

UNION WITH CHRIST. Leo Veuthey, O.F.M. Conv., translated by James Meyer, O.F.M. Chicago: The Franciscan Herald Press, 1954. Pp. 96. \$2.00

Readers of *The Franciscan Herald and Forum* who have profited from the series of articles entitled "Union with Christ" will be delighted to find the series available in book form. The work is already so well known that it seems superfluous to discuss it here. Suffice to remark that it treats of Franciscan asceticism, bringing out its Christocentric character and its tendency toward the mystical union as its normal goal. Each chapter of the book deals with some pertinent aspect of ascetical theology, beginning with a treatment of the Mystical Body and running through nine chapters on Mary, prayer, the Mass, poverty, humility, chastity, mortification, and suffering.

Sister M. Michaeline, O.S.F., did the jacket design for the book and the title page and chapter divisions. Interpretations of the symbols accompany her designs. Unfortunately, the printing is not up to standard.

The translation was made by the late Fr. James Meyer, O.F.M., for thirty-three years editor of *The Franciscan Herald and Forum*, and author and translator of numerous works on Franciscan spirituality. His death is a deep-felt loss to the Franciscan apostolate in this country, especially the apostolate of the press.

S.M.F.

SISTERS' DIVISION OF FEC TO MEET IN INDIANAPOLIS

It was announced at the closing sessions of the FEC that the meeting of the Sisters' Division is to be held at Marian College, Indianapolis, during the Thanksgiving recess, November 25-26. The subject will be the same as for the FEC: "Nature, the Mirror of God."

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The FEC unanimously expressed its sympathy to the members of the Franciscan Institute and to all who were affected by the untimely death of Father Philotheus Bohner, O.F.M., Founder and Director of the Institute. It also expressed "its own indebtedness to the deceased by dedicating the Report of the Conference to this great Franciscan who continually found in nature a mirror of God."

THE MONTHLY CONFERENCE

THE MEANING OF MINORITAS

During the past month we have considered the various aspects of our Franciscan life in penance and have tried to discover wherein we fall short of our ideal and into what alien paths we tend to stray. It now remains for us to synthesize these aspects of the Franciscan ideal or to find one single aspect that embraces them all. This we can discover at the feet of the Infant of Bethlehem, and we shall call it, for want of a better term, *minoritas*.

1. *Why Minoritas?*

It is especially necessary for us children of Saint Francis, living as we do in this sophisticated age of worldly pride and wisdom, to study our way of life, *whence it comes* (Phil. 1:10). For our name of Friars Minor stands as a sign of contradiction and contempt to the vast majority of our contemporaries. If we cannot defend it to our selves, we cannot hope to defend it to the world.

Our Order has a history some seven centuries long. It looks back upon an ancient tradition, yet a tradition sufficiently flexible to be adapted to the needs of every age. Actually, therefore, we have two traditions: the unalterable ideal, the total imitation of Christ, which is the essence of our way of life, and the ideal of adaptability in matters of external observance. This latter tradition is one of the clearest signs of spiritual vigor. An Order that continues throughout several centuries and keeps in close touch with the world must have the strength to conform to the times in manner and outlook without detriment to its essential spirit. Therefore, while the ideal remains intact, it must be expressed in new forms. An apostolic Order must be equipped to enter new fields of activity; it must be prepared to give answers to the questions that continually arise in human society; it must be able to adapt itself to the ever-changing customs of an ever-changing world—and all this without sacrificing or compromising its spiritual integrity. For if the Order clearly understands its divine mission, the specific purpose for which the Holy Spirit has called it into being, it can always fulfill that mission. It can always belong

to the age in which it finds itself without ever becoming a victim of the age. And the more completely the spirit of the Gospel rules the Order, the more effectually will it face up to the problems of the age.

Our Order has always had this mission of meeting the needs of the times. But because of the terrible spiritual uncertainty that is torturing the modern world, the needs are especially critical. It is necessary for us—indeed, it is incumbent upon us by our vocation itself—to examine carefully into our way of life and discover clearly and rationally what pertains to the essentials of the Franciscan ideal and what is meaningful only for a particular time. It is easy to discard certain forms as antiquated or impractical; but it is not so easy to establish new forms to contain the spirit that the old forms expressed. And certainly it is dangerous for us to discard external forms if the interior spirit is to be discarded along with them. Here is a matter that may well be considered a gauge for our own personal activities and attitudes: Do we know what the essentials of our vocation are? Do we know how to recognize outmoded forms and discard them aside without laying aside the spirit that moulded them? This is much in general for private consideration; but for this particular conference let us take the matter of Franciscan *minoritas*.

We are called *Fratres Minores*, Lesser Brothers. Is this name simply a charming remnant of medieval piety, slightly absurd in the modern world? Or does it embody an essential part of our Franciscan heritage, a spirit that must continue if we ourselves are to continue? According to our name we confess to our *minoritas*, to our being the lowly members of the Church. Why do we still bear this name? Just because we have always had it and one cannot so easily change. Then it has simply become an anachronism as far as we are concerned, and we may as well pass it off as merely a consequence of a pious mentality that once flourished in the Order but has no binding force on us today. As a matter of fact, most of us, it would seem, really do prefer to be called Franciscans rather than Friars Minor. It does no violence to our self-esteem to be named after the glorious Saint Francis of Assisi, nor do we find it difficult to bask in the reflected light of his glory. Yet, if we would be worthy children of our Seraphic Father we must live up fully to all the requirements he laid down for us. Not the least among those requirements is the name he

gave his Order, obliging us both to love it and to exemplify it in our daily living. "And let no one be called prior, but let all in general be called lesser brothers. And each should wash the other's feet" (I Rule, VI). In these words of our Rule we see clearly that we are obliged not only to *fraternitas* but to *minoritas* as well.

As a youth, Francis had longed for knighthood. His goal was military glory, and with it the power to rule and dominate. His dreams were solely of the pomp and glitter of worldly fame, of climbing to leadership and supremacy among his equals and of gaining the esteem of the great nobles who towered above him. And of all this he later said: "when I was in sins." For once he grasped the stupendous humility of the Incarnation, he realized that all high-minded striving for domination is but a consequence of man's original sin of pride, and a sign that the creature is unhealthy in the sight of God. Original sin was born of man's unholy desire to be like God, to glorify himself even in defiance of his Creator's will. It is one of the most tragic consequences of original sin that we can know the malice of pride and recognize its manifestations in others, yet make so little effort to conquer it in ourselves. Other sins seem so much more dangerous, so much more loathsome, than pride. But here our thinking is dangerously erroneous. Let us remember that because Christ came to save us and to teach us the way of salvation, he therefore *emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man* (Philip. 2:7). Through the humility of the Incarnate Word the human race was healed of its primal wound, and it became possible for man to lift himself above the sin-stricken world and become a child of God. Thus humility appears in its true light, as part of human redemption; and only those who cast themselves down and seek lowliness with Christ will be exalted with Christ.

Saint Francis, with characteristic penetration, recognized humility as the antidote to the poison of pride and worldiness. "Holy humility shames pride, and all the men who are of this world, and all things that are in the whole world" (*Salutation to the Virtues*). In the last analysis, it is only through humility that we can hope to effect our *metanoia*, that complete turning away from self toward God that our vocation demands. For humility is the beginning of

our new life in redemption; it is the glory of grace. Therefore *minoritas* is essential not only to our Franciscan life but even more basically to our Christian life. We cannot cast it aside without sacrificing the integrity of our vocation of total imitation of Christ.

2. *The Power of Franciscan Minoritas*

For a true child of Saint Francis, the fact that Christ humbled himself when he lived with us on earth is reason enough to embrace and love *minoritas*. We cannot escape the compelling truth that the fundamental law of the Franciscan life is the total, uncompromising imitation of the earthly life of Christ. Therefore as Christ, through his self-abasement, exposed pride as the most powerful weapon of the Prince of this World, the poisoned sword that wounds the soul of man and drives him to every evil, so we can be sharers in Christ's redemptive work and be healed of our wounds only through following him in the way of lowliness and humble service. Humility, then, means power and security in the sight of God, it means order and tranquility and health of soul. We have the assurance of our Seraphic Father, that "where patience is and humility, there is neither anger nor confusion" (*Admonitions*, 27). "Holy humility shames pride, and all men who are of this world, and all things that are in the whole world."

Is it not true that in all of us, "the man who is of this world" is still alive, to a greater or lesser degree? Ever since Paradise was lost to us, the "men of this world" have been seeking for security and protection. Certainly this is not an evil in itself; the evil arises from man's desire to provide this security by his own strength and power. He relies on his own human self; he loves it, nurses it tenderly, sets the highest price on its needs and desires, and surrounds it with honor and dignity. With self thus enthroned and glorified, the mere thought of humility is repulsive and terrifying to him. He simply cannot endure to be lowly and small in his own eyes, much less can he endure to be regarded as such by others. And when he meets another who surpasses him in any way, or who is held in greater esteem, forthwith that other becomes his enemy. From pride to envy is but a short step; and from envy to hatred, still shorter. There is no enemy more cruel and implacable, more cunning and

relentless, than an envious man. And tragically enough, envy flourishes even in the highest and holiest places. The first sin of prideful envy was committed in heaven; and the proverbial *invidia clericalis* that is still rampant among us is a clear echo of that first sin. But all forms of envy, even the least noxious, are unmistakable signs that the spirit of the world has triumphed over the spirit of the Lord. God cannot abide where pride holds sway. We have but to consider the Infancy of Christ to realize the horrifying incompatibility between the diabolical pride of man and the divine humility of the Son of God. The insane pride of Herod that could not tolerate a rival king, even though that king were the longed-for Messiah, slaughtered the Holy Innocents and forced the Infant Saviour to flee with his parents into the pagan land of Egypt. And it was pride—the pride of the religious leaders of God's own people—that ultimately nailed the rejected King to the cross of shame.

The final consequence of pride is the rebellious *non serviam* of Lucifer, the sin that created hell. It is the sin of those who would be like unto God, who deify themselves and refuse to recognize their absolute dependence on their Creator. Thus pride, if left unbroken, destroys a man, for it turns him away from God irrevocably and forces him to seek security within the hollow shell of his deified nothingness. The proud man can cling to none but himself, for pride isolates him and cuts him off not only from God but even from his fellow-creatures. There is nothing more dangerous than the lethal solitude that ultimately envelopes the proud, self-worshipping soul. If only we would learn to realize this; if only we would learn to recognize the first growths of pride in ourselves and root them out quickly and completely! But how pitifully few of us ever succeed in conquering our pride; indeed, how few of us even recognize or admit the signs of it. Pride is a cunning vice; it wears many faces and operates in diverse and devious ways. We cannot pause to analyze its operations here, but we can suggest a few broad questions that, if answered truthfully, will at least indicate the spirit that guides us. For example: Is self-seeking so strong in me that it drives me to attack those who stand in my way, to wear them down, destroy their reputation, turn others against them? Am I so in love with myself that I resent anyone who fails to recognize my excellence? Do I re-

gard myself as a paragon of perfection, and despise and condemn those who are in any way different from me? Do I withdraw from others and keep aloof from them, disdain to associate with them? Do I make much of rank and dignity and personal achievement? It is not uncommon to find priests in our monasteries lording it over the lay brothers; and those with impressive academic degrees patronizing those who have none. Nor is it altogether unheard of that those who call themselves children of Saint Francis adopt a condescending attitude toward seculars, and act harshly and discourteously toward employees and others whom they consider their inferiors. It is in such conduct that our greatest danger lies, and the danger extends to the entire Order.

The only adversary strong enough to conquer pride is the holy *minoritas* obligatory for us as Franciscans and as Christians. "For holy humility shames pride." Humility is strength and security; it is the saving power of right order; it is true honor. For, according to Saint Francis: "Blessed is the servant who is no more elated at the good which the Lord says and does through him than at that which he says and does through anyone else. It is sinful for a person to be more set on receiving from his neighbor than he is willing to give of himself to the Lord" (*Admontions*, 17). Here we find clearly expressed the root of Franciscan *minoritas*. For humility and littleness mean that a man recognizes every good as coming from God, and himself and all creatures as mere instruments in the divine hands. The realization of this fact does not debase him, but rather elevates him and gives him true dignity and abiding security. It is enough for him to know that in this he is following the footsteps of Christ, who, because he humbled himself, was elevated above every creature. Pride lures man to seek heights that are impossible to him, and to strive for a security that cannot be his by nature; therefore the proud man turns away from true security. But the humble man seeks only the place that is his by right—the place determined for him by God—and in this he rests secure. He knows that his works and words are good, for it is God who speaks and acts through him. He is but the instrument, and as such he has no thought of gathering praise for himself. Thus the humble man can work quite well when he is praised, for the praise belongs to God; and he can work just as well

without praise, for he feels no loss. How wonderful it would be if God found only humble hearts among us, humble men and women through whom he could work freely, unhindered by stupid human pride.

The greatest glory that man can give to God is the service of humble love. If there were anything better, Christ would have shown it to us. But we have his example before us, from the Crib to the Cross. And we have his clear command: *Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart.*

3. Humility and Fraternity

Humility is ordered power. It conquers the disorder of original sin and sets man in his natural place before God. But the power of Franciscan *minoritas* does more than this: it sets in order man's relation to man. For pride is a crippling vice, and fear is one of its worst fruits. The proud man, relying on his own strength, is ever fearful of his security, and seeks to guard it with force. Where pride rules, men face each other as enemies, turning their God-given faculties into engines of mutual destruction. Contention, conflict, hatred, and ruin are the tragic consequences.

In this disordered world of today, the world that human pride is tearing to pieces, the Friar Minor stands as a symbol of order and tranquility. The world that Saint Francis lived in was not much different from ours. The poison of human pride had sickened Christian society almost to death. To heal the swelling tumor, Francis would have his friars oppose humility and self-abasement to pride and self-glorification. Thus he instructed them: "Let no one be called prior; but let all in general be called lesser brothers. And each shall wash the other's feet" (I Rule, VI). "Likewise, let not any of the brothers aspire to any power or authority, above all, not among themselves" (I Rule, V). The brothers shall not "quarrel among themselves nor with others, but keep minded to make a humble reply, saying to themselves: *We are unprofitable servants*" (I Rule, XI). They are not to become involved in strife and contentions, but are to *be subject to every human creature for God's sake*" (I Rule, XVI).

The true Friar Minor regards all men as children of the Eternal

Father, and he sees in their gifts and graces, in their achievements and station in life, the all-wise ordinance of God. Consequently he holds all men in reverence as creatures of God, and esteems the work accomplished through them as the work of the Creator. And Christ expressly declared that he came not to be served but to serve, so the Franciscan soul is motivated in all human relations by the desire to serve others. Whoever meets a child of the Seraphic Father should immediately sense the truth of the words: "Where patience is and humility, there is neither anger nor confusion." Thus the name Friar Minor possesses a beautiful harmony; for *fraternitas* and *minoritas* belong together. The fraternal spirit can exist only with the support of humble lowliness.

If our Order is to accomplish its task of combatting pride in this disordered world of today, it rests with us to strive with all our strength for the spirit of Christian lowliness. Let us start first among ourselves. If our relations with the other members of our community are what they should be, we need have no concern about our influence on seculars. They will be quick to recognize our spirit and to adopt it as their own. But to preach Christian humility and then to violate it in our words and actions and attitudes is worse than useless.

The fact that throughout the centuries the world has always looked upon Saint Francis and his holy sons and daughters as worthy of love and reverence is the answer to the question: Why *minoritas*? For the world loved them because they were truly *minoritas*. Because they were humble they could change the world they lived in; because they desired to serve, they had power over men. We cannot bring salvation to the world of today if we come in the guise of masters and superiors. The world is waiting for, and will receive only him who comes to *serve* her, as Christ served her. For only the servant is the saviour.

"So, brothers, let us all be on our guard against any pride and vainglory. Let us keep ourselves free from the wisdom of this world and the prudence of the flesh; for it is the spirit of the flesh that wants to strive much at making words but little at accomplishing, and it is not bent on the inner religious virtue and holiness of the

spirit, but wants and craves the religious virtue and holiness that shows outwardly to people. It is of such that our Lord says: *Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward* (Mt. 6:2).

"The spirit of the Lord, on the contrary, wants to have the flesh mortified and despised, rated low and base and worthy of disgrace, and it strives for humility and patience, frank simplicity, and true peace of the spirit. And always and above all it craves for the divine fear and the divine wisdom and the divine love of Father and Son and Holy Ghost" (I Rule, XVII).

Let us, then, implore the Infant Saviour, who *emptied himself* for us, to grant us the true spirit of littleness, that we may one day share in the glory of the children of Saint Francis who live to the full their vocation of *Fratres Minores*.

Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O. F. M.

SPRING IN THE MIDST OF WINTER

Sermon of Saint Anthony of Padua on the Nativity of the Lord*

As the flower of roses in the days of the spring, and as the lilies that are on the brink of water (Eccli. 50:8)

Ecclesiasticus (39:17 ff): says: *Bud forth as the rose planted by the brooks of waters. Give a sweet odor as frankincense. Send forth flowers as the lily and yield a smell, and bring forth leaves in grace.* In this text there are three things mentioned: abundance of tears, constancy of prayer, and cleanness of life. The *roses* are the souls of the faithful, reddened in the blood of Jesus Christ, which should be *planted by the brooks of waters*, that is, the flowing of tears, that they may be strong enough to bring forth worthy fruits of penance. They ought also to have, like Libanus, the incense of devout prayer in the odor of sweetness, and like the lily, they ought to yield the fragrance of good repute by the cleanness of a pure life, and put forth leaves in thanksgiving. If the souls of the faithful have all these, they can present themselves worthily at today's feast, that is, at the Nativity of the Lord, born of the Blessed Virgin, of whom it is said: *As the flower of roses in the days of the spring, and as the lilies that are on the brink of the water.*

The parturition of the glorious Virgin is compared with the rose and the lily because, just as in yielding the most sweet fragrance their flower is not corrupted, so Blessed Mary, in giving birth to the Son of God, remained a virgin. Whence, when the Virgin brought him forth, the Father could say what Jacob said in Genesis (27:27): *Behold, the smell of my son is as the smell of a plentiful field which the Lord hath blessed.* The Nativity of Jesus Christ was like the odor of fields full of flowers, because he kept intact the flower of his mother's virginity when he was born of her. For the Blessed Virgin was also a field full of roses and lilies which the Lord blessed. Whence: *Blessed art thou among women.*

Note that the Blessed Virgin was troubled when she heard herself blessed among women, for she had ever hoped to be blessed among virgins. And therefore *she thought within herself what manner of salutation this should be* (Lk.1:34) which at first seemed suspect. And as in the promise of a son there appeared manifest danger to virginity, she could not dissimulate further but asked: *How shall this be done, for I know not man* (Lk.1:34)? That is, I have intended not to know. Or perhaps it may be said that she was troubled at this because she heard herself so greatly praised, whereas she thought so little of herself. But rare virtue indeed, if your manifest sanctity is hidden from you alone! On the contrary, as Saint Bernard says: "You despise yourself in secret, being weighed on the scales of truth; but in the market-place when naming the price to others, you sell yourself to us as of greater weight than you have admitted to yourself." Therefore, of the virginal parturition of the Virgin let us say: *As the flower of roses in the days of the spring.*

Spring (*ver*) is so named because it blooms (*vernet*). For then the blades of grass are clothed in various shades, everything is painted with flowers, warmth returns to the air, the birds sing, and all things seem to laugh. We give thee thanks, holy Father, because in the middle of winter, in the midst of the cold, thou has made springtime for us. For at this the Nativity of thy blessed Son Jesus, which is celebrated in the middle of winter and in the midst of cold, thou has made us a springtime full of all loveliness. Today the Virgin, the blessed earth which the Lord hath blessed, brought forth the blossoming herb, the food of penitents, that is the Son of God. Today everything is colored with the flowers of the rose tree and the lilies of the valley. Today the Angels sing: *Glory to God in the highest.* Today the tranquility of peace again takes form upon the earth. And what more? Today all things laugh, all things rejoice. Whence today the Angel said to the shepherds: *Behold, I bring you good tidings*

of great joy, that shall be to all the people: for this day is born to you a saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger (Lk. 2:10 ff). Bear in mind, dearly beloved, that the angel appeared to shepherds, because, as Solomon says: *His communication is with the simple* (Prov. 3:32). Those who keep the flock of simple and innocent thoughts hear from the Angel: *This shall be a sign unto you* (with which you are to sign yourselves): *You shall find an infant* (behold humility!) *laid in a manger* (not at his mother's breast; behold abstinence!) *wrapped in swaddling clothes* (behold poverty!). With this sign, God the Father has signed his Son and sent him into the world. With this sign, sign yourselves. *You will find*, he says, *an infant*, that is, one who cannot speak. Truly Christ became one who cannot speak because he kept silent and *opened not his mouth*, I do not say like a lamb before its shearers, but before its shearers and slayers. Therefore, *you shall find an infant.* Truly he is one who cannot speak who thus keeps silent, dissimulating the sins of men; and because he does not avenge himself, sinners think that he does not see. Whence in Isaias (57:11-12) the Lord complains: *Thou hast lied, and hast not been mindful of me, nor thought on me in thy heart. For I am silent, and as one that seeth not, and thou hast forgotten me. I will declare thy justice; and I shall give to thee justly, according to thy work; and he adds: and thy works shall not profit thee.* Therefore *you shall find an infant.* Alas, alas! Not an infant do I find, but a thief and a detractor, a murmurer and a flatterer, wherever I turn within myself. And you say, *You shall find an infant?* I find one who talks, because his mouth is placed in the skies and his tongue passes over the earth, that is, neither the just man nor the sinner does he spare in detracting. I find one who speaks, who says that good is evil and evil good, putting light into darkness and darkness into light, the bitter into the sweet and the sweet into the bitter.

To continue with our text: *You shall find him, wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.* . . O pastors of the Church, this a sign to you: *You shall find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.* Sign yourselves with the sign of the humility and abstinence of this Infant, and with the seal of his golden poverty. Therefore let us say: *As the flower of roses in the days of the spring.*

Note that as in spring, that is, in March, the Lord made the world, so at the Nativity of his Son he made, as it were, a new world, all things being made new. On the first day God said (Gen. 1:3) *Be light made. And light was made.* And today the Word of the Father, through whom

all things were made, was made flesh. This very Light which said: *Be light made*, was made today. Whence, concerning this day, we sing at the dawn Mass: *Lux fulgebit*, that is, *A Light shall shine upon us this day* (Isa.9:2-6) Note that on this day three Masses are sung. The Mass at midnight, at which we sing: *Dominus dixit ad me, The Lord hath said to me: Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee* (Ps. 2:7), represents the hidden generation of the Divinity, which no man can relate. The Mass at dawn represents the generation from the mother, which took place today. And the third Mass represents the generation from both the mother and the Father. Whence in the Introit of the Mass we sing: *Puer natus est nobis, A child is born to us, and a son is given to us* (Isa. 9:6), which refers to the generation from the mother; and in the Gospel we read: *In principio erat Verbum, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God* (Jn. 1:1), which refers to the generation from the Father. Therefore the first Mass is sung at midnight, because the generation from the Father is hidden from us who believe it. The second Mass is celebrated very early in the morning, because the generation from the mother is visible to us, but not clearly so, being blurred, so to speak, by a kind of mist or cloud. For who can *loose the string of his shoe*, that is, comprehend the sacrament of his Incarnation? The third Mass, therefore, is sung in clear day, because in the day of eternity, when all obscurity shall have passed away, we shall clearly understand how Christ was born from his Father and how from his mother. For then we shall know Knowledge, because we shall see eye to eye, and as he is, we shall be.

To continue: *As the lilies that are on the brink of the water*. Note that the lily grows in uncultivated soil and springs up in valleys, is fragrant and white, and keeps its odor sealed up, and pours it out through an opening. It has six petals, little golden rods, and a clubbed stem in the center. It heals burnt members. The lily (*lilium*) is so-called because it is like milk (*lacteam*); it signifies the Blessed Virgin who was white with the splendor of virginity, and who was born of the chaste and humble parents, Joachim (which means "rising") and Anna (which means "grace"). Today she brought forth her Son; that is, like the lily she diffused her fragrance. She had six petals. . . which are like the six steps of Solomon. . . For Blessed Mary is called the throne of the True Solomon. The little golden rods in the lily are the poverty and humility in Mary, with which her virginity was adorned. The little stem in the center of the lily is the excellence of divine love in the heart of the Blessed Virgin. This is the medicine of sinners who have been burnt in the fire of vices. Joel says of them (2:6): *All faces shall be made like a kettle*. The kettle

is the mind of the sinner in which the water of concupiscence, placed over the fire of diabolical suggestion, sends up the bubbles of perverse thoughts. From this kettle proceeds the smoke of evil consent by which the eye of the soul is blinded; and thus the mind of the sinner becomes blackened. The word "faces" (*vultus*) is used because by it the will (*voluntas*) of the soul is made manifest, and it signifies the works by which a man is known. Therefore the faces of sinners are made like kettles, since from the blackness of the mind the works are polluted. To this blackening and burning the Blessed Mary brings the whiteness of her holy medicine, and to those who confide in her she gives every kind of sanctity. Therefore let us say: *As the lilies that are on the brink of the water*, as if to say: As the lilies in their freshness, beauty, and fragrance last a long time by the brink of the water, so the Blessed Mary, when she brought forth her little Son, remained in the freshness and beauty of virginity.

The blessed Mary is called the throne of the True Solomon; whence he says of her (Eccli. 24:7): *I dwelt in the highest places, and my throne is in a pillar of a cloud*, as if to say: I who dwell on high with the Father have chosen my throne in a poor little mother. And note that the Blessed Virgin (the throne of the Son of God) is called a *pillar of a cloud*. She is called a pillar because she upholds our frailty, and she is called a cloud because she is free from sin.

King Solomon also made a great throne of ivory: and overlaid it with the finest gold. It had six steps: and the top of the throne was round behind: and there were two hands on either side holding the seat: and two lions stood, one at each hand. And twelve little lions stood upon the six steps on the one side and on the other: there was no such work made in any kingdom (III Kings 10:18). This throne was of ivory because the Blessed Mary was white in innocence and cool, without the heat of passion. In her were six steps, which are mentioned in the Gospel text (Lk. 1:20): *The Angel Gabriel was sent, etc.* The first step was modesty: *Who having heard, was troubled at his saying*. Whence: "In adolescence, modesty is to be commended; in youth, joyfulness; and in age, prudence." The second step is prudence; for she did not at once say yes or no, but she began to think. Whence: *She thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be*. The third step is modesty: *How shall this be done?* The fourth step is constancy in proposed good. Whence: *For I know not man*. The fifth step is humility: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord*. The sixth step is obedience: *Be it done to me according to thy word*.

This throne was overlaid with the gold of poverty. O golden poverty of the glorious Virgin, in which she wrapped the Son of God in swathing bands and laid him in a manger! And "overlaid" is well said; for poverty overlays the soul with virtues, but riches despoils it. *And the top of the throne was round behind.* The "top" of the Blessed Mary was love. . . because of which she holds first place in eternal beauty. *And there were two hands on either side holding the seat.* The seat, that is the golden footstool, was the humility of Mary, which the two hands were holding, that is, the active life and the contemplative. For she was like Martha and Mary. She was like Martha going into Egypt and returning from there; she was like Mary when she kept all those words and pondered them in her heart. *And two lions stood,* that is, Gabriel and John the Evangelist, or Joseph and John, *one at each hand,* Joseph at the active, John at the contemplative. *And twelve little lions,* that is, the twelve Apostles, bowing and paying reverence *on the one side and on the other.* Truly, truly, *there was no such work made in any kingdom. . .*

Therefore we pray thee, Our Lady, loving Mother of God, in this the Nativity of thy Son, whom thou didst bring forth as a virgin, wrap in swathing bands, and lay in a manger, that thou beg of him forgiveness for us; and do thou heal, by the medicine of thy mercy, the wounds that the fire of our sins has burned in our souls; so that we may merit to arrive at the joy of the eternal festival where he who deigned to be born of a glorious Virgin ever presides. To whom is honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

DUNS SCOTUS ON THE PREDESTINATION OF CHRIST

One of the doctrines dear to the Franciscan School is the Absolute Primacy of Christ. In substance it concerns the primary motive of the Incarnation. Negatively stated, it rejects redemption as the fundamental reason for Christ's coming. The glory of the redeemed souls cannot compare with the glory of Christ's human nature. Hence, their restoration to grace and glory cannot have been the primary reason why Christ's soul was created, assumed by the Word, supernaturalized by grace and glorified with the beatific vision from the first moment it existed. Positively stated, it proclaims that humanly speaking God first intended Christ as King and center of the universe. Only secondarily, so to speak, did God conceive Christ as redeemer of fallen man.

In its full development, the doctrine extends even further. It includes Mary His Mother, as the next most perfect of God's works, and is cited by its proponents as the fundamental reason for her Immaculate Conception. It broadens the notion of Christ's mediation and the meaning of His Mystical Body by making not only the redeemed, but also the angels and our first parents in their pristine innocence indebted to Him for this grace. It touches even the natural order, transforming the pagan notion of man as the microcosm in whom both the spiritual and material universe are combined. For it makes the human nature of Christ the *motif* the Divine Architect was to carry out in the rest of creation. In Christ's soul God saw mirrored the choirs of angels; after his body the visible world was sculptured. The whole universe is full of Christ.

Francis himself seems to have had some such notion in his mind when he wrote: "Consider, O man, how excellent the Lord made you, for He created and formed you to the image of His beloved Son *according to the body* and to His own likeness according to the spirit" (*Admonitions*, n. 5).

Historically, however, this doctrine is not limited to the Franciscan School, nor has every Franciscan embraced it. St. Bonaventure, we know, was such an exception, whereas outside the Order it found many a defender among theologians, saints and doctors of the Church. In fact as Pohle puts it: "If the question at issue had to be decided purely on the authority of the theologians, we should be unable to arrive at a unanimous decision, so evenly is authority balanced against authority" (Pohle-Preuss, *Dogmatic Theology*, vol. V, p. 30).

Duns Scotus, perhaps, was its great champion. Not that he was the first to hold it, but he advanced the first compelling reason in its favor—an argument which, as one contemporary opponent puts it, "still remains to be solved, and in truth perhaps will never be solved in that which it simply asserts, namely that Christ is of such excellence that He cannot be decreed merely as a means, but must be decreed, if He is decreed at all, for His own sake" (Galtier, *De Incarnatione ac Redemptione*, Paris, 1926, p. 476).

This basic argument in Scotus is found in the question on the predestination of Christ in the third book of his *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*. Since he lectured on the Sentences at both Oxford and Paris, we have more than one version of this question. Five such have been edited with critical notes by Father Balic, O.F.M. (*Joannis Duns Scoti Doctoris Mariani Theologiae Marianae Elementa*, Sibenici, 1933). One of these represents the version he planned to incorporate in

his *Ordinatio* or the revision prepared for publication. It is this version of the question that we have translated in full.

Unlike many of his predecessors, Scotus was not primarily concerned with what God might have done in another order, for instance, if Adam had not sinned. He began with the actual order, with the fact of the Incarnation. For even though God in His liberty was not compelled to create Christ's human nature, or any creature, for that matter, *de facto* He did will the Incarnation, and having willed it, made the God-man the King of creation, the head of his Church. For to Him, if we may quote an eminent Thomist, as *finis*, all must be ordained, and to His great glory our Redemption redounds." (Billot, *De Verbo Incarnato*, 7 ed., p. 41). Scotus asks very pointedly; Does Christ's predestination to grace and glory, and consequently to His position as end of all creatures beneath Him, depend on the permission of sin? In short, is the universe sin-centric or Christ-centric? That for Scotus was the crux of the problem. Some theologians, it is true, believed that certain creatures were created only because God foresaw that others would sin. Scotus wanted no part of this opinion, for, he argued, in such a case one individual would have reason to rejoice in another's downfall, and no one should be thankful that another has sinned.

For the rest the argument is based on the idea of a reasonable and ordinate love. One who loves things inordinately disregards the intrinsic value of what he loves. He loves the means as an end and the end as a means. All this is incompatible with the wisdom of God. The supreme value, the end of all perfect love, is the infinitely lovable Godhead itself. Even a created will cannot find its full perfection or exhaust its capacity for love save by loving this first good. However, the love the three Divine Persons have for the infinitely lovable essence they share is not a jealous or selfish love. As Scotus puts it, following Richard of Saint Victor: "The perfect lover wishes the beloved to be loved." That is why God created angels and men. That too is why He will love first and foremost that creature that contributes the greatest love, that is closest to that end. As he puts it elsewhere: "Everyone who wills in a reasonable way first wills the end and secondly that which immediately attains the end, and thirdly other things which are more remotely ordered to the attainment of his end. And so it is that God who is most reasonable—not of course by different acts, but in one single act which may be said to tend in different ways to the different objects that are ordered in some way towards one another—first wills the end, and in this His act is perfect, and His intellect is perfect, and His will is happy. Secondly, He wills those things which are

immediately ordered to Him, predestining namely the elect who attain Him immediately, and this as it were by reflecting and willing others to love with Him the very object of His love. . . Hence, He first loves Himself ordinately and consequently not inordinately in an envious or jealous manner. Secondly, He wills to have other colovers, and this is nothing else than willing that others have His love in themselves and this is to predestine them, if He wishes them to have this good finally and eternally. Thirdly, however, he wills those things which are necessary to attain His end, namely the gift of grace. Fourthly, He wills for their sake other things which are more remote—for instance, this sensible world—in order that it may serve them, so that what is stated in the second book of [Aristotle's] *Physics* is true: 'Man is in some way the end of all sensible things,' for all sensible things are willed as it were in the fourth place, because of man being willed in the second place. Also that which is closer to the ultimate end is customarily said to be the end of those things which are more remote. Hence, man will be the end of the sensible world; whether it be because God wills the sensible world to be ordered to predestined man or whether it be because His more immediate concern is not that the sensible world exist, but rather that man love Him" (*Opus Oxoniense* III, d. 32, n. 6)

With this in mind let us read what Scotus has to say about the predestination of Christ.

(*Ordinatio*, Bk. III, Dist. 7, Question 3)

Was Christ predestined to be the Son of God?

Negative view:

Not as Son of God was He predestined to be the Son of God, for predestination must be prior to the event predestined, and there was no predestination prior to the existence of the Son of God. Neither is He predestined as man, for if as something one is predestined to be a certain kind of thing, then as such one is that kind of thing. Consequently, if as man He is predestined to be the Son of God, in so far as He is a man He is the Son of God, which is false.

On the contrary:

Rom. 1, 3-4: "[He who was born] of the seed of David. . . was predestinated the Son of God in power."

I reply:

Predestination consists in foreordaining someone first of all to glory and then to other things which are ordered to glory. Now the human nature in Christ was predestined to be glorified, and in order to be

glorified, it was predestined to be united to the Word, in as much as such glory as it was granted would never have been conferred on this nature had it not been so united. Now if it would not be fitting to ordain one to such glory if certain merits were absent, whereas it would be fitting if they were present, then such merits are included in the predestination. And so it would seem that this union by way of fitness is ordered to this glory, although it is not exactly as merit that it falls under this predestination. And just as it is foreordained that this nature be united to the Word, so is it predestined that the Word be man and that this man be the Word. The validity of these last two inferences may be established as we did [in the previous question where we proved that since the hypostatic union did not always exist, it is correct to say both that "God became man" and "And man became God"]].

But you may object that primarily predestination regards the person, and hence one must first find some person to whom God predestined (1) the glory and then (2) this union with reference to the glory. Now you will find no divine Person to whom God predestined this union [as a means of glory]. Obviously He did not do so to the Word in so far as He is the Word. Neither was this union predestined as a means of glory to the Word as subsisting in a human nature, because to the extent that He subsists in this way, the union is already included.

I reply: we can deny that predestination concerns persons only, for if God can love a good other than Himself, not only when it is a person but also when it is a nature, then for its sake He can also select and ordain in advance some good suitable to it. Consequently, He can choose (1) glory and (2) the union as a means of glory, not only for a person, but also for some nature. It is true, however, that in all cases other than this, predestination does concern the person, for in no other instance has God foreordained a good to a [human] nature without by that very fact foreordaining it also to some person, for the simple reason that no other human nature subsists save in a created person to whom the good can be foreordained. But in our case this is not so.

At this point, however, two doubts arise. *First*, does this predestination depend necessarily upon the fall of human nature? Many authorities seem to say as much when they declare the Son of God would never have become incarnate had man not fallen.

Without passing judgment it can be said that so far as priority of the objects intended by God is concerned, the predestination of anyone to glory is prior by nature to the prevision of the sin or damnation of anyone (according to the final opinion given in distinction forty-one of

the first book). So much the more then is this true of the predestination of that soul which was destined beforehand to possess the very highest glory possible. For it seems to be universally true that one who wills ordinarily, and not inordinately, first intends what is nearer the end, and just as He first intends one to have glory before grace, so among those to whom he has foreordained glory, He who wills ordinarily, would seem to intend first the glory of the one He wishes to be nearest the end, and therefore He intends glory to this soul [of Christ] before He wills glory to any other soul, and to every other soul He wills glory before taking into account the opposite of these habits [namely, the sin or damnation of anyone].

Authorities to the contrary can all be explained in the sense that Christ would not have come as a redeemer, if man had not sinned. Perhaps, too, He would not have been able to suffer, since there would have been no need of a union with a passible body for this soul glorified from its first moment of existence, to which God chose to give not only the highest glory but also willed that it be always present. If man had not sinned, of course, there would have been no need of a redemption. Still it does not seem to be solely because of the redemption that God predestined this soul to such glory, since the redemption or the glory of the souls to be redeemed is not comparable to the glory of the soul of Christ. Neither is it likely that the highest good in the whole of creation is something that merely chanced to take place, and that only because of some lesser good. Nor is it probable that God predestined Adam to such a good before He predestined Christ. Yet all of this would follow, yes, and even something more absurd. If the predestination of Christ's soul was for the sole purpose of redeeming others, it would follow that in foreordaining Adam to glory, God would have had to foresee him as having fallen into sin before He could have predestined Christ to glory.

Consequently, we can say that God selected for His heavenly choir all the angels and men He wished to have with their varied degrees of perfection, and all this before considering either the sin or the punishment of the sinner. No one therefore is predestined simply because God foresaw another would fall, lest anyone have reason to rejoice at the misfortune of another.

Our *second doubt* is this. Which did God intend first, the union of this nature with the Word, or its ordination to glory? Now the sequence in which the creative artist evolves his plan is the very opposite of the way he puts it into execution. One can say, however, that in the order of execution, God's union with a human nature is naturally prior to His

granting it the greatest grace and glory. We could presume, then, that it was in the reverse order that He intended them, so that God would first intend that some nature, not the highest, should receive the highest glory, proving thereby He was not constrained to grant glory in the same measure as He bestowed natural perfection. Then secondly, as it were, He willed that this nature should subsist in the Person of the Word, so that the angel might not be subject to a [mere] man.

As for the argument [for the negative view], one could concede that He is predestined to be the Son of God 'as man' to the extent that 'as' designates the formal aspect under which the predicate is affirmed of Him in a restricted sense. For formally speaking, this Man is God, and the predestination to be God precedes this Man, i.e. the Person *as existing in a human nature*. And in consequence of this predestination, this Man becomes God. But if you understand the word 'as' properly as indicating reduplication, so that it expresses the precise reason why the predicate is true of the subject, then it is not correct to say 'As man, He is God' because it is not by reason of His humanity that He is God.

Another way the argument could be solved would be to distinguish the major where it states: 'If as something one is predestined to be God, then as such one is God.' For 'as something' can qualify either the act of predestination or its term. In the first case the meaning would be: 'If one is predestined as a man, he is thereby God,' in which case the major is false whereas the minor [*vis.* 'As man He is predestined to be the Son of God'] is true. In the second case the meaning would be: 'As the Man who is God, as such He is God,' in which case the major is true but the minor [*viz.* 'In so far as He is a man, He is the Son of God'] is false.

Or we can say, thirdly—and this perhaps is the real answer—neither as man nor as God is He predestined to be the Son of God. For that which is predestined to be the Son of God, includes two elements, one of which implies temporality in the terms, namely 'to be predestined;' whereas the other implies that the same term is eternal, namely, that this thing which exists as Son of God. One and the same thing, however, cannot be the basis for both characteristics in the term. For even though two things concur in the term, one temporal which can be the terminus of predestination, the other eternal by reason of which 'to be the Son of God' can be predicated of it, still both do not pertain to the term by reason of the same nature. To speak properly, therefore, from the standpoint of logic, neither as man, nor as God or Son of God is He predestined to be God or Son of God.

Fr. Allan B. Wolter, O.F.M.

THE THIRD JOY—THE NATIVITY

*And this shall be a sign to you:
you will find an infant wrapped
in swaddling clothes and lying in
a Manger. [Luke 2:12]*

Of all the feasts in the splendor of the liturgy, surely Christmas draws the Franciscan heart. It was the joy of our holy Father Francis, it remains the joy of his sons and daughters. Well do we remember in our Lady's third Joy that it was Saint Francis—the least of the lesser brethren—who gave us the creche, the little manger, as a memorial of his tender and brotherly devotion to the Babe of Bethlehem. It remains for us to find the key to the importance of the Nativity in our Franciscan lives.

Saint Bonaventure, ever faithful to the mind of our holy Father, stresses with great and recurring phrases the importance of Christmas to us. And yet Saint Bonaventure realized that we were to approach the Crib not with thoughts of profound sentiment, but with sentiments of profound thought. The Seraphic Doctor knew, as did Francis, that in the manger lay the model for all those who would truly be among the little ones of Christ—the lesser brethren—the *Fratres Minores!*

Littleness is generally something to be spurned—for in itself it implies a certain weakness—a certain, if we may say, emptiness to the world. And yet, littleness is so indicative of our lives as Franciscans, that it can never escape our deepest reflection. Indeed, it would seem that if we are to characterize Franciscan life, our characterization can be contained in this one word. We may, then, seek to understand this virtue—and it is a virtue—of Franciscan piety. In our quest for its significance we can find no better guide than the learned, yet lowly Bonaventure; a man, who when presented with the cardinal's hat, continued with the routine monastic occupation of washing dishes!

Saint Bonaventure's unfolding of the deep significance lying behind the Christmas story is indeed very interesting for the eye that can make comparisons. His first counsel to us is that we *will find an Infant*, and that this Infant is the reward of all who seek purity. Next, we will find this Infant *wrapped in swaddling clothes*, and thus he will be the model of our poverty. Lastly we will find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and *lying in a manger, the bed of humility*.¹ Following the Seraphic Doctor, then, we may seek in these three virtues the roots of Franciscan littleness.

I

The appearance of Christ in this world *in the form of man* is fraught with great significance. It was in taking our humanity that he truly became *Emmanuel—God with us!* We need not be theologians to know that there was no necessity for Christ to come to us in human form. And yet out of the wonderful harmony that sings the story of creation and revelation there is a unique and wonderful consolation in the fact that the *Son of God willed to be born*. The Mass recalls the import of this, for God not only “in a wonderful manner didst create and ennoble human nature,” but “still more wonderfully hast renewed it!”

In becoming a “partaker of our humanity,” our dear Lord came to tell us that the flame of purity had not been extinguished on this earth. Indeed not, for as the beautiful symbol of Christmas—the candle—imparts, the God-Man was to burn out in testimony to all that is pure and beautiful in this world, and in the next.

If the world has given appearances of losing its sense of values in regard to holy purity, it nonetheless, and pray God that it may always be, has not lost its innate ability to equate infancy with innocence. And in coming to us as a child, it would seem that the Son of God emphasized in a most succinct way that the path to purity and innocence is in littleness. Perhaps that is why the shepherds were the first called to adore him. And even in garb the shepherds resemble true friars. The more we reflect on this the more we might surmise that our holy Father received much of his inspiration in founding the Order from these humble men who sat on the Judean hills, *living in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night*. It was their simplicity, their purity—not only in body, but in mind and speech as well—that made them worthy recipients of the angelic tidings: *I bring you news of great joy*. He who had come as a Babe willed that the purity of his littleness be seen first by these little men from the hillside.

May God give us the grace to become as shepherds this Christmas day. Immediately after the shepherds' visit, we are told by Saint Luke *Mary kept in mind all these things, pondering them in her heart*. May we ponder with her in this third Joy, ever to be loyal to the garb we wear. May it not only profess to the world, but *convince* the world that the ideal of purity is to be found in true littleness; a littleness which retires from the world, and, today, finds an Infant. In finding the Infant may we ourselves be blessed by the consolation that our littleness, modeled on his purity, will one day be repaid when we take up the refrain of

the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest!”

II

Having found the Infant, let us, with Saint Bonaventure, attend to the fact that he is *wrapped in swaddling clothes*. Here we will find that Jesus came to us poor. The world does not care too much for poverty. Those countries which still thrive on their peasantry are regarded as ignorant and impotent. The simple dole to the beggar has been replaced by the complete dossier of the social agency. The poverty of a Francis, who so embraced it as to glory in the name *Poverello*, is thought slothful if not stupid.

True, there is a distinction between physical and spiritual poverty. Yet may we never forget, even if none of us is brave enough to practice it, that there is a close relationship of the physical to the spiritual. It will ever remain true that it is considerably easier to practice spiritual poverty if one is already physically poor than the contrary.

The third joy leads to the fourth—the Adoration of the Magi, and there we behold that he who comes to us on Christmas morn is truly a King: *Where is he that is born king of the Jews?* Strange again, how the world upsets the balance established by its Creator. Christ's kingship was built on poverty, whereas the world's kingdoms are based on wealth.

Yet no heart can truly be said to beat with Franciscan pulse if it is empty of poverty, or unless poverty has emptied it. True, existence in modern society has demanded certain conformities of our way of life to the world's. Yet it would be the utmost folly to imagine that our superiors ever intended to extend this conformity to an absorption of the world's spirit.

We have found the Infant, and we found him wrapped in swaddling clothes, but in the depths of our hearts let us trace that the poverty of the crib is to be concluded by the poverty of the cross. It is impossible to find in the course of our Lord's life any attachment to person, thing, or place. This is utter poverty, and it is fed on detachment. It is the mark of the lesser brethren of Assisi that they are detached completely from the great things of this world. Saint Francis has been called a great romanticist, which he was. But the romance that he lived was an espousal to the Lady Poverty. Thus it was, with an emptied heart, he could find his romance in the beauties of creation.

There is no better guide to our taking an unsung place in this life than poverty. In it we can glory in the fact that we will be truly little.

Little in the eyes of the world, great in the eyes of him who is born today in our hearts of him who was *by no means least among the princes of Juda*, although found as an *Infant, wrapped in swaddling clothes*.

III

Lastly, the Seraphic Doctor would have us consider the fact that the Infant was *lying in a manger*. He sees here an indication of the humility in which Christ came as our Saviour. Saint Paul in his glorious Letter to the Philippians first made the great connection between the wood of the manger and the wood of the cross. There he tells us that in coming to us Christ *humbled himself*, but then he adds *becoming obedient to death, even to death on a cross*.

For us, who approach the altar on Christmas morn, there is a great deal to keep in mind as regards humility. We are to receive the same Flesh and Blood, now glorious, that first appeared on this earth in the most royal clothing of humility. The great effect of the Holy Eucharist is that it makes us Christ-like. Properly disposed, then, on Christmas morn, we may be prepared to receive within us the humility of Christ.

Humility takes its place with poverty and purity as the last great virtue of littleness. It, too, implies the readiness and willingness to empty oneself, *taking the nature of a slave*.

The humble Franciscan is in reality a truly noble person. He is one who, in the words of the Virgin Mother of God realizes that all that he has—every breath that he takes—is a testimony that he who is mighty has done great things for him. In a word, the humble man is the one who is awed by the simplest wonder of God's creation, and the wonderful simplicity and unity of his revelation. He knows, with unquestionable certainty, that the lowly are to be exalted, and in every difficulty places his consternation or confusion in this knowledge.

After mentioning the humility of Christ in coming to us, the great Saint Paul immediately mentions his obedience. If we look more deeply we can see much meaning in this. In our own lives as religious we are never called more to shine forth with humility than when we are asked to obey. So with God's mother, for the humility of her *Magnificat* is the fulfillment of her *Fiat!*

Humility is so closely aligned with Franciscan littleness that it is quite impossible to conceive of how one could truly claim for himself the title of a follower of Francis, unless he were first filled with it.

At the crib may we learn how to truly humble ourselves, so that every obedience we perform for the rest of our days as Friars Minor may take us more and more away from ourselves and draw us nearer and nearer to the humble scene of the manger.

IV

When Saint Francis fashioned the first crib, he did so with a purpose. May our meditation on the third of our Lady's Joys impress that purpose deeply in our minds. Amidst all the tinsel and trim of Christmas in this twentieth century, may we return with heartfelt gratitude and love to the sacredness and silence of the first Christmas.

Standing beside the crib, may we be worthy to look in and pray to the Virgin we behold beside the sleeping Babe:

O beautiful Mother of God, the angels have led us here, even as they are to gather with us around the altar tonight. We are called the lesser brethren of your adorable Son—this Child. May we ever be worthy of our name!

Grant us, O Virgin most Pure, to know and to love the Purity that we behold here before our eyes. Let us *be strengthened in the Lord and in the might of his power*. We were *once darkness, but now we are light in the Lord*. May the Light of holy Purity shine forth from our souls and reflect in this crib.

Inspire us, our Lady Poverty, to walk through this vale of tears unmindful of the vanities of this world. Be it ever enough for us *to announce. . . the good tidings of the unfathomable riches of Christ*.

Unfold to us, dear Mother of God, the beauty of *servicing the Lord with all humility*, thus bearing all that we are called upon to do with "the charity of God and the patience of Christ."

In a word, our mother Mary, make us small enough to find room in this Crib and *be at peace, and the God of peace and love* with us.

Fr William J. Manning, T.O.F.

SCRIPTURE READING WITH SAINT BONAVENTURE

(Comment. in Lucam, ch. II, vv. 1-7, *Opera Omnia*, Tom. VII, pp. 44-47).

Now it came to pass in those days, that there went forth a decree from Caesar Augustus that a census of the whole world should be taken. This first census took place while Cyrinus was governor of Syria. And all were going, each to his own town, to register. And Joseph also went from Galilee out of the town of Nazareth into Judea to the town of David, which is called Bethlehem—because he was of the house and family of David—to register, together with Mary his espoused wife, who was with child. And it came to pass

while they were there, that the days for her to be delivered were fulfilled. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn (Luke 2:1-7).

In his beautiful treatise on the Nativity of Christ, Saint Bonaventure develops three topics as described by the Evangelist: the *due time*, the *suitable place*, and the *actual birth from the Virgin*. First, the occasion was timely because it was so determined by God. Admittedly, we cannot fully fathom the arrangement of His Providence: *Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways* (Rom. 11:33). And yet it is hardly presumptuous to detect the divine design giving pattern, purpose, and destiny to human—albeit regal—resolutions. No doubt the whole Roman world respected the edict of Octavian: *There went forth a decree from Caesar Augustus that a census of the whole world should be taken* (v. 1). If so, how much more should all subsequent mankind stand in awe of the divine decree which chose this occasion as the *due time* for promulgating the celestial census. Indeed, the Birth of Christ indicated the opening of the eternal Book of Life, containing the names of all the elect. Because, as Gregory said (*I Bk. Homil.*: Hom. 8, n. 1), “He has come in the Flesh Who willed to enroll His elect in eternity.” Augustus could but decree for a part of the world and but for a short time; whereas the Omnipotent God has determined a universal census for all time: *But in the days of those kingdoms the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed* (Dan. 2:44). And the Psalmist declares: *The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof: the world, and all they that dwell therein* (Ps. 23: 1).

Further, God timed the Nativity with the very beginning of the listing of Roman subjects: *The first census took place while Cyrinus was governor of Syria* (v. 2). It would seem that, at the very outset of the registering, God willed to center all eyes upon His divine Son Incarnate. But, unlike the tyrant's tax to be exacted from all listed, God expected the tribute of a living Faith in His Divine Son—the Incarnate Word—and all that He taught. And the all-Just God permitted the orderly carrying out of the imperial edict: *And*

all were going, each to his own town, to register (v. 3). Still, subservient to His plan, earthly authority must be given its just due: *Render, therefore, to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's* (Matt. 22:21).

Secondly, we notice the *suitable place*, chosen by God, for the birth of the Christ Child. From the *name* itself, ‘Bethlehem’ was most fitting. Indeed what could be more proper than that the ‘Bread of Angels’ should come forth in human form upon this earth: *I am the bread that has come down from heaven* (Jn. 6: 41). And yet His Birth at Bethlehem is even more meaningful: *And thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, art a little one among the thousands of Juda: out of thee shall come forth unto me (He) that is to be the ruler in Israel* (Mich. 5: 2). Truly, Bethlehem was designated by God as the birthplace of the Messiah. And though born here as prophesied, Christ was reared elsewhere. Why? Simply to hide the mystery of the Incarnation from Herod and other wicked men of perverse will. How well this worked is clear from the later dilemma of the befuddled Pharisees: *Can the Christ come from Galilee? Does not the Scripture say that it is of the offspring of David and from Bethlehem, the village where David lived, that the Christ is to come* (Jn. 7: 42)? But Joseph and Mary did not go wrong. For, recognizing the will of God in the human ruler's command, they simply obeyed: *And Joseph also went from Galilee out of the town of Nazareth into Judea to the town of David, which is called Bethlehem—because he was of the house and family of David—to register, together with Mary his espoused wife* (v. 4). Thus the promise to David was also fulfilled: *The Lord hath sworn truth to David, and he will not make it void: of the fruit of thy womb I will set upon thy throne* (Ps. 131: 11).

Now the Gospel adds a significant clause about the condition of Mary: *who was with child* (v. 5). Saint Bonaventure remarks that, although the Virgin had already conceived the King of heaven and earth, even in her pregnancy she willed to obey the command, so that she could say with her Son: *For so it becomes us to fulfill all justice* (Matt. 3: 15). In this she followed the guidance of the Holy Spirit: *Be subject to every human creature for God's sake, whether to the king as supreme or to governor. . . For such is the will of God* (Pet. 2: 14). In this way the human command served the divine de-

sign; for God made use of the edict to send His Son, born at Bethlehem, to found the Kingdom of God on earth. Like an afterthought, the Seraphic Doctor appends a moral to the story of the obedience of Mary and Joseph, saying: "And therefore we should never despise, in any way, the mandate of those placed over us."

Finally, after the circumstances of the *time* and *place* of the Nativity, Saint Bonaventure describes the *very birth of Christ*. His description details three points. First, His Nativity was *opportune*: *And it came to pass while they were there, that the days for her to be delivered were fulfilled* (v. 6). With Mary, as in the case of her cousin, God here worked according to His created nature: *Now Elizabeth's time was fulfilled that she should be delivered, and she brought forth a son* (Luke I: 57). But, more than merely natural, this was the opportune time when a higher fulfillment took place: *When the fulness of time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman* (Galat. 4: 4). Secondly, the Seraphic Doctor notes the *newness* of His Birth, like One born of Nobility. Indeed, Mary had *brought forth her firstborn son* (v. 7). For He was 'firstborn' in the sense that she had had no other child before Him. Yet, as Saint Jerome tells us, this did not mean she would have any after Him. In point of historical fact, she did not. More positively, her giving birth to the only-begotten Son of God attributes Motherhood to Mary, the correlative—humanly speaking—to the Father of the Eternal Word: *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature* (Coloss. I: 15). And, by analogy, this Birth from the Virgin is likened to His all-Pure, eternal Sonship of His Father. More than that: since Mary gave birth without pain or sorrow, she shared the joy of the Father in the eternal Filiation of His Beloved Son. But, beyond all this, the newly, only-begotten Son of Mary was a Priest by divine pre-ordination, and not as the Levites of the Old Testament. In very truth, her Christ Jesus is the eternal High-Priest: *The Lord said to my Lord: . . . from the womb before the day star I begot thee. The Lord hath sworn, and he will not repent: Thou art a priest forever* (Ps. 109: 3f). Contemplating this eternal Mystery of God, Whose Divine Son now assumes human flesh, Saint John cries out as if awe-inspired: *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. And we saw his glory—glory as of the only begotten of the Father—*

full of grace and of truth (Jn. 1: 14). To which Saint Paul adds: *For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, set apart from sinners* (Heb. 7: 26).

Thirdly, Saint Bonaventure concludes with the verse: *Mary wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn* (v. 7). Commenting on this, how fitting that the Seraphic son of Saint Francis—the herald of the poor Christ—should pick out *poverty* as the main feature of the birth of Christ! The Infant Jesus was *poorly clad*: for *Mary wrapped him in swaddling clothes* (v. 7). And, as if fearful we should not know our God, so poverty-stricken, Saint Bernard cries out: "Recognize Jesus, the High Priest, clothed with sordid vestments while he does battle with the devil!" Our Lord has thus exemplified for us the fitness of poor clothing for our earthly warfare with Satan. And, to the point, the Preacher has voiced the warning: *Glory not in apparel at any time* (Eccl. 11:4). And Christ remarked the unsuitableness of finery for his followers: *Behold, those who wear soft garments are in the houses of kings* (Matt 11: 8).

Next, the poorly-born Christ had *no fit resting place*: *Mary laid him in a manger* (v. 7). And, lest we forget His pitiful poverty. Christ reminds us: *The foxes have dens, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head* (Matt. 8: 20). Dear Brothers in Christ, let us never complain; but rather may we ever experience perfect joy when Lady Poverty requests us to be like the Infant Saviour in poor clothing or place of rest. Lastly, the Infant Jesus had *no proper home*: *because there was no room for them in the inn* (v. 7). Homeless and born in a manger, Christ could claim the words of the Psalmist as His own: *I am become as a beast before thee* (Ps. 72:23) And yet He could confidently conclude: *and I am always with thee* (Ibid.). Here He offers us consolation, as if sharing His own lot, that whatever the poverty, meanness, or uncertainty of our dwelling, God will remain with us if we keep the spirit of Lady Poverty. Faithful to our vow, we now give our Infant Saviour a home prepared by Himself. As Saint Augustine says: "There was nothing for Him except a poor place on earth, so that you might open wide a fit dwelling for Him—the home of your heart." The proper preparation of our hearts on His Birthday is by poverty of

spirit. In its sublime significance, this poverty means the admission of our own nothingness and the entire emptying out of self. We are nothing: *For if anyone thinks himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceives himself* (Gal. 6:3). Likewise we can do nothing: *Without me you can do nothing* (Jn. 15: 6). *How necessary* for us, then, to open up to Him the home of our poverty-stricken souls! Paradoxically, we stand to be the gainers: *For you know the graciousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, how, being rich, he became poor for your sakes, that by his poverty you might become rich* (II Cor. 8: 9). Receiving Him with Mary, we can breathe the words of Saint Francis, pregnant with meaning: "My God my All!"

Fr. Owen A. Colligan, O.F.M.

FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

BOOK REVIEWS

THE PIERCED HEART: THE LIFE OF MOTHER MARY ANGELA TRUSZKOWSKA. Francis A. Cegielka, S.A.C., S.T.D. Milwaukee: Catholic Life Publications, Bruce Press, 1955. Pp. 76, \$2.50.

The life of the saintly Mother Foundress of the Felician Sisters makes timely reading. It is the story of a heroic, self-sacrificing soul, called to do great things at the cost of great suffering. Living in troubled nineteenth-century Poland (she was born in 1825 and died in 1899), Sophia Truszkowska struggled against hostile governments and the prejudice of her own people to establish the first active congregation of women in her native country. Her extraordinary interior life, a beautifully balanced combination of action and contemplation, may well serve as an inspiration to many religious of today who are trying to harmonize their prayer life with an overwhelming press of active duties.

The work accomplished by the Congregation within the hundred years of its founding is a glorious tribute to the ideals of the saintly Mother Angela.

S.M.F.

FATHER PAUL: APOSTLE OF UNITY. Titus Cranny, S.A. Peekskill, New York: Graymoor Press, 1955. Pp. 93.

This is the first book-length biography of the famous Anglican convert, Father Paul James Francis Watson, Founder of the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement and zealous apostle of Christian Unity. Father Titus has written well of his beloved spiritual father, tracing his "unity" vocation from childhood—when the elder Watson was dismissed from the General Theological Seminary in New York City as a "Jew in disguise"—to his reception into the Roman Communion in 1909. His work is so well known to require comment here. Suffice to remark that Father Titus has given

an interesting and well-rounded picture of him as a man, and a fairly complete account of his efforts to promote Unity. It is to be hoped that a larger, more detailed life of the saintly convert will soon be forthcoming. Certainly the times are most propitious for promoting unity among Christians. If nothing else, the life of Father Paul should arouse Catholics to focus their attention on the problems involved, and to follow his example of prayer and sacrifice for that great intention.

S.M.F.

ONCE UPON A TIME IN ASSISI. Jeanne Ancelet-Hustache. Translated and Adapted by Sr. M. Clarissa, O.S.F. Herald Press, 1955. Pp. 115. \$1.50.

Here is a lovely little book about Saint Francis written for children of the middle elementary level. It is a work of genuine love, being a reply by Mme. Ancelet-Hustache, the noted French scholar and lover of things Franciscan, to a request of her God-children to tell them about their patron saints, Francis and Clare of Assisi. The book is precisely that: a combination narrative-dialog in which the author and other characters tell little Francis and Clare Matthews about their patrons and introduce them to the life of the Friars and the Poor Clares as it is lived today. The manner of presentation is both lively and instructive, the translation very well done.

The book is attractively printed and has the additional charm of Cassegrain's delightfully simple and humorous drawings.

S.M.F.

NOTICE:

The proceedings of the first National Meeting of Franciscan Teaching Sisterhood will be available at the Indianapolis Convention and also through The Franciscan Institute

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