

# ***READINGS***



## **“It Pleases Me That You Should Teach Sacred Theology”**

### **Outline of Keynote Address**

Michael Blastic, O.F.M. Conv.

#### I. Franciscan Theology and the Franciscan Evangelical Life

Joseph Chinnici: The evangelical religious life means witness—witness as a Roman Catholic to the good Gospel of Jesus Christ. It means taking seriously and publicly naming the fact that God, who encompasses all things, is the personal heart of the evangelical life and the goal of our desires. It means talking about this search for God, a community of three in one, whose Word became flesh in the womb of a woman, and giving it a social language which communicates to people WHO OUR GOD IS AND WHO WE ARE.<sup>1</sup>

#### II. The Origins and Nature of Franciscan Evangelical Theology—Anthony of Padua and Thomas of Celano

##### A. The Franciscan World View

1. The Christian's relation to the world  
Francis's Admonition XVI: “Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God” (Mt. 5:8). The truly pure of heart are those who look down upon the things of earth and seek the things of heaven, and who never cease to adore and behold the Lord God living and true with a pure heart and soul.
2. The meaning of the human Jesus
3. The nature of the human person

##### B. The Significance of Theology for the Franciscan *forma vitae*

1. Assisi Compilation: We who were with St. Francis and have written these things about him bear witness that many times we have heard him say: ‘If I speak with the emperor I will implore him for the love of God and the intervention of my prayer to make a constitution and decree that no man should trap sister larks or do them any harm whatever; likewise that all *podestas* of cities and lords of towns and villages should be bound each year on Christmas day to compel men to scatter corn and other grain on the roads outside cities and towns for the birds to have something to eat, especially sister larks, and other birds, on the day of such a festival. Out of reverence for the Son of God whom the blessed Virgin his mother laid that night in a manger between ox and ass, every man ought also that night to give a good meal to our bothers the oxen and asses. Similarly on

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Chinnici, “The Prophetic Heart: The Evangelical Form of Religious Life in the United States,” *The Cord* (November 1994): 297-298.

Christmas day all the poor ought to be sated by the rich.' For St. Francis had a greater regard for Christmas than for any other festival of the Lord, since although the Lord may work our salvation in his other festivals, yet, because He was born for us, as St. Francis used to say, it was His concern to save us. Therefore he wished that on that day every Christian should exult in the Lord for Love of Him who gave himself for us. Every man should with gladness be bountiful not only to the poor but also to animals and birds (*Assisi Compilation* 110; Brooke, 283).

2. Bonaventure: The first method fixes the gaze primarily and principally on Being itself, saying that God's primary name is *He who is*. The second method fixes the gaze on the Good itself, saying that this is God's primary name. The first looks chiefly to the Old Testament, which proclaims most of all the unity of the divine essence. Hence Moses was told: *I am who am* (Exodus 3: 14). The second method looks to the New Testament which determines the plurality of Persons by baptizing *in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit* (Mt 28: 19). Therefore, Christ our Teacher, wishing to raise to evangelical perfection the youth who had observed the Law, attributed to God principally and exclusively the name of goodness. For he says: *No one is good but God alone* (Mk 10:18; Lk 18:19). Damascene, therefore, following Moses, says that *He who is* is God's primary name; Dionysius, following Christ, says that the Good is God's primary name (*Itinerarium* V:2; Cousins 94-95).
3. Bonaventure: Wonder that in him there is joined the First Principle with the last, God with man, who was formed on the sixth day; the eternal is joined with temporal man, born of the Virgin in the fullness of time, the most simple with the most composite, the most actual with the one who suffered supremely and died, the most powerful and immense with the lowly, the supreme and all-inclusive one with a composite individual distinct from others, that is, the man Jesus Christ (*Itinerarium* VI:5; Cousins 107).

### III. The Franciscan Theological Tradition in History

#### A. Origins

1. University of Paris
2. University of Oxford
  - a) The Bonaventurian School
  - b) The Scotistic School
  - c) The Ockhamist School

#### B. Dissolution

#### C. The Capuchin Reform

## IV. The Present Historical Moment as Opportunity

## A. The tasks and requirements of Postmodern Theology

David Tracy: "Modern Western culture believed that we not only could but should separate thought from feeling, content from form, theory from practice. Despite the many great accomplishments of modernity...modernity has also proved impoverishing in its inability to face evil and suffering squarely: not only personal sufferings but especially the suffering modernity's own historical success often caused—the suffering of whole peoples, cultures, and groups both outside and within modern Western culture."<sup>2</sup>

"We need to continue to reflect further on the classical resources which our tradition has bequeathed us in order that we may truly understand love and God together: the reflections on *agape* transforming *eros* to become the great form of Catholic *caritas*; the use of the mutually informing insights of intelligence and love to understand God rightly in Augustine and Aquinas; the transformation of ancient neo-Platonic emanation theory into a Christian emanationist "*bonum diffusivum sui*" form as the understanding of all reality in Bonaventure and so much of the Franciscan love intoxicated tradition."<sup>3</sup>

## B. Today's Questions

1. What does it mean to be human?
2. What is the value and role of social institutions?
3. How do we deal with the other?

## V. Conclusion

Bonaventure: First, therefore, I invite the reader to the groans of prayer through Christ crucified, through whose blood we are cleansed from the filth of vice—so that he not believe that reading is sufficient without unction, speculation without devotion, investigation without wonder, observation without joy, work without piety, knowledge without love, understanding without humility, endeavor without divine grace, reflection as a mirror without divinely inspired wisdom (*Itinerarium*, Prologue 4; Cousins 55-56).

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<sup>2</sup> David Tracy, "Evil, Suffering, Hope: The Search for New Forms of Contemporary Theodicy," *Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings* 50 (1995): 19.

<sup>3</sup>David Tracy, 33.



## Texts on Creation from the *Breviloquium* of St. Bonaventure

Zachary Hayes, O.F.M.

### Prologue, Section II.

4. Thus the whole world is described by Scripture as proceeding in a most orderly way from beginning to end, in the manner of a most beautiful and well-designed song. In the flow of time, one can discover the variety, multiplicity, and symmetry, order, rectitude, and beauty of the many judgments that proceed from the divine wisdom through which God governs the world. As no one can see the beauty of a song without a view that takes in the whole, so no one sees the beauty of the order and governance of the universe without beholding the whole of it. Because no one lives long enough to see the whole of it with the eyes of the flesh, and because no one alone can foresee the future, the Holy Spirit has provided us with the book of the Holy Scriptures, whose length corresponds to the extent of God's governing action in the universe.

### Part II, Chapter 1: On the Creation of the Universe

1. Now that we have briefly considered the trinity of God, we need to say something about the creation of the world. In brief, the following points should be held about this. The whole of this worldly machine was brought into existence in time and out of nothing, by one first Principle, single and supreme, whose power, since it is immense, has *disposed all things by a certain measure, number, and weight* (Wis. 11:20)

2. In general, then, these points concerning the production of creatures are to be understood in such a way that from them truth may be discovered and error may be avoided. By saying *in time*, we exclude the error of those who posit an eternal world. By saying *out of nothing*, we exclude the error of those who hold the eternity of a material principle. By saying *one principle*, we exclude the error of the Manicheans who hold a plurality of principles. By saying *single and supreme*, we exclude the error of those who hold that God produced the lower creatures through the ministry of the intelligences. And by adding *by a certain measure, number, and weight* we indicate that the creature is an effect of the trinity which creates by virtue of a triple causality: efficient causality through which creatures are given unity, moderation, and measure; exemplary causality through which they are given truth, form, and number; final causality through which they are given goodness, order, and weight. Indeed, these qualities are found as traces of the Creator in all creatures, whether corporeal or spiritual, or those composed of both.

3. This should be understood in the following way. For the sake of perfect order and repose in things, all must be led back to the one Principle, which must be first of necessity so that it might grant repose to the other beings, and which must be most perfect in order to grant completion to all other beings. Now, a first Principle in which there is repose can be nothing else but one: hence, if this Principle creates a world; it must bring it forth out of nothingness, since it cannot possibly make it of its own substance. Moreover, creation out

of nothing implies, on the part of the creature, a state of being after non-being, and, on the part of the Principle, an immensity of productive power, which is found in God alone: necessarily, then, the universe must be created in time by this same boundless power acting through itself and without any intermediary.

4. The utterly perfect Principle from whom flows the perfection of all things must act from itself, in accordance with itself, and because of itself; for in its action it needs nothing other than itself. Hence this Principle must be the threefold cause of all creatures: efficient, exemplary, and final. As a result, every creature must bear the same threefold reference to the first Cause: for every creature exists by virtue of the efficient cause, is patterned after the exemplary cause, and is ordered toward the final cause. For this reason, every creature is one, true, and good; has a measure of being, is well-formed and well-ordered; and is measured, discreet, and weighted—for weight is understood to be an ordered inclination. All this applies to every creature in general, whether corporeal, spiritual, or composite, as is the case with human nature.

### Chapter 3: On the Essence of Physical Nature

1. Concerning the existence of corporeal nature, the following should be held. The entire structure of the corporeal world consists of the celestial and the elemental natures. The celestial nature includes the three principal heavens; the empyrean, the crystalline heaven, and the firmament. Within the firmament, which is the heaven of the stars, are the seven spheres of the seven planets: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, and the Moon. Elemental nature is divided into four spheres: fire, air, water, and earth.

Thus, ranging from the highest rim of heaven down to the center of the earth, there are ten heavenly and four elemental spheres, which make up the entire structure of the sensible world in a distinct, perfect, and orderly fashion.

2. This should be understood as follows. If physical nature was to be complete in itself and was also to reflect the manifold wisdom of the first Principle, there had to be a multiplicity of forms, such as appears in minerals, plants, and animals. Therefore, some simple essences had to be established first, so that from the various combinations of these there would come this multiplicity of forms. Such is a nature that is subject to contraries; and this is the elemental nature. And it was necessary that there be also a nature that would reconcile these contrary elements in compounds. Such is the nature of light and of the supercelestial bodies.

3. Since no mixture would come into existence without the activity and passivity of contraries, the opposition among the elements had to be of two types: one involving the active qualities, that is hot and cold, and one involving the passive qualities, that is, wet and dry. Now since any given element both acts and is acted on, it has two qualities, one active and the other passive. But one of these is always the principal and proper quality. That is why there are only four elements, corresponding to the four qualities spoken about above in their fourfold combinations.

4. Now, celestial nature can be motionless and uniform. Such is the empyrean, for it is pure light. Or it can be mobile and multiform, and such is the firmament. Or it can be mobile



and uniform, and such is the crystalline heaven, between the empyrean and the heaven of the stars. The fourth combination—the motionless and multiiform—cannot exist because multiplicity of form leads to varied movements, and not to uniform repose.

5. Thus, there are three heavens. The first, the empyrean, is luminous throughout; the second, the crystalline heaven, is translucent throughout; the third, the firmament, is a combination of the first two. Since the three heavens are incorruptible and the four elements are variable, God designed the seven spheres of the planets in such a way that an appropriate connection, harmony, and correspondence might exist. The planets, through their varied movements and incorruptible forms, act as a bond that joins the inferior elemental spheres with the superior heavenly spheres. Thus, they complete and embellish the universe. The universe itself is said to be organized in numerical proportions joining the ten heavenly and the four elemental spheres. This makes the universe so beautiful in its proportions, and so perfect and orderly, that in its own way it presents an image of its Principle.

## Chapter 5: On How These Things are Described in Holy Scripture

1. It can be concluded from what has been said that order exists not only in the way God created things in time and arranged them in space, but also in the way God governs them with regard to influence. It should be clear, too, that there is order in the way the Scriptures tell us all that we need to know even though they do not explicitly describe the different spheres of the heavens and of the elements, and they say little or nothing about the motions and effects of the heavenly bodies, or the combinations of the elements and their compounds. And what is more, they say nothing explicitly about the creation of the higher spirits in the account of how the present universe was made.

2. This can be explained in the following way. The first Principle makes itself knowable to us through the Scriptures and through creation. In the book of creatures, this Principle manifests itself as the effective Principle, and in the book of the Scriptures, as the redemptive Principle. Now, the redemptive Principle cannot be known unless the effective Principle is also known. So Scripture, though mainly concerned with the work of redemption, must also deal with the work of creation, as that leads to the knowledge of the first Principle that is both the efficient and the redemptive Principle. Therefore this knowledge is both sublime and salutary; sublime because it is concerned with the effective Principle, the Creator; and salutary, because it is concerned with the redemptive Principle, Christ, the Savior and Mediator.

## Chapter 12: On the Completion and Ordering of the Whole World after Its Creation

1. From this we may gather that the universe is, as it were, a book reflecting, representing, and describing its Maker, the trinity, at three different levels of expression: as a vestige, as an image, and as a likeness. The quality of vestige is found in every creature; the quality of image is found in the intellectual creature or rational spirits; the quality of likeness is found only in those who are God-conformed. Through these successive levels, comparable to the

rungs of a ladder, the human mind is designed to ascend gradually to the supreme Principle who is God.

2. This should be understood in the following way. Since all creatures are related to and are dependent on their Creator, they may be referred to the Creator in three ways: namely, as to their creative Principle, as to the object toward which they move, or as to a Gift that dwells within them. All creatures are referred to the creator in the first way, all rational beings in the second way, and all righteous souls accepted by God in the third way. All creatures, however minimally they may partake of being, have God for their Principle; all rational beings, however little they may partake of light, are born to attain God through knowledge and love, and all righteous and holy souls possess the Holy Spirit as an infused gift.

3. Now, a creature cannot have God for its Principle unless it is conformed to that Principle in oneness, truth, and goodness. Nor can it have God for its End unless it grasps God through memory, intelligence, and will. Finally, it cannot have God as an infused Gift unless it conforms to God through the threefold gift of faith, hope, and love. The first conformity is distant, the second is close, and the third is most intimate. That is why the first is called a "vestige" of the trinity, the second an "image," and the third a "likeness."

4. The rational spirit is placed midway between those beings which conform in the first way and those which conform in the last; so that the first manner of conforming is below the rational spirit, the second within it, and the third above it. Thus, in the state of innocence, when the image had not yet been distorted but was conformed to God through grace, the book of creation sufficed to enable human beings to perceive the light of divine Wisdom. The first human being was so wise that, seeing all things in themselves, he also saw them in their proper genus as well as in God's creating Art. For this accords with the triple manner in which creatures exist: in matter, that is in their own nature; in the created intellect; and in the eternal Art. In this, they conform to the three scriptural expressions: *Let it be; God made it; and it was made* (Gn. 1:3ff).

5. For this triple vision, humanity was endowed with a triple eye, as explained by Hugh of St. Victor: the eye of flesh, of reason, and of contemplation; the eye of flesh, to see the world and those things contained within it; the eye of reason, to see the soul and that which it contains; the eye of contemplation, to see God and those things that are within God. With the eye of the flesh, humanity was to see the things outside itself; with the eye of reason the things within itself; and with the eye of contemplation, the things above itself. Now, the eye of contemplation cannot see with perfect clarity, except through glory, which humanity has lost through sin, but recovers through grace, faith, and the study of Scripture. By these means, the human mind is cleansed, enlightened, and perfected for the contemplation of heavenly things, unto which fallen humanity cannot reach without first admitting its insufficiency and blindness. And this it cannot do unless it recalls and attends to the fallen state of human nature.

Related texts:

### Bonaventure on the multiplicity of created beings

II *Sent.* 1, p. 2, a.1, q.1 (II, p. 40): The question is asked: Why such a multiplicity of beings in the cosmos? Bonaventure's answer focuses on the symbolic nature of the cosmos as a reflection of the fecundity and richness of the divine mystery. It reads as follows.

There is a multiplicity of beings coming from a single principle because, in fact, there is a first principle, and that first principle is one. Because the principle is simply first, it is fruitful and powerful with a fecundity that is immense and infinite. If there is a unity that is first in the category of number, then it is the principle from which an infinite series of numbers can arise; and it is the point from which an infinite number of lines can emerge. That which is simply first is, for that reason, totally immense. Because of its immensity, it is infinite. And because of the manifestation of its immensity, it shows many of its treasures, but not all of them, since an effect cannot be equal to the power of its first cause. Because it is uniquely one, it is most simple, most spiritual, and most perfect. Because it is most simple, it is supremely powerful; because it is most spiritual, it is supremely wise; because it is most perfect, it is the supreme good. Because of its supreme power, it can produce many things. Because of its supreme wisdom, it knows many things. And because of its supreme goodness, it wishes to communicate itself to many things and to produce many things. Therefore, a multiplicity of things emerges from one principle precisely because that principle is first and single.

(One might want to relate this to Stephen Jay Gould's view in his most recent book: *Full House: The Spread of Excellence from Plato to Darwin*.)

### On the human problems in reading the book of cosmic revelation

*Itinerarium*, I. Here Bonaventure has described the stages of the journey of the human spirit into God by first reflecting on the cosmic order much as we have seen it laid out in the text of the *Breviloquium*. At the end of the first chapter, in which he has described the order, goodness, beauty, etc. of God's creation, he ends with the following exhortation:

15. Therefore, whoever is not enlightened by such great splendor in created things is blind; whoever remains unheedful of such great outcries is deaf; whoever does not praise God in all these effects is dumb; whoever does not turn to the First Principle after so many signs is a fool. Open your eyes, therefore; alert the ears of your spirit, unlock your lips, and apply your heart that you may see, hear, praise, love and adore, magnify and honor your God in every creature, lest perchance the entire universe rise against you. For because of this, the *whole world shall fight against the unwise*. But on the contrary, it will be a matter of glory for the wise, who can say with the prophet: *For thou hast given me, O Lord, a delight in thy doings, and in the work of thy hands I shall rejoice. How great are thy works, O Lord! Thou hast made all things in wisdom, the earth is filled with thy riches.*



## Christ, Word of God and Exemplar of Humanity The Roots of Franciscan Christocentrism and Its Implications for Today

Zachary Hayes O.F.M.

Outlined by Margaret Pirkle, O.S.F.

- I. Introduction and elements of St. Francis's spirituality (Hayes points out that a logic connects the tradition of Franciscan *spirituality* with the tradition of Franciscan *Christology*.)
  - A. Tendency of Francis to focus his spirituality on the **humanity** of Christ (Adm. 1; before cross of San Damiano; the crib at Greccio; devotion to mystery of the Eucharist; LaVerna.) Christ not as the Pantokrator, but in his human condition as brother.
  - B. Francis's sense of God as a loving Father (God as **good**; perhaps first realized as loving Father in the episode before the bishop of Assisi.)
  - C. Francis's sense of **creation** as a mirror and image of God (Sense linked to God as good Giver of all; Francis's realization of **familial** relation to all creatures intensifies during his life.) NB. *Salutation of the Virtues* and *The Canticle*.
- II. Development of this vision in the Doctors of the Order, especially in **Bonaventure** and **Scotus**. (Hayes names the *human* Christ and the *cosmic* Christ, and turns his attention especially to the latter.)
  - A. Sacred Scripture and traditional roots for cosmic Christology (Jn. 1:1-4; 1Jn. 1:1-3; Col. 1:15-2g Edh. 1:3-14; 1Cor. 8:6; Heb. 1:2ff). Eventually, early Christians who saw Jesus' life to be of universal significance for humanity projected that life against the horizon of the **universe**. "*What happens in Christ and through Christ comes to be seen as the representative piece of humanity and of cosmic reality that has 'come home' to God.*" Early Eastern Church Fathers developed orientation to a **cosmic** Christ, but it was lost to Western Christology which has come to focus more on moral dimensions than on the cosmic.
  - B. Principal Themes
    1. Christ as point of departure (Christ is at the very center of all reality; the Word is the invisible principle of unity and meaning in Bonaventure's theology; the *visible* center of the cosmos and its history is Christ, the incarnate Word.)
    2. God as loving Father. (Bonaventure and Scotus tended to focus on the *nature of love* to gain insight into John's "*God is LOVE*." 1Jn. 4:8, 16; Scotus's

understanding of God's love leads to his expression of the *absolute primacy of Christ*.)

3. World as gift of a loving Creator. (Bonaventure and Scotus see in overflow of Trinitarian love, the *basis* for explanation of the *goodness and diversity* of creatures. Our own creaturehood calls forth a response of **gratitude** for our existence; what has happened between God and the world in Christ points to the future transformation of the cosmos.)
4. Humans as *brothers and sisters* in a cosmic family (Bonaventure's recognition of what we are as creatures leads to realization of our *familial* relation to all creatures; "*Giving ourselves to Christ is not losing the world. It is intimately finding the world in its truest reality in its deepest relation to God. . . . In some way, Christ embodies the whole of creation in his individual human nature*;" Bonaventure teaches that material universe will be transformed, not annihilated.)

### III. Implications of Franciscan Christology

- A. **What are we as human beings?** We are destined to embody something of the divine Word in our own individual lives, not as carbon copies of Jesus or Francis, but to fill the Christ-form with the elements of our personal life—in a way unique to us.
- B. **What is the nature of our world?** "*If we think of Christ's humanity as the 'body' of the eternal Word, can we extend that analogically to the cosmos and see the cosmos as the 'body' of the eternal Word?*"
- C. **What is the Kingdom of God in context of the absolute primacy of Christ?** Creation and human efforts to create a better world are of eternal significance; Franciscans should be able to love the world with no diminishment of their love of God.
- D. **Do we have to choose between a creational theology and a redemption theology?** Bonaventure integrated them in a process of "redemptive completion," i.e. "*Bringing Creation to its God-intended end which is anticipated in the destiny of Christ.*"
- E. **Might Franciscan Christology become a framework for conversing with other Religious traditions?** The Franciscan vision has universalist implications. "*One can enter the conversation with a strong sense of Christian identity; yet, without a sense of absolute possession of Absolute Truth.*" Each tradition may reveal something distinctive and important.

IV. CONCLUSION: Suggestion that *the "insights that lie at the base of medieval Franciscan spirituality and theology need to be retrieved and brought into conversation with the questions and needs of contemporary people."* We should "*see ourselves as responsible stewards of a treasure that has much to offer for the healing of humanity and of the world at large.*"

## Redemption and the Incarnation

John Duns Scotus

I say that the incarnation of Christ was not foreseen as occasioned by sin, but was immediately foreseen from all eternity by God as a good more proximate to the end. Thus Christ in his human nature is foreseen as closer to the end [God had in mind in creating] than the others—speaking of those predestined, for each and every one of these was first ordered to grace and glory before foreseeing his fall, as is clear from what we said earlier. Hence this order obtained in the case of God's prevision. First God saw himself as the highest good. Secondly, he saw all creatures. Thirdly, he predestined some to glory and grace, with no positive act as regards those not predestined. Fourthly, he saw all those who would fall through Adam. In the fifth instant, he foresaw and preordained a remedy for that fall, namely how they would be redeemed by the passion of his Son, so that Christ—as to his flesh (as with all the elect) was first foreseen and predestined to grace and glory before the passion of Christ was envisioned as medicine against the fall, just as a physician first willed the health of a man before he chose the medicine for curing him. Therefore just as the elect were first predestined before the passion was foreseen as a remedy against their fall, so the entire Trinity first preordained the predestined and elect to final grace and glory efficaciously before foreseeing Christ's passion as a medicine for those elect who would fall in Adam. And thus the Word foresaw the passion of Christ as something to be offered for the predestined and elect, and so Christ efficaciously offered it in fact, and thus the entire Trinity accepted his passion efficaciously, and because it was offered efficaciously for none without being accepted from all eternity, therefore Christ has merited for them the first grace leading eventually to glory. So much for the efficaciousness of his merits.

From John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* 3 (sup.) dist. 19 (Assisi com. 137, fol. 161vb) quoted and translated by Allan B. Wolter, "John Duns Scotus on the Primacy and Personality of Christ," in *Franciscan Christology* ed. Damian McElrath (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1980), 153.





# Foundations for a Theology of Presence: A Consideration of the Scotist Understanding of the Primary Purpose of the Incarnation and Its Relevance for Ministry in the Underworld of the World Church

Margaret Eletta Guider, O.S.F.

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## Introduction

In the following presentation, I will discuss the theological significance of the Scotist understanding of the primary purpose of the Incarnation.<sup>1</sup> I will begin with a pastoral interpretation of the Scotist opinion and proceed to explore the implications of this interpretation for Christian missionary activities in the twenty-first century. In brief, I will argue that contemporary approaches to mission and ministry often are informed by a theological understanding of the Incarnation that is conceived in terms of God's response to humanity's need for redemption after the Fall. I will discuss various ways in which this construct constrains the theological imagination of the Church and its ministers. I will suggest that within this framework, the representational images of Jesus Christ that serve to inspire missionaries in their *imitatio Christi* (imitation of Christ) are necessarily those of sacrificial victim and/or savior. In a similar fashion, I will suggest also that the *missio ecclesiae* (mission of the Church) is grounded in a problem-solving stance toward the needs of the world and its peoples. Based on this observation, I will call into question the ability of the Church to realize the mission it has defined for itself in accord with its preferred opinion on the Incarnation. I will demonstrate how the insights of Scotus make it possible for us to reconceive our understanding of what it means to imitate Christ and in so doing reconceive our understanding of mission as well. I will conclude by offering a few reflections on the practical implications of this proposal for Franciscans involved in ministries of presence in the underworld of the world church.

## The Scotist Argument: An Interpretation

In accord with the thought of Scotus, the primary purpose of the Incarnation finds its expression in the divine will as it is moved by love for the highest good. In freedom, the Divine Architect makes the human nature of Christ the motif for the rest of Creation.<sup>2</sup> Christ is affirmed as the origin and end, the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last. In an act of gratuitous love, Christ becomes the center of the created universe and affirms that each human person, in virtue of his/her creation in the image and likeness of the Divine, is created for grace and glory and found worthy of God's loving presence. In short, God's primary purpose for becoming human is not predicated on our need for salvation, but on the

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<sup>1</sup>See: *Ordinatio III* (suppl.) d. 19(Assisi com. 137, fol. 161 vb). For commentary and English translation, see Allan B. Wolter, OFM, "John Duns Scotus on the Primacy and Personality of Christ," in *Franciscan Christology*, ed. Damian McElrath (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1980), 139-145; 152-155.

<sup>2</sup>Wolter, "John Duns Scotus on the Primacy and Personality of Christ," 141.

divine desire to love, to be our beginning and our end, to be "God with us" in order that we might dwell in the presence of the Divine.

The Scotist proposal does not advance an alternative understanding of the primary purpose of the Incarnation in order to diminish or deny the significance of the redemption. Rather, the argument, in its affirmation of the primacy of Christ, provides a more adequate understanding of Gods' action in the world. The *missio Dei* (mission of God) flows out of the desire to love. The divine response to humanity's need for redemption from sin is but one manifestation of that love. Scotus does not negate the significance of God's saving action in the world expressed in the mystery of Redemption. He does emphasize, however, that the primary purpose of the Incarnation is to be understood in terms of the Primacy of Christ, God's loving action in the world.

### The Desire to Save: *Inspiratio* or *Tentatio*

Several years ago, I came across a thought-provoking passage in a short story entitled, *Imitação da Rosa* (*Imitation of the Rose*).<sup>3</sup> Throughout the novella, the Brazilian writer, Clarice Lispector, alludes to various classical Christian metaphors, one of which is the "Imitation of Christ." In reflecting on the Catholic formation of the story's main character as a young adolescent, Lispector writes:

When they had given her *The Imitation of Christ* to read, with the zeal of a donkey she had read the book without understanding it, but may God forgive her, she had felt that anyone who imitated Christ would be lost—lost in the light, but dangerously lost. Christ was the worst temptation.<sup>4</sup>

From the time of my first reading, the quotation haunted me. "How," I asked myself, "could Christ be the worst temptation?"

In the course of my own theological studies and research, the question remained with me. As I began to reflect more critically upon the ways in which the imitation of Christ had informed Christian life and practice throughout centuries,<sup>5</sup> I started to identify and examine the theological and biblical foundations upon which related images, attitudes and actions were based.

Informed as I was by feminist and liberationist hermeneutics, I was acutely aware of the potential limits and dangers inherent in an *imitatio Christi* that was grounded in the desire to sacrifice oneself for the sake of others. Admittedly, the focus at that time was on the treatment of women and slaves within the Christian tradition, and the ways in which the imitation of Christ was appealed to the religious and civil authorities responsible for upholding and preserving the social order. If women and slaves could be compelled to identify their sufferings with those of Christ, it followed that their own self-understanding of sacrificial victims, afflicted, abused, silent and submissive, would remain unquestioned and unexamined.

<sup>3</sup>See: Clarice Lispector, *Imitação da Rosa* (Brasil: Editora Artenova, 1973).

<sup>4</sup>Lispector, *Imitação da Rosa*, 33.

<sup>5</sup>For further discussion of this metaphor and its significance in Christian life and practice, see Margaret R. Miles, "An Image of the Image," in *Practicing Christianity: Critical Perspectives for an Embodied Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 17-42.

At that point, the interactive relationship between theological imagination and human agency became clear to me. In part, it could be argued that the social control of Christian women and slaves was dependent to some degree upon the particular Christology and soteriology for its justification. To the extent that this was true, there could be no social change without theological change. For an ecclesiastical structure invested in maintaining the social order, it would not be surprising to find the exercise of theological imagination severely curtailed. An historical review of selected rebellions, revolutions and heresies seemed to support my suspicions.

Insights such as these led me to pursue my own research interests in the area of religion and society, and more specifically, on the Roman Catholic Church and the problem of prostitution.<sup>6</sup> In reviewing sources that addressed various aspects of the Church's teachings and pastoral practice regarding individuals engaged in prostitution, I found that the biases and assumptions inherent in certain theological foundations often impeded or undermined ministerial activity. Efforts to rescue women from lives of prostitution often failed. The reasons were numerous, but many had their moorings in ministerial attitudes and practices predicated on a particular *imitatio Christi*, understood as the desire to save and liberate. In addition to the passage from *Imitação da Rosa*, it was this realization along with my personal contacts with non-traditional ministers and prostitutes in the city of Chicago and in various regions of Brazil and the Philippines, that led me to reflect on the need for alternative theological foundations for ministry in the underworld of the world church. For all of his subtlety, John Duns Scotus proved to be an invaluable resource for such an endeavor.

Though pastoral activity in the midst of individuals engaged in prostitution is but one illustration of so-called underworld ministries, it serves as an example that unquestionably places Christian communities in the unsettling position of having to come to terms with the stark realities of the world in which they live. As for those who recognize within themselves the desire to minister in the midst of those who constitute the underworld of the world church, namely, the poor, the powerless, the oppressed and the marginalized, a review of the history of missionary activity may be sufficient to alert such individuals to the fact that ministry, which is grounded in the desire to save others, may render would-be imitators of Christ incapable of discerning between divine inspiration and the worst temptation.

### Incarnation and Salvation: Differing Perspectives on Liberation

Working within the framework of liberation theology, the understanding Jesus Christ as liberator and savior logically proceeds from the theological coupling of liberation and salvation. There is a potential danger, however, inherent in such a theological construct, and that is the *imitatio Christi* which such a theology inspires. The images of the liberator and savior are powerful ones. They are at once messianic and utopian. They point to the Reign of God and to the transformation of the world order. Inasmuch as they lend themselves to imitation, particularly in extreme situations, the desire to serve is easily conflated or confused with the desire to save—and with God's help, the power to do so. Personal identification with such images hold considerable potential for fostering the conviction that

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<sup>6</sup>See: Margaret Eletta Guider, *The Church of Liberation and the Problem of Prostitution: A Brazilian Case Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Divinity School, 1992), unpublished dissertation.

to imitate Christ in such a fashion places the follower of Jesus in a privileged position to know the form that the liberation and salvation others should take and thus, to bring it about in accord with his/her own particular plan of action. In its most extreme form that the worst temptation is manifested in a radically exclusive distortion of what it means to be in *persona Christi* (in the person of Christ). It is a distortion that not only loses sight of the divine agency of Christ, but the human agency of the one who is to be saved.

Needless to say, the desire to imitate Christ, as liberator and-savior, is not only a potential temptation for those influenced by liberation theology. Rather, it demonstrates the inherent relationship between the Christology of liberation theology and the Christology that has guided the moral and ecclesial imagination of Western Christianity. Despite the credal formula of Nicea, "for us and for our salvation Christ came down from heaven," Roman Christianity has managed through the centuries to eclipse the first belief statement with the second. Repeatedly the preferred theological opinion that views the world as sin-centered takes precedence over the alternative opinion that views the world as Christ-centered.

In the former view, humanity's need for redemption is posited as the reason for Christ's coming.<sup>7</sup> At its worst, this view implies that the Incarnation was predicated on human sinfulness. At its best, it lends itself to a one-sided view of the mystery of God's love and action in the world. In addition to other limitations and dangers, it contributes to an understanding of ministry that finds expression in human efforts to control not only evil, but other persons—and even God.

Scotus, however, in his understanding of the primary purpose of the Incarnation, provides a much needed alternative. In accord with Scotus's line of reasoning, it, becomes possible to couple incarnation and liberation in away that is complementary, not supplementary, to the traditional coupling of salvation and liberation. Through the coupling of incarnation and liberation, it is possible to reconceive our understanding of human freedom as freedom *for*, not only freedom *from*. In effect, it engages the theological imagination in a consideration of what it means for the human person to be free for God and free for good.

## Towards a Theology of Presence for the World Church

As the Roman Catholic church attempts to discern the competing claims of the oppressors and the oppressed, it also finds itself discerning the competing claims of the poor and marginalized who are no longer one, but many. Despite its broad-based commitment to affirm the "preferential option for the poor" as a constitutive part of its identity and mission, it is unsettled to discover itself in the position of having to choose among the poor, not only with regard for their respective and particular needs, but also in accord with the ecclesial resources available at any given time. Like it or not, the Church runs the risk of exercising a preferential option for some poor more than others. An option that, in the minds of many, is inextricably linked to the desire to save and to liberate.

Throughout the world pastoral agents as well as the people of God find themselves at an impasse with regard to the limits of liberation that are reflected in the boundaries set by churches in the interest of safeguarding the *missio ecclesiae* and its proper relationship to

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<sup>7</sup>A classic example of this is found in Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo?*

those whom it seeks to serve and save. It would appear that before ecclesiastical criteria for evaluating the pastoral effectiveness of individuals or groups, particularly those engaged in under world ministries, could be established, it was necessary to cast people into categories. Such as, non-believers, sinners, or victims. Given these categories, the Church's mission could be assessed in terms of its overall success in bringing about conversions, guaranteeing rehabilitation or ensuring safety and protection, in short, what we understand today to be ministries of faith and justice.

In some cases, the Church assumed that individuals were able, willing, and amenable to changing their lives in accord with the ecclesial expectations. In other cases, it assumed that individuals were not able, and therefore, not free to choose on their own behalf, and therefore subject to the better judgment of the Church. In most cases, however, the Church defined the problem in accord with a particular set of anthropological and soteriological assumptions. In most cases, the Church proposed a solution in accord with its understanding of the role and function of a given person within a given society. In most cases, the Church supplied or guaranteed the material resources for ensuring the end which best conformed with its view of the world and eternity. Regardless of how individuals were cast, whether as non-believers, sinners, or victims, the Church and her ministers were the sole agents of their salvation in the spiritual order and oftentimes, of their liberation in the temporal order.

Another reading of history, however, reminds of a fourth category, namely that of survivors, which the Church is hard-pressed to admit, and even less likely to advance. In effect, survivors remind the Church of the inadequacies of its *modus operandi* and the limitations of certain theological foundations upon which it is based. Survivors keep the Church honest by reminding it that, like a confessor, it knows first hand of the Church's hidden secrets and of its complicity of silence. It reminds the church that it cannot save that which it does not assume. With regard to representatives of the Church known for their practices of abandonment and abuse, of non-believers, sinners and victims alike, survivors dare to require the church to listen to the truth which they speak. And with the question "Do you love me?" survivors take the Church and her ministers where they would not go, by reminding them of an *imitatio Christi*, that is realized in loving action and incarnate presence. Rarely is it the case, that the Church, as institution, acknowledges the value of this approach to ministry. I believe this may be due, at least in part, to the fact that the Church has failed to cultivate and promote the very theological foundations that could enhance its understanding of the *missio Dei* (mission of God).

Though some might contend that a ministry of presence is a final resort for ministers who find themselves overwhelmed by the scarcity of material resources available for the work of human liberation and unable for any number of reasons to draw upon the Spiritual resources of sacramental life of the Church, I would argue to the contrary. In the theological construct of Scotus, presence is the starting point. It is not a means, it is an end in itself. It is not a given, but a chosen, albeit one which is equally disconcerting to problem-solvers and quietists, alike.

Ministers who are moved by an *imitatio Christi* that expresses itself in the desire to be a sign of God's universal loving action and incarnate presence are aware that their participation in the *missio Dei*—understood as God's universal *loving* will for all humanity—is not without its risks and consequences. Grounded in this knowledge and experience, a theology of

presence necessarily addresses itself, not only to the mystery of God's love, but to the problem of God's love as well, a problem that is particularly acute for a Church that remains marked by the long-standing conviction that "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*" (no salvation outside the Church), despite the best efforts of Vatican II.

As the Church reaffirms its commitment to the tasks of evangelization and human liberation, it must do so mindful of the fact that the percentage of Christians in the world continues to remain, as it has since the turn of the century, at roughly one-third of the total population.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, it must remain alert to worldwide reports on the devastation of the earth and the dehumanization of ever-increasing numbers of people. Given its understanding of the Church's participation in the saving mission of Christ, these statistics are clearly cause for concern.<sup>9</sup>

Yet it seems that the apparent inability or failure of the *missio ecclesiae* bring about the salvation and liberation of non-believers, sinners, victims, and survivors, in accord with its own understanding of mission, gives us pause to ask ourselves anew, "what is the Spirit of God saying to the churches?" Could it be that there is something we have yet to fully comprehend about the *missio Dei* and the *imitatio Christi*?

## Conclusion

As a practical theologian and missiologist, it goes without saying that I am concerned with the self-actualization of the church in an increasingly complex global context. As a Franciscan, however, I find it necessary to be even more explicit about my commitment to engage in speculative theological reflection that serves not only the world church as it is broadly conceived, but more specifically, the underworld of that world church. To this end, I assume as my particular responsibility the retrieval of foundational insights from within the Franciscan theological tradition that can inform and sustain those who by charism and conviction embrace a preferential option for the poor and oppressed.

In this presentation, I have focused my attention on one particular argument in order to provide a concrete example of how the theological imagination of the Church can be enhanced through the rediscovery and appropriation of Scotus's thought. I have done this not only for the purpose of recovering valuable insights from the Franciscan theological tradition, but also, with the intention of calling into question the ways in which predominant theological perspectives on themes such as those of incarnation and redemption can limit, constrain and even undermine the Church's ability to realize its expressed desire to be one with the poor.

Given the fact that a number of Franciscans minister in the midst of the marginalized, the powerless and those "who are considered to be of little worth,"<sup>10</sup> it comes as no surprise to find our pastoral activities scrutinized by those entrusted with safeguarding the teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic church. As growing numbers of individuals and communities throughout the world find themselves subject to such inquiry and investigation,

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<sup>8</sup>See: David B. Barrett, "Annual Statistical Talk in Global Mission: 1990, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, vol. 14 (1990), 26ff. See also, David B. Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 5.

<sup>9</sup>See: John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* (Mission of the Redeemer: On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate), reprinted in *Origins* 20:34 (January 31, 1991).

<sup>10</sup> RegNB, 9:2.

we all are brought to a heightened awareness of the diversity of influences and contexts that inform the ecclesial understanding of "right opinion" and "right action."

In this process, we do well to remember that theological foundations are not incidental, but rather, consequential, to the ecclesial movements which they inspire or sustain. As we move farther in time and history from the Second Vatican Council, it is not surprising that we should find ourselves questioning the extent to which the Church's approach to orthodoxy and orthopraxis is dynamic in orientation. Historically speaking, there is limited evidence in the modern period to suggest that the Church, as institution, endeavors to acknowledge the horizon of truth that exists within the tradition with regard to equally correct, yet distinctly diverse theological opinions and pastoral actions. Rather, it seems that the Church in recent centuries has tended to advance and defend one preferred opinion or mode of action, often to the exclusion of all other possibilities. In effect, the process of ecclesiastical gerrymandering appears to refocus the magisterial task in such a way that the emphasis shifts from the differentiation of correct opinions from incorrect opinions, to the distinction of correct opinions from preferred opinions.

Ultimately, this presents a problem for the Church inasmuch as *preferred* opinions in theory become only opinions in practice. Potentially, the end result is a Church that is increasingly less capable of creatively engaging a diversity of opinions and activities in the realization of its identity and mission. To the extent that the ideas and contributions of John Duns Scotus were eclipsed, supplanted, and gradually deleted over the course of six centuries, his thought, for the most part, was rendered largely inaccessible to those outside of erudite Medieval circles and Franciscan theologates. Convinced as I am of the contemporary significance of Scotus's thought and the applicability of his theological insights to the mission and ministry of the Church, it is my sincere hope that the preceding remarks can contribute in some small way to a much larger project.





## Franciscan Poverty Controversies The First Hundred Years

Outline prepared by Margaret Carney, O.S.F.

### A. First Decade: 1230-1240

1. Expansion of Order, new ministries, building and study needs impact observance of poverty
2. Order turns to the papacy (Gregory IX) for help in interpreting Francis's intentions.
  - 2.1 Gregory issues the bull *Quo elongati*.
  - 2.2 Testament is not binding; nuntius to handle money matters as agent for almsgivers; question of movable goods not settled.
3. Transition from poverty to security, simplicity to learning, etc. underway.

Ministers: John Parenti, Elias, Albert of Pisa, Haymo of Faversham

Pope: Gregory IX

NB. *Angelis gadium* to Agnes of Prague

### B. Second Decade: 1241-1250

1. Middle of this decade is major turning point.
2. Innocent IV issues *Ordinem vestrum* (1245) and *Quanto studiosus* (1247).
  - 2.1 These rulings, in effect, give friars business agents.
  - 2.2 Papacy assumes responsibility for friars dominion over goods.
  - 2.3 Syndics/agents with wide legal powers appointed by friars.
3. Friars who champion strict observance harassed.
4. Genoa chapter under John of Parma refuses these liberties.
5. Four Masters provide Exposition = internal study of interpretation of Rule.

Ministers: Haymo of Faversham, Crescentius of Jessi, John of Parma

Pope: Innocent IV

NB. Clare begins her Rule; Hugh of Digne

### C. Third Decade: 1251-1260

1. Secular clergy attack credibility of Order in Paris.
2. Bonaventure writes defense against the attacks of secular clergy.
3. John of Parma tries to instill reverence for early traditions, simplicity of life.
4. Polarization increases between simple brothers seeking "primitive observance"—beginnings of the "spiritual party"—and friars with apostolic programs seeking efficient solutions.

Ministers: John of Parma, Bonaventure

Popes: Innocent IV, Alexander IV

NB. Approval of Clare's Rule; John of Parma accused of heresy

## D. Fourth Decade: 1261-1270

1. Generalate of Bonaventure is time of dangerous controversy over doctrine of poverty of Christ and Apostles [*Apologia pauperum*].
2. Franciscan school maintains that Christ rejected use of money and lived by begging.
3. Franciscans claim to be unique followers of Christ in this regard.
4. Text “nothing for your journey” becomes rallying cry.

Ministers: Bonaventure

Popes: Urban IV, Clement N

## E. Fifth Decade: 1271-1280

1. Conflict between Franciscans and Dominicans rages over poverty, obedience.
2. Br. Leo dies—“voice” of early friars.
3. Leaders of the “Spirituals” imprisoned: Olivi hailed as new leader.
4. New papal statements [*Exiit qui seminat*] try to clarify doctrinal issues and provide moderate canonical solutions.

Ministers: Bonaventure, Jerome of Ascoli, Bonagratia

Popes: Gregory X, Adrian V, Nicholas III

NB. Olivi must answer for his teachings on poverty.

## F. Sixth Decade: 1281-1290

1. Rising agitation exists between “conventuals” and “spirituals.”
2. Olivi is investigated then acquitted by Gen. Chapter.
3. Papacy [*Exultantes in Domino*] reinforces powers of business agents of friars.
  - 3.1 General spirit of relaxation is evident.
  - 3.2 System of total financial security is created by agents/syndics.
4. Third Order groups become partisans in controversies; leads to censure from Franciscan and ecclesiastical authorities.
5. Ubertino de Casale, leader of the spirituals, is teaching in Florence.

Ministers: Bonagratia, Arlotto of Prate, Matthew of Aquasparta, Raymond Gaufredi

Popes: Martin IV, Honorius IV, Nicholas IV

NB. Rule of Third Order in 1289 [*Supra montem*]

G. Seventh Decade: 1291-1300

1. Chapter changes constitution to relax poverty requirements.
2. Olivi defends his doctrine of "usus pauper."
3. "Spirituals" are permitted to create juridic separation.
4. Olivi dies in 1298. Olivi had been moderating influence among spirituals.

Ministers: Raymond Guafredi

Popes: Celestine V (The Hermit), Boniface VIII

H. Eighth Decade: 1301-1310

1. Separate "spiritual" group becomes ecclesiastical/political force to be reckoned with.
2. Group identifies with moral rigorism and asceticism.
3. Ubertino is banished to La Verna; writes *Arbor vitae*.

Ministers: John Murrovale, Gonsalvo of Valboa

Popes: Boniface VIII, Benedict XI, Clement V

I. Ninth Decade: 1311-1320

1. Papal authority investigates the "spiritual" position.
2. Investigation sees need for clear legal limits to obligation of vow of poverty.
  - 2.1 *Exivi de paradiso* attempts compromise position regarding "poor use" and discretion of superiors.
  - 2.2 Issue of the separate status of the "spirituals" is avoided.
3. "Spirituals" are no longer reforming old standards, but imposing new rigorist standards of their own.
4. Social disruptions occur in cities that are "spiritual" strongholds (Narbonne and Beziers).

Ministers: Gonsalvo of Valboa, Alexander of Alexandria, Michael Cesena

Popes: Clement V, John XXII

J. Tenth Decade: 1321-1330

1. Pope John XXII enters into battle with Franciscan Order.
  - 1.1 Position of Aquinas on religious poverty is made normative.
  - 1.2 John refuses to involve papacy in business affairs of the Order [*Ad conditorem*].
2. John condemns doctrine of absolute poverty of Christ [*Cum inter nonnullos*].

3. Minister General Michael of Cesena and William of Ockham revolt in complex religious/political intrigue. They are excommunicated.
4. Friars sympathetic to "spiritual " position are handed over to Inquisition. Four are burned at stake in Marseilles.

Ministers: Michael Cesena

Popes: John XXII

#### Consideration:

1. The crisis created by the early inability of Order to integrate a biblical understanding of poverty and a lived synthesis of material renunciation created divisions within and controversies without that were damaging to the early Franciscan vision.
2. This needs to be understood in light of the radical newness of the mendicant form of life and the lack of constitutional history and experience in interpretation of the vow.
3. The "Conventual"/"Spiritual" split continues to exercise a kind of fatal attraction in each Franciscan generation.
4. Political and doctrinal issues external to the Order greatly affected the freedom of early generations to pursue their own organizational development and inner cohesion.

#### Sources:

M. D. Lambert, *Franciscan Poverty* (London, 1961).

David Flood, O.F.M., "Franciscan Poverty (A Brief Survey)" in *Nicolaus Minorita: Chronica* (Franciscan Institute, 1996), 1-53.

## Defense of the Mendicants

### Chapter Two<sup>1</sup>

SECOND POINT OF THE FIRST ANSWER: THE CAPITAL ERROR ABOUT THE WAY OF  
MANIFESTATION OF PERFECTION AND IMPERFECTION IS SHATTERED, AND THE  
EXEMPLARITY OF TRUE PERFECTION AND ITS DIFFERENCE FROM IMPERFECTION  
ARE REVEALED

Thus, the sound opinion of Doctors has overthrown the adversary of Christ's mercy. But even more: we shall see that the sharp edge of this man's very argument cuts off the head of his own perverse teaching. Not only does the opponent of evangelical perfection fall away from the truth, distorting the Scriptures into impious meanings, *obscuring divine plans with words of ignorance*; in addition, he even contradicts himself. Since it would take long to explain one by one the many instances of warped interpretation and abuse of the Scriptures, the twisted opinions and insults to common sense, found in his text, we trust that it may suffice for the prudent reader if we deal briefly with some examples.

2. Thus, when this writer, in a preliminary statement, comes to perfection, he says: "Perfection in this life consists, not in being without sin, but in preventing its *reign in your mortal body*."<sup>2</sup> A truthful saying, in a Catholic sense, and one accepted by the saints. Yet, because he places here the terminal point of evangelical perfection, making its fulfillment consist in this, he stands convicted of being far from the full notion of perfection. For every man is bound by divine precept to avoid the reign of sin within himself; every man, therefore, would be called to be perfect.

3. Again, if any small measure of love were enough to produce this effect, it would follow that the smallest love would attain the summit of perfection. This would render meaningless the saying of Augustine: "Love should be increased, so that being increased it may be perfected."<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, if perfection consists in nothing more than the avoidance of the reign of sin within us, imperfection consists in allowing this reign. But sin cannot reign within us unless we are in a state of mortal sin: and so imperfection is always equated with mortal sin. No sensible person could fail to see that this is absurd and far from the truth.

Next, let the careful reader note how this author then proceeds to clear self-contradiction in defining imperfection. "Imperfection," he continues, "consists in not conforming with Christ within the possibilities of the human condition." But "not conforming," thus qualified, is possible not only without mortal sin, for no one is bound to it, but even without venial sin,<sup>4</sup> specifically as regards matters which are of counsel only, depending on freedom of choice, and hence may be omitted without any sin; such matters, that is, as the vows of poverty and virginal continence.

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<sup>1</sup>*The Works of Bonaventure, Cardinal Seraphic Doctor and Saint*, Vol. 4, trans. Jose de Vinck (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1966), 19-35.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Gregory, "Moralium," XXI, 3:7, commenting on Rom. 6:12.

<sup>3</sup>Augustine, "Epistolae," 186 (alias 106), 3:10; cf. Bonaventure, "Sent.," I, d. 17, p. II, q. 1f.; *ibid.*, III, d. 30, q.

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<sup>4</sup>Cf. Bonaventure, "Sent.," II, d. 42, a. 2, q. 1.

Our author adds to this by saying that "to depart from Christ's commands and from His works is an imperfection," and that "the Apostle cautioned the disciples against such a thing." Now here he not only strikes a discordant note, he even puts together two contrary propositions: to depart from Christ's command is always a mortal sin, whereas to depart from Christ's works may be a venial sin, or even no sin at all. It appears, then, that this man does not understand what he is saying since he includes in one sentence two intrinsically different ideas.

To continue: he goes on to comment thus on the meaning of imperfection: "Imperfection of life consists in a distortion that turns us away from the rule of justice and from the footsteps of Christ in matters in which Christ may be imitated as far as is possible by the corruptible flesh." Here he shows that he lacks understanding, not only of the truth, but even of the meaning of words. We are not greatly concerned, of course, with the words in themselves; but here it is important to discuss the meaning assigned to them, and to reject it because it is wrong. He says that "imperfection turns us away from the rule of justice." Now, it is a fact that, as Anselm says, "justice consists in rectitude of the will;<sup>5</sup> but if there exists a certain justice that is perfect and another that is imperfect, it necessarily follows that there exists a certain rectitude that is distorted!

Furthermore, if rectitude is justice, distortion is injustice, and so, if imperfection is a distortion, the imperfect will be unjust. It follows, therefore, if imperfection is a distortion, that some justice is unjust!

Finally, since in the words of Augustine, "every virtue is a right reason,"<sup>6</sup> it necessarily follows that distortion is a sin. If, therefore, imperfection is always a distortion, imperfection is always a sin. Now, since some forms of charity are imperfect, it follows that some forms of charity are sinful!

Hence, according to the explanations of perfection given above, it may be deduced from [our author's] premises that justice is unjust, rectitude distorted, and charity vicious!

4. As a further proof of his ignorance, he adds a little later that "the wise man asserts that *it is great glory to follow the Lord* and since this is said unqualifiedly, it is to be understood universally." Now, it is greatly presumptuous to desire to follow the Lord in every one of His actions—as, in His miracles, in His judgments, in the chastisement He inflicted, in His foresight of future events, and so forth. Hence, if this man were right and this saying, because unqualified, were to be taken universally, either it is great glory to follow the Lord in some things which it is presumptuous to desire, or else the wise man is proved to have said something wrong.

And to this instance of madness, he adds another of no lesser degree; for he asserts that Christ said to the young man, "*Follow Me*," without distinguishing in what things and how much, and thus said it unqualifiedly. "And great," he concludes, "is the presumption of desiring to make distinctions where God makes none, for the legislator alone has the right to interpret the laws he has established."

5. Now in saying this, the author directly contradicts at one and the same time faith itself, the teachings of the holy Fathers, and his own expressed belief.

In the first place: If in every instance in which Christ makes no distinction, we also are to make none, the Catholic interpretation of His saying, "*The Father is greater than I*" is

<sup>5</sup>Anselm, "De conceptu virginali et originali peccato," 3; "De veritate," 12.

<sup>6</sup>Augustine, "Soliloquia," I, 6:13; cf. Bonaventure, "Sent.," II, d. 27, dub. 3.

erroneous, for it teaches that these words should not be applied to His divinity but to His humanity. Next: the saints are also in error whenever they explain the words of Christ by means of distinctions and interpret His intention in the light of such expositions. And finally: the man negates his own stated position by proceeding himself to make a qualification, in these words: "This is not understood of the acts concerned with the distinction between levels and dignities, but only of other acts."

6. Nor is he content even with such folly, but piles it up higher. Concerning the statement that the Lord gave to the perfect some precepts that did not apply to the imperfect, he remarks that to believe this was the error of the Manicheans, and a very dangerous one. He forgets the words that Jerome wrote "Against Jovinian": "Has it ever been prescribed to all that they may not have two garments, or food in their bag, or money in their belt, or shoes on their feet; that they are to sell everything they have and follow Jesus? Has not this been prescribed only to those who wish to be perfect? Otherwise, how could something different have been prescribed by John the Baptist to the soldiers and to the publicans?"<sup>7</sup>

Jerome thereby shows that such is not merely his personal view, but first of all the clear purport of Scripture. And it is this which this new doctor, following the teaching of Jovinian, now condemns as heretical and dangerous.

When he adds that man is not made imperfect by the commandments, because a commandment, being *holy and just and good*, does not bring about death. "and imperfection is a certain kind of death," by attempting to prove a clear truth through an obvious falsehood, he is revealing both his imprudence and his fallacy. It is indeed certain that the commandments make no one perfect or imperfect, since both the perfect and the imperfect are bound to observe them. It is also certain that there is not so much distance between perfection and imperfection as there is between life and death. For if imperfection is death, it is either a punishment or the result of guilt. If it is a punishment, no one in this life is perfect, not even Christ; if it is the result of guilt, since the guilt deserving of death is mortal sin, no one would be imperfect without at the same time being deprived of life through mortal sin. And if this man says that death may in a certain sense be predicated of venial sin, he is speaking incorrectly, and even falls into formal error, for if venial sin is a death that makes man imperfect since there is no more reason [for this] in any one venial sin than in any other, as often as a man falls into venial sin, he falls away from the state of perfect. Again, because no one, whatever his virtue, is entirely immune to venial sin, no one in this life will be perfect with the perfection Christ counsels. Now, such a proposition is heretical and must be condemned.

7. He later makes a still further addition to the mass of errors by saying that imperfection is a mere limping which does not fall under the precepts, but is a matter of toleration; that, for instance, to reclaim one's own property is not commanded, but tolerated. But this is plainly false, since toleration, according to Augustine in his work "On the Good of Matrimony," implies some sin,<sup>8</sup> and to claim one's own property is permitted to the imperfect, for the gloss on the sixth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians says: "It is permissible to the weak to claim their own property, and even to bring their claim before a judge."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Jerome, "Contra Iovinianum," II, 6.

<sup>8</sup>Augustine, "De bono coniugali," 10:11.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. Augustine, "Enchiridion," 78:21; Bonaventure, "In Lucam," 6:74f.

In the same spirit, after some vain and frivolous considerations, the author continues that "in the New Testament, even when matrimony is contracted for the sake of the offspring, it is only tolerated." This is clearly contradicted by Augustine in the work just cited. "Certainly," he says, "no doubt is permitted concerning the sinlessness of matrimony as such. That is why indulgence is directed, not to marriage, but to that intercourse which derives from incontinence, not for the sake of procreation alone, but for a reason entirely independent of procreation, and which marriage does not require, but which it excuses. Intercourse for the sole purpose of generation is without guilt, and this alone is proper to marriage."<sup>10</sup>

Here, there is such a difference in words and in meaning between the ancient Doctor and the new one that one of the two must necessarily be wrong. If the author will follow, not his own interpretation, but that of the more eminent Doctor, he will be less likely to fall into the pit of error. He should cease, therefore, to describe imperfection as a distortion and limping to stray from the truth. (There is also a great difference between the teachings of "the more eminent Doctor" and that of contemporary theologians whose doctrine is that intercourse for the sake of fostering mutual love is not only sinless, but meritorious, even without being directed towards procreation. The generally low esteem in which medieval theologians held marriage appears clearly in the last sentence of paragraph 9, below.)

8. Next, he adds that Christ never did anything for imitation by the perfect alone, arguing that Christ does not begrudge perfection to anyone; as if there could be no gradations and distinctions in the examples and words of Christ: corresponding to the different levels and states in the organization of the Church. Such an opinion does not conform at all with the Scriptural testimony. For Christ specifically said to the apostles: "*To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to the rest in parables.*" And again, speaking to His Father: *Thou didst hide these things from the wise and prudent, and didst reveal them to little ones.*"

Is God partial because He does not reveal the secrets of His wisdom to all? It is clear that, just as Christ spoke words that were proportioned to those who received them, He used the example of Himself in the same way. It is not at all out of partiality, but out of the highest dispensation of the wisdom of God, *who allots to everyone according as He will*, that some things are proposed as examples to prelates, and not to their subjects; others to rational creatures, and not to animals; others to the perfect, and not to the imperfect; others again to the strong, and not to the weak, as expressly appears from the above quotation from Jerome's argument against Jovinian. On the other hand, we do not mean that the works of the counsels and of supererogation are proposed only to those who are already perfect. Rather, they are for all who wish to ascend to the summit of perfection; but since this implies difficulties and painful effort, it will gain a response, not from the many, but from the few.

9. Our adversary, then, attempts to prove that the works and example of Christ are equally proposed to all—under the pretext that, if He had done something for the imitation of the imperfect alone, it would then seem that He would also have been bound to take a wife and to get involved in legal disputes so as to let the imperfect see examples of these things. This reasoning has no weight whatsoever: it proceeds from a thought deeply disordered. No one indeed would reason in this way without at the same time committing

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<sup>10</sup>Augustine, "De bono coniugali" 10:11.



the distasteful lapse of associating the practices of carnal passion and argumentative litigation with the condescension of divine sweetness that consisted assuming our infirmities. It amounts to Christ condescended to human weakness in the acts of eating and fleeing, he should have condescended also in the acts of physical love and processes of law; otherwise the reasoning is senseless. And indeed it is: for there is no similarity between what He did and the suggested course of action, since it was good that Christ should condescend to those infirmities which are commonly related to fallen nature and have no guilt annexed to them, but there was no reason whatsoever to make Him stoop to the others.<sup>11</sup>

10. Finally, if close attention is given to the conclusion our adversary attempts to draw, it will be clearly apparent that, through his own false reasoning, he involves himself in a manifold error. He says indeed: "There are two elements in perfection: to sell and distribute what one has, and to follow Christ the Lord; so also it is required as a foundations of perfection that a man give up everything he has, but also, as a complement, that once this has been done, he also imitate Christ to the limit of human possibility." In his view, it is "no small blasphemy" to assert as regards the things done by Christ in conformity with our nature, that those persons in particular who try to be perfect are to imitate Him in some of these things only, not in all of them. Now, while such words may claim a certain superficial justification, this man's reasoning is empty if judged by the canons of truth, and his conclusion full of errors. It is by no means the same thing to give up one's possessions and to imitate actions of Christ. For the first is a single and simple act, consistent with perfection as long as it is whole, that is, as long as possession are abandoned, not in part, but entirely.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, the actions of Christ are manifold and various, and even though all are perfect as being His, when considered in their nature some are most excellent, others of lesser quality, and still others merely condescensive; which was partly demonstrated in the preceding discussion, and will be more clearly proved in what is to follow.

11. If it is true that perfection indicates an unvarying conformity to the works of Christ, and imperfection some departure therefrom, many absurdities inevitably ensue. For example, since Christ was assisted by women who went about with Him and cared for Him, it follows that Paul was imperfect in not having such companions; since Christ dwelt among men, John the Baptist was imperfect because he abandoned the crowds and sought a solitary abode; since Christ drank wine, the Baptist was again imperfect in eschewing wine and strong drink; since Christ spoke to a woman who avoids the company of women; since Christ allowed his feet to be kissed by a sinner, anyone is imperfect who shuns and shrinks from the contact of women; since Christ refused to divide the inheritance between two brothers, anyone is imperfect who leads back to peace and equity the relatives embroiled over the division of an inheritance; since Christ knowingly entrusted the purse to a thief and seeks out an honest man; since Christ was in a state of fear when His passion was approaching, anyone is imperfect who runs to his martyrdom in a state of joyful confidence; since Christ remained silent during the passion itself, anyone is imperfect who proclaims the truth while suffering for Christ. The same reasoning may be developed in many other instances, in addition to those that concern the avoidance of women and the use of food or

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<sup>11</sup>Cf. Bonaventure, "Sent.," III, d. 15.

<sup>12</sup>Jerome, III "In Matthaeum," 19:21.

money. All such conclusions are so absurd that anyone attempting to defend them would seem to be not so much mistaken as demented.

12. In order that the prudent reader may be free of such and similar lapses into which the one we are answering has fallen through frivolity of mind, let him note carefully that there is a double cause for such misrepresentations. First, while the author knows that Christ is the exemplar of all perfection, he fails either to grasp or to consider the nature of this exemplarity; second, while he is clearly aware that imperfection falls short of perfection, he is unable to investigate the extent of this difference.

We should understand that since Christ is the Word both Uncreated and Incarnate, there is in Him a twofold principle of exemplarity, the one eternal and the other temporal. By the eternal, I mean the principle according to which He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the image of His substance, and also *the refulgence of eternal light, the spotless mirror of the power of God*. In this mirror all things shine forth in their exemplarity, and they are produced, in their spirit and in their matter, from the beginning of the creation of the world until its end, for the perfecting of the entire universe. It is in this sense that Christ is the Uncreated Word, the intellectual Mirror and the eternal Exemplar of the whole fabric of creation.<sup>13</sup> But insofar as He is the Incarnate Word, in the actuality of His assumed humanity, He is also the mirror of all graces, virtues, and merits; and therefore the dwelling of the Church Militant should be set up at this example, the dwelling of which Moses mysteriously says: *See that you make...[it] according to the pattern shown you on the mountain*.

From this single and undivided eternal Exemplar there flows such a variety of created natures, and such a variety of perfections in these natures, according to the degree of their participation in the supreme Good itself, that all cannot be possessed together by any given creature—for which reason God established diverse species of beings so that the universe should be complete. And likewise, the diverse states, levels, and orders are derived in their exemplarity from the Incarnate Word, as from the original principle of grace *of whose fullness we have all received*, and as from a mirror in which and from which shines forth all the fullness and beauty of holiness and wisdom. These states, levels, and orders are derived from Him according to the various manners in which the Exemplar is to be imitated. Within them, the manifold perfection of Christ is distributed according to a multiform participation, in such a way that it is found at the same time in all things. And yet it does not glow in any one of them in the fullness of its universal plenitude; but each state and level receives that kind of influence from the Exemplar, and approaches its likeness to that greater or lesser degree, which accords with the proportion of its own [determined] nature.

13. Thus, manifold actions shine forth from Christ as from the exemplar and origin of our whole salvation. Now, some of these actions pertain to LOFTINESS OF POWER, such as walking on the water, transmuting the elements, multiplying the loaves, transfiguring Himself, or performing miraculous cures. Other actions pertain to the LIGHT OF WISDOM, such as revealing the mysteries of heaven, penetrating the secrets of hearts, or predicting the future. Still others pertain to SEVERITY OF JUDGMENT, such as expelling the hucksters from the temple, overturning the tables of the sellers of doves, or severely reproaching the priests. Others again pertain to the DIGNITY OF OFFICE, such as conferring the Sacrament of His most holy Body, imposing His hands, or absolving from sin. Further actions pertain to CONDESCENSION toward our misery, such as hiding when

<sup>13</sup>Cf. Bonaventure, "Collationes in hexaemeron," 1:10ff.; 3:2ff.

persecuted, trembling with dread before death, or praying the Father for the removal of the chalice. Some, finally, pertain to the REVELATION OF THE PERFECT LIFE, such as observing poverty, maintaining virginity, subjecting Himself to God and to men, watching in prayer throughout the night, praying for those who crucified Him, or offering Himself to death out of supreme love for His enemies.

Now, while there are six different kinds of action, perfection consists in imitating Christ in the last category only. To aspire to imitate Him in those deeds that are of unique excellence would be impious and worthy of Lucifer, unless a special privilege were conferred on some man by way of a gift. The actions related to severity and dignity belong to those who preside and to prelates. And those related to condescension pertain to the weak—to speak only of intrinsic actions. Thus, supreme Christian perfection consists, not as our adversary would teach, in the universal imitation of the actions of Christ, but in the imitation only of those proposed as examples of the perfect life.

14. It appears then that ignorance of this truth was the first cause of such error. Another cause, closely related to it, is the fact that our adversary did not make a rational distinction between perfection and imperfection; for he imprudently asserts that "perfection and imperfection differ as do rectitude and distortion, justice and sin, purity and pollution, glory and infamy, life and death, health and disease, or walking and limping." From such a statement must necessarily proceed falsities both numerous and great. Some of these have been indicated earlier. Let the attentive reader note that perfection and imperfection do not differ as contraries,<sup>14</sup> but as a greater good is distinct from a lesser one, that which is close to the goal from that which is far from it, a more meritorious action from one of lesser merit, a deed better conformed to God from one less so, a greater glory and holiness from one not so great.

15. Now, even though this is clear upon reflection to intelligent men, it should be thoroughly established by referring to the saints; in order that the slightest doubt may be eliminated.

Ambrose, in the first book "On Offices," says: "Every service is either mediocre or perfect. And this we can well prove by invoking the authority of the Scriptures, for we read in the Gospel that the Lord said: *'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments....Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery'*...etc. To abstain from crimes is but to perform a mediocre service, one in which there is something missing. Therefore, Christ continues: *'If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor,...and come, follow Me.'* This indeed, is a perfect service, which the Greeks call *κατάρθωμα*, and through which all things are set aright that might otherwise have had some defect."<sup>15</sup>

From these words of Ambrose, we may gather that he does not call a sinful a mediocre and imperfect service, since it is still consistent with the observance of the commandments. And writing on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, he speaks to the same effect: "Try to lead the faithful to moderation in the use of legitimate goods, so that they may appear not only innocent but glorious: for to refuse a permitted advantage is a deed of very great virtue."<sup>16</sup> And so, if there is innocence in the enjoyment of legitimate goods and

<sup>14</sup>Cf. Aristotle, "De praedicamentis," C, *De oppositis*.

<sup>15</sup>Ambrose, "De officiis," I, 11:36f.

<sup>16</sup>"Commentaria in Epistolas Pauli," 1 Cor.; found among the works of Ambrose, attributed to Hilarion the Deacon.

perfection in the fact of refraining from them, it is clear that innocence may coexist with imperfection: and so imperfection is not sin.

Augustine likewise, in his work "On the Good of Matrimony," writes: "What could be said against the entirely clear words of the Apostle: '*Let him do what he will; he does not sin if she should marry*'; also: '*If thou takest a wife, thou hast not sinned. And if a virgin marries, she has not sinned*'?" Hence it is certainly not right to doubt whether marriage is truly without sin. The Apostle does not condone marriage as if he were forgiving it, for who would go to the extreme absurdity of saying that forgiveness is being granted to those who have not sinned?"<sup>17</sup> Yet it is a fact that marriage is not consistent with evangelical perfection, in which Christ teaches that virginity is to be maintained *for the sake of the kingdom of heaven*.

Imperfection, then, does not require forgiveness, nor is it in itself any sort of sin. The same author writes in the same book: "The work of Martha was good when she took care of the service of the saints, but what her sister Mary did was better. We praise the goodness of Susanna in her conjugal chastity, but we place on a higher level the chastity of the widow Anna, and much higher still that of the Virgin Mary. Those who provided out of their substance for the needs of Christ and of His disciples were doing what was good, but those who gave up all of their substance the more completely to follow Christ the Lord were doing what was better."<sup>18</sup> In such words Augustine excellently shows that the perfect does not differ from the imperfect as virtue from vice, but as a greater good from a lesser one.

Blessed Jerome expressed the same opinion even more clearly in his letter to Hedibia: "If you wish to be perfect and to stand on the highest level of honor, do as the apostles did."<sup>19</sup> And later: "if you do not wish to be perfect, but to hold the second place in the order of virtue, give up whatever you have, all your possessions, give everything to your children, to your relatives. No one shall reproach you if you follow the lesser degree, as long as you know that anyone who has followed the higher is superior to you by right."<sup>20</sup> Note how evidently he asserts that imperfection, which is a secondary and inferior state or grade, is not to be held reprehensible or sinful. The same author, writing to Demetriades, says: "Evil actions are forbidden, good actions are commanded, mediocre actions are tolerated, perfect actions are counseled. All of sin is encompassed within the first two categories, for the others are left to our free disposition, so that we may acquire a lesser glory through the use of things tolerated and permitted, or a greater glory through their rejection."<sup>21</sup>

Could arguments more cogent be given in favor of our position? It seems beyond question that they must cleanse even the slowest intelligence, unless it were blinded by malice, of the darkness of the errors explained above; particularly if it would also bring itself to consider the fact that a newly baptized soul, though not even close to the summit of perfection and merit, is not infected by any stain of sin.

<sup>17</sup>Augustine, "De bono coniugali," 10:11.

<sup>18</sup>Augustine, "De bono coniugali," 8:8.

<sup>19</sup>Jerome, "Epistolae," 120 (alias 150):1.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>21</sup>Cf. *ibid.*, Appendix, 1:9. This letter is believed to be by Pelagius.