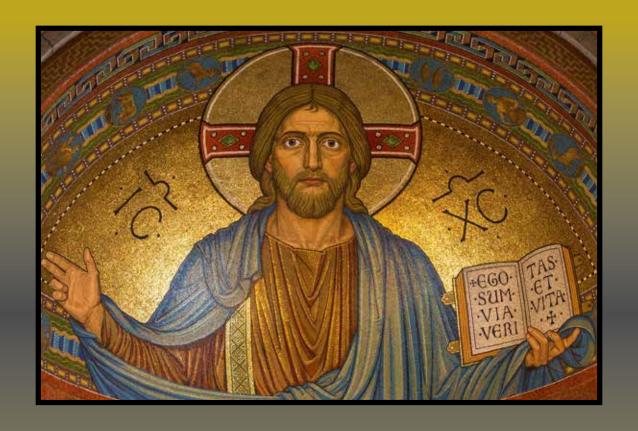
FRANCISCAN CONNECTIONS: THE CORD - A SPIRITUAL REVIEW



Franciscan Radical Orthodoxy

Appreciation in Solanus Casey

How Bonaventure Thought

Stimulus Amoris



Franciscan Connections: The Cord - A Spiritual Review

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From the Editor-in-Chief



David B. Couturier, O.F.M., Cap., is the Editor-in-Chief of *Franciscan Connections*. He is the Dean of the School of Franciscan Studies at St. Bonaventure University and Director of the Franciscan Institute

One of the most important books I have ever read is John Milbank's tour de force, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (1991). In it, Milbank decries the rise of secular reason as the Enlightenment's empty soteriological alternative to Christianity. He sees secular reason as founded on an ontology of violence that traps humanity into inevitable spasms of aggression and convulsions of war. Milbank posits that Christianity's Trinity is a more secure and hopeful social theory, inviting humanity into the fraternal conviviality that exists by donation, not compulsion, within the Trinity for the world.

I have been struck over the years by how little correspondence there has been between Franciscanism and Radical Orthodoxy, the theological movement spawned after Milbank's original work. Most theologians who follow Milbank know of his deep commitment to Thomistic categories. It doesn't help that even millennial Franciscan theologians suspect no common space between the interests of Milbank, his Cambridge colleagues, and Franciscanism. It is a conclusion that has mystified me.

I mentioned this problem to Daniel Maria Klimek, TOR, and was delightfully surprised to learn that he shared my instinct that there were points of common cause between the interests of modern day Radical Orthodoxy and the concerns of the Franciscan intellectual tradition. Klimek takes up the challenge of showing points of convergence between these two theological visions, the one from Cambridge and the other from Assisi. Because of its importance, we have dedicated several of our pages to that endeavor in this issue.

Several years ago, I was asked to read the letters of the Ven. Solanus Casey, OFM. Cap., who spent his years as a friar, compassionate porter, and healer on the streets of Detroit. I remember remarking at the time that his letters were devoid of anything that could easily smack of the political. In many ways, Solanus is a strong case of the "neighborhood saint," the local holy man who feeds the poor, and offers spiritual wisdom and direct signs of compassion. Daniel Crosby, OFM Cap. captures what underpins Solanus' attitudes and actions – a powerful theology of appreciation.

Joachim Osterman, OFM, who holds a PhD in Bio-chemistry, brings together his years of experience as a scientist and commitment to the Franciscan vision to locate new points of dialogue between faith and modern science. Osterman asks and answers the powerful question – "Can God's mercy and providential care still be seen in nature and the science of nature?"

This issue of Franciscan Connections is packed with insights from some of our great Franciscan theologians. Kenan Osborne, OFM, offers an introduction to his latest book, The Infinity of God and a Finite World: A Franciscan Perspective. Wayne Hellman OFM Conv. offers a theological preview of his book on Bonaventure's work on Sacraments. Kevin Elphick introduces us to Angela's thoughts on love. Robert Donius speaks eloquently about the mystery of humility. Br. Michel Bettigole provides a deeper look into how Bonaventure thought. Poems by Murray Bodo and Peter Welsh round out our Franciscan offerings.

This volume makes important Franciscan connections with science, social theory, the streets of Detroit, love in the Middle Ages, and stress in modern America. The power of the Franciscan intellectual tradition to break open new avenues of positive living continues to amaze.

Fr. Dave

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Franciscan

International News

Pierbattista Piaazballa, O.F.M., head of the Custody of the Holy Land, has announced that the friars have decided to remain in Syria, where Christians face increased persecution from supporters of the Islamic State (TerraSancta.net).

The world's TOR friars held a plenary council in Sri Lanka (Jan. 26-Feb. 10), which was their first in Asia. The 25 participants included provincial ministers, delegates from provinces and vice provinces, as well as directors of formation. For two days, Father Joseph Benedict Matthias, SJ, rector of St. Peter Seminary in Bangalore, India, addressed issues of integral human development and challenges in formation. The other days were devoted to reports and discussions on internal issues arising from their 2013 general chapter.

The Association of the Franciscan Families of India has asked that country's government to pardon 1,000 prisoners guilty of minor crimes. Nithya Sagayam, O.F.M., Cap., director of this initiative, explains that the goal is not only to win these pardons but also to assist prisoners rehabilitate and reconstruct their lives with honor and dignity.

"Contemplating the Five Wounds of Christ" is an initiative of Franciscans International to focus on five key issues: Exploitation of People and Nature, Flight and Rejection, Hunger, Human Trafficking, and Early Forced Marriage.

On Easter Monday, Franciscan friars, sisters, and leaders from the Muslim and Christian communities participated in a prayer service at Gulshan-i-Iqbal Park (Lahore, Pakistan) where 90 people were killed and at least 300 were injured during a suicide blast the previous day.

A two-volume critical edition of the letters and

writings of St. Maximilian Maria Kolbe has recently been published. Orders for the American continent should be placed through mpress@martown.com and for other countries through info@inscripta.ch.

"Fraternity for Europe" will be the focus of a July 10-16 meeting in Venice of one friar from each Capuchin province on that continent.

Members of the Franciscan Family continue to promote the Holy Year of Mercy through acts of service, preaching, teaching, various communications media, and other means.

Sister Margaret Pirkl (Sister Cortona), 87, a Franciscan Sister of the Congregation of Our Lady of Lourdes, Rochester, MN, died at Saint Marys Hospital, Rochester, on March 19, 2016. Sister Margaret was a writer and was the initiator, coordinator and energizer behind the Franciscan Global Perspective Series published by the Franciscan Federation in 1987. In 1988 she received the Franciscan Peacemaker Award at the Franciscan Federation national meeting. She also served as a parish volunteer in Caledonia, MN (1976-1977), at Assisi Heights in the retreat office and as a Spiritual Director. From 1992-2000 she served as a presenter and resource person for Franciscan Sabbatical programs, retreats and workshops at Tau Center, Winona, MN. She retired to Assisi Heights in 2003.

Key websites

www.ifc.tor
www.ofm.org
www.ofmconv.net
www.ofmcap.org
www.franciscanfriarstor.org
www.franciscansinternational.org

Roundtable

National News

After several years of planning, the T.O.R. Family is sponsoring a pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi. Mary Elizabeth Imler, O.S.F., Suzanne Kush, C.S.S.F., and Peter Lyons, T.O.R. will lead the November 8-17, 2016 pilgrimage for sisters, friars, associates, and co-workers in sponsored ministries, celebrating the T.O.R. heritage, Rule, and Life. Cost is \$3,600 from New York or \$2,600 for land-only option. Contact mimler@stfrancis.edu or visit www. franciscanpilgrimages.com for details.

Clare of Assisi House, sponsored by the Aston Franciscan sisters, hopes to open this summer in Reading, Pennsylvania. Sisters Eileen Doherty and Kathleen McMullin will work with Director Robin Ball to help women coming out of prison to find a second chance and a safe and supportive environment. They are partnering with local organizations to achieve this goal.

The Franciscan Pilgrimage Program in Franklin, Wisconsin offers one-, two-, or three-day programs in local communities for Franciscans who would like to visit for the first time or revisit places crucial to the development of the Franciscan movement. Men and women from the program's staff explain the photos and "spirituality of place" that each site represents.

The main presenters at the O.F.M. interprovincial meetings this June and July are Bishop Richard Garcia of Monterey, CA for Danville, Retired Bishop Howard Hubbard of Albany for Loudonville, Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe for Albuquerque, and Marlene Weisenbeck, F.S.P.A. for Chicago.

Michael Higgins, T.O.R., will be the next president of Oceanside, California's Franciscan School of Theology, affiliated with the University of San Diego. He was the TOR vicar general (2001-07) and minister general (2007-13) and holds doctorates in Franciscan spirituality (Antonianum) and educational administration (Capella University).

The Franciscan Federation is celebrating its 50th anniversary conference in Milwaukee, June 17-20. Mary Elizabeth Imler, OSF, Edna Michael, OSF and David Couturier, OFM Cap. will give the keynote addresses.

The Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities is holding a symposium at Marian University in Indianapolis, Indiana (June 7-9). Details through AFCU website (listed below).

Stephen Cho, OFM (Korea) and eight friars of St. John the Baptist Province marched in Cincinnati's Opening Day Parade on April 4. Visitors to youtube. com/watch?v=IRiiDrrgcFg, can hear several friars singing Take Me Out to the Ball Game.

Dr. Hamid Shirvani begins in July as president of Briar Cliff University (Sioux City, IA).

Dr. Andrea Lee, IHM is the new president of Alverno College (Reading, PA).

Key websites

www.franfed.org www.escofm.org www.franciscancollegesanduniversities.org



Compiled by Pat McCloskey, O.F.M., the author of Peace and Good: Through the Year with Francis of Assisi (Franciscan Media). Send news items for this column to pmccloskey@FranciscanMedia.org. He serves as Franciscan Editor of St. Anthony Messenger and writes its "Dear Reader;" and "Ask a Franciscan" columns. He also edits Weekday Homily Helps.

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Mercy and the Modern Sciences:

Faith and Science in the Franciscan Tradition

By Joachim Ostermann, O.F.M.

he first thing I do when I get out of bed most mornings is check my email. Today, I found there an invitation to download a Franciscan prayer app for my cell phone. What a wonderful use of technology. I then checked the news, which was about the United Nations Conference on Climate Change. Heads of government are coming together from all over the world to address a problem that could affect the entire world. Whether they will make substantial progress is a different question, but the mere fact that they are talking is a cause for hope.

These simple examples help to illustrate a topic that is very close to my heart: the relationship between faith and science. I became a Franciscan friar rather late in life, after 25 years in the sciences. I was attracted to the spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi and the Franciscan tradition because of its closeness to nature and the ordinary lives of ordinary people. It struck me as being a truly bottom-up spirituality; spirituality grounded in the lives of people who are seeking God in nature and the ordinary events of life. As I learn more about the Franciscan tradition, I begin to see how it can bring Christian faith and science closer together.

Mere Nature

We live in a world that is very different from medieval Italy in the time of Francis. Our age is a modern, scientific-technological age. We cannot ignore this basic fact. There are about 7.4 billion people on earth today – twice as many as 50 years ago. The population growth of the last century is extraordinary. Without modern science and technology, most of us would not be alive. Not only is our science different from that of the medieval age, our whole relationship with nature has been fundamentally changed by modern science and technology.

We continue to make new and exciting discoveries every day. Just recently, researchers at the University of California in Irvine found a way to make mosquitos resistant to malarial infection. Hundreds of millions of people suffer from malaria, and more than half a million die from it each year. With this discovery, we may be able to eradicate this disease, just as we have eradicated other diseases that were once the scourge of humanity. However, we must not be naively optimistic. To make malaria-resistant mosquitos would require the large-scale release of geneticallymodified mosquitoes, with the goal that these modified mosquitoes replace the ordinary ones. Should we make such a far-ranging change in the ecosystem? Are there consequences we cannot see? Is it the right thing to do? These are not just rhetorical questions,,;; rather, these are questions we need to ask as science and technology take us into new and unfamiliar areas. Such questions are about our faith and the meaning of our lives. They are questions of spirituality. We have much work to do, if our Franciscan spirituality is to remain a bottom-up spirituality grounded in the experience of nature and not idealized from how we experience it today.

This is not an easy task with an obvious solution. It is not enough to just let science be science and faith be faith. If they could easily be kept apart, then why are scientists so much less likely than everybody else to profess faith in a personal God?¹ What causes so many scientists to turn away from Christian faith? There seems to be something about "doing science" that gives rise to a very different kind of faith - a faith that sees nothing in nature but brute and meaningless facts. To many scientists, knowledge of nature reveals nothing but foundational laws that are completely indifferent to our welfare.

Even the most devout supporter of scientific naturalism can believe in an eternal principle that is active in the cosmos and gives rise to our finite existence. Scientists are just as likely to pause in awe and wonder when they encounter the beauty of nature, be it in the immediate sense experience or in the depth of scientific understanding. The trouble is not with faith in God as an abstract principle or first cause. The trouble is with faith in a *personal* God. In particular, the trouble is with having faith in a God who is merciful.

As Christians, our response to the human condition draws on the Gospels and the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. However, the world of the scriptures is the pre-industrial agricultural world of times long past. It is one thing to have faith in a merciful God when we see the goodness of God in the pillars of life – cereals, fruit trees, and various kinds of livestock. But it is another thing, when we see the fruits of advanced modern technology on which our lives now also depend. It is all too easy to consider this modern technology entirely as a human accomplishment, without at all considering it a divine gift.

Given our experience of advanced, modern technology, is it still possible to see God's mercy and providential care in nature and the science of nature? This is a difficult question, one we need to explore in terms of the sciences that most affect our lives. We need to consider physics and the laws that describe the reality of material existence. We must look to biology and how it explains the diversity of creatures and the way they function, individually, in groups, and as part of an ecosystem. Finally, we must explore it in terms of medical science and its deep insights into the causes of diseases and our limited means to cure them.

In physics, we find the extraordinary effectiveness of mathematics to explain the order we find in the universe. Our ability to understand the physical history of the universe inspires awe and wonder, but a universe described by mathematics has little place for personal being: neither for God, nor for our own existence as distinct, self-aware, personal, and free. In this way, physics paradoxically alienates us from the very universe physicists describe. Things are no better in biology. Its evolutionary account of living beings finds nothing but chance and necessity in the struggle for

¹ For research on the faith of scientists, see , for example, Elaine H. Ecklund and Christopher P. Scheitle, "Religion among Academic Scientists: Distinctions, Disciplines, and Demographics," a *Social Problems*, 54 (2007): 289-307.

survival. For the evolutionary biologist, human consciousness and morality is nothing more than a specialized survival strategy. And medical science, despite its great potential to benefit human beings, is rather merciless when it distinguishes between what can and what cannot be done. The sick person feels like a defective machine in need of repair by expertly trained technicians who can diagnose *all* problems and fix *some*. None of this gives confidence that the first cause of all this is merciful, forgiving, and concerned about saving us from oblivion.

The Experience of Francis

The Franciscan tradition offers a way to step back, regain our confidence in the power of our faith and reason, and take a second look at modern science. Finding a merciful God in the science of nature was no easier for Francis than it is for us today. In his Testament, Francis tells us, "When I was in sin, it seemed too bitter for me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and I showed mercy to them."2 It was a merciful God who led Francis amongst the lepers, and by allowing himself to become an instrument of God's mercy, Francis discovered the mercy of God expressed toward him. His initial revulsion towards leprosy and what it does to a human person is very understandable. However, this reaction is also deeply sinful, as it fails to see the person in the suffering and treats the person not as living but dead. Likewise, modern science is an abstraction of all that is personal in nature. With its focus on impersonal matter, modern science makes no fundamental distinction between the living and the dead. To point this out is not to deny the rationality and truth of science. It does, however, remind us who interpret science not to lose sight of the personal that was abstracted from the outset.

In the medieval world, the situation of the leper may indeed have been hopeless. With no possibility for a cure, it was necessary for the afflicted to live in isolation so that others were protected. We cannot deny the rationality of this act. But, in the light of Christ and His sacrifice for us, we discover a superior rationality that urges us to act according to Christ's example – even at the risk of our own lives. To reach out in this way is only apparently in opposition to rationality, only apparently without hope, as it expresses a much larger hope grounded in God's mercy. Francis found closeness with God by living in imitation of Christ. Near the end of his life and at a time of great bodily suffering, he was consoled by a vision that told him to "be glad and rejoice in your illnesses and troubles, because as of now, you are as secure as if you were already in my kingdom."3 This vision completed his identification with Christ. He could now see how his own suffering prepared him for eternity with Christ.

Faith and Science in the Franciscan Tradition

How might we put Francis' insights and the perspective of the Franciscan tradition to good use in answering our question: aCan God's mercy and providential care still be seen in nature and the science of nature? To begin, we can acknowledge that all is created by God and flows out of God's goodness; our knowledge of even the most humble creature is divinely inspired knowledge. It is, therefore, proper for us to allow this knowledge to take possession of us and lift us up in our journey to God. St. Bonaventure

provides the means by which study of material things can be the beginning of the journey of the soul into God. Like modern science, Bonaventure distinguishes between the knower and what is to be known, but he does not separate them from each other (as modern science does). Rather, he makes a distinction between two ways of knowing. The first is the comprehensive way or mode, in which the knower grasps what is known. The second is the ecstatic way or mode, in which the known object grasps the knower.⁴ In this grasping and being grasped, the knower and what is known truly come together. The analytical knowledge of science is, thus, completed by the mystical knowledge of contemplation.⁵

However, the journey into God requires that we are willing to leave sin behind. To do this, Bonaventure says we must understand the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In him, the self-giving goodness of God out of which all created being flows is revealed. By leaving sin behind, abandoning any sense of possession and control, and identifying with Christ and his cross, believers can allow themselves to be drawn into the divine mystery through the revelation of God in created things. We must desire wisdom, not power, and God's wisdom is revealed in his incarnate word.⁶

Bonaventure reminds us that abstract and impersonal science cannot be the beginning of our intellectual reflection about the world and things. Instead, we must start by recognizing that we are one creature in creation. In contrast, modern science places the human person outside the cosmos, as an observer looking in from the outside. But we are not detached observers. The very fact that our minds are inseparable from our physical existence is enough to show that we are in the world and not above it. Our thoughts are a real part of nature; our thoughts reach out into the world just as the world reaches out to us and shapes our thoughts. This fact does not mean we cannot attain true knowledge by way of abstracting the personal and the modern sciences. But it makes these results knowledge of the impersonal context in which the true drama of personal life and development takes place.

Duns Scotus provides another means by which we might put the Franciscan tradition to use and reconcile mercy with the modern sciences. Two insights of Duns Scotus are particularly important here. First is the univocity of being - the idea that being means the same when it is applied to our finite being as to God's infinite being. For Scotus, we are truly children of God, members of the divine household who have been made for relationship with God. The univocity of being means that we can find God, even now, by seeking to understand material things. The second of these insights emphasizes the power of the human intellect.

² Test 1-2, FA:ED 1, 124.

³ AC 83, FA:ED 2, 185.

⁴ Works of St. Bonaventure: Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ. Zachary Hayes, ed. (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2005), 188.

⁵ The measurement problem of quantum mechanics is a rich source of inspiration for how modern science points toward a relational understanding between knower and what is to be known. However, it ought to be remembered that the measurement problem is about the relationship between a quantum effect and a measurement apparatus. How the measurement apparatus relates to the observer very much depends on one's philosophical understanding of the human person in the physical world, and this topic cannot be addressed within quantum mechanics. Quantum mechanics stands in the intellectual tradition of theory development that abstracted the personal from the beginning. For a philosophical introduction into the measurement problem in quantum mechanics, see Henry Krips, "Measurement in Quantum Theory", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta, ed., accessed March 8, 2016, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2013/entries/qt-measurement/.

⁶ Works of St. Bonaventure: Itinerarium Mentis in Deum. Philotheus Boehner and Zachary Hayes, ed. (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2002), 37-41.

⁷ Allan Wolter, *Duns Scotus: Philosophical Writings* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), 4-8 (Prologue, *Questions on the Metaphysics*, no.3).

Scotus recognizes the mind's ability to make distinctions in the composition of something, even when there are no separate parts. Such distinctions are not merely conceptual. It means that we can look at two distinct individual beings and find something in them that has a real unity even though it is present in distinct individuals. For example, we are able to see in a human person both his or her individual identity and his or her common human nature. It is the same human nature that is present in all of us, together with what makes us the individual who we are. Indeed, each one of us is both fully an individual *and* fully an example of the human form. With such insights, Duns Scotus expresses great confidence in the power of human reason to truly understand the metaphysical foundation of our world, carefully balancing attention to both individuality and commonality.

A Franciscan Perspective on Creation

Now, back to the question about mercy and the modern sciences, the circumstances of showing and finding mercy in our time, many centuries after Francis and his medieval interpreters. The kingdom of God, the kingdom of mercy and consolation, remains present in all that God has created for us in Christ and for Christ. Our ability to see this kingdom and live accordingly is still impeded—most importantly by sin and its consequences. We no longer walk with God as Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden. Not only is our relationship with God, but our relationships with each other and all of creation now at risk to become about exploitation. We have learned much about creation by applying the tools of the modern sciences, but they have left us with an impersonal understanding of nature, and this impersonal understanding of nature in our daily lives. What have we learned from the Franciscan tradition?

We have learned that the Franciscan view is the view from the inside. To understand what this means, we must consider why modern science has lost the ability to see personal being as both the source and goal of creation. Science attempts the view from the outside. The Copernican shift that displaced us from the center of creation was not merely a step towards a better explanation of astronomical phenomena. It was also a step in which we made ourselves observers of the universe, accounting for all by abstracting the personal and attempting to describe the rest as if seen from outside. The stance of the distant, detached, and disinterested observer became the modern scientific ideal. Nothing could be more alien to the spirituality of Francis. In showing mercy to the leper, not in the abstract but in the particular encounter with a particular person, Francis's conversion and the journey of his soul into God began. The philosophical thoughts of his medieval followers only reinforced what he had come to know by intuition: that it is in the concrete encounter with creatures in creation that we live our lives and find the mercy of God.

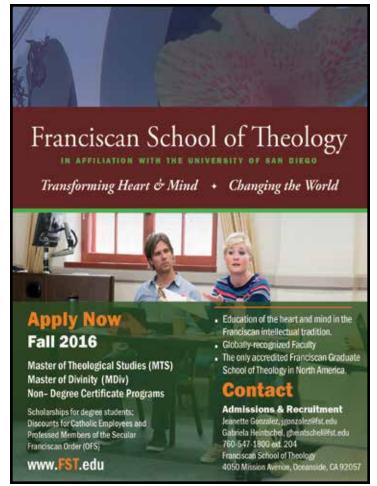
The Franciscan view is the view from the inside. As we look at the modern sciences from a Franciscan perspective, we must use them to recover the proper place of the human person within creation. We must have confidence in our own minds and our minds' ability to understand and discern purpose and meaning in creation as a whole and in individual creatures. This trust includes

trust in the results of scientific investigation. Trust in God has to start with trust in creation, and this includes trust in our own ability to learn and understand from the study of creation, through individual experience as much as through scientific investigation. But prior to any objective scientific investigation, we already know that we are persons and creatures in creation, rather than demigods who disinterestedly watch from the outside. When we acknowledge that our view is from the inside, we can accept that it cannot be comprehensive, that it cannot ever grasp the whole.

Science is true, but it can never be supplemented in some way to become the whole truth. The true understanding of science is found by realizing that it is true knowledge, but more importantly, that it is a stepping stone in the spiritual journey towards the fullness of truth, towards God. When we accept that our view is from the inside, then we can allow the outside to grasp and take hold of us. When we allow for this to happen, then our pursuit of truth may eventually be transformed into the experience of love, the love of God that reaches out to us, in our personal encounters with nature, with each other, and with God. The Franciscan view is the view from the inside, which is the proper place of the human person within creation, and only from there can mercy and the modern sciences be reconciled.



Joachim Ostermann, O.F.M., is a Franciscan Friar, a scientist, and a person very much interested in everything that shows how science and Christian faith support each other. Prior to entering religious life, he earned a PhD in Biochemistry and worked at universities and biotechnology companies in the US and Canada. He now lives and works in Duncan and Victoria, BC.



⁸ Paul Vincent Spade, Five Texts on the Medieval Problems of Universals (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994), 59-63 (Ordinatio II. d. 3, part 1, par. 11-28).

Humility:

A Foundational Spiritual Pathway

By Bob Donius

y father used to tell my brothers and me, "You can do anything you want in the world, just not everything." He encouraged us to take initiative and be courageous, yet be realistic and humble. I think that courageous initiative and humility are also part of the invitation of Francis to his brothers, "I have done what is mine [to do]; may Christ teach you what is yours [to do]." Each of us has something to do; yet not everything. We are part of the whole, a member of a diversely gifted community.

As part of disability awareness week this past autumn, a faculty colleague asked if I would offer a reflection around the theme of "Spirituality and Coping with Anxiety and Stress." My considerations brought me to the virtue of humility, central to many of the world's religious traditions. Living with humility is about embracing what life is asking of us each moment, no less and no more. In a culture that emphasizes the drive to achieve more, we often find ourselves stressed, tired, discouraged, and living in the past or future rather than the present.

Let me begin my reflection like I begin all of my classes, with silence and breathing, which is a common practice of many spiritual traditions. My students appreciate this Benedictine practice of *statio*, the still moment between moments. We are often running from one thing to the next, distracted and unfocused. Hence, we need to take a pause, to catch our breath, to be where we are. I remember the calm that came with Brother Bob Struzinski's² invitation years ago: "There is nowhere else you need to be right now; there is nothing else you need to do." Humility recognizes that this is the moment we have, yet we get stressed by the pressure of future expectations, feeling the pull of what more we have to do. Pause and breathe.

Breathing and silence can be a way of living mindfully with equanimity. This is the wisdom that our Buddhist brothers and sisters practice. They are conscious of doing what it is they are doing, which sounds simple, but is not always easy in our fast paced culture. Being in the moment is also about humility; I am limited (and blessed) by this time and space.

In a culture that values, and sometimes expects, multitasking, it is a challenge for us to be doing what we are doing. We can get stuck thinking about a past problem, or worrying about a future demand and miss the present moment. This can add to our stress. Our parents probably all told us at some point in our childhood, "One thing at a time." This is humility. My Buddhist friend reminds me of this when he *drinks mindfully*, which he does by

holding the glass with two hands, rather than the expedient one hand. At the moment, all he is doing is drinking. Try it.

Many things can stress us in any given day. Some stress is good for us, and some not. The key difference is *our attitude* toward the stressor. Psychologists speak of *eustress* and *distress*. Eustress is "good stress." Distress is "bad stress." Attitude makes the difference. For example, depending on whether or not we find them exhilarating or terrifying, the following could cause either eustress or distress: riding a roller coaster, skydiving, running, public speaking, chopping wood, teaching, etc.

Some stress is good for us. Exercise is healthful physical stress. Work is stressful, but is also our particular participation in creation. Eustress can result in feelings of vigor and satisfaction, wellbeing and meaning. Millennia ago, Socrates spoke of the importance of "creative tension" as part of the good life. What would you consider eustressful in your own experience?

And yet, we are faced with stressors that create in us anxiety, fear of failure, perhaps depression, or a feeling of being overwhelmed (with more expectations than we have time, energy, or talent for). Certainly, one might consider many helpful responses to living well with stress: adequate sleep, a healthy diet, regular exercise, meaningful work, life-enhancing leisure, tidying up our clutter (both physical and mental), love, balance, etc. In addition to these, or maybe even prior to them, one pathway or practice that spirituality has to offer is humility.

In the flow of each day, life comes to us, and we go to it. Our attitude, our disposition (our imagination as Fr. David Couturier would name it³), is key. One of the fundamental dispositions in many spiritual traditions is humility: an attitude that recognizes my human dignity in a wondrous universe; an attitude that recognizes my interrelationship with the whole earth community, that I am a brother, a sister, to all; an attitude that knows that I am the beloved child of a loving God. Most, if not all, spiritual traditions have this humble disposition as a central teaching.

Confucianism claims, "The firm, the enduring, the simple, and the modest are near to virtue." In Hinduism's Bhagavad Gita we read, "They are forever free who renounce all selfish desires and break away from the ego-cage of 'I,' 'me,' and 'mine' to be united with the Lord. This is the supreme state." Buddhism teaches that in order to learn and ultimately to be enlightened, we must be humble and admit that we do not know. Native American Spirituality proclaims, "All my relations," a recognition of our place in the whole web of life.

¹ Thomas of Celano, *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul*, Second Book 214 as found on page 386 of *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, Volume II The Founder*, edited by Regis Armstrong et al, Franciscan Institute of St. Bonaventure University,

² Br. Bob (1935-2013) was a friar of Holy Name Province for 55 years who helped found Francis Inn in Philadelphia, taught theology at St. Bonaventure University and was a member of the Mt. Irenaeus Community. https://hnp.org/funeral-mass-robert-struzynski-set-dec-21-sbu/

^{3 &}quot;Franciscan imagination" - see Fr. David's article, "The Globalization of Indifference and the Franciscan Imagination" in *Franciscan Connections*, Volume 65, Issue 1, March 2015, 14-19.

⁴ Chapter XXVII. The Analects of Confucius In Plain and Simple English: Book-Caps Study Guide By Confucius, The Bhagavad Gita - Page 69. https://books.google.com/books?id=HW3XAAAAMAAJ. Eknath Easwaran, 1985.

^{5 &}quot;Mitákuye Oyás'iŋ (All Are Related) is a phrase from the Lakota language. It reflects the worldview of interconnectedness held by the Lakota people of North America. This concept and phrase is expressed in many Yankton Sioux prayers, as

In their central prayer, Jews pray, "Shema, Israel, Adonai eluheinu, Adonai ekhad... Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord alone ... Therefore, you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength" (Dt. 6:4-5). Psalm 23 proclaims, "The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack... Even though I walk through a dark valley, I fear no harm for you are at my side." The prophet Micah reminds us that it is essential to walk humbly with our God (6:8).

Christians consider the many times humility is referenced by Jesus, who "did not come to be served, but to serve" (Mk 10: 45). "Many who are first will be last, and the last, first" (Mk 10:31). "He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it" (Mt 10:39). And in teaching his disciples to pray, and thus how to live, Jesus prays, "Our Father ... Your will be done" (Mt. 6:9-10).

Islam recognizes that our greatest difficulty is to remember God and live with humility. We are self-focused from our birth. Therefore, the difficult challenge to live rightly is in not seeing ourselves as the center of the universe. Hence, the Qur'an requires that believers prostrate in prayer five times throughout each day, and proclaim that *there is no God but God*. The words AND the gesture both symbolize and deepen humility. I am not at the center; God is. This can be a great relief!

The story is told that Pope (now saint) John XXIII, each night, on his way to bed, would pause in the Chapel door at the Vatican, and pray, "Lord, it's your church; I'm going to bed." During my many years of Church ministry, I have often remembered and prayed his prayer. Here was "Good Pope John" (who was also a secular Franciscan) who was called to lead a global Church into a new moment in its self understanding and its relationship with people of every place and culture and religion. Big job; yet he humbly recognized that he was not the center. And with courage he would do what was his to do.

As mentioned in the beginning, Francis of Assisi, centuries earlier, said to his brothers at the end of his life, "I have done what is mine to do; may Christ teach you what is yours to do." Assessing what life is asking of each of us, we can say, "This is mine to do; this (other thing) is not mine to do." Furthermore, elsewhere, Francis invites us to do this "as much as we can" (i.e., with courageous initiative and humility).6

Among the many things I think Francis learned from his imprisonment and sickness in Perugia were that freedom is a gift, not a given, and health is a gift, not a given. Thus, he was opened to seeing freedom and health in a new light from a new place. He came to see that the lepers were deprived of both. He was humbled. He came to see with new eyes, from a new place, a place of vulnerability and powerlessness. This led him to gratitude and compassion, and I might add, less stress and greater joy.

Other Franciscan theologians, Bonaventure and Scotus, considered the notion of *pietas*, or being in right relationship; this too is part of humility. Who am I? Who are you? What self-centeredness do I need to let go of in order to live well in this interrelated community? What is our essential oneness? As Thomas Merton recognized, we imagine that we need to become one; yet, we are already

well as by ceremonial people in other Lakota communities. The phrase translates in English as "all my relatives," "we are all related," or "all my relations" (Wikipedia).

one. Patricia Humphries has captured this beautifully in her award winning song, *We Are One*:

Smiling face, outstretched hand Through disputes small and grand We will lay down our guns We are one In the rage, through the war We have shared pain before In our grief when it's done We are one, We are one

Where the earth touches sky
We are born, we all die
Where the clear waters run
We are one, We are one. (Refrain)

When the light touches land Over sea, over sand When each day has begun We are one (somos uno) When the rock wears away And the tide rolls and sways By the moon, by the sun We are one, We are one

In the soft of the night
We are learning not to fight
In our hearts, in the drum
We are one
In the birth of a child
Through the fierce and the mild
In our daughters and our sons *In las hijas y los hijos*We are one, We are one *Somos uno, somos uno.*⁷

In this oneness, each of us has a part to play, a gift to give. And so, in humility, I embrace my part of the whole that is ours.

Humility is the beginning of 12-step spirituality; step one is to acknowledge that we are powerless, and to surrender to our Higher Power. However we name our Higher Power, we embrace our limits, and we derive strength from knowing that we are accompanied. The humbled and empowered one prays, "Lord, grant me the serenity (and humility) to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

In his recent book entitled *Falling Upward*⁹, Franciscan priest and theologian, Richard Rohr, explores a spirituality for the second half of life. He says that the first half of life is addition; the second half is subtraction. In the first half of life we are busy with discerning and growing our identity, building a career, raising a family, etc. And these are all good and important and necessary life tasks. In the second half of life, he says, we are called to generativity, to embrace our limits (humility), and to generously give away our lives for others. This is what elders and grandparents offer.

I was reminded of this recently while I was limping across cam-

⁶ This is the translation of Professor Jean-François Godet-Calogeras of a common expression of Francis, "quantumcumque possum," found in several places in Francis' writings, including at the end of his Testament (41) as found on page 127 of Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, Volume I The Saint, edited by Regis Armstrong et al, Franciscan Institute of St. Bonaventure University, 2000

⁷ We are One, 2000. Pat Humphries, Moving Forward Music, BMI. http://www.emmasrevolution.com/

⁸ The Serenity Prayer is the common name for a prayer authored by the American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971) (Wikipedia).

⁹ Richard Rohr, Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2011.

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pus and had a wonderful moment with a colleague and friend, Rob Hurlburt. When I told him my daughter was pregnant, he shared, "Being a grandparent is humbling. When I hold my grandchild, I am aware that I am a small part in the great cycle of life."

Let me share with you what I learned from a former classmate and dear friend, now deceased, Al LaFave. As an 18-year-old freshman in college, Al was injured in a car accident and broke his neck. For the next 18 years, he lived in a nursing home as a quadriplegic. Then he returned to campus and joined our class. We volunteered in teams of two to do all his care, which was very personal! At the end of our first year, Al was invited to address the whole student body. He told us, "We're all handicapped; mine just happen to show more." He helped me to understand that disabilities, handicaps, and limitations are part of all of our lives. Aging, sickness, and ultimately death, which Francis embraces as "Sister Death," can stress us, or they can humble us and inspire us to accept what is, that our lives are bounded by birth and death and the particularities of our "thisness," and to treasure the now, and make the most of each moment.

And so, with humility, we might live well with stress, with less stress and with peace. In a letter to Dorothy Day (1965), Thomas Merton wrote, "You will never find interior solitude until you make some conscious effort to deliver yourself from the cares and the attachments of an existence in time and in the world." Four centuries earlier, Ignatius of Loyola offered us a similar invitation to humility in his prayer known as the Suscipe (*Receive*, in Latin).

We might join Pope Francis in this Jesuit prayer of humility, which liturgical musician Dan Schutte has rendered in his powerful song, *These Alone Are Enough*:

Take my heart, O Lord, take my hopes and dreams, Take my mind with all its plans and schemes. Give me nothing more than your love and grace. These alone, O God, are enough for me.¹¹

Humility is not a pass to mediocrity. It requires that we give ourselves fully to each moment. I like to quote to my students Mary Oliver, who asks in one of her poems, "Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?" Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta enjoined, "Let us do something beautiful for God." In so doing, she recognized, "Don't look for big things; just do small things with great love." 14

Humility is not self-conscious, but is generous and outward moving. Consider our Sun: it gives four million tons of its mass every second, in every direction. Yet only one-billionth of it reaches Earth. This outrageous and unconditional and humble generosity nurtures, feeds, lights and warms us, yet never asks for a report or a thank-you!¹⁵

One practice for living with humility might be to regularly look at the night sky. For the ancients, this was a daily, easy to achieve awareness. For many of us with electricity illuminating the night, our practice needs to be more intentional. As we behold the immensity, the billions of stars that wash overhead in our Milky Way galaxy, and the more distant stars and galaxies, we can sense our smallness, and the amazing fact of our self reflective consciousness, beholding this universe that has been unfolding from its original flaring forth for 13.7 billion years until this moment. Contemplating the night sky, the immensity of this wondrous universe and our small yet exquisite place in it, we know that each of us is once and only once. Our "call" or "vocation" is to do who we are, each of us individually, and together communally. No pressure!!

Humility can lead us to serenity, a peaceful context for living well with stress. We have some work to do, but not everything. And throughout it all, we are embraced by Infinite Love. So we can surrender and breathe. As our Muslim brothers and sisters say, *Inshallah*: If God wills. Or as our Latino sisters and brothers say, *Si Dios Quiere*. Or Augustine, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee, O Lord."

¹⁵ For a fascinating presentation, see the Emmy-award-winning film, *The Journey of the Universe*, presented by cosmologist and physicist, Dr. Brian Swimme, 2011



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¹⁰ In a letter to Dorothy Day in 1965, as cited in an essay, Thomas Merton on Solitude, which in turn credits Richard Anthony Cashen's *Solitude in the Thought of Thomas Merton*. Kalamazoo: Mich., Cistercian Publications, 1981. http://www.hermitary.com/solitude/merton.html © 2003, the hermitary and Meng-hu.

 $^{11\ \}mathit{These\ Alone\ Are\ Enough}, 2004.$ Daniel L. Schutte. Published by OCP, 5536 NE Hassalo, Portland, OR 97213.

¹² The Summer Day in New and Selected Poems, 1992. Beacon Press, Boston, MA, Copyright 1992 by Mary Oliver.

¹³ Malcolm Muggeridge's Something Beautiful for God: Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Harper & Row, New York, 1971, 125.

¹⁴ As quoted in Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light by Brian Kolodiejchuk, Doubleday Religion, New York, 2007, 34.

Appreciation:

The Spirituality of Solanus Casey

By Daniel Crosby, O.F.M., Cap.

ot too long ago, here in America, in the age before all this instant access, when people were thrilled with the possibilities brought about by the wonders of radio and the trusted typewriter, a humble Capuchin priest died on July 31, 1957. He was 86, and his name was Fr. Solanus Casey. On the day of his funeral in Detroit, 15,000 people tried to crowd into the small, public chapel at St. Bonaventures Monastery, where he had served for many years. In the years since his death, devotion to him has grown – so much so that in 1995, Pope John Paul II declared him "Venerable." Thousands of people are praying that his beatification and canonization will come soon. Ten years before his death, reflecting on the post-Second World War era in which he lived, Solanus wrote; "Herein seems to me to be humanity's great weakness; our want of appreciation!" (May 14, 1947)

Appreciation. In many ways, appreciation is the golden thread that binds together all the aspects of Casey's life and spirituality. His constant, heartfelt emphasis on appreciation is one of the main reasons why his spirituality is so needed in our restless, over-technological world.

Just before the Second World War, in 1937, at a dinner for benefactors of the Capuchin Soup Kitchen in Detroit (which he had helped to inaugurate at the height of the Great Depression), Casey told the guests, "In my humble conviction, appreciation...is as necessary for social order and harmony as are the laws of gravity for the physical world."

These words might surprise and startle us today – perhaps even more than they did when first spoken at that banquet – because they sound exaggerated. They bear repeating: "In my humble conviction, appreciation…is as necessary for social order and harmony as are the laws of gravity for the physical world."

These simple but unusual words came from a man considered by his Capuchin superiors to be so intellectually deficient that they allowed him to be ordained but never to hear confessions or preach a public sermon. A "simplex priest" they called it. In their estimation, the basic priestly tasks of publicly preaching and hearing confessions demanded more intellectual acumen than the young Solanus Casey seemed to portray.

Casey, the son of Irish immigrants, left his Wisconsin home for Detroit in December 1896, arriving on Christmas Eve at the doors of St. Bonaventure Monastery, the headquarters of the Midwest Capuchins. Nearly all the friars who welcomed him that holy night were immigrants from Germany. They spoke German and taught theology classes from books written in Latin. Casey definitely had a problem learning languages, so his native intelligence did not show forth on theology exams. However, never in his life did he complain of his superiors' unjust decision. He accepted it with total trust and loving obedience. History would prove how dead wrong those superiors' estimations of this young friar were!

But what is appreciation? Why is it "as necessary for social order and harmony as the laws of gravity are to the physical world?" What happens when there is such a "want of appreciation" in our

world – undoubtedly more so in our 21st century world even than that of Solanus? What can we do to develop a lifestyle, a spirituality of greater appreciation, so we can become more gently human as this humble American Capuchin?

Deepak Chopra, the Indian-born American author and public speaker, has this to say about the value of appreciation:

Appreciation may not often be used to describe a spiritual state, yet appreciation is in many ways the highest sense. When you appreciate you don't put yourself first. You have nothing of your ego at stake. Appreciation brings loving awareness to creation. In seeing how beautiful something is, you are gazing at the divine. The deeper your appreciation, the more you are seeing with the eyes of the soul.

How well these words describe the personality and spirituality of Solanus Casey! According to Genesis, the first book of our Hebrew-Christian bible, appreciation is exactly the stance our Creator took (and still takes) at the completion of creation. "God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good" (1:31). God's first look at creation is a look of appreciation. Genesis seems to be telling us that appreciation is the only valid response to the gift of creation, in all its varied forms. Even more than that, the author also seems to be telling us that appreciation happens only when there is peaceful, contemplative, "nothing of the ego" kind of looking at what is before us: "God *looked at* everything he had made and found it very good." No envious comparing here, no devious calculating, "What's going to be in this for me?" Just simple, loving acceptance of the good which God beholds before him.

In the very next chapters of Genesis, the author makes it very clear that creation (especially human beings) is not perfect. Only God is perfect, but we are good, indeed very good, in our imperfection. Later Scripture passages tell us that when this Creator God looks upon his people, he even "delights" in us (Ps 149:4). God appreciates what God has made! The biblical message is clear: Appreciation is the original and only authentic response to our flawed but gifted creaturehood – and the flawed and gifted creaturehood of everyone else.

Of course, if we creatures - who now do the "beholding" which God did/does after creation – do not accept our own imperfect goodness, then there will be no peaceful, contemplative beholding of anyone else outside ourselves, either. Competition, rivalry (overt or covert), and all the ego-filled ways we can look at others will rise to the surface. Too often, these stay to wreak havoc and violence our lives. This, of course, is the stuff of newscasts every day in our 21st century. From his very first days as a Capuchin, Casey had a name for all these tendencies, these inauthentic ways of looking. The word he used for them was "covetousness." Because we look at ourselves as not having enough or being enough, we then look out at what others have/ are and instead of appreciating what we behold, we give in to the urge to take what they have/are to fill up our insufficiency. According to Casey this is the look that "enflames all things and will not let go." And he concludes, "Covetousness, then, is the root of all evil."

Undoubtedly as a result of struggling prayerfully through his many setbacks and handicaps, Casey came to the peaceful possession of his good, imperfect self, which allowed him to look upon all God's creation with the same appreciation that God had when looking upon His first creation. I had the privilege of living with Casey in my first year as a Capuchin, which, incidentally, would be his last year as a Capuchin. "Appreciate" is the word I heard on his lips more than any other. It made a lifelong impression on me. I would hear him say, "If we would only appreciate our faith." "If we would only appreciate each other." "If we'd only appreciate what he's trying to tell us." "If we'd only appreciate what it means to be a Capuchin." When he uttered the word "appreciate," it was like he was savoring its beauty. He would linger over the word, saying it slowly, lovingly, as if it contained for him - for everyone - the sweetness of honey. What depth of meaning came from this humble Capuchin: If our lives were marked by the sweetness and truth of appreciation, how different our lives, our families, communities, and our world would be.

The well-known Oblate writer Fr. Ronald Rolheiser says that "One of the defining traits of human maturity is the capacity to admire," (Column, Jan. 12, 2003) to stand in appreciation before another person, object or accomplishment. By this measurement, Solanus Casey – initially thought of as intellectually inferior – grew into one of the most mature human beings of the 20th century. "No ego at stake," as Deepak Chopra says, no "putting yourself first." It's the reason why he concludes that, "Appreciation may not often be used to describe a spiritual state, yet it is in many ways the highest state."

Appreciation. All of us have moments of appreciation – such as when we behold a brilliant sunset or someone goes out of his or her way to help us. However, this kind of appreciation takes no effort. It's spontaneous, demanding no discipline. This is not the appreciation Casey would talk about. For him, appreciation was not just a momentary, passing experience. Through prayer and contemplation, appreciation became for him a pervasive attitude, an expression of his whole way of living. The words, "God is so good," tumbled constantly, effortlessly from his lips. Appreciation became the "conviction" (his own word) that dwelt permanently in his heart.

Let's be clear, though. When he wrote the words, "Herein seems to me to be humanity's great weakness: our want of appreciation," there was no finger-pointing at less-enlightened souls. He spoke of "our" want of appreciation and immediately added, "But again, how fortunate for us that God's mercy is above all his works – and his patience is essentially one with his mercy." For Casey, even "our want of appreciation" gives us reason to grow not in guilt or shame but in appreciation of God's never-ending, merciful, patient love.

Let's return now to Casey's central "conviction." First of all, it's important to note that in speaking to those 1937 benefactors, he uses the word "conviction," not "opinion," as we might expect. Even his choice of words reflects how deeply this realization was planted in him. He was not sharing with these guests some lovely, pious, opinion, but something that came from the ground of his existence. "In my humble conviction appreciation. . . is as necessary for social order and harmony as are the laws of gravity for the physical world."

We've already pointed out our "want of appreciation" springs from and breeds envy, covetousness, competition, rivalry, violence – and yes – consumerism (needing to fill ourselves up with more because we cannot rest peacefully with who we are and what we have). Instead of seeing ourselves and others as the good but imperfect

(even delightful) brothers and sisters that we are, we look upon others as objects, threats needing to be ignored, controlled, conquered or annihilated. The inevitable result? The "social order and harmony" about which Casey wrote, the peace and tranquility in the world and in our hearts that God created us to have, diminishes. In many situations in this 21st century of ours, it seems hardly alive. How devastating and far-reaching is "our want of appreciation"!

The great twentieth century Jewish philosopher and spiritual writer, Abraham Heschel, echoes the humble Capuchin's words when he wrote in his book, *Who is Man*:

The way one relates to the world is the primary factor in determining whether a human being actually achieves being human. In appreciation one recognizes the world as something to be admired, revered, understood, shared. In manipulation a person sees the world basically as something to be used, handled, possessed. Manipulation is the attitude that brings about separation and alienation. When one lets the drive for power and appropriation dominate existence, then one is certain to lose a sense of the reverence due to creation, the sense of the sacred vanishes. Appreciation. . .is the source of fellowship and communion. It implies acceptance of reality, meeting the world with openness, standing "face to face" with what confronts us. We are struck by the immense preciousness of being, the preciousness that is a cause for wonder.

In this age which is so filled with ego, when Chopra's, "What's in it for me?" becomes so prevalent that people feel entitled, doesn't "preciousness" sound a bit archaic, a relic of some bygone age? Maybe, yet etymologically, the words "appreciation" and "precious" come from the same source. *Pretiosus* in Latin means "costly, valuable." Whenever we truly appreciate, it's because we are able to behold the innate value, or preciousness, contained within.

When entitlement or taking things for granted becomes our basic stance, our way of looking out at others, we become an example of Casey's "want of appreciation." In one way or another, we are operating out of the "covetousness" he warned against. In this ego-filled, often angry, superficial condition, we lose what makes us most human. Rabbi Heschel puts it this way:

Acceptance is appreciation, and the high value of appreciation is such that to appreciate appreciation seems to be the fundamental prerequisite for survival. Mankind will not die for lack of information; it may perish for lack of appreciation. (82-3)

Even though they were contemporaries, Casey more than likely never heard of Heschel. Their thinking and spirituality, however, were strikingly similar: the role of appreciation to make a person not only truly human but then, as a result, to make us truly like our Creator God. Casey once wrote, "If according to philosophy, to know is to appreciate, may we not say that, to know is to love what is good, it is to reject what is bad, the wicked; it is to adore the divine? Can we think of a higher purpose?"

From his background, steeped as it was in the Jewish mystical tradition, Heschel wrote:

To be human involves the ability to appreciate, as well as the ability to somehow give expression to that appreciation. Celebration is the expression of appreciation – but we are losing the power to celebrate as we seek instead amusement and en-





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tertainment. Entertainment is adiversion from daily living. Celebration gives attention to the present moment of life and expresses a deep inward appreciation. (116-7)

Once more, like Casey, Heschel writes out of his "conviction" that appreciation cannot be simply a temporary feeling or an isolated situation but a permanent way of living. Indeed, according to both Heschel and Casey, living appreciatively is the only truly human way of living in the world. But in this world that knows so little appreciation, we will need a pretty drastic change – from the inside out – if we are to make the way of appreciation truly our way.

In *Who is Man?* Heschel describes some of the visible results of that transformation, some of the characteristics that flow from an appreciation-filled person. Interestingly, these are the exact characteristics that attracted (and still attract) thousands of people every year to Casey. Heschel believed that "there is needed in our lives a spirit of gentleness, stillness, openness and reverence if we are to grow in appreciation of the reality that confronts us everywhere." (*The Human and the Holy*, p. 44)

Not long ago, Larry Peterson of the Catholic Writers' Guild penned an article for the Vatican's own daily, electronic newsletter, ZENIT, in which he shared how he's been rejuvenated by discovering all these virtues in the humble Capuchin from Detroit. Disheartened by all the "rude, obnoxious, self-gratified egomania" behavior he hears or sees each day on TV, he tells us he:

... decided to begin a search for someone sans (without) ego. I was sure it would be...next to impossible. But ... it was not! Let me tell you about one ... who was a quiet, uncompli-

cated man who never aspired to anything more than a simple priest: Bernard Francis Casey (who later became the Capuchin) Father Solanus Casey. His main job at the monastery in Detroit was that of "doorkeeper." Father Casey, wanting to be the absolute best at whatever God chose for him, became the finest doorkeeper that ever lived. He did this for well over 20 years, and also became known for his service to the sick and the advice and consultations he would have with visitors. People began attributing cures and other blessings to his interactions with them or others.

Father Solanus Casey, a man who opened and closed doors for people. A man who had no ego and was happy to serve God in the simplest ways. . . Quite the contrast to the gaggle of egotists that bombard us daily. . . Solanus (Barney) Casey has recharged me.

But the question we posed earlier remains unanswered and now becomes more insistent: What can we do to develop a lifestyle, a spirituality of greater appreciation so we can become more gently human like this humble American Capuchin? It will not happen automatically simply by reading and being temporarily inspired by Casey's story and example – though that can certainly serve as a more than legitimate launching pad! To develop a lifestyle of appreciation demands sacrifice, discipline on our part – as Scripture says, "a change of heart and mind and attitude." The gospel calls this *metanoia*, the Greek word for conversion.

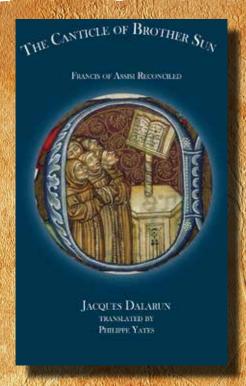
This won't be easy. A life of conscious appreciation goes counter to a culture like ours which is riveted to the surface of life – to what is new, to what makes us look good, to "What's in it for me?" as Deepak Chopra says (all the ways Solanus would call "covetousness"). To grow in appreciation will require a conscious, deliberate desire to gain this biblical attitude – and then, with God's help, to pursue it steadfastly. As St. Francis of Assisi said, "So great the good I have in sight that every pain to me is delight." So, as we set out on this less-traveled way of appreciation, let us call to mind, again and again, the "good" we have in mind, the attractiveness of Father Solanus and his spirituality; let us be bolstered by the words of his mentor, Saint Francis. To live in appreciation is the goal, the prize worth every obstacle, pain and setback.

In addition to his, however, it helps if we have some plan of action which will put flesh and blood into our desire and longing. Without some kind of concrete plan, our heartfelt desire will prove to be no more than another passing fancy or whim – which, as we know, are all too plentiful in this technological culture of ours.

To help make this concrete, I would like to offer a five-fold process or plan of action – which, if faithfully followed, will gradually but definitely develop within us a spirituality of appreciation. It's a process which I believe Solanus himself followed almost naturally, a process he encouraged others to follow – without ever thinking he was following a five-fold process.

This process can be called "S-A-L-V-E" after the first letter of the verb which begins each new step. The word "salve" has two meanings, one in English and the other in Latin. In English, we put "salve" over wounds to soothe and heal them. This five-step process, when applied daily, heals the wounds of covetousness, envy, jealousy, hatred and violence which are so prevalent in our world. The second meaning comes from the Latin, where "Salve!" means "Hail!" This is the greeting the angel Gabriel gave to Mary, recognizing – and appreciating –-her deep, inner goodness. Again, this

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five-step process, applied daily, helps us to recognize and appreciate our goodness and the goodness of others around us. Whether it's the English meaning or the Latin meaning, thousands of people testify that this is exactly the healing power they experienced in their encounters with Solanus Casey.

1. Slow down; Step back; Shut out the noise – so as to See the reality going on beneath the surface. Appreciation will never become part of our lives unless we slow down, step back from our addiction to what's new, how we're doing/looking, etc. Take time to see, below all the noise and activity, what (and Who) is really going on; learn who you really are; be in touch with what really matters. You are not alone; you are surrounded – you, with all your faults, limitations and sinfulness – by a loving, welcoming, healing presence. Slow down to let this in; let it slowly transform how you see yourself, how you look at others.

This was often the message Solanus would give to people who came to him, totally absorbed as they were in their pain and suffering or the pain and suffering of those they loved. In various ways he would tell them to step back, slow down and see a loving God's presence below the surface of everything going on – and strengthened by that, begin to think about the pain, suffering and poverty of other people too.

2. Accept yourself, and with that acceptance, gradually come to even Appreciate yourself – with all your painful imperfections. You are not perfect. You are good; in fact, very good, even precious. When we take time to slow down and shut out all contrary noise, we discover how infinitely, lovingly accepted we are by this welcoming, forgiving presence. Drink in that acceptance and gradually make it your own. In his book Eternal Echoes, the renowned Irish author, John O'Donoghue says, 'When you awaken to appreciation and love for yourself, springtime awakens in your heart. When you enter your soul's affection, the torment ceases in your life." (12)

In notes he made during one of his retreats, Father Solanus wrote about the difficulty and joy of this process – going from "resistance" to "acceptance" and finally, to "embracing with appreciation." (Undated notes) It was a message first for himself – and then for the countless others who trustingly came to him.

3. Look, Look and then Look again at others in the same way God has looked at you. When we've made ourselves slow down and step back, God has helped us to more accurately look at ourselves. Through his look of acceptance, we're able to accept ourselves – with all our faults, gifts, limitations and sinfulness. Now, as we continue to slow down and silence other voices, we hear that voice say, "What I have done for you, you must do for others; accept them – with all their faults, gifts, limitations and sinfulness – as I have accepted you." Even those, especially those, who have hurt you or your loved ones.

Ronald Rolheiser writes, "If we look at the world through the prism of what's best in us, our jealousy" (again, Solanus would say, "covetousness") "can turn to appreciation and we can be astonished at other's goodness." In a similar vein, Solanus wrote: "The world is full of misunderstanding but God often uses its mistakes to correct us and give us the right outlook on life and its eternal destiny." In other words, keep drinking in God's own peaceful, contemplative way of looking at us and others; that will give us the "right outlook" for looking at ourselves and everything in creation as well.

4. Value others (and yourself) for the inner goodness that is within. This is your brother, your sister. They're infinitely worthwhile, precious in God's sight. Worth God's being born one of them, worth being looked at lovingly in the midst of their betrayal,

worth dying for. They're valuable, even though they do not always know it or act like it. Do not just accept them; value them; they've been bought at a price.

Solanus once wrote: "I want to rise up above material things, to get a better picture of life, a truer sense of values." (Sept. 1942 letter to Miss Mae Whelan) When people were welcomed in Detroit by the "doorkeeper of St. Bonaventure's," isn't this exactly what they experienced in his presence? They were valued, respected; they came to know something of their infinite preciousness.

5. Embrace them – probably not physically but with your heart, your eyes, your smile, your words, your willingness to reach out to them when they are in need. No condescension, just simple, genuine presence and attention. As Rabbi Heschel said, "Appreciation needs to be articulated." Sometimes appreciation calls for articulation in words, but always it calls for a new way of looking, a new way of being with others that is "gentle, open, full of reverence."

Recall once more the process Solanus himself wrote about, not just with regard to himself but in relationship to others: be willing to go from "resistance" to "acceptance" and finally, to "embracing with appreciation." How marvelously he portrayed this entire process of appreciation in his dealings with people from all walks of life

SALVE: the means toward and the result of appreciation as a spirituality, a way of life and not just a passing emotion. What salve, what healing and hope Solanus Casey brought into our world through his life of appreciation! What a gentle, almost angelic way of greeting and welcoming people this simple but all too uncommon gift brought to him in his long journey of life!

As we said earlier, when with God's help we remain faithful to this five-fold process, we too can develop this gift which we admire so much in this humble American Capuchin. Like Solanus, it will be impossible for us to take God's blessings for granted or thoughtlessly bounce around the surface of life with a sense of boredom or entitlement – or as Heschel says, desperately attempt to control and manipulate what is outside us. Instead we'll be rooted in the goodness, the sufficiency we have from our loving Creator God. We'll find reason, daily, to go beneath the surface of our life and that of others to discover the preciousness hidden within. And like the reporter for ZENIT, we too will be rejuvenated. What a difference the gift of appreciation made in Solanus' world! What a difference it can still make in ours.

Lets' listen one final time to the words of this humble American Capuchin, praying that we might take to heart the lesson of appreciation which he lived and taught so well:

"Herein seems to me to be humanity's great weakness; our want of appreciation." "In my humble conviction, appreciation. . .is as necessary for the social order and harmony as are the laws of gravity for the physical world."



Daniel Crosby, O.F.M., Cap., is a member of the Capuchin Franciscan Province of St. Joseph. He served for 15 years as director of St. Anthony Spirituality Center in Marathon, Wisc. He has been a spiritual director and well-received retreat master/parish mission director throughout North America. He is presently part of the Capuchin community and its vibrant ministry at St. Bonaventure's near downtown Detroit.

Poetry Corner

Passion of Saint Francis

For the invisible things of Him from the creation Of the world are clearly seen

-Romans 1:20

Praised be You my Lord with all your creatures...

-St. Francis, 'Canticle of the Sun'

At La Verna one weekend, his body badly weakened ('Brother Ass', as Assisi's Friar called the fleshly vessel)
Under burden of a slow-as-molasses fast set to last
For forty days- Assumption's Feast to Michaelmas,
This Francis, a friar-on-fire, his senses suspended
As if clouds of incense at Mass, passed in a trance
To Heaven for his Passion, his hands, feet and heart
All marked with 'stab of a lance'; Love-possessed, to earth
He returned, bearing in his dead flesh the ageless message
Of Heaven's presence, blessing with it both man and insectNothing with Adam's soul or an atom's mass excepted.

All creation bears a relation, from the praying mantis
To man praying matins- as Francis was that holy night
When Christ with fire purified his five fleshly sensesFor in Heaven's census nothing earthly is foreign
Nor anything ignored, and all we declare for our Lord
Is Father-gathered already, and our human hymn to Him,
Though intimate, is only one of an infinite number,
Mockingbird's song and angel's prayer united in His choir
(And but for sin men might sing with six-winged seraphim?);
But for him, banished from home, a holy man shunned
Under curse worse than Adam's, Earth was the mansion
Where all- man, plant and animal- lived out its worshipFew choirs higher than that man's who was born a worm.

The sum of life, summer swallows and martins chirping For Friar Francis and fishes gathered in shallow margins For Anthony preaching (each being its uniqueness sings), Speaks as clearly as music in air or light in pure water What are- to Faith's sense- signs of God's real Presence. Similarly, our Savior in the consecrated wafer lives, And the Spirit in Baptism's water, still both are veils Little availing, and blessing less, unless one believes.

All creation, from chapel to cave, was his cathedral And, once disrobed, he was clothed in the Catholic habit Of reading into the universe lines of the divinest verse, Every star and stone a note to serve the eternal song (Stones, not loaves, being what his love coveted most). Soon even leaves were sewn into a vestment to belief, And the Testament's seed (sown in the soil of his soul) Grew so no scene was seen apart from His immanence, All grass and the asses eating it given the divine imprint.

When Word and Son came forward the sun was eclipsed And become our brother, for the One our tongue and lips Now praise for being raised (and for those lost he won) Can make the sun and all his own be one; nothing's other When seen through Lent's lens that, even to suffering, Lends splendid new meaning, resurrecting all creation By uniting to the five human senses five divine wounds.



Peter (Francis) Welsh, graduated with a B.A. in English from Seton Hall University in 2005. He spent 9 years teaching children with Autism and currently works with high school students with behavioral and learning disorders at a private school in New Jersey. He has been published previously in *The Chesterton Review*.

Assisi Field and Tree

The saints are here or have been – those who've changed the sun and moon

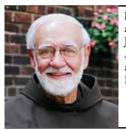
this field of Francis and Clare where they burned away the dross

planted the tree crossed with One who blossomed his joy in them

They rose to the sun and moon of Assisi's lightsome sky

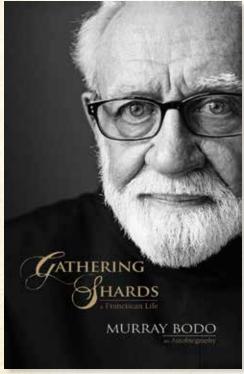
Brother Sun and Sister Moon they silver the olive trees

they sing the blossoming Tree whose little flowers are we



Murray Bodo, O.F.M., is a Franciscan Friar. A poet and author of many books, including Francis: The Journey and the Dream, he divides his time between Assisi, Italy and Cincinnati, Ohio, leading pilgrimages and writing. His latest book is Gathering Shards: A Franciscan Life, Tau Publishing, 2016.





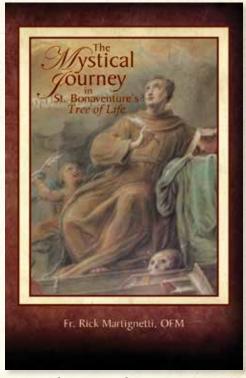
Gathering Shards: A Franciscan Life Murray Bodo, OFM

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In this book, though the pages may be fragmented and flawed, they are an attempt to gather the shards of my life into a metaphorical pottery bowl similar to those I tried (and failed) to assemble from Anasazi shards I collected when I was a boy in Gallup, New Mexico, near the border of the Navajo Reservation and fifty miles or so from the Zuni Indian Pueblo.

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How Bonaventure Thought:

St. Bonaventure and the Art of Memory

By Michel Bettigole, O.S.F.

he purpose of this essay is to briefly describe the components of the medieval art of memory and illustrate how an understanding of this memory system is essential for an understanding of the thought of St. Bonaventure.

Bonaventure was born in the town of Bagnoregio in the year 1217. Very little is known about his family life. Several features about his early schoolboy studies can be inferred, however, from later biographies and his own writings. First, there is no doubt that he studied the classic subjects of the trivium and the quadrivium in preparation for the study of theology and philosophy at the university. Second, his tutors must have been superb educators because he was wonderfully prepared to master the university course of studies. Third, he had extraordinary intellectual abilities that were apparent to his teachers from his first days as a student at the university. "His Masters, especially Alexander of Hales, recognized in him a student with a keen memory and unusual intelligence." ¹

Part of the core curriculum for schoolboys intent on attending the university was the requirement of substantial and detailed knowledge of the great Christian classics and, also, the major writers of Greek and Roman antiquity. Foremost of the literature learned by Bonaventure was Sacred Scripture. Reference to passages from the Old and New Testaments permeate his writings. As difficult as it may seem for us to understand, he evidently memorized great portions, if not all, of the New and Old Testaments. He was also indebted to the writings of the Church Fathers and to contemporary authors such as Hugh of St. Victor. Above all, he was indebted to St. Augustine. References to Augustine's writings are prominent throughout all his major works. Bonaventure was especially indebted to Augustine for the great doctor's explanation of the structure of the soul and the role of memory in the spiritual and intellectual life.²

One of the principal subjects taught in the curriculum of the trivium was rhetoric. In his study of rhetoric Bonaventure would have studied the works of the ancient masters such as Aristotle and Cicero to learn the essentials of composition and style, as well as the different literary forms including narrative, argumentation, and works of praise. As a subdivision of the subject of rhetoric he would have had intensive training in memorization and the development of the art of memory, beginning in boyhood.

In our age of instant electronic and printed information, the art of memory no longer exists. We cannot fathom the incredible

capacity for memory achieved by ancient and medieval scholars:

How Seneca, a teacher of rhetoric, could repeat two thousand names in the order they had been given; and when a class of two hundred students or more spoke each in turn a line of poetry, he could recite all the lines in reverse order, beginning from the last one said and going right back to the first; or we remember that Augustine, also trained as a teacher of rhetoric, tells of a friend called Simplicius who could recite Virgil backwards.³

We also learn that St. Thomas Aquinas evidently dictated the entire *Summa Theologica* without notes,⁴ or that St. Bonaventure also delivered all of his lectures contained in the *Hexameron* from memory.⁵

The art of memory and the techniques of memorization can be traced back to the Greek poet Simonides. It is recorded that Simonides once attended a banquet with many guests. Called outside the banquet hall by a friend, he was not present when the building collapsed killing all the members of his party. The grieving relatives wished to give burial to their kin but the bodies were so mangled and defaced that they were unrecognizable. Simonides was able to identify each person by recalling the order in which they sat at the table. Simonides is thus considered the founder of the art of memory.

In antiquity, there were many tracts written on the art of memory, and while most of these were lost, the few that survived had an enormous impact on medieval thought. The major works of memory passed down from antiquity were the Ad Herrenium by an anonymous author (though ascribed to Cicero in the Middle Ages), and the Institutones Oratorica by Quintillian. The techniques of memory taught by these ancient masters entered medieval thought directly through their own writings and indirectly through other ancient treatises on memory. These techniques were also taught by contemporary medieval theologians such as Hugh of St. Victor, St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. Albert the Great. The techniques and skills needed to become proficient in the art of memory were thus passed down from ancient scholars to become an essential part of every medieval schoolboy's education. To become a scholar, each young student had to master the four basic techniques of the art of memory: Visualization; Order and Sequence; the Construction of a Memory Palace; and Repetition.

¹ John Francis Quinn, Saint Bonaventure in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed Feb. 14, 2014, http://brittanica.com/st bonaventure.

² Timothy J. Johnson, "Introduction", *The Sunday Sermons of St. Bonaventure*, Ed. And Trans., Timothy J. Johnson, (St. Bonaventure, N.Y., The Franciscan Institute, 20080), 28.

³ Francis A. Yates, *The Art of Memory*, (N.Y.: Random House, 2011), Kindle Edition, Chapter One.

⁴ Kevin Vost, Memorize the Faith (and Most Anything Else: Using the Methods of the great Catholic Medieval Memory Masters), (Manchester, N.H.: Sophia Institute Press, 2006), Kindle Edition., Chapter One.

⁵ Anonymous, *The Works of Saint Bonaventure, Book V, Collations of the Six Days*, (Paterson, N.J.: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1970), trans. Jose de Vinck, 382.

Visualization

Schoolboys were taught how to memorize classic writing by envisioning a blank tablet and writing on that tablet the material to be memorized. Each page of this imaginary tablet was not to contain more material than that which could be seen mentally in a single glance. Thus, the student would visualize and memorize a single page and then turn that page to a new blank page to begin the memorization of the next item. Students were also taught to remember specific things by placing them in a vivid setting and using comical or grotesque images to impress the memory of these things firmly in their minds.

Kevin Vost, in his contemporary book on teaching the art of memory, illustrates how to use this technique of visualization in the memorization of the seven capital vices. He tells his students to imagine a living room:

... We see in the center a statue of ourselves surrounded by a pride of lions...looking out the large picture window you see trees growing dollar bills. The television is showing continuous images of bikini clad women. These vivid images firmly fix in our minds the ideas associated with the capital sins of Pride, Greed, and Lust.⁷

Order and Sequence

Bonaventure would have learned how to take complicated arguments or books to be memorized and break them down into logical segments to be placed in sequence, so that when he wished to recall the material, he could retrieve it simply by following the logical train in which it had been placed.

Jesuit scholar and missionary Matteo Ricci, who wrote a treatise on memory for Chinese students, explains the importance of sequence in this way:

As with the practice of calligraphy, in which you move from the beginning to the end, as with fish who swim along in ordered schools, so is everything arranged in your brain, and all the images are ready for whatever you seek to remember.⁸

And St. Thomas says: "It is necessary that a man should place in a considered order those (things) which he wishes to remember, so that from one remembered (point) progress can easily be made to the next."

The Memory Palace

The most essential step in becoming adept at memorization was the construction of a "memory palace" where items to be memorized could be stored for later retrieval. This palace could be any large edifice or groups of buildings: a church, a castle, a public building, or a vast estate. It had to be large and airy and contain many rooms. In this way, the student could enter the memory pal-

ace of her mind and move leisurely through it, visiting each place where she had deposited a thing to be remembered and selecting the specific item that she needed to recall at that given moment. It was imperative that when placing items in the memory palace she did so in a logical, sequential order, so that she could easily locate the material she wished to recall. Quintillian describes how to use the memory palace in this way:

The first thought is placed, as it were, in the forecourt; the second, let us say in the living room; the remainder are placed in due order all around the the *impluvium** and entrusted not merely to bedrooms and parlors, but even to the care of statues and the like. This done, as soon as the memory of the facts to be revived, all these places are visited in turn and the various deposits are demanded from their custodians, as the sight of each recalls the respective details. Consequently, however large is the number of these to remember, all are linked one to the other like dancers hand in hand ¹⁰

We can better understand a memory palace by using a modern illustration: the memory palace of a contemporary student of law. This student creates as her memory palace a modern Department of Justice Building that contains many courtrooms. Before the first courtroom, she places a statue of John Marshall, first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, where she places all items relating to constitutional law. Before the next courtroom, she places a picture of a man holding a bloody knife. In this courtroom, she places all items relating to criminal law. Before the third courtroom she places a picture of JP Morgan smoking a cigar and counting money. In this courtroom she will place all items relating to corporate law. Before the next courtroom she places a picture of a man and a woman and a young child. Here she places all items relating to family law. Thus when she is asked in law school to write a brief relating to a bankruptcy case, she enter her courthouse memory palace and slowly walks past the constitutional and criminal law courts until she reaches the picture of JP Morgan. She then enters this courtroom library of corporate law, to retrieve the material relating to bankruptcy. She then returns in an orderly manner to her student's desk where she begins to write her brief using the material she has retrieved.

Once items that have to be remembered are stored in the memory palace it is essential that the student continually visit his memory palace and go over the various items stored there so that they will remain fresh in his mind. As one of St. Thomas' rules of memory says:

...it is necessary that a man should dwell with solicitude on, and cleave with affection to, the things he wishes to remember - because what is strongly impressed upon the soul slips less easily away from it...¹¹

Bonaventure's Memory Palace

It is almost certain that St. Bonaventure's primary memory palace was a cathedral. His life long focus on theology and spirituality and his conviction that all reality, all knowledge, emanated from the crucified and glorified Christ makes it almost certain that he would store his knowledge in such a structure.

⁶ Mary Carruthers and Jan Ziolkowlski eds. and trans., *The Medieval Craft of Memory: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 12.

⁷ Vost, Memorize the Faith, Kindled Edition, Chapter Two.

⁸ Jonathan Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*, (N.Y: Penguin Books,

⁹ Yates, Frances A, The Art of Memory, Chapter Three.

¹⁰ Quintilian, quoted in Spence, The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci, 6.

^{*}Impluvium – A pool in the center of the house that collected rainwater. 11 Yates, Frances A, *The Art of Memory*, Chapter Three.

Sculpture and the stained windows might depict the history of salvation from the creation of Adam until the last judgment. Various chapels would have places to deposit information about scripture; dogma; sacraments; liturgy; sermons and other religious subjects. There would also be areas in the cathedral devoted to various philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius. In this section of the cathedral each philosopher would be portrayed in a painting or sculpture and there would be specific places to deposit his books.

At the center of Bonaventure's memory cathedral there would be an image of the crucified and glorified Christ as seen by St. Francis at Mount La Verna when he received the Sacred Stigmata. The description of this crucifix is described in *The Legend of the Three Companions:*

Two years before his death, a seraph with six wings appeared to him. Within its six wings there was the form of a very beautiful, crucified man, whose hands and feet were extended after the manner of a cross, and whose features were clearly those of the Lord Jesus. Two wings covered his head, two, the rest of his body down to the feet, and two were extended as if for flight. When this vision disappeared, a marvelous glow of love remained in his soul, but, even more marvelous, an impression of the stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ appeared in his flesh¹²

This image of the Crucified Lord in the form of a six winged seraph stands at the center of Bonaventure's memory cathedral. From it all knowledge emanates and returns. Christ is the center of all reality:

He is the image of the invisible God,
The first born of all creatures.
In him everything in heaven
and on earth was created,
Things visible and invisible.
All were created through him;
All were created for him.
He is before all else that is.
In him everything continues in being.¹³

One cannot truly know any of the various sciences unless one gazes on this image of the crucified Lord. An extended meditation on this Six Winged Seraph is the focus of Bonaventure's masterpiece: *The Soul's Journey into God*. In this great work he explains how each set of the wings of the six winged seraph represents a different way that God manifests himself to us. We can see him in the external world of created things (lower set of wings); we can see him in the operations of our mind (middle set of wings); we can see him in his glory in our soul redeemed by grace (upper set of wings):**

Following this threefold progress our mind has three principal aspects. One refers to the external body, wherefore it is called animality or sensuality; the second looks inward and

12 "Legend of the Three Companions" in in Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, three volumes, eds., Regis Armstrong, O.F.M., Cap., J.A. Wayne Hellman, O.F.M., Conv., William Short, O.F.M., (N.Y: New City Press, 2001), Volume Two, 108 13. Col. 2:15-17.

Standing before this image of the Crucified, Bonaventure gazes on his memory cathedral, which is the storehouse of his vast learning. To understand St. Bonaventure's thought is to realize that he often lives in this memory cathedral filled with symbols and paintings that contain all dimensions of the spiritual, theological, and philosophic life:

Flooded with all these intellectual lights, our mind-like a house of God-is inhabited by the divine Wisdom. It is made to be a daughter of God, a spouse and friend. It is made to be a member, a sister, and a coheir with Christ the Head. It is made into the temple of the Holy Spirit, grounded in faith, elevated in hope and dedicated to God through holiness of mind and body.¹⁵

How Bonaventure Thought

Bonaventure is preeminently a visual thinker. He sees that which he wishes to explore or explain. When he writes or preaches he is always "looking" at something.

One sees God's traces in the sensory world; one sees His image in the mind; one sees His goodness in human goodness; one sees his powers in the operation of our own powers – it is always a matter of direct seeing...the simplest man can see God as clearly as the most learned scholar.¹⁶

Before undertaking a study of any subject, Bonaventure paints a picture of that subject down to the last detail. By looking at this "picture" he is able to recall all the philosophical and scriptural elements associated with it. He uses this technique of "seeing" in his masterpiece, *The Soul's Journey into God*, where he meditates on the philosophical, theological, and spiritual dimensions of reality found in the image of the crucified Christ represented as a six winged seraph.

He employs the same method of visualization whenever he is writing a sermon or composing a work of theology or philosophy. It is seen in his book, *The Tree of Life*, where he imagines a twelvebranched tree in the center of a watered garden. Bonaventure discusses Christ's life and teachings by identifying various aspects of the life of Christ associated with each branch. He is "looking" at this tree when he dictates each chapter of this book.

One cannot stress too strongly this ability of St. Bonaventure to describe the most sublime spiritual experiences in terms of a painting or a vision. All of reality is filled with the vision of God. The entire universe reflects his glory. To be joined with God one must only experience the universe that surrounds oneself and *see*:

^{**}Words in parentheses are mine.

into itself, wherefore it is called spirit; the third looks above itself, wherefore it is called mind. From all of which considerations it ought to be so disposed for ascending as a whole into God that it may love Him with all its mind, with all his heart, and with all his soul (Mark, 12, 30).¹⁴

¹⁴ St. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, trans. Zachary Hayes(St. Bonaventure, N.Y., The Franciscan Institute), I,4, 37-38.

¹⁵ St. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, trans. Zachary Hayes, IV, 8,107.

¹⁶ George Boas, Introduction to Saint Bonaventure: *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, (Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2002), xviii.

Therefore, any person who is not illumined by such great spendors in created things is blind. Anyone who is not awakened by such great outcries is deaf. Anyone who is not led from such effects to give praise to God is mute. Anyone who does not turn to the first principle as a result of such signs is a fool. Therefore open your eyes, alert your spiritual ears, unlock your lips, and apply your heart so that in all creation you may see, hear, praise, love and adore, magnify and honor your God lest the entire world rise up against you.¹⁷

Conclusion

Bonaventure's primary way of perceiving the visible and invisible universe is sight. He is always gazing at something when he writes a treatise or preaches a sermon. The techniques of the art of memory and the construction of a memory cathedral are essential to the way he thinks and orders his information. To understand the art of memory is to begin to understand how he thought. When Bonaventure entered his memory cathedral he did not see only architecture. He saw a building filled with divine light and adorned with statues, pictures, stained glass windows, gems, and candles-all of which served as receptacles for the entirety of his vast learning.

To think like Bonaventure is to understand that he often lives and moves in his memory cathedral suffused with divine light. With him we can also enter this memory cathedral and kneel before the image of the six winged seraph that suffuses the entire cathedral with his glory. With him we can see all knowledge, all reality as emanating from and returning to this divine source.

Finally to think like Bonaventure is to understand that for him all knowledge, all human learning, is a prelude to piety and love of the Lord. All study of the arts and sciences serve as stepping stones to union with God. One cannot approach study unless one is properly disposed. As he says in the "Prologue" to *The Soul's Journey into God:*

Therefore, I first of all invite the reader to groans of prayer through Christ crucified, through whose blood we are purged from the stain of our sins. Do not think thatreading is sufficient without unction, speculation without devotion, investigation without admiration, circumspection without exultation, industry without piety, knowledge without charity, , intelligence without humility, study without divine grace, the mirror without the inspiration of divine wisdom. ¹⁸

To gaze on the image of Christ in the form of the six-winged seraph is to pass beyond all learning and all knowledge. The soul is illumined with God's grace and God's glory. It sees God's presence in all things. Having reached this pinnacle of grace we can then experience the vision of the crucified Christ as Bonaventure experienced him and cry out with The Seraphic Doctor:

Now if you ask how all these things are to come about, ask grace, not doctrine; desire, not intellect, the groaning of prayer and not studious reading, the Spouse not the master; God, not a human being; darkness not clarity; not light, but

the fire that inflames totally and carries one into God through spiritual fervor and with the most burning affections...so that when the Father has been shown to us, we can say with Philip: It is enough for us. (John 14:8) Let us hear with Paul: My grace is sufficient for you; (2 Cor.12:9) and let us exult with David saying: My flesh and my heart waste away; you are the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever. Blessed be the Lord forever, and let all the people say: let it be, let it be. Amen. (Ps. 105, 148)¹⁹

19 St. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium in Mentis Deum*, trans. Zachary Hayes, VII, 6,139.



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¹⁷ St. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, trans. Zachery Hayes, I, 15, 61.

¹⁸ St. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum, trans. Zachery Hayes*, "Prologue", 4, 39.

Works of St. Bonaventure XVII:

Theological Introduction

By J.A. Wayne Hellmann, O.F.M., Conv., Timothy R. LeCroy, and Luke Davis Townsend

n approaching Bonaventure's texts on the sacraments found in Book Four of his Commentary on the Sentences, one immediately notices that St. Augustine continues to speak. As seen above, Bonaventure discovered Augustine's voice in his study of The Sentences of Peter Lombard and in his study of 12th-century Victorines. They were all indebted to St. Augustine. Bonaventure brings Augustine forward. In his treatment of sacraments, this is especially true for the way he understands the Church, the ecclesia. Formed by St. Augustine (as well as other earlier Christian teachers), he utilizes the patristic vision of the Church as the Body of Christ to which its members are mystically united. Bonaventure's theology of sacraments thus flows out of Augustine's notion of mystical and spiritual communion. Sacraments are healing remedies by which the members of the Body of Christ reintegrate themselves into the unity and charity of mystical communion with and within the Body of Christ. Individually and collectively, all become more deeply united and thereby imbued with the gift of the Spirit. They, as the Body of Christ, become the Spouse of the High Priest offering himself on the cross out of obedience and to the praise and glory of his Father.

Yves Congar nicely articulates the earlier patristic tradition, as inherited in the early Western Middle Ages: "The church is considered as the Body of Christ and as such is united to him. She is thus understood more in her mystical reality than in her social constitution..." In this received patristic context, Bonaventure moves the theological tradition forward. Sacraments are of the ecclesia, and they thereby flow out of and draw one into the mystery of the Body of Christ, which embraces both heaven and earth, enabling the faithful to become more and more perfectly the Church, more perfectly integrated into the Body of Christ, and ultimately more and more empowered by the charity of the Holy Spirit that unifies and produces spiritual fruit. Again, Yves Congar articulates this vision clearly:

For Augustine, someone can belong to the church insofar as it is a means of grace, communio sacramentorum, but that will be spiritually "useful," bear fruit spiritually, and offer salvation only if (through these means [of sacraments] or beyond them) he or she participates by way of caritas in the unitas of which the Holy Spirit is the principle. This is the aspect of the church as communio sanctorum – the communion of saints, where the faithful orientate themselves toward ecclesial unity by a "social love," living by the Holy Spirit in both caritas and unitas.... The Holy Spirit is actually the principle of our communion with Christ and, in Christ, among ourselves.²

Again, as Congar writes, "...the church is seen above all as the community of the faithful given life by the Holy Spirit." Sacraments are about spiritual communion. And so, when Bonaventure writes about the reasons for sacraments, he asks not what Christ did, but he rather ponders the mystery and life of the Church. For the sacrament of Order, for instance, Bonaventure's concern is to ponder the beauty and order it brings to the Mystical Body so that the ecclesia may celebrate Eucharist. Similarly, Marriage is developed as a spousal mystery within the Body of Christ, the Spouse of the High Priest.

Bonaventure also understands the Eucharist within the context of the mystery and life of the Church. The ultimate res, or the deepest meaning of the Eucharist, is the Mystical Body, not the true body of Christ present sub sacramento. This "true presence" of the body of Christ as res et sacramentum becomes another sign. The true body of Christ points toward a deeper, more important reality: the unitas and caritas of the Mystical Body, that is, deeper and greater unity within the communio sanctorum. In other words, the body of Christ, truly present sub sacramento, is not an end but rather a means leading toward the ultimate reality (res), incorporation into the Mystical Body of Christ.

Thus, Bonaventure's use and development of the rich patristic tradition he received offers a refreshing approach to understanding the sacraments. Unlike in his later works such as De mysterio Trinitatis, written after Aristotle's works were introduced into the theological curriculum in the studium at Paris in 1255,4 Bonaventure's use of Aristotle in his circa 1250 writing of Book Four of his Commentary on the Sentences is limited. In his writing on the sacraments he does not focus on emerging philosophical questions such as causes, substances, accidents, etc. as subsequent medieval theologians would do. Neither does Bonaventure's work, at this point in his life, deal with anti-ecclesiastical or anti-hierarchical developments, which "required a clarification of the conditions for the church to exist as a historic organization instituted by Christ."5 Furthermore, Bonaventure's work is also free from the polemics that developed during the Reformation of the 16th century and the resulting magisterial teaching of the Council of

Congar here explains Augustine's thought concerning the connection of the "communion of the sacraments" with the "communion of the saints." Both are about the vivifying power of the Holy Spirit operative in the unity of charity. In reading Bonaventure's texts on the sacraments carefully, it becomes clear that Bonaventure understands sacraments from within the mystery of the "communion of saints." This communion both constitutes and expresses the power of the Spirit vivifying the Mystical Body, the ecclesia.

¹ Yves Congar, "The Ecclesia or Christian Community as a Whole Celebrates the Liturgy," in *At the Heart of Christian Worship: Liturgical Essays of Yves Congar*, Paul Philibert ed. and trans. (Collegeville, Minnesotta: Liturgical Press, 2010), 34. 2 Congar, 37-38.

³ Congar, 43.

⁴ J. Isaac Goff, Caritas in Primo: A Study of Bonaventure's Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity (New Bedford: Academy of the Immaculate, 2015.

⁵ Congar, 39.

Trent that began an unprecedented emphasis on the "institutional aspect" of the Church, moving sacraments away from the spiritual communion of the Mystical Body into more external "institutional" questions.

In this historical and theological context, it is not surprising therefore that Bonaventure, although he accepts the number of seven to be the number of sacraments, as he inherited from Peter Lombard, never identifies all seven as "instituted by Christ." Rather, in the tradition of Hugh of St. Victor, he argues the institution of sacraments flows from the development of the ecclesia through its phases of salvation history: "...they were instituted differently at different times." They are simply the marvelous signposts of God's ordered plan of salvation, beginning with creation itself and continuing unto the work of the Spirit within the Church itself.

Bonaventure writes that institution of sacraments was "fitting for God and advantageous for us." Sacraments are "advantageous for us" because "the sacraments are a help to grace" and thus they are most fitting. They are not, however, necessary because "God does not bind his power to the sacraments." Ultimately incorporation into caritas of the communio sanctorum, and therefore into the Mystical Body of Christ, is a completely and totally free gift of grace.

Sacraments are therefore invitations to accept and enter into the mystery of the life of grace found in the communio sanctorum as realized in the Mystical Body of Christ. Through visible signs sacraments dispose members of the Body of Christ toward reception of grace and cultivate their desire for deeper faith: "The movement of faith is aroused through the delivery of the sign." Bonaventure here further argues that these signs are "figurative and significative." In this sense, he will argue that sacraments fill a teaching, contemplative, and even mystical role, cultivating and actually revealing the deeper mystery of the Mystical Body of Christ where the Spirit gives life and heals.

Following Hugh of St. Victor that "a sacrament is a material element that represents by likeness and signifies by institution," Bonaventure argues that the fallen person needs visible signs in order to be drawn into and to accept the invisible reality of God's mercy, justice and wisdom. These sacramental signs have their "capacity for signification from nature." So the specific signs effective in each of the sacraments are not arbitrary. The first instance of signifying is rooted in a material created element. All created elements reveal something of the mystery of God. The word spoken in the celebration of a sacrament builds on the natural sign and specifies further the sacramental grace to be received.

The grace connected to any sacrament either "cleanses or anoints inwardly, just as it is signified exteriorly in the visible sign." This means that although grace goes forth from God directly into the soul, it is nevertheless grace given according to what is specifically signified by the signifying external element. In speaking of the Eucharist, Bonaventure explicitly demonstrates



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⁶ Bonaventure, Sentence Commentary, IV, d. 2, a. 1, q. 2, res.

⁷ Bonaventure, Sentence Commentary, IV, d. 1,. a. un., q. 1, res.

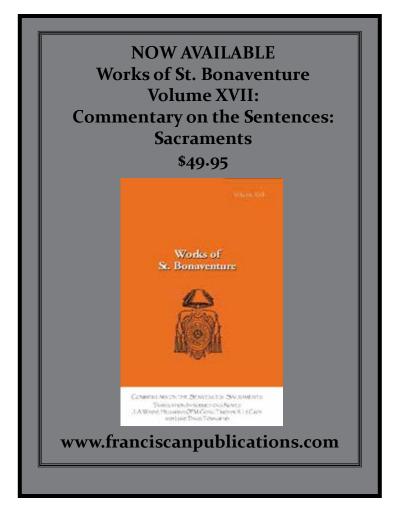
⁸ Bonaventure, Sentence Commentary, IV, d. 1, a. un., q. 1, ad obj. 2.

⁹ Bonaventure, Sentence Commentary, IV, d. 1, a. un., q. 1, res.

 $^{10\} Bonaventure, \textit{Sentence Commentary}, IV, d.\ 1, p.\ 1, a.\ un., q.\ 2, res.$

¹¹ Hugh of St. Victor, *De sacramentis*, I, p. 9, c. 2 (PL 176, 318: Corpus Victornium, 209-10). Cf. *Sentence Commentary*, IV, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 2.

¹² Bonaventure, Sentence Commentary, IV, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 3, res.



this. Although the Eucharist contains the author of all grace, the grace given in this sacrament is not just any grace, but rather only the grace that is signified, that is, "the grace for the particular effect of a meal." Bonaventure consistently argues that "it is necessary that a sacrament have an explicit likeness" to the grace given in any of the sacraments, and only according to these external likenesses is the grace of a particular sacrament to be understood.

This is an important point because, in this, Bonaventure here makes clear that the reality of the sacraments is rooted in the reality of creation. All elements are creatures that speak of the Creator, as signs or vestigia of the glory of God. Certain of these created elements have refreshing, nurturing, or healing components. They speak of God in different and unique ways. When the word of institution or blessing, inviting one to contemplation and mystical union, is joined to active use of those natural elements, they are empowered to speak of the ways God's grace refreshes, nurtures, or heals the interior life of the human person. Thus, these elements through the expression of the word acquire "dispositive influence toward reception of grace." They are therefore called sacraments. All created elements speak of God's presence among us. Some of these, the sacraments, do so in unique, specific, and powerful ways.

So the sacraments are exterior realities that signify, again by the power of the word that corresponds to the natural significance of the external sign, drawing thereby one's heart and mind into the interior working of healing grace within the Body of Christ. Hence, a fountain of life-giving water signifies rebirth in Christ, not the other way around. The Eucharist, which not only signifies but also contains the internal reality it signifies, the Body of Christ, is first understood by the significance of food, of a meal. Not the other way around. Why? Because, "grace is higher than our senses, and the corporeal is nearer to us. Therefore, grace is rightly signified through the latter (the corporeal and the nearer) and not vice versa."

Sacraments, in Bonaventure's thinking, continue the emphasis on the reality of the Church as the work of the Holy Spirit drawing the faithful into the mystical unity and charity of the Mystical Body of Christ. The sacraments are the external realities that in various ways through the history of salvation draw the People of God into contemplation of and desire for the communio sanctorum. Visible things bring people to the invisible. As Bonaventure states, "because humanity had taken the fall from visible things..., it befitted divine wisdom to find remedy through the same visible things." And so, visible sacraments are given for education and training because the spiritually blind need "to be able to consider things rightly." 19

Sacraments therefore teach, humble, and draw persons to mystical contemplation and union with Christ in the dynamic of his Mystical Body. Sacraments draw persons to comprehend and embrace the Mystery of Faith. Sacraments are not simply institutional actions of the People of God to externally express the Body of Christ. Rather, they are external signifying natural elements in action that, by the power of the Word joined to them, identify a specific grace that opens the way for the heart to enter into internal, invisible and spiritual communion within the Body of Christ. The emphasis in understanding sacraments cannot be, according to Bonaventure, simply a manifestation of the institutional life of the Church, and they cannot narrowly be understood as "instituted" by Christ. It is true that sacraments flow from the general principle of the Incarnation, but they nevertheless, and because of that same principle, begin in the mystery of creation (signum) itself. They lead into the mystery of God, into participation in the grace God chooses to pour directly into the hearts and souls of those who desire him.

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¹³ Bonaventure, $Sentence\ Commentary, IV, d.\ 2, a.\ 1, q.\ 3, ad\ obj., a\ 2.$

¹⁴ Bonaventure, Sentence Commentary, IV, d. 2, a. 1, q. 3, ad obj. 2, c.

¹⁵ Bonaventure, Sentence Commentary, IV, d. 1, a. 1, q. 1, ad obj. 2, 1-2.

¹⁶ The reality of transubstantiation, thus, cannot be the starting point for understanding the Eucharist.

¹⁷ Bonaventure, Sentence Commentary, IV, d. 1, a. 1, q. 2, ad obj. 2.

¹⁸ Bonaventure, Sentence Commentary, IV, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, res.

¹⁹ Ibid.

The Infinity of God and a Finite World:

A Franciscan Approach

By Kenan Osborne, O.F.M.

o some degree, Christian theologians during and after Vatican II have begun to reconsider the theological meaning of God's infinity. We see this in such books as Reforming the Doctrine of God by LeRoy Shults; The Infinite Puzzle: Quantum Field Theory and the Hunt for an Orderly Universe by Frank Close; and 20th Century Theology: God & the World by Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olsen.¹ Other contemporary authors could also be cited. However, most contemporary Christian theologians focus on issues other than the infinity of God, which, in their view, are far more pressing for today's theological context.

Another contemporary issue has also received great attention namely, interreligious dialogues. From the middle of the twentieth century down to the present, interreligious conferences have become a major aspect in religious activity. In the current meetings of interreligious leaders and scholars, the issue of God's infinity is mentioned only now and then. In my view, the infinity of God is a major challenge that the members of interreligious conferences need to face. If God is infinite, then no one religion can claim that it and it alone honors the one true infinite God. Each of the religions in these dialogues has an understanding of God or of some form of transcendence. If, in the theology of any of these religions, God is presented as infinite, a major factor arises: how can one religion limit an infinite God?

For the members of some religious groups, God is durationally infinite. In this view, God has no beginning and no end. In other religions, God is considered infinite in a more comprehensive way, e.g., God is infinitely perfect, infinitely loving, infinitely powerful, etc. In both instances, the belief in an infinite God raises a major conflict. Since there can be only one infinite God, either durationally infinite or comprehensively infinite, and since some religions claim that their God is the one and only infinite God, the need for serious dialogue with the leaders and scholars of other religious groups is fruitless. The women and men in these "other groups" simply do not believe in the correct infinite God that is "our God."

In my book, I show that in the history of Christian theology on the infinity of God, Christian theologians have generally presented a theology of an infinite God in a way that excludes all other religious groups. The other religious groups, which are not Christian, do not honor the one, true infinite God. Since this view of divine infinity has been theologically present, particularly from the High Middle Ages onward, the presence of Christian scholars, who attend interreligious conferences, is questionable. If only Christians believe in the one and only true infinite God, then why do the Christian religions send delegates to such conferences?

In the past fifty years, there have been many books and articles on interreligious dialogues. In 1989, for instance, Jacques Dupuis wrote Jésu-Christ à la rencontre de religions. In 1997, he published

another volume, Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism, which received a scathing response from the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith in 1999. In 2001, he published a third book, Il cristianesimo e le religioni: Dallo scontro all'incontro. This book was translated into English, Christianity and Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue.² Dupuis, in his "Conclusion" of the third volume, carefully maneuvers through Christian uniqueness in and through Jesus, as he deals with the working of the Spirit in non-Christian religions. The Vatican's Notificatio to Dupuis regarding his second book indicates that today's Church leadership does not allow any interreligious explanations that contradict the Church's position that the Catholic Church is the only one true Church.

The twentieth-century interest in interreligious dialogues, however, has gained much momentum from Vatican II onward. Paul Knitter raises a serious caution:

One of the staunchest, and perhaps most effective, impediments to putting our theological money where our dialogical mouths are has come from the Roman Magisterium. While the Vatican calls for dialogue and for praying together for peace have continued – especially under the pontificate of John Paul II – any suggestion that the religions share a differing but equal validity or any questioning of the absolute and exclusive "unicitas" or uniqueness of Jesus is purely and simply forbidden. This was made thunderingly clear in *Dominus Iesus*, the declaration issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 2000 under then-Cardinal Josef Ratzinger.³

Over the past several decades, interreligious dialogues have had both a positive and a negative side. In Dupuis's volume, *Christianity and the Religions*, there is a chapter entitled "In Many and Various Ways." In these pages, he states: "a valid theology of the religions must build on the recognition of the differences, without giving in to the illusory presupposition of a 'common essence' between the various religions and their underlying ideas." Dupuis seems to be stating that there is no univocal "common essence" of God, which is present in all religions. Over many centuries, a "univocal God" has never been accepted as the answer to interreligious differentiation. It is my

¹ LeRon Shults, Reforming the Doctrine of God (Grand Rapids, MI: B. Eerdmans, 2005); Frank Close, The Infinite Puzzle: Quantum Field Theory and the Hunt for an Orderly Universe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olsen, 20th Century Theology: God & the World (Carlisle, England: Paternoster Press, 1992).

² See Jacques Dupuis, Jésu-Christ à la rencontre de religions (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1989). Robert R. Barr translated this volume into English: Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991). Dupuis also published Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 1997); and Il cristianesimo e le religioni: Dallo scontro all'incontro (Brescia: Edizioni Queriniana, 2001). Eng. trans. by Phillip Berryman, Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001).

³ Paul Knitter, "Can We Put Our Theological Money Where Our Dialogical Mouth Is? Looking Back Over the Past Fifty Years," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 49 (2014), 169. In the article, Knitter's reference to *Dominus Jesus*, reminds us that the *Notificatio* from the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith regarding Jacques Dupuis' book, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, appeared in 2001, one year prior to *Dominus Jesus*, which was published in 2000. *Dominus Jesus* was based in a strong way on the issues that the Vatican congregation found unacceptable in Dupuis' volume.

⁴ Dupuis, Christianity and the Religions, 114-137.

⁵ Ibid., 116.

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view that one of the key issues regarding God and the multiplicity of religions does not lie in our *diverse ways of presenting God*, but in our *diverse ways of presenting the very nature of God who is infinite*. To date, however, the infinity of God has not been a major theme in any of the interreligious dialogues.

In his book, Dupuis centers on a valid theology of religions, ⁶ but religions are not the center of one's faith. The center of all religions is *one's faith in God*. The center is not one's faith in a given religion. People remain in the Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Hindu, etc. religions not because of the religion itself, but because they have experienced the holiness and the beauty of God or "the transcendent" within a given religious community. If one were to remove this spiritual experience of God or "the transcendent," then why would anyone want to remain a member of a "religious community"?

In the final chapter of my book, I focus on the presence of God in contemporary ecumenical and interreligious dialogues. How can one and the same God be the common center of all religions? There is a major aspect of God that calls into question the very meaning of God, and this major aspect is the infinity of God. If God is truly infinite, then the leaders and members of today's many religions cannot "finitize" an infinite God. By "finitize," I mean that the members of a single religion cannot claim that their religion alone believes in the only true God. They limit an infinite God to their own finite religion. The infinity of God has very definite implications, and these implications must be treated with greater care and greater delicacy today, since several major religions claim that "their God" is the "one and only God."

In my book, I reflect on an infinite God and interreligious discussions, but I do so in a cautious and limited way. I limit my presentation to the theology of infinity within the Roman Catholic Church. I present the history of God's infinity as found in the writings of the Roman Catholic Church, beginning with the biblical material. From there, I cite the main church documents which have referred to God as infinite. From there, I delineate the history of western Catholic theology of God's existence and infinity in greater detail. I begin with Augustine, since his writings have profoundly influenced all western Christian theologians. As I note in chapter two, Augustine established a fundamental format to explain the existence of God and the nature of God, and this format has in various degrees been repeatedly used by western Christian theologian.

From the Carolingian Reformation onward, Augustine's influence on western theologians has been enormous. In his writings, his use of infinity is minimal, but his foundational format for the existence of God is found in almost all of his major writings. In the writings of other Fathers of the Church during the first six centuries, the term infinite appears only a few times. None of the Fathers of the Church developed a comprehensive explanation of what divine infinity means.

From the thirteenth century to the end of the fifteenth century, theological discussion of God's infinity was both extensive and intensive. In the High Middle Ages, Christian scholars provided their students with a "comprehensive theology" of divine infinity. Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, and John Duns Scotus are the main theologians who not only wrote on God's infinity in a thorough way, but their theology of God's infinity influenced almost all western Christian theologians who followed these towering scholars from the fourteenth century to the Reformation and the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century.

From the sixteenth century down to the middle of the twentieth century, the infinity of God became a secondary issue at best. During these many centuries, the overwhelming focus in Catholic, Anglican, and Protestant theology was ecclesiology. Throughout this time, western Christian theologians consistently focused on a theology in and through which the authors "proved" that their church – and their church alone – was the one and only true Church that Jesus instituted. Prior to the Reformation and the Council of Trent, no western or eastern Catholic theologian had ever written a "theology of the Church." Only from the mid-sixteenth century onward have Christian theologians formulated treatises that we call "ecclesiologies."

Orthodox, Anglican, Protestant, Free, Churches and Evangelical churches have also had ups and downs in their respective presentations of the infinity of God. Likewise, the world religions have, over many centuries, either avoided the issue of God's infinity or carefully described the infinity of God in and through their own respective theologies of God.

Over the past twenty-five years, I have often thought about writing a book on infinity, especially the infinity of God. Whenever I mentioned this to my academic confreres, they would say: "Why would you want to write on such a difficult subject?" I did not provide an easy answer to the question. My interest in infinity, particularly the philosophy and theology of infinity in the writings of John Duns Scotus, began in my college years, and this interest has stayed with me until today.

In those college years, a particular passage from Scotus' writings on the infinity of God caught my attention. Scotus writes:

I say that we can arrive at many concepts that are proper to God because they do not apply to creatures. Such would be the concepts of all pure perfections taken in the highest degree. And the most perfect concept of all, by which we know God most perfectly, as it were in a descriptive sort of way, is obtained by conceiving all the pure perfections and each in the highest degree. Now a less perfect but simpler concept is possible to us, namely, the concept of an infinite being. For this is simpler than the concept of "good being" or "true being" or other similar concepts, since infinite is not a quasi-attribute or property of "being" or of that of which it is predicated. Rather it signifies an intrinsic mode of that entity, so that when I say "infinite being," I do not have a concept composed accidentally, as it were, of a subject and attribute. What I do have is a concept of what is essentially one, namely, of a subject with a certain grade of perfection — infinity.

What intrigues me in this passage from the *Ordinatio* is the way in which Scotus unites infinity to the very essence or nature of God. Scotus presents the infinity of God in a way that is totally different

⁶ Ibid., chapter three, "Christianity and the Religions in Recent Theology, 76-95; and chapter four, "The God of the Covenant and the Religions," 96-113.

⁷ Scotus, *Ordinatio*, Liber Primus, Dist. 3 pars 1, qq. 1-2. The Latin text of the *Ordinatio* is found in *Ioannis Duns Scoti Opera Omnia* (Civitas Vaticana: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1954), 40. The English translation is taken from William Frank and Allan Wolter, *Duns Scotus, Metaphysician* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1995), 117. The Latin text reads as follows:

Dico quod ad multos conceptus proprios Deo possumus pervenire, qui non conveniunt creaturis — cuiusmodi sunt conceptus omnium perfectionum simpliciter, in summo. Et perfectissimus conceptus, in quo quasi in quadam descriptione perfectissime cognoscimus Deum, est concipiendo omnes perfectiones simpliciter et in summo. Tamen conceptus perfectior simul et simpliciter, nobis possibilis, est conceptus entis infiniti. Iste enim est simplicior quam conceptus entis boni, entis veri, vel aliorum similium, quia "infinitum" non est quasi attributum vel passio entis, sive eius de quo dicitur, sed dicit modum intrinsecum illius entitatis, ita quod cum dico "infinitum ens," non habeo conceptum quasi per accidens, ex subiecto et passione, sed conceptum per se subiecti in certo gradu perfectionis, scilicet infinitatis.

from such expressions as God is good, God is true, God is omnipotent, etc. Infinity, for Scotus, is an essential part of God's nature and existence.

Most of the medieval theologians presented infinity simply as an attribute of God. I give examples of this attributive understanding of the infinity of God in my chapters on Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas. In the writings of Scotus, however, the infinity of God is connatural with God's essence. A scotistic theologian cannot say "God" without saying that God is infinite at the same time.

The infinity of God not only challenges us intellectually but it also challenges us spirituality. In the Franciscan tradition, the presence of God throughout the created world is a foundational position. One cannot limit the presence of an infinite God to a specific church community. One of the most powerful expressions of God's presence throughout the created world appeared in the *Canticle of Creatures*, which was composed by Francis of Assisi:

Most High, all-powerful Lord, Yours are the praises, the glory, and the honor, and all blessing, To you alone Most High do they belong, and no human is worthy to mention Your name.⁸

The Franciscan author, Eloi Leclerc, in his volume, *The Canticle of Creatures: Symbols of Union*, comments on this opening passage of the *Canticle* in an insightful way:

At this point, the movement toward the Most High is jarred by self–awareness: "No mortal lips are worthy to pronounce your name." This is not a phrase intended merely for edification or tossed out in passing. It expresses a basic attitude of innermost poverty before the transcendent God. No praise, however sublime, can manifest the mystery of God. Francis is aware of this and accepts it.⁹

In the *Canticle*, Francis realizes that God cannot be known directly and therefore he turns to the created world of Brother Sun, Sister Moon, and Sister Stars.

Francis now turns to creatures. ... Since he cannot name the Transcendent One, he will name things and sing the praises of this world. ... The visible universe will be his path of praise, his path toward the Sacred.¹⁰

In the created world, we have only a glimpse, a reflection of God, or an indication of God. For Francis of Assisi, God is a mystery and we are only able to realize God's presence in the contemplation of our world and of ourselves. We are unable to know God in a direct way: "No praise, however sublime, can manifest the mystery of God. Francis is aware of this and accepts it." ¹¹

There is a major relationship between the issues in the *Canticle* of the *Creatures* and its spirituality to the later development of Franciscan philosophy and theology. Franciscan philosophy and theology cannot be understood unless one also understands Franciscan spiri-

8 The English translation of the "Canticle of the Creatures" is taken from Francis of Assisi: Early Documents (New York, NY: New City Press, 1999), 113, eds. Regis Armstrong, Wayne Hellmann, William Short.

tuality. Franciscan spirituality is the reason why Franciscan philosophy-theology has any value at all. In Bonaventure and Scotus, Franciscan spirituality is strongly present and it is clearly interconnected to Franciscan philosophy and theology.

Augustine of Hippo developed a foundational format for theologically proving three major issues: that God exists, that God has an essence which is totally different from anything created, and that theological language helps us to see the mystery of the Triune God.

I use this foundational format in a loose way throughout my chapters on Peter Lombard, Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, and John Duns Scotus. This format affected each of them in different ways. Through his foundational format, and many of his other positions, Augustine has remained strongly influential down to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Augustine's influence in Anglican, Protestant, and Roman Catholic theology has helped unite scholars in the current ecumenical discussions. However, another major issue has also arisen, and it too presents a serious problem for intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

From 1980 onward, I began to visit Asia, and these visits included many lectures on the philosophy of western religion at several universities in China, and in several seminaries and conferences in Korea, Singapore, and India. I was also selected to be an associate editor of *The Journal of Ecumenical Studies*; and over the years, I contributed a few articles and book reviews to the *Journal*. I have also presented papers in Mexico, Bolivia, and Kenya. Multi-culturalism gradually became a major part of my academic teaching at the Franciscan School of Theology-Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. In a slow but sure way, my academic teaching moved into a multi-religious world.

In this volume, I attempt to show, in a small way, that an infinite God cannot be limited by culture, by religious writings and worship, or by human finitude. Today's multi-cultural approach with its variety of philosophies goes well beyond the Platonic-Aristote-lian-philosophical interpretation through which Catholic theology has been presented. Oddly enough, throughout the Asian world, the Sub-Saharan world, and in many local cultures, there is no word for being. These "other" philosophies are not based on Greco-Roman philosophy. The question arises: Can we express Christian theology in and through any of the prominent Asian philosophies, the prominent African philosophies, or the prominent ethnic philosophies? To be a Christian, does one have to be Platonized and Aristotelianized?

In the last sixty-five years, Liberation Theology became a major theological movement in the Roman Catholic Church. Pope Paul VI in one of his meetings with African bishops said: "You may and you must have an African Church." Pope John Paul II on several occasions cited Paul VI's speech, but he omitted the section referring to an "African Church." By placing conservative bishops throughout South and Central America and throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, both John Paul II and Benedict XVI have almost eliminated the influence of cultural philosophies and theologies on Catholic teaching. Both of them did not want "African" or "Asian Churches." They wanted only one church, which in reality meant the European format of the Catholic Church. Today, Euro-American Catholic Theology, based heavily on Greek philosophy, dominates the seminaries in Africa, Asia, and South America. My response to this is once again based on the infinity of God: is the Roman Catholic Church limiting the presence of an infinite God in a multi-cultural and multi-religious world?

Adapted from The Infinity of God and a Finite World: A Franciscan Approach by Kenan B. Osborne, O.F.M.

⁹ Eloi Leclerc, Le Cantique des Creatures ou les Symboles de l'Union (Paris: Libraire Artheme Fayard, 1970). Eng. trans. by Matthew J. O'Connell: The Canticle of Creatures: Symbols of Union (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1970), 29.

¹⁰ Ibid., 29-30.

¹¹ Ibid., 29.

Stimulus Amoris:

Angela of Foligno and James of Milan

By Kevin Elphick, O.F.S.

n his Papal Bull, *Misericordiae Vultus*, which announced the Jubilee Year of Mercy, Pope Francis advocated the practice of prayerful meditation as a means to receive more fully the abundant mercy of God. He explained that the "...many pages of Sacred Scripture are appropriate for meditation ... to help us rediscover the merciful face of the Father." For Pope Francis, meditation is not a sterile, intellectual activity; rather, Scripture is "meditated upon concretely" and as such, necessarily tied to "prayer, fasting, and works of charity." He explains, "...the mercy of God is not an abstract idea, but a concrete reality with which he reveals his love as that of a father and mother, moved to the very depths out of love for their child... this is a 'visceral' love." And necessarily, by meditating and reflecting on this merciful love, "as the Father loves, so do his children."

However, aside from the Stations of the Cross and Rosary, meditation is not something that is routinely taught and nurtured at the parish level. In some communities, the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises are filling this void, perhaps made all the more popular now that we have our first Jesuit Pope. But the Franciscan tradition also has a vast treasury of meditation tools which would be timely in this Jubilee Year of Mercy and awaiting rediscovery in this time of grace. One example is St. Bonaventure's writing, Five Feasts of the Child Jesus, which is an extended meditation on the early life of Jesus, wherein the reader is immersed in the details and events of the young Jesus in the Gospels. There is also Bonaventure's Tree of Life, a poetic meditation on the events of Christ's life. Yet another example is found in the sermons of Mother Juana de la Cruz, collected in her book, El Conhorte. Attended by Cardinals, royalty, and the general populace, her sermons were vivid, extended meditations on the Scriptures, often from the perspective of the courts of Heaven. Mother Juana's sermons led her congregations in a meditative exercise in which the listener was made present to Biblical events.

Here, however, I'd like to highlight the 13th century book, the *Stimulus Amoris*, written by the friar, James of Milan. Last year, Paulist Press published a new translation of sections of the work in their Classics of Western Spirituality Series under the title, *The Earliest Franciscans: The Legacy of Giles of Assisi, Roger of Provence, and James of Milan.* The full text of the *Stimulus* was translated by Fr. Campion Murray, O.F.M. under the title, *Love's Prompting & Canticle of One Who is Poor for the Beloved* (Phoenix, AZ: Tau Publishing, 2013). The quotations below are taken from Fr. Murray's translation.

Concerned with fostering the art of meditating on the life of Jesus and Mary, the *Stimulus Amoris* was written for his fellow friar, Brother John, so that he too might "discover this way of living, praying, and meditating" (2). However, the book soon appealed to a much wider audience. "The *Stimulus* was one of the most successful devotional works of the later Middle Ages." ¹ Hundreds of manuscripts were created of the work in the 14th century, and the Augustinian mystic, Walter Hilton, translated it into English and

expanded it under the title, *The Pricking of Love*. By its detailed attention to the Gospel and the saving Passion, the *Stimulus Amoris* modeled meditation for the faithful as a prayerful exercise.² A genuinely Franciscan writing, it was acutely attentive to the Incarnation and the human condition as the avenues to the Divine.

Friar James of Milan is profoundly incarnational in his spirituality, and therefore he offers a unique explanation for God becoming flesh. Because humanity had become so enticed by what was fleshly, God responded by becoming flesh to redeem our souls. "It was necessary, therefore, because it had become too enamoured of the flesh, for my Son to become incarnate so as to entice it to his and my love" (38). Focused on the humanity of Christ, the *Stimulus Amoris* exploits the frailty of the human condition's propensity to lust after flesh, advising: "If therefore, Oh Soul, you love the flesh, do not love any flesh other than the flesh of Christ" (40). Albeit a condescension to our fallen condition, meditative longing after the flesh of Christ is, for James of Milan, a first foothold on the journey Heavenward.

This meditative journey is visceral, and James advocates envisioning a physical encounter between the Christian and Christ. True to the Franciscan meditative tradition, James of Milan encourages not only reflection on Christ, but also fervent interaction with Christ in this meditative prayer and insertion of the Christian into the action and narrative. "Behold, your most sweet Spouse, wounded for you but now glorified, wants to embrace you, to cover you with kisses... he also wanted his hands and feet to be pierced so that ... your hands can enter into his and your feet into his so that you will be inseparably joined together" (43). James explains "the flesh is enticed by that sweetness... And if the flesh experiences sweetness, how much more will the soul be flooded with sweetness when... it is joined to the heart of Christ?" (42). Consistent with his incarnational spirituality, but still striking, the author of the Stimulus even goes so far as to engage in a word play with the Latin words for wound, "vulnus," and "vulva," so as to accentuate the implied conjugal intimacy of the mutual encounter.³ He describes Christ's "Wounds which wound," (43) conjuring an image of Christ's wound pressed against our shared wounds, so that "we too may be wounded with the wounds of your Son..." so that we become a "companion in the sufferings" a "companion in the wounds." (46) Profoundly sensitive to the healing potential of a meditation that brings our shared woundedness into direct contact with Christ's

¹ The Earliest Franciscans: The Legacy of Giles of Assisi, Roger of Provence, and James of Milan (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2015), 55.

² See Chapter 1 of Dan Merkur's book, Crucified with Christ: Meditation on the Passion, Mystical Death, and the Medieval Invention of Psychotherapy (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2007), 1-8. Also, "Exercising Imagination: The Meditationes vitae Christi and Stimulus amoris" in Michelle Karnes' Imagination, Meditation, and Cognition in the Middle Ages (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 141-178.

³ The editors of *The Earliest Franciscans* quote Sara Beckwith, who describes this word-play as a "pun," which captures the permeability between the Christ's body and the devotee so that each is "made so soft and so continuous with each other," so as to become indistinguishable from each other (108). One manuscript of the *Stimulus* describes the joining of the wounds using the Latin phrase "vulnus vulneri copulatur." See Wolfgang Riehle's *The Middle English Mystics* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 46.

wounds, James proves to be both theologian and savvy psychotherapist: "By his wounds you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

And if a bridal mysticism was not in keeping with the reader's spiritual yearnings, Brother James offered yet another Gospel image, Jesus as Mother (see Matthew 11:19 & 23:37; Luke 7:35 and 13:34). "And he who previously was in the womb of the Virgin... now deigns to carry me... within him. ... He like a mother, would feed me from his breasts, wash me with his hands, carry me in his arms, console me with kisses and hold me on his lap" (41). Here, James moves the meditation into a familiar, domestic image, allowing the person praying to experience Christ's loving care as akin to the intimacy once known in childhood. Brother James holds out to us an extended meditation on Jesus being "like a good mother... wanting to embrace a child...opening her arms, [who] receives the child running back, smiles happily upon it and smothers it with sweet kisses... she consoles the child holding it to her and finally offers it her breast" (17).

For James of Milan, no one image of the Christ is adequate to convey the infinite Mercy of God present in the Incarnation. To meditate on the immensity of this mercy, James points to Christ Crucified, but names him both Spouse and Mother, thereby implicitly reminding us that while all our images of God point toward the Divine, they also necessarily fail in fully communicating to us the infinite Divine. If we think we know the limits of God's infinite mercy, James reminds us: "the mercy of our God is boundless." If we think our meditations have conceived the fullness of God's love "still God's mercy infinitely exceeds this" (21).

St. Angela of Foligno & the Stimulus Amoris

While slightly later than James of Milan, a fellow Franciscan, St. Angela of Foligno (1248-1309) was also reflecting a similar maternal image of God: "...the soul knows that God is within it by an embrace which God bestows upon the soul. Never has a mother embraced her son with such love, nor can ...be ... imagined ...the indescribable love with which God embraces the soul. He presses it to himself with such tenderness and such love that no one... can believe it."4 It is possible that Angela was familiar with the Stimulus Amoris. Even if she had not encountered it personally, there is good evidence that she was significantly influenced by it. Angela had traveled to Assisi in 1291 and entered the Basilica of St. Francis. There, she was overcome by God's maternal love when she looked up at the stained glass window depicting Christ holding St. Francis in his embrace. St. Angela would later explain: "As soon as I had genuflected at the entrance of the church and when I saw a stained-glass window depicting St. Francis being closely held by Christ, I heard God telling me: 'Thus I will hold you closely to me, and much more closely..." This stained glass window is present in the Basilica today, and upon entering, the pilgrim will see the same image of Francis being held by Christ, and a mirror image in the adjacent window, depicting the Virgin holding the Christ Child with equal tenderness. The two images are intended to be viewed together. Jerome Poulenc, O.F.M., finds the theological basis for these windows in James of Milan's Stimulus Amoris. As a result, he interprets it as depicting the spiritual motherhood of Christ, deriving from James' texts which we have just read.6 In Angela's mystical

experience, her meditation upon the artwork of stained glass opens her to hear God telling her that mercy enfolds and embraces her closely like a mother, and even more so. It is a decidedly maternal embrace, and it is evident in her writings that she reflected on this experience as she matured in her spiritual life, further developing this image and elaborating on it.

It may seem that the writings of two 13th century Franciscans take us 21st century Christians far afield from Pope Francis' urging of meditation upon Scripture for the Year of Mercy, especially given James and Angela's experience of God's mercy and love as a mother's love. But God's mercy as a maternal love is exactly what Pope Francis has in mind. In his Message for Lent during the Jubilee of Mercy, Pope Francis explained: "In the prophetic tradition, mercy is strictly related – even on the etymological level – to the maternal womb (rachamim)." While the Holy Father does not go into a Hebrew lesson, what he is pointing to is the Hebrew word, "rachamim" (סימחר) which derives from the Hebrew root for womb. Its use is effectively demonstrated in the quote from Isaiah, "Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion (racham) on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you" (Isaiah 49:15 NAS). The tender mercy of the Father is revealed to be the compassionate womb of the same Mother.

What then is the goal of the meditative exercises that both Pope Francis and James of Milan exhort their readers to engage in? Aside from stirring up religious fervor, the meditations might appear to be solitary introspection with no outward purpose. But James does reveal his goal for these meditations. Focused meditation on the sufferings of Christ is an exercise designed to expand and strengthen our own compassion toward others. Meditatively loving the suffering Christ is a form of calisthenics to train our will how to love others: "Wonderful passion which changes one who meditates on it..." (40). Having sympathetically identified with the suffering of Christ, one is increasingly fine-tuned to empathically identify with the suffering of others: "You will have the same sympathy for [others'] bodily misfortunes as if they were affecting your own body; you will serve a neighbor freely and carefully as if you were serving yourself..." (69). James' "Stimulus of Love" is a program of meditative exercises designed to move from meditation on the passion, to lived compassion for others: "...[I]n the mind, after much weeping or deep sharing in the passion of Christ... it embraces from the greatness of its love for the Creator, other creatures which it meets" (24).

Having identified with Christ whose mercy is experienced as that of a Mother and child, the reader is then conditioned to emulate this same merciful love: "One should not despise even the poorest person, but show to all a motherly affection; one should love others in the way a mother loves a dear, only child. One should regard all their affections as one's own, and help them, as far as possible...and...show a maternal love in sympathy and in helping..." (5). Pope Francis also echoes this same approach to mercy and compassion: "God's mercy transforms human hearts; it enables us, through the experience of a faithful love, to become merciful in turn. In an ever new miracle, divine mercy shines forth in our lives, inspiring each of us to love our neighbor and to devote ourselves to what the Church's tradition calls the spiritual and corporal works of mercy."

James of Milan celebrates this mercy of our saving God: "Who can proclaim the wonderful, unspeakable and loveable clemency of the Savior who so kindly bends down to our misfortunes? Completely immerse yourself in the Lord's mercy and never cease from thanking such a sweet Lord" (15). But today, when we hear the

⁴ Angela of Foligno: Complete Works (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1993), 190.

^{6 &}quot;Saint Francois dans le 'vitrail des anges' de l'église supérieure de la basilique d'Assise," in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, 76 (1983): 701-713.

word "mercy," a juridical and moral context is implicitly conveyed. Having leniency, overlooking, and dismissing our debts and sins are the associated images evoked by "mercy." And while this meaning is present in both James and Francis' use of the word "mercy," it is clearly so much more for them. James resorts to images of God as "Mother" and "Spouse" to communicate to our imagination the overflowing, infinite love of God. Pope Francis uses the parental images of Father and Mother to convey that loving Mercy, which "gushes forth from [God's] depths naturally, full of tenderness and compassion, indulgence and mercy." During this Jubilee Year of Mercy, it is essential that we hear and meditate upon the Lord's merciful love as more than solely a juridical leniency. This compassionate, womb-originating love is found in the Trinitarian mystery itself. According to Pope Francis the mercy we encounter originates "From the heart of the Trinity, from the depths of the mystery of God..." Here we recall that the "Only Begotten" is "born of the Father before all ages." In an infinite act of mercy, God gives birth to the only begotten Son. This womb-originating mercy is a mystery inherent in the Godhead itself. The Son is eternally born from the womb of God in a generative act of love.⁷

And if we, as Christians, imitate Christ who is born from the Father, James of Milan advises us not to be content with solely a birth from the womb of God, but to seek to return, ever again. He writes that when God gives "birth to me, I know that his wounds are always open and I will enter his womb again... I will repeat this, until I will be inseparably gathered to him" (42). We are left with something of an almost tidal image of God's loving mercy, whereby we are flowing out and then back into God's depths. Pope Francis also uses a flowing image to describe what he intends by God's mercy, this "great river of mercy [which] wells up and overflows unceasingly. It is a spring that will never run dry... Every time someone is in need, he or she can approach it, because the mercy of God never ends... it is as inexhaustible as the richness which springs up from it."

And so, in this extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, I'd encourage following Pope Francis' advice to meditate on Holy Scripture. Take as your companions good Franciscan guides such as James of Milan and Angela of Foligno. Follow their meditations so that you encounter the merciful love of God to be like that of both a Mother and also a Spouse. And so by this divine stimulus of mercy, you will "have made yourselves daughters ... of the Most High...and have taken the Holy Spirit as your Spouse" (~St. Francis, "Form of Life for St. Clare"). Let this Holy Year begin your meditative journey into the womb of mercy.

⁷ The Council of Toledo, Spain (675 C.E.) used the language "from the womb of the Father," "de utero Patris" to describe the divine generation of the Son. See St. Ephrem the Syrian's depiction of the womb of God which begot the First-born in his "Hymns on the Nativity" "Hymn 21" in Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989), 175. St. Bonaventure also describes Christ as "born from the womb" of the Father in his Commentary on the Book of Wisdom, Chapter 9.



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Reconciling Cambridge with Assisi

By Daniel Maria Klimek, T.O.R.

homas Merton dedicated a couple pages of The Seven Storey Mountain to writing about Daniel Walsh, a philosophy professor who lectured at Columbia University during Merton's time and who was associated with the great neo-Thomist thinkers Étienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain. Merton identified Walsh as "a true Catholic philosopher" because Walsh, "like Gilson, had the most rare and admirable virtue of being able to rise above the petty differences of schools and systems, and seeing Catholic philosophy in its wholeness, in its variegated unit, and in its true Catholicity. In other words, he was able to study St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure and Duns Scotus side by side, and to see them as complementing and reinforcing one another, as throwing diverse and individual light on the same truths from different points of view, and thus he avoided the evil of narrowing and restricting Catholic philosophy and theology to a single school, to a single system." Merton would go on to say: "I pray to God that there may be raised up more like him in the Church and in our universities. . . . Indeed, I think it is a great shame and danger of no small proportions, that Catholic philosophers should be trained in division against one another, and brought up to the bitterness and smallness of controversy: because this is bound to narrow their views and dry up the unction that should vivify all philosophy in their souls."²

While this essay is not exclusively about Catholic philosophy, delving into a British theological movement which has both Anglican and Catholic origins, the passage from Merton speaks to a significant reality that will be addressed here: schools of thought being pinned against each other to the point of distorting the reality that, at their core, each tradition espouses a shared theological vision that has more in common than meets the eye. A lot of debate has taken place between scholars from Radical Orthodoxy and the Franciscan tradition, at times with very critical publications pinning one side against the other.³ As a Franciscan who has gained much through the reading of Radical Orthodoxy theology, especially in strengthening and appreciating my own Franciscan identity (perhaps a fact that would surprise both

Radical Orthodoxy and Franciscan writers), I firmly believe it is time to set aside our disagreements and concentrate instead on the bigger picture that can—and should—unite us: how much our constructive theological visions have in common, complementing each other and having the potential to benefit from one another exponentially. Let us begin this tale of two cities by turning to Cambridge, the birthplace of Radical Orthodoxy.

Radical Orthodoxy: Reclaiming the World for Theology

"Once, there was no 'secular'." This thought-provoking sentence marks the beginning of John Milbank's magnum opus, his groundbreaking book Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason. Milbank's book, originally published in 1991, would inspire - among countless others - a young doctoral student named Catherine Pickstock who would write her dissertation under Milbank at the University of Cambridge. Pickstock's dissertation, later published as After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy, would – along with Milbank's work – become one of the seminal texts of Radical Orthodoxy. Milbank and Pickstock would be joined by a third British theologian, Graham Ward, and combining a unique theological vision, the three would edit the manifesto of the movement, a collection of essays published in 1999 under the title Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology. 6 Ward has especially been an important scholar in the conversation between theology and postmodernism, dedicating much of his work to studying the dynamics between theology and contemporary critical theory.7 This would become a hallmark of Radical Orthodoxy: it is a movement that possesses the intellectual prowess to engage postmodern thought with a sophistication and capacity that has a flare for exuberant eloquence and a depth of erudition, bringing into conversation the work of premodern figures like Plato, Augustine, Anselm, and Thomas Aquinas with postmodern philosophers like Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Jean-François Lyotard, among others. Radical Orthodoxy understands itself as a postmodern movement: a theology that while critical of many aspects of secular modernity and postmodernity, hopes not to abolish the modern for a premodern past but, on the contrary, to save it: redeeming modernity.8 How does Radical Orthodoxy hope to accomplish this?

¹ Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (New York: Signet, 1948), 216. 2 Ibid., 217.

³ Most recently, John Milbank has published a very critical article on the Franciscan legacy. Daniel Horan has written the most comprehensive critique of Radical Orthodoxy's usage of John Duns Scotus. So much of the debate has centered around interpreting Scotus' work and influence on modernity, as well as that of the late-medieval Franciscan tradition. See John Milbank, "The Franciscan Conundrum," Communio: International Catholic Review 42 (Fall 2015), 466-492; Daniel P. Horan, Postmodernity and Univocity: A Critical Account of Radical Orthodoxy and John Duns Scotus (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014). See also Richard Cross, "Where Angels Fear to Tread': Dun Scotus and Radical Orthodoxy," Antonianum 76 (2001): 7-41; Luke D. Zerra, "Duns Scotus: The Boogieman of Modernity? A Response to John Milbank on the Univocity of Being," The Cord, vol. 63.4 (2013): 374-384; Mary Beth Ingham, "Re-Situating Scotist Thought," Modern Theology 21 (2005): 609-618; Thomas Williams, "The Doctrine of Univocity is True and Salutary," Modern Theology 21 (2005): 575-585; Kevin L. Hughes, "The Ratio Dei and the Ambiguities of History," Modern Theology 21 (2005): 645-661; Catherine Pickstock, "Duns Scotus: His Historical and Contemporary Significance," Modern Theology 21 (2005): 545-573.

⁴ John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 9. Originally published by Blackwell in 1991.

⁵ See Catherine Pickstock, After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).

⁶ John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, Graham Ward, eds., Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology (London: Routledge, 1999).

⁷ See Graham Ward, ed., *The Postmodern God: A Theological Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997); idem, *Theology and Contemporary Critical Theory*, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); idem, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Postmodern Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001).

⁸ John Milbank, "The Programme of Radical Orthodoxy," in Laurence Paul Hemming, ed., Radical Orthodoxy? A Catholic Enquiry (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000), 45.

By reclaiming the world, and thus all that is within – culture, politics, sexuality, art, beauty, entertainment – for theology, once understood as the Queen of the Sciences: essentially, Radical Orthodoxy hopes to reclaim the world for God. If everything in creation comes from God then everything can only be properly understood in its fullest and truest sense through a theological framework, meaning through its dependence on, and doxological orientation toward, the transcendent. Radical Orthodoxy does not want to separate the world from faith and theology but reorient it through the lens of faith and theology. In this sense, it is not only secular modernity that merits criticism – in its distortion of reality that creates a space separate from God – but also false expressions of Christianity. Milbank, Pickstock, and Ward explain that "once one has realised, following the great English literary visionaries William Shakespeare and Thomas Nashe that sexual puritianism, political disciplinarianism and abuse of the poor are the result of a refusal of true Christianity (see Lear and Measure for Measure), one is led to articulate a more incarnate, more participatory, more aesthetic, more erotic, more socialised, even 'more Platonic' Christianity."9

A major aspect of this project is the critique of contemporary dualisms which have distorted reality. Such dualisms constitute the unhealthy byproducts of modernity, and include such anomalies as the opposition of faith and reason, grace and nature, sacred space from "secular" space, among other distortive dichotomies. We can see how such dualistic distortions can have great effects on Christianity and culture: for example, so much of historical Jesus scholarship since Hermann Reimarus and David Friedrich Strauss to contemporary enterprises like the "Jesus seminar" have tended to attempt to separate the Jesus of history from the Jesus of faith, as if these must be two separate realities: the man Jesus of Nazareth from the divine Son of God; the ethical teacher from the miracleworker; presenting dualisms which claim to separate fact from myth but, in the process, become contemporary heresies distorting the integrity and fullness (as human and divine) of the identity and reality of Christ. Radical Orthodoxy, on the other hand, is not about elevating reason over faith or, on the contrary, faith over reason – as certain strands of Barthian Neo-orthodox theology have attempted - but about seeing the two as complementary components of a single reality which need each other and which cannot be reduced by the other.

"Modern dualisms, such as the opposition between faith and reason, became the rules of the game in which modern theology had to play," theologian James K.A. Smith explains. Radical Orthodoxy, however, "instead of operating within those confines, questions the very rules of the game by calling into question the assumptions of modernity itself." One way that Radical Orthodoxy questions, and ultimately disregards, the rules of the game is by refusing – unlike other theologies – to formulate a theological vision that must appeal to secular standards of understanding. Let us consider this in further detail.

"Radical Orthodoxy is a hermeneutic disposition and a style of metaphysical vision," Catherine Pickstock explains, "and it is not so much a 'thing' or 'place' as a 'task'." To better understand this task,

this "style of metaphysical vision," it is helpful to turn to Milbank's opening passage, in his classic book, which – as noted – explained that once "there was no 'secular'." In some sense it reads like an ontological inversion, and yet also complement, to the famous introduction of the Gospel of John, wherein it is declared that in the beginning was the Word. If the Word was in the beginning and everything came into being through Him, and the Word was God, then there is nothing that is created or sustained without God. In other words, there is no space from which God can be considered absent; there is no "secular" space. The very notion of a secular space, presupposing the absence of God, constitutes a myth of modernity. Milbank expounds: "The secular as a domain had to be instituted or *imagined*, both in theory and practice." ¹²

This is an essential component of Radical Orthodoxy's project: deconstructing the assumptions of secular modernityinstead of playing by its presuppositions—by showing that the "secular" is not, as popular opinion holds, an autonomous sphere of reason and neutrality, but a philosophical construction of latemedieval thought that holds its own - strongly rooted - ideological assumptions. Most scholars locate the origins of the secular in modern thought through the work of philosophers like Kant and Descartes. Radical Orthodoxy takes the narrative even further back, seeing the roots of secular modernity and all its distortive dualisms as a byproduct of late-medieval theology. The implication here is important, for if you are able to shift the genealogy from modern philosophy back to medieval theology then, as Radical Orthodoxy argues, since everything comes from God, you are showing that nothing can escape theology: thus, if the "secular" derives from medieval theology then the "secular" is ultimately, at its core, a heterodox theology. And disciplines that have been influenced by a secular ideology, such as the social sciences, philosophy, and even theology, are therefore being influenced not by a neutral and independent domain of autonomous reason—in itself a myth of modernity—but by another (albeit, heretical) theology.¹³ In this case, the secular constitutes a meta-narrative that has no greater right than the meta-narrative of the Christian tradition in terms of being the basis of our assumed truths, as both stem from (and, thus, constitute) theologies. Given this reality, Radical Orthodoxy "seeks to articulate not only a confessional theology, but a confessional account of human experience in all if its elements: a Christian social theory, a Christian aesthetics, a Christian account of sexuality, and so forth. It sounds a call for radically Christian reflection across the disciplines."14 In short, Radical Orthodoxy aims to boldly reclaim the world for Christ, reorienting our perspective to the Real.

14 Smith, "What Hath Cambridge To Do with Azusa Street?", 104-105.

⁹ Milbank, Pickstock, Ward, "Suspending the Material: the Turn of Radical Orthodoxy," in *Radical Orthodoxy*, 3.

¹⁰ James K.A. Smith, "What Hath Cambridge To Do With Azusa Street? Radical Orthodoxy and Pentecostal Theology in Conversation," *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, vol. 25, no. 1 (Spring 2003), 102.

¹¹ Catherine Pickstock, "Radical Orthodoxy and the Mediations of Time," in Hemming, *Radical Orthodoxy?*, 63.

¹² Milbank, Theology and Social Theory, 9; emphasis in original.

¹³ The roots of this vision stem back to Milbank's Theology and Social Theory, wherein Milbank critiques the secular assumptions of disciplines like the social sciences as ideologically (rather than objectively) motivated. Frank Burch Brown explains: "Indeed, Milbank argues that secular reason always turns incoherent and, in the end, nihilistic - entailing or inventing, despite itself, some kind of inadequate meta-narrative and quasi-religious metaphysic. Focusing on modern social science in particular, Milbank claims that such a science, far from evincing rational integrity and independence, turns out to be either a kind of Christian heresy or an insidious form of neo-paganism." Nico Vorster similarly explains that Milbank's project, extending beyond the social sciences, incorporates philosophy and theology: "He regards the idea of an autonomous secular sphere as a 'fiction' that has colonized philosophy and theology all too long. According to Milbank the secular is not a neutral domain as it proclaims itself to be, but is a 'disguised heterodoxy of various stripes, a revived paganism and a religious nihilism'." See Frank Burch Brown, "Radical Orthodoxy and the Religion of Others," Encounter 63 (2002): 47; see Nico Vorster, "The Secular and the Sacred in the Thinking of John Milbank," Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies, vol. 11, issue 32 (Summer 2012), 110.

Roots of the Controversy: The Scotus Debates

Last semester, in the classroom at a graduate course at the Catholic University of America, a professor of mine remarked how one day he was looking for an artistic representation of the Gospel scene of the devil tempting Jesus. Using Google-image he found a painting¹⁵ in which the devil – tempting Jesus – wore garb that resembled, almost identically, a Franciscan habit. The professor, astonished, showed the image to a Dominican friar, a friend of his, exclaiming: "Look at this – the devil is a Franciscan!" The Dominican replied, very tongue-in-cheek, "the devil is a Franciscan. And you know what he is whispering into the Lord's ear?" Slowing his voice for dramatic effect, the Dominican explained: "Univocity of being."

We all erupted laughing. It was graduate-student humor, the punch-line an abstract theological concept from a late-medieval thinker: Blessed John Duns Scotus, the Subtle Doctor.

Perhaps it was appropriate that it was one of our Dominican brothers who came with the joke, as the great Dominican doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas, is someone whose theology Radical Orthodoxy has used as a counter to Scotus, specifically Aquinas' concept of analogical as constituting a contradistinction to Scotus' univocal ontology. Put very simply, Aquinas would argue that there is such an otherness between God and human beings that they do not share in the same being and can, therefore, only be compared through analogy. Scotus, on the other hand, would argue that God and human beings do share a being, though in very different degrees, constituting a univocal ontology. Thus, Aquinas would argue that we can say that "Felicity" is beautiful like God is beautiful only through analogy, as the infinite beauty of God transcends all comparison to human beauty. While Scotus would argue that Felicity's beauty does have a sharing in the essence of God's beauty, except that the latter - infinite divine beauty - has, of course, a much deeper and sublime degree of that beauty. Radical Orthodoxy considers Scotus' univocal ontology idolatrous, as they argue that he places a metaphysical category - that of Being above God, as both God and humanity fall into a univocal category of Being, in contrast to Aquinas, whose analogical understanding has an apophatic proclivity of seeing God as transcending all categories of Being (and thus univocal comparison). As one Radical Orthodoxy theologian put it: "The univocal thesis allowed the world to abandon God, as one could now wholly dispense with God by explaining the world in terms of this higher ground whatever it might be."16

The theologians of Radical Orthodoxy locate the early constructs of the "secular" prominently (although not exclusively¹⁷) in the theology of Scotus, particularly his univocity of being.

Daniel Horan explains Radical Orthodoxy's genealogical narrative: "prior to the dawn of this 'idea' of the secular, which is ultimately a construct of modernity, everything was understood in relationship to the divine."18 Radical Orthodoxy categorizes this as ontological participation, how everything in creation was understood as suspended from and participating in the divine, to the point that throughout history there was "no space that was not always understood to be liturgical and doxological-oriented toward praise of the divine."19 However, they see Scotus' univocity of being as replacing an ontology of participation which, according to Radical Orthodoxy thinkers, would lead to a significant shift in intellectual history undermining the predominance of metaphysical participation for a newly formed, deontological philosophy of autonomous reason: constituting the early construct of the "secular," as a space separated from revelation and theology. This separation from God, being thus grounded in nothing, would lead (by definition) to nihilism. For Radical Orthodoxy, "secular modernity is generated by an ontological framework that must be called into question, an ontology grounded in the univocity of being that grants an autonomy to things such that it is supposed that the world can be properly understood in itself—that is, without reference to its transcendent origin, the Creator."20 Thus, by this logic, it is Scotus' univocal ontology that "unhooks" us from ontological participation with God, giving all beings and things in creation a self-sustaining autonomy that is separate from the divine, creating an autonomous space that is void of the transcendent and thus (by definition) "secular." As Smith explains: "Ushered in as a process, modernity generated the invention of the secular by rejecting the participatory ontology that preceded it."21

Although few would dispute Radical Orthodoxy's claim that a major shift transpired in intellectual history from ontological participation to the construction of "secular" space, Radical Orthodoxy's historical narrative of locating the beginning of that shift in the late-medieval period, largely (but not exclusively) through Scotus and his theory on the univocity of being, has been widely debated and criticized. The questions, of course, arise: is Scotus saying what Radical Orthodoxy claims he is saying? Or, do his ideas lead to what Radical Orthodoxy claims they lead to – the construct of secular modernity? Smith explains the major issues that are in play here:

RO tends to pack two claims into its account: (1) the historical claim that Scotus's development of a univocal ontology generated what would become the secular philosophies of immanence that dominate modernity; (2) the systematic or conceptual claim that adherence to the univocity of being engenders a secular, nontheistic metaphysics that makes no reference to the transcendent. One could perhaps grant (1) without holding (2). That is, one could perhaps contend that adhering to a univocal ontology does not entail the denial of transcendence that RO suggests.²²

Many scholars of the Franciscan intellectual tradition have come to the defense of the Subtle Doctor, challenging Radical

¹⁵ I presume that this was the *Temptation of Christ in the Wilderness* by the Early Netherlandish painter Juan de Flandes (1460-1519). The painting is currently located at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

¹⁶ Phillip Blond, "Perception: From Modern Painting to the Vision in Christ," in Milbank, Pickstock, Ward, *Radical Orthodoxy*, 233.

¹⁷ Pickstock states that "Duns Scotus has been seen as central to this change, but by no means its instigator or sole contributor. Other important figures are often cited: Avicenna, Gilbert Porreta, Roger Bacon, Peter Olivi, Bonaventure, Henry of Ghent, William of Ockham, Jean Buridan." Given how many Franciscans are identified in the aforementioned list it is not a surprise as to why Radical Orthodoxy has been positioned at odds with Franciscanism. However, it is important to note that this narrative—of situating the early constructs of the secular with late-medieval figures with a particular (though not exclusive) emphasis on Scotus—is not an innovation of Radical Orthodoxy—although they have popularized it in recent years—but can be seen in the earlier work of a number of thinkers, including Étienne Gilson, Olivier Boulnois, J.-F. Courtine, Eric Alliez, and Jean-Yves Lacoste, among others. See Pickstock, "Duns Scotus," 543, 569n2.

¹⁸ Horan, Postmodernity and Univocity, 20-21.

¹⁹ James K.A. Smith, Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-Secular Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: 2004), 88.

²⁰ Ibid., 185.

²¹ Ibid., 88.

²² Ibid., 100.

Orthodoxy's interpretation of Scotus. Most notably, scholarship that merits attention here is that of Richard Cross, Mary Beth Ingham, Thomas Williams, Kevin Hughes, and – recently, providing the most thorough critique to date of Radical Orthodoxy's position - the work of Daniel Horan.²³ I do not want to diminish in any way the important work of these scholars and their noble contributions of coming to a hermeneutical and epistemological defense of the Subtle Doctor. This has been a worthy and significant endeavor in recent Franciscan scholarship. However, I do want to suggest that so much attention has been given, between scholars of Franciscanism and Radical Orthodoxy, to debating Scotus that this emphasis has had the unfortunate effect of mitigating attention from the reality that, at their core, the Franciscan tradition and Radical Orthodoxy share a deeply connected, constructive theological vision: a vision that can especially be seen through the figure of Francis of Assisi, as I will expound in further detail below. Consequently, each school of thought can benefit greatly from a fruitful dialogue with interlocutors from the other side regarding (what I argue is) a shared theological vision. I suggest, therefore, that we go beyond the Scotus debates - here I am also arguing that Radical Orthodoxy's constructive project does not rest on the Scotus critique24 - and

concentrate instead on the bigger theological picture: a picture that can reconcile, unite, and empower two important traditions instead of continuing to divide them. Let us consider important points of similarity in the constructive theologies of the Franciscan tradition and Radical Orthodoxy.

"This World is Pregnant with God!" Renewing Ontological Participation (or Ontological Mendicancy)

Catherine Pickstock explains a fundamental vision of Radical Orthodoxy's understanding of reality as being ultimately doxological, intended for the praise and worship of God: "To stress that truth is doxological is to say that temporal things are only adequately known when they are received as gifts and offered back as praise of the divine." There is perhaps no other text in the history of the Christian tradition that articulates this vision more clearly and poetically than the *Canticle of Creatures* (a.k.a., the *Canticle of Brother Sun*) by Francis of Assisi. The stanzas of the famous poem speak for themselves, consider the well-known depiction of the sun:

All praise be yours, my Lord, through all that you have made.

And first my lord Brother Sun, Who brings the day; and light you give to us through him. How beautiful is he, how radiant in all his splendor! Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.²⁶

In the poem, the various elements and components of nature and creation – sun, moon, earth, fire, water, wind, light, day – are understood not as autonomous, self-sustaining forces, but – on the contrary – through a doxological ontology, as gifts stemming from - and participating in - the Creator and "being offered back as praise of the divine" (as Pickstock articulated Radical Orthodoxy's identical vision). Regarding the Canticle, Murray Bodo wrote of Francis' vision: "It looks wholly to the Other with the eyes of praise and adoration, and that Other is God revealed in all his creatures."27 In the world that Francis paints in his Canticle creation has a liturgical and doxological role—one of ontological participation, as Radical Orthodoxy would say—participating in, and pointing to, its transcendent source, God the Creator, and being understood gratuitously, as complete gift of the divine, offering praise to Him who - in His divine generosity - gives and sustains all that is in the world: pointing to a deeply incarnational Christianity that speaks to the goodness and participatory ontology of creation, and its sacramental dimension.²⁸ Bernard McGinn comments: "Francis presents a specifically Christian nature mysticism in which God's

constructive project does not hinge on the Scotus critique. See Rahner as cited in Horan, *Postmodernity and Univocity*, 143n115; for original source see Karl Rahner, "Philosophy and Theology," *Theological Investigations*, trans. David Bourke, vol. 13 (New York: Crossroad, 1975), 77; see Picstock, "Duns Scotus," 543; Scott W. Hahn and Benjamin Wiker, *Politicizing the Bible: the Roots of Historical Criticism and the Secularization of Scripture*, 1300–1700 (New York: Crossroad, 2013); Milbank, "Franciscan Conundrum," 487.

25 Catherine Pickstock interviewed by Stratford Caldecott, at http://www.secondspring.co.uk/articles/scaldecott24.htm (accessed 04/02/2016).

26 As cited in Murray Bodo, O.F.M., The Way of St. Francis: A Spirituality of Reconciliation (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 143.

27 Ibid., 145.

28 Consider, in comparison, how in their manifesto Radical Orthodoxy theologians articulate the hope for a "more incarnate, more participatory, more aesthetic" Christianity, all of which are essential to a Franciscan spirituality, as first articulated by Francis. The subject of aesthetics we will explore in greater detail below. See Milbank, Pickstock, Ward, "Suspending the Material," 3.

²³ See note 1.

²⁴ Catherine Pickstock has confirmed this interpretation in a personal correspondence, clarifying to me: "I have never supposed that RO hinged upon the critique of Scotus as such, but rather that he was one of many - not all Franciscan - who began to make non-participatory moves. Indeed, there may even be inchoate intimations in this direction even within the work of Thomas Aquinas, concerning 'potentia absoluta,' as has been suggested by John Montag SJ and the late Revd Dr John Hughes" (03/30/2016). I am in agreement with her, and here I disagree with Daniel Horan, who has argued: "I suggest that what Milbank has created, and Pickstock the first to adopt, is a form of Scotus Story-based genealogical foundationalism upon which Radical Orthodoxy's entire system and subsequent subfield projects are built. In other words, after Milbank's Scotus Story sketch, first outlined in Theology and Social Theory and later minimally fleshed out in The Word Made Strange, his position on the origin of modernity becomes axiomatic for all those associated with the Radical Orthodoxy movement" (Horan, 35). That many, if not most, Radical Orthodoxy authors have adopted the Scotus narrative I do not doubt. However, I would be careful in associating this narrative with "all those" associated with Radical Orthodoxy, as differences between RO authors exist. Moreover, if I am reading Horan correctly, and if he is also elucidating that Radical Orthodoxy's entire system and subsequent projects depend on the Scotus narrative than I strongly disagree with his thesis; although, in using the term "built" instead of "depend"—"upon which Radical Orthodoxy's entire system and subsequent subfield projects are built"—it is possible that Horan is not implying dependency. If we consider the importance of Radical Orthodoxy's genealogical narrative—that of seeing the construct of the secular not in modern philosophy but, earlier, in medieval theology—than other figures (beyond Scotus) could qualify for providing the rudiments of this trend in intellectual history, as Pickstock lists a number of medieval thinkers, including the Muslim thinker Avicenna—who lived centuries before Scotus—which shows that for Radical Orthodoxy's narrative to work, Scotus, although used prominently, is not necessary. Scott W. Hahn and Benjamin Wiker also point to Avicenna and William of Ockham as being two of the major figures in leading to a non-participatory ontology in history. Milbank, likewise, points to Avicenna as having a major influence with a univocal ontology on late-medieval Franciscan thought, writing of "Franciscans and those Franciscan-influenced in following Avicenna by construing 'forms' as univocal with respect both to finite and infinite (and so with reversible exemplarity) thought of them as being bestowed in various unstable and in principle undoable mixtures by God upon the finite world." Horan himself cites Karl Rahner as pointing to Aquinas as the precursor to secular modernity. Rahner explained: "It was Thomas Aquinas who first recognized philosophy as an autonomous discipline, and its secularization, its emancipation, constitutes the first step in the legitimate process by which the world is allowed to become 'worldly,' a process which, ultimately speaking, is willed and has been set in motion by Christianity." It is interesting that Rahner, akin to Radical Orthodoxy, sees the origins of the secular as stemming from Christianity-specifically, in Rahner's interpretation, from one of its greatest doctors in Aquinas—and therefore as something that cannot escape theology. As these examples illustrate, Scotus, notwithstanding his prominent role in Radical Orthodoxy's historical genealogy of modernity, is not necessary for that genealogy to work, and thus - as Pickstock explained - Radical Orthodoxy's

presence is experienced as luminously real and immediate in the cosmos as a whole and in each of its elements insofar as they reflect some aspect of the divine fullness."²⁹

From Francis, future Franciscan theologians and mystics would expound on such a vision. Alexander of Hales, who became a Franciscan in 1236, and who was a professor at the University of Paris, where – among others – Bonaventure was his student, "became a leading exponent of Franciscan theology. Alexander taught that the Creator invites humanity to return to Him through the beauty of what He creates. As everything created bears the imprint of the Trinity, creation in turn points back to God." Such a Franciscan theology, as Pickstock articulated about Radical Orthodoxy's theology, stresses that truth is doxological and therefore that created things lead us back to God, their Creator, in praise.

The medieval Franciscan mystic Angela of Foligno reports experiencing an ecstatic vision while in Assisi that began with God speaking these words to her: "I want to show you something of my power."

And immediately the eyes of my soul were opened, and in a vision I beheld the fullness of God in which I beheld and comprehended the whole of creation, that is, what is on this side and what is beyond the sea, the abyss, the sea itself, and everything else. And in everything that I saw, I could perceive nothing except the presence of the power of God, and in a manner totally indescribable. And my soul in an excess of wonder cried out: "This world is pregnant with God!" Wherefore I understood how small is the whole of creation—that is, what is on this side and what is beyond the sea, the abyss, the sea itself, and everything else—but the power of God fills it all to overflowing. He then said to me: "I have just manifested to you something of my power." From this I comprehended that henceforth I would be able to better understand other things.³¹

This vision of God's all-encompassing transcendence, overflowing in each and every sphere of creation and yet beyond it, to the point that Angela calls the presence of the power of God "totally indescribable" while, paradoxically, perceiving it in the whole of creation, leads her to cry out, "This world is pregnant with God!" There is a deeply Franciscan framework that shapes this understanding, again reminiscent of the vision of reality that Francis articulated in the *Canticle of Creatures*, a world pregnant with God. Compare Angela's vision with how Pickstock describes Radical Orthodoxy's understanding of transcendence:

If you think of reality as a kind of hierarchy for a moment, and if you put transcendence at the top of the hierarchy, and you have on the lower realms of the hierarchy all forms of reality, right down to ants and ant legs and so forth, although transcendence, according to this picture, is right at the top, equally it is just as present to the ant's legs as it is to the angels, and the priests, and the bishops, and so forth. It's both at the top

and the bottom, there simply isn't a place where transcendence cannot be because it is transcendent, it is beyond all limit, and yet works in and through every limit that we have."³²

Thus, by this view, as Angela would say, the "world is pregnant with God!"

This perception of reality speaks to an ontology. When Pickstock explained that we can only understand temporal things adequately when we perceive them as gifts that are receivedthus, gratuitously—and offered back as praise of the Creator, she was speaking to an ontological disposition: Radical Orthodoxy's emphasis on an ontological participation with the divine. Notice the connection to, what Kevin Hughes calls in a separate matter, "the heart of Bonaventure's theological vision," pointing to an ontological mendicancy: "Bonaventure perceives creation as the overflowing and outpouring of existence ex nihilo, out of nothing. In other words, everything that is exists only as complete and utterly gratuitous gift; existence itself is sustained in being by divine generosity. In this sense, creation itself is mendicant. All creation is dependent upon 'alms,' the good and perfect gift, of the Father of lights (Jas. 1:17), in what we might call a natural or ontological mendicancy."33 Here there is a recognition that everything that exists - human beings, animals, nature, all space and time - does not only constitute a gift of, but has its dependence on, is sustained by, and leads back to, the divine: nothing is untouched by the Creator - no space in reality - as He sustains all. In other words, there is no space that can be called "secular," as the word presupposes an absence (or separation from) the divine, thus constituting an artificial construct (as Milbank et al. argue), a myth of modernity: an innately false ontology. What Radical Orthodoxy, therefore, hopes to steer us away from is a materialist and nihilist ontology, underscored by secular modernity, that grants autonomy to things "such that it is supposed that the world can be properly understood in itself—that is, without reference to its transcendent origin, the Creator."34 This is something that the Franciscan vision also, throughout history, beginning with Francis, has been concerned with: articulating a vision of creation that points, in all things, to the Creator as an act of praise, doxologically looking to the transcendent source of all that is (understood as gift). Whether we call this ontological mendicancy (thus giving the term a distinctly Franciscan flavor) or, as Radical Orthodoxy calls it, ontological participation, we are essentially speaking of the same reality. Let us go deeper into this

²⁹ Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism – 1200–1350* (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 56.

³⁰ Maurice Carmody, The Franciscan Story: St. Francis of Assisi and His Influence Since the Thirteenth Century (London: Athena, 2008), 110.

³¹ Angela of Foligno, Complete Works, trans. and intro. Paul Lachance, O.F.M., pref. Romana Guarnieri, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 169-170.

³² Radio interview with Catherine Pickstock and John Milbank for CBC Radio show *Ideas with Paul Kennedy*: segment titled, "Ideas about Radical Orthodoxy." Audio available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vMn6q1z7Oxk (accessed 04/2/2016).

³³ Kevin L. Hughes, "Bonaventure's Defense of Mendicancy," in Jay M. Hammond, Wayne Hellmann, Jared Goff, eds., *A Companion to Bonaventure*, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, vol. 48 (Leiden, NV, the Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2014), 539.

³⁴ Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 185. Radical Orthodoxy would associate this ontological shift with the concept of univocity of being, thus connecting it to Scotus and other late-medieval thinkers. Whether this is an accurate understanding of what Scotus meant is arguable, and it – indeed – *has* been argued, pervasively! I contend, however, that we should reorient our attention away from this debate as it has mitigated focus from the more important reality: the final goal of the constructive vision of reclaiming a participatory ontology, as Radical Orthodoxy puts it, or an ontological mendicancy, as Kevin L. Hughes puts it. In other words, let us not stop at the means—the question of what led to the construct of the "secular"—but let us give greater attention to the ends, the constructive project of reclaiming a participatory (mendicant) ontology that renews a liturgical and doxological understanding of the world, pointing to the transcendent: essentially, the shared theological vision of Radical Orthodoxy and the Franciscan tradition.

reality by turning to the important subject of beauty, and observing how Francis of Assisi as a figure is an icon that (unbeknownst to many) embodies the vision of Radical Orthodoxy's constructive project, and therefore can break the divide between the British school of thought and Franciscanism: reconciling Cambridge with Assisi.

Francis of Assisi: Embodied Icon of Radical Orthodoxy's Vision

Aesthetics, the study of beauty, is another area of interest where a great dialogue can take place between the Franciscan tradition and Radical Orthodoxy.³⁵ In the anthology of essays that became Radical Orthodoxy's manifesto three essays out of twelve were dedicated to subjects pertaining to aesthetics, showing how important beauty is to the project.³⁶ This should come as no surprise for a project that wants to reclaim the world for Christian theology, as in order to do so we must be able to show the world the beauty of Christianity.³⁷ One of the three essays on aesthetics was written by Phillip Blond, a fascinating figure in contemporary British intellectual and political life. Blond, who was a student of John Milbank's and did his Ph.D. in theology at Cambridge, is also an important political philosopher who has advocated a thirdway vision of politics and economics which challenges traditional dichotomies of liberal and conservative ideas through a more independent voice, articulated as a form of Red Toryism, which is more inclined to combine social conservatism with economic progressivism—Blond has, for example, proposed ideas to turn the Conservative Party into the "the party of the poor." Many Radical Orthodoxy authors have identified their politics as being socialist—thus a form of non-statist Christian socialism. In the person of Blond, who is the founder of an influential thinktank (ResPublica) and an advisor to British political leaders, we see Radical Orthodoxy extending a portion of its vision beyond the ivory tower and into the pragmatic world of economic and sociopolitical decision-making.³⁹ Not only have Radical Orthodoxy

35 I thank Fr. David Couturier, O.F.M. Cap., for first pointing out to me the possibility of aesthetics as one direction to consider for this essay.

ideas influenced the Red Tory movement but also the Blue Labour movement of British politics.⁴⁰ The task of Radical Orthodoxy is not strictly academic but, as Graham Ward has articulated, there is a loftier ideal: "participating in the redemption of Creation..."⁴¹

In his essay on aesthetics, Blond focuses on art, particularly perceptions of art over time, considering what epistemological transitions have come with the advent of modernity and postmodernity. Like his Radical Orthodoxy counterparts Blond is critical of dualisms—in this case, the dualism between reality and ideality as well as subjectivity and objectivity that much of modern art has experienced. Blond explains that the "division of the ideal from the real reveals its true teleology and inheritance: self-sufficient immanentism."42 In other words, true art needs to have the holistic (and, therefore, iconic) dimension of being both material and spiritual, of being a material work that leads to a deeper transcendent truth: like an icon personifying its role as a visible window leading into a deeper, invisible reality. In this regard, both objectivity and subjectivity are important, as the art should be an objective representation of the true, the good, and the beautiful while at the same time possessing the capacity to draw us in and touch us personally, leading to the subjective experience that is an

did his doctorate under Catherine Pickstock, are trustees of *ResPublica*; Milbank, in fact, being the chairman of trustees. However, both Milbank and Pabst have also been associated with Blue Labour politics. See Nathan Coombs, "The Political Theology of Red Toryism," 2; paper presented at the PSA Annual Conference, Edinburgh, UK March 31st-April 1, 2010. See also http://www.respublica.org.uk/our-people/trustees/ (accessed 04/02/2016).

40 Milbank explains: "Red Toryism is an old current in Canadian politics, which has now been transplanted and revived in Britain by my former pupil Phillip Blond. Through him and others, including the Blue Labourites headed by Maurice Glasman, a 'politics of paradox' is emerging and is making some headway in the UK. (In the UK, as in Europe, 'red' denotes left-wing and 'blue' denotes conservative. Hence 'red Tory' indicates the paradox of a Toryism blended with a non-statist associationism and distributism-with 'socialism' in a certain sense-and 'blue Labour' indicates the paradox of a non-statist Socialism with a Tory tinge.) Basically, what we have here is an attempt to work out in practice a Communitarian politics, but one which fully includes the economic dimension. A Communitarian versus Libertarian polarity is starting to disturn the dominance of the Left-versus-Right polarity at the heart of British politics. The new thinking concentrates around Phillip's think-tank ResPublica, and-make no mistake about it-this is something big. Already, both major parties have adopted aspects of Phillip's ideas for an 'ownership state,' which would involve more decentralized professional control of the public realm—but with non-profit, social purposes in view. To complement this new mode of state, the new 'paradoxical' position also advocates a 'moral market,' in which contract must itself have a social purpose, and businesses will often be partnerships of owners, workers, and consumers. This is influenced by Luigino Bruni and Stefano Zamagni, who helped draft Caritas in Veritate, Pope Benedict XVI's recent social encyclical. One can link this also to a blending of elements in Polanyi and Marx." Milbank emphasizes the importance of returning to a politics with a religious grounding, explaining that "Red Tories and Blue Labourites reject both the deontology of the right and the utilitarianism of the left in favor of the view that state, society, and economy must all see their role as the building up of individual and relational flourishing—of honor and virtue. The mediating role of religious bodies in all this clearly must be crucial. We hope that many Muslims and Jews, as well as Christians, will embrace a return to the politics of the Good, rooted both in the Bible and in classical antiquity. It is this legacy, re-thought and democratized (in keeping with biblical impulses), which alone can now save Europe, America, and the world." See Nathan Schneider, "Orthodox Paradox: An Interview with John Milbank," for The Immanent Frame: Secular, Religion, and the Public Sphere, available at http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2010/03/17/orthodox-paradox-an-interview-with-john-milbank/ (accessed 04/02/2016). See also Phillip Blond, Red Tory: How Left and Right Have Broken Britain and How We Can Fix It (London: Faber, 2010); also, Ian Geary and Adrian Pabst, eds., Blue Labour: Forging a New Politics (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015): essays in this work include contributions from John Milbank and Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury and Milbank's former teacher at Cambridge.

41 Graham Ward, "Radical Orthodoxy and/as Cultural Politics," in Hemming, Radical Orthodoxy?, 103.

³⁶ These include Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, "Aesthetics: The Theological Sublime," 201-219; Phillip Blond, "Perception: From Modern Painting to the Vision in Christ," 220-242; and Catherine Pickstock, "Music: Soul, City, and Cosmos after Augustine," 243-277; all in Milbank, Pickstock, Ward, *Radical Orthodoxy*.

³⁷ I am reminded here of the famous words of Pope Benedict XVI, articulating that "art and the saints are the greatest apologetic for our faith." See http://www.ncregister.com/site/article/pope-benedict-sees-beauty-at-the-service-of-truth/#ixzz44ifR4d4U (accessed 04/02/2016).

³⁸ Blond's work has had a great influence on British Prime Minister David Cameron. *The Telegraph* referred to Blond in 2010 as "a driving force behind David Cameron's 'Big Society' agenda." See http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/8131290/Minister-backs-plan-for-massive-state-sell-off-of-assets.html (accessed 04/02/2016).

³⁹ While members of Radical Orthodoxy and Red Toryism have not identified themselves as one and the same, Nathan Coombs argues that "when we examine red Toryism's theological godfather, radical orthodoxy, it is striking how the ideas parallel one another, right down to the use of terminology where the Platonic-Augustinian doctrine of divine participation follows to proposals for a 'participatory economy.' As the ideas of radical orthodoxy are unfolded, these overlapping semantic and conceptual vocabularies prove not coincidental, or simply rough correlates of one another, but instead point to the ontological grounding of radical orthodoxy, where the theological underwrites every other domain: from the natural sciences to political economy. But at the same time, that is also not to say red Toryism and radical orthodoxy are functionally one and the same thing." The Radical Orthodoxy influence on Blond's think-tank is impossible to ignore as both John Milbank and Adrian Pabst, a "next-generation" Radical Orthodoxy theologian who

⁴² Blond, "Perception," 221.

encounter with true Beauty: the Beautiful, in this sense, being God.

Blond connects the importance - in fact, the epistemology - of how we see art with the greater issue of perception of how we see reality.⁴³ He has a great respect for the goodness of creation and the knowledge of God in created things, explaining that "for us God can be only what he shows and gives to us; and what we are shown and given is a phenomenal, sensate, world that reaches its fullest height and unimaginable glory in Christ."44 Here it is the incarnation that is at the center, for "Christ binds together in his own body the invisible and the visible, and as a result he incarnates the transcendent in the flesh and prevents any subsequent account of human materiality divorcing itself from theology."45 Thus not only is an incarnational theology necessary to understand art and the iconic perception that can challenge the reductionistic materiality of much of modern art, but also to take such a sacramental vision seeing the invisible in the visible – as an awareness of life, as a lens for perceiving our world. Blond expounds in poignant detail:

To say this is to re-consecrate our world; it is to say that no created things stands apart from its Creator and that each and every existent creation reveals its origin in the Father through showing and revealing the grace that allows it such an exhibition. In respect of this I feel, then, that it is no act of idolatry to believe that theology finds its possibility here - etched in the phenomenal world of perception and in the look and appearance of the created world. Not least because this claim, that we see God in the glory of the perceptual world, necessarily prohibits any visible from being both self-determinate and determinative of God, since, as I have said, God is seen only when every being and each and every visible surrenders idolatrous self-determination to enter into the beauty and light of infinite participation. In this way a phenomenal indeterminacy reveals not nothingness but an utter dependence upon, and an absolute determination by, God.46

These are rich, multifaceted and important insights: about how we see art and beauty as having a greater reflection on how we see the world, or – at least – on how we should see the world: sacramentally, liturgically, and doxologically – leading not only to a recognition of God's creative presence among us, in each and every sphere of our daily lives, but also returning praise and worship to the divine for His gifts of creation: recognizing, in the process, the giftedness of our lives and of everything around us. These ideas, it must be recognized, have a deeply Franciscan quality and are, in fact, central to an understanding of the Franciscan aesthetical tradition.

Perhaps no scholar has written about the Franciscan aesthetical tradition as eloquently as Mary Beth Ingham, C.S.J., in her book *Rejoicing in the Works of the Lord: Beauty in the Franciscan Tradition*. Citing Thomas Celano's *Life of Francis*, Ingham shows how central

it was for Francis of Assisi to see creation in terms of perceiving the artwork of a Divine Artist:

This happy traveler, hurrying to leave the world as the exile of pilgrimage, was helped, and not just a little by what is in the world. Toward the prince of darkness, he certainly used it as a field of battle. Toward God, however, he used it as the clearest mirror of goodness. In art he praises the Artist; whatever he discovered in creatures he guides to the Creator. He rejoices in all the works of the Lord's hands. And through their delightful display he gazes on their life-giving reason and cause. In beautiful things he discerns Beauty Itself; All good things cry out to him: "The One who made us is Best." 47

It is not only Francis' spirituality, in its incarnational and sacramental dimensions, that complements and fulfills the aesthetic vision which Radical Orthodoxy hopes to promulgate, but even Francis himself, as an icon – in his mystical identity as *the stigmatic* (being so united with the Crucified Christ that his flesh bears the wounds of the Savior) - which encapsulates the necessary integration of the visible with the invisible, transcendence touching immanence, the flesh signifying participation with (and leading toward) the Divine. Blond, as quoted above, explained that "Christ binds together in his own body the invisible and the visible, and as a result he incarnates the transcendent in the flesh and prevents any subsequent account of human materiality divorcing itself from theology." This is exactly what Francis of Assisi accomplishes as the first recorded stigmatic in history: Francis' own body binds together the invisible and visible, and - to quote Blond's description of Christ - Francis' body "incarnates the transcendent in the flesh and prevents any subsequent account of human materiality divorcing itself from theology." Of course, Francis is able to accomplish this through Christ. His body, like a sacred work of art, becomes an icon that points to a deeper, transcendent reality: the salvific reality of Christ-crucified.

Francis, I propose, is an ideal model, a living icon who *embodied* what has become the core of Radical Orthodoxy's theological vision, a vision that extends to all of reality. 48 In Francis, as an icon,

⁴³ George Weigel makes a similar connection, contrasting the Cube-shaped monument located outside Paris, La Grande Arche de la Défense, an icon of modernist art, with the Cathedral of Notre Dame, perceiving a deeper dimension in the difference that is represented in these architectural landmarks that speaks to a distinction in culture and civilization that has monumental social consequences. See George Weigel, *The Cube and the Cathedral: Europe, America, and Politics without God* (New York: Basic, 2005).

⁴⁴ Blond, "Perception," 237.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 238.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 239.

⁴⁷ Cited in Mary Beth Ingham, C.S.J., *Rejoicing in the Works of the Lord:* Beauty in the Franciscan Tradition (New York: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2009), 22.

⁴⁸ I say this while being well aware that Milbank's own perspective on Francis, in the little that he has written about him, has been very ambivalent. On the one hand, Milbank seems to subscribe to the notion, perhaps articulated most directly by the medieval Franciscan mystic and poet Jacopone da Todi-"I see Paris demolish Assisi"—that sees a rupture and discontinuity between the original vision of Francis and the subsequent, late-medieval Franciscan intellectual tradition. Of course, this is a view that is not new, being around for centuries: even when Bonaventure was Minister General of the Order there were not a few friars who opposed his vision as betraying that of Francis (a view which I disagree with, seeing much continuity and development). On the other hand, Milbank is also critical of the ways that Francis as a figure has been interpreted and portrayed by his followers, seeing Christological, eschatological, and economic consequences that have had an influential—in Milbank's perspective, unfortunate—impact as a result of Francis' identity (or, at least, portrayals of that identity). For example, Milbank is critical of how many late-medieval Franciscans, especially those influenced by the ideas of the apocalyptic mystic Joachim of Fiore, interpreted Francis as an eschatological figure who was prophesized in the Apocalypse, connecting a highly eschatological theology with Francis' identity. Notwithstanding Milbank's take, I still contend that at the core of his theological vision and mystical identity, Francis personifies (and, literally, embodies) the fundamental components that shape Radical Orthodoxy's theology: a doxological, liturgical, and sacramental worldview; a deeply incarnational Christianity; a profound recognition of a participatory ontology with the Divine. These are the central components of both a Franciscan and a Radical Orthodoxy vision, and have unfortunately been ignored, notwithstanding their parallel centrality, in

we see the embodiment of a theology of ontological participation, of an incarnational Christianity, of a theological vision that points to the myth of secular space and sees – instead – the sacred in every sphere of creation – this is, in fact, the secret to the simple, but profound, message that is at the center of *The Canticle of Creatures*, where Francis first articulated how everything in creation points to the transcendent, teaching us to open our eyes and see the deeper, sacred and God-given, reality that is all around us.

Subsequent Franciscan thinkers, such as Bonaventure, have added to such important aesthetical thought. Consider that Blond titled his essay on aesthetics "Perception," as the issue for him as with other Radical Orthodoxy theologians - was to recover a deeper way of seeing, epistemologically and ontologically, in order to perceive that which has been lost by the modern mind: a hermeneutical disposition that sees beyond material things as self-sufficient, seeing instead a creation that is dependent on, and participates in, the Creator. Similarly, the "intellectual-spiritual journey set forth by Bonaventure involves perceiving correctly," Ingham explains. 49 "Again and again the Seraphic Doctor invites us to move from sense knowledge to spiritual insight, from corporal beauty to incorporeal beauty, so that we might reach that Christian wisdom, able to look above itself."50 Here Bonaventure's theology speaks to the deeper issue of perception which is also central to Radical Orthodoxy theology. "Because of the rational structure of the created order, once we humans were perfectly able to understand the book of creation and to recognize the divine Artist at work."51 In our pre-lapsarian state of innocence, Bonaventure explained, our perception was not yet distorted by sin and, therefore, humanity was able to see creation as it exists, in relation to the Creator. Bonaventure continues: "They were then so wise that when they saw all things in themselves, they also perceived them in their proper genus and with reference to God's creating Art."52 Thus, how do we return to, and reawaken, that pure and holistic vision, the manner of seeing that was lost which saw reality sacramentally and doxologically—in reference to, and praise of, God?

Returning to Blond, given the centrality of the incarnation his theory of aesthetics turns to Christ as the answer. It is the incarnated Christ, the Word that became man, the transcendent taking on human flesh, the invisible permeating the visible, that sets the framework not only for an essential theory of aesthetics that is able to look beyond the material, within the scope of both an objective and subjective dialectic, but an entire worldview

favor of polemical concentration on less imperative issues. Once again, it is time to reorient our focus and thus broaden the perspective. See Milbank, "The Franciscan Conundrum," esp. 468, 489-490; Hughes, "Bonaventure's Defense of Mendicancy," 509-542. While Jacopone da Todi was skeptical of late-medieval Franciscan intellectual currents on the mendicant tradition—"With all their theology they've led the Order down a crooked path," he wrote—it is important to highlight that the majority of his skepticism may have reflected less an opposition to the ideas themselves that came from the Franciscan schools and more a dissatisfaction with friars living a lifestyle associated with academic high culture. Jacopone wrote: "That's the way it is—not a shred left of the spirit of the Rule!/ . . . Our honored professors get special treatment/In the wing of the monastery reserved for guests/While the others eat herbs and oil in the refectory/Should the master of theology pick at his food/They stand on their heads to try to please him/Let the cook fall sick and who will pay him a visit?/In chapter meetings they keep passing new rules/And the first chapter to introduce one/Is always the first to break it." See Jacopone da Todi, The Lauds, trans. Serge and Elizabeth Hughes, pref. Elémire Zolla, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 123.

49 Ingham, Rejoicing in the Works of the Lord, 26.

which sees creation in its incarnational and doxological fullness: as pointing to, and participating in, the work of the Divine Artist (as Francis of Assisi perceived reality). Bonaventure, likewise, saw Christ and his redemption of humanity as that which can save us from the distorted vision of reality that sin had left. "Here is where Bonaventure's Christology plays a central role for his theory of beauty. We need Christ in order to restore and reform our inner and outer faculties: to order them again so that we might see and know God."53 Again, the emphasis on perception is important here for Bonaventure-conversely, not only is "Perception" the title of Blond's essay but, even more so, a central component of Radical Orthodoxy's vision: we need to transform our perception of reality; thus come back to a liturgical worldview that considers worship, as a way of life that is constantly oriented toward the Divine and thus transcends empty materialism and secular assumptions that distort the holistic character of our God-given world.⁵⁴ Thus, as Radical Orthodoxy considers perception—which extends to various ways of seeing and knowing, meaning ontologically, epistemologically, teleologically, politically, aesthetically, covering all spheres of culture and reality—so, too, Bonaventure argues for the restoration and reform of "our inner and outer faculties: to order them again so that we might see and know God." As Radical Orthodoxy considers the incarnated Christ to be at the center of this project of restoration, so too does Bonaventure, knowing that it is Christ who in his redemptive role restores and reforms our faculties of perception, providing a vision of God that was distorted and lost due to sin. Ingham explains the central components of a Franciscan aesthetical vision, and in this explanation we see once again the various concerns that are of the utmost importance to Radical Orthodoxy's vision: a liturgical, sacramental, and doxological ontology that sees the sacred goodness of creation and points to its transcendent source, the Creator:

The commitment to beauty in creation, in the human person and in the Incarnation, grounds the sacramental intuition of the Franciscan tradition. Here the term *sacrament* relates not simply to the theological category of sacraments (signs of divine love) but to an awareness of all of reality as SIGN: a manifestation of meaning, a work of art from the hand of the loving Artist, a mirror that reflects a transcendent dimension. This Franciscan sacramental vision of meaning is both transcendent and immanent: at its heart lies an artistic vision of the relationship between the divine Artist and creation as the work of art.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Ibid., 26.

⁵¹ Ibid., 24.

⁵² Bonaventure as quoted in Ingham, ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 25.

^{54 &}quot;One of the most central aims of a radically orthodox perspective," Pickstock explains, "is to restore time and embodiment to our understanding of reality." Smith elaborates: "This is indicative of an even broader goal of revaluing materiality and embodiment as part of what we might describe as an incarnational ontology." Pickstock as quoted in Smith, "What Hath Cambridge To Do With Azusa Street?," 105. For original quotation see Catherine Pickstock, "Radical Orthodoxy and the Meditations of Time," in Hemming, Radical Orthodoxy?, 64.

⁵⁵ Ingham, *Rejoicing in the Works of the Lord*, 33. These same ideas, of beauty, especially sacred Beauty, inspiring a devotion to God, inspiring us to expand our sense perception of reality in order to see the fullness (and not restrictions) of reality, were delivered in Pope Benedict XVI's discourse to Czech authorities in Prague on September 26, 2009. Here it is especially interesting how, beyond the power of iconography, Benedict points to the influence of beautiful architecture as an equally impressive expression of faith and God's hand at work in the world, able to expand and awaken our sight toward the transcendent mysteries of life. "The arresting beauty of its [Prague's] churches, castle, squares and bridges cannot but draw our minds to God. Their beauty expresses faith; they are epiphanies of God that rightly leave us pondering the glorious marvels to which we creatures can aspire when we

Conclusion: A Testimony and "Anonymous Franciscans"

Earlier this year I wrote John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock a long, and what I hoped to be thoughtful, letter, expressing my thanks and gratitude for how much their work – their theology – has helped me to better understand, appreciate, and live my own Franciscan identity. I presumed it was a rare letter for them to receive as academics — especially academics whose theology has, at times, been categorized as "anti-Franciscan" — a religious friar thanking them for their inspiration in helping influence a more authentic Franciscan life. They both wrote back with deep gratitude — I was especially moved by how personal, appreciative, and humble John Milbank's response was.

In my letter, I shared with them some of my struggles during my novitiate year. Here are segments from that letter: "As a novice, I was struggling. One of the errors that I was falling into was treating the chapel, and therefore all the time that I had during liturgy and for personal prayer, as sacred space while treating every other moment (dinner with my friar brothers, recreation, social occasions, etc.) as secular, and therefore 'less important' time and space." It was during this time in novitiate that I started reading Radical Orthodoxy theology with greater sincerity — I know, not necessarily your "light" spiritual reading expectant of the novitiate year, yet the Lord had a plan — and something began to change.

My letter continued: "Yet, while reading your work and that of the other RO contributors, something powerful began to happen. Not only was I gaining insights academically, but I was beginning to have an intellectual and spiritual conversion that led me to realize why there was something wrong in the way that I was approaching religious life, especially as a Franciscan. In restricting time in the chapel as sacred while treating most other experiences as innately secular and, therefore, of less importance, I realized I was falling into dualisms in thinking and acting that were having a bad effect on me and my relationships: being reflective not of a healthy Christian faith but of secular assumptions which promulgate a false dichotomy, as your works have pointed out. Reading your works, and especially the emphasis on the need for a deeply incarnational spirituality that is present in ontological participation, in reawakening a doxological worldview, in an incarnational aesthetics which sees the sacred in all spheres of created beauty, allowed me a deeper understanding and appreciation of my Franciscan identity. It allowed me a better love for the vision of our founder, St. Francis of Assisi, and the theology that he was promulgating in such writings as the Canticle of Creatures, which reads to me as a work filled with primary ideas that are crucial to the RO understanding of the world: a participatory ontology, understanding created things properly as dependent on, and participating in, the divine, giving praise and thanksgiving to God through this doxological sight of reality."

The most personal part of my letter emphasized: "It is not an exaggeration when I say your works have helped me when I was struggling with my own Franciscan identity as a novice, when

give expression to the aesthetic and the noetic aspects of our innermost being. How tragic it would be if someone were to behold such examples of beauty, yet ignore the transcendent mystery to which they point. The creative encounter of the classical tradition and the Gospel gave birth to a vision of man and society attentive to God's presence among us. In shaping the cultural patrimony of this continent it insisted that reason does not end with what the eye sees but rather is drawn to what lies beyond, that for which we deeply yearn: the Spirit, we might say, of Creation." See Pope' Benedict's discourse to Czech authorities, "Truth Does Conquer, Not by Force, But by Persuasion," Sept. 26, 2009.

I was perceiving my daily reality through an unhealthy dualism; your works have allowed me a greater, more holistic (and I believe, deeply Franciscan) hermeneutic of life, a vision that has helped me to grow into a more authentic person with a deeper spirituality, helping me to become a better friar, a better brother to my fellow friars, a better brother to the people I have been called to minister to and encounter every day, becoming a better servant of the Lord. I cannot tell you enough how much change transpired in my own spirituality and thinking, affecting my relationships and my surroundings, after I started reading and truly internalizing, on a practical, daily basis, the vision that Radical Orthodoxy theology was espousing."

I am far from perfect in living the Franciscan life, my shortcomings are too many to count—just ask my friar brothers! but I cannot stress enough how much more authentic my understanding and desire for an incarnational Franciscan life has become after my encounter with Radical Orthodoxy. In the constructive theological vision that they espouse I consider John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, Phillip Blond and their Radical Orthodoxy cohorts not as opponents of a Franciscan worldview but, on the contrary, I consider the sons and daughters of Radical Orthodoxy to be "anonymous Franciscans." They are inheritors and interlocutors of the incarnational theology, ontological vision of beauty, and the participatory metaphysics that the Poor Man of Assisi espoused with a vibrancy which few, in the history of Christianity, have ever matched. Radical Orthodoxy theologians have, through their writings and theological vision, allowed me to have a truer grasp and deeper appreciation of my Franciscan identity. It is through the reading of their works, especially during the vulnerable and difficult time of being a religious in the novitiate, that I came to better understand a Franciscan outlook on the world. An over-accentuated concentration on Radical Orthodoxy's provocative interpretation of Scotus has had, I believe, the unfortunate result of mitigating attention from Radical Orthodoxy's constructive theological vision in Franciscan circles yet it is a constructive theological vision that is, in its deepest sense, vividly Franciscan, espousing a theological worldview worthy of, and compatible with, Francis of Assisi.

⁵⁶ This may be difficult for some (perhaps even Radical Orthodoxy theologians themselves) to accept, given the distinctly critical perspective toward the Franciscan legacy that a number of Radical Orthodoxy publications have taken — a fact that I do not want to ignore — however, I firmly believe that the underlying vision, as this essay has explicated, of Radical Orthodoxy contains so many unquestionable parallels to a Franciscan vision, even if without direct intent by (and, thus, unbeknownst to) the authors themselves: hence, my choice, playing off of Karl Rahner's famous coinage, of the phrase "anonymous Franciscans."



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