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## Bishop John England's Address to Congress

### *From Blackmoor Lane to Capitol Hill: An Irish Capuchin's Influence on Bishop John England of Charleston, SC*

By Brian Cudahy

John England was widely regarded as a forceful and powerful preacher and constant demands were made upon him to address various congregations ... Catholic, Protestant and civic. Five years into his episcopacy he travelled from Charleston to Baltimore, where, on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1825, he served as a co-consecrator and delivered the sermon at the episcopal consecration of Benedict J. Fenwick as the second bishop of Boston. Boston was one of four dioceses crafted out of Baltimore in 1808 while Fenwick was the priest who had greeted England when he arrived in Charleston in 1820 and who England quickly appointed vicar general of the new diocese, a post Fenwick held for the first two years of England's episcopacy.

After Fenwick's elevation to the bishopric at the Cathedral of the Assumption in Baltimore, England returned with him to Boston and preached at his installation there on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1825.<sup>1</sup> Later that month, while en route back to Charleston, England paused for a few days in Washington, the capital of the still-new nation. On Christmas Day he preached in Saint Patrick's Church,<sup>2</sup> and his theme that day was a defense of his religion against a steady current of criticism that attempted to characterize Roman Catholicism as being incompatible with the democratic principles enshrined in the United States Constitution. Such claims were based on Catholicism's supposed allegiance to a "foreign power," namely that of the papacy, along with a persistent fear that the papacy felt itself empowered to depose secular rulers in nations the world over, an issue that Arthur O'Leary had forcefully addressed a half-century earlier. Among those in America who were outspoken in advancing such a view was John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts, a man who had been elected the sixth

President of the United States the previous year.

Adams had served as Secretary of State during the two presidential terms of his predecessor, James Monroe, and what was thought to be a forceful exposition of his negative views about Catholicism were voiced in a speech he gave, while Secretary of State, on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1821.<sup>3</sup> To a 21<sup>st</sup> century reader, Adams' speech might not appear to be anti-Catholic vitriol, but more a measured embrace of the Enlightenment, modernity, freedom of expression and the reforms of the Reformation. With some careful editing here and there, and, perhaps, bracketing out Adams' praise for America's Declaration of Independence, one could imagine major portions of his 1821 oration as flowing from the pen of Arthur O'Leary. But references such as "corruptions and usurpations of the church,"<sup>4</sup> and "fetters of ecclesiastical domination"<sup>5</sup> were understood to be, and surely were, negative assessments of Roman Catholicism. In more direct criticism, Adams claimed that the right to exercise one's own reason was something "the sophistry and rapacity of the church had obscured and obliterated," and in a reference to Martin Luther, he also said that it was "from the darkness of the cloister that the first spark was emitted..."<sup>6</sup>

John England had met Adams on a visit to Washington later in that same year of 1821 on his first trip north of his own diocese when he was received by President Monroe and then-Secretary of State Adams, and although the two men, Quincy Adams and England, would find themselves on opposite sides of an extremely contentious issue, their relationship was characterized by mutual cordiality and respect. Looking back almost 50 years to the era of Arthur O'Leary, one might see certain parallels between England's dealings with John Quincy Adams and the Capuchin friar's exchanges with John Wesley. Both sets of antagonists held strong views

<sup>1</sup> See: Peter Guilday, *The Life and Times of John England, First Bishop of Charleston*, 2 vol. (New York: The America Press, 1927), II, 48. (Hereafter: Guilday.)

<sup>2</sup> St. Patrick's parish, in Washington, was established by Bishop Carroll in 1794 and the church where Bishop England preached was designed by Irish-born James Hoban, the architect of the White House, and completed in 1809. St. Patrick's remains an active parish to this day, although the current church building dates to 1884 and was not the site of England's Christmas sermon in 1825.

<sup>3</sup> See: Guilday, II, 49-51, for a discussion of key sections of Adams oration. For the full text, see: John Quincy Adams, *An Address, Delivered at the Request of the Committee of Arrangements for Celebrating the Anniversary of Independence, at the City of Washington on the Fourth of July 1821 Upon the Occasion of Reading the Declaration of Independence* (Boston: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1821).

<sup>4</sup> Adams, 6.

<sup>5</sup> Adams, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Adams, 6.

one against the other, but each party approached his adversary with courtesy, respect and decorum.

England's Christmas Day sermon received wide currency in Washington. President Adams, himself a member of the Unitarian Church, actually attended the Christmas mass at which England preached and invited him to the White House for dinner shortly afterward. Then the United States House of Representatives requested that Bishop England expand on his ideas before that body. Sunday afternoon addresses to the House by various religious figures were not uncommon in the early years of the 19th century, but John England was the first Roman Catholic cleric to be so invited. Prior to England, the only Catholic priest to address any session of Congress was one Gabriel Richards, who served as an elected member from Michigan some years earlier. England accepted the invitation after securing permission from his archbishop, Ambrose Maréchal, and he did so on Sunday afternoon, January 8<sup>th</sup>, 1826.<sup>7</sup>

### John England's Address Before the United States House of Representatives

Although it has sometimes been said that England addressed a joint session of Congress, this is not correct. A joint session requires formal invitations from both houses of Congress along with associated joint resolutions by the two bodies. Bishop England's invitation was tendered only by the Speaker of the House, Congressman John W. Taylor, of New York. Taylor, a Presbyterian with certain links to Baptist congregations in his upstate New York homeland, was known for his ardent opposition to slavery and helped draft the Missouri Compromise of 1820.<sup>8</sup> Many senators attended England's presentation that day in the House chamber, as did President Adams, with whose views England had so forcefully disagreed on Christmas Day, and would do so again when he addressed the House of Representatives. In 1820, the chamber in which the United States House of Representatives met was within the main portion of the Capitol Building. It is today known as Statuary Hall and every four years is the site of a celebratory luncheon hosted by Congress following presidential inaugurations.

John England would speak that day, extemporaneously, for the better part of two hours. Consequently the text that has been preserved is one that he reconstructed

in subsequent days and is surely not a verbatim transcription of the talk he, in fact, delivered.<sup>9</sup> But England undoubtedly captured the substance of his address and Guilday introduces his treatment of the talk with this characterization: "Among Bishop England's public discourses the one which easily ranks first in importance is his address before Congress, delivered in the House of Representatives, on Sunday, January 8<sup>th</sup>, 1826, in the presence of President John Quincy Adams..."<sup>10</sup>

Such circumstances could make it difficult to find parallels between England's "Address to Congress" and Arthur O'Leary's "Essay on Toleration," since the two were dissimilar in structure, format and purpose. O'Leary's essay was a piece of written exposition, and clearly evidences the balance and directness one might expect in a composition of such a sort. It is, and was always intended to be, a finished piece of written prose. John England's oration, on the other hand, was not of such a sort and includes elements of oratorical spontaneity that are evident even in the written draft he later composed. Despite such structural differences, though, strong echoes of the Capuchin friar may be found in the talk John England delivered.

The bishop of Charleston gets right to the point. After announcing that he hopes to "avoid any unpleasant reference to those differences which exist between persons professing Christianity,"<sup>11</sup> he tells the assemblage that he will not "content myself with giving a discourse upon any general topic," but will, instead, "speak upon some of the peculiarities of my own faith."<sup>12</sup>

But as one reads on, the echo of a common rhetorical device often used by Arthur O'Leary can be detected. Namely, like the Capuchin friar with whose work he was quite familiar, John England shows himself to be a master of subtle misdirection. Simply stated, he does not at all begin by addressing the "peculiarities of my own faith." Rather he talks about the nature of religion itself, and in doing so, he establishes a very important

<sup>9</sup> For discussion of how the spoken address was later rendered into a written text, see: Guilday, II, 54.

<sup>10</sup> Guilday, II, 48.

<sup>11</sup> John England, *The Works of the Right Rev. John England; First Bishop of Charleston*; 5 vol., ed. Right Rev. Ignatius Reynolds (Baltimore, MD: John Murphy and Company, 1849), IV, 173. (Hereafter: *Works*.) England will return to this theme often in his address, such as midway through when he says: "And here let me assure you, that if, in the course of my observations, any expression should escape from me that may appear calculated to wound the feelings of those from which I differ, that it is not my intention to assail, to insult, or to give pain; and that I may be pardoned for what will be inn truth an inconsiderate expression, not intended to offend." (*Works*, IV, 180.)

<sup>12</sup> *Works*, II, 173.

philosophical and theological point.

“Religion is the homage which man owes to God,”<sup>13</sup> England claims, putting forth as self-evident a principle with which none of his listeners could possibly disagree. The argument he then advances as a follow-up to this assertion is most critical to what he will later say when he does, in fact, talk about the “peculiarities of my own faith.” Assuming the available printed text is a reasonably accurate version of the oration England delivered before the House of Representatives, less than a minute into his talk he defines what he calls “natural religion.” What England means by “natural religion” is a trust in the human mind’s ability to discover order and intelligibility. England claims that humankind has an inherent inclination “to exert our understanding for the discovery of truth, to frame the determination of our will according to ascertained truth, and to carry those determinations into effect...”<sup>14</sup> This is what John England calls “natural religion.” Others might say it is simply a basic trust that mind is capable of achieving true and reliable knowledge, while in scholastic terms with which John England would surely have been more than familiar, “natural religion” might also be called “unaided human reason.” It remains unclear as to whether England believed this “natural religion” was an inquiry that leads one to an understanding of Divinity, and he does not pursue such a path in his address.

Instead, John England lays down a premise that is critical for everything that will follow. For having introduced the possibility of the revelation of truths that are beyond the scope of “natural religion,” he asserts this: “If we should find that God did make a revelation, there will not be anything found in that revelation to weaken the principles of natural religion.”<sup>15</sup> England expands on this point at some length: “The first principle ... is that man is obligated to exert himself for the discovery of truth. In a state of mere nature<sup>16</sup> we would have only the testimony of our own reason; in a state of revelation we have the additional aid of the testimony of God.”<sup>17</sup>

In very clear terms, John England is advancing before the United States House of Representatives a simple yet very subtle point, one that has been at the root of Christian reflection since its earliest days. “(W)e are all upon this ground made originally equal,”<sup>18</sup> the Bishop of Charleston claims, adapting for his own apologetic purposes a foundational principle of the American re-

public. “Natural religion” might represent a base line whose self-evident truth is something that can achieve universal agreement. But should a particular religion dare to assert that “God did make a revelation,” then England advances as equally self-evident that nothing in that revelation will “weaken the principles of natural religion.”

This is not, at first glance, a style and tone one might expect to find in the writings of Arthur O’Leary. But on closer examination it does have much in common with arguments that emanated from Blackmoor Lane a half-century earlier. O’Leary forcefully asserted the importance of toleration as a principle that would allow confessional denominations to articulate their beliefs free from secular control. England, a half-century later, is attempting to establish a ground on which all religions might be able to recognize the common philosophical basis from which they start.

John England then goes on to spend a fair degree of time and effort addressing a topic that might be characterized as a debate over “scripture versus tradition,” and in doing so “we arrive at the essential distinction between the Roman Catholic Church and every other.”<sup>19</sup> Is the essence of the Christian message one that is solely found in the pages of *The New Testament*, or does the Christian message also include elements that are without explicit foundation in Scripture? England’s arguments are simple and direct. “It is a fact, that our blessed Redeemer did not write his communications,”<sup>20</sup> he asserts, and he then goes on to say that “it is equally certain, that he neither gave a command, nor a commission to have them written. It is a fact, that his religion was fully and extensively established before any part of the Scriptures of our new law was committed to writing.”<sup>21</sup>

While this issue of “scripture versus tradition” might be one that separated certain Christian denominations from Roman Catholicism, especially in America, and while it was certainly not one that finds any particular resonance in the writings of Arthur O’Leary, Bishop England quickly turns after this discussion and articulates something that was most integral to the Capuchin friar whose life story his own brother had written and published three years earlier. Because after discussing the development of Christian dogma, England quickly goes on to assert: “No king could say that he would regulate the doctrines for his people; no nation had authority to modify those doctrines for themselves.”<sup>22</sup> England has thus laid a predicate for his larger effort

<sup>13</sup> *Works*, II, 174-175.

<sup>14</sup> *Works*, II, 174.

<sup>15</sup> *idem*.

<sup>16</sup> Use of the expression “state of mere nature” could be a reference to social contract political theory, an important element in Arthur O’Leary’s thought.

<sup>17</sup> *Works*, II, 174-175.

<sup>18</sup> *Works*, II, 175.

<sup>19</sup> *Works*, II, 180.

<sup>20</sup> *idem*.

<sup>21</sup> *Works*, II, 180-181.

<sup>22</sup> *Works*, II, 182.



to argue that the “wall of separation” between church and state spoken of by Thomas Jefferson,<sup>23</sup> and earlier established in the first amendment to the United States Constitution,<sup>24</sup> is one that Roman Catholicism not only welcomes but finds very reassuring.

John England has now arrived at a point in his discourse where he is ready to discuss in greater detail “some of the peculiarities of my own faith.” He has already alluded to elements by which Roman Catholicism differs from certain Protestant denominations in, for example, its understanding of the role of Scripture as a source of dogma. But having discussed that tangentially, he is now ready to tackle the big issue, the one that he believed animated President John Quincy Adams’ negative assessment of Catholicism and yet was so central to the message of Arthur O’Leary. Does the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church believe that it has the power to depose the lawful rulers of independent states, nations and kingdoms? The United States Constitution might be willing to refrain from intruding itself into the domain of religion, but is Roman Catholicism willing to reciprocate? Does Thomas Jefferson’s “wall of separation” restrain ideologies originating on both sides of the barrier, or only on one side?

John England addresses this question by responding, in his address, to a question of his own creation. Namely, what would he do if ordered, by a pope or bishop, to vote in a certain way in an American election? John England did not use any minor issue to make his point. He spoke about an order a Roman Catholic in America might hypothetically receive from some ecclesiastical authority outside the country to cast a vote that would *overturn the government*. Interestingly, England does not speak about a direct papal effort to depose a secular leader by, say, force of arms. Rather, honoring the democratic traditions of his new nation, England hypothesizes about a direction from ecclesiastical authorities to use democratic means, the casting of one’s vote, to achieve the same end. In his response to his own question one can hear echoes of Arthur O’Leary’s debates with both “Michael Servitus” and John Calvin over the “deposing power” of the Roman Pontiff. John England addressed the matter as follows:

A political difficulty has been sometimes raised here. If this infallible tribunal, which you pro-

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Jefferson, “Letter to the Danbury Baptists,” (January 1, 1802). Available online at: [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Letter\\_to\\_the\\_Danbury\\_Baptists\\_-\\_January\\_1,\\_1802](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Letter_to_the_Danbury_Baptists_-_January_1,_1802)

<sup>24</sup> “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...”  
*The Constitution of the United States; Amendment One* (1791).

fess yourselves bound to obey, should command you to overturn our government, and tell you that it is the will of God to have it new modeled, will you be bound to obey it?<sup>25</sup> And how then can we consider those men to be good citizens who profess to owe obedience to a foreign authority to an authority not recognized in our Constitution to an authority which has excommunicated and deposed sovereigns, and which has absolved subjects and citizens from their bond of allegiance?<sup>26</sup>

England does not deny that, in ages past, the Catholic Church has “deposed sovereigns” and “absolved subjects from their bonds of allegiance” to their lawful leaders. But America in the nineteenth century was not the Holy Roman Empire of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and John England was well schooled in the ecclesiology articulated by, among others, his own mentor in Cork, Bishop Francis Moylan, who affirmed that Irish Catholics should not hesitate to swear their allegiance to the British Crown by oath, an oath that clearly precluded belief in any papal power of deposition. John England continued:

Our answer to this is extremely simple and very plain; it is, that we would not be bound to obey it that we recognize no such authority. I would not allow to the Pope, or to any bishop of our Church, *outside this Union*, (emphasis added!) the smallest interference with the humblest vote at our most insignificant ballot-box. He has no right to such interference. You must, from the view which I have taken, see the plain distinction between spiritual authority and a right to interfere in the regulation of human government or civil concerns. You have in your Constitution wisely kept them distinct and separate. It will be wisdom, and prudence, and safety to continue the separation. Your Constitution says that Congress shall have no power to restrict the free exercise of religion. Suppose your dignified body tomorrow attempted to restrict me in the exercise of that right; though the law, as it would be called, should pass your two houses and obtain the signature of the President, I would not obey it, because it would

be no law, it would be an usurpation; for you cannot make a law in violation of your Consti-

<sup>25</sup> The “infallible tribunal” is the Roman Catholic Church, the second-person pronoun references John England himself.

<sup>26</sup> *Works*, II, 184.

tution. You have no power in such a case. So, if that tribunal which is established by the Creator to testify to me what He has revealed, and to make the necessary regulations of discipline for the government of the Church, shall presume to go beyond that boundary which circumscribes its power, its acts are invalid; my rights are not to be destroyed by its usurpation; and there is no principle of my creed which prevents my using my natural right of proper resistance to any tyrannical usurpation.<sup>27</sup>

A hundred and thirty-four years later, Senator John F. Kennedy, while campaigning for the office of President of the United States, asked much this same question of himself during a famous speech before a group of Protestant ministers in Houston, Texas. Senator Kennedy, seeking a secular office, did not have to craft his answer with the same precision as did Bishop England many years earlier, and he simply said he would recognize no authority other than the law of the land.<sup>28</sup>

John England, however, was not seeking public office. He was doing something far more important. While forcefully denying the legitimacy of any political dictates directed at American Catholics from church authorities in foreign lands, he was also endeavoring to see the American Catholic hierarchy as itself an entity that was entitled to all the religious freedoms the Constitution guaranteed. What can all too easily be lost amid England's negative assurances that foreign bishops must not dictate ballot box behavior to citizens of the United States is the affirmative assertion he made about the bishops who are not "outside this union," who are, in fact, very much a part of it.

This is an admittedly subtle, but nonetheless very important, statement that underscores England's belief in the importance of episcopal collegiality. Unlike Senator John Kennedy's later assertions that he would not recognize or tolerate interference from the leaders of his Church on matters civic and political, John England's language was considerably more nuanced. He was saying that the bishops who were not "outside this union" were a collective voice that enjoyed status and standing as citizens. And it mattered not whether that collective voice was raised about matters political, literary, artistic or theological. It enjoyed standing because it was the voice of Americans. Furthermore, in asserting his

<sup>27</sup> *idem*.

<sup>28</sup> Said Kennedy: "I do not accept the right of any ecclesiastical official to tell me what to do in the sphere of my public responsibility as an elected official." (Quoted by: John Cogley, *Catholic America* [New York: The Dial Press, 1973], xx.) For the text of Kennedy's remarks, see: <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/jfkhoustonministers.html>

claim in such a fashion, England was also making a strong case for episcopal collegiality, since the bishops who were "of this union" were not mere surrogates of an off-shore authority. They enjoyed a status on and of their own.

John England shares with Arthur O'Leary a strong conviction that religious orthodoxy may never be enforced by coercion. "Christ gave to his Apostles no commission to use the sword or the brand," he told the House of Representatives.<sup>29</sup> But he was a bit more willing to explain away certain actions of the Inquisition than was O'Leary by distinguishing the religious actions of the Inquisition in the condemnation of heresy with the actions of civil authorities in carrying out punishments. "Then follows a direction that the heretics so condemned, are to be given up to the secular powers, or to their bailiffs, to be duly punished."<sup>30</sup> O'Leary had earlier suggested that certain actions of tribunals often identified as part of the Inquisition were totally secular in nature, but the Capuchin was far more severe than was John England in condemning the Inquisition is general.

England, though, does speak as sharply and forcefully as O'Leary when he asserts: "It is not then a doctrine of our church that the Pope has been divinely commissioned either to depose kings or to interfere with republics, or to absolve the subjects of the former from their allegiance, or interfere with the civil concerns of the later."<sup>31</sup> As evidence this was not a view inconsistent with John England's overall ecclesiology, elsewhere he has written: "My belief is that God never gave to any Pope nor to any other Bishop, nor to any other clergyman, nor to any state, nor to any human tribunal, any power directly or indirectly, to inflict any corporal or temporal punishment upon any man for heresy or religious error."<sup>32</sup>

Bishop John England concluded his address to the United States House of Representatives with a very positive and constructive thought.

Religion, that holy name has too often been abused for this end, that man might flatter himself without having the sanction of heaven for the indulgence of a bad passion. In these happy and free states we stand upon the equal ground of religious right; we may freely love and bear with each other, and exhibit to Europe a contrast to her jealousies in our affection. By inquiry we shall correct many mistakes, by which our feel-

<sup>29</sup> *Works*, II, 187.

<sup>30</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>31</sup> *Works*, II, 189.

<sup>32</sup> *Works*, II, 256.

ings have been embittered, we shall be more bound together in amity, as we become more intimate, and may our harmony and union here below produce that peace and good will that may be emblematic of our enjoyment of more lasting happiness in a better world.<sup>33</sup>

The rhetorical flourishes of this early 19<sup>th</sup> century language may well conceal the important subject it is raising, namely what in a contemporary context would be called the separation of church and state. Peter Clarke characterizes John England as “the first Catholic to develop and articulate a theology of separation of church and state and of freedom of religion,”<sup>34</sup> and his address to the House of Representatives in 1826 represents his most forceful statement of that theology.

At first blush, John England’s warm embrace of the new democratic tradition that was taking root in the United States, and that constitutes an important underlying theme of his address, could be seen as standing in opposition to Arthur O’Leary’s defense of the British Crown. O’Leary embraced a monarchical form of government and expressed a marked distaste for tactics and themes he saw emerging in revolutionary France, and which he identified with democracy itself.

But John England and Arthur O’Leary might not be all that different in the foundational principles that undergird their more specific political attitudes. For each man, by virtue of his embrace of a social contract understanding of government, was advocating respect for the product of that social contract, the House of Hanover and the British Parliament in O’Leary’s case, American constitutional democracy in England’s.

O’Leary saw in democracy itself a virtually unalloyed evil. But this was a stance that was conditioned by two not-totally-unrelated considerations. The first was the fact that the House of Hanover was in place as the established governmental entity. Secondly, though, in O’Leary’s mind, “democracy” was equivalent to the violence and bloodshed he associated with the French Revolution. For such “democracy” to take root in British and Irish soil would, in O’Leary’s eyes, necessarily entail a repeat of the carnage that Abbé Edgeworth had so dramatically described in his correspondence with Bishop Francis Moylan.<sup>35</sup>

John England, on the other hand, was addressing the duly constituted House of Representatives in a country

<sup>33</sup> *Works*, II, 190.

<sup>34</sup> Peter Clarke, “John England: Missionary to America, then and Now,” *Patterns of Episcopal Leadership*, ed. Gerald P. Fogarty, S.J. (New York: Macmillan, 1989), 83.

<sup>35</sup> Moylan wrote: “*French liberty is unquestionably the worst species of slavery, and their equality means no more, than reducing every individual to the same level, by sinking the whole community*

whose own revolution had ended 45 years earlier when the British general, Charles Cornwallis, surrendered to George Washington at Yorktown, Virginia.<sup>36</sup> Democratic governmental structures, in other words, had themselves become commonplace and accepted in the new country, were producing favorable results, and lacked any of the odious associations O’Leary and Moylan and Edgeworth equated with the bloody emergence of democracy in revolutionary France. One might even wonder, for that matter, that had it been Arthur O’Leary who was named the first bishop of Charleston in 1820—prescinding, of course, from the fact the man would have been 91 years old in 1820—and had the cleric who crossed the North Atlantic aboard the *Thomas Gelston* been the Capuchin friar from Blackmoor Lane, it is hardly unreasonable to suggest that he would have accorded the same respect to the constitutional and democratic government he found in America as he had earlier given so unreservedly to the King of England and the House of Hanover.

## England and O’Leary

John England’s embrace of democracy, then, can be seen not as something that was different from the views of Arthur O’Leary, but rather as something that added value to the basic political philosophy O’Leary had long advocated. In his address to the House of Representatives, John England stated: “Our tenets do not prescribe any form of government which the people may properly and regularly establish.”<sup>37</sup> Arthur O’Leary was horrified by the carnage unleashed by the French Revolution, and characterized its political philosophy as “a woman dressed in all the allurements of seduction, saluted by those new sovereigns as the Goddess of Liberty, who transfer to this living idol those signs of adoration that they had refused to the Son of God...”<sup>38</sup> The Capuchin went on to contrast this to “the principles of a Gospel which every where enforces subordination, and submission to the reigning powers.”<sup>39</sup> But taking a step back from O’Leary’s understandable equation of democracy itself with its emergence in revolution-

*into the same state of abject poverty and degradation.”* (Rt. Rev. Dr. F. Moylan, *A Second Remonstrance to the Lower Order of Inhabitants in His Diocese* [London: J. P. Coghlan, 1799], 6.)

<sup>36</sup> Part of General Washington’s command at Yorktown included The Fourth Continental Light Dragoons, led by Colonel Stephen Moylan, a native of Cork and brother of Bishop Francis Moylan.

<sup>37</sup> *Works*, II, 185.

<sup>38</sup> Arthur O’Leary, *A Sermon Preached at Saint Patrick’s Chapel ... on Wednesday, The Eighth of March, 1798* (London: P. Keating, 1798), 19.

<sup>39</sup> O’Leary, 29.



ary France, is it unreasonable to suggest that O’Leary would have seen “submission to the reigning powers” in nineteenth century America to be loyalty to the United States Constitution?

Even if it takes a measure of interpretative analysis to see parallels between O’Leary and England on the overall question of democracy, there are other assertions advanced by the bishop of Charleston to the United States House of Representatives in 1826 that were once preached “between salt houses and stables” on Blackmoor Lane a half-century earlier. “The spirit of religion is that of peace and mercy,” England declared in Washington, “not that of persecution. Yet men of every creed have persecuted their brethren under the pretext of religion.”<sup>40</sup> Arthur O’Leary anticipated John England when he wrote: “I, in my cell, reflecting on the revolutions that religion has occasioned, not for good but for the destruction of mankind—revolutions in their morals, by inspiring them with mutual hatred and aversion, by making them believe that they had dispensed with the unchangeable laws of love and humanity, and deluding them into a persuasion that the death or oppression of a fellow creature on account of his error was an agreeable sacrifice to the Divinity...”<sup>41</sup>

England takes a step or two back from O’Leary and the latter’s severe and total castigation of co-religionists such as Robert Bellarmine and officers of the Inquisition, and the Bishop of Charleston introduces complex distinctions between a religious authority that “excommunicates ... heretics,” and “secular powers” whose task is then to effect appropriate punishment, with particular reference to the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215.<sup>42</sup> But while offering an explanation of what happened over 500 years earlier, England quickly distances himself from such a perspective by telling his audience, in terms as unequivocal as ever written by Arthur O’Leary, that “it is not a doctrine of our church that we are bound to persecute those who differ from us in belief.”<sup>43</sup>

England had advanced a rather parallel explanation a year earlier not over the question of punishment for doctrinal deviation, but rather on the matter of the deposing of kings and rulers by the papacy when he suggested that there have been times when secular forces requested the aid of a pope in their own internal affairs. “The Popes, in many instances, had a power of deposing kings and princes, not by divine right, but by the

concession and grant of the nations and the kings themselves, deliberately given in congress.”<sup>44</sup> England goes on to suggest that in such cases the papacy was merely called on to act as an impartial judge. England, however, choose not to advance this line of thinking in his address on Capitol Hill.

The general theme of religious toleration, and the necessary distance that must be placed between the domain of religious dogma and the sphere of secular government is expressed as forcefully by John England as it ever was by Arthur O’Leary. Even if England was somewhat less severe in his criticism of Robert Bellarmine than was O’Leary, England was hardly one who regarded Bellarmine as a paragon of right thinking. A year prior to his address to the House of Representatives England wrote a series of letters to the Reverend William Hawley that were published in *The United States Catholic Miscellany* where he said:<sup>45</sup>

Cardinal Bellarmine, and a few other writers, stated, NOT *as Catholic doctrine, but as their opinion*, that God gave to the Pope as much temporal power as was necessary for guarding the faith, because his principal duty of its preservation occasionally required the means for its protection by temporal aid: and therefore, that if one of the powerful children of the Church, became contumacious and mischievously exerted his influence to destroy the faith, the common father of the church could by God’s authority, restrain him, and if he could not be restrained without an abridgement of his temporal authority, the greater good of preserving the faith was sufficient warrant to abridge it.

This specious sophistry was rejected and treated as it deserved, by the great bulk of the Catholic princes, clergy, and people. It was never even suspected to have been in the contemplation of any human being, to propose this *as a doctrine revealed by God*; of course, *not as a tenet of the Catholic Church*; for nothing can be received as a tenet of the church, unless it has been revealed by God. But it was adduced as the opinion of some writers, I care not how many or how few. Ghillini never asserted that the Pope

<sup>40</sup> *Works*, II, 186.

<sup>41</sup> Arthur O’Leary, “An Essay on Toleration,” *Miscellaneous Tracts of the Rev. Arthur O’Leary* (Dublin: E. & B. Dowling, 1816), 184.

<sup>42</sup> *Works*, II, 187.

<sup>43</sup> *idem*.

<sup>44</sup> *Works*, II, 235

<sup>45</sup> The formal salutation of the first of these letters was: To the Reverend William Hawley and his associates, Clergymen of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States. While assuredly written by England, they are signed, simply: “A Catholic Clergyman, A Native of Ireland.”



had such power from God.<sup>46</sup>

In effect, England places as much distance between himself and Bellarmine as did Arthur O’Leary, and while he expresses himself somewhat more reservedly than did the Capuchin, the two clerics are of one mind on the question of the deposing power of the papacy.

Perhaps the clearest statement of Bishop John England’s debt to Arthur O’Leary can be found in a letter that appeared in *The United States Catholic Miscellany* some five years after his address on Capitol Hill, but which was central to his message before the House of Representatives. Here England talks about the primacy of conscience, the very same theme that was so central to O’Leary’s message. “The tribunal of conscience and the tribunal of that God who will judge all the acts of the soul, are the only ones before which the guilty can be convicted.”<sup>47</sup> England then goes on to say that “every individual has the right to investigate for the discovery of truth; and this right is indefeasible. Nay it would be ridiculous to attempt to coerce it; for it would be impossible.”<sup>48</sup> Then John England suggests something about his assertion that was equally true for the basic presuppositions at the heart of Arthur O’Leary’s writings: “This is too plain to need either explanation or proof.”<sup>49</sup>

Patrick Carey provides a clear and sharp summation of this matter when he writes: “For England, the rights of a man’s personal conscience were inalienable.”<sup>50</sup> And so an odyssey of ideas that began in the shadowy confines of Blackmoor Lane in Cork City, Ireland, had reached its destination in the new world on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.

Bishop England’s 1826 address before the House of Representatives was warmly received back home in Charleston. Under a dateline of Washington, January 9<sup>th</sup>, the day after England spoke, *The Southern Patriot and Commercial Advertiser* reported this: “Yesterday, the Chamber of the House of Representatives, the galleries and lobbies, were crowded to hear Bishop England; and few, if any, of the great concourse which attended, returned ungratified. The Bishop delivered a discourse, of nearly two hours in length, on the general principles of religion, and the leading principles of

the Catholic faith, which was one of the most logical, condensed, and liberal expositions of the nature and obligations of Christianity which we have heard in some time. If there was a liberality in extending to the Bishop this opportunity, there was no less liberality in the manner in which it was used.”<sup>51</sup>

## Other Issues

There were many other facets of John England’s life and episcopal ministry in the American Southland, but because these have been treated in considerable detail elsewhere, a few need only be mentioned in brief outline fashion here to help sketch out a more complete picture of the man.

**Mission to Haiti:** John England did not leave North America during the first twelve years of his episcopacy. Starting in 1832, however, he would make four visits to Europe and it was during the first of these transatlantic trips that he would receive a mandate from Pope Gregory XVI to serve as a legate to the newly independent Caribbean island nation of Haiti, a responsibility that would see him make three trips to that troubled country in an unsuccessful effort to negotiate a concordat between the Vatican and the second independent country in the Western Hemisphere. He was forced to conclude that his acceptance of this mission to Haiti severely limited his effectiveness in dealing with political leaders in South Carolina, men who equated sympathy for, and even work with, the freed slaves of the island nation as perilously close to advocacy for similar emancipation in the Southland. England once wrote from Haiti to Paul Cullen, then the rector of the Irish College in Rome: “My great doubts are whether I shall be allowed to remain in Charleston...”<sup>52</sup> because of work with freed slaves on the island. Guilday concluded that this “Apostolic Delegation to the Republic of Haiti was Dr. England’s outstanding failure,”<sup>53</sup> and in addition to his work being unsuccessful “was the realization that four years of his life had been given outside his diocese to a fruitless quest of religious peace in the island.”<sup>54</sup>

**Work With Other Dioceses:** England also became involved in assisting other American dioceses in their dealings with issues raised by the role of trustees, although none of his fellow bishops would ever look favorably on the strategy England developed in Charleston that dealt with trustee issues in a manner that was

<sup>46</sup> John England, “Letters to the Rev. William Hawley,” *Works*, II, 235. The reference to “Ghillini” is likely the 15<sup>th</sup> century Dominican, Stefano Ghillini, who served as bishop of Bobbio until his death in 1472.

<sup>47</sup> England, “Letter X,” *Works*, IV, 54. This letter was addressed: “To the Candid and Unprejudiced people of America.” It was dated September 19<sup>th</sup>, 1831, and was signed: “Yours, respectfully, B.C.” England often used these initials to identify himself as the bishop of Charleston.

<sup>48</sup> *idem*.

<sup>49</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>50</sup> Carey, 89.

<sup>51</sup> *The Southern Patriot and Commercial Advertiser*, (January 16<sup>th</sup>, 1826), 2.

<sup>52</sup> Quoted in: Guilday, II, 309.

<sup>53</sup> Guilday, II, 270.

<sup>54</sup> Guilday, II, 310.

pastorally effective, namely the adoption of a constitution for his own diocese that clearly defined and delineated the respective roles of clergy and laity.<sup>55</sup> A man who was surely England's closest ally in the American hierarchy, Irish-born Francis Kenrick, then coadjutor to the bishop of Philadelphia, none the less wrote to Paul Cullen in Rome in 1834 regretting England's address at the previous year's provincial council in Baltimore because he spoke so favorably about his diocesan constitution despite the fact "none of the other bishops agree with him."<sup>56</sup> Despite this, Kendrick thought highly of England, regarded him as a friend, and even feared his fellow countryman was so frustrated with his episcopal colleagues that on his next trip to Rome he might never return.<sup>57</sup>

Despite such reactions, at various times England was rumored to be a potential candidate for advancement to the episcopacy of a larger American diocese; Pittsburgh, Cincinnati and Philadelphia were mentioned, perhaps even New York, and Kenrick once wrote to Cullen that the "Charleston Diocese is not a fit theatre for a man of his splendid talents."<sup>58</sup> Other reports spoke of his potential elevation to the College of Cardinals,<sup>59</sup> but none of these advancements ever materialized. Richard Shaw has called Bishop England "a misplaced natural leader in a rural southern diocese..."<sup>60</sup>

**Developing a Native Clergy:** Guilday has written: "On the morrow of his arrival in Charleston, the most pressing problem presented to Bishop England was the formation of a diocesan clergy."<sup>61</sup> England felt that Catholic clergy serving in the United States must be well schooled in British and American history and that if "foreign ways and habits, foreign methods, and foreign speech were to continue to be the outward signs of Catholicism, then there was little hope for any direct and salutary influence of Catholic thought upon the American republic."<sup>62</sup> While there surely had been unfortunate experiences with priests from Ireland who had immigrated to the United States, priests with in-

<sup>55</sup> For details on England's efforts to assist other dioceses with issues associated with lay trustees, see: Guilday, I, 380-452. This citation encompasses two full chapters, one dealing with problems in the Diocese of Philadelphia, the other in New York.

<sup>56</sup> Archival List: Papers of Paul Cullen, Irish College Rome; Correspondence 1821-1879; Supplements 1824-1849, 372, No. 22.

<sup>57</sup> *idem*.

<sup>58</sup> Quoted in: Monsignor Richard C. Madden papers, Diocese of Charleston Archives, Charleston, South Carolina: MSS 1050, Box 1, Chapter 6.

<sup>59</sup> Guilday, I, 520.

<sup>60</sup> Richard Shaw, *Dagger John: The Unquiet Life and Times of Archbishop John Hughes of New York* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 107.

<sup>61</sup> Guilday, I, 374.

<sup>62</sup> *Idem*.

sufficient theological education for example, John England continued to believe that properly educated Irish clerics could become effective clergymen in America. England also believed that members of the Society of St. Sulpice, who Archbishop Maréchal had brought to Baltimore to operate St. Mary's Seminary there, were singularly unfit for the education of American priests, largely because of their inability to distance themselves not simply from their native French culture, but more specifically from their roots in the *ancien regime* of pre-Revolutionary France. In fact, England also believed that it was the Sulpicians in Baltimore who helped turn Archbishop Maréchal against the idea of calling a Provincial Council.<sup>63</sup> Voicing such feelings undoubtedly helped generate further animosity toward England on the part of Maréchal, and Guilday has concluded that Maréchal's view toward England "slowly deepened into a sullen resolve to exclude the Bishop of Charleston from all Church affairs of a national kind."<sup>64</sup>

**Slavery:** Joseph Kelly commented early in a 2001 article dealing with John England and slavery in America: "No traveler ever had disembarked on the bustling piers along the Cooper River better prepared to combat racial bigotry, to undermine the tyranny of Charleston's first families, and to persuade the city of the evils of slavery than John England."<sup>65</sup> But this was a victory Charleston's first bishop would never achieve.

John England was a man who deplored the practice of slavery, but he was also someone who, aware of the minority status of Catholicism in a section of the nation whose economy was intrinsically linked to the availability of slave labor, could not be regarded as an abolitionist in any sense of that term. Although it can only be surmised that Bishop England was its author, a comment in the *Miscellany* on March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1840, captures this general view: "We will only remark from our own experience that no truth is more evident than that the intermeddling of northern abolitionists have tended to retard the generous and humane efforts which the Southern proprietors were spontaneously making for the increase and the amelioration of the moral condition of the slaves."<sup>66</sup> Kelly summarizes this ambivalence: "Ironically, although England hated slavery, he was also scared of emancipation, for he feared the violence of political upheaval, 'the cataracts of blood' opened

<sup>63</sup> Guilday, I, 489.

<sup>64</sup> Guilday, I, 374.

<sup>65</sup> Joseph Kelly, "Charleston's Bishop John England and American Slavery, *New Hibernia Review*, 5 (Winter 2001): 8-56.

<sup>66</sup> Quoted in: Peter Clarke, *A Free Church in a Free Society* (Hartsville, South Carolina: Center for John England Studies, 1982), 401.

by the Haitian revolution.”<sup>67</sup>

Four years earlier in 1836, England had written to Paul Cullen and voiced concern over emancipation efforts directed toward the Southland by northern abolitionists. “South Carolina and Georgia are the most determined of any of the slaveholding States against permitting any interference, however remote, with their domestic institutions.”<sup>68</sup> And continuing: “Any interference with the operation by any State in either of the Dioceses in which slavery does not exist, would be considered little less than treason.”<sup>69</sup>

England’s stand on the matter of abolitionism caused him to part company, for a time, with his friend and ally from anti-veto days in Ireland, Daniel O’Connell.<sup>70</sup> During the bishop’s final meeting with The Liberator in Dublin in 1841, his final trip to the land of his birth, he promised to complete an unfinished treatise he was working on, *Letters ... on Domestic Slavery*, and dedicate it to his old friend, O’Connell.<sup>71</sup> Guilday has characterized this unfinished work as “among the best historical writings from his pen.”<sup>72</sup>

John England, though, may well have been prescient in seeing where the issue of slavery and abolition was leading the country. Guilday paraphrases a letter he wrote as early as 1828 saying that it was “evident to many ... that the South and North would eventually separate,” and England goes on to suggest that perhaps “there should not exist too strong a bond to unite Churches” that might one day find themselves living under separate political allegiances.<sup>73</sup>

As Joseph Kelly notes, John England’s “importance to the history of American slavery and the abolition

movement have not been adequately explored.”<sup>74</sup> But Kelly also believes that the abolition movement was not monolithic and who better than Bishop England “could distinguish in the minds of his fellow Charlestonians the radical abolitionism of [William Lloyd] Garrison from the liberal, constitutional reform hoped for by the gradualists?”<sup>75</sup>

Kelly is here writing about developments in the mid-1830s, a quarter century before the onset of the American Civil War.<sup>76</sup> “It was the last chance for dissent in Charleston,” he writes, “and the one person who could have effectively voiced that dissent—John England—kept silent.”<sup>77</sup>

**Provincial Councils:** While England was unable to convince Archbishop Maréchal to convene a council of all American bishops, once English-born James Whitfield succeeded Maréchal following his death in 1828, the first such council was convened in 1829. Whitfield believed it to be unproductive and thought the first such council should be the last. John England, though, during one of his visits to Rome prevailed upon church officials to direct Whitfield to call a second council, and Guilday feels this “deeply offended” Whitfield.<sup>78</sup> While a second council was convened in 1833, John England “found himself deserted by all the prelates who were present,”<sup>79</sup> and this was in reaction to a variety of views the bishop of Charleston was known to espouse, particularly the matter of his diocesan constitution. During England’s tenure in Charleston, four provincial councils were held, but the goal of having these sessions articulate a strong sense of episcopal collegiality by the American hierarchy remained unrealized. At the end of the fourth Provincial Council in 1840, the last John England would attend, the bishop of Charleston “felt he had been a total failure in the provincial meetings. All of his favorite projects and proposals were rejected by his fellow bishops.”<sup>80</sup>

**Finances:** John England will continually speak of his “depressing failures to move the American Catholic Church in constitutional directions.”<sup>81</sup> But beyond his personal frustrations over the unrealized goal of establishing a collective voice of and for the bishops of the

1884 (New York: Macmillan, 1932), 84, fn. 2.

<sup>67</sup> Kelly, 51.

<sup>68</sup> England to Cullen (February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1836), “Papers Relating to the Church in America from the Portfolios of the Irish College at Rome; Third Series,” *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia*, 8 (June 1897), 218.

<sup>69</sup> *idem*.

<sup>70</sup> “Dr. England had written an open letter to his friend, Daniel O’Connell, taking the Liberator to task for interfering in a domestic problem such as slavery in the South...” (Guilday, II, 153.)

<sup>71</sup> Guilday, II, 529. The letters, which were never completed, were addressed to the United States Secretary of State, John Forsyth, and are included in both the Reynolds and the Messmer editions of the collected works of John England. (See: *Works*, III, 106-191; see also: *The Works of the Right Reverend John England, First Bishop of Charleston*, ed. Sebastian G. Messmer, 7 vols. [Cleveland: Arthur H. Clarke, 1908], V, 183-311.) This incomplete effort of England’s was also published independently, but after England’s death and with no indication that the author did not regard it as a finished product. See: John England, *Letters of the Late Bishop England to the Honorable John Forsyth, on the Subject of Domestic Slavery* (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1844.) For additional treatment of England’s views on slavery and abolitionism, see: Clarke, 159-259. See also: Kelly, *passim*.

<sup>72</sup> Guilday, II, 528.

<sup>73</sup> Peter Guilday, *A History of the Councils of Baltimore*; 1791-

<sup>74</sup> Kelly, 50.

<sup>75</sup> Kelly, 56.

<sup>76</sup> There is, expectedly, an extensive bibliography on abolitionism. For a classic account that outlines differences between such radical abolitionists as Garrison, and what Kelly calls “gradualists,” see: F. G. De Fontaine, *History of American Abolitionism* (New York: D. Appleton, 1861).

<sup>77</sup> *idem*.

<sup>78</sup> Guilday, II, 266.

<sup>79</sup> Guilday, I, 532.

<sup>80</sup> Carey, 203, fn. 17.

<sup>81</sup> Carey, i.



United States, if one were able to ask John England, during his final years what was the most pressing pastoral problem he found himself facing day after day, month after month, and year after year, it would not be surprising if he identified the constant need to secure financial resources for his fledgling, but continually poverty-stricken, diocese. During the 22 years he served as bishop of Charleston, he made four transatlantic voyages to Europe, and while these allowed him to make customary *ad limina* visits to the pope to report on the status of his diocese and receive special instructions from the papacy associated with his assignment in Haiti, he also saw these trips as opportunities to plead his case before charitable and benevolent organizations on the continent for financial assistance to maintain and even expand the Catholic footprint in his diocese. He cultivated contacts with numerous charitable organizations in his native Ireland, in Lyons, France, and especially with one particular organization, the Leopoldine Association of Vienna.<sup>82</sup> Peter Guilday has chronicled these several trips, along with parallel efforts to secure financial resources from benevolent organizations in the United States in some detail.<sup>83</sup>

### John England's Final Days

On his fourth and final trip to Europe in 1841, John England travelled to the port of Boston by a steamer out of Charleston and on May 16<sup>th</sup> boarded one of the early transatlantic steamships, a vessel that bore the name *Britannia* and that had been placed in service the previous year by a Scotsman in Nova Scotia by the name of Samuel Cunard. Technology was beginning to transform both local and international travel and *Britannia* was a far cry from the *Thomas Gelston*.

The steamer was forced to pause in Halifax for several days while necessary repairs were made and this gave Bishop England a chance to visit with faculty and students at St. Mary's College there. *Britannia* reached Liverpool on June 6<sup>th</sup> and England then crossed back to Dublin by steamer and met, for the final time, with his long-time friend, Daniel O'Connell. He reached Cork on June 15<sup>th</sup> and while no documentation is available to support his activities during this, his final visit to the city of his birth, it would seem safe to suggest he spent time with his younger brother, Thomas England, who was then serving as parish priest in the village of Passage West. Because John England realized his health

<sup>82</sup> For details about the Leopoldine Association, see: "German and Austrian Aid to the Catholic Church in the United States," *The Sacred Heart Review*, 56 (September 9, 1916): 8-9.

<sup>83</sup> See: Guilday, II, 173-213, 352-376.

was not as robust as it was in earlier years, it is likely both men appreciated they would have no further opportunities to enjoy each other's company.

Like his previous trips to Europe, this journey kept John England away from Charleston for many months. His return voyage left Liverpool on September 21<sup>st</sup>, two days shy of his 55<sup>th</sup> birthday. The rigors of the return voyage took a toll on the prelate's health, although he ministered to many sick passengers as the vessel made its way across the Atlantic to the port of Philadelphia, where it docked on November 1<sup>st</sup>.

Upon his arrival, England felt strong enough to accept an invitation from his friend, Dublin-born Francis Kenrick,<sup>84</sup> who was then coadjutor bishop of Philadelphia, to preach there for 17 consecutive nights. After that, following a trip by railroad south to Baltimore, he preached for an additional four days. "Bishop England reached his episcopal city on Thursday, December 9, 1841."<sup>85</sup>

He would never again leave his adopted home. Bishop John England, born in Cork City on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1786, died in Charleston, South Carolina, at 5:00 a.m. on Monday, April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1842. The city of Charleston mourned his death and declared that his passing was a true loss to the entire American nation. The *Charleston Currier* carried this tribute on April 12<sup>th</sup>: "Although his native country was ever green in his memory and dear to his heart, his allegiance to his adopted country was recognized as his highest duty, as well as from inclination as from principle."<sup>86</sup>

Of the many communications that were written on the occasion of John England's death, surely the most poignant was a letter that Father Richard Baker, the secretary of the Diocese of Charleston, composed on April 19<sup>th</sup>, a week after the bishop's death. It was addressed to Thomas England, John England's younger brother, then the parish priest at Passage West in County Cork. "I leave you to judge of the feeling under which I venture to apprise you (if you have not learned it before) of the death of your illustrious brother, our venerable and beloved Bishop who expired after a painful and protracted illness (inflammation of the intestines) on the morning

<sup>84</sup> Kenrick would become bishop of Philadelphia in the spring of 1842 and serve as archbishop of Baltimore from 1851 until his death in 1863. For details of England's friendship with Kenrick, see: Colin Barr, "The Irish College, Rome and the appointment of Irish Bishops to the United States, 1830-1851," *The Irish College, Rome, and Its World*, ed. Dáire Keogh and Albert McDonnell (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008), 108-115.

<sup>85</sup> Guilday, II, 536.

<sup>86</sup> Quoted in: *Madden papers*, MSS 1050, Box 1, Chapter 7, 51.

of the 11<sup>th</sup> instant about 5 o'clock."<sup>87</sup>

Bishop John England's funeral was held in Charleston on April 16<sup>th</sup>, 1842, and his friend, Bishop Kenrick of Philadelphia, travelled south to preach at the solemn requiem mass.<sup>88</sup> He was entombed in a crypt beneath the episcopal chair in the tiny cathedral of St. Finbarr, and the remains of his late sister, Joanna England, were exhumed from the churchyard of St. Mary's on Hassel Street and reinterred alongside those of her brother.<sup>89</sup>

John England had written to *Propaganda Fide* in Rome before his death suggesting three potential candidates who might be considered as his successor, one of whom was Richard Baker, the secretary of the diocese.<sup>90</sup> Rome forwarded this list to the archbishop of Baltimore, Samuel Eccleston, but because of issues associated with one of the proposed names, and also because Eccleston was not enthusiastic about elevating any of John England's choices to the episcopacy lest his policies and ministerial style be given new life, action was deferred on approving any of England's suggestions. The see of Charleston would remain vacant for over two years. Eventually, though, Ignatius Reynolds, a professor of theology in the diocese of Bardstown, Kentucky, was named bishop of Charleston by Pope Gregory XVI on November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1843. Reynolds, though, was troubled over this assignment and it was not until March of 1844 that he accepted the call and was consecrated as John England's successor.

Reynolds honored his predecessor by seeing to the publication of a five-volume edition of John England's written work,<sup>91</sup> principally, but not exclusively, taken from his contributions to the newspaper he had founded, *The United States Catholic Miscellany*. But Bishop Reynolds treated England's constitution with disdain. While it was initially declared to be something that could, at local option, be followed at the parish level, it was ignored as an instrument of diocesan governance and the consultative procedures it enshrined soon became nothing more than a memory.

Rather than further the democratic and collegial ecclesiology pioneered by England, Reynolds directed his attention to the financial state of the see of Charleston. Indeed it was the perilous condition of the economy of

<sup>87</sup> Quoted in: Guilday, II, 542. Guilday's research uncovered this previously unpublished letter among papers of the England family in London.

<sup>88</sup> Guilday includes extensive quotations from publications around the country that commented on Bishop England's death. See: Guilday, II, 541-550.

<sup>89</sup> Today, the remains of Bishop John England lie in a crypt beneath the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Charleston.

<sup>90</sup> Guilday, II, 548-549.

<sup>91</sup> See: *Works of the Right Reverend John England, First Bishop of Charleston*, ed. Ignatius Reynolds.; 5 vol. (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1846).

the diocese that was a major reason why Reynolds hesitated to accept his episcopal nomination. The reputation of Bishop John England would grow in the decades following his death, but his immediate successors made clear and decisive efforts to administer the diocese of Charleston in ways that were quite different from the vision laid out in the Southland between 1820 and 1842 by the protégé of Bishop Francis Moylan.

Bishop Reynolds began construction of the new Cathedral of St. John the Baptist and St. Finbarr on the Charleston site Bishop England had selected shortly after his arrival in Charleston in 1820 and Bishop Reynolds presided at its dedication on April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1854, five days prior to the twelfth anniversary of England's death. Reynolds himself died the following year, 1855, and was succeeded by Patrick Lynch, a man who, at Bishop England's direction, was the first seminarian from the Diocese of Charleston to be sent to Rome for theological studies at the *Urbanum* and who was one of the priests Bishop Reynolds had assigned to assist in the editing of John England's writings.<sup>92</sup>

## Summary

"+John, Bishop of Charleston," as England would typically sign his letters and communications, can in no sense be called a "disciple" of Arthur O'Leary in any literal or ordinary sense of that term. Cork City in the years following 1771 was different from Charleston in the years following 1820 in so many ways, and the daily tasks of a mendicant friar and the ordinary of a diocese would also be different even if the two clerics were neighbors and contemporaries. But to the extent O'Leary developed what T. J. Walsh has called "an historical and philosophical approach to a scientific sociology,"<sup>93</sup> one can see evidence of his thought in the ecclesiology of John England. Each man saw toleration as a self-evident principle that must underlie any effort at serious dialogue, each was forceful in decrying the use of violence as a means for ensuring religious or even political orthodoxy, each was willing to appropriate insights of the Enlightenment to enhance understanding of his own religious heritage and each man was unswerving in his belief that no religion should ever take measures that might result in the deposition

<sup>92</sup> For a biography of Bishop Lynch, who served the see of Charleston during the awful days on the American Civil War and whose views on slavery remain troubling, see: David C.R. Heisser and Stephen J. White, *Patrick N. Lynch, 1817-1882* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2015).

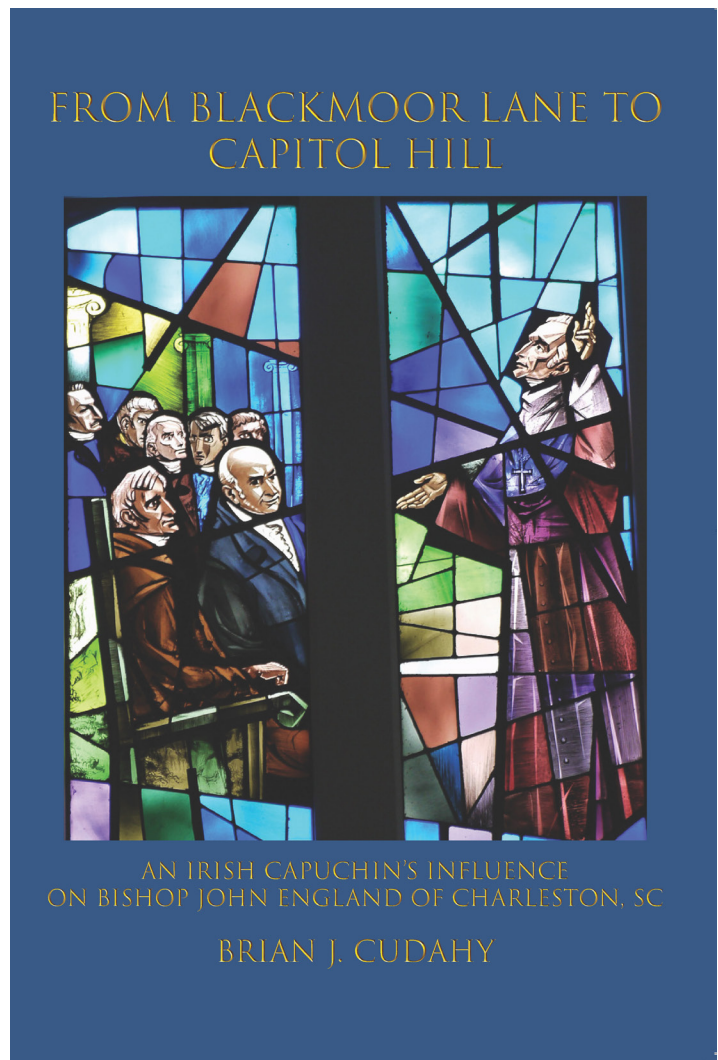
<sup>93</sup> T.J. Walsh, "Father Arthur O'Leary, a Capuchin of Blackmoor Lane," *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, 52 (1948): 92.

of the leader of a sovereign state or nation.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the views of an Arthur O'Leary or a John England hardly seem radical, although they surely have not achieved any massive popularity in the way the Catholic hierarchy manages Church affairs. That is because in both post-O'Leary Ireland as well as in post-England America, ecclesiology drifted away from the ideals that had their origin on Blackmoor Lane and were later articulated on Capitol Hill.



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# Franciscan Poetry

## Rock Picking

By Peter Welsh

Saint Francis of Assisi, in this fight against my enemies assist me;  
Put to flight Satan, an angel of light and lies who lays mines  
To slay me, a Peter-pretender dealing falsely to damn me,  
Leading me wrong in all my longings and desiring this nature,  
Once rising high like an angel's, to fall low like a creature's.  
And how could twisted Man, with Sin's inky stain sinking in  
Deeper than his skin, viny in his very veins, ever untangle it,  
If Deity never deigned to reign over him and invisibly visit  
Via Vianney-men lifting Him up present in altar-altered gifts?

\*

Even as in Eden Eve and Adam became their own enemies  
Taint and stain (sad synonymy) of sin in me- now mine  
Even as my own name- makes me my enemy who merely shares  
A name with you, a preacher who came to proclaim God's reach  
And true care for each creature, sparing neither His high nor minor,  
Franciscan or sparrow: both His mirror; and praying for minnows  
(I suppose) mocks God no more than praying for sinners-  
Just another sort of fish you wish us, Peter's peers, to fish for;  
Nor in begging rocks did you mock one begging his bread,  
And generous was your genius that saw Jesus in each of us  
So that neither rich rebel nor poor leper could repel you,  
Your mission being to bring in a million missing sinners and ever  
To endeavor to love over and above, making the Other a Brother.

\*

You proved, through love of objects heavy and feathery  
Others forget for getting of light pleasures and heavy  
(Yet hardly heavenly) treasures, the love our begotten Lord  
Bore for those who were careful not to rip, only strip his robe,  
Those whose measure is a treasure surely far greater;  
Now Man's hands that plucked His beard receive Him as bread to eat  
(So the Son's lesson summed up is, *Go do good as God did for you*).  
And, lest we forget, cocky Peter, blessed to be Heaven's Greeter  
Denied his Maker to a maid, but later no less than died with Him;  
And even crooked, greedy Judas, who dined with Jesus,

And kissed Him with his hissing lips, could've been forgiven  
For leaving God and the eleven, turning odd a perfect even  
(Yet even a lived-with devil couldn't leaven their heaven);  
And Simon, too, for the sin of simony- money for The Gift;  
For, by Christ's witness, we must forgive seventy and seven.

\*

So Christ chose Simon to be Peter and closest of those dozen,  
And though he dozed in the garden became the Church's guardian,  
For with God all is possible, even Peter's perfect repentance.  
Him Christ fished not with net nor worm but the Word-made-flesh,  
Growing inner in Spirit with him, raising him to God's Rock in Rome  
To lead His flock not with an iron rod but a shepherd's crook.  
But you, worthier than Peter, if our merit be determined  
By the measure of that charity that gives clearest clarity  
(As it did for you and Clare), He formed into some vile worm  
Humble enough to live under a rock and declare such a home  
Well-fit for one who'd roam without room, roof or fox's hole.

\*

In it you'd still tender Him holy homage for His tender concern,  
Following all Ten Red-Letter Laws, adding *nothing* to the sum,  
Pursuing, as some do purses, poorest Poverty- purest poetry  
To you who coveted nothing but nothing, or only the covert Pearl-  
Knowing that the Potter who made poor dust into that same Peter  
Who keeps the keys owns a home whose room far eclipses Rome's.  
Such Love- two lips put to leprous sores as though tulips or roses-  
Lures me to you who bore four and more wounds before our world  
To show how One loves all (even me) the same as if His Only.



Peter Welsh graduated from Seton Hall University with a B.A. in English Literature. He is a teacher of students with autism. His poetry has been published in 'The Chesterton Review'.

## Patrick Carolan Bids Farewell to Leadership of FAN

By Sr. Marie Lucey

At the end of December, 2019, Patrick Carolan will step down as executive director of Franciscan Action Network. In his letter to FAN institutional members Patrick wrote: “Together we have built FAN into a powerful voice for justice and peace and an advocate for poor and marginalized people.” This is true, but Patrick’s leadership in this work must be acknowledged with gratitude. Nine years ago, FAN was struggling to establish its role as “a collective Franciscan voice seeking to transform United States public policy related to peacemaking, care for creation, poverty, and human rights.” (FAN Mission Statement) The office was a tiny, dark office on Monroe Street in Washington, DC. While FAN had made some progress, it was not well known in DC-based interfaith organizations or on Capitol Hill. Nine years later, FAN is very well known and respected in DC, with both Catholic and Interfaith partners; there are FAN members in every state; and FAN is even known in several countries around the world.

Nine years ago, when FAN was searching for an executive director, Patrick was not a likely candidate. He lived in Connecticut with his wife and best friend Stella, and two adult children. Patrick worked for the Diocese of Bridgeport as Manager of Advancement/Development for the Stamford Catholic Schools and for St. James Parish in Stratford where he developed Faith Formation and Social Justice Programs. But he had no connections with the Franciscan family. However, after being strongly encouraged by a Sister of Mercy to apply for the position with Franciscan Action Network in Washington, DC, Patrick recognized the invitation of

the Holy Spirit and applied. FAN members owe a debt of gratitude to that Sister of Mercy who recognized a Franciscan-hearted man when she saw him!

Patrick was a quick study in the Franciscan story with its complicated family, and he drank deeply from the well of Franciscan spirituality. During his tenure as executive director, he was a co-founder of the Global Catholic Climate Movement



and of Faithful Democracy, a faith coalition focused on Money in Politics because big money has a corruptive influence on FAN’s primary advocacy issues: climate crisis, immigrant and refugee policies, gun violence prevention, human trafficking and peacemaking. He invited FAN members around the country to be involved in a 30 day Fast for Families on the National Mall, where people participated in a water-only fast in the tent for one or many days in support of immigrants. Patrick engaged in a number of nonviolent acts of civil disobedience to protest anti-immigrant, anti-refugee, anti-Muslim policies or government failure to address the climate crisis or rampant gun violence. In 2015 he was a recipient of the White House Champion for Change award for his work on climate crisis. Since FAN’s partnership with UPF, a Muslim film company which produced the docudrama *The Sultan and the Saint*, Patrick has traveled to a number of U.S. cities and several European cities to introduce the film to



Muslim, Christian and Jewish audiences.

FAN staff and board members are deeply grateful to Patrick for putting FAN on the map. He speaks to total strangers at meetings, on the Metro, and in airports about Franciscan Action Network. It is due to Patrick that FAN is now widely recognized and respected as a Justice/Peace/Integrity of Creation faith organization grounded in Franciscan values. Although Patrick will no longer be FAN's executive director, he will continue to follow and support FAN's work. Our deepest thanks to a genuine Franciscan-hearted man.



Sister Marie Lucey, OSF is a Member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. She has been with the Franciscan Action Network (FAN) since 2011, advocating for immigrant rights, gun violence prevention, human trafficking and other social justice and peacemaking issues. She also coordinates and communicates with FAN's institutional members.

# Franciscan Institute's Research Advisory Council Chair discovers a 17th century Spanish-Timucua Book

**D**r. Timothy J. Johnson, *Craig and Audrey Thorn Distinguished Professor of Religion* at Flagler College and Chair of the Franciscan Institute's Research Advisory Council has recently discovered a previously unknown work by the 17<sup>th</sup> century Franciscan missionary to Spanish Florida, Francisco Pareja.

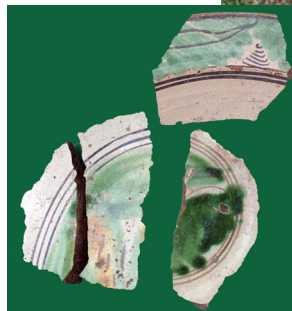


The book published in Mexico in 1628 is housed in the Codrington Library of All Souls College in Oxford England and is entitled, "III. parte de catechismo en lengua Timuquana y castellana: En que se trata el modo de oyr Missa, y sus ceremonias," ("Part Four of the Catechism in the Timucua and Castilian Languages.") The book is focused on ways to hear Mass and other ceremonies.

Johnson discovered the previously unknown work to scholars while on sabbatical and doing research on Spanish-Timucua sermon stories from seventeenth-century Florida. It is part of a research project Johnson is undertaking on Franciscan religious literature in Northern Florida during the Spanish colonial period. The native language of most of Northern Florida in the Spanish colonial period was Timucua, and Franciscans began to study this language and teach native people reading and writing at the end of the sixteenth century. Timucua is the first written indigenous language in the United States, and appeared in print as early as 1612.

The find is significant because the language of the Timucuan people is no longer spoken and historians have been eager to learn as much as possible about the language and its speakers through a small number of published religious materials in Timucua, including catechisms that once taught the Christian faith in this part of Northern Florida.

Johnson describes the finding: "This discovery is what dreams are made of for people who work with historical documents. This book allows scholars to further explore a pivotal historical period in American history that has been neglected for far too long."





## CARITAS for Children President Makes Profession as a Secular Franciscan

After a 5-year period of both discernment and formation, the Franciscan Family welcomed Christopher T. Hoar (“Chris”) into the Franciscan Third Order, on October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The Third Order (Secular) Franciscans are a community of over 350,000 clergy and laity with contemplative hearts that pursue justice, peace, and the loving care of creation. Through his profession, Chris has decided to grow further in the spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi, who recognized that lay men and women were still drawn to serve God with deeply committed hearts and lives.

Even 800 years after his death, many have chosen to follow the way of Saint Francis because he came to mirror the love of Christ and the living Gospel so closely. Others have chosen to follow him because of his sincere love for the poor and the marginalized. What many forget is that Francis, just like Jesus, zealously faced some of the biggest questions of his day, one being: “How should one lovingly respond to the easily forgotten, marginalized, and disadvantaged people in the world?”

For over two decades, Chris has actively grappled with this issue, and has engineered a brilliant method to confront this growing challenge. In the United States, he owns a for profit business that serve the transportation needs of commercial, non-profit, and religious organizations throughout the U.S. and Canada. This business, Fleet Services, Inc., has given him the opportunity to create and acquire the funding, along with other’s support, for a very “Franciscan” nonprofit organization, namely CARITAS for Children.

For the last 22 years, CARITAS for Children has built relationships between children from poor countries and adults with the desire and potential to sponsor them. Specifically, a sponsor provides financial assistance for a life-changing Catholic education, daily meals, clothing, and medical care of an orphaned or disadvantaged child. At the same time, the sponsor gains a global perspective, a new member to their family, and a unique spiritual insight into the enriching effects of true charity. Many have said that sponsoring a child with CARITAS, has created a unique encounter with Christ. CARITAS for Children is about building relationships, encouraging charity and mercy, keeping consistent with the Franciscan mission to seek people in the margins

and invite them into the love, peace, and joy of Christ.

What makes CARITAS different than other child sponsorship programs is that their ministry services are made possible with the cooperation of Catholic Religious (i.e. Capuchin Franciscans, Jesuits, Carmelites) who are trusted to provide the on-location care and supplies to the children in need, including educational necessities, nutritious daily meals, clean water, counseling, religious instruction and more. Chris has also built a special set of ways to financially support the Catholic Religious men and women who work to support the CARITAS programs on the ground. As of today, CARITAS helps sponsor children in Poland, Nigeria, Uganda, Haiti, Dominican Republic, and coming soon, Belize.

Christopher T. Hoar, OFS hopes, prays, and works very hard to continue building these loving and relational bridges, to and from people from the poorest and richest countries. His dedication for the last 20 years is just one example of how Franciscan lay men and women serve God with deeply committed hearts and lives. If you would like to find out more about CARITAS for Children, you can visit the website at [www.caritas.us](http://www.caritas.us)



Deacon Ted Faust, OFS (Fraternity Minister),  
Christopher T. Hoar, OFS,



# A Byzantine Franciscan and the Coincidence of Opposites

By Robert Lentz, OFM

The Franciscan tradition of art is as alive as the Franciscan movement. Some centuries have been more glorious than others. History—the judgment of those who follow you—will judge our work in this 21st century. I introduce myself to you as someone intensely interested in both Franciscan aesthetics and evangelization. As a Byzantine iconographer, I feel the need to introduce a greater expression of transcendence in our religious art, while, as one who is involved in evangelization, I do not want to lose our Franciscan charism of glorifying God in the “ordinary”. For almost thirty years I have been an active agent in making iconographic symbolism more relevant to people of our time, and have noticed in the last ten years that my new images are being copied by other artists, both in the Americas and in Europe. In 2004, as I was walking towards the Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi, for example, just before I reached the main piazza, I glanced in the window of an ecclesiastical art store and saw an exact copy of my icon, *The Meeting of St. Francis and St. Clare*, (fig. 1) painted by an Italian artist. Two years later, a different exact copy sat in the same window when I walked past. This iconographic type has now entered into the tradition. Back in the 90’s, I depicted St. Clare with a cat. I now see cats with St. Clare, in other contemporary icons. In 1986, I placed bandages over Francis’ stigmata when I painted his bust. Now bandaged Francises are popping up in the work of other artists. I have just finished a nine by seven foot panel icon of the Holy Trinity, based on the theology of St. Bonaventure, for a church in Houston, Texas. At its blessing, the archbishop referred to it as a new standard for images of the Trinity in our time. Through this image, Franciscan theology, with its exciting insights, is re-entering the life of the contemporary Church at large. As the maker of these images, which are influencing the art tradition you study, I offer you this paper, which is a reflection on my own life as an artist and a friar.

At the turn of the last century, just before the 1905 Revolution, my paternal grandparents left what was then the Russian Empire. Their coming to America was a traumatic event that left family roots both broken and tangled. After settling in Massachusetts, they moved to Buffalo. Anti-immigrant sentiment sent them across the

continent to the Colorado Rockies, where their Model T Ford broke down and they could go no farther. To their dismay, they found that the Ku Klux Klan controlled the Colorado state government with the Grand Dragon sitting in the governor’s chair and Klansmen in full regalia marching down Colfax Avenue, several blocks



from here. They watched crosses burn in their neighborhood. I grew up with these stories.

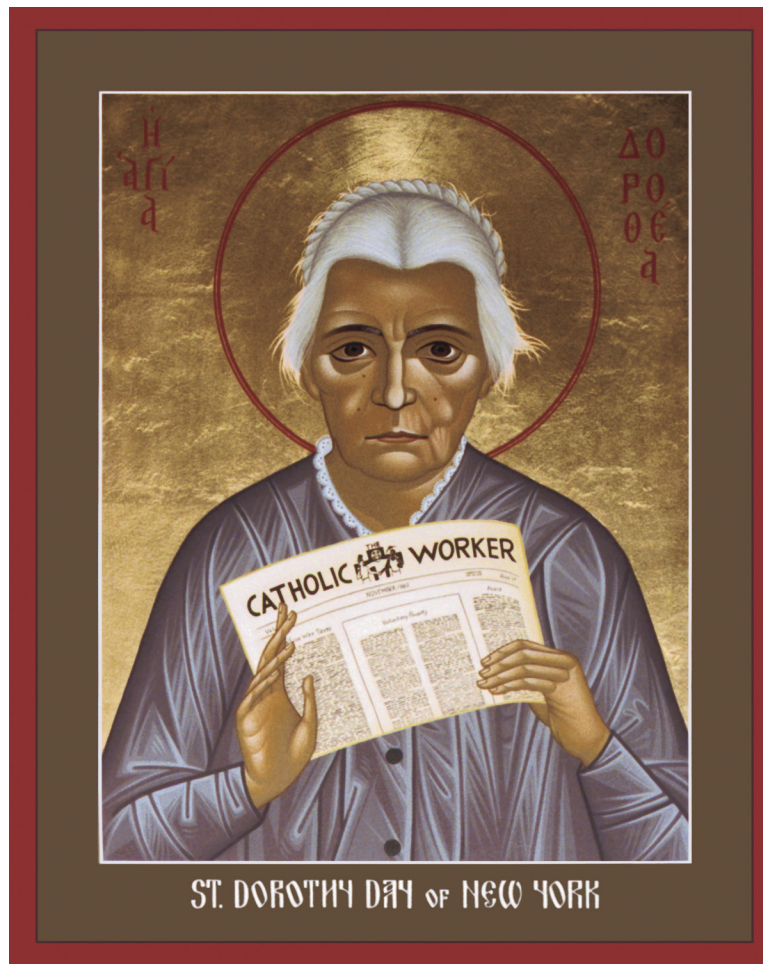
I also listened to more magical stories as a child: stories of bands of wild Cossacks riding through villages in southwestern Russia, of endless fields of sunflowers, and of monastery churches full of icons. My grandmother’s small house was full of images of saints, and I soon had the wall next to my bunk bed covered with paper holy cards. I learned to pray in the vast expans-

es of prairie that once opened to the horizon, east of Denver. My image of God was that of the transcendent Pantocrator, a face I had seen in my grandmother's icons, reinforced by my experience on the American steppes.

My favorite holy card was one of St. Francis of Assisi, with birds in his left hand and on his shoulders. I remember the gilt edges of the card and the bright colors of the print. It was no icon, but it became a window for me into heaven, nevertheless. From the time I was six years old, I knew I wanted to be like this saint. When I was eight, I made myself a habit out of gunnysacks and a rope. My father wasn't pleased at all. He had little use for priests and looked forward to having as many grandchildren as possible.

When I was 17 years old, I left for Detroit to become a friar in the Province of St. John the Baptist. I was drawn especially to the contemplative side of Franciscan life, which seemed to recede, like an ocean wave on a sandy beach, each year in the 60s. In theology, I longed for something more, too young to know that it was the mystical theology that lay behind my grandmother's icons. When the time came to make solemn vows, I left, instead, and began a pilgrimage of almost 35 years, which has led me back into the Order, now as an old man.

This pilgrimage took me through Latin America to a Russian Orthodox orphanage in Santiago, Chile. I lived in several Russian and Greek monasteries, where I learned the tradition of hesychastic prayer and how to paint icons. I heard fascinating stories from exiled men and women who had fled the Bolsheviks in the 1920s. I listened to crazed Orthodox monks who expected the imminent arrival of the Antichrist and had found caves in nearby mountains where they intended to hide when he did appear. I entered fully into the ghetto of the Russian Church in Exile, exploring my family's roots and



the theological world of the Byzantine East.

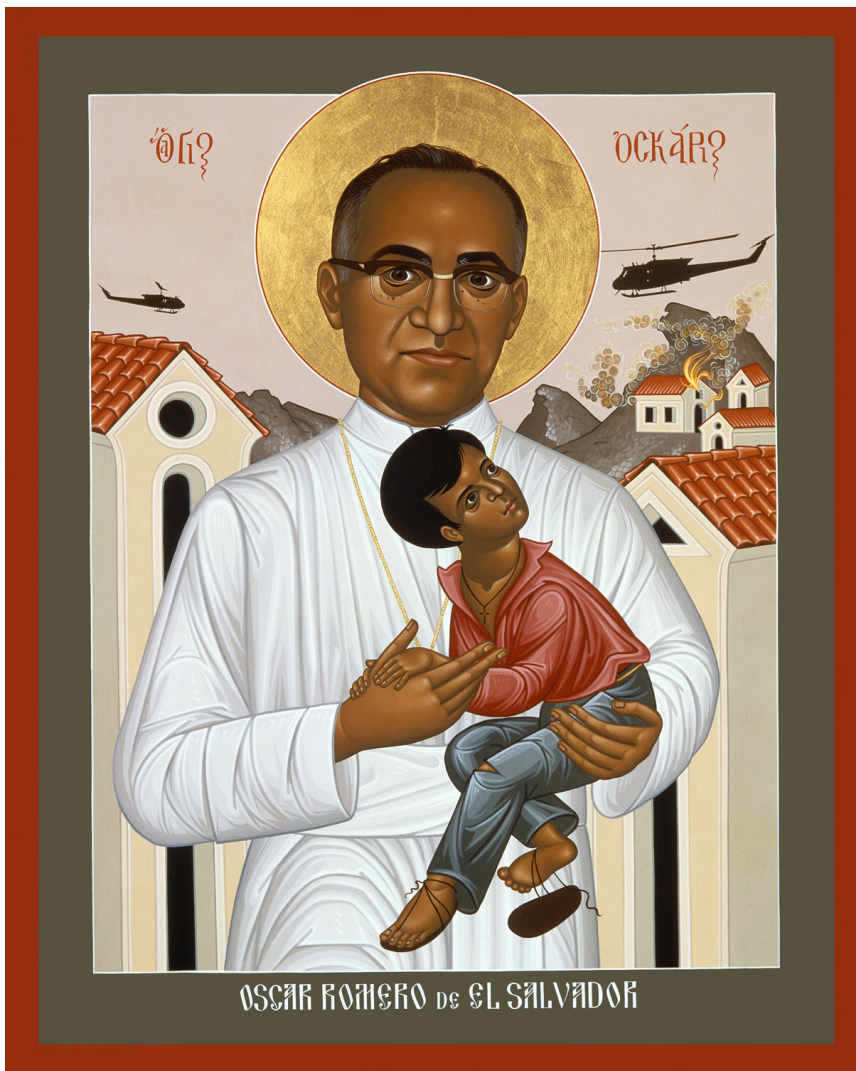
In 1982, I met a Catholic priest in San Francisco who worked with marginalized Catholics, not far from the Russian Cathedral on Geary Boulevard. When the flat above his became available, I rented it with another Russian artist. Throughout the week, Father Daniel O'Connor hosted support groups, evening retreats, and simple meals for all sorts of people pushed aside by the Church. For the first time in my life, I found myself surrounded by Communists of every hue, by feminists and gay folk, by atheists and artists. In the contemplative setting of his flat, I learned to listen to new stories and began to

see God's face from different angles. In time, these new perspectives began to demand expression in the icons I was painting.

I cannot remember a time when I have not made images. As a tiny child, it was with crayons. I won a set of pastels in grade school and began to experiment with more sophisticated media. While my family fished in the high Rockies, I taught myself how to sculpt wood. I learned how to build walls with fieldstone and how to weave cloth. But it was the Byzantine icon that always fascinated me, trying as it did to express what happens when God touches a human life. My early attempts at making icons were earnest but comical. In the mid-70s I met an emigre from Leningrad who had studied iconography in a monastery in Pskov, but he was jealous of his knowledge and unwilling to help me learn. Finally, in 1978, I apprenticed myself to a master painter at Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Brookline, Massachusetts.

In the monastery workshop, we worked in silence, twelve hours a day, six days a week, and six hours on Sundays and holy days. My teacher had studied in Athens in the school of Photios Kontoglou, an Orthodox Greek from Asia Minor who had rediscovered Byzantine iconography while cleaning ancient icons on





Mount Athos. In those days we used egg tempera on gesso composed of gypsum and animal skin glue. Each apprentice began with the humblest tasks and advanced to more difficult work when he had mastered simpler things. We worked in silence and followed the typicon of one of the sketes attached to St. Panteleimon's Monastery on the Holy Mountain. My fourth month I was finally allowed to paint faces, and the abbot began giving me old Russian icons to copy for his hermitage in Maine.

I learned iconographic canons as well as painting techniques. I was immersed in Patristic theology. When I left Boston to return to Colorado, I never anticipated leaving the protecting shell of Eastern Orthodoxy. Events in Chile and Colorado broke this shell wide open, but I realize now, from the perspective of so many years, that it was my love for St. Francis that really shattered the shell. In the 60s we weren't as deeply exposed to Franciscan spirituality as young friars are today. What we did receive in formation, however, changed my world forever. Francis opened my eyes to God's limitless love. After Francis, no ghetto could ever hold

me—not even a gilded ghetto topped with a cross.

I began with an icon of Dorothy Day, (fig. 2) and then one of Oscar Romero. (fig. 3) The third was of the Protestant holy man, Martin Luther King, and the fourth, the Hindu, Gandhi. Each step away from the ghetto cost me blood in the beginning. The Orthodox had filled my head with fear of the devil and the punishments awaiting anyone who betrayed the holy Tradition. Father Daniel O'Connor's Irish humor blasted many of my Orthodox demons away, but it was my own experience of finding Christ in the alienated men and women who gathered at his house that eventually silenced the rest. Humor and these grace-filled encounters, held in contemplative prayer, brought the insights I needed to reclaim my life outside the ghetto.

I returned to the New Mexico desert, where I lived as an urban hermit in the barrios of Albuquerque, following the Third Order Rule for almost 20 years. I supported myself painting the icons for which I have become famous. My work has been controversial, especially among Byzantine Christians. I have never sought controversy, however, nor change for the sake of change. As a Byzantine Christian myself, I have a profound respect for Tradition. As I have ventured farther and farther from the customary, I have always tried to remain traditional, wrestling with the Tradition, trying to find ways to say new things. I have, in short, done theology in the margins, exploring christological and ecclesiological questions with my brush.

### The Coincidence of Opposites

Many theologians in various traditions have spoken at length about the role of the coincidence of opposites in the spiritual life. Any consideration of an encounter with the Divine must include the coincidence of opposites beginning with immanence and transcendence. I think, especially, of the great Muslim mystic from Spain, Ibn al-Arabi, whose writings often mirror the letters of Saint Clare to Saint Agnes of Prague. Saint Bonaventure's emphasis on Christ as the center rests upon Christ's role as the ultimate coincidence of opposites. I find in his teaching the key to my own life and



my art.

At first glance, it would be hard to find spirituality closer to the core of the Latin Rite than Franciscan spirituality. Franciscan emphasis on the Incarnation of Christ, especially as expressed in popular devotions like the Christmas crèche and the Way of the Cross, have shaped what the Latin Rite has become in the twenty first century. As a young man in his early twenties who had grown up with a very different kind of spirituality, I often felt lost in the Latin Rite world of the Franciscan Order. I was too young to dig deeper, and, with the limited exposure to Franciscan spirituality I received, I didn't even know *where* to dig. After leaving the Order, I lived as a guest for a while in Sybertsville, Pennsylvania, where Franciscans from the Byzantine Rite Custody of Our Lady of the Angels had a friary, and even there felt more conflict than coincidence of opposites. It seemed the Pennsylvania friars had merely slipped a Byzantine veneer over Latin Franciscan life, a veneer that fit so poorly, their custody had nearly been destroyed several years before by a mass exodus of the friars in formation, who eventually became Orthodox.

As a Byzantine Christian, living once again in this seemingly very Latin Order, I am caught, once again, between opposites. The pull between the opposite poles is sometimes painful, but I am no longer a youngster. I often swim in Bonaventure's texts, as well as those of Ibn al-Arabi, plunging into depths I didn't know existed in my youth. The Christ I have discovered on my long pilgrimage is indeed the coincidence of all opposites. The symbolic center point of his cross, the point of coincidence, is also the center of my own heart. From that

center, I choose how to live my Franciscan life. Having once seen the shell of a ghetto crash around me, I am not interested any more in a veneer. As I have learned to plunge into the depths of both the Franciscan and the Byzantine traditions, so have I learned to search for what is of essence. When I search for the Franciscan "essence," I find ample room for my Byzantine soul.

I have traveled through Umbria four times in the past ten years. None of these times has been an official tour or pilgrimage. Each time I have searched out the various nooks and crannies of Francis' world, lingering where I have felt his presence, rather than where he was supposed to be. Aside from his tomb, Assisi has

never held me. Gubbio and Perugia have been interesting because of their stories, but I weary of them after a few hours. It has been the rugged caves in the Rieti Valley, and the forests of La Verna that have caught and held my heart. I have spent days in St. Michael's cave at Poggio Bustone, so close to St. Francis that I almost felt I could touch his feet. Greccio, with its crowds, eludes me, but the springs at Fonte Colombo hold me fast. On La Verna, I visit the basilica and the chapels and then flee to the mountainside, where I can, once again, spend days. The Francis I have come to know is a wild man burned by our transcendent

God. He is brother to Gregory of Nyssa, Seraphim of Sarov, Gregory Palamas, and all of Russia's holy fools. Francis, the greatest saint of the Latin Church, is universally loved because he has become a coincidence of opposites, like the Christ he so faithfully imitated. The Francis of the caves could create a crèche at Greccio, without losing his spiritual balance, precisely because he was so intimately acquainted with the God who is



beyond all words.

Francis was born into a world with many Byzantine elements, but a world that was slowly slipping towards the Gothic and the Renaissance. The religious art all around him was closely related to the iconographic world of Byzantium. Umbria, especially, bore a Byzantine stamp because of the Syrian monks<sup>1</sup> who had fled there to escape violence in the East. The Crucifix he heard speak was a Byzantine icon painted, perhaps, by one of these exiled monks. This crucifix has become famous throughout the western world and is a central image in Franciscan life. That such a Byzantine image stands at the birth of this most seemingly Latin Order reveals a hidden coincidence of opposites that demands our attention.

On May 17, 2008, I delivered a paper at the University of Saskatchewan, in Saskatoon, Canada (“Christ In the Margins: Byzantine Iconography In the Twenty-first Century”). Bruce Russell, an art historian at the university, made an insightful reference to one of the frescos in the upper church of the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi. In this fresco, which depicts the crèche Francis created in Greccio in 1223, Francis and others are behind the rood screen of a church much larger than anything in Greccio’s cave. Above the door of this rood screen is a crucifix in the same shape as that of San Damiano. We see a plain brown panel, crisscrossed with braces and attached unceremoniously to a supporting tripod with a rope. It is the ugly back of an icon, not the luminous front. Bruce pointed out that the artist, one of those who began the tradition of Franciscan vernacular art, depicted Francis as having gone around the icon to its back side, rather than through it to glory.

The story we know of Francis and the San Damiano Crucifix, however, is that he somehow slipped *through* it to the reality of the Christ it depicted. What happened to Francis at San Damiano that day is what has happened for centuries to Byzantine Christians when they have prayed well before their icons: he discovered in the icon a window into heaven. The space between the experience of the holy founder and his followers decades later who sought to spread his teachings is a space that, in this case, eliminates the coincidence of opposites. In eliminating the coincidence of opposites, in emphasizing the immanent, rather than tying it to the transcendent, this artist in Assisi begins the process in Western religious art that eventually results in the sentimental, rather meaningless images we find in our church goods stores today. When Bruce spoke to

<sup>1</sup> Additional information about the presence and influence of these Syrian monks may be found in G. Penco, *Il monachesimo in Umbria dalle origini al secolo XII incluso* (Gubbio: Congress Centro Studi Alto Medioevo, 1962), 258-76.

me of this fresco, I immediately thought of the sense I have had for many years that the revolution initiated by the vernacular artists of the Franciscan movement has sometimes been catastrophic for the Western Church and its mystical tradition.

Though seldom understood by Western Christians, the Seventh Ecumenical Council<sup>2</sup> was the last of the great Christological councils of the Church. Far from being peripheral to Christian faith, icons, the council decreed, were an essential part of our belief, resting as they do, on the full humanity of the divine Christ. The ancient Church, both Western and Eastern, lived around the icon as a primary symbol of itself. The icon spoke of a sacred center around which human life revolved, a center that held all in its gravity—its focus of meaning—precisely *because* it was sacred. Ancient Christian art, art before the thirteenth century, emphasized transcendence, sometimes at the expense of immanence. With the rise of vernacular art, the sacred element in art was pushed to the side and became a veneer. Because of the powerful impact of art on the human psyche, an impact much more immediate and more powerful than words, the effect of this revolution, as it has led through the Renaissance to ever more humanistic styles, has perhaps even led us to the “death-of-God” theology of several decades ago. Christianity is a wisdom path, not merely a moralistic movement. Take away the coincidence of opposites and you have a path that leads nowhere.

Depicting sacred themes does not, by itself, make art sacred. In the sense in which I am using the term, neither does using such art in sacred ways. For art to be truly *sacred*, it must struggle to tie together both the immanent and the transcendent in its making. It will then be sacred, regardless of its use—just as a Byzantine icon, a Baule mask, or a Rothko painting is no less sacred when it ends up in an antique store. The sacred subject of a piece of art reveals itself as such, independently of external testimony. Art reveals the sacred solely through artistic devices. Art stands on its own.

In the thirteenth century, the new mendicant orders were faced with a Catholic laity who had been marginalized as much within their Church as they had in the rest of feudal society. Processes reaching back to the time of Theodosius and Justinian had brought about a situation in which all sacred power was concentrated in the hands of the clergy, with the laity going to the clergy in order to receive God. Holiness belonged in

<sup>2</sup> Footnote: J.D. Mansi, *Seventh Oecumenical Council, Acta, in Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio* (Florence, 1759-98), vol. 12, cols. 951-1154; vol. 13, cols. 1-485. Excerpts in English translation in *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, edited by H.R. Percival, Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, vol. 14 (Oxford: James Parker and Company; New York: Christian Literature Company, 1900), 523-87.



monasteries, not on muddy streets. The new vernacular art that spun out of the mendicant movement was an attempt to restore importance and dignity to ordinary secular life. As noble as this effort was, it eventually slipped away from the all-important coincidence of opposites, no longer *dignifying* secular life, but further degrading it as it ignored more and more the transcendent center, which is the ultimate source of all dignity.

The more ancient Christian art, whether Byzantine or Romanesque, had as its primary goal communicating a sense of communion between the immanent and the transcendent. Figures in the ancient art seemed to emerge from their flat surfaces, to join congregations in an eschatological “communion of saints.” Manipulation of perspective as well and the use of shadow and light contributed to this illusion. The bodies of the holy persons assumed poses that suggested this movement outward into the space before them. At the same time, even as the saints seemed to come forward to mingle with the faithful, there was no doubt about the holiness they had already achieved in their transcendent state. Light emanated from their faces and bodies. They had become part of God’s “new creation.”

In the new art that began to develop after the time of St. Francis, perspective is reversed and worshippers are invited to enter the images with their imaginations. Instead of heaven exploding eschatologically into worship space, ordinary, daily life enters the church building to tell a story. The stories the artists tell have emotional nuances that engage the imagination of their audience. Deep feeling takes the place of eschatological glory. Drama takes the place of communion.

While poorly executed Byzantine or Romanesque art might simply end up remote and austere, it always points towards an opposite transcendent pole. The new realistic art, however, dependent as it is on imagination and emotion, runs a more dangerous risk of becoming sentimental when it misses its mark. The transcendent pole, which draws salvation history forward, disappears in an emotional fog. Gone is the ancient sense of a transcendent center that dignifies ordinary human life.

Encountering this center in the years of his conversion is what enabled Saint Francis to embrace the leper, the wolf, and the Sultan of Egypt. (fig. 4) The same Francis who desired to experience the humility of Christ’s birth in the cave at Greccio, who brought farm animals and straw around the small altar in that cave, would write in a letter to the entire Order, just before he died, “Let everyone be struck with fear, let the whole world tremble, and let the heavens exult when Christ, the Son of the living God, is present on the altar in the hands of a priest! O wonderful loftiness and stupendous dignity! O sublime humility! O humble sublimi-

ty! The Lord of the universe, God and the Son of God, so humbles Himself that for our salvation He hides Himself under an ordinary piece of bread! Brothers, look at the humility of God, *and pour out your hearts before Him!*”<sup>3</sup> This mystical outburst is the cry of a saint who has seen the raging furnace that Bonaventure mentions near the end of Chapter Seven (Ch. 7.6) in his *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*. It reflects the balance Francis found in his own spiritual life through Christ, the coincidence of opposites. While he longs to know Christ’s poverty as a human, he has already seen the glory of his divinity—and all of this first in the icon crucifix painted by a Syrian monk.

Each time I have visited the Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi, I have tried to appreciate the bright frescos that line the nave of the upper church. It is purely a mental exercise for me, however, as my heart races toward the apse and the blackened, oxidized images of Cimabue. I have heard tour guides tell their groups how Cimabue was a step towards the more advanced art of the nave, the teacher Giotto and other new vernacular artists surpassed. And since my return to the First Order, as I have stood in the middle of the nave, I have wondered about my own icons and my identity as a friar, and how strange it sometimes seems to try to hold the two together.

These past two years, I have begun to see things in a different light as I have worked on a nine-foot icon of the Holy Trinity for All Saints Church in Houston, Texas. (fig. 5) Preparation for painting the icon involved immersing myself in Bonaventure’s teaching about the Trinity. The more I read and digested of his writings, the more similar he sounded to Eastern Orthodox theologians I already knew. Bonaventure knew the Eastern Fathers through Latin sources, and he embraced their theological insights because they harmonized so well with his own evolving Franciscan spirituality. The reading in the breviary from the *Itinerarium* on the feast of Bonaventure always brings tears to my eyes, as he challenges us to seek the spouse not the teacher, darkness not clarity, and to look not to the light but rather to the fire that enflames totally and that carries one into God.<sup>4</sup> In a sense, from his hermitage on La Verna, Bonaventure tells us to move past the bright frescos in the nave to something more transcendent if we would reach the

<sup>3</sup> Francis of Assisi, “A Letter to the Entire Order,” in *The Saint*, Vol. 1 of *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, edited by Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellman and William J. Short (New York: New City Press, 1999), 118.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, in Vol. II of *Works of St. Bonaventure*, translated by Zachary Hayes (Saint Bonaventure, New York: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2002), 139.





goal of Christian life.

I have spoken of Christianity as a “wisdom path,” and Bonaventure’s short book is called an *itinerarium* or a “journey”. Each of us is referring to a process of growth that challenges what we are and know and leads us towards something far beyond us. While the vernacular art that arose after the death of Saint Francis recognized the life of ordinary people and brought it into the churches, the stories it told led only a few feet down the *itinerarium mentis in Deum*, the path into God. With the passage of centuries, popular devotions like the crèche and the *via crucis* often devolved into sentimental exercises, far from the “sublime humility” and the “humble sublimity” Saint Francis had praised. Separated from Francis’ experience of divine darkness in the caves, these dangerous memories were tamed beyond recognition. As artists concentrated more and more on religious emotion, by the Victorian period Catholic churches and homes were filled with a surfeit of weak, insipid depictions of Christ and the saints. Having forgotten the coincidence of opposites, what began as a

divine drama of opposites ended up as sacrine piety, worthy of the scorn it received after the Second Vatican Council.

Our Franciscan life itself can only collapse when it is not based on Christ, the coincidence of opposites Francis knew and lived so well. In documents, such as *Followers of Christ for a Fraternal World* (General Curia OFM, Rome, 2004), we are challenged to place prayer as the first priority in our life, ahead of fraternity, ahead of our work. Prayer is to our life what Francis’ experience of God’s transcendence was to the crèche he created at Greccio. Grounded in true knowledge of how sublime the Divine Mystery is, its corresponding humility becomes overwhelming. Our Order has been reformed so many times over the centuries, only to fall once again into mediocrity. I suggest that it has been a neglect of the coincidence of opposites, our only safe path, which has brought us so often to this state.

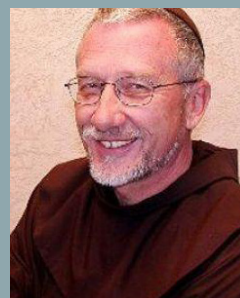
While I once wondered how to hold together my identity as a Franciscan with my Byzantine soul and the icons that are my work, I no longer feel this con-

tradition. Franciscan spirituality, at its best, is a coincidence of opposites: a meeting of the transcendent in the immanent, a joining of contemplative prayer with apostolic work, a school of theology where Greek and Latin Fathers meet and embrace. Bonaventure died just before the Council of Lyons, a gathering of Orthodox and Catholic bishops and theologians hoping to restore unity between the two Churches. He has been called the greatest synthesizer of the Middle Ages, this teacher of the coincidence of opposites. If we would remember Bonaventure's challenge to turn to the raging fire that carries the soul to God, if we can remember to hold a truly contemplative life together with our apostolic work, we would no longer seem so intensely Latin, but rather an Order open to all that is of Christ. Realizing this, I no longer worry about whether there is a place for a Byzantine friar painting icons in the Franciscan family.

Having said all this, I must admit that my icons differ quite a bit from those I was taught to paint at Holy Transfiguration Monastery in 1978. Long before my return to the First Order, I was choosing colors more varied and brilliant than those my teacher used, delighting in God's creation no less than Francis as he sang the Canticle of the Creatures. Long before I re-discovered Duns Scotus and his *haecceitas* or "thisness," I was rebelling against the Byzantine practice of depicting animals and birds in icons with less dignity than humans. My animals and birds await their fulfillment in Christ no less than the saints they accompany, and when I paint them, I respect their God-given uniqueness. With Franciscan trust in the compassion of God, I found ways to express transcendence in the faces of my saints without the severity that one often finds in icons. Embracing life on the margins of the Church, four years after my apprenticeship in the Greek monastery, I have painted for the poor and marginalized ever since. My icons have included elements from their lives, no less than the vernacular frescos in Assisi, but I have not abandoned the element of transcendent presence that forms the essence of what an icon is. Whether it is a chipped coffee mug in the hand of Brother Matthias Barret, or a smelly Billy goat rubbing against my Arab Good Shepherd, each of my icons expresses ordinariness with transcendence and is filled with little words that point to the one Word, Christ.

As I was looking at articles and papers I have written in the past, I was struck by the fact that I have never before stressed the need for transcendence in sacred art. In the past, I have defended Franciscan immanence in my icons, justifying the changes I have brought to Byzantine iconography, taking for granted that sacred art must depict transcendence. In both instances, how-

ever, it is an insistence that holiness must always contain this coincidence of opposites, since all holiness refers back to God, whose one and only Word is Christ. A challenge before Franciscan artists of the twenty first century is an enunciation of a uniquely Franciscan aesthetics. There was little room for a Franciscan artist in religious life forty years ago, but today we are carving out niches for ourselves as legitimate evangelizers in an evangelical order. At the heart of this aesthetics will be the coincidence of opposites, with all its ramifications. While I myself paint Byzantine icons, I will never insist that these are the only way the transcendent might be joined to the immanent. Rothko's abstract canvases and Rouault's haunting Christs often lead me to the "raging furnace" more quickly than an icon by Rublev. While I paint icons, I am Franciscan enough to search for Christ wherever he shows his lovely face. As a Byzantine Rite friar, however, I remind us all that his face will never be complete without the transcendent.



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# The Shrinking Subject: Early Mendicant Theologians Read John's Gospel

By Aaron Gies

In his sixth and seventh *Admonition*, Francis of Assisi worried about those who wanted to be celebrated for knowing and teaching the words of the gospel without putting into practice what it says. It is a commonplace of Franciscan studies that, in making this point, he was worrying about trends in academic theological education. I believe that early Mendicant lectures on John at the University of Paris furnish an example of the sort of subtle turn Francis was concerned about, especially in their division of the text, (*divisio textus* in Latin). In these five commentaries, written between about 1230 and 1274, the excitement over Aristotelian epistemology seems to have increasingly focused interest on the divinity of the Word, the chief speculative proposition defended by John, at the expense of the practical wisdom embodied in the figurative resonances of the narratives, so that the reference of the texts in question was shifted without realigning their interpretation at the atomic level. In a short period of time, through the work of some of the period's greatest Franciscan and Dominican scholars, the subject of the Gospel of John drastically shrank.

## The division of the text

The division of the text seems to have come to theology at the Universities of Paris and Oxford from the Arts Faculty, where commentaries on Aristotle's works by Adam of Buckfield and others imitated the Arabic scholar Ibn Rushd (Averroes), trying to reproduce the logical sequence of Aristotle's thought.<sup>1</sup> This capacity of division to clarify authorial intent had obvious possibilities for those trying to understand revelation and reflection upon it.<sup>2</sup>

The Masters of the Sacred Page who lectured on the Gospel of John in the middle decades of the thir-

<sup>1</sup> D.A. Callus, "The Introduction of Aristotelian Learning to Oxford," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 29 (1943) 229-81, (repr. London: Humphrey Milford Amen House, 1944), 1-55; Cited in Timothy B. Noone, "An Edition and Study of *Scriptum super Metaphysicam* bk 12., dist. 2: A Work Attributed to Richard Rufus of Cornwall" (PhD diss., Center for Medieval Studies, The University of Toronto, 1987), 85, 86.

<sup>2</sup> Currently, the earliest known theological work to employ a detailed division of the text is Alexander of Hales's *Gloss* of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, produced in the 1220s. See Ayelet Even

teenth century were especially eager for new insights into authorial intent because of the growing influence of Aristotle's theory of knowledge. They had inherited a strong tradition holding that John's Gospel was a unified literary work attributable to the Beloved Disciple. Moreover, it was the central font of theoretical language about the Trinity and Christology and an important source of salvation history. However, the tradition was somewhat equivocal about what precisely its subject was.

In the new Latin translations of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* and *Metaphysics*, Aristotle sets forth a hierarchy of knowledge that placed knowledge of particulars at the bottom and knowledge of certain causes at the top.<sup>3</sup> He regards the surest form of knowledge as that which comes about through necessary demonstration, such as that which is possible in mathematics.<sup>4</sup> He calls this knowledge *scientia*. It is not clear that theology, which proceeds from revelation and involves many particulars, is *scientia*. To the contrary, the liberal arts seem to have a stronger claim to that title. Because of the authority and prestige of theology over the arts, scripture within theology, the gospels within scripture, and John among the gospels, there was a strong incentive for theologians to consider the body of knowledge proposed by the fourth gospel *scientia*. However, this approach involved several problems, four of which must concern us here:<sup>5</sup>

1. There are theoretical and practical sciences. Only theoretical sciences are sciences in the strict sense. These do not concern human activities and goods, but the speculative knowledge that makes true knowledge of causes possible.<sup>6</sup> John must clearly be employed by theologians to derive both types of knowledge, but the new

Ezra, "Visualizing Narrative Structure in the Medieval University: The *Divisio Textus* Reconsidered," *Traditio* 72 (2017): 342, fn 4.

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysica* I.1 (Bekker 981).

<sup>4</sup> Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora* I.1, (Bekker 71<sup>a</sup>).

<sup>5</sup> On the problem of theology as *scientia*, see esp. Ulrich G. Leinsle, *Einführung in die scholastische Theologie* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1995); English trans. Michael J. Miller, *An Introduction to scholastic Theology* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 132, 133.

<sup>6</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysica* I.1 (Bekker 981<sup>b</sup>).



epistemological prestige of the theoretical had a noticeable effect on the way the text was divided.

2. Aristotelian sciences have a unified subject. Everything considered by the science is considered under the aspect of this subject.<sup>7</sup> As already suggested, John's Gospel makes irreplaceable contributions to knowledge of the Trinity, Christology and the history of salvation: but which is primary?

3. Scientific principles are general, not specific. The gospel is primarily taken up with the particular.<sup>8</sup> Can anything be demonstrated from historical detail?

4. Scientific proofs are certain.<sup>9</sup> Based on John 20:31, the gospel of John is universally acknowledged have as its goal "faith and eternal life" in its hearers. However, this goal comes about only in those hearers whom the Holy Spirit graciously calls. As a "science," then, the gospel seems to be more certain to some than to others.

At a minimum, then, for the knowledge offered by John's gospel to be considered *scientia*, some method of study is needed to adapt the its mystical discourses and historical narratives to the bare simplicity of rational argument. The division of the text itself addresses some of these issues. The end product, sometimes depicted graphically in manuscripts and probably always visualized, theoretically allows a commentator to show the relationship between any given phrase in the book and the author's overall subject and purpose.<sup>10</sup> It is designed to lay bare the argument, enabling the scholars to identify the certain within the probable, the theoretical within the practical, the general within the specific, the one subject within the many topics. The following

<sup>7</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysica* I.1 (Bekker 981<sup>b</sup>); *Ethica Nicomachea* I.5 (Bekker 1216<sup>b</sup>1).

<sup>8</sup> Aristotle, *Analytica priora* II.21 (Bekker 67<sup>a</sup>).

<sup>9</sup> Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora* I. 2 (Bekker 72<sup>a</sup>-72<sup>b</sup>); And see the example at I.4 (Bekker 73<sup>b</sup>).

<sup>10</sup> On the visual essence of division, see Even Ezra, "The *Divisio Textus* Reconsidered," esp. 145; For the Gospel of John, Alexander produced a division of the text that includes 774 discrete units. In this massive apparatus I have been able to detect only one inconsistency. It occurs at the most atomic (definitive) level of the text and involves no inconsistency in the separation of sense units, only in the titles used to describe them. See Aaron Gies, "Alexander of Hales on the Gospel of John: An Epitome of *Sacra Doctrina*" (PhD diss., The Catholic University of America, 2018), 521-550.

examples focus only on the highest level of division, which I refer to as the major division. In each of these commentaries, it forms part of the work's preface. Following the fashion of the time, which introduced the work by analyzing it according to Aristotle's four causes, the major division was usually introduced as the work's "formal cause." The work's subject, on which Aristotle's epistemology exerted a reductive pressure, was the work's "material cause." The author's intention in writing was identified with the "final cause." The "efficient cause" was of course the Holy Spirit working with and through the human author, in this case John the Evangelist. Between ca. 1230 and 1274, a number of changes are visible in the division and related categories of analysis that seem to closely align with reception of, and anxiety about, Aristotle's theory of knowledge.

Hugh of St. Cher [ca. 1200-1263] and his secretaries<sup>11</sup> probably postillated John's Gospel during the years of his theology teaching at Paris, (1229-1235).<sup>12</sup> The Dominican sees in John's gospel the grand narrative of salvation history: the gospel is unified by a mystical itinerary of procession and return. He gives a straightforward account of the Gospel's purpose at John 20:31: "here you have the intention of this work specifically, and of all the other books of Sacred Scripture generally."<sup>13</sup> He does not clarify how "faith and eternal life" come about from John's account of procession and return, and what is to be made of those who do not believe. For Hugh, John's Gospel does not have a single, unified subject, but a few closely related subjects, and the certainty of the knowledge brought about by it is left undefined.

Hugh of St. Cher, major division of the text of John

#### I. Two-fold procession from the Father (1:1-3)

1. The eternal generation of the Word (1:1-2):
2. The going forth of creatures from God the Creator (1:3)

#### II. Resurrection of rational creatures to the Father through the Son's mediation (1:4-end)

<sup>11</sup> Beryl Smalley, *The Gospels in the Schools, c. 1100-c.1280* (London: Hambledon, 1985), 118, fn. 38, 120.

<sup>12</sup> Smalley, *Gospels*, 118; M. Michelle Mulchahey, *First the Bow is Bent in Study: Dominican Education before 1350* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1998), 485-491; Gilles Berceville, "Les commentaires évangéliques de Thomas d'Aquin et Hugues de Saint-Cher," *Hugues de Saint-Cher (†1263): Bibliographie et théologien*, ed. Louis-Jacques Bataillon, Gilbert Dahan and Pierre-Marie Gy (Turnhout, 2004): 173-196.

<sup>13</sup> Hugh of St. Cher, *Postilla in Iohannem* [20:31], *Hugonis de Sancto Charo opus admirabile* 6 (Venice, 1703), 397v: Et potest hic tangi intentio huius operis specialiter, et generaliter omnium aliorum librorum sacrae scripturae. [Translations are the author's unless otherwise noted].

3. The incarnation of the Word (1:4-5)
4. John the Baptist (1:6-37)
5. Calling of the Apostles (1:38-51)
6. Preaching and miracles of Christ and the Apostles (2:1-12:50)
7. Confirmation of the elect or “Great Sermon of the Lord” (13:1-17:26)
8. The passion (18:1-19:42)
9. Resurrection and apparition (20:1-end)<sup>14</sup>

Alexander of Hales [ca. 1183-1245], who joined the Franciscans in 1236, lectured on John sometime in the 1230s, perhaps more than once. He describes the Gospel’s purpose thus: “that by [his] eternal and temporal generation we may attain to spiritual generation in the present and spiritual regeneration in the future.”<sup>15</sup> Alexander, then, also sees the whole drama of procession and return reflected in the gospel. Still, he takes a step beyond Hugh by linking the Gospel’s purpose as stated in 20:31, faith and eternal life, to its observed structure.<sup>16</sup> Some manuscripts of Alexander’s lectures actually have two prefaces, the first more developed than the second. As I theorized in my dissertation, this may be the result of Alexander’s own revisions to his lectures. In both, Alexander divides John into seven sections. He divides these seven sections beneath two overarching divisions: the generation of Christ, eternal and temporal, and Christ’s works of restoration, by which his body the Church is spiritually generated and

regenerated.

Alexander of Hales, major division of the text of John

- I. The eternal and temporal procession of Christ the Head (1:1-14)
  1. Eternal and temporal procession of Christ (Jn 1:1-4)
- II. Its effects in us his Body (1:15-end)
  2. “Our” spiritual birth in baptism (1:15-5:47)
  3. “Our” spiritual nourishment in the eucharist (6, 7)
  4. “Our” spiritual illumination (8, 9)
  5. “Our” being led by Christ (10)
  6. The Passion (11-19)
  7. The Resurrection, “our” spiritual rebirth in glory (20-21)<sup>17</sup>

Bonaventure [1221-1274] lectured on John either as a biblical bachelor, 1248-1250, or as a regent master between 1254 and 1257.<sup>18</sup> He sees in the Gospel a proximal purpose: faith, and a final purpose: eternal life. With him, a new twofold division arrives which persists

<sup>17</sup> Alexander of Hales, *Postilla in Iohannis euangelium* Pref. A, c. 9, working ed. in Gies, “Alexander of Hales on the Gospel of John,” 367-68: Est ergo processus huius euangelii in quo determinatur forma: primo de processione eterna et temporali ipsius Filii a Patre, quod habetur in primo capitulo; secundo de generatione spirituali que fit in baptismo per quam fit promotio ad <re>generationem spiritualem, de qua in fine. Sed quia generatio spiritualis non sufficit in adultis ad regenerationem, ideo multe conditiones sunt intermedie de quibus agitur hic. Qui enim natus est spiritualiter indiget cibo spirituali ut perficiat siue sustentetur, de quo sexto et septimo. Indiget etiam illuminatione spirituali ad hoc ut proficiat usque ad terminum uie, de qua octavo et nono. Et quia illuminatio non sufficit nisi habeat ducem, sequitur in decimo de ducatu ad hoc quod perueniat ad terminum uie. Illud enim quod immediate ducit ad terminum uie est passio, de qua agitur ab undecimo usque ad uigesimum. Ex hiis patet qualiter generatio spiritualis promouet ad regenerationem spiritualem cuius exemplum datur uigesimo et uigesimo uno.

See Boyd Taylor Coolman, “Hugh of St. Victor’s Influence on the Halensian Definition of Theology,” *Franciscan Studies* 70 (2012): 372; Citing Hugh of St. Victor, *De sacramentis Christianae fidei* I, Prol. 2 (PL 192:183).

<sup>18</sup> Fidelis a Fanna et al., Prologomena to Bonaventure, *Commentarius in euangelium Iohannis, Sancti Bonaventurae opera omnia* 6 (Quaracchi, 1893), xxii; See also Prologomena to Bonaventure, *Commentarius in euangelium Lucae, Sancti Bonaventurae opera omnia* 7 (Quaracchi, 1895), viii, ix. The editors do not absolutely assert a sequence of works, only noting Salimbene’s comment that Bonaventure began reading Scripture in 1248, the typological distinction of the Luke commentary from the Postils on Ecclesiastes, Wisdom and John, and a terminus ante quem of 1257; Cf. Jacques Guy Bougerol, *Introduction to Bonaventure* (St. Anthony Guild, 1963) 94, 95, who asserted without further citation that the postils were the products of Bonaventure’s time as a biblical bachelor, while the Luke commentary was magisterial.

<sup>14</sup> Hugh of St. Cher, *Postilla in Iohannem Prol, Hugonis de Sancto Charo opus admirabile* 6 (Venice, 1703), 277v: Ita in universo in novem partes dividitur liber iste. Prima est de aeterna verbi generatione. Secunda est de exitu creaturarum a Deo Creatore. Tertia de verbi Incarnatione, per quod fit exitus ille creaturarum. Quarta de precursore verbi, id est, de Joanne. Quinta de vocatione Apostolorum. Sexta de doctrina et miraculis Christi, et Apostolorum communiter. Septima de confirmatione Electorum, que appellatur magnus sermo Domini. Octava de Passione. Nona de Resurrectione, et apparitione.

<sup>15</sup> Alexander of Hales, *Postilla in Iohannis euangelium* Pref. A, c. 11, working edition in Gies, “Alexander of Hales on the Gospel of John,” 368: Causa finalis est ut, per Filium qui est natura, fiamus per adoptionem in praesenti filii Dei in gratia et in futuro in gloria.

<sup>16</sup> See Alexander of Hales, *Postilla in Iohannis euanglium* [20:31], Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, ms Lat. 14438, f. 81rb, ln. 4-10: Hec autem scripta sunt ut credatis, etc. Hic determinatur finis scripture, XV Romanorum: Quaecumque scripta sunt ad nostram doctrinam scripta sunt. Quia Iesus est Christus Filius Dei. Tanguntur ea que pertinent ad diuinam naturam et humanam et personam. Omnia enim ad hec referuntur. Ut credentes uitam habeatis. Hic determinatur finis ulterior ad quem promouet fides.

after him. Rather than speak of *exitus* and *reditus* or the two generations of Christ leading to two “generations” in his Mystical Body, Bonaventure speaks only of the Word in himself and the Word in flesh. The major division mark therefore moves from John 1:3 to John 1:5, taking the Word’s role in producing creatures into the first section, and beginning the second great division with the testimony of John the Baptist.

Bonaventure substantially recalibrated the type and extent of doctrine John is said to contain, perhaps to accommodate Aristotelian demands for scientific knowledge to be theoretical, unified in subject, general and demonstrative. Compared with Hugh and Alexander, Bonaventure’s division reduces the importance of narrative particulars. Alexander and Hugh’s subdivisions are scenes: they represent a symbolic *cursus* which the faithful travel with the Word. The names of Bonaventure’s subdivisions resemble those of dogmatic treatises.

#### Bonaventure, major division of the text of John

- I. On the Word in himself (1:1-5)<sup>19</sup>
  - 1. In comparison to speaking (1:1-2)
  - 2. In comparison to what is said (1:3-5)
- II. On the Word as united with flesh (1:6-end)
  - 1. On the incarnation (1:6-10:46)
  - 2. On the passion (10:47-19:42)
  - 3. On the resurrection (20:1-end)<sup>20</sup>

Albert the Great [ca. 1200-1280] probably wrote his own exposition on John after 1262, relatively late in his long career.<sup>21</sup> At John 1:1, he claims the book has a single subject: “Everything John introduces, he introduces to manifest the divinity of the Word.”<sup>22</sup> Al-

<sup>19</sup> Bonaventure, *Commentarius in evangelium Iohannis*, ch. 1, c. 1.1, *Opera Omnia* 6, 246: Iste liber, qui est de Verbo incarnato, in quo duplex consideratur natura, divina scilicet et humana, dividitur primo in duas partes. In prima agit de Verbo in se; in secunda vero, in quantum est carni unitum, et incipit illa pars ibi: Fuit homo missus a Deo. Et quia verbum dicit operativam potentiam, ut dicit Augustinus, et habet respectum ad dicentem, et ad id quod per verbum dicitur; ideo prima pars habet duas. In prima determinatur de Verbo in comparatione ad dicentem; in secunda in comparatione ad ea quae dicuntur per Verbum: Omnia per ipsum facta sunt.

<sup>20</sup> Bonaventure, *Commentarius in evangelium Iohannis*, ch. 1, c. 17, *Opera Omnia* 6, 250: quia assumptio haec facta est propter nostram salutem, quae facta est per passionem et consummata per resurrectionem; ideo habet haec pars tres partes. In prima agit de incarnatione; in secunda de passione, infra in fine undecimi: Collegerunt ergo pontifices; in tertia de resurrectione, in principio vigesimi capituli.

<sup>21</sup> Smalley, *Gospels*, 242; Markus Führer, “Albert the Great,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford University, May 27, 2019): <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/albert-great/>.

<sup>22</sup> Albert the Great, *Enarrationes in Ioannem [Enarr. Ioh.]*, Prol., ed. Auguste Aemilia Borgnet, *Beati Alberti Magni opera*

bert elsewhere refers to this single subject as *scientia Verbi*. He even claims that the “science of the Word” it propounds is so complete and unified that it may be described as unique, superior to “secular sciences,” which in fact depend on the Uncreated Word to perform their task of describing creation.<sup>23</sup> The work’s purpose is double: to declare the sufficiency of the sacraments and defend the faith. Albert splits them because the first one “always follows,” but the second “sometimes follows in the hearer, sometimes not.”<sup>24</sup> This is a direct acknowledgement of the differing the purpose and effect of the Scriptures, which has now become a key tension between exegesis and the account of theology as a science.<sup>25</sup> He clarifies when he discusses John 20:31. Here, as in Hugh, Bonaventure and John, the proximal end is faith and the final end is eternal life. The difference is the context, which refers to “believers.” Albert quotes Matthew 1:21: “you will call his name Jesus, for he will save *his people* from their sins.”

Albert retains the two-part division we have associated with Bonaventure, but uses more philosophical terms. In the first, he considers the Word in his essence and in his relations, as Cause of things and as Principle through which things are known, noting that these are shown to be the same in Aristotle’s *Physics*.<sup>26</sup> This leads him neatly into the second major division, the way in which the Word himself is known, namely through the testimony of John the Baptist and through his own testimony.

Aristotelian accommodation functions at the expense of literary unity in Albert. His division makes John into a philosophical treatise, but does not always make sense. For example, how is it that John the Baptist’s testimony to Christ includes the calling of the first disciples? Further, Albert’s approach to the bulk of the Gospel of John as “Christ’s testimony to himself,” seems to abandon a sapiential approach to the text for a more narrowly speculative one.

*omnia* 24 (Paris: Vivès, 1890), 24: Joannes omnia quae inducit, ad hoc inducit, ut divinitas Verbi manifestetur.

<sup>23</sup> Albert the Great, *Enarr. Ioh.* Prol., ed. Borgnet, 8: A tali unitate Verbi haec scientia est una, et, ut ita dicatur, unica: et non discursa, vel dissuta, sicut scientiae saeculares aliena mendicantes suffragia ad sui propositi declarationem.

<sup>24</sup> Albert the Great, *Enarr. Ioh.* Prol., ed. Borgnet, 9: Finis autem et utilitas duplex est: in se scilicet, quem semper consequitur, hoc est sacramentorum Verbi sufficiens declaratio.... Finis autem in altero (qui aliquando consequitur in auditore et aliquando non) est fidei aedificatio.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Topica* 2.3, (Bekker, 110<sup>b</sup>).

<sup>26</sup> Albert the Great, *Enarr. Ioh.* [1:4], ed. Borgnet, 32.



Albert of Cologne, major division of the text of John

I. On the Word in himself (1:1-5)<sup>27</sup>

1. The Word's personal and essential properties respecting the divine Persons (1:1, 2)
2. The Word's essential properties respecting things created through him (1:3-5)
  - a. As he is cause of all that exists and subsists (1:3)<sup>28</sup>
  - b. As he is the reason by which everything is known (1:4, 5)

II. On the manifestation of the Word in flesh (1:6-end)<sup>29</sup>

1. Testimony to the Word by means of another (1:6-1:51)
2. Testimony to the Word by himself (2:1-end)
  - a. Shows himself active and instructive (2:1-11:57)
  - b. Shows how he sanctifies the rational creature (12:1-19:42)
  - c. Shows glorification through the resurrection and ascension (20-end)<sup>30</sup>

The John commentary of Thomas Aquinas [1225-1274], written 1270-1272, during his second Paris magistracy,<sup>31</sup> has received more scholarly attention than any of the other commentaries in our sample—perhaps more than all of the others combined.<sup>32</sup> His account of

<sup>27</sup> Albert the Great, *Enarr. Ioh.* [1:1], ed. Borgnet, 24: Dividitur autem iste liber totus in duas partes: quarum prima de proprietatibus personalibus et essentialibus Verbi increati in se considerati est: secunda autem est de proprietatibus Verbi in creaturam rationalem ad sanctificandum eam procedentis: et incipit ibi, v. 6: Fuit homo missus a Deo.

<sup>28</sup> Albert the Great, *Enarr. Ioh.* [1:3], ed. Borgnet, 32: Cum autem duo sint in ipso, scilicet quod est uniuscujusque causa per quam sunt hoc quod sunt et subsistunt: et secundum quod ipsum est ratio cognitionis omnium, in qua cognoscitur omne quod cognoscitur.

<sup>29</sup> Albert the Great, *Enarr. Ioh.* [1:6], ed. Borgnet, 39: Hic incipit secunda pars libri, quae est de manifestatione Verbi per proprietates processionis temporalis, qua procedit in creaturam rationalem ad sanctificandum eam. Et dividitur in duas partes secundum duo testimonia quibus manifestatur: quorum primum est testimonium factum per alium, et secundum est testimonium factum per seipsum.

<sup>30</sup> Albert the Great, *Enarr. Ioh.* [2:1], ed. Borgnet, 87: Prima manifestat se Verbum prout est operativum et erudativum. Sed quia per eruditionem et operationem intenditur creaturae rationalis sanctificatio, in secunda parte ostenditur qualiter per Verbum incarnatum creatura rationalis sanctificatur: et incipit in capitulo XII. Quia autem per sanctificationem venit ad glorificationem, ideo in tertia ostenditur de glorificatione per Resurrectionem et Ascensionem: et haec incipit in capitulo XX.

<sup>31</sup> Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Initiation à saint Thomas d'Aquin: Sa personne et son oeuvre* (Paris, 1993), 288.

<sup>32</sup> See esp. Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering, eds., *Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas: Theological Exegesis and Speculative Theology* (Washington, DC, 2005); Thomas Prügl,

the Gospel's subject is substantially the same as Albert's: "John the Evangelist principally intends to show the divinity of the incarnate Word."<sup>33</sup> The major division follows immediately: "and thus this Gospel is divided into two parts: for first he presents the divinity of Christ; second, he makes it known through those things which Christ accomplished in the flesh."<sup>34</sup> The purpose of the Gospel is, "that the faithful become the temple of God, and become filled with the majesty of God," that is faith and eternal life, as in John 20:31.<sup>35</sup>

Like Albert, Thomas holds resolutely to the unity of the Gospel's subject: John is not an outline of systematic theology as in Hugh and Alexander, nor even about the Word in himself and the Word incarnate as in Bonaventure, but the divinity of Christ, full stop. This, of course, allows him to claim John as an unambiguously "scientific" text. However, unlike Albert, Thomas does not appear anxious about the certainty of its "proofs." This, of course, is because of the doctrine of subalternation: he sees theology as possessing certitude because of its access to the conclusions of a higher *scientia*: the knowledge of God and of the Blessed.<sup>36</sup> the Evangelist need only "show" what is infallibly known, and the accomplishment of his purpose will follow.

This brief survey of the practice of *divisio* in early Mendicant John commentaries allows us to draw a number of useful conclusions. All these scholars wanted to account for John's mediation of saving knowledge, both speculative and practical, to his faithful readers. At the outset of this period, little more than a literary division of the text followed by traditional exegesis according to the fourfold sense seems to have been considered adequate. However, Aristotelian epistemology, with its expectation that a fully "scientific" body of knowledge would be theoretical, with a uni-

"Thomas Aquinas as Interpreter of Scripture," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame University Press, 2005): 386-415.

<sup>33</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Super evangelium sanctae Ioannis reportatio*, [*Super Ioh.*] [1:1], ed. Raffaello Cai (Rome: Marietti, 1952), 7: Evangelista Ioannes, sicut dictum est, intendit principaliter ostendere divinitatem Verbi incarnati.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Super Ioh.* [1:1], ed. Cai, 7: et ideo dividitur istud Evangelium in partes duas. Primo enim insinuat Christi divinitatem; secundo manifestat eam per ea quae Christus in carne fecit.

<sup>35</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Super Ioh.* [Prol.], ed. Cai, 3: Patet etiam finis huius Evangelii, qui est ut fideles templum Dei efficiantur, et replentur a maiestate Dei.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I.1.2, resp., ed. Leonine Commission, *Opera omnia* 4 (Rome, 1888), 9. On St. Thomas's celebrated doctrine of subalternation, see Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Théologie comme science au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Paris, 1957), 67-92; Christian Trottmann, *Théologie et noétique au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: à la recherche d'un statut* (Paris, 1999), 125-156; Leinsle, *Introduction*, 167-171.

fied subject reasoning from general principles to certain conclusions, contributed to a simplification, we might almost say a demystification, of John's subject. Following John 20:31, the purpose of John's gospel was always "faith and eternal life." However, over time, the sapiential reading of John, in which those who "see and believe" sacramentally follow the Incarnate Word in his itinerary of procession and return, took a back seat to the secure derivation of speculative knowledge of the divinity of Word. While the interpretation of individual passages changed little, the believer's participation in the sacraments of Christ's life, death and resurrection was no longer part of the work's main subject. On this score at least, Francis's worry that theologians were allowing theory to crowd out practice seems to have been prophetic.



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## Interview With Dr. Aaron Gies, Post Doctoral Fellow, Franciscan Institute

### What is your special field of research interest?

The first long piece of medieval writing I ever read was Bernard of Clairvaux's *Sermons on the Song of Songs*. For me, it opened up a window on a surprising new conception of what it means to read scripture as divine revelation. Since that time I've been fascinated by medieval exegesis. My work now is focused on a slightly later style of reading scripture that you get with the early university masters, especially Alexander of Hales (ca. 1183-1245), the first Franciscan master of theology at Paris. It's important to remember that before around 1250, there was no concept among theological teachers of a profession called "theology" that was distinct from "biblical studies." At the beginning, the hard work of reflecting on revelation was done by lecturing on scripture, and that ethos endured long after disputation assumed an important place in the curriculum. My work is simply about taking the exegesis of masters like Alexander of Hales seriously as sources of theological reflection and argument.

### Describe your work as a post-doctoral fellowship at SBU?

My project as a fellow is to complete a critical edition of Alexander of Hales's lectures on John, the *Postilla in Iohannis euangelium*. The work survives in seven known manuscripts from all over Europe. Over about eight years I've collected images of them and studied them closely to determine the relations between them. Since starting at the Institute this summer, I've finished transcribing the best. I'm starting now to compare it with the others to produce a readable, well-annotated text as close as possible to Alexander's original words. The commentary is about 180,000 words, which is comparable to Bonaventure's John lectures. I hope to finish it in 2021 and see it published by the Frati editori di Quaracchi in 2022

How have you found teaching first year university students today?

My students at St. Bonaventure are polite and hard-working, and they sometimes surprise with the

acuity of their questions or the depth of their reflections in writing. They would roll their eyes if I said it to them, but it really is a profound privilege and honor to teach them. Getting them to talk to each other is difficult! I'd like to blame cell phones, but that's lazy. In reality, I think that I need to build more activities where they're explaining the material to each other.

### How did you become interested in Franciscan research?

When I arrived at Catholic University for PhD studies, I was interested in theology, but also in social history, Latin paleography and text editing. At a time when I did not yet really understand the theological implications of the Franciscan movement, Josh Benson, Regis Armstrong, Katherine Jansen and Timothy Noone were collectively able to show me what an exciting, quickly-developing field Franciscan studies is within medieval studies as a whole, simply because so many of the texts are still unedited and unstudied. When I realized what sort of discoveries there were to be made, and got some inkling of the rough beauty of academic theology, I knew that's where I wanted to focus my own efforts.

### Tell us a little bit about your family and the challenges of being an academic, husband and father today?

My wife, Katie, and I married when we were 23. I was just starting my graduate work at Gordon Conwell, Charlotte; she was halfway through her Doctor of Veterinary Medicine at NC State. We've kind of grown up together. Over the years, we've each moved for the other and we trade off cooking and cleaning and childcare as needed. She's now an experienced emergency veterinarian who does mobile relief, flying to a practice and taking charge for three or four days at a time, then flying home to us. I am continually awed by her commanding presence, her energy, her compassion. She also enthusiastically supports my research, especially when she can tag along to France or Italy. Of course, the challenge across academia now is uncertainty in the job market, which can mean lots of short-term moves, a worry now that our son, James, is five and has opinions: he loves Olean, his school and church friends, riding





his bike on the trails with our husky, Ivory. But from a Franciscan perspective, it would be a mistake to think of this sort of work primarily as a job, or to confuse job security with being secure. Francis would say that what makes someone a theologian is not a job title, but returning what one has learned about God to God by putting it into practice. I think my family holds me to the same standard.

### **How has the Franciscan Institute encouraged your research?**

I'm a little embarrassed to admit how much I have benefited from the Institute's help over the years. Their support has helped me to attend and present at conferences, publish my research and connect with other scholars. The Institute is my employer, since it has partnered with the University's Department of Theology and Franciscan Studies to create my current position at St. Bonaventure. More informally, scholars connected with the Institute, both currently and in the past, are a constant source of inspiration. My office in the library is the old Institute secretary's office. Philotheus Boehner, Ignatius Brady, Gedeon Gál, Elige Buytaert and so many more have all worked on the same hallway, and

their publications are all in the Institute's collection just around the corner. The greatest encouragement comes from recalling the substance and spirit of their accomplishments. That work can and should be carried on.

