's Gospel, Bonaventure further writes of grace:

> The whole of mystical theology consists in an excessive love according to a threefold hierarchical way: the purgative, illuminative, and the perfective."[10]

"The grace of God our Savior," therefore, is threefold in nature, be it in the traditional Pseudo-Dionysian terminology of the purgative, illuminative and unitive or perfective ways, or according to the more dynamnic concept of the *sursumactio* or the elevating principal of the grace that leads to a mystical embrace of God. And from this perspective we are bound to see a threefold movement or pulsebeat in the unfolding of the "graced" life of Francis. "In him," Bonaventure continues in the Prologue, "they can venerate God's superabundant mercy and be taught by his example to utterly *reject ungodliness and worldly passions*, to live in conformity with Christ, and to thirst after *blessed hope* with unflagging desire (Tit 2:12-13)." The interruption of Titus 2:12-13 with a phrase typical of Bonaventure is indicative of his intention to use this framework in the unfolding of the life of Francis.

Is it correct to interpret this threefold division according to the classical understanding of the spiritual life? That is, in the following way:

Purgative:		
I. Francis' Manner of Living while in the dress of the world		V. Austerity
	parallels	VI. Humility & Obedience
II. His Perfect Conversion		VII. Poverty

Illuminative:		
III. Founding of Order		VIII. Piety
	parallels	IX. Charity-Desire of Martyrdom
IV. Confirmation of Order		X. Prayer
Unitive/Perfective:		
XIV. Transitus		XI. Love of Scripture-Prophecy
	parallels	XII. Preaching-Healing
XV. Canonization		XII. Stigmata

In the *Documents de Saint Françis d'Assise,* Damien Vorreux first proposed this interpretation and based it on his sense of the text and the principal of *sursumactio*.[11] In my own doctoral dissertation, *The Spiritual Theology of the Legenda Major of Saint Bonaventure,* I attempted to confirm this interpretation by examining the early Bonaventurean writings, investigating the pivotal understanding of the virtues found in them, and reflecting upon them in light of the medieval concept of spiritual growth.[12] This was far from easy especially when confronted with, for example, Bonaventure's treatment of Francis' devotion to Scripture found in chapters eleven and twelve or the so-called Unitive consideration of the virtues. Ewert Cousins in his introduction to the Bonaventure volume of the Classics of Western Spirituality more or less confirmed that interpretation, at least in the English speaking world.[13] Without a doubt, it is consistent with Bonaventure's theology at the time of his compilation of the *Legenda major* as well as that of his *De triplici via*. But is it sufficient to remain with this perspective? Does it capture the total richness of Bonaventure's approach?

An Anthropological or Horizontal Approach

There is a far richer approach found in a "horizontal understanding" that has been largely overlooked. Whereas I hesitatingly presented it in my doctoral dissertation, I am now convinced that this is the more important theological substructure of the *Legenda major*. When it is applied to Bonaventure's compilation of the texts of Thomas and Julian, it offers far richer insights into his understanding of Franciscan spirituality and offers many valuable applications for contemporary spirituality.

This horizontal approach has its starting point in Bonaventure's anthropology especially as he describes it in the *Proëmium* to the *Second Book of Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* and the first chapter of the *Soul's Journey into God:*

"In the initial state of creation, man was made fit for the quiet of contemplation, and therefore God placed him in a paradise of delights (Gen 2:15). But turning away from the true light to changeable good, man was bent over by his own fault, and the entire human race by original sin, which infected human nature in two ways: the mind with ignorance and the flesh with concupiscence. And a result, man, blinded and bent over, sits in darkness and does not see the light of heaven unless grace with justice comes to his aid against concupiscence and unless knowledge with wisdom comes to his aid against ignorance."[14]

Two aspects of this Bonaventurean anthropology are worthy of our immediate attention: the portrayal of the human person as "bent over" and the challenge confronting us to become upright through the gifts of grace and knowledge. In the *Proëmium* to the Second Book of Commentary Bonaventure develops this approach far more indepth by accentuating God's plan to have us as the *rector* or *rex* of creation and, therefore, *rectus*. Yet, because of the ravages of sin, we have become blind and bent over caught up in or own closed worlds and oblivious to what surrounds us or, as Bonaventure writes quoting Ecclesiastes, we are "caught up in an infinity of questions."

From this starting point, then, the power of "the word full of grace and truth" can be cearly seen: the Word of grace to effect our wills; that of truth to effect our minds. It is this twofold power of the Word that Bonaventure sees as enabling us to stand up straight, to be what we are meant to be, and, in this instance, to be fully aware of our vocation seen in light of the mystery of Christ. Curiously Bonaventure omits in the *Seoul's Journey into God* what he had earlier underscored in the *Proëmium:* the importance of the virtues of this "renewed" human person. Bonaventure sees virtue as the uprightness of reason leading towards a goal or as the beginning of a process in which the soul becomes "righteous" or "upright," is helped in its spiritual progress through the gifts of the Spirit, and arrives at the possession of eternal beatitude.[15] This is a strong characteristic of this Word-centered anthropology in that Bonaventure now sees us using our "rectified" intellect and will to continue the creating power (*virtus*) of God.

There is yet another aspect of this anthropology emerging in this period of Bonaventure's thought. It appears quite clearly in the *Disputed Question on the Trinity* and the *Breviloquium* which, as we have indicated, comes from that first year or so of Bonaventure's ministry as General.[16] He returned to it frequently in his later years so that it seems to have captured much of his understanding of the challenges of life. In its simplest form this theology can be expressed in this way: God has written three books of us: the Book of Creation, the Book of Scripture, and the Book of Life.

Had we not sinned, Bonaventure maintains, the Book of Creation would have been efficacious in leading us to discover the power, wisdom and goodness of God. Yet, because of sin, the book became obscured and our eyes dimmed. Thus God gave us the Book of Scripture which marvelously teaches us of the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and, in its light, enables us to read the Book of Life in which we can come to the fullness of knowledge.[17]

Once we discovered this understanding of the call of the human person, it becomes easier for us to accept Bonaventure's concern for vision, another aspect of his thought that surfaces at this period of his life. It is certainly obvious in the *Soul's Journey into God* as Bonaventure skillfully develops his theology of the Franciscan approach to the world, the human person, and God. But it appears quite succinctly in the *Breviloquium:*

> *Through the eye of the flesh, man was to see things outside him; with the eye of reason, things within him; with the eye of contemplation, things above him. Now the eye of contemplation cannot see with perfect clearness, except through glory, which man may lose through sin but restore through grace, faith, and the study of Scripture. By these means, the human soul is cleansed, enlightened and perfected for the contemplation of heavenly things, unto which fallen man cannot reach unless he first admits his insufficiency and blindness. . ."*[18]

Again we may be struck by the Bonaventurean three's as the challenge of life is described as cultivating three types of sight.

At this point the computer read-out of the Legenda major presented in the *Corpus des Sources Franciscaines* suggests some interesting insights into this theme. For example, the noun, *visio*, appears thirty-two times, whereas its verb, *videre*, can be found one-hundred and nine times. These indications alone indicate the importance of sight in the *Legenda*. But when they are joined with other words such as *apparitio, appareo, contuitus* or *contueor,* the important undercurrent of vision becomes more evident in Bonaventure's thought.[19]

If we keep in mind that this theology of our call permeates Bonaventure's writings prior to or contemporaneous with his endeavor to compile the works of Thomas and Julian, then we are able to approach the *Legenda* in a different way. The hierarchical approach does not lose any of its validity, on the contrary, it remains for us a simple, easy-to-follow approach, typical of Bonaventure, that follows an easily understood classical theology of spiritual development. But this "horizontal" or "anthropological" vision expresses a far greater richness and is far more capable, it would seem, of capturing what Bonaventure perceived as the uniqueness of Francis' approach to God. From this perspective, then, we might interpret the *Legenda major* according to this structure:

I. Francis' Manner of Living while in the dress of the world		III. Founding of Order
	leads to	
II. His Perfect Conversion		IV. Confirmation of Order

the perfectly converted (upright), Gospel filled person now discovers the balance of a virtuous life:

V. Austerity	and	how creatures provide comfort
VI. Humility and Obedience	and	God's condescension
VII. Poverty	and	miraculous fulfillment of our needs

so that the Books written by God can be read:

Book of Creation	**Book of Scripture**	**Book of Life**
VIII. Piety	XI. Understanding of Scripture	XIV. Patience and Passing in death
IX. Charity	XII. Preaching	XV. Canonization
X. Prayer	XIII. Sacred Stigmata	

The first two chapters of the *Legenda major*, therefore, deal with the struggle of the "Franciscan curvatus," caught up in the things of the world, unable to contemplate the things of heaven, and distracted from thinking of God. Only through the embrace of poverty, that is, through his "perfect conversion," as Bonaventure considers it, does Francis come to be permeated with the Gospel and to understand the ways of God correctly. This might well be what we would call in the language of the *Proëmium* to the *Second Book of Commentary* and the *Soul's Journey into God* "the ability to stand upright *(rectus)*" and to be permeated with 'the Word full of grace and truth." It is this Gospel life that Francis proposes to his followers, becomes the foundation of their life, and leads to the development of virtue, as Bonaventure describes in the third and fourth chapters of the *Legenda*.

That the lessons of the Gospel form the starting point for Bonaventure's virtuous Francis is obvious from the opening lines of the fifth chapter:

> When Francis the man of God saw that many were being inspired by his example to carry the cross of Christ with fervent spirit, he himself like a good leader in Christ's army was encouraged to reach the palm of victory through the height of heroic virtue. He directed all his attention to this text of the Apostle: ***Those who belong to Christ have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires.***[20]

The nine chapters describing the virtues of Francis, then, offer us the "fleshing-out" of the theology of the upright person and that of the divinely written books meant for salvation. We notice, for example that chapters five, six and seven, while weaving together incidents of the "purgative" virtues in Francis' life, also present more positive elements touching on his miracles. Thus "the austerity of [Francis'] life" is balanced with "how creatures provided him comfort." The treatment of "humility and obedience" is set off by a consideration of "God's condescension to his slightest wish." And, finally, "[Francis] love of poverty" finds its completion in "the miraculous fulfillment of his needs." Bonaventure, it would seem, is presenting us with the Gospel virtues that guarantee our standing upright and does so by presenting a balanced portrait.

Further, we can notice in the fifth chapter a passage which is unique to Bonaventure: neither Thomas nor Julian contain it. It is found in the consideration of Francis' difficulties with his eyes.

> "Although he had already attained extraordinary purity of heart and body, he did not cease to cleanse the eyes of his soul with a continuous flood of tears, unconcerned about the loss of his bodily sight. When he had incurred a very serious eye illness from his continuous weeping, and a doctor advised him to restrain his tears if he wanted to avoid losing his sight, the holy man answered: "Brother, doctor, we should not stave off a visitation of heavenly light even a little because of love of the light, which we have in common with the flies. For the body receives the gift of light for the sake of the spirit and not the spirit for the sake of the body." He preferred to lose his sight rather than to repress the devotion of his spirit and hold back the tears which cleansed his interior vision so that he could see God."

As we have indicated, this is a strictly Bonaventurean addition to the text of Celano and no doubt underscores that call of the human person to read the various books provided by God that we have been discussing.

The first of the books, that of Creation, unfolds in the eighth, ninth and tenth chapters of the *Legenda major*. In the eighth chapter, for example, Bonaventure masterfully weaves the animal stories spread throughout Thomas' lives according to a theology of *pietas* that seems to be Augustinian in origin. "If you ask what is the virtue that makes a person love creatures because they come from God and exist for him," Bonaventure asks in the *Third Book of Commentary*.

> "I reply that it is pietas and a sort of natural affection... Therefore the greater progress we make and the nearer we approach the state of innocence, the more docile these creatures become towards us and the greater affection we feel towards them. We see this in the case of Saint Francis..."

From the theological perspective, Bonaventure arranges the stories of Francis' dealings with creatures in concentric circles moving from the saint's relations with his fellow human beings to the animals.

The ninth chapter, "On the Fervor of His Charity and His Desire for Martyrdom," continues this creation motif, as we can see in this magnificent statement: "In beautiful things he saw Beauty itself and through his *vestiges* (Job 23:11) imprinted on creation *he followed His Beloved* (Cant 5:17) everywhere, making from all things a ladder by which he could climb up and embrace him *who is utterly desirable* (Cant 5:17)."[21] This is totally consistent with Bonaventure's teaching in the *Breviloquium:* "All material things are made to serve us and to enkindle in us the fire fo love and praise for the Maker of the universe through Whose providence it is governed."[22] And to be perfectly consistent in his theology of love that maintains that perfect love is expressed in dying for and with Christ, Bonaventure places at the heart of the nine chapters describing Francis' virtue a consideration of his desire for martyrdom.[23]

Throughout the ninth chapter Bonaventure takes the texts of Thomas and Julian and carefully blends numerous references to the mystical Song of Songs, thereby accentuating the aspect of a love that develops through knowledge of the Book of Creation. In the tenth chapter, however, he portrays Francis as the pilgrim who "has no desire for the things of this earth," who "longs for some comfort from his Beloved," and who "penetrates the dwelling places of heaven in his eager search for his Beloved." There seems to be a totally different theology operative here, one in which the Book of Creation is set aside that the activity of prayer might be enhanced. We might easily come to this conclusion were it not for the insertion of the Greccio incident at the end of the chapter in which we discover Bonaventure's Christology which envisions the Incarnate Word as the perfection of the Book of Creation. In light of that consciousness of the mystery of Christ, then, we come to read the Book of Creation with perfect clarity.

It is easier for us to discover the contours of the Book of Scripture in chapters eleven, twelve and thirteen. The very title of the eleventh chapter, "on [Francis'] understanding of Scripture and His Spirit of Prophecy," clearly gives direction to the remaining two chapters, "On the Efficacy of His Preaching and His Grace of Healing," and "On His Sacred Stigmata." These two chapters, however, excemplify themes found in the *Commentary on Luke's Gospel* that touch on the office of preaching and those in the *Soul's Journey into God* that sees the Gospel "fleshed-out" anew in the stigmata of Francis. Even without a knowledge of the theology of the Book of Scripture, we could easily summize its presence in these three chapters for they are so totally absorbed in it.

Thus we arrive at the last two chapters of the *Legenda major*, [Francis'] Patience and His passing in Death" and "On His Canonization and the Solemn Transferal of His Body." They form the "eschatological" chapters of the work in which Bonaventure portrays Francis as "fixed with Christ to the cross," "falling asleep in the Lord," and "under the appearance of a radiant star being carried aloft on a shining cloud over many waters."[24] The themes of new life, entering the land of the living, passing from death to life flow throughout these two chapters. We arrive, then, at reading the third and final book, that of Life, in which the mystery of Christ becomes perfectly clear to us and reveals to us to fulness of life.

Conclusion

What we have presented is an overall, somewhat superficial approach to Bonaventure's *Legenda major*. In this we have attempted to consider two points that are of extreme methodological importance: (1) the establishment of clear parameters within which the text may be examined: and (2) the application of some basic Bonaventurean theological principals in order to discover the contours of his compilation. When these methodological tools are applied, we believe that some of the richness of this work can be discovered as we have attempted to illustrate. Far from being a simple work of medieval hagiography, the *Legenda major* becomes a work of symbolic theology in which Bonaventure uses story to articulate the principals of Franciscan spiritual life.

Much more could be done to exemplify a more thorough methodology. The individual chapters, for example, should be studied indepth that their inner structures become more obvious. Even a superficial study of the fifth chapter suggests Bonaventure's eagerness to offer a complete description of an austerity that embraces the entire human person. The tenth chapter marvelously weaves together the strands of Bonaventure's theology of prayer in such a way that it may well be said that it presents his complete teaching by means of the incidents of Francis' life.

In addition, many of the connections or associations made in each chapter should be investigated in light of Bonaventure's theology. Why does Bonaventure begin with portraying Francis' *conversatio morum* before his *conversio* when in traditional monastic spirituality the order was reversed? What, we may ask, is the connection between knowledge of Scripture and the gift of prophecy as presented in the eleventh chapter? Or does Bonaventure maintain the same bond between preaching and the healing ministry described in the twelfth chapter as we see in some contemporary charismatic theologians?

An even richer reading of the text of the *Legenda major* would come about by looking carefully into medieval understanding of some of the medieval words. We have already suggested a nuanced interpretation of *pietas* that would bring out more of its rich Augustinian sense. Much more, however, needs to be done in this regard. Thus DuGange's *Glossarum Mediae et Infimae Latinitatis* (Paris: 1840) or J. F. Niermeyer's *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1954 - 1976) would be essential tools of the dedicated student.

There are any number of questions that must be asked about the *Legenda major* in light of Bonaventure's own theology. Over and again we discover articles that deal with its historical or spiritual value. Repeatedly, Bonaventure is portrayed as the politician, the manipulator, the unfaithful disciple, or the second founder who never really understood Francis. So many of these works become lost in comparing the *Legenda* with the writings of Thomas of Celano or the other biographies; few examine it in light of the profundity of Bonaventure's own thought. It is our hope that this brief article will encourage others to apply a more methodological approach to this rich work.

Notes

[1]A. G. Little, "Guide to Franciscan Studies," in *Études franciscaines* 40 (1928) 517-33; (1929) 64-68.

[2]J.H.R. Moorman, *The Sources of the Life of Saint Francis* (Manchester: University Press, 1940), p. 141; Anthony Mockler, *Francis of Assisi: The Wandering Years* (Oxford: Phaedon, 1976), p. 21.

[3]Excellent studies of the lives of Thomas of Celano abound of which *La Conversion de Saint François selon Thomas de Celano; étude comparative des textes relatifs à la conversion en Vita I et Vita II,* (Paris: Editions Franciscaines, 1963) of François DeBeer is most noteworthy. While there is not much written concerning the *Vita S. Francisci* of Julian of Speyer, an excellent study and translation of the work was done by Jason Miskuly, O.F.M., at St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, New York. It is presently being prepared for publication.

[4]K. Esser, *Origins of the Franciscan Order,* trans. A. Daly and I. Lynch (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1970), p. 5.

[5]For discussion of the chronology of these early sources confer among others: J. B. Bougerol, *Introduction a l'étude de S. Bonaventure* (Paris - Tournai, 1961): 239 - 245; I. Brady, "Bonaventure, Saint" in *New Catholic Encyclopedia,* vol. 2 (New York, 1967), 658 - 664; J. F. Quinn, "Chronology of Saint Bonaventure (1212 — 1257)," *Franciscan Studies 32* (1972), 168 - 186.

[6]Cf. I. Brady, "St. Bonaventure's Sermons on Saint Francis," *Franciskanische Studien* 58 (1976): /129 - 41. Also, E. Doyle, *The Disciple and the Master: Sermons of Saint Bonaventure on Saint Francis,* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983).

[7]*Legenda minor* VI 9. Translation that of author.

[8]Among the many citations that can be discovered, those from the Gospel commentaries are most clear. Cf. *Commentarius in Evangelium Ioannis, Proëmium;* VI 9 (VI 243).

[9]*Breviloquium* V 1:1 (V 256)

[10]*Commentarius in Evangelium Lucae* XIII 21: 47 (VII 349).

[11]Cf. *François d'Assise: Documents, Écrits et premières biographies,* ed. T. Desbonnets, D. Vorreux, (Paris: Editions Franciscaines, 1968): 585.

[12]R. J. Armstrong, *The Spiritual Theology of the Legenda Major of St. Bonaventure,* unpublished dissertation, Fordham University, 1978.

[13]*Bonaventure,* ed. Ewert Cousins, (New York: Paulist Press, 1978).

[14]*Itinerarium mentis in deum* (I 7 (V 297 - 298). Translation is that of E. Cousins, ibid., p. 62.

[15]15 Cf. III Sent., d. 23, a. 2, q. 1, resp. (III, 488b) l Brevil., 5:4 (V 256b).

[16]*Questiones Disputatae de SS. Trinitate,* Q. 1, a. 2, concl. (V, 54-55); *Breviloquium* II 5:2 (V, 222).

[17]For excellent presentations of this material, see K. Foster, "Liber Vitae bei Bonaventura: Ein begriffsgeschichtlicher Aufriss", *Theologie in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Michael Schmaus, zum 60. Geburtstag dargebracht* (München, 1957), 397-414; W. Rauch, *Das Buch Gottes: Eine systematische Untersuchung des Buchbegreffes bei Bonaventura* (München: Hueber, 1961); G. A. Zinn, Jr., "Book and Word. The Victorine Background of Bonaventure's Use of Symbols." *S. Bonaventura 1274 - 1972* (Sta. Maria degli Angeli: Tipografia Porziuncula, 1973). 143 - 169.

[18]Cf. *Breviloquium* II 12: 1 (V,).

[19]For a further treatment of this theme, see N. Muscat, O.F.M., *The Life of Saint Francis in the Light of Saint Bonaventure's Theology of the "Verbum Crucifixum,' Doctoral Dissertation, Pontificio Atheneo "Anthonianum," 1988.*

[20]*Legenda major* V 1.

[22]*Breviloquium* II 4 (V, 222)

[23]Cf. *Commentarius in Evangelium Lucae* XXII, 33 n. 44 (VII, 553).

[24]*Legenda major* XIV 1, 6.

Our Lady of Guadalupe

on a hill
in a little spot
known simply as
Tepeyac,
came a mere
slip of a girl
draped in a starlit
turquoise mantle,
haloed by a mandorla
of tongues of fire
and perched on that
moon of dark memory...
In ancient Mexico
they built high
altars
for human sacrifice,
step after sorrowful step
gushed and ran red
with the lives
of the poor
enslaved to a
religion
which gouged and robbed
them of their hearts.
The priests and cultists
of the Way of Fear
hung the still beating
hearts — quivering talismans —
round the waist of
the insatiable goddess.
Into the nightmare
and unspeakable suffering
of people still haunted
by their ancestral past,
just outside Mexico City,
Mary,
ever so slightly
nodding,
with the most
tender
gentle
humble
and loving gaze
one could ever imagine.
She appeared pregnant
full of the Word,
burning with the
Love within.
She brought roses
to the skeptical
wonders and a teaching
to the very Church
she images
and left
her blessed visit
ever-sealed
on the clothes
of a poor man.
Her message
rings out anew
in this year of
Jubilee,
this Favorable Time:
"I listen to your
weeping and solace
all your sorrows
and your sufferings."

William Hart McNichols, S.J., S.F.O.

Francis of Assisi and Unceasing Prayer

BRIAN E. PURFIELD, O.F.M.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is divided into three sections. The first deals with establishing a basis for an understanding of unceasing prayer. Here I have relied very much on the insights of Henri Nouwen and these serve as foundational insights upon which the rest of the paper builds. In the second section we look somewhat cursorily at the context of Francis and deal very briefly with the concept of unceasing prayer as the *"Opus Dei"* of the monastic life. We shall also mention the changing circumstances and reforms that Francis was heir to, in an attempt to situate the vision of Francis himself with regard to unceasing prayer. This vision will be set down in the third section and I shall endeavor to indicate the continuity of Francis' vision with what he inherited, but also deal with his unique contribution, particularly with regard to the role of the Spirit as the medium through which we gaze on God and share in the inner life of the Trinity.

SECTION I
UNCEASING PRAYER: CLEARING THE GROUND

The Biblical Basis: St. Paul

When St. Paul speaks about prayer, he uses very strong language. He does not speak of prayer as a part of life, but as all of life. He does not mention prayer as something we should not forget, but claims it is our ongoing concern. Without hesitation he admonishes his readers to pray constantly, unceasingly, without interruption. He does not ask them to

---

The author, a member of the Immaculate Conception Province in England, is completing a master's degree in Franciscan Studies at the Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University. He holds a licentiate in theology from the Gregorian University of Rome.

spend some of every day in prayer. He is more radical. For Paul, prayer is like breathing; it cannot be interrupted without mortal danger. To the Christians in Thessalonica Paul writes: "Pray constantly, and for all things give thanks to God, because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus.[1] Paul not only demands unceasing prayer but also practices it. "We constantly thank God for you,"[2] he says to his community in Greece. "We feel we must be continually thanking God for you".[3] "We pray continually that our God will make you worthy of his call.[4] To the Romans he writes: "I never fail to mention you in my prayer"[5] and he comforts his friend Timothy with the words: "Always I remember you in my prayers."[6]

The two greek terms that appear repeatedly in Paul's letters are *pantote* (always) and adialeiptos (without interruption). Clearly then for Paul, prayer is not a part of living, but all of living; not a part of his thought, but all of his thought; not a part of his emotions and feelings, but all of them.

What does it mean to pray without ceasing?

Henri Nouwen looks at unceasing prayer as the conversion of our unceasing thought processes. He says that unceasing thinking is the source of our joy as well as of our pain.[7] Unceasing thinking can be turned into uninterrupted conversation with God. This ongoing conversion from thought to prayer is assisted by the discipline of prayer exercise.

Unceasing thoughts

We are always involved in some kind of thought process and being without thoughts is not a real human option. Our ability to think constitutes our humanity and our thinking sets us apart from all other created beings. All our emotions, passions and feelings are intimately linked with our thoughts. We are involved in, or subjected to, unceasing thoughts day and night, willingly or unwillingly, during our most alert moments and during our deepest sleep, while working and while resting.

Our ceaseless thought is our burden as well as our gift. We would like to be able to stop thinking for a while. Perhaps then we would not be haunted by the memory of lost friends, by the awareness of past sins, by the knowledge and oppression in our world. But then without thought there can be no smile, no laughter, no quiet joy. How can we be glad to see friends again when we are not able to think of them? How can we be grateful when we cannot remember the gifts we have received? Our thought are the cradle where sorrow and joy are born. This unceasing thinking which lies at the core of our humanity, needs to be converted slowly but persistently into unceasing prayer.

Unceasing Prayer

To pray unceasingly, as Paul asks us to, would be completely impossible if it meant to think constantly about God. Even for monks who spend many hours a day in prayer, thinking about God all the time is an unrealistic desire.

To pray does not mean to think about God in contrast to thinking about other things, or to spend time with God instead of spending time with other people. To pray means to think and live in the presence of God. As soon as we begin to divide our thoughts into thoughts about God and thoughts about people and events, we remove God from our daily life and put him in a pious little niche where we can think pious thoughts and experience pious feelings. Although it is important and indispensable for the spiritual life to set apart time for God, prayer can only become unceasing prayer when all our thoughts — beautiful or ugly, high or low, proud or shameful, sorrowful or joyful — can be thought in the presence of God. We are to move from a self-centered monologue to a God-centered dialogue. This requires that we turn all our thoughts into conversation. The main question is not so much what we think, but to whom we present our thoughts.

Jesus' life was a life lived in the presence of God his Father. He kept nothing hidden from his Father's face, fears, hopes, and his despairs were always shared with his Father. So Jesus could say to his disciples: "... you will be scattered... leaving me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the father is with me."[8] Prayer asks us to break out of our monologue with ourselves and to follow Jesus by turning our lives into an unceasing conversation with our heavenly Father.

Prayer is not introspection. It is not a scrupulous, inward-looking analysis of our own thoughts and feelings but a careful attentiveness to him who invites us to an unceasing conversation. Prayer is the presentation of all thoughts to our loving Father so that he can see them and respond to them with his divine compassion. Prayer is the joyful affirmation that God knows our minds and hearts and that nothing is hidden from Him.[9] It is a radical conversion of all our mental processes, because in prayer we move away from ourselves and direct all that we recognize as ours to God in the simple trust that through his love all will be made new. But this conversion is not easy and there is a deep resistance to being so vulnerable. We want to love God and worship him, but we also want to keep a little corner of our inner life for ourselves. We are always tempted to select carefully the thoughts that we bring into our conversations with God.

This withholding from God of a large part of our thoughts leads us onto the road of idolatry. Idolatry is the worship of false images and this happens when we keep our fantasies, worries, and joys to ourselves and do not present them to the Lord. By refusing to share these thoughts, we limit his lordship and erect little altars to the mental images we do not want to submit to a divine conversation.

... prayer can only become unceasing prayer when all our thoughts — beautiful or ugly, high or low, proud or shameful, sorrowful or joyful — can be thought in the presence of God.

The Need for Discipline

Unceasing prayer is an ongoing struggle against idolatry. When all our thoughts have been brought into a loving conversation with God, then we can speak about obedience in the full sense. Since this is never a task that is completed, we need discipline. Without it, unceasing prayer is a vague ideal. Discipline means that something very specific and concrete needs to be done to create the context in which a life of uninterrupted prayer can develop. Unceasing prayer requires the discipline of prayer exercises. Planned prayer-practice is important for through this practice God can become fully present to us as a real partner in our conversation.

The discipline of prayer embraces many forms of prayer — communal as well as individual, oral as well as mental prayer. It is of primary importance that we strive for prayer with the understanding that it is an explicit way of being with God. We can only say "All our thoughts should be prayer," if there are times in which we make God our only thought.

Common to all disciplined prayer — liturgical, devotional or contemplative — is the effort to direct all our attention to God alone. Nouwen discloses the discipline of contemplation as one road to unceasing prayer. Contemplative prayer is prayer in which we attentively look at God. The Incarnation makes it possible to see God in and through Christ. When Jesus spoke to his disciples about the Father, Philip said: "Lord, let us

see the Father and the we shall be satisfied." Jesus answered: "To have seen me is to have seen the Father. Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?"[10] Contemplative prayer means to see Christ as the image of God the Father. By looking at Christ with loving attention, we learn with our minds and hearts what it means that he is the way to the Father. Jesus is the only one who has seen the Father.[11] His whole being is a constant seeing of the Father. His life and works are an uninterrupted contemplation of His Father. For us, therefore, contemplation means an always increasing imagining of Jesus so that in, through and with him, we can see the Father and live in His presence.

This puts the Eucharist into a totally new perspective. It is there that the transformation of all images into the image of Christ finds its fullest realization. There the unity with Christ experienced through contemplation finds its perfection. In contemplative prayer, Christ cannot remain a stranger who lived long ago, but he becomes a living presence with whom we can enter into dialogue here and now.

The main thing is not that we use this or that prayer technique but that we realize that the Christian ideal of making our whole life a prayer remains nothing but an ideal unless we are willing to discipline our body, mind and heart with a daily practice of entering directly, consciously, and explicitly into the presence of our loving Father through his Son. Unceasing prayer as a permanent unchangeable state of mind will never be reached. It will always require our attention and discipline.

SECTION II:
THE CONTEXT OF FRANCIS

Basic Monastic Spirituality

If someone asks what a monk does, the spontaneous response will probably be, he prays. When the well-known courtier, Arsenius, turned to the Lord for direction he received a simple clear response: "Flee, be silent, pray always."[12] Monks go apart to find silence. In their solitude they embrace an ascetic life to silence the clamouring within. They seek silence so that they can pray, so that they can hear and respond to God. They go apart, embracing the monastic life because they want to find freedom and the support they need to enter into a complete union with God. They have somehow sensed that this is what they are made for. The whole of creation, all its being and activity, is the *Opus* of God, God's masterpiece. All is made to glorify God. The rest of creation can adequately glorify God only if it is lifted up to God through and by the mind and heart of the human person. For the human person alone is made in the

full image of God, with a mind to know God and a heart to love God. The lover of God, the one who truly seeks God, is eager that the whole creation, in accord with the divine will, ascend to God in glory. Through obedience, monks seek to be in constant harmony with this movement. Through their prayer services, which Benedict called the *Opus Dei*, the work of God, they seek to give voice to this movement, taking care "that our minds are in harmony with our voices."[13] When monks stand in choir, using the divinely inspired texts and listening to the shared faith of the fathers, they best express and constantly increase their "zeal" for the *Opus* of God, that longing that all that takes place in their lives and in the whole of creation is to the glory of the God they love.

Cluny and Unceasing Prayer

In the Middle Ages Cluny was admired even by those whose ascetical ideas were very different, because of the perfection of its organization of prayer. Abbot Odo (died 942) tried to convince the monks of the value of their state of life by reminding them that it consisted in keeping before the world the mystery of Pentecost, in showing mankind what the Curch essentially is: the holiness of God communicated to men. It is for monks to go out of this sinful world, to be strangers to it, as it were outside it, *extra mundum fieri*, and to become, as far as possible to human frailty, dwellers in paradise. The silence and peace of eternity must begin for them here and now; they must live as the angels; joining with them in the eternal praise of God; each one by asceticism sharing in the depths of his heart in the mystery of Christ.

In this atmosphere, this life whose centre was God, the whole point of the celebration of the liturgy could be understood. It was a worship and an asceticism. All that the monk had to do was to adhere to the inexhaustible marvels that the Church spread out before the eyes of his faith, throughout the Christian year. A ceremonial whose etiquette was regulated in its least details made it possible to carry out the service at the court of the King of kings. It called for sustained effort and constant self-abnegation from each one, always, and at all times. On the other hand, this complicated ritual could not be allowed to become an obstacle to the secret prayer of the heart.

Private prayer though is only alluded to in the way in which St. Benedict speaks of it. "If perchance a brother desires to pray by himself (*oratio peculiaris*) let him go out and do it speedily: *sub brevitate orationem faciat*." This ambiance shaped by the solemn prayer of the Church did not, however, preclude private devotion: only, like the liturgy, the latter expressed itself in terms of the sacred scripture, particularly the psalms.

The celebration of the liturgy in common was a stimulus to the mind of the individual during the times of silence, in the midst of every occupation, the words of the Office came back to his hearts and lips. It was the custom in England to recite psalms while washing; at Cluny while working in the kitchen or sacristy. Prayer took hold of the monk's whole life — a prayer which was not simply a heedless mumble, but came from the depths of a soul sanctified by the mysteries of Christ.

It was not particularly affective, being contemplative rather than theological or speculative. The medieval monk was not given to reflecting on his own sufferings, or analyzing his interior trials; to him anything which hindered the flight of his soul to God was a temptation of the devil and he turned his eyes towards the Cross triumphant. All his asceticism, the network of observances which restrained him was in order to his liberation.

Prayer held the monk of Cluny wherever he might be. It was for each monk individually to widen his learning and to cultivate a personal love for our Lord and a devotion to our Lady. Whatever he might be doing, the great work of his life was to put himself completely at the disposal of a society whose chief task was to carry out exactly a service at court. Any time which was not given to solemn praise was filled by spiritual reading, private prayer, and manual labour and all this had as its background the divine words learned in choir or meditated on during times of silence. Probably what one may call the habit of prayer has never been carried to greater lengths. Jean Leclercq remarks: "Cluny was the chosen home not so much of the *'laus perennis'* as of the *'oratio continua.'*"[14]

Unceasing Prayer and the Individual

The failure of the Gregorian Reform of the 11th and early 12th centuries had produced a creative crisis in medieval religious culture. The reform though served to change the focus of renewal from the institutional realm of traditional monastic forms to a religious awakening centered more on the importance of the individual. In this vein, C. Morris views the years 1050 - 1200 as a turning point in the history of Christian devotion. This period witnessed the development of a piety more suited to the so-called discovery of the individual:

> There developed a new pattern of interior piety, with a growing sensitivity, marked by personal love for the crucified Lord and an easy and free-flowing meditation on the life and passion of Christ... by the regular use of the confessional and the growing popularity of the position of homage as a posture for prayer; and by the emergence of the 'dying Christ' style of crucifix.[15]

The second half of the 12th century saw a gradual decline in the relative importance of the monastic orders and in the influence of monastic leaders in the life of both clergy and laity. The commercial revolution itself had contributed to this situation, for it shifted the focus of attention away from the feudal manor and monastery and transferred it to the city and cathedral. An increasing number of religious-minded people desired to remain in more active participation in the world than the older monastic orders allowed. Contemporary concern for one's neighbour was more outward looking. By the late 12th century, endowment of large monasteries was on the wane. Emphasis was placed rather on founding hospitals and other institutions of social welfare.

Interlocked with these developments, the idea of the apostolic life linked with itinerant preaching and voluntary poverty exercised a powerful appeal to the imagination. Instead of relying on the prayers and intercessions of monks on their behalf,[16] we find lay persons caught up in movements whose aim was evangelical. It meant a dual response for the Christian: to return to the gospel while remaining in the world.

The history of the various religious movements from the 11th to early 13th centuries reflect this emergence of direct lay involvement in spirituality.[17] Francis came at the end of this lengthy development.

SECTION III: UNCEASING PRAYER IN THE WRITINGS OF ST. FRANCIS

Francis' Call to Unceasing Prayer

From the very brief survey of the monastic tradition we have seen an understanding of unceasing prayer as an activity of our lives, an *Opus Dei* to be carried out daily and for which we must flee the world and devote ourselves to this work entirely, without any distractions, not even the distractions of ourselves. This was the first strain of thought we looked at. Then with the growing emphasis on the individual, there was also a desire to remain in the world: is it possible therefore to speak of unceasing prayer in this context? If so, in what sense? What kind of unceasing prayer are we a speaking of? Here I believe Francis is in line with the tradiiton before him, but he also contributes something unique and special of his own.

The call to unceasing prayer can be found four times in the writings of Francis and once in the writings of Clare.[18] It is to be noted that all of the references are from forms of the Rule and that the call to unceasing prayer is contained in the final form of the Rule from Francis and this is

repeated in Clare's Rule. Therefore, the call to unceasing prayer is to be taken as very much a part of Franciscan life. Neither Francis nor Clare considered it as an optional extra.

In the Rule of 1221 Francis says: "Therefore the servants of God must always give themselves totally to prayer or some good work."[19] The implication is that our prayer is an activity of our lives. This conception has overtones of the monastic stress on the *Opus Dei* to be performed continually. However in the Rule of 1223 Francis writes: "But let them pursue what they must desire above all things: to have the Spirit of the Lord and its holy manner of working, to pray always to Him with a pure heart."[20] The principle agent of prayer, that is, the primary sign of its presence, is unceasing prayer with a pure heart. Thus is confirmed by what he writes in the same Rule: "so that avoiding idleness, the enemy of the soul, they do not extinguish the Spirit of holy prayer and devotion to which all other things of our earthly existence contribute."[21] I believe this passage is very important for a grasp of Francis' understanding of unceasing prayer and that it links him very much with the traditional understanding of unceasing prayer. It is interesting that the very phrase used at the beginning of the last passage — "avoiding idleness, the enemy of the soul" — shows a direct influence from the Rule of Benedict, for exactly the same words are in the Rule of Benedict.[22] Francis was undoubtedly aware of the Rule of Benedict,[23] though this does not mean that the Rule of Francis grew out of that of Benedict. I believe the textual similarity is not merely coincidental but that Francis also realized the importance of the *Opus Dei*, the activity of unceasing prayer in the lives of his friars and he also stresses, for example, the need to pray the Liturgy of the Hours.[24] The monks had fled the world to do this and though Francis speaks of "leaving the world,"[25] it is also clear that he and the friars are not to be behind monastery walls but to "go about the world."[26]

In the Rule of 1221 Francis refers back to a description of prayer he had suggested earlier in vv. 19 and 25, namely that we keep our mind and our heart turned toward God. This is what I would term Francis' traditional understanding of unceasing pryaer. We are to give ourselves totally to prayer and good works. He saw no disparity between prayer and activity. Prayer was the soul of his activity and activity was the sharing of the fruits of his prayer with others. Celano tells us that when anyone came to see him or some unexpected business needed his attention, he would interrupt his prayer at once, and return to it afterwards in his deepest heart.[27] He wanted his friars to be both contemplative and active. Celano again records that Francis once said: "The preacher must first draw from solitary prayer what he will later proclaim in sermons; he must first be on fire before he speaks words which in themselves are cold."[28]

Francis knew from experience the value of solitude and silence and the need of them in those committed to the active apostolate. For this reason he composed the Rule for Hermitages which testifies to that value and provides for that need.

However, twice Francis warns of the wiles of the devil who tries to turn our hearts away from God. There is a danger in describing prayer as an activity, a danger I think Francis was atuned to. The *Opus Dei* can easily become the *Opus Dei*. Particularly in the Rule of 1221 Francis touches upon the prayer/work tension or what we might call "my work is my prayer" theme that some use. Prayer is not an optional extra in our lives. Prayer is an indispensable element in our relationship with God springing from the transcendent dimension of human existence, without which nothing in our lives can ultimately have any lasting value or validity. This is the chief reason why those who hold that it is not necessary to pray if one works generously and devoutedly for others, support a fundamentally anti-human doctrine. I think Francis intuited this and this refers back to what we said in section one about the discipline of prayer. We know, of course, that there is a true sense in which to work is to pray, dependent on consciously attending to the things of God and so long as you "do not extinguish the Spirit of prayer and devotion."[29] But as anyone knows who has spent protracted periods in the active apostolate, and I think Francis realized this too, work sooner or later begins to lose its attraction and becomes a boring burden. It is then that one understands the power and value of prayer. Without prayer there is soon no work at all. The friars could be particularly prone to this because they did not have the prayerful security of the monastery wall to help keep the mind and heart turned to God.

Unceasing Prayer and Adoration

In the Rule of 1221 there seems to be two totally different aspects of unceasing prayer. V.27 we have examined above, refers back to the earlier description of prayer as keeping our minds and hearts turned to God. However, in V.29 Francis links unceasing prayer with adoration. He says: "And let us adore Him with a pure heart, because we should pray always and not lose heart (LK 18:1); for the father seeks such adorers. God is Spirit and those who adore Him must adore Him in spirit and in truth (cf. Jn 4:23-24)."[30]

The theme of adoration is accentuated as central to the life of Franciscan prayer.[31] In this context however, this is the type of prayer that the Father seeks i.e. the prayer of adoration characterized by a pure heart and an unceasing quality. In order to penetrate further the significance of the

prayer of adoration in Francis' writings, we must return to its biblical meaning. The Gospel of John, as in the passage just cited, is quoted frequently in this regard. An important aspect in this theology of prayer is the phrase "God is Spirit and those who adore Him must adore Him in Spirit and Truth."[32] Francis repeats this in his Second Letter to the faithful (19-20) and makes a reference to the first part of the verse in Admonition I:3. Was Francis aware that at the heart of adoration was an activity of the Spirit? I think so, since he gives another indication of what he means when he speaks of "never ceasing to adore and see the Lord God living and true with a pure heart and soul."[33]

Here there is something more than what we have seen in the traditional monastic outlook and more akin to what Nouwen was speaking of in section one. Unceasing prayer is a continual activity of the Holy Spirit within us, "the Spirit of Truth,"[34] with which we see things "with the eyes of the Spirit." In other words, through the Holy Spirit we are enabled to look upon the Father by sharing in the same power of seeing as the Son, or upon the Son by sharing in the same power of seeing as the Father. The Spirit becomes in us the medium through which we gaze upon the mystery of God. In this view of unceasing prayer, with the Spirit within us, we are taken into the very life and love of the Trinity.

Nouwen spoke of contemplation as one of the disciplines of prayer leading to unceasing prayer. In Francis, the First Admonition is inspired by the great desire to see the Lord. The role of the Holy Spirit is crucial to this desire and it is important to recognize the importance of praying with a pure heart, that is a heart which is transparent and an unassuming expression of the activity of the Spirit of the Lord, always pointing beyond itself (not introspection) and to the other, to pray with a pure heart implies recognition of the things of God and, therefore, unceasing adoration of the Lord, as Francis teaches in Admonition Sixteen.

Unceasing Prayer: Francis lives in the Presence of God His Father

Celano says of Francis that "All his attention and affection he directed with his whole being to the one thing which he was asking of the Lord, not so much praying as becoming himself a prayer."[35] The description serves to emphasize the principal point about prayer: prayer is not primarily saying something but being someone in virtue of a relationship with God who is ever-present everywhere in the totality of His Being.

The purpose of all prayer, be it liturgical, public, corporate, personal, vocal or silent, is to deepen our union with God, made possible by God Himself who, in absolute freedom and pure loving kindness, bridges the

infinite gulf that separates us in our creaturehood from Him the Sovereign Lord and Creator of the Universe. In this relationship we draw ever nearer to Him and the nearer we are to Him the more do we become like him. The more we become like Him, the more are we made truly ourselves. In unceasing prayer, there is no part of us that can be kept back according to Francis: "Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves so that he who gives Himself totally to you may receive you totally."[36]

There is nothing that can make a man more himself than the constant effort to deepen his relationship with God by loving the divine will and living in the divine presence.

Francis had a very clear grasp of what it means to be a creature. No created thing has meaning in itself. Its significance is derived from the Almighty Creator, who is, as Francis writes, supreme goodness, all goodness, eternal goodness, and without whom there is no goodness.[37] In gospel humility Francis acknowledged the gift-character of creation. To be created is to be a gift of God. This explains the sense of gratitude which pervaded his life and why he gives thanks so often in his writings. We find him thanking God for being God, for the gift of life, for every creature, for the love revealed and shared in Christ Jesus, for every grace and for the promise of glory. He gave thanks without creasing and he knew that thanksgiving was also a gracious gift.

Francis was always at prayer in the precise sense of living constantly in the presence of God and of centering his whole being on Him. He writes in the Rule of 1221: "All over the world, in every place, at every hour, at every moment, every day and without ceasing, we should believe truly and humbly and cherish in our heart and love, reverence, adore, serve, praise and bless, glorify and exalt, magnify and thank, the most High and supreme eternal God."[38]

According to this text and from ample evidence in his life, it is clear that Francis saw prayer first of all as an intimate relationship with the Triune God and a way of being (Nouwen's unceasing thoughts and unceasing prayer), and then as frequent communion with God in the liturgy and periods of personal recollection (the discipline that Nouwen spoke of.

CONCLUSION

In every one of us, there is an area of mystery at the core of which is an openness to God, who calls out to us from His own blessed eternity. As *homo sapiens*, as beings who find truth and reality not only outside ourselves, but in the inner depths of our own being, we must also be *homo orans*. If we are not the latter, then we will slip back into being no more than *homo sciens* — and knowledge only puffs up, wisdom it is

that builds up.[39] We must progress from *homo sapiens* to *homo amans* by being *homo orans*, that is to say, by praying we become ourselves a prayer.

Footnotes

[1]1 Th. 5:17-18.
[2]1 Th. 2:13.
[3]2 Th. 1:3.
[4]2 Th. 1:11.
[5]Rm 1:9.
[6]2 Tim 1:3.
[7]Henri Nouwen, *Clowning in Rome, Reflections on Solitude, Celibacy, Prayer and Contemplation*. Garden City, NY, Image Books, 1979. 61-84.
[8]Jn 16:32.
[9]Ps. 138:1-3; 23-24.
[10]Jn 14:8-10.
[11]Jn 6:46.
[12]*The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetic Collection*, trans. Benedicta Ward, London: Mowbray, 1975. 8.
[13]Rule of Benedict 19-7.
[14]*A History of Christian Spirituality vol. II: The Spirituality of the Middle Ages* ed. Jean Leclercq, Francois Vandenbrouche, Louis Bouyer. Seabury Press, NY 1968, 110.
[15]C. Morris, *Discovery of the Individual: 1050 - 1200*. New York, Hagerstown, San Francisco, London: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1972, 160. On pp. 139-144 Morris discusses the changing form of the crucifix which manifests the new spirit of piety.
[16]The traditional dictum of Bishop Adalbero of Laon had divided society into three sacral orders: the clergy who prayed, the nobles who fought, and the rest who laboured. Cf. M-D. Chenu, *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century*, ed & trans. Jerome Taylor & Lester K. Little, University of Chicago Press, 1979, 264 no. 42. See also 255.
[17]For a treatment of the various religious reform movements of the period, see R. Brooke, *The Coming of the Friars*, London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1975, 40 - 113. Also D. V. Lapsanski, *Evangelical Perfection: An Historical Examination of the Concept in the Early Franciscan Sources*, St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1977. 6-50.
[18]RegNB VII:12; XXII:27.29; RegB X:9; RegCl X:10.
[19]RegNB VII:12.
[20]RegB X:8-9.
[21]RegB V:2; see also RegNB VII:11-12.
[22]Rule of Benedfict 48:1.

[23]Legend of Perugia 114.
[24]RegB III: 1; Test. 30
[25]Test. 3.
[26]RegB III:10.
[27]2 Celano 94.
[28]2 Celano 163.
[29]Reg B V:2; V:14; EpAnt 2.
[30]RegNB XXII:29-31.
[31]Cf. Adm XVI:2; IIepFid 12-20; EpOrd 4; OffPass X:3; RegNB XXI:2; XXIII:4; XXIII:11; Test. 5.
[32]Jn. 4:24.
[33]Adm XVI:2.
[34]IIEpFid 20.
[35]2 Celano 95.
[36]EpOrd 29.
[37]LaudHor 11.
[38]RegNB XXIII:11.
[39]cf. aso Adm VII.

Bibliography

Armstrong, R. and Brady, I. trans. *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*. Paulist Press, New York 1982.

Chenu, M-D. *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century*. Ed & trans. Jerome Taylor & Lester K. Little. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.

Dupuy, M. s.v. "Oraison". *Dictionaire de Spiritualité ascétique et mystique, doctrine et histoire*. Ed. Marcel Viller et al., vol. XI. cc. 839-845.

Esser, C. *Opuscula Sancti Francisci Assisiensis*. Bibliotheca Franciscana Ascetica Medii Aevi. Tom XII. Grottaferrata (Roma): Ad Claras Aquas, 1978.

Fry, R. ed. *The Rule of Benedict*. Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota. 1981.

Habig, M. ed. *St. Francis of Assisi Writings and Early Biographies, English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis*. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1972.

Leclercq, J. et al. ed. *A History of Christian Spirituality vol II: The Spirituality of the Middle Ages*. Seabury Press, NY. 1968.

Morris, C. *Discovery of the Individual: 1050-1200*. New York, Hagerstown, San Francisco, London: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1972.

Nouwen, H. *Clowning in Rome: Reflections on solitude, celibacy, prayer and contemplation*. Garden City, NY, Image Books, 1979.

Books Received

Noll, Mark A. *One Nation under God. Christian Faith & Political Action in America*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988. Pp. zv-211, including Indices. Cloth, $14.95.

Pable, O.F.M., Martin W. *A Man and His God. Contemporary Male Spirituality*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1988. Pp. 141. Paper, $5.94.

Pardy, Marion. *Teaching Children the Bible. New Models in Christian Education*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988. Pp. xv - 170, including Index. Paper, $12.95.

Peterson, Eugene H. *Reversed Thunder. The Revelation of John and the Praying Imagination*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. Pp. xiv - 206, including

Roberts, William P. *Marriage. Sacrament of Hope and Challenge*. Updated & Revised. Cincinnati, Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1988. Pp. v-154. Paper, $6.95.

Romero, Oscar. *The Violence of Love. The Pastoral Wisdom of Archbishop Oscar Romero*. Compiled and translated by James R. Brockman, S.J. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. Pp. xiv-242. Paper, $12.95.

Rock, Judith and Mealy, Norman. *Performer as Priest & Prophet. Restoring the Intuitive in Worship through Music & Dance*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. Pp. xi - 138, including Bibliography. Paper, $13.95.

Ross, Maggie. *Pillar of Flame. Power, Priesthood and Spiritual Maturity*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. Pp. ivi-214, including Appendices. Cloth, $17.95.

Sayer, George. *C. S. Lewis and his Times*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. Pp. xvii - 278, including Bibliography and Index. Cloth, $19.95.

Schwarz, Howard. *Lilith's Cave. Jewish Tales of the Supernatural*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. Pp. xi-294, including Bibliography and Index. Cloth, $22.50.

Spong, John Shelby. *This Hebrew Lord*. Revised Edition. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. Pp. xv - 192, including Bibliography. Paper, $8.95.

Spong, John Shelby. *Living in Sin? A Bishop Bethinks Human Sexuality*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. Pp. xi-294, including Bibliography and Index. Cloth, $15.95.

Strommen, Merton P. *Five Cries of Youth. New and Revised Edition*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. Pp. xviii-190, including Bibliography. Cloth, $14.95.