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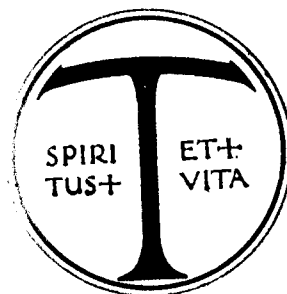
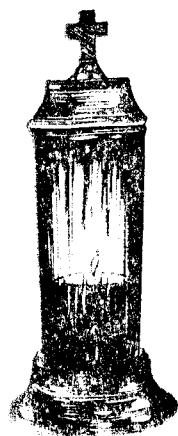
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A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW



VOL. VII, NO. 11, NOVEMBER, 1957

the CORD

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MONTHLY CONFERENCE

The Liturgy of Holy Orders

Fr. Martin Wolter, O.F.M.

When a young man receives the tonsure from the Bishop, thus becoming a member of the clergy, he sets foot on a long path that leads through an entire series of liturgical ceremonies which the Church calls the conferring of Holy Orders. There are the four Minor Orders of *Ostiariate* (or Doorkeeper), *Lectorate* (or Reader), *Exorcistate* (or Exorcist), and *Acolytate* (or Acolyte). Then follow the Major Orders of *Subdeaconship*, of *Deaconship*, and of the *Priesthood*, while in a few cases all these may culminate in the fullness of Orders in the *Episcopacy*. In his learned and devotional book, *The Priest's Way To God*, Father Thomas Plassmann, O.F.M. has thoroughly treated all these beautiful and inspiring liturgical ceremonies and prayers. In this monthly conference, therefore, let us content ourselves with a few thoughts on the Franciscan concept of the holy priesthood which may be derived from the Liturgy of Holy Orders.

This Franciscan concept of the priesthood can perhaps be summarized in the words which St. Francis wrote in his *Testament*: "And all the theologians and persons who administer the most holy words of God, we must honor and respect as people who minister spirit and life to us." The liturgical words and ceremonies of ordination teach the same lesson. We must honor and respect the clergy because of their God-given power and dignity. In doing this we shall perceive that God has appointed them to "minister spirit and life to us."

We Must Honor and Respect Priests

St. Paul gives us the reason why we must reverence the holy priesthood when he describes the priestly office in the Old and the New Testament. "For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in the things pertaining to God, that he may offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to have compassion on the ignorant and erring, because he himself also is beset with weakness, and by reason thereof is obliged to offer for sins, as on behalf of the people, so also for himself. And no man takes the honor to himself; he takes it who is called by God, as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify himself with the high priesthood, but he who spoke to him, 'Thou

art my son, I this day have begotten thee.' As he says also in another place, "Thou art a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 5, 1-6).

It is important for us to realize that we do not honor a priest because he has seen fit to "take the honor to himself." Actually neither the man who becomes a priest, nor the fellow-man who is obliged to reverence his priesthood, have the decisive voice in these matters. But no man can assume the holy priesthood against the will of God, at least his permissive will. And though others may stubbornly refuse to recognize it, the ordained priest possesses a God-given sacerdotal power and dignity which demands reverence from others. The honor and dignity of the Catholic priesthood is not something which it is man's place to give or to refuse. It is the work and the choice of God. "You have not chosen me," said our Lord to the Apostles, "but I have chosen you" (Jo. 15, 16).

In her liturgy of ordination the Church clearly and strikingly expresses this truth that the honor of the holy priesthood comes from God and not from the man himself. The candidates for the priesthood do indeed present themselves before the ordaining bishop. But it is the Church itself, in the person of this bishop, who calls forth and examines the man to be ordained. For it is indeed a call. First of all God in his providence gives the young man the physical, mental and moral requirements for the priesthood. Besides the grace of the true Faith there are given special inspirations of the Holy Spirit leading the youth to the seminary door. The rector of the seminary and other ecclesiastical superiors continue to voice the call of the Lord all the way up through the arduous studies and the lower ranks of orders. Last of all on the day of ordination comes the final approving call of the bishop to step forward and receive the order of the priesthood.

The selection of the man for the office is thus the choice of God and of his Church. But the power itself and the graces that accompany the office also come from God through his holy Church. This is symbolized simply but powerfully in the rite of the imposition of hands. The bishop extends both of his hands and places them upon each of the young men in turn. In this gesture we see the divine power and grace as it were, coming down from heaven above to dwell in the soul of the priest. It recalls to mind the description of Christ beginning his public ministry with his baptism in the river Jordan. "And behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and coming upon him" (Matt. 3, 16). But the

priestly power and public ministry do not come from God directly, but rather through the medium of his Church. It is through the hands, the physical human hands of the bishop, that God wishes to transmit this sacred power. And the ordaining bishop himself received his power and commission from another before him. If we go back far enough we shall see that this divine power has been passed along through human hands from the Apostles themselves.

Immediately following the imposition of the hands upon each individual priest, the bishop prays over them all collectively: "Let us pray, dearly beloved brethren, that God the Father almighty may shower down heavenly gifts upon these his servants, whom He has chosen for the office of priesthood. . ." And again he prays that God would "pour out the blessing of the Holy Spirit and the power of the sacerdotal grace" upon them. The bestowal of the priestly vestments, the chalice, etc. all point out this same lesson and the words of the Preface express it succinctly in calling almighty God "the author of honors and the distributor of all dignities."

When we honor the priest, therefore, we are really honoring God who instituted the holy priesthood. Or perhaps it would be even more apt to say that we honor Christ in his priests. There is indeed a striking similarity between the manner in which God the Father sent his Son into the world on a mission, and the manner in which Christ sends his priests into the world. Our Lord speaks of himself as "him whom the Father has made holy and sent into the world" (Jo. 10, 36). And he admonished the Jews saying: "He who does not honor the Son, does not honor the Father who sent him" (Jo. 5, 23). Then he told his Apostles: "As the Father has sent me, I also send you" (Jo. 20, 21). "He who hears you, hears me; and he who rejects you, rejects me; and he who rejects me, rejects him who sent me" (Lk. 10, 16). It took the light of faith to see the Son of God in Jesus Christ, the poor carpenter from Nazareth, a backward town in the hills of Galilee. So likewise it takes faith to see and honor Jesus Christ in the person of his priests, human and sinful creatures that they are. Such a strong, clear-sighted faith, however, is just what St. Francis possessed and wishes us to imitate. This is the legacy he leaves us in his *Testament*.

"The Lord gave me so much faith in priests that live subject to the law of the holy Roman Church, by reason of their Orders, that even if they were to persecute me I will take recourse to them. And if I had as much wisdom as Solomon had, and were to come upon

poorly-off priests out in the world, it is my will not to preach against their pleasure in parishes where they are stationed. And it is my will to love and honor them and all others as my masters; and I will not regard sin in them, because I discern the Son of God in them and they are my masters. And I do this for the reason that in this world I see nothing bodily of the most high Son of God himself but his most holy Body and Blood, which they have in charge and they alone administer to others."

Who Minister Spirit and Life to Us

St. Francis tells us that "theologians and persons who administer the most holy words of God, we must honor and respect as people who minister spirit and life to us." The Poverello here is quoting from the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel. It may be well for us to study the context from which he borrowed the phrase.

This is the chapter wherein we read how our Lord spoke to his disciples and the Jews at Capharnaum and promised them the Eucharist. But their purely human way of looking at things, their hardness of heart and lack of genuine faith, prevented most of them from profiting by his words. We read how "the Jews therefore murmured about him because he had said, 'I am the bread that has come down from heaven.' And they kept saying, 'Is this not Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How, then, does he say, 'I have come down from heaven!'" (Jo. 6, 41-42). Jesus patiently explains to them his sublime doctrine, but finally he is forced to point out to them the root of all their difficulties. "It is the spirit that gives life," he says, "the flesh profits nothing. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some among you who do not believe" (Jo. 6, 64-65).

There is a tremendous lesson for us in this narrative of St. John's Gospel. Here we see dramatized and foreshadowed the age-old problem of the rejection of God's priests. St. Paul tells us that every priest must be "taken from among men" (Heb. 5, 1), yet men continue to cry out: "Is this not N. whose father and mother we know?" They continue to see, with their eyes of flesh, only a human being. It is only with the eyes of the spirit that they can behold in the priest a man of God. Of course there will always be Pharisees, so self-righteous in their fancied perfection, who complain: "This man is not from God. . . we ourselves know that this man is a sinner" (Jo. 9, 16, 24). They overlook the fact that if the priest is a human being at all, he is

going to be something of a sinner, some indeed more, some—thank God!—less. But has not St. Paul shown us the providence of God in all this? The priest, says St. Paul, "is able to have compassion on the ignorant and erring, because he himself is beset with weakness, and by reason thereof is obliged to offer for sins, as on behalf of the people, so also for himself" (Heb. 5, 2-3).

For ourselves at least perhaps we can find the answer to this problem in the liturgy of ordination and the teaching and practice of St. Francis. We know how frequently the Seraphic Father spoke and wrote about the reverence due to priestly hands; we find him kneeling in the mud to kiss the hands of poor and sinful priests. Let us then consider the rite of anointing the hands of the priest.

After the ordination proper, that is the essential rite of the imposition of hands and accompanying prayer, the bishop invokes the Holy Spirit and anoints the thumb and forefinger of each hand of the newly-ordained priests. At the same time he prays: "O Lord, deign to consecrate and sanctify these hands through this anointing and our blessing. Amen." The holy oil symbolizes the divine power and sanctity which now covers over, purifies, heals and sanctifies the weak, sinful, corrupt flesh of the priest's human hands. The glorious results of this holy anointing are then expressed by the bishop's next words: "In order that whatsoever they shall have blessed, may be blessed, and whatsoever they shall have consecrated, may be consecrated and may be made holy, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

This is the answer to our problem. With the light of faith to guide us and God's grace to spur us on we shall take a truly Catholic attitude toward the holy priesthood. The hands of the priest will still seem human, but we shall not overlook the holy oil of God's grace on those consecrated fingers. The lips of the priest will continue to speak in our human tongue, but in the words we shall discern the breath of the Spirit of God. Then we will understand how St. Francis could say even of the worst priest: "He can be bad for himself, but for me he is good." We will follow in the footsteps of St. Francis, who despite his holiness and graces of illumination, never ceased to consult priests and bishops, to listen to their words, to confess to them his sins and to receive from them the Body and Blood of his Lord.

Every time the priest speaks to us in his official capacity, whether in the confessional, the classroom, the counseling room or the pulpit, sacramental graces accompany the spoken words. Every

time the priest blesses us, graces pour over our soul. Every time the priest administers the sacraments to us, he is channeling graces to us. Thus Holy Orders is a living sacrament, living in the person, the words and the actions of the priest who ministers to us "spirit and life."



THE MYSTIC

Drawn out of self, I am increasingly
 Impelled to break through the mysterious
 Barrier that divides the world we see
 From that which lies beyond. This impetus
 To shuck the shell of self and loose the mind
 To sedulous invasions of the vast
 Empyrean is subtle and is kind,
 And yet, direct and firm. The first and last
 Of life are merged in infinite release;
 And I am swept, though I remain on earth,
 Through vistas of sure love and constant peace
 Where time and space are lost and death is birth,
 Till, like the lowest worm, I am struck dumb
 To know the Wisdom from whence I have come.

Mary Margaret Milbrath

Christ the One Master of All Teachers

Sr. M. Frances, S.M.I.C.

When the philosophy of Aristotle first came into the schools of medieval Europe, it came by way of his Arabian commentators, notably Averroes, who had distorted much of his doctrine. The new philosophy was taken up at the great universities, especially Paris, with the kind of reckless enthusiasm that seems always to welcome new ideas, and in consequence a serious evil developed. A thinly-disguised rationalism, taught by the brilliant Siger of Brabant, who followed Averroes, soon infected both the teachers and the students of the University. It became a fairly common opinion that one could remain orthodox by accepting the teachings of Faith and at the same time upholding a philosophy directly opposed to Faith. Saint Bonaventure, himself a recognized Master at the University of Paris, was quick to perceive the danger. He launched a counter-attack on the doctrines of Siger of Brabant, extolling the power of the human mind but at the same time rejecting the supremacy of reason over revelation. To Siger's Avverroestic deification of the intellect in the person of Aristotle, Bonaventure opposed Christ as the one true Teacher of all men—the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

One of the sermons Bonaventure preached at the University of Paris, entitled *Christ the One Master of All*, includes a clear statement of the mental attitude he required in a worthy teacher. Because the intellectual arrogance Saint Bonaventure opposed in the thirteenth century is stronger than ever in the twentieth, those of us who presume to be Christian teachers may well profit from the Seraphic Doctor's words. The following paragraphs have been selected and adapted from this sermon.

* * *

Since Christ is our one Master, He, above all other teachers, must be honored, listened to, and questioned.

Christ must be honored above all because He specifically reserved to Himself the dignity of the magisterial office. In support of this, Saint Bonaventure quotes from Saint Matthew: *Be not you*

called Rabbi; for only one is your master, and all you are brethren (Mtt. 23:8); and again from Saint John: *You call me Master and Lord, and you say well, for so I am* (Jn. 13:13). It is not sufficient, however, to honor Christ in word; we are also bound to honor Him in action, by following the pattern of conduct He has laid down for us. *Who does not follow me, cannot be my disciple* (Lk. 14:27).

Furthermore, Christ must be listened to above all other teachers and with the humility and docility of Faith. Here Bonaventure comments on a passage from Isaias: *The Lord has given me a learned tongue, that I should know how to uphold by word him who is weary; he wakens in the morning, in the morning he wakens my ear, that I may hear him as a Master* (Is. 50:4). "Twice he says *he wakens*, because it does not suffice that our ear be wakened to understanding if it be not also wakened to obeying." As Christ teaches not only by word but also by example, so we are perfect listeners only if we bring our understanding into harmony with His words and our obedience into harmony with His deeds. *Everyone will be perfect, if he is like his teacher* (Lk. 6:40).

Christ must also be questioned above all other teachers, but we must question Him only out of a sincere desire to learn the truth, not out of prideful curiosity or probing scepticism. The unbelieving Scribes questioned Christ to test Him; they were not seeking the truth when they approached Him with the smooth request: *Master, we would see a sign from thee* (Mtt. 12:38). Signs indeed they had seen and were still seeing, yet they sought a further sign. Here, Bonaventure observes, we see that "human curiosity knows no limit, nor does it deserve to be led to truth." Therefore the Scribes were told that *a sign shall not be given them but the sign of Jonas the prophet* (Mtt. 13:39). Nicodemus, however, was one of the few who questioned Christ with a pure mind. He came to Jesus at night and said to Him: *'Rabbi, we know that thou hast come as a teacher from God'* (Jn. 3:2). And Jesus gladly opened to him the mysteries of faith because he did not seek signs of power but testimonies of truth.

Once our mind is rightly disposed, Bonaventure would have us question Christ about matters pertaining to knowledge, to discipline, and to goodness, according to the prayer of the Psalmist: *Teach me goodness and discipline and knowledge* (Ps. 118:66). Knowledge, says Bonaventure, is concerned with the cognition of truth; discipline, with the avoidance of evil; and goodness, with the choice of the good.

The first looks to truth; the second, to sanctity; and the third, to charity.

Regarding those things that relate to truth, Bonaventure again warns us that we are not to approach Christ with the purpose of testing Him, as the disciples of the Pharisees tested when they said: *Master, we know that thou art a true teacher*, and then proceeded to set a snare for Him. Because their hearts were not right, Christ rebuked them sharply: *Why do you tempt me, you hypocrites*; (Mtt. 23:18-19); but because they asked a good question, He gave them a true answer: *Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's*. Regarding those things that relate to the discipline of sanctity, Bonaventure refers to the rich young man who asked Christ: *Good Master, what shall I do to possess eternal life?* (Mk. 10:17). The answer was that he should observe the Commandments, and if he would be perfect, observe the Counsels, for they contain the perfect discipline of conduct toward those things that incite man to sin. Regarding charity, we should question Christ after the example of the doctor of the Law who asked: *'Master, which is the great Commandment in the Law?'* He said to him: *'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind'* (Mtt. 22:36-7). There Christ showed that love is the fulfillment of the Law (Rom. 13:10).

Under these three heads—knowledge, discipline, and goodness—the whole law of Christ is ordered, and our questions are to be directed to Him under these heads. "Every doctrine of the servant-teacher," says Bonaventure, "ought to be ordered toward these three things, that under the supreme Master, he may worthily fulfill the office of teacher. The servant-master ought to aim at the knowledge of the truth of Faith. *I tell the truth, I do not lie, a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth* (I Tim. 2:7), Saint Paul affirmed, and Saint Peter said: *For we were not following fictitious tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eye-witnesses of his grandeur* (II Pet. 1:16)."

The servant-teacher, moreover, "ought to aim at the discipline of sanctity, like Saint Paul, who said: *I have been appointed a preacher and an apostle; that is why I am suffering these things* (II Tim. 1:11-12); because, according to Proverbs: *The learning of a man is known by his patience* (Prov. 19:11). As it is not fitting that a fool teach wisdom, so it is not fitting that an impatient man

teach patience nor an unruly man teach discipline. In morals example moves more than words."

Finally, the servant-teacher ought also "to aim at the benevolence of the love of God and of neighbor. *The words of the wise are as goads and as nails deeply fastened in, which by the counsel of masters are given from one shepherd* (Eccles. 12:11). By these words of the wise are meant the words of divine love, which penetrate to the core of the heart; and they are said to be *given by the counsel of masters from one shepherd* because although divine love is praised and besought by the words of many, as the two Testaments witness, yet it is breathed by one Word alone, Who indeed is the pasture and shepherd of all. These words all proceed from Him and tend to Him. They are said to be given, significantly, *by the counsel of masters*, meaning, of those who think the same."

According to Bonaventure, all teachers of the Christian law ought to agree in their teaching, since all are disciples of the one Master and all are obliged to charity. Saint James says: *Let not many of you become teachers, brethren* (Jas. 3:1). This, Bonaventure assures us, is not said by way of prohibiting the communication of knowledge, but only the communication of strange and diverse doctrines that have their source in the minds of men and not in the words of Christ. This is also the plea of Saint Paul: *Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all say the same things, and that there be no dissensions among you; but that you be perfectly united in one mind and in one judgment* (I Cor. 1:10).

"Dissensions of opinions arise from presumption," says Bonaventure, quoting Proverbs: *Among the proud there are always contentions* (Prov. 13:10). He then turns to Saint Paul for further confirmation: *If anyone teaches otherwise and does not agree with the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting upon controversies and disputes of words; from these arise envies, quarrels, blasphemies, base suspicions, the wranglings of men corrupt in mind and bereft of truth* (I Tim. 6:3-5).

"Since these are the three things that impede the perception of truth: presumption of minds, dissensions of opinions, and despair of finding truth, Christ, opposing these, says: *One only is your Master, the Christ*. He says that Christ is the Master, lest we presume upon our own knowledge; He says that there is one Master, lest we disagree in mind; He says that He is yours, prepared to assist us, lest we

despair. This is especially so because He Himself desires to teach us, knows how to teach us, and is able to teach us, by sending that Spirit of Whom He speaks: *When he, the Spirit of truth has come, he will teach you all truth* (Jn. 16:13)."



ODE TO SUFFERING

Participation in Thy Cross, O Christ,
Is an earthly purgatory.
Or—did I say purgatory?—
No, 'tis heaven to participate
In the sufferings of Christ—
Not in His glory—
If you know the secret!

Alas, so few there are, O Suffering,
Who truly know thee, or can tell
Thy secret meaning.
So thou art lost and become an agony,
A deplorable state,
A veritable hell,
Or, to say the least, a purgatory!

But 'tis for me to embrace
And a heaven of thee to make,
'Cause Christ by His agony
Has taken thy death-sting
And for me has put life immediate
In thy wake
That I may suffer yet sing!

For that is heaven—life,
Supernatural life,
Which is nothing less
Than union with my God—
The bliss of heaven!—
Therefore I'll suffer 'til I die
And then have life and God!

Sr. M. Catherine, O.S.F.

The Crucified And the Light of Life

(Continued from last issue)

IV

The Crucified is a Door to Truth

In the *Itinerarium* he speaks of "a most ardent love of the Crucified the love which so transformed Paul into Christ when was rapt to the third heaven that he declared: *With Christ I am nailed to the Cross. It is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me.*" He proceeds to speak of how this love absorbed the soul of Francis. Further on he explains that this love has issue in the *way of illumination* that leads to God, which one enters upon only through the *Crucified*. This love then is something that brings with it vision for the eyes of the soul. It is something that attracts the intellect as well as the heart. He explains that Christ is the *door*, and that he who enters by the door of Christ will "find pastures" (*Itinerarium*, Prol., 3).

He again refers to the *door* when he instructs us on the manner of being lifted up out of the things of sense so that one may see both the soul itself and the eternal Truth by means of Christ, Truth itself, Who took upon himself human form. Christ Crucified, then, may be spoken of as a door by which one passes to a kind of vision of divine truth (*Op. cit.*, IV, 12).

St. Bonaventure opens the prologue of his *Tree of Life* with the text cited above: *I am nailed with Christ to the Cross*. We should expect to find more clarification on the same matter, but expressed in a different mode. He follows his Scriptural text with an admonition to the follower of Christ that he must strive to realize within himself what these words signify, and which we may safely interpret: *transformation into the Crucified Christ*. But who, in fact, is the Christ whom we should resemble? And what does it mean to be nailed to the Cross with Him? The burden of the ensuing work gives an answer to these questions that is as vivid as a bolt of lightning. And how is a fragile little mortal to become like this most noble and heroic God-man? St. Bonaventure, with his typical, thoughtful kindness weaves suggestions, counsels, and exhortations into his texts, carefully instructing us on how this is to be done so that we, like St. Francis, might also be transformed into this heroically courageous Master who suffers excruciating torments of both mind and body, while pronouncing "upon His enemies a word of new blessing unheard of from all time (*Lignum Vitae*, 27).

Perhaps compassion is one of his most fruitful suggestions. The affection of compassion is within the natural scope of the human heart. It is quite human to bestow compassion upon a noble and innocent man undergoing cruel and unjust afflictions. But when one has surrounded this Man with the affection of compassion, one finds himself in close sympathy with none other than the good and lovable Son of God. Wherefore, the author explains, using the words of Job: "*Who will grant that my request may come and that God may give me what I look for?*" that my whole being may be transpierced, both mind and flesh, and that I may be affixed to the gibbet of the Cross with my Beloved" (*Ibid.*, 26). Surely then we will be looking in the right place when we seek in the *Tree of Life* for clarification on the devotion to the Crucified.

In the *Prologue* Bonaventure speaks of mystical crucifixion with Christ in terms of both *affection* and *understanding*. The burden of his work is designed to stir both faculties. In swift but intensely significant scenes he recounts the story of Christ which covers the whole of Christology. He is here the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and final end of all things. We see Him as the Eternal Word, in His vicissitudes as Incarnate Word among men, and in His final glorious Kingship — and we are one day to resemble Him in this glory. As Bonaventure proceeds, he points out the revealed doctrines of the Faith. They are gleaming rays piercing through rents in the sky. Patiently, he teaches.

He teaches in many ways. He instructs visually, one might say, in his passages on Christ's Passion. In this succession of brilliantly sketched scenes from the Gospel, he depicts the suffering Jesus under the aspect of first one virtue and then the other, and draws the reader through compassion and repentance to come, see, and learn what Christ's virtue is.

Perhaps he is most masterful in his subtle invocation of the Divinity's presence according to His various attributes: truth, goodness, splendor, omnipotence, justice, mercy, and the like. An awesome sense of divine Love hovers there, and profound messages on the purpose of the work of Redemption resound. Divine truths glow like a halo around the vilified, lacerated, and bleeding Body of the Man of Sorrows. His abject wretchedness, having become the inverse of His glory — how could a mere mortal have willed to bear so much — means even more to the reader's astonished mind in terms of the impassible Divinity than it does as a spectacle of abominations which He bore in His excessive mercy to free us from our guilt.

The author's own words may be used to describe the blessed ends

which he desires for us, and for which he is preparing us in these labors of His for our sanctification. In the oration that terminates the work, he prays to the Father that through His Only-Begotten Son, made flesh, crucified, and glorified, that He send us the Holy Spirit, "the Spirit of Wisdom, so that we might enjoy the vivifying taste of the fruit, which verily thou art, of the *Tree of Life*, and the gift of understanding by which the perceptions of our minds are illuminated . . ." (*Ibid.*, 49).

Bonaventure does not confine his scope solely to the crucifying of the heart's affections with Christ, however great an accomplishment that might be. He intends to use the full vigor of his resourcefulness to guide us along the uncharted paths that lie beyond. He desires that the rectified powers of a purified soul be drawn upward and onward with the help of grace to a view of the *splendor of truth* to which the Crucified Christ is the one and only door. Having become at one with the Son of God, we should also be made to see what He sees.

We would do well to inform ourselves further on the guiding principles involved in this unworldly and lofty project. These are dealt with explicitly in the third paragraph of the third chapter of the *Triple Way* where Bonaventure treats of "the degrees leading to the *splendor of truth*, which one attains by way of Christ's imitation." In concise, scientific fashion, he lays down the method of obtaining the mind's illumination precisely through the *suffering Christ*.

If indeed the *Tree of Life* is composed in view of this same end, we should expect it to embody the same principles, and render service in illustrating the theoretical statements found in the *Triple Way*, and in enlarging upon those principles according to the author's mind. Furthermore, the concrete imagery of the one should so clothe the stark phrases of the theoretical treatise that we should be furnished with no little help in applying the Seraphic Doctor's own directives to our daily efforts to imitate the Saviour as St. Francis did.

V

Two Texts Compared

The comparison of a few passages may show what sort of light the texts of the *Tree of Life* shed upon the *degrees leading to the splendor of truth*.

In the *Triple Way* (III, 3, 3), St. Bonaventure is found giving instructions on how to illuminate the mind by considering *who* the suffering Christ is:

In the first place, consider *who* it is that suffers, and submit to Him through the assent of the reason, and thus believe most firmly that Christ is truly the Son of God, the Principle of all things, the Savior of men, the Rewarder of all merits.

In the *Tree of Life* (22), he shows us how this is done. He meditates upon Jesus undergoing the death penalty rather than deny that He was the *Son of God*:

It then came about that our Pontiff Jesus Christ was brought before the council of the iniquitous pontiffs. He confessed the truth, that is, as to whether He was the Son of God, was condemned to the death penalty as a blasphemer, and was made to endure countless insults.

In various ways he presents the suffering Jesus as *Principle of all things*. For instance, in the following passage from the *Tree of Life* (29), the sun recognizes in Him its Creator, while He who is dying is the source and author of life:

Thereupon, the innocent Lamb, the true Son of Justice, hung upon the Cross for the space of three hours, and during this same time, that visible sun, in pity for its Maker, hid the rays of its light. At the ninth hour, all had been consummated, and the Fountain of Life Itself was dried up.

In the *Triple Way* (III, 3, 3), the author instructs us on the role of *compassion* in getting to know Christ:

. . . consider of what kind is He who suffers, and become one with Him through compassionate affection, so that you may bestow compassion upon Him who is most innocent, most meek, most noble, and most lovable.

In the *Tree of Life* (21), he evokes compassion. For example, the repentant Peter who had had to look into the pitying eyes of his beloved Master suffering opprobrium, and Whom he had denied, becomes a keen lesson in contrition through compassion:

O you, whoever you are, who have heard the voice of the bold maid-servant, that is to say your flesh, and have insolently denied, be it in will or in act, the Christ Who has suffered for you, remember the Passion of your most dear Master. Go out with Peter and weep over yourself most bitterly, if He should at any time turn His gaze upon you Who looked upon Peter in tears. *Inebriate yourself with wormwood* of a two-fold lament, of compunction, that is, for yourself, and for Christ of compassion. Thus, along with Peter, expiate the guilt of your crime, and you will, as was Peter, be filled with the spirit of sanctity.

The remembrance of Jesus' meekness and noble serenity while undergoing outrages in both word and deed become motives for compassion.

Thus in the same work the author writes (23):

O sweet Jesus, who will be so hard that he will be able to bear with his bodily ears, or consider mentally those horrible shouts, "Take him, take him, crucify him," without groaning and wailing in spirit!

One feels that the author could hardly rise to greater heights than description of compassion augmented and overflowing into excessive love when describing the Magdalene who had been forgiven because of her great love. After describing the Entombment, and loyal solicitude of the women who cared for Christ's bodily needs after death as faithfully as they had done in life, Bonaventure centers his inner gaze upon the Magdalene (*Tree of Life*, 32):

Mary Magdalene was among them. She was borne by such an ardently flaming heart, swayed by such overwhelming sweetness of affection, drawn by such powerfully strong bonds of charity, that all feminine weakness was left forgot. Neither the foreboding darkness, nor the fearful cruelty of the persecutors could keep her back from her visit to the sepulchre. On the contrary, she took her stand beside it and washed it with her tears. The disciples had left, but she did not leave, because she burned with the fire of a divine love. Consumed with ever mounting desire, wounded with unbearable love, she knew naught else to do but weep, and she could burst forth crying those prophetic words which say, "My tears have been my bread day and night, whilst it is said to me daily: Where is thy God?"

Now he invites the reader who dares to follow such sentiments, to join with him in supplicating God for the grace of similar compassionate love:

O my God, my good Jesus, in no way is it due me, in every way I am unworthy, but grant me, who did not merit to be with these in body, that by faith, when I do consider these things, I might know the same compassionating love for You, O my God, who for me were crucified and died, which your innocent Mother and the repentant Magdalene experienced at the actual hour of Your Passion.

One is now imbued with a fuller sense of what he means by the compassion he wishes for us in the *Triple Way*.

The author's intellectual agility serves in many instances to give us clear and piercing insights into well-known concepts. It has often been told and so often repeated that we have become inured to it, that innocence is to be esteemed above all things. St. Bonaventure, with a few clear lines, can renew the old idea in its full and terrifying value. In the *Triple Way* (III, 3, 4), through knowledge of the sufferings of Christ, he gives us an argument that convinces because we learn

... that virtue is praiseworthy, that is, how precious. . . it is. Precious because Christ gave His life, rather than act contrary to virtue.

In the *Tree of Life*, (31), he builds an unforgettable elaboration upon this argument, using a brilliant application of the story of Joseph:

Acknowledge, therefore, most clement Father, the coat of Your dearly beloved son Joseph. Like a wild beast, the hatred of brothers according to the flesh has eaten him. In its fury it has trampled his garment, and has besmirched all its beauty with the remains of his blood. See, it bears the marks of five deplorable rents (the Five Wounds). This is, O Lord, the garment which Your innocent Son freely left in the hands of the adulterous Egyptian woman, that is, the Synagogue, since He chose rather to be despoiled of the cloak of the flesh, and descend into the prison of death than to harken to the voice of an adulterous people, and glory in the things of this world. For reasons of the joy set before him, he endured a cross, despising shame.

Indeed, one learns what Bonaventure means when he says that virtue is precious.

In keeping with his insistence upon the obligation of restoring the disordered faculties of our fallen state, he deplores the blindness of men who are worldly and follow the impulses of the flesh or conduct themselves according to its prudence. In the *Triple Way* (III, 3, 4), he explains

... that the world is sensible was disclosed through the Cross because it is a place in which blindness reigns, for it did not recognize the true and highest light. . .

Both the Jews and Pontius Pilate become examples of such blindness in the *Tree of Life* (24). With a little reflection one recalls counterparts in the world our newspapers tell us about:

Pilate was not unaware that the Jewish people were not spurred on by zeal for justice, but by envy, for he had openly declared that he found not the slightest cause for death in Him. Nevertheless, human fear overcame him; he filled his soul with bitterness, and turned over the most pious King to the cruel tyrant Herod for judgment.

The author becomes formidable when he deals with the sin of pride. In the *Triple Way* (III, 3, 4), in instructing on the evil of sin which one learns through the Cross, he says

... that the world is sensible was disclosed through the Cross because required such a great price, such great atonement, and such difficult remedy. So much, in fact, did it require that God and the noblest man in unity of person were needed to make satisfaction for arrogance. . .

In the *Tree of Life* (25), he illustrates the malice of proud arrogance.

After describing the shamefully humiliating torments of Christ who had been forced to bear them standing before the soldiers gathered into the Pretorium, he begins to write like a warrior smiting down his enemies in the heat of battle:

Observe well, O pride of the human heart, which flees ignominy, and aspires to honours, who this is who enters bearing the likeness as of a King, and even so is shamefully dishonoured, as if He were a contemptible slave. This man is your King, He is your God, who was *thought as it were a leper*, and the most abject of men, so that He might rescue you from everlasting shame, and heal you from the pestilence of pride.

Woe once, and woe again, to those who after being given such a clearly mirrored image of humility are borne aloft with pride, once again making the Son of God a mockery, who because of all the indignities He endured for the sake of men, became all the more worthy of being honored by them. (20)

Another passage (26) illustrates the difficult remedy of sin:

When brought to the place of His torture, He was disrobed, so that when the bruises and lacerations of the flesh inflicted by the blows of the scourge on His back and sides had been bared, He could appear as it were a leper. Thus, so that you might be cured, your Beloved could appear before you pierced with nails, and beaten blow upon blow.

He gives us an insight into what great atonement was required (24):

After He had been made sport of. . . (Pilate) gave a still more cruel order: He should stand naked before the eyes of those jeering Him for the brutal torturers to show that virginal and most pure Body—cutting wounds into wounds, and beating bruises upon bruises. The Most Precious Blood ran down the sacred flanks of that innocent and most lovable Youth, in whom no guilt whatsoever had been found. . . Behold, the innocent Lamb! So that you might be saved from a sentence of just condemnation, He chose for your sake to be condemned with an unjust judgment. Behold, He did pay that which He took not away!

Such citations could be multiplied indefinitely. Perhaps those quoted above will suffice to indicate in what way the *Tree of Life* might be used to complement the *Triple Way* so that we can be taught directly from the Seraphic Doctor how to make fruitful in ourselves the devotion to Christ Crucified, that same devotion which the Seraphic Father enjoins upon our piety, so that both heart and mind, united in contrition, might be filled with the curing Light from on high. In the words of the *Triple Way* (III, 3, 4),:

This, then, is how all things were made manifest in the Cross. . . Wherefore, it is the Cross which is the key, the door, the way, and the splendor of truth, and whoever takes it up and follows it does not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life.

The Ascetical Doctrine Of St. Bonaventure

Fr. Agostino Gemelli, O.F.M.

Despite the difference of temperament and environment, there is no dissolving of the continuity between Saint Francis and Saint Bonaventure. Saint Bonaventure is the conscious thought of Saint Francis, carried, a generation later, over a broader field. A summary examination of the principal chapters of Saint Bonaventure's doctrine will make this evident.

Saint Francis never wondered whether God exists, because for him the Invisible was the most evident Being in the world and his love discovered Him everywhere. Saint Bonaventure affirms that the existence of God is a *verum indubitabile*, proclaimed by all nature, stamped on our mind like the seal of the artist on his work; it is a truth and a fundamental good that conditions all other truths and all other goods, just as light, even to those who give no thought to it, makes the sight of colors and objects possible. The originality of Saint Francis—and this seemed like an entirely new discovery in the century of the *De Contemptu Mundi*—was his fraternizing with all creatures in the name of the heavenly Father. Saint Bonaventure, an assiduous reader of Saint Augustine and a disciple of Alexander of Hales, pondered how this paternity could be realized without nature somehow sharing in the divine. Recognizing in analogy the law of the universe, he saw God present in His works, but in each to a different degree, that is, he saw Him under the form of a distant and confused shadow in material creatures, as a distant yet clear *vestige* in creatures that are both material and spiritual, as a very close and very distinct *image* in spiritual creatures. He showed the image of the Trinity in the triple rule of measure, order, and weight that presides over the universe, in the triple principle of matter, form, and the composition of matter that constitutes every essence, and especially in the trinomial, memory, intellect, and will that characterizes the human soul. Hence the interior order of the divinity becomes for

Saint Bonaventure the law that regulates the interior economy of creatures. These end by being a sort of representation, a picture, a statue of eternal wisdom. It is also a book in which can be discerned the brilliant traces of the creative Trinity, the very book which Saint Francis had read.

The soul of Saint Francis was so divinely penetrated with the idea of Christ that the Crucified stamped his body with the seal of His Passion. Saint Bonaventure, who considered the crucifix the greatest of books, made Jesus Christ the center of speculation and action, the center of the universe and of history. His thought, like the body of Saint Francis, was marked with the sign of the Cross, and we might say that he already saw the name of Jesus, which two centuries later Saint Bernardine was to show to the people in a sensible form, stamped on every event and on every soul. That is why he could impregnate knowledge with the Franciscan spirit. The originality of his idea of knowledge comes from the fusion of his natural vocation to study with the vocation to sanctity. He loved God and he loved study; but because the love of God is exclusive, Saint Bonaventure loved study in God and for God, and justified his human passion for it not only by making it serve God but also by discovering God in knowledge as he had discovered Him in nature. He was guided in this discovery precisely by the Franciscan eye, more piercing in him than in any of his confreres who, although certainly saints, were less gifted scholars.

I.

Examine the *De reductione artium ad Theologiam*, a work of twenty pages. It might be called the Franciscan *Discourse on Method*, but with this fundamental difference: the Franciscan method leads to the discovery of God, whereas the Cartesian method sows the seeds leading to the discovery of self. The informative principle clearly expressed in its conclusion: "All knowledge serves Theology," might lead superficial rationalists to conclude that this work is the negation of knowledge and consequently the quintessence of the alleged medieval obscurantism. The truth is quite the contrary: because to serve God is to reign, once all branches of knowledge are founded on theology, that is, on the knowledge of God, they are sanctified by the divinity they symbolize. According to Saint Bonaventure, the scientific disciplines—or to use his expression, the intellectual illuminations—are six in number, corresponding to the six days of creation; and

each one, besides its own doctrinal content, symbolically repeats the three teachings of Sacred Scripture: the eternal generation and Incarnation of Christ, order in life, and the union of the soul with God, or more briefly, faith, action, and the ultimate goal of both.

Let us take an example. The sciences remind us of the mystery of the Incarnation because just as the Word became man, so also a concept becomes visible through the work of the artist. The sciences urge us to live rightly, for again, just as the artist strives to produce a beautiful, useful, and lasting work and it is well received when it fulfills these three conditions, so likewise three conditions are required to live rightly: knowledge, will, and perseverance. Finally, the sciences teach union of the soul with God, for just as the artist lives, enjoys, and glories in his own work, so God delights in, rejoices in, and loves the souls He has created.

One more example. Rational philosophy or eloquence reminds us of the mystery of the Incarnation. Just as the Word became flesh, so also thought becomes word and teaches us how to live correctly, for since every discourse must express truth, coherence, and beauty, so every one of our actions must express proper measure, beauty, and order. This symbolizes the union of the soul with God, because another's speech tells us something, instructs us, and moves us, simply by an inner power of our soul which derives from the one true Teacher, "who has His Chair in heaven and speaks in the interior of the heart." In other words, our understanding is proportionate to our union with God, and the union of the orator with his audience is a pale figure of this.

If Bonaventure's division of knowledge had been sixty instead of six, he would have found an analogy with the Word, with action, and with the goal of life in all sixty. Was this a little game of medieval symbolism? No. It was something more profound. The unity and morality of knowledge, disclosed in its purely transcendental meaning as deriving from God and present in knowledge as well as in creatures, leads us to God as do all creatures. The consequence of this synthesis which precedes but transcends the vain efforts of modern immanentism is the indissoluble fusion (it is more than harmonization) of knowledge and faith in so far as the principle of the unity of knowledge resides in the eternal thought: Christ, the Word of the Father, the light of every man who comes into the world.

II.

The *Itinerarium* is an even clearer expression of the thought Saint Francis. To understand this work, in which Saint Bonaventure mounts the pearl of his thought, we must call to mind the fact that he was elected Minister General of the Order in 1257. Away from his desk and university discussions, his activities, observations, contacts with a great number of people helped him to acquire a vast experience which, joined to his mentality as a man of study, was to preserve his inborn lyricism from academic arrogance and stamp his writings with concreteness.

We are all born with a passion that becomes the fulcrum of our salvation or perdition and which, at a given moment (a moment that generally coincides with maturity of thought and great love) presses itself in a work that synthesizes our whole personality. Our preceding works, when compared with this one, are but a preparation, while the subsequent works either develop or repeat it. We know very little about the life of Saint Bonaventure, yet his writings, especially his mystical works, are evident proof that he had a passion for the Absolute Good, and for the possession of this Good. He was a man of desires, yearning with all his heart that all be lovers in union with God. As such, he was soon to suffer from the limitations which reality opposed to his unlimited passion. I mean all reality, the sensible reality and that which is more properly intellectual, because the soul is not satisfied with any pleasure and does not find its rest in any knowledge. It sees in the continual change among creatures that everything, both inside and outside us, is locked within unyielding boundaries. Beauty fades even as our senses reach out to possess it, and our senses droop in the very act of taking possession of it. Truth expressed in words shrinks to the measure that our mind has conquered it. The mind itself, in the very pride of conquest, beholds unconquerable horizons. Desire overreaches possession, having grasped that form of possession called knowledge, since to comprehend, as the word has it, is to take within us, to enclose within the confines of our individuality. In the face of these limitations, more or less clearly realized, everyone strikes his own distinctive attitude. Some persons clearly see the dividing line between the possible and the ideal and without a struggle stay within the range of the possible. These are somewhat narrow-minded, practical souls. There are persons whose gaze leaves, these limits for the unattainable; they remain inactive in their desires for contemplation. These are irresolute souls, dreamers.

There are the persons who presume to abolish these limits; they lose themselves in action, which for them touches on the infinite because of its thousand-formed roots and unforeseeable results. These are the souls that tend to immanentism. Finally there are the persons who either because of discouragement or of thirst to reach the ideal, renounce everything they possibly can. These are pessimists or ascetics.

Saint Bonaventure is not found in any of these categories. His attitude in the presence of limitations is the boldest imaginable. It made itself known at La Verna in the autumn of 1259. From his early youth he had already learned from Saint Francis to release the Creator from imprisonment in creatures. Then, Alexander of Hales, separating Goodness from imperfect things, had taught him how to grasp philosophically the Infinite in the finite, and continuing along these same lines, Bonaventure had discovered wisdom in knowledge, that is, the mystery of God. But that was only shifting the limits and not overstepping them. If the torment of insatiability comes from our desire to go to God, then we must reach God. But how? That is the problem, the tragic and eternal problem of humanity which engrossed Saint Bonaventure the day he climbed La Verna in that autumn of 1259. He was then thirty-eight years old. He had been a Friar Minor for sixteen years, a recognized master at the University of Paris for five years, and General of the Order for two. He had come to the mountain of Saint Francis in search of peace, far from prelates and sovereigns, Guelfs and Ghibellines, spiritual and lax friars; far from the valley of masters and students, pen and parchments, commentaries and *summae*, the complaints of friars and the invectives of adversaries. A few of the early Franciscans, veterans of Lady Poverty, were the only ones near him; close by, the rock, the forest of the stigmata, the sky, and the great Saint, Father Francis, ever present though invisible.

The man of desires plunges his passion into this living stream of Franciscanism. How can one possess God? "Through love", answered Saint Francis, and he showed him how in the vision of the stigmata. "While I abode there," wrote Saint Bonaventure, "pondering on certain spiritual ascents to God, there occurred to me, among other things, that miracle which in this very place had happened to Blessed Francis—the vision he received of the winged seraph in the form of the Crucified. As I reflected on this marvel, it immediately seemed to me that this vision suggested the uplifting of Saint Francis in contemplation and that it pointed out the way by which that state of contemplation can be reached. The six wings of the seraph can be rightly understood as signifying the six uplifting illuminations by which the soul is

disposed as by certain steps or grades, to pass over to peace through the ecstatic transports of Christian wisdom." What Saint Francis has attained to the highest degree must with the grace of God be within the reach of every man of good will, at least to an inferior degree. Experience and study, Franciscanism and scholasticism, classical mysticism and Greek intellectualism were to meet one another in the full manliness of Bonaventurian thought and present his ascent to God in a doctrinal system. According to Saint Bonaventure, these degrees of ascent toward God consist in seeking God in us, outside us, and above us, *per speculum* and *in speculo*, in proportion as creatures raise us up to God by their beauty and manifest to us God's presence in them by His power. The six degrees of contemplation correspond to the six human faculties: sense, imagination, reason, intellect, higher understanding, and the apex of the soul. But when through this ladder of meditation and purification which in its structure partakes of Plotinian ascent and which repeats in a new Franciscan spirit the mysticism of Saint Bernard and of the Victorines, the soul has leaped to the *apex mentis*, will it have annihilated these limits? Not yet.

Nevertheless—and this is well worth noting—everything outside of us concurs in this ascent. Saint Bonaventure evaluates and uses every reality for this journey: nature, the senses, the intellect—each one helps but no one alone is adequate. An impassible abyss separates the human intellect from the divine vision. We can go beyond things, but we cannot go beyond our own humanity. There lies the crucial, human point. Self-deification is the reef that causes all the shipwrecks of thought, including modern immanentism. Saint Bonaventure avoids both immanentism and shipwreck. For him the Mediator and, so to speak, the bridge between humanity and divinity, is Christ. Thus he writes: "After our mind has beheld God outside itself through and in the vestiges of Him, within itself through and in His image, and above itself through the divine similitude shining upon us, and in the divine Light itself in so far as it is possible in our state as wayfarer and by the exercise of our mind, it must still, in beholding these things, transcend and pass over, not only this visible world but even itself. In this passing over, Christ is the way and the door; Christ is the ladder and the vehicle, being, as it were, the Mercy-Seat above the Ark of God and the mystery which has been hidden from eternity.

"... this also was shown to the blessed Francis, when, in a transport of contemplation on the mountain height—where I pondered over the matter that is here written—there appeared to him the six-winged

Seraph fastened to a cross, as I and many others have heard from the companion who was then with him at that very place. Here he passed over into God in a transport of contemplation. He is set forth as an example of perfect contemplation, just as previously he had been of action, like a second Jacob-Israel. And thus, through him, more by example than by word, God would invite all truly spiritual men to this passing over and this transport of soul".

Through Christ, by Christ crucified, human limitation crumbles and desire finally attains to God. But no one pretends to know what this divine embrace is like. The mind, of course, does not comprehend it, because to comprehend it would be to limit it. Just as love which manifests itself in a desire that is greater than ourselves does not have limits, so the true object of love has no limits, and through meditation on Christ, our love "goes so deep that our intellect cannot follow it". We transcend human nature through love, not through knowledge. As Saint Bonaventure reduces all branches of knowledge to theology, so he resolves all desires to the transport of ecstasy defined by him as "an experimental knowledge of God," not from vision but from sweetness, not through the certitude of reason but through the certitude of love.

Fourteen years later, Saint Bonaventure, speaking to the students of Paris in his *Collationes in Hexameron*, his swan song, repeated the fundamental themes of this thought and offered them by way of corollary to the wonderful intuition he had developed in his first books, the *Itinerarium* and the *De Reductione*. He concludes that Christ is the center of truth and that whoever would reason correctly must begin with Him: "This is our logic, this is our reasoning which is to be used against the devil who disputes with us." This sentence summarizes the passion that had been working within him throughout his life, the passion that urged him to go from virtue to virtue in search of the wisdom of Christ, which now clearly appears to the Saint in the full knowledge of maturity as the logical connection of all things manifested in the universe. In our relation with God and the economy of the universe, the Word occupies the place of the middle term in the perfect syllogism, and this middle term, because of its evidence and congruity, compels the extremes to agree. The life of Christ is a syllogism in which the major proposition was from eternity; the assumption lay in the Cross; and the conclusion in the Resurrection. This logic, recognizing that each one of us must imitate the Master, teaches us that human life is also a syllogism: birth, death,

and re-birth, of which the middle term is the most difficult. But cannot be re-born without first having died.

Therefore, thought and action converge in the Word. If as truth He is the goal of metaphysics and ethics, as means He is the path from the one to the other; this is our logic. "To this end is all reasoning directed that we may become like God." With these words so very rich in content which identify the thought of the universal Doctor with the ideal of the Poverello who hated pseudo-philosophy, Saint Bonaventure breaks the mesh of intellectualistic logic, gives syllogism instrumental value, as he had previously demonstrated in his writings, totally abandoning it in his most original works where creative impulse leads him, and makes love the means of knowledge and the folly of love, which is the cross, the logical principle of life.

III

One day in the September of 1260, Saint Bonaventure was at Mont Ripido, near Perugia, with Brother Giles, who was venerated as one of the first to have followed Saint Francis and who therefore authoritatively represented the strictest observance. With that light irony and simplicity that genuine Franciscans know so well, Giles asked: "Can an unlettered man love God as well as the scholar?" "Certainly he can," was the humble reply of Saint Bonaventure. "An old woman can love Him much more than a master in theology." Brother Giles, overjoyed to find the spirit of Saint Francis in so young and learned a doctor, cried out to an old woman who was passing by: "Rejoice, my dear old lady, for I have just learned that an old woman can love God better than Brother Bonaventure." Saint Bonaventure's answer was not only an act of humility; it also expressed his conviction that love, not knowledge, leads to God. In his desire to lead everyone to ecstatic happiness, he longed, as did Francis, to bring to all the pardon that unlocks paradise.

A few years later, while on his way from Foligno to Assisi for the fourth General Chapter, a Brother stopped him near the gates of Spello. "Father," he said, "I must talk to you, I need comforting, beg of you not to spurn a humble inferior." A certain amount of daring was needed to stop the General in such a way and tell him of one's trouble. Saint Bonaventure immediately left his companion and sat down on the grass, patiently listened to the doleful stories of the unfortunate friar and did not leave until he had consoled him. The

incident proves the attractiveness of Saint Bonaventure, his burning charity, and his religious experience.

That he talked secretly with God could be read in his eyes. Many, like the friar of Foligno, went to him for spiritual direction and comfort. These demands of the faithful are no doubt the origin of all his mystical writings. This was certainly the case of the one he wrote on the perfection of life for the Poor Clares (according to the latest diligent research of the Fathers of Quaracchi), and addressed to Blessed Isabella of France, the sister of Louis IX and foundress of the convent of Longchamps. It also accounts for the *Office of the Passion* which he wrote for the King himself. His shorter works represent the practical development of the *Itinerarium* with something less philosophical and more spontaneous about them, which, while measuring the way step by step, give an insight into the inexhaustible spirituality of the Saint.

The mysticism of Saint Bonaventure is essentially that of Saint Francis expressed in the language of a scholar. For Bonaventure also, the spiritual life begins with the two questions of the stigmatic—the questions which for Saint Augustine synthesized all knowledge: Who are you? Who am I?

Who are you? Being, the scholastics answered, one, true, and good. The doctors of Paris, devoted followers of Aristotle, unhesitatingly called Him the prime immovable Mover. But these definitions do not touch upon experience. No one has ever seen Being; one must philosophize in his quest for the first immovable Mover. Alexander of Hales, the master, had already taught Bonaventure that, if God is not seen (the sight of truth dazzles the mind just as the sun does our eyes), then He is experienced, because there is the knowledge of him who sees in the light and the knowledge of him who tastes in the darkness. Now the knowledge of faith is precisely that in which vision is absent and taste is present.

Saint Bonaventure seems to dilate the pupils of the soul in that darkness of light in order to reach what is beyond sense perception, beyond imagination, beyond intelligence, beyond every created thing. He kneels before revelation and fully accepts the philosophical definition. Yet when he looks into himself, he is aware that he touches God in the abyss of his desire, that is, in the burning desire toward a good that nothing can give and yet which can exist, for this good torments him, and he discovers that it is by desire alone that God makes Himself sensible to us. The man who desires to attain perfection says: "It is enough; this Being you love cannot be perceived by the senses, but

He is *entirely desirable*. He cannot be imagined, but He is *entirely desirable*. And you must love Him necessarily whether you want or not, for the love of creatures does not progress (and consequently begets boredom); and if it does progress, it does not satisfy; and if it does satisfy, it is not enough."

This definition of God as the only desirable good, so valuable to an understanding of the soul of Saint Bonaventure, corresponds to what, with a still more consciously critical sense, he was to say in the *Itinerarium*: God is the center and circumference of all things, and at the same time He is completely outside of all things.

From this there logically follows the answer to the other question: Who am I? Pascal defined man as a thinking reed. Saint Bonaventure would have added the adjective "desiring." He examines his conscience in order to study its ills, and he invites all who are searching for God to look into themselves first, to reach the bottom of their own self, made of torment, desire, and will which is ignorant of its goal. The starting point is such that anyone can find himself. Saint Bonaventure had begun by stating a dogma or presenting some apologetic argument, very few would have been convinced. But instead he strove to move the heart where the aspiration of the Infinite and the perversion of the finite struggle to devour each other, so that there is no man, from the learned to the uneducated, from the prince to the servant, who does not understand him, nor who remains unconvinced by him.

Yet, self-knowledge is not enough for undertaking the ascent to heaven, any more than the sprouting of the seed piercing through the soil is enough if the sun does not intervene to do its part. Grace is necessary. Furthermore, the desire to mount is already a gift of grace. Without grace we can have no desire, and yet without desire we cannot grow in grace. Grace begins by inspiring lively desires, then it "gives itself all the more as it finds ardor for good." Whoever has this burning desire, if he trusts in Saint Bonaventure, will find the Saint guiding him from hill to hill with the assurance of a master and the prudence of a psychologist.

(To be continued)

Fr. Paul J. Olin, O.F.M., Transl.

FRUSTRATION

I stand upon a grassy knoll
—just gazing.

Encircling me is a gentle breeze,
So playfully as if to tease:
This something I can't see is quite amazing,
quite amazing.

I snatch at it and awed to find
—a flower.

I feel it curl around my arms
With all its many soothing charms—
Itself I cannot claim despite
my power.

I know it's here because I hear
it singing:
Those high-pitched tones in melody borne
So subtly they weave, so swiftly they're lorn. . .
Yet constantly the varying moods
it's flinging.

This tempting thing, I call a breeze,
has power:
I watch it push against the leaves
To try the tears of willow trees,
And press against the petals of
a flower.

If only I could hold it for
an hour—
Just time enough to find a clue
That I its mystery undo—
But such a task is well beyond
my power.

Fr. Anacleto Yonick, O.F.M.

FRANCISCANS DISCUSS APPLIED THEOLOGY FOR LAITY

Over fifty Franciscan friars were present for the opening session of the Franciscan Educational Conference. The convention was held at Our Lady of Angels Retreat House in Saginaw, Michigan, as part of the centennial celebration commemorating the coming of the Capuchins to America in October, 1857.

The Very Rev. Gerald Walker, O.F.M. Cap., Provincial of St. Joseph's Province, and the Very Rev. Cyprian Abler, O.F.M. Cap., local Superior, welcomed the delegates, who had come from Vatican City, Canada, and all sections of the United States.

In his opening address, entitled "The Concept of Franciscan Theology", the Rev. Maurice Grawjewski, O.F.M., of West Chicago, Illinois, president of the F.E.C., discussed the need to stress the Franciscan approach to Sacred Theology.

He also pointed out the various contributions of the Franciscans to the history and development of theology.

Considerable discussion from the floor followed Father Maurice's presidential address. Father Allan Wolter, O.F.M., of St. Bonaventure's University Franciscan Institute, was the discussion leader.

All of the other papers read and discussed at the meeting developed various aspects of the Franciscan Theological Synthesis, a project sponsored by the conference for the purpose of furthering publication of text-books and studies emphasizing the Franciscan approach to theology.

Opening the session on Aug. 21, Father Cyril Shircel, O.F.M., of St. Mary's Seminary, Lamont, Ill., delivered a paper on "The One and Triune God." Father Cyril declared: "Revelation and Theology are destined to make known to us the loveliness of God, who is our end and goal. Discussion of Father Cyril's paper was led by Father Geoffrey Bridges,

O.F.M., of San Luis Rey, California.

Father Dominic Unger, O.F.M. Cap., of the Capuchin College, Washington, D.C., read a paper on "The Final Cause of the Incarnation," in which he set forth the common view of the Franciscan school since Duns Scotus that in the present economy of salvation God willed Christ first among all the beings of the universe, and that consequently the existence of Christ is not conditioned by any creature or by man's need of redemption from sin.

Father Noel Mcholy, O.F.M., of Santa Barbara, California, and Father Joseph Montalverne, O.F.M., of St. Bonaventure, N. Y., both commented on this paper.

Father Kilian Lynch, O.F.M., of the Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure, N. Y., read a paper on the place of Mary, the Virgin Mother of Christ, in the theological thought of the Franciscan school.

Discussion on Father Kilian's paper was led by Father Owen Bennett, O.F.M. Conv., of St. Anthony-on-Hudson Seminary at Rensselaer, N. Y.

Father Berard Marthaler, O.F.M. Conv. of Assumption Seminary, Chaska, Minn., read the next paper on "St. Bonaventure's Concept of Original Justice", in which he pointed out how St. Bonaventure contributed to the deeper understanding of the condition of our first parents and the nature of original sin as "the culpable absence of original justice." Father Roger Matzerath, S.A., of Atonement Seminary, Washington, D.C. led the discussion on this paper.

The final paper of the Wednesday session was given by Father Aidan Mullaney, T.O.R., of Philadelphia, Pa. Father Aidan set forth the theological tradition in the Franciscan Order concerning the infused supernatural virtues.

Four papers were given at the closing session of the Conference on Thursday.

Father Ernest Latko, O.F.M., of Christ the King Seminary, West Chicago, Ill., dealt with "The Franciscan Contribution to the Theology of the Sacraments." "The contributions of the many Franciscan writers in this field," Fr. Ernest declared, "have been monumental."

Father Matthew Herron, T.O.R., of Steubenville, Ohio, led the discussion of Father Ernest's paper.

Father Juniper Cummings, O.F.M. Conv. of Assumption Seminary, Chaska, Minn., developed the Franciscan approach to the theology of grace under the title, "The Theology of Love—a Study in Grace." Among other points Father Juniper emphasized the wealth of Franciscana, or Franciscan bibliography, on the subject of divine grace and many other theological subjects, available in this country, especially at St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, N. Y. "This century-old institution," Father Juniper said, "retains a spirit of Franciscan liberty and a fraternal atmosphere that is conducive to scholarly work." Discussion of Father Juniper's paper was led by Father Eugene Kubina, T.O.R., of Richfield, Minn.

Father Gregory Grabka, of St. Hyacinth's Seminary, Granby, Mass., read the next paper on "The Treatment of the Mystical Body." Father Gregory pointed out that the teaching of the great Franciscan masters on Christ the end of all creation is at the same time the doctrine of the primacy of the Whole Christ, the head and members in the Church. Father Edward Hanahoe, S.A., of Washington, D.C., led the discussion on Father Gregory's paper.

The final paper of the Conference was delivered by Father Germain Williams, O.F.M. Conv., of St. Anthony-on-Hudson, Rensselaer, N. Y., on the subject "The Last Things: The Return of Man to God."

Discussion of Father Germain's paper was led by Father Aidan Carr, also of St. Anthony's-on-Hudson, Rensselaer,

N. Y.

At the meeting of the Commission for the Theological Synthesis, sponsored by the Conference, two new members were elected: Father Geoffrey Bridges of San Luis Rey, Calif., and Father Walter Bedard of Canada. Three meetings were planned during the course of the coming year. It was announced that all outlines for the Franciscan Theological Synthesis are to be completed by Easter, 1958, when the Commission will meet at Loretto, Penn.

The Library Section reported the progress made on the various projects it has undertaken. The list of Franciscan Subject Headings has been completed and will soon be made available. The section is sponsoring an indexing of the Reports of the Franciscan Educational Conference and of Franciscan Studies. It also proposed to inaugurate a review service for Franciscan librarians on works dealing with Franciscan subjects. The following officers were elected for the term 1957-1960: Rev. Vincent Dieckmann, O.F.M., of Oldenburg, Ind., chairman; Rev. Ronald Wiest, O.F.M. Cap., Marathan, Wis., vice-chairman; Rev. Donald Bilinski, O.F.M., Pulaski, Wis., secretary-treasurer.

RESOLUTIONS

The Franciscan Educational Conference joyfully takes this occasion to extend hearty congratulations to the Province of St. Joseph of the Friars Minor Capuchin on its Centenary and completion of one hundred years of apostolic and seraphic achievement.

Whereas a great wealth of theological doctrine is to be found in the extensive commentaries produced during the golden age of the Franciscan School, be it resolved that the friars be encouraged and exhorted to revise and reprint these works in order to better enhance the integration of past and present Franciscan scholarship.

Be it resolved that the Franciscan Educational Conference continue to sponsor, promote and encourage research and study leading toward an early publication of a handbook of dogmatic theology according to the Franciscan Masters.

Whereas in our day Franciscan friars and sisterhoods as well as the laity realize the need of theology, be it resolved that the Franciscan Education Conference sponsor and promote an adaptation of the above-mentioned dogmatic theology to meet this demand.

Whereas, beginning October 4th, 1957,

the friars at St. Bonaventure University are to commemorate a century of educational endeavor, be it resolved that the Franciscan Educational Conference offer felicitations and congratulations to this great Franciscan Institution and its personnel on this happy occasion.

The present slate of officers were re-elected by acclamation.

The Sixth National Meeting of Franciscan Sisterhoods will be held at Cardinal Stritch College, 3221 South Lake Dr., Milwaukee 7, Wisc., on Nov. 29-30, during the Thanksgiving holidays.



ANOTHER SAVED

A dried-up mass of dead-black dirt
That sighed when drenched by falling rain . . .
One tiny green peeped through the mud
And raised itself to view the storm.
A sunbeam helped the little thing
To stand and stretch its weary limbs—
A smiling violet raised her head—
The sun bent low to kiss its child.

A sinner caught within the bog
Who cried when blest by wholesome grace.
One contrite phrase, "I LOVE!" said he
And raised his head to see the light.
A heart then took the weary man
To help him pray and laugh again.
A smiling face had turned to God—
And God bent low to kiss His child.

Fr. Anacleto Yonick, O.F.M.

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