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Repairing the Church: A Franciscan Perspective

By David B. Couturier, OFM. Cap.

he Church is in crisis. Sixteen years after the sexual abuse scandal first broke in Boston, we find ourselves mired again in the ugly and terrifying realization that thousands more children have been abused, victims have been abandoned, families have been torn apart, and crimes have been committed and covered up by "men of God." We now know that these crimes reach across the world to the highest levels of the Church, and include bishops, archbishops and cardinals. There is no doubt now that the Church has created a culture of corruption and cruelty against the people of God. We know that our litanies of shame and sorrow ring hollow and our procedures have been ineffective because they have protected bishops from accountability and transparency. It is clear that it was naïve at best and self-serving at worst for the bishops to have exempted themselves from the strict accountability protocols they imposed on priests during the development of the Dallas Charter in 2002. They relied on the principle that they answered to a higher power and jurisdiction in the Vatican, when they knew full well that the Vatican was ill-equipped to handle episcopal malfeasance

of such a scope and magnitude. We are left with our horror, anger and rage. Archbishop Wilton Gregory of Atlanta recently spoke frankly and in personal terms that many of us can relate to:

My anger and disappointment, shared by Catholics and others, are only heightened by the reality that leaders who have engaged in or neglected to protect others from such damaging and deviant behavior have for many years failed to be held accountable — and have even risen in leadership positions. We must do better — for the sake of all victims and survivors of sexual abuse, and for the sake of everyone whom we serve in the name of Jesus Christ.²

How did the Church in America, meant to be the "community of the beloved," turn into a culture of corruption and cruelty? How did it become possible for priests to attack their own parishioners, especially the youngest and most innocent among them, and for bishops to leave these victims in the ditch of their deepest pain against every moral norm and example of Jesus in the Scriptures? How could these bishops read the parable of the Good Samaritan and not feel indicted and compelled to compassion? How were they blind to their own cruelty? Part of the answer may lie in the failure of our bishops to understand how they have created and sustained a culture of indifference and privilege among themselves.

Several months ago, I read the entire transcript of the Australian Royal Commission's Final Report on the Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (December 15, 2017).³ I was particularly intrigued by the grilling that the Archbishops of Australia took from the lead investigators. One question from a brilliant woman barrister stood out. Paraphrasing her question, it went something like this – you, Archbishops, have testified that you did not design a common national policy or procedure to deal with sexual abuse cases. Each diocese and each bishop developed individual and separate procedures. How is it, then, that all of

¹ It is important that we understand clearly the data around the incidence of child sexual abuse before and after its revelations in Boston in 2002. Mark Gray, a researcher for the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), recently provided important statistics about old and new cases. He writes: "The most common decade of birth for alleged abusers was the 1930s and the most common decade of ordination was the 1960s. This profile has not changed in allegations that emerged in the 14 years that have followed-including the recent grand jury report. No new wave of abuse has emerged in the United States." Gray goes on to compare the US Church's efforts to create safe environments with those of secular institutions. "In the last three years, 22 allegations of abuse occurring during 2015-2017 have been made. This is an average of about seven per year nationwide in the Church. That is far too many. Nothing is acceptable other than zero. At the same time, to put those reports in some context, 42 teachers in the state of Pennsylvania, where the grand jury reported from, lost their licenses to educate for sexual misconduct in 2017. As recently as 2015, 65 teachers in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) were in "teacher jail" for accusations of sexual abuse or harassment in that county alone. The current wave of "educator sexual misconduct" has yet to receive the same aggregation and attention that clergy sexual abuse has by the media (although The Washington Post has rung a warning bell and Carol Shakeshaft has written extensively on it in academic work). As the John Jay researchers note, "No other institution has undertaken a public study of sexual abuse and, as a result, there are no comparable data to those collected and reported by the Catholic Church" (p. 5). See: Mark Gray, "Pain Never Disappears from Unhealed Wounds," (Georgetown University: CARA) August 28, 2018. Accessed at: http://nineteensixty-four.blogspot.com/2018/08/ pain-never-disappears-from-unhealed.html.

² "Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory's Statement in response to the resignation of Theodore McCarrick," August 9, 2018, at: https://georgiabulletin.org/news/2018/08/archbishop-wilton-d-gregorys-statement-in-response-to-the-resignation-of-theodore-mccarrick/

³ Accessed at: https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/document-library

you developed similar procedures and practices that look strikingly alike, despite never having spoken about this in common?

The Archbishops offered sincere responses, but they failed to answer the question. They couldn't answer it, because it would require a level of corporate understanding that most of them and most of us, in our highly individualized mindset, have failed to achieve. Dioceses, like all other institutions (secular and religious) are run by conscious and unconscious processes. There are institutional codes of conduct and rules of expectation that are conscious and find their way into our human resource manuals and there are other organizational codes, customs, attitudes and expectations that are unconscious and out of direct aware-

and their attendant anxieties over weakness and loss of control. They are unaware as to how these anxieties and defenses become socialized in their institutions. Bishops can probably cite the proper codes of canon law that deal with assigning priests and closing parishes. But, they probably have no clue on how to admit and alter their own feelings of ambition before they become routinized in leadership styles and structures. Similarly, they could likely recite the canonical codes dealing with the proper dispositions needed for marriage and yet be unable to understand and deal with the troubled dynamics of loneliness and isolation that become patterns of denial and privilege in their diocesan and parochial operations.

Case in point. Theodore McCarrick was a troubled man



ness.⁴ Many of the codes on how to deal with power, anger and intimacy lie well below the normal levels of corporate discussion. These are the codes now coming to light as a result of sexual abuse cases and the #MeToo Movement.⁵

Bishops, like many corporate leaders, are woefully unaware of or indifferent to their own powerful aspirations

⁴ David B. Couturier, "The Socio-Analytic Study of Catholic Organizations Today," in John H. Morgan, *Foundation Theology 2016* (Mishawaka, IN: The Graduate Theological Foundation, 2016), 43-54.

⁵ David B. Couturier, "#MeToo and Franciscan Values: The Psychological, Organizational and Spiritual Dynamics of Sexual Harassment at Work," *Franciscan Connections* 68:1 (Spring, 2018), 31-40.

for most of his priesthood and all of his time as bishop, archbishop and cardinal. And no brother bishop saw it? No fellow archbishop or cardinal had a clue? Or, is the problem deeper? Do our bishops even realize just how troubled they are? Will they admit that their scotoma is a corporate failure and structural weakness in the very system of leadership they have created? One could argue, as socio-analysts trained in organizational defenses would, that they didn't want to see what they saw and know what they knew, be-

cause the anxiety over their failing system of leadership was too intense and threatening.⁶

I sense that the bishops will now proceed with a familiar maneuver and routine: ferret out the "bad bishops" and ignore the troubling similarity of abuse responses across the world, on every continent, among all levels of clergy (deacons, priests and bishops). Segmentation may be a good legal strategy, but it won't solve the problems.

Too many laity have suffered because of our unprocessed fears and our troubled ambitions. It's time for bishops to come clean. In 2002, when the scandal erupted, the American bishops exempted themselves from scrutiny when accusations came in. As I stated above, they reasoned that they answered to a higher power in the Vatican, knowing full well that the Vatican wasn't equipped to consider episcopal malfeasance of this kind and magnitude. Might it not be the case that the bishops were terrified to look inward, at themselves and the structures from which they benefit? Most of us are.

The danger is that bishops like McCarrick will become scapegoats, the bad apples to be tossed aside to protect the "innocence" of the episcopacy. That strategy is short-sighted.

There is a profound weakness in the episcopacy right now, and this, despite the overwhelming talent, holiness, courage and zeal of so many of them. McCarrick is an example, not a scapegoat. He is a charming, funny, immensely talented man who, I am sure, deeply loves God and wants to serve that God. And yet, he is, if reports are true, a deeply troubled man. And, I believe, he is a profoundly lonely and isolated man whose power and ambition blinded his fellow bishops from seeing what was going on for so long right in front of them.

McCarrick's fellow bishops couldn't see how he used his power to force intimacy and his ambition to avoid his anxieties. Bishops have an opportunity to learn something about the toxic nature of their own power and ambition and how it keeps them from seeing what is right in front of them and from acting effectively and ethically for those they are ordained to serve.

There is a hard and troubling truth staring us in the face. Those of us who lead the church and its ministries at its various levels (bishops, priests, religious women and men) do not understand or are profoundly ambiguous about the relational dynamics of power and intimacy both personally and organizationally. We have known this since the groundbreaking studies on the psychological forces in vocational life were first published in the 1970s and 1980s.⁷

Our ambivalence over these results and what they tell us about desire in religion continues to hamper our ability to proceed effectively toward the personal and structural conversion we need.

The Franciscan Movement began with a divine mandate to "repair the churches." St. Francis stood before the cross at San Damiano and heard the charge to attend to the ruinous dynamics affecting the church of God in his day. His efforts and the legacy he left were not a recitation of "shame and sorrow." It was a life of penance, which went beyond the occasional act of fasting or intense prayer.8 Francis changed structures. He transformed his life, his behaviors and the very architecture of his life from privilege to poverty, from hubris to humility. He developed a new form of life, one of social engagement organized around minority and a fraternal economy.9 Our bishops will not succeed by intoning litanies of shame and sorrow. People need and deserve to see actions that reflect a new minority among men who have been accustomed to privilege and prestige. That transformation will not be easy.

The Church before Vatican II declared its identity as a "perfect society," uniquely designed by God to stand above and beyond the politics and problems of civil society. To that end, the Church robed its popes as emperors and its bishops as monarchs in satin and ermine. Vatican II took a humbler stance recognizing the Church's proper identity as a "pilgrim people," suffering the anxieties and fears, as well as the joys and hopes of a community on the way to truth, beauty and goodness. It has not been an easy or smooth transition from perfect to pilgrim and what still holds the church back from fulfilling its mission in the world is its inability to study the unconscious organizational dynamics that impact every imperfect but aspiring community.

What trips up the church are not its sacred aspirations. The Church loves the Lord and depends on His grace. There is no doubt about this and this truth still comforts, consoles, moves and inspires the people of God. However, the church also wrestles with the ambiguities that tempt us to hide failures behind patterns of secrecy and protection. If we are to surpass this moment of unparalleled crisis, we will have to confront our inordinate and inconsistent affliction with power and intimacy. Bishops will need to admit

⁶ Ken Eisold, What you don't know you know: Our Hidden Motives in Life, Business and Everything Else (New York: Other Press, 2009); Manfred F.R. Kets de Vries, Struggling with the Demon: Perspectives on Individual and Organizational Irrationality (Madison, CT: Psychosocial Press, 2001).

⁷ L.M. Rulla, J. Ridick and F. Imoda, Entering and Leaving Vocation:

Intrapsychic Dynamics (Rome: Gregorian University Press,1987) and Psychological Structure and Vocation: Motivations for Entering and Leaving Vocation (Dublin: Villa Books, 1979).

⁸ R. Stewart, Stewart R. *De Illis qui faciunt Penitentiam. The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order: Origins, Development, Interpretation.* (Rome, Istituto Storico dei Capuccini, 1991).

⁹ David B. Couturier, "Franciscan Minority and Prophetic Presence: A Psychological Perspective," in E. Covi, *Francescanesimo e Profezia* (Rome, 1985), pp. 664-673 and *The Fraternal Economy: A Pastoral Psychology of Franciscan Economics* (South Bend, IN: Cloverdale Books, 2007).

¹⁰ Patrick Granfield, "The Church as *Societas Perfecta* in the Schemata of Vatican I, "*Church History* 48:4 (December, 1979), 431-446.

their own ambitions for power and how those ambitions are baked into structures lacking in full accountability and transparency that they have created and maintained for their own advantage (and that of the clergy subordinate to them).

Bishops need to relook at the dynamics of intimacy within the church and what the failures of celibacy say about their incomplete understanding of sexuality, marriage and women. Bishops will need to forego the temptation to scapegoat others for what is their distinct crisis and blindness. Organizational psychologists already see the danger of their familiar patterns of avoidance – i.e., splitting the world into ideologies of "all good" and "all bad." This crisis deserves better than tired tropes that blame this horror on "them," whether liberals or conservatives. Nor will it do to project all fault for sexual abuse and its cover-up on any selected group put in danger of illogical and unsubstantiated discrimination once again (i.e., homosexuals).11 What is at issue are the unconscious ways that power and intimacy at the highest levels of the Church interfere reqularly with our deepest aspirations and our need for a verifiable witness of true communion in a church still structured to inequity. All of us are indicted and complicit in the culture of corruption and cruelty that has been created. The guicker we confess this and learn how it came to be, the faster will be our repair.

St. Francis provided an answer to the greed and violence of his time. He provides an answer for the ecclesial crisis of our age. It lies in a new spirit of minority, which begins with truth-telling. Bishops must tell/confess the truth (as we all must) and the whole truth about themselves. And, before they take up the task of telling the truth (and the whole truth) about society, as the prophets of justice they ought to be, they must be willing and able to tell the truth and the whole truth about the church. St. Francis was not afraid of this scandal of confession and the reform it requires. Nor should we be.

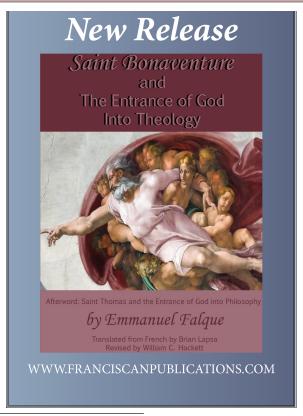
I share the hope and prayer of Archbishop Wilton Gregory:

I pray that this moment, and these days, weeks, and months ahead, will be an opportunity for light to break through the darkness, and for darkness to be exposed to the light. I pray that all victims and survivors of sexual abuse will come forward and receive the help, support, and healing they need. And I pray that our Church and our leadership will be renewed and transformed by the light of Christ and have the courage to take the necessary next steps.

Like so many of you I am angry, but I am not overcome by despair. I hope and I pray that the Holy Spirit will cleanse and strengthen the Church. My anger has not led me to hopelessness; I pray yours has not either. I am grateful for your witness of faith and hope, even in difficult times.¹²



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¹² Wilton D. Gregory, op. cit.

¹¹ Kathleen McChesney, "What Caused the Crisis?: Key Findings of the John Jay College Study on clergy sexual abuse," America (June 6, 2011) accessed at: https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2011/06/06/ what-caused-crisis-key-findings-john-jay-college-study-clergy-sexualabuse; see the (unsubstantiated) words of Bishop Robert Morlino, in Brian Rowe, "Bishop Morlino, others charge 'homosexual subculture' for clergy sexual abuse crisis." in National Catholic Reporter (August 21, 2018), accessed at: https://www.ncronline.org/news/accountability/bishop-morlino-others-charge-homosexual-subculture-clergy-abuse-crisis and Dr. Thomas Plante, "Continuing to blame homosexual men, celibacy, and believing that the frequency of clergy abuse found in the past (especially committed in the 1960's through the early 1980's) will continue now and in the future is clearly misguided based on these conclusive research findings," see "The New John Jay Report on Clergy Sex Abuse," Psychology Today (May 18, 2011), accessed at: https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/do-the-right-thing/201105/the-new-john-jay-report-clergy-abuse-in-the-catholic-church.

Clare with Francis The Saints of Assisi Come ... Converse ... Create

Come

During the fall of 2014, twelve St. Bonaventure University students participated in an honors seminar studying with Professor Jean-François Godet-Calogeras the life and relevance of Clare of Assisi in the 13th century and today. The seminar attracted students intrigued by the first woman to join Francis' new movement. They wanted to know who she was. At the end of the seminar, all shared their enthusiasm, discoveries, reflections. The men expressed their admira-

WHERE'S CLARE?—The Bonaventure campus is home to multiple statue of St. Francis, such as the one at left, but none of St. Clare, after whom Clare College was named.

Unfair for Clare Clare community

feel campus should have a Clare statue

By LAURIN ZAZZARA AND KAILYN JENNINGS

St. Bonaventure has mulcry status of the status of Clare colleges. And a consider of Clare Colleges. John Apozynski, a retired a status of Clare on campus. The grade form of a good portion of the status of Clare on campus. The status of Clare on campus the women into the movement to make it university has both male and female students, it is essential that she becomes a visible as Francis."

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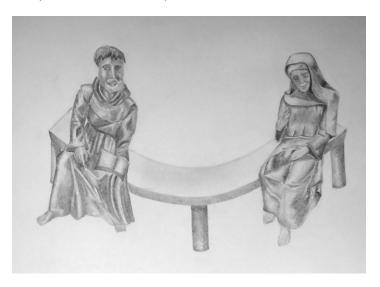
By LAURIN ZAZZARA AND KAILYN JENNINGS

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tion and acknowledged that Clare had taught them how important Clare is, that the Franciscan movement would not be complete without her. The women saw in Clare a role model, as one of them wrote: "I believe that Clare will be able to serve as a role model for me in times where I may be experiencing difficulty." And all of them concurred on the same astounding observation: there is no representation of Clare on the SBU campus. How come? They ex-

pressed the desire to make her visible at the university by putting up a statue of her on campus.

The following semester, in the spring of 2015, the same professor taught a course on justice and peace in the Franciscan tradition. Thirteen students participated. Among the topics studied were gender issues, and here the study focused on the figure of Clare. Following the class, two students wrote an article in *The Bonaventure*, "Unfair for Clare," to express the desire to have a statue of Clare on campus. There was clearly a call for action.



Converse

"Unfair for Clare" ignited a conversation. First, Fr. David Couturier, executive director of the Franciscan Institute (and also then dean of the School of Franciscan Studies), asked Prof. Godet-Calogeras to get back to the students, gather concrete ideas, and put together a proposal.

The first results of a search for statues were disappointing. The statues found on the Internet were static and stereotypical. There was a shared desire for something more lively and interactive. Then emerged the question: why not have "Clare together with Francis, like in conversation?" A student, Ramya Sreeramoju '19, drew a first sketch of Clare and Francis on a bench.

During the same period of time and unbeknownst to students, Bob Crowley '71 was in conversation with Sr. Margaret Carney about the statues on the SBU campus and how they lack any continuity of "telling our story." They discussed statues that should be on campus. The first

one mentioned was a statue of Clare. It was thought that it could be a donation of the class of 1971 for its 50th class reunion.

The two conversations merged, and a committee was gathered, led by Bob Van Wicklin, vice president for University Advancement. A more elaborate design was sketched by Hannah Walker '14, then employee in the University Advancement department. This time Clare was accompanied by her cat, and Francis was flanked with the wolf of Gubbio.

The committee used the sketch to conduct a search for an artist. Among a few proposals, the committee chose the one offered in November 2016 by Ray Sokolowski of Pittsburgh.

"After visiting Assisi, Italy I was immensely inspired by St. Francis and his teachings. It was a spiritual renewal ... my encounter with St. Francis reinforced the importance of the lives of all people and of all living things. It brought out in me the idea that St. Francis said we are brothers with all that surrounds us. I want my sculpture to reflect this inspiration." —Excerpt from Ray Sokolowski's proposal, November 11, 2016.

Shortly after, two generous trustees, Laurie Branch and Jack McGinley, offered to donate the money needed to pursue the project. That was the green light to proceed from conversation to creation.

Create

The creation of the statue began with the selection of models for both figures. A niece of the sculptor posed for Clare, while a Bonaventure student, Matt Creeron '16, agreed to pose for Francis.

In the summer of 2017, Ray Sokolowski and his wife, Kathy Rooney, came to campus to present a maquette of the sculpture.

The project was becoming reality. From the maquette, Ray Sokolowski moved to create the full life size sculpture of Clare and the female cat that used to play around her, and of Francis with his brother wolf of Gubbio.







Once finished, the clay sculpture was transferred to the foundry in Zanesville, Ohio where it was molded and then founded into bronze.

On June 6, 2018 the bronze statue traveled from Ohio to Allegany, and was installed on Saint Bonaventure campus.

Today the statue invites all students, staff and visitors to St. Bonaventure to come for a while, to converse about the goodness of God and all creation, and to go into the world and create peace, goodness and justice.













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Sanctifying Grace and the Threefold Way in the Summa Halensis

By Katherine Wrisley Shelby

Behold, I have described it for you in a threefold way, Proverbs 22:11. Since all forms of knowledge bear the mark of the Trinity, then all those things which are taught in Scripture ought to represent in themselves a vestige of the Trinity ... And this threefold meaning of Scripture corresponds to a threefold hierarchical activity, namely, purification, illumination, and perfection. Purification leads to peace, illumination to truth, and perfection to charity. When these are perfectly acquired, the soul is beatified, and to the extent that it is always revolving around these three activities, its reward will be increased.

hus St. Bonaventure of Bagnoregio begins his spiritual treatise, *The Threefold Way*. The significance of the three "hierarchical activities" for the Seraphic Doctor's spirituality and theological project (which he of course borrows from the sixth-century anonymous author, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite), hardly needs an introduction for any scholar in the least bit familiar with the tenor of his writings. For Bonaventure, "the soul is beatified" through these three activities—or namely, through purification, illumination, and perfection—inasmuch as he thinks these inwardly structure the soul into a "similitude" or "likeness" of the Trinity. His opening words here from his titularly named spiritual treatise, moreover, allude to the idea that these three activities thus also play an espe-

cially crucial role within his teachings on grace: as Edward Coughlin suggests in his own introduction to the definitive English translation of *The Threefold Way*, these activities "serve as one of the primary frameworks through which Bonaventure renders an account of how the soul, under the influence of grace, is led back (*reductio*) to God."²

As is so often the case when reading any medieval theologian, however, it would be a grave mistake to regard the Seraphic Doctor's use of the Threefold Way within his doctrine of grace as emerging miraculously bereft of any further theological context. Bonaventure was, after all, a product of the University, and his prominence as a Scholastic theologian ought not be regarded apart from the community of emerging Franciscan scholars at the thirteenth-century University of Paris who introduced him to the concepts that would become the central pillars of his thought. My purpose today is to highlight one such avenue of influence between this very community and the Seraphic Doctor's theology. More particularly, I will show how—well before Bonaventure would himself pick up the pen for his famed text of the same name—the Summa Halensis similarly employed the "Threefold Way" within its own account of what grace "is" and what grace "does" within the soul. In service of this aim, I here provide a sort of primer on the doctrine of grace in the Summa Halensis by first introducing the text's definition of what sanctifying grace "is" and next exploring the text's explanation of what grace "does," or namely, its effects, both of which are treated in a series of Questions in Book 3. In so doing, it is my hope that scholars interested in Bonaventure's spirituality and theology might arrive at a deeper understanding of the historical-theological context that anticipated his own use of the "Threefold Way" within his teachings on grace, and thereby perhaps also arrive at a deeper appreciation of what the Seraphic Doctor himself meant by claiming that grace purifies, illuminates, and perfects the soul into a likeness of the Trinity.

What Grace "Is" in the Summa Halensis: A Created Gift

How, then, does the *Summa Halensis* define grace? As other scholars have already well attested, the histori-

¹ Bonaventure, De Triplici Via, in Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae Opera Omnia, v. 8 (Ad claras Aquas Quaracchi prope Florentiam: Ex typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1898), p. 3, prol.: "Ecce, descripsi eam tibi tripliciter, etc. Proverbiorum vigesimo secundo. Cum omnis scientia gerat Trinitatis insigne, praecipue illa quae docetur in sacra Scriptura, debet in se repraesentare vestigium Trinitatis ... Hic autm triplex intellectus respondet triplici actui hierarchico, scilicet purgationi, illuminationi, et perfectioni. Purgatio autem ad pacem ducit, illuminatio ad veritatem, perfectio ad caritatem; quibus perfecte adeptis, anima beatificatur, et secundum quod circa haec versatur, suscipit meriti incrementum." All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated. Hereafter, all references to Bonaventure's Latin writings in the Opera Omnia will be referenced by the work, followed by a reference to the volume and page number in the Opera Omnia where it appears. I am deeply grateful to Fr. David Couturier at the Franciscan Institute, Dr. Timothy J. Johnson, Dr. Boyd Taylor Coolman, Br. William Short, and all the friars at St. Isidore's College in Rome for the opportunity to present this material at St. Isidore's for the conference, "Alexander of Hales and Early Franciscan Masters. Rome, Frati Editori di Quaracchi, June 9-10, 2018." This paper has been revised and abridged from a section of my dissertation; see Katherine Wrisley Shelby, The Vir Hierarchicus: St. Bonaventure's Theology of Grace (PhD Dissertation, Boston College, 2018), pp. 74-97.

² See F. Edward Coughlin, "Introduction," in *Writings on the Spritual Life*, ed. F. Edward Coughlin, *Works of St. Bonaventure* X (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2006), p. 37.

cal-theological significance of the doctrine of grace therein cannot be overstated.³ Alister McGrath's monumental work on the history of the Christian doctrine of justification quite importantly identifies Alexander of Hales as one of the first theologians in the thirteenth century to define

sanctifying grace, or gratia gratum faciens, as a created gift in distinction to the uncreated gift of the Holy Spirit.⁴ Some context is here warranted. In the twelfth century, a handful of theologians had reacted rather strongly against the Lombard's claim in The Sentences that grace simply is the Holy Spirit, or namely, the uncreated gift of charity that forgives sins, and they thus began demanding a more precise causal explanation with respect to how God inheres in the soul through grace.5 Simon

Tournai, for example, ascertained that there must be "a consistent distinction between what is human reality and what is divine" with respect to humanity's justification, so that, as Aage Rydstrom-Poulsen has summarized of Tournai's ideas, "Human righteousness is one thing, the causa formalis, whereas the source of righteousness is another, causa efficiens. Likewise, human caritas is one thing, and its source, the Holy Spirit, is another." In light of these demands for "more precise distinctions and a clear language of causality in order to explain the interaction between divine and human nature" that developed in the twelfth

century,⁷ Alexander of Hales would become one of the first theologians—most likely even *the* first, according to some scholars⁸—to actually distinguish between a "created" gift of sanctifying grace and the "uncreated" gift of grace, understood as the Holy Spirit, in both his *Disputed Questions*

from before he was a brother and in his *Glossa* on the Lombard's *Sentences*.9

Subsequently, the authors of the Summa Halensis—comprised of Alexander's students-would take up the question of what grace is in Book 3, and would there follow the precedent set by their Teacher in affirming that there is both an "uncreated" and a "created" gift when defining grace. The former, according to the Summa Halensis, is the Holy Spirit, "the first power of loving" which, when "given to us ... transforms us into a divine

species so that the soul is assimilated to God."10 The author

9 Ibid.

¹⁰ See Summa Theologica Doctoris Irrefagabilis Alexandri de Hales Ordinis Minorum (Quaracchi: Ex Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1924), 3 (4.2), p. 3, inq. 1, tract. 1, q. 2, c. 1, a. 2, p. 959: "Dicendum quod est gratia creata et increata in habente gratiam. Gratia increata est Spiritus Sanctus ... Spiritus enim Sanctus eo facit nos gratos quo facit nos gratos quo facit nos deiformes; hoc autem facit, quia amor est ... Quia ergo Spiritus amor est, immo et virtus prima amoris, inde est, cum datur nobis, transformat nos in divinam speciem, ut sit ipsa anima assimilata Deo." Hereafter and throughout this paper, I have chosen to refer

⁷ Rydstrøm-Poulsen, *The Gracious God*, pp. 484-485.

⁸ See Monsour, The Relation Between Uncreated and Created Grace in the Halesian Summa, p. 86: "According to Gérard Philips, there is no evidence that the term gratia creata, was part of written theological discourse before the first half of the thirteenth century. It occurs for the first time, it seems, in the body of writing the manuscript tradition attributes to Alexander of Hales (ca. 1186-1245). Thus, grace is spoken of as created, and also uncreated, in the reportatio, Quaestiones Disputatae 'Antequam Esset Frater,' dated by its modern editors between 1220 and 1236. Again, the two terms, gratia creata and gratia increata, occur in the reportatio, Glossa in Quatuor Libros Sententiarum Petri Lombardi, identified as Halesian in 1946, and dated by its modern editors between 1222 and 1229. In each of these works, however, the distinction receives little more than passing mention." The questions pertaining to the subject of grace from the Quaestiones Disputatae 'Antequam Esset Frater' have recently been edited in Quaestionis disputate de gratia: editio critica, ed. Jacek Mateusz Wierbicki, in Studia Antoniana 50 (Antonianum, 2008).

³ See especially Alister McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 2nd Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), esp. pp. 48-49; H. Daniel Monsour, *The Relation Between Uncreated and Created Grace in the Halesian* Summa: *A Lonergan Reading*, PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 2000; and Hubert Philipp Weber, *Sünde und Gnade bei Alexander von Hales* (Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 2003).

⁴ McGrath, *Iustitiα Dei*, pp. 48-49.

⁵ The most important and expansive study of the development of these debates can be found in Aage Rydstrøm-Poulsen, *The Gracious God: Gratia in Augustine and the Twelfth Century* (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 2002).

⁶ Rydstrøm-Poulsen, *The Gracious God*, p. 484-485.

continues this explanation to then define sanctifying grace, or *gratia gratum faciens*, as a created gift: this, he writes, is "a similitude and disposition belonging to the rational soul, from which it is held by God as one who has been received and assimilated, because there is both a transforming form (*forma transformans*), and this is uncreated grace; but there is also a transformed form (*forma transformata*), which is left behind in the thing that has been transformed... namely, in the soul, and this is created grace."¹¹

Why is this important? In thus following the teaching of Alexander of Hales regarding a "created" gift of sanctifying grace in distinction to the "uncreated" gift of the Holy Spir-

important advance on Peter Lombard's discussion of the divine presence in all creatures"

by conceiving of this created grace as "a special presence of God in the justified, such that an ontological change occurs in the soul ... which can be conceived as a conformity of the soul to God."

Sanctifying grace in the *Summa Halensis* is precisely this: a created gift, a "similitude" or "disposition" that conforms the soul to God so that the soul can receive the *un*created gift of grace, the Holy Spirit. How though, does this "ontological change" take place? If the *Summa Halensis* defines sanctifying grace as a "created" similitude that conforms the soul to God, how does this conformity happen?



it in their explanation of "what grace is," the authors of the *Summa Halensis* here set the stage for all further discussions surrounding "what grace is" in the thirteenth century and beyond. As McGrath summarizes of the importance of this "shift" when defining grace, the *Summa* "makes an

to this sprawling work as the *Summa Halensis* in order to conform with my peers; for a recent introduction to the *status quaestionis* surrounding the authorship of the *Summa*, see Hubert Philipp Weber, "Alexander of Hales's Theology in His Authentic Texts (Commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, Various Disputed Questions)," in *The English Province of the Franciscans* (1224-c.1350), ed. Michael J.P. Robson (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 273-293.

¹¹ Summa Halensis 3 (4.2), p. 3, inq. 1, tract. 1, q. 2, c. 1, a. 2, p. 959: "Ex alia parte debemus intelligere gratiam creatam velut similitudinem et dispositionem ex parte animae rationalis, ex qua habet quod sit accepta Deo et assimilata, quia ibi est forma transformans, et haec est gratia increata; similiter ibi est forma transformata, quae derelinquitur in transformato, scilicet in anima, ex transformatione, et haec est gratia creata."

What Grace "Does" in the Summa Halensis: The Effects of the Created Gift within the Soul

In response to this question, the author of the questions on grace in Book 3 next presents a series of three chapters dealing with "the effects of grace" (*de effectibus gratiae*) within the soul. The first of these builds upon the text's previous definition of grace as a "created" similitude by then describing the "effects" of sanctifying grace as follows:

We should say that the effects that are proper and essential to grace are to purify, illuminate, and perfect. For, since grace is nothing other than a similitude of the soul to God, as Augustine says, grace

¹² McGrath, Iustitia Dei, p. 49.

¹³ McGrath, Iustitia Dei, p. 49.

stretches the soul to assimilate to God; but these three actions—namely, to purify, to illuminate, and to perfect—must necessarily concur in order for this assimilation to happen, because the assimilation is nothing other than a movement from dissimilarity to similarity. Whence, a soul will then be assimilated to God when it is moved from unlikeness to likeness, or from a likeness to a greater similitude, so that it would be even more like God. But Dionysius speaks of purification with respect to this dissimilarity, because purification removes that dissimilarity from the soul; and so, purgation is the removal of the dissimilarity from the soul, but the similitude is introduced when the soul is illuminated and perfected.¹⁴

Well before the Seraphic Doctor would complete his own spiritual treatise on these three activities, the authors of the *Summa Halensis* have here already associated the created "similitude" of sanctifying grace with the Threefold Way. Crucially, they here explicitly argue that the created gift of sanctifying grace causes the conformity or "similitude" of the soul to God precisely by causing *these* three specific activities within the soul; or, to put it more simply, the created gift of sanctifying grace causes what McGrath has referred to as an "ontological change" within the soul by purifying, illuminating, and perfecting it from within.

Whereas Bonaventure's later treatment of grace with respect to the Threefold Way will focus on these three activities almost exclusively, however, this is only the first of three chapters within this Question in consideration of the "effects" of grace in the Summa Halensis. The author nonetheless begins Chapter 2 by continuing to focus on the three activities that comprise the Threefold Way: grace, he indicates, is a similitude of both the highest Truth and of the highest Goodness. As a similitude of the highest Truth, grace can be compared to the soul as light. This is because in air, light "causes three things:" it first purifies air "from dispositions which are contrary to it;" it secondly illuminates air by "disposing the air with a disposition that is similar to itself;" and thirdly, light perfects the air by "informing" the air. So, as the author writes: "Just as light in the

air performs these three aforesaid acts, this can similarly be said of grace inasmuch as it is compared to the soul as light, because it first removes the dissimilarity of eternal light from the soul, and with respect to this effect, it is understood as purifying; second, it disposes the soul to a disposition that is similar to it, so that the soul can be similar to grace in act, and then this is understood as illumination; and finally, grace informs the soul, and then it is said 'to perfect' the soul."¹⁶

Next, building upon John 1:4-5, which tells us that "the Word was life and the light of humanity," the Summa then further insists that grace—since it is a similitude of the Word—can be compared to the soul as both light and life. If the Threefold Way describes the similitude of the soul to God as "light," or as Truth, then Chapter 2 continues by next unfolding how grace likewise causes the soul to conform to the highest Goodness, as well, associated here with "life" and "love." In this respect, according to the Summa, in addition to "purification, illumination, and perfection," the effects of grace within the soul can also properly be called "vivification, assimilation, and gratification": as the author writes, "because love is imprinted on the soul, grace is said to vivify; because it is impressed on the soul, it is said to assimilate [through the power of love that transforms the lover into the Beloved]; and because it is assimilated to the soul through love, it is understood in a general way to gratify."17 Crucially, the text is here quite clear that this introduction of a second triad of the effects of grace alongside the Threefold Way does not diminish or supersede the former effects in any way, but should rather simply be regarded as another "mode" of the similitude: where "purification, illumination, and perfection" conform the soul to the Word

"Secundum quod gratia est similitudo primae Veritatis, comparatur ad animam ut lux..." Notably, the comparison of grace to light is a point of obvious comparison between the *Summa Halensis* and Alexander's teachings on grace from his authentic writings; see *Questiones Disputatae de gratia*, ed. Wierbicki, "1 Questio: De Gracia in Genere," 1 disp., mem. 2, a. 1, ad ob. 3, p. 123: "Ad tercium dicendum quod inter lumen solis et lumen gracie et est similitudo ... sicut sol materialis agit in hec inferiora mediante suo lumine, similiter Deus elicit a libero arbitrio opera meritoria mediante lumine gracie..."

¹⁶ Summa Halensis 3 (4.2), p. 3, inq. 1, tract. 1, q. 6, c. 2, p. 1000: "Secundum quod gratia est similitudo primae Veritatis, comparatur ad animam ut lux; secundum vero quod est similitudo summae Bonitatis, comparatur ad animam ut vita. Et ita habetur in Ioan. 1, 4-5, quod Verbum erat vita et lux hominum, lucens in tenebris, et ideo gratiae, quae est similitudo ipsius, comparatur ad animam ut lux et ut vita. Sed, sicut dictum est quod lux in aëre tria facit: primo enim purgat ipsum aërem a dispositione sibi contraria; secundo, disponit aërem dispositione consimili sibi, et tunc illuminat ipsum; ultimo, informat ipsum, et quantum ad hoc sumitur iste actus 'perficere.' Et sicut lux in aëre habet istos tres actus praedictos, similiter dicendum est de gratia, inquantum ipsa ut lux comparatur ad animam, quia primo removet ab anima dissimilitudinem lucis aeternae, et quantum ad hoc sumitur iste effectus 'purgare;' secundo, disponit ipsam simili dispositione, ut possit esse similis in actu, et tunc dicitur ipsam illuminare; ultimo, informat ipsam, et tunc dicitur ipsam perficere."

¹⁴ Summa Halensis 3 (4.2), p. 3, inq. 1, tract. 1, q. 6, c. 1, p. 997: "Dicendum quod purgare, illuminare, perficere sunt proprii effectus gratiae et essentiales. Cum enim gratia nihil aliud sit quam similitudo animae ad Deum, sicut dicit Augustinus, gratia intendit animam assimilare Deo; sed haec tria necessario concurrunt ad assimilationem, scilicet purgare, illuminare, perficere, quia assimilatio nihil aliud est quam motus a dissimili ad simile. Unde tun anima assimilatur Deo, quando movetur a dissimilitudine ad similitudinem, ut sit magis similis; sed dicit Dionysius quod purgare respicit ipsam dissimilitudinem, a movendo ipsa ab anima; unde purgatio est remotio dissimilitudinis ab anima; unde purgatio est remotio dissimilitudinis ab anima; unde purgatio est remotio dissimilitudinem."

¹⁵ Summa Halensis 3 (4.2), p. 3, inq. 1, tract. 1, q. 6, c. 2, p. 1000:

¹⁷ Summa Halensis 3 (4.2), p. 3, inq. 1, tract. 1, q. 6, c. 2, p. 1000:

as "light" according to Truth, "vivification, assimilation, and gratification" rather conform the soul to God as "life" according to Goodness.

This pattern is finally completed in Chapter 3 of the same Question, which next asserts that grace must also be considered as a similitude of "power and virtue." In this way, sanctifying grace is comparable to a "cause of motion" and—surprise, surprise!—has yet another Threefold effect within the soul, whereby sanctifying grace causes merit by "justifying, arousing, and eliciting" the soul's rational faculties and free will so that it can know, desire, and find rest in the Good. In order to help readers understand this third triadic effect of grace within the soul, the author of this particular passage within the Summa opens his discussion by offering a helpful comment about how all three triads relate to one another, writing:

We ought to understand that grace should be compared to the soul as life, as a cause of motion, and as light, because grace is a similitude of the highest Truth, and so compared to light; and it is also a similitude of the highest Goodness, and so compared to life; and it is also a similitude of power and virtue, and so compared to the soul as that which moves the will. But Power is attributed to the Father, Truth to the Son, and goodness to the Holy Spirit, and for that reason, grace is a similitude of the whole Trinity, and it assimilates us to the whole Trinity. Because it is comparable to light inasmuch as it is a similitude of the first Truth, we assume that there are three effects of grace; because it is also compared to life inasmuch as it is a similitude

"Secundum autem quod gratia est similitudo Bonitatis summae, comparatur ad animam ut vita, quia sic comparatur ad animam ut amor, et iste amor impressus vita est qua anima vivit Deo ... et ita secundum hunc modum actus gratiae est vivificare. Ad istum vero actum consequitur transformatio sive assimilatio quod transformat amantem in amatum... et quantum ad hoc sumitur iste effectus gratiae, qui est assimilare animam ad Deum et conformare. Ex hoc autem quod anima est assimilata Deo, ex hoc grata est Deo ... Et ita ex hoc quod amor imprimitur animae, sumitur vivificare; ex hoc quod iam impressus est, sumitur assimilare; ex hoc quod assimilata est anima per amorem, sumitur gratificare generali ratione."

¹⁸ Summa Halensis 3 (4.2), p. 3, inq. 1, tract. 1, q. 6, c. 3, pp. 1001-1002: "...secundum vero quod comparatur ut motor, scilicet eo quod est similitudo summae potestatis sive virtutis, sunt eius effectus tres, scilicet iustificare, excitare, motus meritorios elicere. Et hoc per comparationem ad liberum arbitrium, quia, sicut dicit Bernardus, *De libero arbitrio*, liberum arbitrium gerit similitudinem divinae potestatis, eo quod non potest cogi; unde circa ipsum fiunt isti tres effectus gratiae. Sed hoc diversimode, quia liberum artibitrium est facultas voluntatis et rationis; excitare vero est effectus gratiae circa liberum arbitrium quoad rationem, iustificare, quoad voluntatem, motus meriotorios elicere quoad facultatem. Unde gratia movet voluntatem per iustificationem, quia, sicut dicit Anselmus, iustitiae est rectitudo voluntatis; et ideo iustificatio est ipsius voluntatis, excitatio est ipsius rationis, motus meritorios elicere ipsius facultatis sive potestatis. Unde tria haec, bonum cogitare, velle, perficere, facit gratia in nobis, sicut dicit Bernardus..."

of the highest Goodness, we assume that there are three different effects of grace; and because it is compared to a motive cause, namely, inasmuch as it is a similitude of the highest power or virtue, there are also three effects of grace, namely, to justify, to arouse, and to elicit the movement of merit.¹⁹

Here, it is helpful to recall the central significance of the Trinity for the entire Summa; just as Bonaventure's own theological project—including his use of the Threefold Way therein—would flow from his doctrine of the Trinity, so too do the authors of the Summa Halensis here ground their teachings on the "effects" of grace within their doctrine of the Trinity. Here and elsewhere throughout the Summa, "Power" appears as a trinitarian appropriation for the Father; "Truth," as a trinitarian appropriation for the Son; and "Goodness," as a trinitarian appropriation for the Holy Spirit. Inasmuch as the *Summa* defines sanctifying grace as a "created gift," understood as a "similitude" or "disposition" in the soul that causes it to become "assimilated" to God, the text's discussion of the "effects" of grace here provides a precise account of what this "similitude" looks like. To be graced—to become sanctified—is to become more and more likened unto the entire Trinity: to the Son's Truth, the Spirit's Goodness, and the Father's Power.

The discussion surrounding the *effects* of grace in the *Summa Halensis*, or the question about what grace "does" in the soul, thus involves a sort of "extended" or "multiplied" account of the Threefold Way, whereby these three triads of activity serve the purpose of ordering the soul to the Trinity. In the first triad of activity, sanctifying grace "purifies, illuminates, and perfects" the soul as "light" to conform it to the Son as Truth. It next "vivifies, assimilates, and gratifies" the soul as "life" to conform it to the Spirit in Goodness in the second triad of activity, and finally "justifies, arouses, and elicits" the soul as the cause of merit to conform it to the Father in Power in the third. The *Summa's* presentation of grace has, essentially, *tripled* the Dionysian Threefold Way and applied it in an anthropological way to the soul: in order to become more and more like God, the

¹⁹ Summa Halensis 3 (4.2), p. 3, inq. 1, tract. 1, q. 6, c. 3, pp. 1001-1002: "Intelligendum est quod gratia comparatur ad animam ut vita et ut motor et ut lux, quia gratia est similitudo summae Veritatis, et sic comparatur ut lux; est etiam similitudo summae Bonitatis, et sic comparatur ut vita; est etiam similitudo potestatis et virtutis, et sic comparatur ut motor arbitrii ad animam. Potentia autem attribuitur Patri, veritas Filio, bonitas Spiritui Sancto, et ideo gratia similitudo est totius Trinitatis et assimilat nos toti Trinitati. Secundum autem quod comparatur ut lux, eo quod est similitudo primae Veritatis, sumuntur tres effectus gratiae; secundum quod comparatur ut vita, eo quod est similitudo summae Bonitatis, sumuntur tres alii effectus; secundum vero quod comparatur ut motor, scilicet eo quod est similitudo summae potestatis sive virtutis, sunt eius effectus tres, scilicet iustificare, excitare, motus meritorios elicere."

soul must be conformed to all *three* persons of the Trinity through all *three* triads of "graced" activities.

Crucially, though the author of this particular Question de effectibus gratiae in the Summa Halensis presents these three triads in a sequential way, beginning with the original Dionysian triad of "purification, illumination, and perfection" and moving forward from there to discuss the other two, it is essential to emphasize that his insistence on the soul's similitude to all three persons of the Trinity through these threefold effects ought not be understood in a merely linear way. As the author indicates in his presentation of "purification, illumination, and perfection" discussed above, these activities happen concurrently. In other words, the soul does not cease being "illuminated" and "purified" when it has been "perfected" in the first triad; rather, in order to be "perfected," the soul must also continuously be "illuminated" and "purified" so as to achieve a greater and greater similitude to God. We can similarly extend this idea



to the remaining two triads beyond the *first* Threefold Way in the text: the soul does not cease being "purified, illuminated, and perfected" through grace when it is "vivified, assimilated, and gratified" and then also "justified, aroused, and elicited to merit;" rather, all *three* triadic effects of grace must concur within the soul simultaneously so that the soul can be conformed to the Son in Truth, to the Spirit in Goodness, and to the Father in Power.

Conformed to the Trinity through the Threefold Way

In conclusion, if we were thus to offer a shorthand response for the questions concerning what grace is and what grace does in the Summa Halensis, we might simply say that sanctifying grace is there defined as a created gift that causes the soul to become a "similitude" of the entire Trinity. It does so through a certain "multiplication" of the Threefold Way: when describing the effects of grace within the soul, the authors of the text extend the original Dionysian triad of "purification, illumination, and perfection" into two additional triads—"vivification, assimilation, and gratification," as well as "justification, arousal, and elicitation to merit." While this extension of the "Threefold Way" will perhaps seem forced for the modern reader, for the earliest Franciscan theologians working with Alexander of Hales at the University of Paris, it provided a fitting methodology for describing how the soul most fundamentally relates to God through grace. If all of creation unfolds from the Power, Goodness, and Truth of the Trinity, then likewise, the soul tainted by sin can only be re-ordered to God insofar as grace "reshapes" it into a similitude of the Father's Power, the Son's Truth, and the Spirit's Goodness. The story of grace in the Summa Halensis is nothing less than an account of the Threefold Way—or perhaps better yet, the tripled Threefold Way—that thus causes the soul to become a similitude of the Trinity.

How, though, can any of this help us understand Bonaventure's famed spiritual treatise of the same name? I return to the inaugural words from that treatise with which I here opened my remarks:

Behold, I have described it for you in a threefold way, Proverbs 22:11. Since all forms of knowledge bear the mark of the Trinity, then all those things which are taught in Scripture ought to represent in themselves a vestige of the Trinity ... And this threefold meaning of Scripture corresponds to a threefold hierarchical activity, namely, purification, illumination, and perfection. Purification leads to peace, illumination to truth, and perfection to charity. When these are perfectly acquired, the soul is beatified, and to the extent that it is always revolving around these three activities, its reward will be increased.²⁰

As modern readers of this medieval text, it will be all too tempting for us to read Bonaventure's account of the *Threefold Way* in a purely "linear" way, as a sort of "step-ladder" of mystical ascent whereby the soul is first "purified" through peace, next "illuminated" to truth, and finally "perfected" in love when it receives the gift of sanctifying grace.

²⁰ See again *De Triplici Via*, p. 3, prol. (8:3).

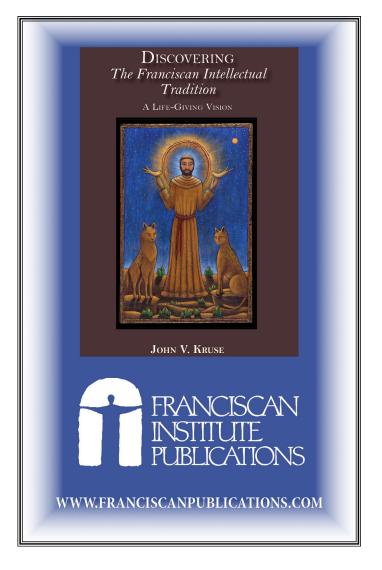
While this reading would not be entirely wrong *per se*, such interpretations of Bonaventure's account of the spiritual life nonetheless leave something to be desired: once we have been "perfected" in charity, what need have we to be further "illuminated" in truth, or likewise "purified" in peace? As the Seraphic Doctor here himself indicates, this *linear* reading of the spiritual life must instead give way to a *dynamic* interpretation of these three activities, inasmuch as he claims that the soul's reward will be increased "to the extent that it is always *revolving around* these three activities" [my emphasis].

It is in attending to this particular claim that the Summa Halensis's prior treatment of the Threefold Way might help us better understand how to approach these three activities in Bonaventure's writings. For the authors of the Summa, the created gift of grace sanctifies the soul by causing it to become more and more likened unto all three persons of the Trinity through the above-discussed triads of activity: once it has been "justified, aroused, and elicited" to the Power of the Father, the graced soul does not stop being "vivified, assimilated, and gratified" to the Goodness of the Spirit; nor does it stop being "purified, illuminated, and perfected" to the Truth of the Son. The point, rather, is for the graced soul to relate to all three persons continuously through all three triads of activity. Approaching Bonaventure's own account of the Threefold Way through the Summa Halensis helps us see how, for all these Franciscan thinkers, grace does not conform us to God by causing us to "ascend" a step-ladder that will lead us to some "stopping point" of perfection beyond which we can traverse no farther; rather, grace conforms us to the Trinity only insofar as the person thus perfected through grace must continue being inwardly "purified" and "illuminated"—as well as "justified, aroused, and elicited" and "vivified, assimilated, and gratified"—thus "revolving around" all these activities so as to become a greater and greater similitude of all three divine persons. As Bonaventure similarly writes of those who embark upon the path of the Threefold Way in his Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, "No one saw them standing still."²¹ Following those teachers and peers who helped compose the Summa Halensis, for the Seraphic Doctor, to thus receive the created gift of grace is to be prepared for a *dynamic* journey into God that is never a "standing still," but a dance of activity through which the soul—by grace—becomes increasingly more and more likened unto the Trinity's Power, Truth, and Goodness in ever deeper and more meaningful ways.



Katie Wrisley Shelby holds a PhD in Historical Theology from Boston College, where she wrote her dissertation on Bonaventure's doctrine of grace, especially as it can be interpreted through his theology of hierarchy. More broadly, her research focuses on Franciscan theology and spirituality in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. She has published in The Cord, has authored several book chapters, and is the co-editor of Bonaventure

Revisited: Companion to the Breviloquium with Dominic Monti (Franciscan Institute, 2017) and Preaching and New Worlds: Proceedings from the 20th International Medieval Sermon Studies Society and Symposium with Timothy J. Johnson and John Young (Routledge, forthcoming).



²¹ See *Comm. Lc.* ch. 13, v. 33, par. 27 (7:356), where Bonaventure reads Jesus's words in Luke 13:33 ("Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem") analogically, whereby "today" refers to purification; "tomorrow," to illumination; and "the next day," to perfection. Of those who embark on this threefold journey with Christ, he writes, "nulles vidit eos stantes."

Emerging Franciscan Scholars Series

Dr. Katherine Wrisley Shelby

Franciscan Connections begins a new series on "Emerging Franciscan Scholars" with an introduction to Dr. Katie Wrisley Shelby. Dr. Wrisley Shelby recently co-edited Bonaventure Revisited: Companion to the Breviloquium (Franciscan Publications, 2017) with Dominic Monti, OFM. She received her PhD from Boston College in 2018. Her article on Sanctifying Grace in the works of St. Bonaventure appears in this issue.

What attracted you to Franciscan theology?

I was first attracted to the Franciscan story as a sophomore at Flagler College, where I took a class from Timothy Johnson called "The Gospel According to St. Francis." It was a great course: we began with Francis himself, and then moved on to Bonaventure, Scotus, and even read a little bit of Leonardo Boff by the end of the class. I think an honest response about what exactly led me to keep studying Franciscan theology after that course would have to be twofold: for me, there was both an intellectual and a spiritual draw.

Intellectually, the Franciscan tradition attracted me because of its attention to both the "head" and the "heart:" here was this incredibly rich and diverse piece of the Christian tradition that emphasized social justice, interreligious dialogue, and care for the environment on one hand, but which also had an intellectual depth and philosophical rigor that I had not yet encountered on my own. The Christian doctrine that I had been raised with in Sunday School began to seem more interesting on a cognitive level. Even as a sophomore in college, I remember being especially drawn to Bonaventure's doctrine of the Trinity as it related to creation, and also to Scotus's teachings on the reasons for the Incarnation. The symbiosis between theological spec-



ulation and theological praxis in the Franciscan tradition is overwhelmingly beautiful, and that remains part of the draw for me to this day.

Spiritually, I was introduced to St. Francis in the same semester I really experienced grief for the first time. In February 2008, at about the same time we were reading

Mary Beth Ingham's Scotus for Dunces in "The Gospel according to St. Francis," I received a call to come home because a rare form of cancer was sending one of my best friends from high school to hospice. Along with my boyfriend at the time, who is now my husband, I dropped everything and drove home. She died on a Thursday—I had my first paper due on Sco-



tus that same Thursday. It was the best and worst week of my life, and as a nineteen year old who felt invincible and whose faith had never really been challenged in a serious way, my grief felt impossible to handle. In retrospect, my enrollment in "The Gospel According to St. Francis" was providential in ways I'm still piecing together. Learning about Francis's commitment to "nakedly following the naked Christ" helped me see how this new thing I was experiencing—this grief, this inexplicable suffering of my friend, and this first glimpse of death—was, in spite of my own fear, yet held by God. I said goodbye to Rebecca but met Francis, Bonaventure, and Scotus instead, and through them, I began to understand a new way of approaching my faith. On nights when I cried for Rebecca, I would gaze at the image of the Crucified on the San Damiano Cross and find peace. I still keep an icon of that Cross above my desk at home, and I think of Rebecca every time I do.

What is your own faith tradition and how does your Franciscan scholarship resonate with it?

I grew up in the Presbyterian Church (USA), and my husband and I now are members at Trinity Episcopal Church in Boston. My father is a minister in the PC (USA) tradition: he identifies as an evangelical, but in a countercultural way to what that word means amongst most Americans who identify as such. As a child, I remember hearing him preach about what he called an "ancient-future faith," a faith that looks backward in the Christian tradition in order to better understand how to serve Christ in the present day. He

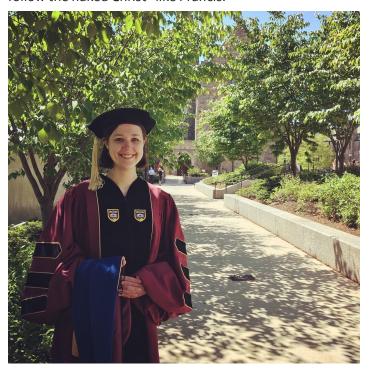
founded a church in the 90s when I was eight years old, and his mission statement for that church was "to be the hands and feet of Christ in a broken and hurting world." I think my work in the Franciscan intellectual tradition today is a result of hearing both of those messages from my father as a child. He would read the Desert Fathers, listen to the music of Hildegard von Bingen, hang icons of the Trinity on his wall: we lived just down the road from Disney World, and I think his commitment to the Christian past was a crucial component of his evangelical tactic in that context. The Desert Fathers helped him resist the façade that surrounded us in the tourist traps of Central Florida so that he could "be the hands and feet of Christ" to that particular community.

When I discovered the Medieval Franciscans in college, it was as if everything thing I heard from my father as a child suddenly began to make sense in an intellectual way for the first time. I think the discovery helped me better understand how to "be the hands and feet of Christ in a broken and hurting world," and—like my father's experience with the Desert Fathers—how to contradict the façades of Christianity in 21st-century America with a faith that felt grounded in reality instead of something that simply made me "feel good." As someone who wandered through evangelical circles in my youth and has landed in the Episcopal Church today, I'm committed to the Franciscan tradition in my studies because I think its attention to both the "head" and the "heart" is precisely what Protestants in America need to encounter in order to move forward through the particular challenges of the present moment. Further on down the road, I'd really like to begin exploring ways to use the Franciscan story as an opportunity to create space for ecumenical dialogue. I'm convinced that Franciscan theology really can help Protestants understand better how to be "the hands and feet of Christ to a broken and hurting world," and I'd love to one day work on building bridges to the Franciscan tradition in Protestant contexts for that purpose.

What impact do you see Franciscan scholarship having on Millennial questions and concerns?

I confess I have to come at this question as a Millennial, and more specifically, as a millennial living in a major American city. As a Millennial, I can affirm that most people my age (early to mid-thirties) who share my context have had to redefine "success" in a way that differs pretty strikingly from our baby-boomer parents. We can't afford property; we want to have children but worry about being financially stable enough to do so; we've spent the past decade working towards our career goals through our education, but a great many of us struggle to find jobs after we earn

higher degrees. I think one of the reasons I love the Franciscan "story" so much is that it helps me—in spite of all my "Millennial" questions and concerns, as well as those of my friends—define "success" differently. It takes the focus off of individual material wants and instead focuses on broader questions: economic justice, the environment, service to those in need. If I can get current college students to start thinking about those sorts of questions through Franciscan theology, then perhaps it will help them navigate the question of what "success" means for them later on in life. Even if they don't land the perfect job, even if they can't afford to buy property like their parents, they can maybe learn what it means to live the "good life" by learning how to "nakedly follow the naked Christ" like Francis.



What is it like studying Franciscan theology at Boston College?

Studying Franciscan theology at BC was a dream-come-true. Dr. Stephen F. Brown was my advisor throughout my time as a graduate student there; he retired this past summer. The extent of his knowledge and wisdom when it comes to not only all things Franciscan, but also to all things medieval, is truly astonishing. He's stepping into his role as an Emeritus scholar at BC this year, and I know he's eager to continue working with Graduate Students on paleography and manuscript studies. I hope incoming students will take advantage of that. Dr. Boyd Taylor Coolman was another of my mentors at BC, and working with him was also an incredibly enriching experience. His work on the Victorines changed the way I read Bonaventure, and I'll be forever in his debt for introducing me to Alexander

of Hales and the world of the Summa Halensis in a robust way. Both of them were fantastic mentors, and both of them work really hard to make sure their students succeed. I think BC's historical theology program has become one of the best contexts in which to study Franciscan theology in the US, and it's in large part because of their role in making sure that happens.

Tell us about some of your colleagues (young and old) in Franciscan Studies today?

I'm consistently blown away by the feeling of friendship that persists amongst Franciscan scholars. Older scholars have been overwhelmingly hospitable, beginning most obviously with my dissertation committee, Stephen Brown, Boyd Taylor Coolman, and Timothy Johnson. I talk to other students in different fields, and it makes me realize how blessed I am to have the three of them as mentors: they are all eager to help me succeed as a scholar, and they go out of their way to make sure I have every opportunity to do so. That feeling, moreover, seems consistent with older scholars beyond them in the field: the Academic world can be incredibly cut-throat, but I've mostly been met with overwhelming hospitality within the world of Franciscan studies. It really feels like a community of people eager to support one another.

In fact, I think that hospitable mood has been instilled in a pretty powerful way by those "older" scholars on emerging scholars in the field. There's a group of us who, as graduate students under tenured faculty, made a point of finding each other at conferences and supporting one another's work. We're competing with one another for jobs, but despite that, we're friends, and we're all rooting for each other. I don't know if that's the case in other fields, but I suppose it is part and parcel to the Franciscan spirit that pervades our work.

Tell us about yourself—you're newly married. Where are you from? What are your hobbies outside of scholarship? Anything else....

A strange fact about me: I actually grew up in Disney World, in the town of Celebration, FL, which was founded by the Disney Corporation in order to honor Walt Disney's dream of building "the community of tomorrow" (it since has been sold to another corporation). I sometimes reflect about how my experience growing up there impacted my attraction to Franciscan studies: there's probably much more I could say about that, but suffice it here to simply leave it at that. My Dad was the founding pastor of the first church built there, and I lived there from age 8 to 19.

An even stranger fact about me, and how my husband and I met: the show 48 Hours once ran a comedic spot about my Dad's role in Celebration, which has since been included in Bill Geist's book, Way off the Road. My husband's family, who lived in Utah at the time, saw the bit and decided to check out Celebration on one of their family vacations to Disney. They eventually moved there, and I thus met my now husband, Tyson, when I was 14 years old because of that silly 48 Hours story. We became high school sweethearts, and we got married when we were 24. My Dad even performed the ceremony in the church that provided the context for the 48 Hours bit. Tyson is truly my favorite part about my life: I could never have finished my PhD without him, and he continues to support me in ways that go above and beyond what I could have ever expected from a "good husband."

We're avid hikers and love to go backpacking when we can—our favorite spot to go is in Southeastern Utah, to the desert. When we can't get into the woods around Boston, we've taken to something we call "city-hiking": we'll strap on our tennis shoes and spend a Saturday exploring the city by foot. We both try to keep up a number of hobbies in addition to our jobs (he works in finance!): he golfs, bakes, is learning how to play the piano, and crochets; I play the piano, dabble in painting, and love to cook. And of course, our involvement in our church community remains an important part of our relationship and our lives: I serve as a Lay Eucharistic Minister at Trinity, and we've both assisted with homeless ministries through Trinity in the city.



Becoming the Body of Christ: St. Bonaventure's Ecclesiology and Pope Francis' *Amoris Laetitia*

By Laura Elizabeth Currie

onaventure's ecclesiological vision is decidedly Eucharistic.1 During his studies at Paris, there were two prevailing currents of Eucharistic thought developing from the writings of St. Ambrose and St. Augustine, both of whom would greatly influence Bonaventure.2 In the Ambrosian stream, the Sacrament's divine institution was given primacy: the power to convert the elements of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ arises from the power of the very words spoken. Thus, the words themselves miraculously confect the Sacrament.3 In the Augustinian stream, the central position and unitive power of the Sacrament was emphasized: The Sacrament is the *locus* of the Church's unity, the "middle term" or "spousal bond" that integrally unites the members of the Body to one another and to Christ their head. For Augustine, the purpose of the Sacrament is primarily to preserve and maintain the unity of the whole Church.

It is within this historical context that Bonaventure's own Eucharistic theology emerges, not only as a creative synthesis that takes elements from both streams of thought, but also as a unique advancement of and contribution to the development of the Church's Eucharistic doctrine. Following Ambrose, Bonaventure posits the primacy of the Sacrament's divine institution by teaching the primacy of Jesus Christ, who is the divine Word Himself. For Bonaventure, Christ the Word (Dei Verbum) has the power not only to convert the elements of bread and wine into

His own sacred Body and Blood, but also to unite both elements into one singular Sacrament. Thus, the elements of bread and wine themselves are not annihilated but rather maintained and incorporated into a higher, more nobler form, being the Sacrament itself.⁴ Following Augustine, Bonaventure also posits the centrality of the Sacrament in the life of the Church. It is the "middle term" uniting the members of the Mystical Body with one another and with Christ their Head.⁵ Subsequently, Bonaventure affirms with Augustine that the "end goal" or "ultimate reason" for the Sacrament is precisely the unity of the Mystical Body and the integrity of its communal life.⁶

Thus, Bonaventure's Eucharistic ecclesiology emerges and can be summed up as follows. The Sacrament of the Eucharist stands at the center of the Church's life. It not only maintains and preserves the unity of the whole Mystical Body, but more so leads one into the life of the Mystical Body itself. The purpose of the Sacrament is essentially ecclesiological in Nature.⁷ It is divinely instituted for the sake

¹An extensive study of St. Bonaventure's systematic ecclesiological thought can be found in Peter D. Fehlner, *The Role of Charity in the Ecclesiology of St. Bonaventure* (Rome: Editrice "Miscellanea Francescana," 1965).

² A concise outline of Bonaventure's theological influences is given in "An Excursus on the Historical Development of Eucharistic Theology," in the "Theological Orientation to Distinction Eight," in Bonaventure, Works of St. Bonaventure, eds. J.A. Wayne Hellmann, Timothy R. Lecroy, and Luke Davis Townsend, vol. XVII, Commentary On the Sentences: Sacraments, (Saint Bonaventure: The Franciscan Institute Publications, 2016). [Hereafter referred to as CS.] 169-74. For further study on the emergent perspectives in Eucharistic theology during the Scholastic period, see Gary Macy's "Three Eucharistic Theologies" in The Theologies of the Eucharist in the Early Scholastic Period: A Study of the Salvific Function of the Sacrament according to the Theologians c. 1080- c. 1220 (New York: The Clarendon Press, Oxford University Press, 1984) and compare with Daniel P.Horan's "Christocentricity, Unity and Ethics in Bonaventure's Theology of the Eucharist," Worship 85 (November 2011): 503-51.

³ "...a miracle that can be stated as being on par with those of the Old Testament," Hellmann et. at., "An Excursus," in "Theological Orientation," in *CS*, 169.

⁴ See in Bonaventure, "The Unity of the Sacrament of the Eucharist" in D.8, P.2, A.2, Q.2, CS, 209-11. See also D.11, P.1, A.1, Q 3, "Whether this change is annihilation," in *Ibid.*, 247-9.

⁵ The Augustinian tradition of Eucharistic theology posits a three-fold dimension to the Body of Christ: First, and foremost, there is the *local* Body of Christ, reigning in Heaven. Second, there is the *sacramental* Body of Christ in the Eucharist, the "middle term. Third, there is the *mystical* Body of Christ, the People of God, the 'communion of saints', who are mystically joined to Christ and to one another, as members of a Body are joined to their Head (in *lbid.*, 169-72). See also D. 11, P.1, A.1, Q.1, "Whether in the Sacrament of the Eucharist there is a true conversion of bread into the Body of Christ," in *lbid.*, 239-42. Bonaventure concludes that, "the Church commonly holds there is a conversion there of the bread into the body of Christ—not, I insist, into a part of the body of Christ, but into the whole of it."

⁶ See "What in the Eucharist is the *res* and what is the "sacramentum," in D.8, P.2, A.2, Q.1, *Ibid.*, 205-208. For Bonaventure, there is a threefold dimension to the Sacrament of the Eucharist: first, the *sacramentum tantum* (the visible species of bread and wine); second, the *sacramentum et res* (the "middle term," the sacramental Body of Christ); and third, the *res tantum* (the ecclesial union of the Mystical Body of Christ). "Christ is present in the Eucharist to give grace. The end of this sacrament is union with the Mystical Body (*res tantum*). Therefore, [the error of equating the middle term of the Eucharist (*res et sacramentum*) to the end (*res*) of the other sacraments, is that of] equating the grace of the other sacraments with the provider of grace in the Eucharist..." See Hellmann et. al., 60 footnote 35.

⁷ "Sacraments are about spiritual communion. And so, when Bonaventure writes about the reasons for the Sacraments, he asks not what Christ did, but he rather ponders the mystery and life of the Church...The ultimate *res*, or the deepest meaning of the Eucharist, is the Mystical Body..." See Hellmann et. al., "Theological Introduction,"



of building up the Mystical Body of Christ in both unity and integrity.8

The Analogy Between Sacramental and Spiritual Conversion

Fundamental to Bonaventure's Eucharistic ecclesiology is his notion of *conversion*. For Bonaventure, the process of conversion is like that of a *transitus* —a kind of movement, or passage, or "transition"—from what is natural into what is supernatural, from the sign into what is signified. This notion of conversion as *transitus* emerges most clearly in the historical development of his understanding of *sacramental* conversion; namely, the "transition" of the natural elements of bread and wine into the supernatural Sacramental Body and Blood of Christ.

Following Ambrose, Bonaventure asserts that the very form of the divine Word of institution as given by Christ, 11

CS, 28.

⁸ The unity of the whole Christ (*totus Christus*) is the integral union of all three Augustinian dimensions of the Body of Christ (see footnote 4). The Sacrament effects a unity of integrity in the Mystical Body. Just as there is no annihilation of the elements of bread and wine when converted into the Sacrament, there is no annihilation when the individual members are incorporated into the Mystical Body of Christ (see footnote 3).

⁹ Latin *converti*: Bonaventure oftentimes uses this term when referring to the soul's own *turning* towards God (*convertit*), usually in contemplation: in *turning* to God, the soul receives grace or efficacy. See especially D.12, P.2, A.1, Q.1, "Whether this sacrament has efficacy in any just person," in *CS*, 295-8.

¹⁰ See Robert Glenn Davis, *The Weight of Love: Affect, Ecstasy, and Union in the Theology of Bonaventure* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017); in particular, his summation of the medieval notion of *affectus*—namely as being a *movement* of the soul that lies both *within* the soul, as well as within *that which moves* the soul.

¹¹ See D.8, P.1, A.2, Q.3: "Whether the Lord celebrated the Eucharist

when spoken over the elements of bread and wine, constitutes "a unique expression...unique among all expression, in that it accomplishes the very thing it represents. Hence it is an effectual Word."12 In other words, Bonaventure affirms that Christ's Word of institution is simultaneous with His work of transforming the elements into the Sacrament; thus, both Word and Sacrament include each other.13

Following Augustine, Bonaventure also emphasizes the unitive dimension of the Sacrament by highlighting the fecundity or "fruitfulness" of the Word's union with the elements of bread and wine: The union of the Word with the elements causes their "transition" into the Body and Blood of Christ, thus pro-

ducing the very Sacrament itself. Underscoring Augustine's assertion, that the purpose of the Sacrament is that of unifying and preserving the integrity of the Mystical Body, Bonaventure affirms that the Sacrament is itself "a sign of something further," 14 namely, that it points towards and leads one into the Mystical Body.

In tandem with his sacramental theology, Bonaventure's notion of conversion as *transitus* is also applied analogously to the context of *spiritual* conversion. This is evident throughout his pastoral preaching on the subject of conversion and within two of his pre-Lenten *Sunday Sermons*, ¹⁵ in which Bonaventure exhorts his Franciscan confreres to spiritually prepare their hearts that they might properly enter into the Paschal season with Christ. ¹⁶

before He spoke the Word," in CS, 190-2.

 12 See D.8, P.2, A.1, Q.1 and Q.2: "The Form of the Word Over the Bread / Over the Wine" in *Ibid.*, 193-203.

¹³ Ibid., 191.

¹⁴ See D.8, P.2, A.1, Q.1, *Ibid.*, 193-8. See also Hellmann et. al., "Theological Orientation," in *CS*, 168: "Although the individual experiences the Sacrament through its external sensible signs, it is not a primarily physical action. Rather, the reception of the Sacrament leads the individual, from its external signs, into what is being signified internally... This concept ultimately pervades Bonaventure's Eucharistic thought." Compare with Bonaventure's Part VI of his *Breviloquium*, on the Sacramental Remedy: "We must maintain the following about the source of the sacraments: that they are sensible signs divinely instituted as remedies in which, under the cover of material realities, divine power operates in a hidden manner," in Bonaventure, *Works of St. Bonaventure*, trans. Dominic Monti, vol. 9, *Breviloquium* (St. Bonaventure, New York: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2005), 211-12.

¹⁵ My present work refers to "Sermon 12: Third Sunday Before Lent," and "Sermon 13: Second Sunday Before Lent," in *SS*, 165-84.

¹⁶ "Through the mediated presence of an edited sermon collection [*The Sunday Sermons*], [Bonaventure] intended, not to assist [his confreres] in composing sermons for the laity, but rather, to call the preachers themselves to conversion." See Timothy J. Johnson's "Introduction" to Bonaventure, *Works of St. Bonaventure*, ed. Timothy J. Johnson, vol.

Whereas in sacramental conversion, the elements of bread and wine "transition" into the Sacramental Body and Blood of Christ through their union with the divine Word—in spiritual conversion, when the divine Word unites with the soul, it likewise causes the soul to "transition" into the Mystical Body of Christ; namely, into the communal life enjoyed by the members of the Church.

In his pre-Lenten *Sunday Sermons* Bonaventure focuses on the individual's need to hear the Word of God and to produce good works in order to obtain salvation. In each sermon, Bonaventure invokes a threefold pattern, in which the movement [or *transitus*] of spiritual conversion can be identified. First, Bonaventure asserts the efficacy of the

Word's power to effect spiritual conversion; second, he expounds upon the fecundity of the Word's union with the soul; and third, he reveals how the soul transitions into the Mystical Body of Christ.

In the first Sermon, Bonaventure expounds thematically¹⁷ upon the Scripture verse: "Call the workers and give them their wages." (Matthew 20:8)¹⁸ Here, Bonaventure notes the efficacy of the divine Word to call forth the soul from its natural life enmeshed in sin¹⁹ into the supernatural life of grace.²⁰ This effect of the Word upon the soul can be likened to how, in sacramental conversion, the divine Word has the power to transform the elements of bread and wine from their natural

substance into the supernatural substance of the Sacrament. $^{\scriptscriptstyle{21}}$

Second, Bonaventure identifies the *locus* of conversion within the fecundity of the Word's union with the soul, in that the Word produces virtue within the soul when united with it, as evidenced in the soul's production of meritorious human works and deeds.²² This union of the Word with the soul can be likened to how, in sacramental conversion, the union of the Word with the elements of bread and wine produces the Sacrament, which in itself accomplishes the

meritorious work of maintaining the life and integrity of the Mystical Body.

Finally, Bonaventure reveals how the "end goal" or "logical result" of the soul's virtuous deeds, through union with the Word, is the soul's conversion or *transitus* into the Mystical Body. This then is "the wages"—the very "remuneration of the divine vision", and the soul's participation in it, as Bonaventure describes, "which is given to each according to their works."²³ Here, Bonaventure emphasizes that the wages are not gifted, but rather given as something due—as the logical result or end of meritorious human work. This "end" is likewise analogous to the "end" of the Sacrament, being the communal life of the Mystical



Body, and the members' participation in the divine life of Christ, their Head. Thus, in this first sermon, Bonaventure reveals how the soul, when united with the Word, heeding its call, and bearing fruit in good works, is spiritually converted into the life of the Mystical Body.

In his second pre-Lenten *Sunday Sermon*, Bonaventure also expounds thematically upon the verse: "But on good ground are those who, hearing the Word with a right and good heart, retain it and bear fruit in patience." (Luke 8:15). ²⁴ Here he invokes the same threefold pattern—of asserting the efficacy of the Word; announcing the fecundity of the Word; and finally highlighting the transition or conversion of the soul itself.

Bonaventure duly notes the need for the soul's proper spiritual preparation by the divine Word, using an agricultural metaphor: Preparing one's heart for the reception of

^{12,} *The Sunday Sermons of St. Bonaventure* (Saint Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2008). [Hereafter referred to as *SS*], 14-22.

¹⁷ For an introduction to the *sermo modernus* style taken up by Bonaventure, see *Ibid.*,15-18.

¹⁸ Bonaventure, "Sermon 12: Third Sunday Before Lent," in *SS*, 166. ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 166-7.

²⁰ For a further study on the affecting relationship of the divine Word with the human soul, see Daniel P. Horan's "Love Lived in Community: *Lumen Gentium* 13 and the Meaning of Grace in Bonaventure's *De Septem Donis Spiritus Sancti*," in *The Downside Review* 128 (October 2010): 249-268.

²¹ Bonaventure, "Sermon 12," SS, 167.

²² Ibid., 169.

²³ "And this contemplation or vision "is the entire reward" which seizes the souls of the blessed with so great a desire for it, that the Almighty will always be mindful of them as they, since in continual praise and glorification, they return to the first principle whatever good they possess." *Ibid.*, 173.

²⁴ Bonaventure, "Sermon 13: Second Sunday Before Lent," SS, 175.

the Word can be likened to readying the material ground for the reception of seeds, so that a good harvest might abound.²⁵ Just as there is a necessity to properly prepare the gifts of bread and wine on the altar for their consecration, Bonaventure acknowledges the necessity to properly prepare one's heart spiritually, so that it also might be "good ground" upon which the divine Word can take root.

Second, Bonaventure emphasizes the necessity of the soul's firm acceptance of the Word upon its reception [or union], ²⁶ so that it might bear fruit "in patience." Just as the Word produces the Sacrament when it is united with the elements of bread and wine at the moment of consecration, the union of the Word with the soul likewise produces the fruit of good human works.

Finally, Bonaventure notes that the timely maturation of the Word within the soul is revealed precisely through the execution of good works—and that this is the logical end and evidence of true spiritual conversion. It is the logical end of the Sacrament is the ecclesial unity of the Mystical Body of Christ, the end of true spiritual conversion is the soul's transition into that "sweet, divine familiarity" with God in the communal life of the Church, as Bonaventure describes. This divine familiarity with God is evidenced in the soul's production of good works. Thus, in this second sermon, Bonaventure reveals how the soul, in preparing well, receives the divine Word of God and transitions into the Mystical Body.

Applying Bonaventure's Ecclesiology to Pope Francis' Amoris Laetitia

As I have shown, Bonaventure's notion of conversion, understood as *transitus*, is applied analogously to both the *sacramental* and *spiritual* contexts. Bonaventure posits both the Ambrosian primacy of the Word's power to effect both forms of conversion, as well as the Augustinian fecundity of the Word's union with the elements of bread and wine in the sacramental context and with the soul in the spiritual context. The *sacramental* conversion of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is thus analogous to the soul's *spiritual* conversion into the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church. In light of this analogy, Bonaventure's thought can lend itself towards a consideration of the Eucharist as being central, if not fundamental, to the process of one's spiritual conversion to God.

Although Bonaventure affirms the power of the Word to convert the soul to God in both of his pre-Lenten ser-

mons, he emphasizes the necessity on the part of the individual to allow oneself to be effected or converted by the Word, as the Scripture verse states in the first sermon, "Give the workers their wages..." and in the second, "But on good ground are those who hear the Word with a right and good heart, retain it and bear fruit in patience..." For Bonaventure, in order for one to truly "merit the wages," and receive the "remuneration of the divine vision," individuals must open themselves up to meet the effort of God with their own efforts, by properly preparing themselves spiritually to receive the Word.²⁹

This Bonaventurian emphasis on a "joint effort" or "co-willing" on the part of God and the soul has resonance with Pope Francis' pastoral initiatives intimated in *Amoris Laetitia*³⁰ and his emphasis on personal spiritual conversion via the Eucharist. Through *Amoris*, the Holy Father is calling for the Church to serve as *mediator* of both God's Word and Sacrament of the Eucharist. Those resonances are demonstrated in the following ways.

First, Amoris is calling for pastors in the Church to serve as facilitators of God's movement towards individuals by bringing the tenderness of His Word to their flock.

Throughout the document, and especially in Chapter Eight, Pope Francis stresses that the true nature of the Church, "from the time of the Council of Jerusalem, has always been the way of Jesus, the way of mercy and reinstatement."³¹ Thus, "illumined by the [merciful] gaze of Jesus Christ, [the Church must] turn with love to those who participate in her life in an incomplete manner, recognizing that the grace of God works also in their lives, by giving them the courage to do good, to care for one another in love, and to be of service to the community in which they live and work."³² In a spirit of mercy, the Holy Father thus insists that the Church develop new, creative and concrete means by which wounded members might return to the Sacraments and receive the saving remedies they need, whatever their circumstances.

²⁵ Ibid., 176.

²⁶ Ibid., 178.

²⁷ Ibid., 182-3.

²⁸ "Third, those who inflamed the heart with the fire of divine desires and diligently understand the word through the execution of works, bear the delightful fruit of sweet, divine familiarity." *Ibid.*, 184.

²⁹ Hellmann, "Sacramental Remedy," 251. Bonaventure states in his *Breviloquium VI*, ch. 4, sec. 3: Sacraments "are instituted in such a way that they would always bear their signification to all, but would sanctify only those who approach them worthily and sincerely.." 223.

³⁰ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* [Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on Love in the Family], March 19, 2016, sec. 291 (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 2016), 221, (hereafter referred to as *AL*).

³¹ "It is a matter of reaching out to everyone, of needing to help each person find his or her proper way of *participating in the ecclesial community* and thus to experience being touched by an 'unmerited, unconditional and gratuitous' mercy. No one can be condemned for ever, because that is not the logic of the Gospel!...Naturally, if someone flaunts an objective sin as if it were part of the Christian ideal, or wants to impose something other than what the Church teaches, he or she can in no way presume to teach or preach to others; this is a case of something which separates from the community (cf. Mt 18:17). Such a person needs to listen once more to the Gospel message and its call to conversion. Yet even for that person there can [still] be some way of taking part in the life of community..." Ibid., sec. 296-7, italics mine.

³²Ibid., sec. 291.

Second, the Church must discern and accompany its members' efforts to meet God where they are at, and in certain cases, give the Sacrament of the Eucharist in response. This is essentially where the controversy ensuing from Chapter Eight lies. The document intimates that the Eucharist may be administered to members who are living in an objective state of sin.33 Yet, it is herein that Pope Francis is essentially echoing Bonaventure's emphasis on the efficacy and fecundity of the divine Word, really and truly present in the Eucharist, and its power to convert the soul into the communal life of the Mystical Body, no matter the circumstances. The Holy Father's conviction that the Sacrament has the power to lead those who are hearing the Word and converting to God is most evident in his own

fervent preaching. Many times he has called for pastors to "have the odor of their sheep,"³⁴ to be close to their people, shepherding them in a way that would render them truly capable of discerning the steps by which individuals may become more fully integrated into the communal and Sacramental life of the Church.³⁵ Through proper discernment, the Holy Father affirms that incorporating the reception of the Eucharist in certain cases would undoubtedly contribute towards the building up of the Mystical Body of Christ.³⁶

Finally, in light of Bonaventure's thought, *Amoris* can essentially be read as addressing the very moment of conversion [or *transitus*] in terms of being a movement that is first initiated by God in the lives of individuals—and in

³³ Those who live "in an *objective* situation of sin – which may not be *subjectively* culpable, or fully such – a person can be living in God's grace, can love and can also grow in the life of grace and charity, while receiving the Church's help to this end. *Ibid.*, 305. [See footnote 351: "In certain cases, this can include the help of the sacraments. Hence, I want to remind priests that the confessional must not be a torture chamber, but rather an encounter with the Lord's mercy, and I would also point out that the Eucharist is not a prize for the perfect, but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak."]

³⁴ See Pope Francis, "Chrism Mass Homily," Vatican Website, March 28, 2013, accessed May 22, 2018, http:// wz.vatican.va/content/frances-co/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130328_messa-crismale.html. Pope Francis coins the idea that pastors must "have the odor of their sheep" and embrace their responsibility "to go out and anoint" the People of God *often*, with the divine "oil of gladness." Compare his homily with the notion of "Gradualness in Pastoral Care" in *AL*, secs. 293-295.

³⁵ The Synod Fathers stated that the discernment of pastors must always take place "by adequately distinguishing", with an approach that "carefully discerns situations." *AL*, sec. 298. Priests have the duty to accompany members, by helping them to understand their situation according to the teaching of the Church and the guidelines of the bishops. Useful in this process is an examination of conscience through moments of reflection and repentance. See *Ibid.*, sec. 300.

³⁶ For Pope Francis, as for St. Bonaventure, the building up of the Mystical Body of Christ is precisely the 'end' of the Sacrament.



response, is calling for the Church to mediate and facilitate this movement between God and the individual. In response to God's initiative, the Church must then go out and gather in those members who are being converted by the Word and, in certain cases, administer the Eucharist.³⁷ Pastors must ultimately discern the "good grounds" upon which the Word is falling within their flock and accompany those members' personal efforts to "till the ground" of their hearts, so that they may receive and retain the Word; and finally, "give the wages" to these members by administering the Sacrament when warranted.³⁸

Thus, applying Bonaventure's ecclesiology to Pope Francis' pastoral suggestions in *Amoris Laetitia* could ultimately contribute towards a more universal consideration of what it means to be in 'spiritual communion' with the Mystical Body of Christ —that perhaps there are members of the Body being summoned by Christ beyond the es-

³⁸ See Bonaventure's understanding of the Eucharist as signifying Christ as "the food which perfectly refreshes those who partake of it sacramentally and spiritually," in *CS*, D.11, P.2, A.1, Q.2, 268. Given this, it would thus be fitting to administer the Eucharist to those souls who are converting to Christ and His Mystical Body, as the *viaticum pro transitum*.

^{37 &}quot;I am in agreement with the many Synod Fathers who observed that "the baptized need to be more fully integrated into Christian communities in the variety of ways possible, while avoiding any occasion of scandal. The logic of integration is the key to their pastoral care, a care which would allow them not only to realize that they belong to the Church as the Body of Christ, but also to know that they can have a joyful and fruitful experience in it. They are baptized; they are brothers and sisters; the Holy Spirit pours into their hearts gifts and talents for the good of all. Their participation can be expressed in different ecclesial services, which necessarily requires discerning which of the various forms of exclusion currently practiced in the liturgical, pastoral, educational and institutional framework, can be surmounted. Such persons need to feel not as excommunicated members of the Church, but instead as living members, able to live and grow in the Church and experience her as a mother who welcomes them always, who takes care of them with affection and encourages them along the path of life and the Gospel." Ibid., 299, italics mine.

tablished 'ordinary means' —and that perhaps the Church must be willing to submit to her Head in these certain cases.

Applying Bonaventure's notion of conversion as transitus to the Church today could also lend itself towards grounding the pastoral praxis of Amoris with a more nuanced understanding of the role of the Eucharist in spiritual conversion, since for Bonaventure, the Sacrament is not only the cause of the Church's unity, but is also a doorway—a means by which one is spiritually led into or converted into the Mystical Body. In this latter sense, Bonaventure seems to assert that the Sacrament has the same efficacy as the divine Word itself, in its power to effect the soul's conversion into the Church. The Eucharist seems to be essential to the soul's transitus into the Mystical Body.39 For those who have spiritually prepared themselves, the Eucharist leads them into the spiritual enjoyment of the "Seventh Day Sabbath Rest,"40 which Bonaventure coins as being "the wages" in his first sermon, and as the "divine familiarity" in the second. The Eucharist also serves as a sign for those who may be looking on from the outside, pointing them towards and inviting them into that communal life of loving unity and charity, which the members of the Mystical Body enjoy.

Thus, for Bonaventure, the reception of the Sacrament facilitates an ever deeper encounter between God and the soul, effecting at the same time the soul's transition into the Church. On account of the efficacy and power of the Sacrament itself, Pope Francis exhorts the bishops of the Church to carefully discern the members of *their* Body, ⁴¹ *their flock*, in a way that is in conformity with the true universal and merciful nature of the Church.

Conclusion

Regarding today's controversy within the Church over Amoris Laetitia, it must be stated that even St. Bonaventure himself does not fail to recognize the need for one to adequately prepare oneself spiritually, in order to rightfully receive Christ, the divine Word of God in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and thereby enter fully into His Mystical

⁴¹ cf. 1 *Cor*. 27-34.

Body, the Church. One must become "good ground" upon which the divine seeds of grace may be planted. One must indeed "undergo the fatigue of meritorious work" in order to receive the just "wages." One must "bear fruit in patience," in order to rightly enter the "divine familiarity" with God. In this sense, Bonaventure's own pastoral suggestions can be joined to the Holy Father's; namely, in that Bishops and pastors must then take partial responsibility for this preparation, through the careful and merciful discernment of the members of their flock. At the same time however, they must not fail to see that God Himself is also moving towards individuals and that grace is prompting certain individuals to come ever closer to the Church and its Sacraments. Ultimately, it is for the sake of this divine initiative that bishops and pastors must 'make way for the People of God,' by tirelessly and mercifully working to accompany these individuals evermore in their conversion to God and into the communal life of the Mystical Body of



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³⁹ For Bonaventure, "spirituality always trumps physicality. The mystical nature of conversion and of sacramental presence, its spiritual signification and efficacy, and the importance to commune spiritually as well as sacramentally all point to the most important purpose of the Eucharist: true communion with God, as realized by the power of the Spirit within the *communio sanctorum*, whereby all the members of the Mystical Body of Christ are united together by the *vinculum caritatis* in order to offer praise and glory to the Father." *CS*, 168.

⁴⁰ For further study on the eschatological "seventh place" of the Sacraments in Bonaventure's *Breviloquium*, see Hellmann, "Approaching the Text," in "On the Sacramental Remedy," *Bonaventure Revisited*, 245-7 and also Hellmann et. al., "Theological Orientation to Sacraments, Distinctions One and Two," in *Commentary on the Sentences*, 41.

The Canticle of the Creatures Read in Light of the Benedicite

By Luke Iyengar

he quest for pure prayer is as old as Christianity itself, when the disciples first asked the Lord to teach them (Lk 11:1¹). The Bible contains many sublime prayers that have nourished Christian spirituality throughout the ages. The Church has incorporated many of these into her liturgy, and they continue to be a source of spiritual nourishment for the faithful in modern times. This is shown especially in the life of St. Francis, who brought the spirituality of the Bible into his own prayer.

In St. Francis of Assisi we find a model of prayer ablaze with love for God. In many ways, he was an exemplar of the perfect Christian life, especially in his prayer. In this article, we focus on a particular prayer written by St. Francis based on a biblical model. While some might include the *Canticle of the Creatures* among the texts that give us an image of a Francis more at home holding a birdbath than preaching the Gospel, it is actually a fine example of biblically-inspired prayer. The *Canticle of the Creatures* is in fact best read in light of the story arc of the Three Holy Youths in the Book of Daniel as an adaptation of their hymn of thanksgiving, the *Benedicite*. We can see this in the similarities in the circumstances of their composition; the likelihood of the Prayer of the Three Youths as a source for the *Canticle*; and the similarity of subject matter in both hymns.

The narrative of the Three Youths, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael, is told in the first three chapters of the Book of Daniel. In this section, the three young men (together with Daniel) are taken to Babylon and immediately mark themselves out from the rest of the Babylonian king's servants by their refusal to eat unlawful meat (Dan 1:1-15). Because of this, God gives them favor in the sight of the king, and they are promoted to high positions (Dan 1:17-20; 2:49). However, in chapter 3 the young men refuse to commit idolatry, and so are thrown into a fiery furnace (vv. 1-23).

However, the three are miraculously preserved from death; the very fact that Azariah has time to pray his prayer of repentance is arguably a miracle given that those who put the Jews in the furnace died in the process (cf. Dan 3:22). After this prayer, an angel descends into the furnace and preserves the men's lives, and they sing a hymn of praise (Dan 3:49-90). This is followed by an epilogue in which King Nebuchadnezzar promotes the three youths and orders the whole empire to worship the LORD (Dan 3:91-100).

For comparison with this, we present the events in the life of St. Francis leading to the composition of the *Canticle of Brother Sun* as narrated in the *Assisi Compilation*. In the passages leading up to the composition of the *Canticle*, we are given a rather severe picture of the asceticism practiced by St. Francis,² perhaps best summarized by section 79's statement that the saint "was severe with his body, not only when he appeared healthy, although he was always weak and ill, but also when he was ailing."³ When St. Francis is finally forced to begin treatment for an eye disease, the *Compilation* notes that the weather "was very cold, and ... not conducive to treatment."⁴

During his convalescence, St. Francis prayed for the Lord to strengthen him and was assured of his salvation.⁵ He was told in a mystical experience that he would be given the kingdom of heaven in exchange for his sufferings, and this prompted him to compose the first part of the *Canticle* in praise of God through His creatures.⁶ Shortly thereafter, strife between the bishop and podestà of Assisi prompted the saint to add a verse about forgiveness and bearing wrongs, and this was so effective that the conflicting parties were reconciled immediately.⁷ Finally, having been told by a brother that he had not long to live, St. Francis added in a verse addressing "Sister Bodily Death."⁸ This all took place in the years 1225-1226, shortly before the saint's death.⁹

Turning to a comparison of the life of St. Francis with that of the Three Youths, we may note that the narratives of both involve some sort of ascetical effort. The Jews refuse to eat unlawful meat; St. Francis was heroic in his self-denial. Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael are forced to enter a raging furnace; St. Francis is forced to undergo cau-

¹ All citations are of the NABRE.

² The Founder, vol. 2 of Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, ed. Regis Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap; J.A. Wayne Hellmann, O.F.M. Conv; and William J. Short, O.F.M. (New York: New City Press, 2000), Assisi Compilation 79-82. Hereinafter FA:ED II and AC.

³ FA:ED II, AC 79.

⁴ FA:ED II, AC 83.

⁵ FA:ED II, AC 8₃.

⁶ FA:ED II, AC 83.

⁷ FA:ED II, AC 84.

⁸ FA:ED II, AC 7. The chronology for this is supported by Kajetan Esser, O.F.M, *Studien zu den Opuscula des hl. Franziskus von Assisi*, ed. Edmund Kurten, O.F.M. and Isidore de Villapadierna, O.F.M. Cap. (Rome: Historisches Institut der Kapuziner, 1973), 305.

⁹ Esser, Studien, 305.

terization. In the midst of both of these ordeals, the suffering servants of God sing a hymn of praise to the Lord.

Because what I am saying here could be taken in the wrong way, I want to pause and clarify precisely what I am proposing. I am not proposing, first and foremost, that the account in the Assisi Compilation is a mere hagiographical redaction of the saint's life intended to present il Povorello as a re-hashing of the captives in Babylon—especially not if such a hagiographical redaction be interpreted as a crude fictionalization of the saint's life! Nay rather, it seems entirely tenable that the events happen just as the Compilation states that they did. The similarities in narrative in-

dicated seem at once too subtle to be the work of an editor trying to make a point, and at the same time too present to be altogether dismissed.

Nevertheless, I do not make so bold as to suggest that St. Francis was consciously thinking of himself as reliving the experience of the Three

Youths, certainly not after the manner of an antitype. Such a conclusion seems unwarranted by the narration of the *Assisi Compilation*, which makes no such suggestion.

However, that being said, I do think that it is quite possible that St. Francis recognized the similarity in ordeals between the Three Youths on the one hand and himself on the other. In the first place, all of them distinguished themselves from others by a harsh asceticism. Second, their lives were in jeopardy, those of the Three on account of the king's edict and that of the one on account of his illness. Third, all of them faced an unpleasant encounter with fire, the Hebrews in a fiery furnace and St. Francis in cauterization which, although an accepted medical practice at the time, ¹⁰ could hardly be looked at as a pleasant ordeal.

In their tribulations, St. Francis and Azariah both pray confidently to the Lord for help, and each receives divine assistance. For the Three Youths, "the angel of the Lord went down into the furnace with Azariah and his compan-

ions, drove the fiery flames out of the furnace, and made the inside of the furnace as though a dew-laden breeze were blowing through it. The fire in no way touched them or caused them pain or harm." (Dan 3:49-50). For his part, St. Francis receives the assurance of his salvation. In response to their vindication, the Three Youths break out in a song of thanksgiving, and so likewise does Francis many centuries later.

While he lay sick and sad in his bed, facing the prospect of cauterization, it is not impossible to suppose that St. Francis' thoughts may have wandered through the Scriptures he knew so well from the Church's liturgy, ¹² searching

for a biblical role model for his sufferings. Given that the Three Youths similarly suffered a trial by fire, as it were, it only makes sense that St. Francis would have put two and two together in order to arrive at his own "riff" on the Song of the Three Youths. As they sang their song of

praise for deliverance from physical death, so St. Francis sings his song of praise for deliverance from spiritual death.¹³

This is intended in a sense consonant with what Pozzi said nearly thirty years ago, commenting on the question of seeking out the sources of the *Canticle:* "Ordinarily we speak in terms of literary sources, such as parallel passag-

¹⁰ Cf. Octavian Schmucki, O.F.M. Cap, "The Illnesses of Francis During the Last Years of His Life," trans. Edward Hagman, O.F.M. Cap, *Greyfriars Review* 13 (1999), 40-41.

¹¹ FA:ED II, AC 83.

¹² Octavian Schmucki, "Divine Praise and Meditation according to the Teaching and Example of St. Francis of Assisi," trans. Ignatius McCormick, O.F.M. Cap, *Greyfriars Review* 4 (1990), 65-67, points out that most of St. Francis' scriptural education would have come from liturgical sources such as the Missal and Office books.

¹³ And thus we must disagree with the conclusion of Pozzi (in spite of his many valuable insights) who said that "by translating and rearranging [the Prayer of the Three Youths], St. Francis profoundly changed the meaning of the original" (Giovanni Pozzi, "The Canticle of Brother Sun: From Grammar to Prayer," trans. Edward Hagman, O.F.M. Cap, *Greyfriars Review* 4 (1990), 21). It is important to note here that nowhere else in his article does Pozzi seem to make this claim. Rather, the entire surrounding text of the article on pp. 20-21 (n.b. on pg. 20, "he intended simply to produce a popular version of a psalm") is consonant with the understanding that St. Francis is substantially *preserving* the meaning of the Prayer while applying it to his own situation.

es, reminiscences, and memoirs. Here, instead, we need to speak in terms of Francis' recourse to a model of behavior, one that would provide a body of ideas and a way of life."¹⁴ We are not seeking here to demonstrate that St. Francis was directly quoting the *Benedicite*.

Rather, we are inquiring into the possibility of something somewhat different and perhaps more profound: whether St. Francis, around one of the most trying times of his life, drew—whether consciously or nearly unconsciously is not too terribly important for this article—on the Song of



the Three Youths as the basis for his own praises of God. In this way, the prayer of the Bible and of the Church becomes St. Francis' prayer—not as a mere development or shoddy imitation of the original, but as a language made his own.¹⁵ In this case, "the Bible ... provided him with forms in which to express his thoughts, and personal models by which he expressed his own personality."¹⁶

St. Francis' familiarity with this beautiful piece of biblical prayer is nearly beyond even an *unreasonable* doubt. It formed part of the weekly Sunday Divine Office in his day, and was also used on feast days. ¹⁷ Therefore, Hammond is right in saying that the *Benedicite* was "burned into Fran-

¹⁴ Pozzi, "Canticle of Brother Sun," 1.

cis' mind,"18 and one might comment here that the use of the word "burned" is particularly appropriate, given the circumstances. As such, in seeking a text suitable for praising the Creator at this particularly trying time, it is only natural that St. Francis' mind would light upon this prayer as apt for expressing himself.

So, given the parallels in the circumstances of their compositions, it seems quite possible that the *Benedicite* would have been on St. Francis mind during his convalescence, making it a natural candidate for use in his com-

position of "a new *Praise of the Lord."* The Prayer of the Three Youths could have functioned for the saint as a model with which to express himself, just as Pozzi said above. As such, the Prayer merits further consideration as a candidate for the primary biblical influence on the *Canticle*. To that end, we examine another of St. Francis' writings, the *Praises to Be Said at All Hours*.

Jay Hammond argues that the *Praises* to Be Said at All Hours form "the immediate backdrop to the Canticle."²⁰ Some might interpret this as contradicting the possibility that the Prayer of the Three Youths was the basis for the Canticle. However, the fact is that Revelation and Daniel are the only two books of the Bible quoted more than once in the *Praises*, with a repeated quotation of Daniel 3:57 forming the refrain.²¹ Conveniently enough, this verse, a different part of

which is quoted in *Praises* 5, is from the Prayer of the Three Youths.²²

Far from contradicting Pozzi's argument that the Prayer of the Three Youths gave St. Francis "the nucleus of his prayer,"²³ this seems rather to show that part of the Prayer was on St. Francis' mind every time he recited the Divine Office. Schmucki supports this conclusion by advancing the proposition that the *Praises* are themselves modeled on the *Benedicite*, though he does not develop the point himself.²⁴

¹⁵ Willem Marie Speelman, "A Song in the Dark: Francis of Assisi's *Canticle of Brother Sun," Perichoresis* 14, no. 2 (October 2016): 53-66, *ATLA Religion Database*, EBSCO*host* (accessed April 27, 2018), 59.

¹⁶ Pozzi, "Canticle of Brother Sun," 1.

¹⁷ Jay M Hammond, "The Canticle of the Creatures (1225/26)," in *The Writings of Francis of Assisi: Letters and Prayers*, Studies in Early Franciscan Sources, vol. 1, ed. Michael W. Blastic, O.F.M; Jay M. Hammond, and J.A. Wayne Hellmann, O.F.M, Conv. (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2011), 230 n. 98; Giuseppe Abate, *Il primitivo breviario francescano* (1224-1227) (Rome: Editrice "Miscellanea Francescana," 1960), 46-47; Pozzi, "Canticle of Brother Sun," 3.

¹⁸ Hammond, "Canticle of the Creatures," 230 n. 98.

¹⁹ FA:ED II, AC 83.

²⁰ Hammond, "Canticle of the Creatures," 229-230.

²¹ See *The Saint*, vol. 1 of *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, ed. Regis Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap; J.A. Wayne Hellmann, O.F.M. Conv; and William J. Short, O.F.M. (New York: New City Press, 1999), PrsH 1-10 (Hereinafter FA:ED I). There is a most unfortunate misprint in FA:ED I that usually cites the refrain for the *Praises* as coming from Rev 4:8. However, the first verse of the *Praises* in this edition correctly cites it as a derivative of Dan 3:57. Schmucki, "Divine Praise and Meditation," 44, also mentions the liturgical use of this refrain at Sunday Lauds.

²² FA:ED I, PrsH 5.

²³ Pozzi, "Canticle of Brother Sun," 3.

²⁴ Schmucki, "Divine Praise and Meditation," 44.

Schmucki is helpful, however, in showing the bridge between the *Praises* and the *Canticle*, noting several instances in which the text of the *Praises* foreshadows that of the *Canticle*. In the first place, he points out that in the *Praises* St. Francis "alters the biblical text [of Rev 4:11]: 'Glory and honor and power' to 'glory and honor and blessing,' thereby anticipating the opening stanza of the *Canticle of Brother Sun.*" ²⁵ As we indicated above, *Praises* 5 quotes Dan 3:57; this quotation constitutes "a prelude to the global scope of the *Canticle of Brother Sun.*" ²⁶ Thus, there is a foreshadowing of the later prayer in the earlier works of St. Francis.

From this, we conclude that the Prayer of the Three Youths was present frequently in St. Francis' prayer life in two channels, one mediated and one unmediated. Immediately, the Prayer was present at Lauds every Sunday and holy day. In a mediated way, the Prayer was present every time St. Francis opened his mouth to pray the Divine Office. As such, it is easy to imagine the *Benedicite* taking a leading role among the sources for any prayer composed by the saint.

Now that we have established the likelihood of the Prayer of the Three Youths having been a source for the composition of the *Canticle of Brother Sun*, we proceed to a comparison of the material present in each text. For the sake of brevity, we shall limit ourselves to a discussion of two principal elements of interaction between the texts, summarization and application.

The Canticle Summarizes the Prayer of the Three Youths

Both Pozzi and Hammond provide insightful commentaries on the *Canticle's* summarization of the Prayer of the Three Youths. Pozzi, in fact, gives a helpful verse-by-verse account of the verses of the Prayer summarized by the first twelve verses of the *Canticle*.²⁷ Here, however, we follow Hammond in an eschatological reading of the *Canticle* as a summary of the new creation, based on the assumption that "the *Assisi Compilation*'s report about Francis being promised the kingdom is reliable."²⁸

This enables us to accompany Hammond in reading significance into the selection of seven objects for the praises in the *Canticle*. These represent the entire material universe and recall the seven days of creation in Genesis.²⁹

The sun, moon, and stars "represent everything that was known to exist in the heavenly firmament," while the four classical elements of earth, water, air, and fire "symbolically represent everything that exists on earth." In short, Francis has condensed nearly all of the creatures addressed in the Prayer of the Three Youths into these seven representative verses. Likewise, he includes space and time by indicating the elements that comprise space and the orbs that measure and in a way construct time. Thus, he has summed up the entire cosmos in these seven components.

From this, we can see the *Canticle* in part as a summary of the *Benedicite*. Composed in the vernacular rather than Latin, set to music, and much briefer than the more ancient prayer, the *Canticle* lent itself to easy memorization by the common folk to whom it was sung as a method of exhortation.³² Nevertheless, the *Canticle* is not only a summary; as we said above, the *Benedicite* provided St. Francis with a language he used to address his current situation.

Pozzi suggests that the verses of the *Canticle* on forgiveness ought to be read as a reference to verses 86-87 of the Prayer of the Three Youths.³³ This seems like a bit of a stretch, unless one reads the *Canticle's* verses as an interpretation or application of precisely what it means to be



³⁰ Hammond, "Prayers and Praises," 232.

²⁵ Schmucki, "Divine Praise and Meditation," 45. It seems to the present author that *Praises* 8 may also have Danielic rootings. While Schmucki cites it as coming from Rev 5:13 ("Divine Praise and Meditation," 45), it may be worthwhile to examine whether Revelation is not itself in some way to be associated with Daniel.

²⁶ Schmucki, "Divine Praise and Meditation," 45.

²⁷ Pozzi, "Canticle of Brother Sun," 6-7.

²⁸ Hammond, "Prayers and Praises," 231-232.

²⁹ Hammond, "Prayers and Praises," 232.

³¹ Hammond, "Prayers and Praises," 232.

³² Pozzi, "Canticle of Brother Sun," 20-21.

³³ Pozzi, "Canticle of Brother Sun," 6.

"just," "holy," and "humble of heart" (Dan 3:86-87). In this case, we can see St. Francis' brilliance in applying the moral sense of the biblical text to the concrete occasion of the feud between Assisi's civil and ecclesiastical leadership.

This is not the only instance in the *Canticle* of an application of the biblical text. Let us remember that St. Francis

declared that he wanted this hymn to be

a new *Praise* of the Lord for his creatures, which we use every day, and without which we cannot live. Through them the human greatly race offends the Creator, and every day we are ungrateful for such great graces, because we do not praise, as we should, our Creator and

the Giver of all good.34

And so, St. Francis composes this hymn thanking the Creator for His blessings and setting the creatures in their right relation to God and man.

Interestingly, instruction on the right view of creatures is also the purpose of the Prayer of the Three Youths according to Severian of Gabala, whose words are worth quoting at length:

Consider the godless person, how he stumbles over the same things by which the faithful are justified. He sees the moon and worships it. He sees the stars and venerates them. He sees the sea and calls it divine. Those who entered the furnace in Babylon after their salvific and laudable confession praised God through his works in a hymn, saying, "Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord." Having said this, they could have ended the hymn. God does not pay attention to the length of the hymn but to the intention of those who sing. By saying "all you works," everything was in fact included,

who it was that was sung to and who it was that sang.³⁵

and there was no need to add anything else. But

since they were not proclaiming this to themselves

but praising God, and with the hymn they also

taught the Chaldeans who were present, the hymn

necessarily runs through the entire creation. Thus

the Chaldeans, who were lost in error, would learn

Now, in St. Francis' day all of Italy was Catholic, at least in name, and so he did not need to compose a hymn particularly against idolatry. However, his *Canticle* is instructive on the correct use of worldly goods, which the wealthy are ever at risk of turning into idols and the poor are ever at risk of lusting after. Thus, there is a profound harmony between the *Canticle* and the Prayer of the Three Youths in their attitudes towards creatures.

The Canticle on Death

As we draw to the close of this article, it seems only fitting that we should make a few remarks about the apparently divergent views on death expressed by the two hymns, in verse 88 of the *Benedicite* and verses 12-13 of the *Canticle*. Pozzi expresses this apparent divergence thus:

³⁴ FA:ED II, AC 83.

³⁵ Severian of Gabala, "On the Prodigal Son," in *Apocrypha*, ed. Sever J. Voicu, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament 15 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 454-455.

[In the *Benedicite*] death is mentioned as a particular rather than universal phenomenon, as something negative but not as a present reality. It concerns only the three young men, and only insofar as they have escaped from it. St. Francis reverses this completely. For him, death is a universal phenomenon, and while he does not minimize its tragic nature, still it is a motive for praise, since it gives more than it takes away. With a single ... stroke Francis makes death a creature, an earthly reality, something positive rather than negative, something active rather than the mere taking away of physical and spiritual existence.³⁶

In short, Pozzi argues that St. Francis universalizes death and makes it positive, in contrast to the Prayer of the Three Youths.

However, we must be careful not to take this divergence too far, not to turn a difference of viewpoint into a full-blown disagreement. In the first place, let us remember that the verses of the *Canticle* were composed only in view of St. Francis' own impending death. Let us also consider that the hymns were composed on opposite sides of the coming of Christ, when the gates of the heavenly kingdom were thrown open.

We might almost conceive of a kind of dialogue between the hymns, the elder praising God for deliverance from physical death, the younger praising Him for deliverance from spiritual death with the words, "Blessed are those whom death will find in Your most holy will, for the second death shall do them no harm."³⁷ Moreover, while God delivered the three youths only once from physical death, reading their prayer in light of the coming of Christ we may well say that He "has delivered us from Sheol, and saved us from the power of death" (Dan 3:88), but in a spiritual way much more enduring than when He delivered the youths in Babylon, by saving us from sin. Thus, a Christian reading of the *Benedicite* shows its profound agreement with the *Canticle of Brother Sun*.

Conclusion

Having examined the relationship between the Prayer of the Three Youths in Daniel and the *Canticle of Brother Sun* composed by St. Francis, we are hopefully in a position to make a few observations as to the meaning of these two prayers as applied to the spiritual life of modern Christian.

In the first place, we can see that St. Francis' personal prayer was deeply nourished by Scripture and by the

Second, we can see the didactic function of prayer. As already mentioned, both the Prayer of the Three Youths and the *Canticle of the Creatures* served a didactic function for their listeners. This shows us a model for the composition of modern Christian prayers, and implies that our prayers should also have some sort of instructional value for those who listen to us.

Third, both prayers teach us to praise God even in the midst of the intense sufferings of persecution or physical illness. Given that modern men are unlikely to be thrown into giant fiery furnaces or have such painful remedies for eye disease as cauterization, St. Francis and the Three Youths provide models for us in our (usually less painful) sufferings.

Finally, St. Francis shows us the continuing validity of Sacred Scripture for the life of the faithful in all ages. Though the situation of his day was rather different from that of the Babylonian Exile, yet he expressed himself in scriptural language and gave the faithful who followed him an example of prayer that itself remains valid for us. He was not introducing anachronisms into the biblical text, but rather applying it to his own life and day. Thus, St. Francis' model of biblical spirituality continues to be an example for the faithful of the Church today.



Luke lyengar recently graduated with a Master of Arts in Theology from Franciscan University of Steubenville, where he is serving as a part-time instructor. He is in the process of applying to seminary for the Byzantine Catholic Church.

Church's liturgy. For him, there was not so much a dichotomy between the public prayer of the Church and his own personal prayer as an overlap and an influence. The biblical prayers given to the saint by the Church gave him a language with which he could compose prayers adapted to his own situation. It would be well for us to embrace this model, in order that the Church may teach us to pray as befits saints.

³⁶ Pozzi, "Canticle of Brother Sun," 8.

³⁷ FA:ED I, CtC 13, italics in original.

"An Ardent Absence" A Conversation with the Author

By Jean-François Godet-Calogeras

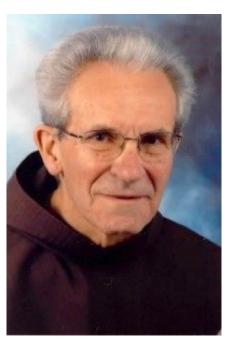
he name of Thaddée Matura is well known in the English-speaking Franciscan world. Several works of the Canadian, Polish born Friar minor have been translated from the French into English and published over the past decades. To mention a few, The Gospel Life of Francis of Assisi Today (Franciscan Herald Press, 1980); Francis of Assisi: The Message in His Writings (Franciscan Institute Publications, 1997 and 2004); A Dwelling Place for the Most High (Franciscan Press, 1999); Francis of Assisi: Writer and Spiritual Master (St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2005); and Francis of Assisi: Heritage and Heirs, Eight Centuries Later (Franciscan Institute Publications, 2010). With a solid foundation in theology and exegesis, all those books deal with Francis, his writings, his spirituality and way of life.

This past summer, the Franciscan Institute Publications released *An Ardent Absence*. This book is not focused on Francis of Assisi, but rather on the desire and experience of God, on the journey to God with its times of light and darkness. Since I have been closely involved in the translation, and also because of my long friendship with Thaddée Matura, I decided that, instead of writing a review of the book, I would converse with its author and let him express himself on the subject.

Thaddée, the back cover of the book mentions that "An Ardent Absence" is your favorite book. The book has obviously encountered great success with two editions in French, and translations in Italian, Spanish, Polish, Czech and Slovak. However, I suspect that it is your favorite book for another reason.

Yes, it is true, among all the books I have written, "An Ardent Absence" is the one I like the most. I think it is because it is the most personal of my books. In the other books, I am dealing with a theme, or I study a particular writing or set of writings of Francis. But this one is the only one where I simply express what I feel, what I have been carrying in me.

As you just said, your other books were centered on Franciscan spirituality, or religious life, or the Scripture, like the one in which you study radicalism in the Gospel. What brought you to change genre and write this one?



For a long time I have been carrying in myself intuitions, intuitions that were based on the Word of God, and also on the writings of the mystics. Those intuitions have driven me internally for years. One day, in a kind of inspiration, I finally expressed them in a language that I wanted to be poetic.

Wouldyouexplainthespiritual question that is at the core of "An Ardent Absence"?

The book deals with a fundamental question of human life: what can a human being possibly experience of the mystery of God, how far can one go, how close to God? It is a redoubtable question, and maybe that is why it is rarely treated today. What kind of experience of God can we, human beings, really reach? What does it mean to seek God? Are we capable of knowing God? May we name God? Beyond all the symbols, words, images, concepts, rites, can we get a touch of the reality of God, and if so, how can we?

"An Ardent Absence" mentions mystics like Angela of Foligno, John of the Cross, or Angelus Silesius. But the name of Francisof Assisi appears only at the very end of the last page with a relevant quote from his "Canticle of the Creatures." How would you express the link between "An Ardent Absence" and your Franciscan being?

Actually, Francis is present throughout the book like a watermark. My life as a Franciscan and my knowledge of the writings of Francis have convinced me that the center, the heart and the foundation of his spiritual vision is God. For Francis, God is the supreme happiness of the human being.

Yes, Francis called God "summum bonum," the supreme good, the total good, the only good.

And delectable and wholly desirable... When Francis begins to talk of God, the poet begins to sing, and he can't find enough words to exhaust his lauda, his praise. He wants all humankind to join him. All my writings relating to Francis testify to this conviction, especially the last one, "To believe in God to believe in the human being" (Croire en Dieu pour croire en l'Homme). It is truly Francis' call to the whole world, in his times and until today.

But Francis also says that God is Ineffable, incomprehensible, unfathomable.

That is why I gave my book that title, "An Ardent Absence". It is an expression I borrowed from the great poet

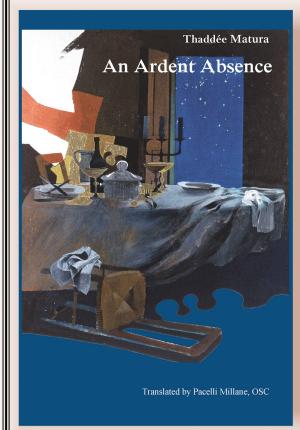
Rainer Maria Rilke. I quote him at the beginning of the

"To find God one must be happy Because those who out of distress invent God,
Go too fast and search too little
The intimacy of God's ardent absence."

Ardent absence, ardent presence... Thank you, Thaddée.



Jean-François Godet-Calogeras is a professor of Franciscan studies at Saint Bonaventure University, New York, received his education in classical philology and medieval studies at the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium. As a Franciscan scholar, he is internationally well-known for his publications on the early Franciscan documents, in particular the writings of Francis and Clare of Assisi, for his lectures and workshops on early Franciscan history, and for his participation in the elaboration of the new Rule of the Third Order.



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This essay addresses a formidable subject, rarely treated today. It is a matter of knowing what "experience" of God can reach a human being, whether he or she seeks God without knowing it or naming God, or that he or she affirms, as a Christian believer, God's historical manifestation in Jesus Christ. Once the symbols, the words, the images, the concepts, the rites, are passed, can we join a je ne sais quoi of the reality of God, and how? In a language that combines theological rigor and poetic approach, the book addresses the search and desire of God, with its pathways, its nights, and what can be glimpsed at the end of all these steps. Without being a "confession" or a testimony, this personal, and therefore partial, itinerary is rooted in many experiences of past and present. It is addressed to those who, by human paths and from the bottom of their faith, seek the face of the God of Jesus Christ, present, close, but always stealth behind darkness, the faithful companion of the mystics.

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'Against Their Soul and Our Rule': A Case for Nonviolent Direct Action

By Anthony Zuba, OFM Cap.

ity, but also as a matter of fidelity to the Gospel.

However, it has not always followed that Franciscans embrace nonviolence as a method of action and as a positive and radical power for social transformation. To do so would require them to protest, to withhold their cooperation from, and to intervene in the affairs of state, society

ranciscans reject violence, not only because of its futil-

ation from, and to intervene in the affairs of state, society and the economy. Some forms of nonviolent direct action would involve civil disobedience, which poses the risk of arrest and the threat of bodily harm. The fear of punishment by civil authority or censure by religious authority prevents some Franciscans from doing these things.

Some Franciscans may see nonviolent direct action as a weak response to war, genocide, and other crimes against humanity and creation. Still others may believe that the Gospel neither commands nor forbids active intervention in the world's affairs. Thus any direct action, nonviolent or otherwise, is a matter of indifference in regard to salvation.

It is fair to debate the effectiveness of nonviolent methods of action. It is even fair to debate whether the Gospel of Jesus Christ binds disciples normatively to nonviolent practice. These debates cannot forestall the choices facing every Franciscan community, nor can they negate the options made by our Franciscan ancestors. The question facing the Franciscan family today is stark: does our evangelical life commit us radically to nonviolence challenging injustice? Are we called—bound, even—through the example of Saint Francis and Saint Clare of Assisi to a degree of revolutionary nonviolent practice that we have seldom achieved?

I believe Franciscans can make a case for nonviolent direct action as a practice that is consonant with their evangelical life. And they can do so from the sources of their own tradition.

While many Franciscans have engaged in nonviolent direct action over the last two generations, few, to my knowledge, have offered a grounding for their acts in distinctly Franciscan sources of thought and practice. Their justification usually comes from radical readings of Catholic social doctrine (e.g. Catholic Worker), or from Christian nonconformists (Quakers, Tolstoy), or from Gandhian principles (Martin Luther King), or humanistic sources (Thoreau), or political theorists (Gene Sharp).

The argument I wish to advance is simple: nonviolent direct action has Franciscan foundations. And we can make

a contribution to the strategic practice of nonviolence in the Church and the world.

An appropriation of the stories and teachings of the early Franciscan movement will help us make a case for nonviolent direct action. We have recourse to the legends, the Earlier Rule and Later Rule, the Admonitions, and the Canticle of Creatures to make our case. We can cite instances of Franciscan action in the early history of the movement as precursors of modern nonviolent direct action. We can also cite recent practitioners who have tended a garden of nonviolence from its spiritual roots.¹

Francis: Man of Peace – Survivor of War

One must start with the life and works of Saint Francis of Assisi.2 The man of peace was a survivor of war, a onetime soldier who saw bloodshed in Perugia and suffered imprisonment and illness. During his long convalescence, he began to withdraw from his family and his community, leaving his carousing days behind. He no longer aspired to rise up and overtake the nobility: the cost, paid in blood, was too high. As his body and soul healed, he removed himself completely from the world that justified greed and conquest. In an early and controversial reversal of conduct, Francis resisted the temptation to take up arms in the papal militia in Apulia. Guided by a vision at Spoleto, Francis lay down his arms and returned to Assisi. This son of a wealthy cloth merchant also lost interest in his father's business. In one incident, he seized his father's expensive cloth, sold it at Foligno and, returning to Assisi, gave all the money to the priest at the chapel of San Damiano.

These moments are often cited as conversion experiences, as God's activity directing the life of Francis, and so

¹ See Ken Butigan, Mary Litell, and Louis Vitale, eds., *Franciscan Nonviolence: Stories, Principles, Practices, Reflections, and Resources.* Las Vegas, Nev.: Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service, 2003. Pace e Bene published this omnibus of sources at the behest of both the Franciscan Friars' Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation International Council and the Interfranciscan JPIC Commission. It contains reflections on the lives of Francis and Clare of Assisi, as well as contemporary resources for a Franciscan practice of nonviolence.

² From sources of the first Franciscan century, see Thomas of Celano, *The Life of St. Francis*; Julian of Speyer, *The Life of St. Francis*; John of Perugia, *The Anonymous of Perugia*; *The Legend of the Three Companions*; and others in Regis J. Armstrong, Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short, eds., *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, 3 vols. (New York: New City Press, 1999-2002).

they are. They can also be taken in themselves as strategies Francis adopted to escape the violent conventions of his day. Refusing to carry out his commission to fight with the papal armies in Apulia, Francis became something like a conscientious objector. Seizing his father's cloth, selling it, and giving away all the money, Francis interrupted the order of economic affairs by abandoning profit and wealth, and treating money only as a medium of exchange. By renouncing his role as the leader of gaiety and merriment around town, Francis caused the usual social activities to be suspended. These acts of withdrawal and intervention were not without effect on the conduct of other people. As Francis was a well-known and popular figure, his decisions were bound to influence others and lead them to imitate his example, as the emergence of the Lesser Brothers would prove later on.

So it would continue through the rest of Francis' life. When his father abused him and chained him in a cell for his insubordination, he did not give in to vengeance. Rather, he responded with prayer and patient forbearance, winning his release. When brought before the town and bishop of Assisi by his father to be disinherited, Francis cheerfully complied. By refusing his parents' wealth, which no longer lured him, he deprived his father any leverage he had over his freedom. By stripping off his clothes before everyone, he turned his public shaming into an act of guerrilla theater, vindicating himself and leaving his father humiliated.

Francis found ways to avoid the escalation of violence and avert calamity. In the Earlier Rule he directs the brothers to yield their places to others (VII:13); this they did when they abandoned their hut at Rivo Torto to a man and his donkey who coveted it. He also directs the brothers to receive robbers with kindness (VII: 14). The Assisi Compilation (115) provides a corroborating anecdote of the brothers offering food and drink to robbers, winning their conversion. In 1220, Francis sought to end the Fifth Crusade without war, by preaching Christ to the Sultan of Egypt, Malik al-Kamil. He pled with Cardinal Pelagius not to send the Christian armies into battle at Damietta and warned the soldiers not to advance, predicting a disaster for them. His pressure on the cardinal and soldiers did not prevent the attack and slaughter that followed. But protest was not Francis' only mode of action. Against war's rules of engagement, against the ecclesiastical authorities, and against common sense, he entered the Muslim camp to speak to the enemy. Because of his good will and holiness, he was conveyed safely to the sultan, received with honor and listened to respectfully, and returned to the Christian camp unmolested.

Shortly before Francis' death, the town of Assisi was roiled in chaos. The bishop excommunicated the mayor, who in turn imposed sanctions on the bishop by forbidding the people from buying or selling goods from him. Francis

reconciled the two by calling a public assembly and singing the *Canticle of the Creatures*, with new verses composed in praise of those who "give pardon" and "endure in peace." Immediately the mayor forgave the bishop for excommunicating him, and the bishop apologized for his rash actions. Francis, blessed with gifts of persuasion, knew the value of spectacle, and he staged such "happenings" to edify the people, to instruct them, and to defuse explosive tensions.

That Francis always opted for nonviolent methods of action is no coincidence. It is a consequence of his discovery of the living God after his shattering experience of war and the exploitation economy. This revelation of a God who has nothing to do with violence was confirmed for him by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To Francis and his followers, the Gospel of Jesus Christ announced a God of peace, a God of total goodness; a God revealed in voluntary poverty, a God revealed in self-sacrificing love. These attributes bound to a dynamic God who entered history and acted upon it through the words and deeds of Jesus. The Gospels' record of Jesus' acts and commandments inspired Francis, ever impulsive, with what Martin Luther King Jr. called "the fierce urgency of now." Any time Francis encountered strife or an ethical or moral conflict, it stirred his soul into opposition, and he would not rest until he had changed the situation³ by any means he could: persuasion or protest, noncooperation or withdrawal, or intervention.

The man of peace sought to pass on his example to the brothers through a Rule and Life, given its final canonical form in 1223. From the very beginning of the *Later Rule*, Francis sought to conform his brothers' conduct to the nonviolent Christ alone: "The Rule and Life of the Lesser Brothers is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ" (*Later Rule* I: 1).⁴ This Gospel is the supreme law of the Friars Minor. Respect for all other human laws and customs is conditioned by the Gospel, whose priority is determined by the Rule and Life. Already one can see that a positive observance of this Rule and Life may require at times a negative observance of human laws and customs where the latter impose burdens that hinder us from observing the Gospel.

Observance of this Rule and Life is made in obedience to the pope and his successors, and to Francis and his successors, the ministers of the Order and the local fraternities. The brothers' obedience is total, with one condition: "Therefore, I strictly command them to obey their ministers in everything they have promised the Lord to observe

³ Sometimes changing the situation meant creating a crisis. Tradition holds that Francis returned to Assisi from the Fifth Crusade, appalled to find the friars constructing convents. He commenced a symbolic destruction of his own property, pulling down the stones from the convent roof! Nonviolent or not?

⁴ Regis J. Armstrong, Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short, eds., *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, 3 vols. (New York: New City Press, 1999-2002), 1:100.



and which is not against their soul or our Rule" (*Later Rule* X: 3).⁵ Francis orders the brother ministers to "humbly and charitably correct them, not commanding them anything that is against their soul and our rule" (*Later Rule* X: 1).⁶ If any command contradicts the Gospel life as the brother understands it, it is not a command at all.

Since Francis puts a premium on obedience to the spiritual ministers of the Order, let us consider what he means by obedience. The *Admonitions* encapsulate the practical wisdom of Francis on the evangelical life. In the third Admonition he writes of obedience to superiors as a renunciation of one's own possessions and body.⁷ A religious should go so far as to do what the minister commands even if he knows better than the minister what is good for him: "let him willingly offer such things to God as a sacrifice; and, instead, let him earnestly strive to fulfill the prelate's wishes" (Verse 5). But Francis also puts down qualifications, saying

the religious acts in true obedience "provided that what he does is good" (Verse 4). Also, a religious may not do anything "contrary to his will" (ibid), that is, his conscience. How, then, does a religious act in response to a command that he knows to be wrong and violates his conscience? "If the prelate, however, commands something contrary to his conscience, even though he may not obey him, let him not, however, abandon him. And if he then suffers persecution from others, let him love them all the more for the sake of God. For whoever chooses to suffer persecution rather than wish to be separated from his brothers truly remains in perfect obedience because he lays down his life for his brothers" (Verses 7-9). To conclude, he chastises religious who turn their back on their superiors, rightly or wrongly: "These people are murderers and, because of their bad example, cause many to lose their souls" (Verse 11).8

Although Francis' focus is on obedience, herein lies an understanding of the qualities that shape a Christian, nonviolent resistance to injustice—and a recognition of the power of that resistance. One of those qualities is *humility*. The good I want to do is no better than the good that

⁵ Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, 1:105.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Francis paraphrases Luke 14:33 and 9:24: "The Lord says in the Gospel: Whoever does not renounce all that he possesses cannot be my disciple; and: Whoever wishes to save his life must lose it." Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, 1:130.

⁸ Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, 1:130.

others bid me to do. The good I do is not better because I willed it. All goodness comes from God and is willed by God. Therefore, obedience is owed to whatever is good. Francis is taking the will to power out of our actions. This way, when it comes to evil, we can resist it properly—because it is wrong—and effectively, because our obedience is to God and not ourselves. Another quality is *solidarity*. What concerns Francis ultimately? Staying in relationship with his minister and with his brothers, who God has given to him for the sake of salvation. It would be easier for the brother to depart from the community, free to follow his conscience. But the unjust command would remain and the others would remain in sin and error. The loyal subject does not seek the destruction of others, but their redemption. So the subject seeks to bring them back to God and to the truth by accepting their persecution. The third quality is love. This is the love that lays down its life for others. Francis praises those subjects who surrender their will to fulfill the desire of another and calls it "loving obedience" (emphasis mine). And he bids them to love "all the more" their persecutors, remaining among them when they disobey their unjust commands. One may discern in this prescription of Francis an ethos for challenging injustice. When we withdraw consent to unjust laws, we do not withdraw from society. To the contrary, we remain in covenant with all peoples, not only victims, but also and especially those who command what is unjust and contrary to conscience. We remain "all the more" in their midst. We love them who order what is unjust "all the more." It may prompt a crisis. It may lead to suffering. But it is action that is faithful to the Gospel, our Rule and Life. And we accept the consequences of our actions. This is the epitome of what today we call civil disobedience, but it is, in the words of Francis, "perfect obedience" to God and an imitation of Jesus Christ who lay down his life for others.

With the Admonitions as foreground and interpretive guide, the Later Rule charts a Franciscan vision of Christian resistance to injustice, rooted in humble, loving obedience that reaches out in solidarity. What makes it distinctly nonviolent is the rejection of self-will, separation, and retaliation. With prophetic fervor, Francis denounces religious who "return to the vomit of their own will" as "murderers." When subjects who groan under unjust commands turn away from their superiors to follow their own will instead, it is as if they had taken their lives. Francis considers it an act of violence thus to oppose the will of another. It is one thing to resist evil; it is another to resist a person. Not only is it fruitless to contend in this way—one will supplants another—it is dangerous. It escalates the situation by meeting violence with equal or greater violence. Recall that Francis blames religious who follow their own will for the loss of many souls. It is safer to withstand persecutors than to overcome them through aggression. This strategy is also more faithful to the Gospel. Jesus overcomes violence by revealing it on the Cross and reducing its power to nothing.

Francis left his followers an example and rule of Christian conduct that enabled them to practice a nonviolence that was revolutionary for its time. It should be noted, however, that Francis did not hand on a program of social reconstruction. Social justice as an ideal, and Catholic social doctrine, were unheard-of. Francis practiced nonviolence to be faithful to God, and he did turn the medieval order upside down, but he did not use nonviolent means strategically in collective action for social change. Consider the acts of the early Franciscans. The brothers' choice to live without property, and their refusal to touch coins or receive money for their labor was motivated not by ascetic impulse, ideology, or utopianism, but by non-cooperation with moral evil. Theirs was a voluntary withdrawal of participation in the abusive economic system of their age.9 They were nonviolent because they declined to benefit from the labor of others, relying on their own labor and by begging. They were nonviolent because they did not coerce others who did not follow their Life and Rule. Their acts would not rise to the level of direct action as we understand it today, because they did not force others to reckon with the need to change customs, policies, and practices that shaped their economy. They did not make claims on others. Though they broke with customs, and though their movement transformed European society during the high Middle Ages, they did not consciously seek a reform of given practices.

Clare and Non-Violent Action

But in their own way, Saint Clare and her sisters did. One time they undertook a hunger strike to loosen Pope Gregory IX's prohibition of visits from brothers, in order to gain access to preachers for their convent. From the Legend of Saint Clare (37):

The pious mother, sorrowing that her sisters would most rarely have the food of sacred teaching, sighed: "Let him now take away from us all the brothers since he has taken away those who provide us with the food that is vital." At once she sent back to the minister all the brothers, not wanting to have the questors who acquired corporal bread when they could not have the questors for spiritual bread. When Pope Gregory heard this, he immediately mitigated that prohibition into the hands of the general minister.¹⁰

⁹ The imperial powers manipulated currency, causing inflation and much suffering. Michael F. Cusato, "The Early Franciscans and the Use of Money," in Daria Mitchell, ed., *Poverty and Prosperity: Franciscans and the Use of Money* (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: The Franciscan Institute, 2009), 13-37.

¹⁰ Regis J. Armstrong, ed., Clare of Assisi: Early Documents (New

This incident is remarkable. How it resembles modern tactics of nonviolent direct action! Clare opposed Gregory's rigorous interpretation of the Later Rule, which restricted visits from friars to monasteries of nuns (XI, 2-3). (Friars could gain entry only by apostolic permission.) By fasting, Clare and her sisters forced the issue—every Christian has a right to hear the Word of God preached—on the mind of the pope. With their bodies, they made a claim on the highest ecclesiastical power and won, achieving a more just practice. Of course, this action was rather limited in scope and did not touch on the whole ecclesiastical order. (Gregory delegated his authority over friar visits to the general minister of the Order; the prohibition in the Later Rule remained.) But it reveals a willingness to challenge authority, even Church authority, when it imposes on the Gospel life. Clare and her sisters protested out of reverence for the gifts of God upon which we rely. Indeed, Clare's quest to have her Rule recognized by the Church, the first to be written by a woman, was sustained by her faith in God and a lifetime of nonviolent action: prayer, fasting, and dispossession.

In our times, God has raised up Franciscans who took the step of using nonviolent means intentionally to dismantle the political structures that support unspeakable violence. One anti-nuclear and peace activist, Fr. Jerry Zawada, OFM, died on July 25, 2017. He was arrested over 100 times and served about five years in prison. Among other things, he planted corn and crosses at numerous nuclear missile silos in northwestern Missouri and trespassed at the U.S. School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Ga. His conversion to radical peacemaking came after hearing a Salvadoran schoolteacher describe how she was tortured by the military for fighting for the poor. In his own words:

And it dawned on me almost like a light, I could not not do something. I didn't have to take away anybody's pain. I just needed to walk with them and learn from them and maybe somehow, I describe it in my religious terms as seeing the face of Christ, and working along those lines just learning from them, accompanying them in their plight and then hopefully to work with others for some type of resolution and relief.

Despite criticism from his superiors, he continued to get arrested, citing obedience to God and the Gospel. His provincial minister, Fr. James Gannon, offered an insight into Father Jerry's motivations: "He always would say he believed what he did was God's will. And that was his faith, that he was following God's will."¹¹

York: New City Press), 311-312.

¹¹ Brian Roewe, "Jerry Zawada, Quiet, Powerful Presence in Peace Movement, Dies," *National Catholic Reporter*, July 27, 2017. Accessed online August 9, 2018: https://www.ncronline.org/news/justice/jerry-zawa-

Fr. Louis Vitale, OFM, has been arrested hundreds of times in efforts to halt the U.S. government's preparations for nuclear war. He has led numerous anti-nuclear protests at the Nevada Test Site. He has trespassed at Vandenberg Air Force Base near Lompoc, Calif., to protest its testing of intercontinental ballistic missiles. With Father Jerry, he has conducted fasts and vigils at Creech Air Force Base, Nevada, where Predator drones are piloted. He says his ministry is an "evangelization of peace," following in the footsteps of Jesus and Francis. "By taking on the suffering of others, we change the world. We are willing to put our bodies where they are and suffer the consequences, be what they may."¹²

His life story mirrors Saint Francis' conversion: Born into affluence, he enlisted in the Air Force. He took pride in being a "flyboy," owned a Jaguar Roadster, and enjoyed the party life. After he nearly shot down a commercial airplane that appeared to be an enemy aircraft, he was changed. He entered the Franciscan order and had his conscience awakened by the Second Vatican Council, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Vietnam War. He was arrested for the first time in Las Vegas, Nev., in 1971 at a traffic sit-in to protest state cuts to public benefits.

Father Louis actively seeks arrest because that is how Franciscans make change in the world. They share the suffering of innocent victims. "When you see that people are being tortured, what's a few months in jail?" he told the *Los Angeles Times* moments before an arrest at Fort Huachuca, Ariz. to oppose the training of military interrogators. ¹³

Father Louis does not worry about the outcome of his efforts because the witness is what matters: "Effectiveness is not what we're after. We are doing what's right before God. That's what we are called to do, and what happens, happens."14

Our Gospel life is celebrated in the Church and beyond it as a *habitus*¹⁵ that generates practices for transforming conflict and achieving reconciliation. Nonviolence is a development of the Franciscan *habitus*. It finds expression in our trademark salutation *Pax et bonum*, "Peace and all good things." Far more than a pious greeting, Francis' of "peace and all good things" was a provocative message in Europe at a time when it was a war of all against all. It

da-quiet-powerful-presence-peace-movement-dies.

¹² Richard C. Paddock, "Protesting Priest's Path Leads Repeatedly to Jail," *Los Angeles Times*, April 9, 2009. Accessed Aug. 7, 2018: http://articles.latimes.com/2009/apr/09/local/me-protest-priest9.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Habitus is articulated by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu as the presence or embodiment of a historical context that works unconsciously in groups to give rise to the ways we think, judge, and act today. *Habitus* in the context of the development of the Church is given extensive treatment in Roger Haight, *Christian Community in History*, vol. 1 (New York: Continuum, 2004), and Bryan Stone, *Evangelism After Christendom* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos, 2007).



finds expression in the *Canticle of the Creatures*: "Praised be you, my Lord, through those who give you pardon for Your love, and bear infirmity and tribulation. Blessed are those who endure in peace for by You, Most High, shall they be crowned."¹⁶

The habitus of Franciscan life attracts many seekers who are interested in adopting a lifestyle consistent with the Gospel. For us who work in social movements, it is also a means for conversion of sinful social structures. Of course, personal conversion and social transformation are mutually dependent phenomena. It is not possible to follow Jesus Christ with integrity in a society that is disintegrating because of racism and poverty, in a world that is disintegrating into tribal states. The peace we seek in our personal lives is found when we dwell in harmony with our sisters and brothers, especially the least among us.

Conclusion

It is not enough for Franciscans to save souls when sin distresses the world itself, causing all of creation to cry out in agony. We are called to rebuild the Church. This requires an inspection of the house in which we dwell. Do we build our house, the political-social-economic order in which we live, on the solid rock of right relationships, or the unstable sands of the will to power? And what "spirits" haunt this house? Materialism, militarism, racism, and dominion over nature? Occupy, Black Lives Matter, and the newly revived Poor People's Campaign are examples of movements that demonstrate an advanced consciousness of structural sin. It is time now for the Franciscan movement, both with 1) its subtle understanding of the temptations to violence; and 2) its supple grasp of nonviolent practices, to take its rightful place among these developments and bring our treasured values to God's people.

Franciscan nonviolence may be deployed strategically in direct action that leads to civil disobedience, but there are also many other methods that do not entail this degree

of sacrifice. It is important for us not to dismiss all nonviolent direct action by falsely assuming that all methods of action lead to civil disobedience and bodily risk. On the other hand, it is critical for Franciscans to have courage and not shrink from confrontation. Most Franciscans don't want to go there because they don't want to provoke conflict. Nonviolence, whether or not it leads to civil disobedience, invites a violent response, doesn't it? It cuts off dialogue with the oppressor, doesn't it? To the contrary! Firstly, nonviolent direct action exposes violence for what it is. It brings about a crisis in order to disarm the powers that disobey God. Secondly, for a Franciscan, direct action is a way of staying in relationship with irresponsible authorities who command things that go against our conscience and our Rule. We don't abandon them; we take the issue to them personally. It is fraternal correction writ large in the public arena.

Where does the Franciscan family go from here? My aim has been to show that the "perfect obedience" imagined by Francis of Assisi not only legitimates nonviolent methods of action, all the way to civil disobedience, but also commends them as a witness to injustice and a call to repentance. May the evils that offend our soul and violate our Rule and Life stir us, in the Holy Name of Jesus, to more adventurous discipleship.



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¹⁶ Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, I:114.



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