Favored Biblical Teachings in the Writings of St. Francis of Assisi Optatus van Asseldonk, O.F.M.Cap.

"Insegnamenti biblici 'privilegiati' negli scritti di S. Francesco d'Assisi"

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The title seems clear enough. The "favored" biblical teachings can be none other than the favorite biblical teachings preferred by St. Francis, which he assimilated into his spirit as vital for himself and his order. We shall limit ourselves to the writings of the saint, without dealing with the biographies of Francis, although they are important also. But there is a problem: This study might seem useless, because it has already been done by others. Schlauri has collected 466 studies on the subject of St. Francis and the Bible, as far as the year 1970. However, he concludes: "Much has been written about St. Francis and the Bible, but only in a general and sketchy way. There are no specialized and in depth studies."

There are other studies after 1970. Besides those by Schmucki and López, there are some theses in manuscript form, such as those by Azzimonti, NguyenVan-Khanh, and Gallant; the updated biblical lists of Esser and Boccali; the studies by Garrido, Conti, Matura, Esser and Van Dijk; the articles by Manns, Iriarte and Optatus van Asseldonk; and recently the thesis, still in manuscript form, by Walter Viviani: John 17 in the Writings of Francis.² From this we see that the biblical sources of St. Francis are being studied once more in a more profound and critical way. It is the beginning of a promising renewal in our understanding of the man of the Gospel, the Poverello of Assisi. This is a very important field of study, very attractive to our young students interested in the perennial relevance of the Alter Christus.

The late Father Esser, esteemed former professor at the Franciscan Institute of Spirituality at the Antonianum, now replaced by Father Metanić, has provided a sound and indispensable base for any critical study of the biblical sources of the saint.

Our presentation is divided into five parts: 1) St. Francis and the Bible in general; 2) the Synoptic Gospels in the writings of St. Francis; 3) St. John

the Evangelist in the writings of St. Francis; 4) the psalms in the writings of St. Francis; 5) the letters of St. Peter in the writings of St. Francis.

1. St. Francis and the Bible in General

In this section we shall try to give some information regarding St. Francis's knowledge of the Bible and how we, by studying his writings, can examine

this knowledge.

What biblical education did Francis have? He received a very elementary education in the parish school of St. George in Assisi. He learned a little Latin, probably by reading the Psalter, which he memorized as others did before and after him. St. Francis had a very good memory (see 2Cel 102). He was also able to learn much from the liturgy of his time (Missal, Gospel Book, Breviary), from personal meditation, from sermons and from conversations with his confreres. Note, for example: "It is good to read the testimonies of Scripture; it is good to seek the Lord our God in them. As for me, however, I have already made so much of Scripture my own that I have more than enough to meditate on and revolve in my mind. I need no more, son; I know Christ, the poor crucified one." And: "Blessed is that religious who takes no pleasure and joy except in the most holy words and deeds of the Lord and with these leads people to the love of God in joy and gladness."

Francis also knew a little French, probably the language of northern France (the langue d'oīl), where his father, Peter Bernardone, did business.⁴

Furthermore, it was extremely rare, and only for the privileged few, to have a manuscript of the Bible. The first New Testament that the order had was given as alms to the poor mother of two of the friars (2Cel 91). In his last days at the Portiuncula, Francis had the Gospel of John read to him (1Cel 110). The Rule permitted those who could read to have a Breviary

(Psalter).5

At this point the question arises as to the direct source from which Francis would have obtained his knowledge of the Bible. The experts agree in pointing out the liturgy and the liturgical books (for example, the Missal, the Breviary, the Gospel Book) as his direct, principal sources. This is the view of Schmucki and Gallant regarding the Office of the Passion and, in a general way, of Van Dijk, the author of several studies on the liturgical sources of that era. Esser also is of the same opinion. There was a discovery made a few years ago regarding the Missal consulted by the saint in the Church of St. Nicholas. In regard to some writings of the saint, the exact liturgical source from which the biblical texts were taken still must be determined.

Some criteria for research into the biblical sources or biblical teachings of Francis are:

(a) It is always necessary to base oneself on authentic texts in their original language, using the most critical edition available, which in our case is Esser's. However, even this edition is not definitive. In over 100 instances, the text is still uncertain. Some writings are not absolutely certain. Some writings are missing. For certain texts, a better and more accurate version has been found. Finally, one must never base oneself on any translation without comparing it with the original text.

(b) It is necessary to allow the texts themselves to speak, to be studied analytically, word by word, literally. Then they should be studied in their immediate and broader contexts, that is, by comparing them with the other writings of the saint. Finally, they should be seen within the literary context of the time and sources from which they spring. We must not forget that the explanatory words of scholars are valuable only in so far as

they are based upon texts from these very sources.

(c) It is not enough to count the biblical texts or the words or the biblical allusions contained in the writings of Francis to prove the influence of Sacred Scripture on him. The texts, the words, the allusions – and even the thoughts – are not to be counted but are to be pondered. It is not the quantity but rather the quality that is decisive in indicating the vital impact that the Bible had on the saint. St. Francis, for example, rarely cites the texts of the Bible literally. Instead, he often uses words and thoughts from the Bible in a free and familiar way, applying them freely to his life and to that of the friars, even to the point of equating his words with those of Christ. In this respect, Esser states that St. Francis does not so much cite from Sacred Scripture as think and live it.8

It is necessary, then, to avoid giving too much importance to lists of biblical citations. It is much more important to look for the actual impact and the real influence of biblical thought on the saint, particularly on the fundamental aspects of his spirit. We must study how Scripture permeated the substance of his thought, both in regard to biblical language and

especially in regard to the biblical content itself.

What particular criterion do we have to prove that the biblical texts found in his writings were placed there by St. Francis himself and not by someone else, as they were, for example, by Caesar of Speyer in the *Earlier Rule?*

The principal criterion for proving that St. Francis himself is the source of the texts is the saint's own way of citing the texts and the way in which the biblical ideas have been assimilated and adapted by him in his various writings. This criterion has been used by specialists such as Schmucki, López, Esser and others. Regarding his way of citing texts, St. Francis is not concerned with literal or textually correct quotes. Instead, he quotes rather freely from memory, spontaneously, through association of ideas or similar words. The Office of the Passion is a very clear example of this

process. Regarding the way in which biblical ideas have been used, that is, assimilated and adapted in his writings in keeping with the actual circumstances of daily life, the biblical text is rarely cited literally, but almost always according to its essential meaning. For example, Matthew 7:12: "Do to others whatever you would have them do to you," the Golden Rule of the Sermon on the Mount, is quoted literally only once, and nine times according to its substance. Likewise, the refrain from Revelation, "praise, glory, honor and blessing," is cited in a loose, personal way, never word for word.

A proof, for example, that the biblical texts of the Earlier Rule were not added by Caesar of Speyer consists in the fact that they are found also in the other writings of the saint and, perhaps, even more in these than in the Earlier Rule. Thus, Nguyen-Van-Khanh has proven quite convincingly that St. John the Evangelist had a predominant influence on the writings of St. Francis from the fact that the Synoptics are cited mostly in the Earlier Rule (81 times; only 30 times in the other writings) and St. John mostly in the other writings (13 times in the Rule; 38 times elsewhere). In fact, St. John is cited in the other writings more often than all the Synoptics together. Hence, perhaps the synoptic texts were added by Caesar of Speyer while

the Johannine texts come from St. Francis.9

In the opinion of even biblical scholars, the hermeneutic criterion adopted intuitively and mystically by St. Francis was marvelously precise and true. This opinion was already expressed during Francis's lifetime, 10 but it is confirmed again today in the many studies that analyze particular passages in the writings of the saint. So, for example, there have been studies by Schmucki and Gallant on the Office of the Passion; by Matura on the Rule and the Testament; by Egger on the Sermon on the Mount and the sending forth of the disciples; by Nguyen-Van-Khanh on the influence of St. John. 11 Manns, on the other hand, does not hesitate to call Admonition 7 "a real hermeneutic treatise." He is referring to how, in this Admonition, Francis explains the Pauline passage: "The letter kills, but the spirit gives life" (2 Cor. 3:6). Francis writes: "Those religious are killed by the letter who do not wish to follow the spirit of Sacred Scripture, but only wish to know the words and how to explain them to others. And those are given life by the spirit of Sacred Scripture who do not refer to themselves any text which they know or seek to know, but, by word and example, return everything to the most high Lord God to whom every good belongs."

The Spirit of Christ, present in the divine word, instills the intimate knowledge of this word and makes it alive and life-giving, according to the words of Jesus in John 6:64: "My words are spirit and life" (cited by Francis at least five times). Thus, the Spirit is the life of the word and gives the life of the Spirit to us "enlivened by the Spirit of the divine word." The Spirit is the gift, the "good" of the Lord, who bestows on us the life of the Lord. This is

the way that St. Francis reads, meditates on and lives the divine words of Scripture, enlivened by the Spirit. In this regard, Manns recalls a passage from the Second Vatican Council: "Holy Scripture must be read and interpreted according to the same Spirit by whom it was written.¹³

For a thorough understanding of the biblical teachings of St. Francis one must study, side by side with the writings, also the biographies, paintings, mosaics, crucifixes, Provençal literature, and so forth. Also, we must not forget St. Clare, his first little plant, or, as Sister Chiara Augusta Lainati puts it: "Francis himself in his feminine aspect." Above all, we must study Sacred Scripture itself!

At present, the biblical sources from which St. Francis drew his "favored" teachings seem to be, besides the Synoptic Gospels, St. John (Gospel, Letters and Revelation), St. Peter, and Psalms. More study is needed regarding St. Paul and St. James.

2. The Synoptic Gospels in the Writings of St. Francis

(a) St. Matthew (1) Matthew 7:12. The most frequently quoted passage from the Synoptic Gospels is found in the Earlier Rule and is Matthew 7:12, the Golden Rule: "And among themselves let them behave according to what the Lord says: 'Whatever you wish that men should do to you, do that to them.' "14a Some typical aspects are worth noting:

- Et ('and') at the beginning of a sentence, is very common in the

writings of Francis. In this chapter it occurs three times;

- Faciant ('do, behave, or act' - third person plural, present subjunctive) is the verb most used by Francis, occurring 190 times;

Inter se ('among themselves') is a typical expression of the saint, together with ad invicem ('reciprocally') and alter alterius ('one and the other');

- Dicit ('says' - present tense, not dixit ['said'] - past tense): The words

of Scripture are, for Francis, spoken directly to him today;

- Dominus ('Lord') is the word Francis uses most in his writings, about 400 times, to indicate either God or Christ. Francis hardly ever speaks of Christ without the title Dominus.

The passage from Matthew is cited literally, except for the omitted words Omnia ergo ('Everything therefore'). However, only once is the passage cited literally; nine other times in the writings it is cited according to its inner meaning. 15 The best known application is found in the Later Rule: "And let each one confidently make known his need to the other, for if a mother has such care and love for her son born according to the flesh, should not someone love and care for his brother according to the Spirit even more diligently? And if any of them becomes sick, the other brothers should serve him as they would wish to be served themselves."16

It would be difficult to find another Gospel text so intensely applied and assimilated by Francis. Unfortunately, this passage, the Golden Rule from the Sermon on the Mount, which is the application of the precept of fraternal charity, has up to now received little attention in the writings of Francis. Instead, the passage must be considered as a key text – one of the most important.

(2) Matthew 5:3-11. Among the Beatitudes, Francis extols especially the one about the persecuted, and the one about loving one's enemies. These thoughts entered deeply into Francis's spirit and recur frequently in his writings.¹⁷ Even the Beatitude concerning the pure or the clean of heart, although quoted verbatim only once, is frequently present according to its meaning. Iriarte writes that this theme had become almost an obsession.¹⁸

(3) Matthew 20:25–28. This passage deals with those who are the greater becoming servants and slaves: "maior... sit vester minister" ("Who wishes to become great... shall be your servant"); "primus... erit vester servus" ("Who wishes to be first... shall be your slave"); "filius hominis non venit ministrari, sed ministrare" ("The Son of Man has not come to be served but to serve." St. Francis cites these passages three times, but never word for word:

Adm IV 1: "Non veni ministrari, sed ministrare, dicit Dominus" ("I did not come to be served but to serve, says the Lord");

 RegNB IV 6: "Et recordentur ministri et servi, quod dicit Dominus: Non veni ministrari, sed ministrare" ("I have not come to be served, but to serve");

- In fact, St. Francis cites verbatim only non ministrari, sed ministrare

("not to be served, but to serve");

— RegNB V 9-12: "Similiter omnes fratres non habeant in hoc potestatem vel dominationem inter se. Sicut enim dicit Dominus in evangelio: Principes gentium domintur eorum; et qui maiores sunt, potestatem exercent in eos, non sic erit inter fratres. Et quicumque voluerit inter eos maior fieri, sit eorum minister et servus" ("Similarly, all the brothers should not hold power or dominion, least of all among themselves. For, as the Lord says in the Gospel: The rulers of the peoples have power over them, and their leaders rule over them; it shall not be like this among the brothers. And whoever among them wishes to become the greater should be their minister and servant").

The expression "minister and servant," applied especially to the superiors, recurs at least sixty times in the *Rules* and the *Testament*. It, too, must be

considered a key idea.¹⁹

(b) St. Luke

Since Luke has been the least mentioned so far, it is opportune to make him better known. We shall treat Luke 9 and 10 (the sending forth of the apostles and disciples); Luke 18:19 (only God is good); Luke 22:26 (let the greater be as the lesser); and Luke 1:31–35 (the annunciation by the angel).

(1) Luke 9:3-5; 10:1-9. The sending forth of the apostles and disciples. It is now considered very probable that St. Francis had listened to the reading of the sending forth of the seventy-two disciples (Luke 10:1-9) at the moment of his own Gospel vocation. According to the Missals (Gospel Books) of that time, Luke 9 and 10 were read more than once, but Matthew 10 was never read.²⁰ Luke 10 was read on the feasts of the evangelists and in the Common of the Apostles. According to the Breviaries of St. Francis and of St. Clare, Luke 10 was the Gospel on the feast of St. Luke, October 18.²¹

In support of the Gospel reading having been Luke 10, we also have *First Celano* 22, which speaks of the Gospel of the sending forth of the disciples; so also the Treatise on the Miracles of the Blessed Francis, numbers 25–26.²² Jacques de Vitry cites instead the passages of Luke 9 and 10.²³ The strongest proof is without doubt chapter 14 of the *Earlier Rule* on the apostolic mission of the friars in the world. In this chapter, the text and the ideas of Luke 9 and 10 clearly dominate. Each of the individual texts is found exclusively in Luke, with one exception found only in Matthew (5:39– not resisting evil), the sense of which is also in Luke.²⁴ The passages from Luke are cited from memory, not word for word, and accommodated to the life-style of the friars. Note also that in the *Later Rule*, Luke 9 and 10 are cited three times, while Matthew 10 only once.²⁵

Egger explains that Francis discovered the heart or nucleus of the apostolic mission and of the Sermon on the Mount (as the exegetes even today interpret it) – without gloss, simply: to go into the world, proclaiming peace without resisting evil, without anything of their own (that is, without possessions, without defenses, without power). Thus chapter 14 of the *Earlier Rule* says: Carry nothing for the journey (Luke 9:3), proclaim peace (Luke 10:5), do not resist evil (Matt. 5:39), and even offer the other cheek (Luke 6:39), that is, peace without any violence or human defense whatsoever. This is the new radicalism of the Gospel according to the letter and the spirit.²⁶

(2) Luke 18:19. In its Gospel form, the phrase "only God is good" is: "But Jesus said to him: Why do you call me good? No one is good but only God." This passage is never quoted word for word, but five times according to its gist: "Who alone is good; (you) who alone are good." It is an idea that is very familiar to Francis and recurs spontaneously like a refrain in his various writings, and always in the context of God, the source of all that is good,

the only good, to whom all good things must be given back with thanks and

praise. It is truly another key idea.27

(3) Luke 22:26. The text of the Vulgate reads: "Vos autem non sic: sed qui maior est in vobis, fiat sicut minor" ("But not so with you. On the contrary, let him who is the greatest among you become as the least"). The text is also found in Matthew 20, but the word 'least' (minor) is missing. Matthew speaks of 'greatest' (maior) and of 'slave' (servus) and 'servant' (minister). The context of Luke is that of serving at table, as in John 13 (the Last Supper).

Francis cites this passage from Luke two times, but never verbatim: RegNB V 12: "Et qui maior est inter eos fiat sicut minor" ("And whoever is the greater among them should become like the lesser"). And: 2EpFid 42: "Cui autem obedientia commissa est et qui habetur maior, sit sicut minor et aliorum fratrum servus" ("The one to whom obedience has been entrusted and who is esteemed as greater should be as the lesser and the servant of the

other brothers").29

The term *minor* becomes very important for St. Francis. As we know, he called his order *fratres minores*. For him, *minor* was the opposite of *maior* and meant the least, the smallest, the servant of all, as he willingly called himself, the last and subject to all creatures. This "name" has truly become the name of his order. In the *Earlier Rule* he wrote: "And no one should be called Prior, but all generally should be called Friars Minor. And the one should wash the feet of the others" (John 13:14). And again in the *Earlier Rule*: "Instead, they should be the lesser ones and subject to all who are in the same house."³⁰

First Celano, number 38, says that these words of the primitive Rule suggested the name of the brotherhood to Francis.³¹ Francis turned down the name pauperes minores ("lesser poor ones") as noted by Burchard of Ursberg. Already in 1216, Jacques de Vitry spoke of minores, even in reference to the Poor Clares.³²

(4) Luke 1:30–35. In the angel's annunciation to Mary there are many expressions very dear to Francis and Clare, as for example: Son of the Most High; Holy Spirit, the Holy One; womb of Mary; Mary-Servant, and so forth. Sister Chiara Augusta Lainati has indicated the importance of this theme, and she and the sisters of the protomonastery in Assisi are studying it.³³

Conclusion: One clear fact emerges: In Francis's writings there are a number of Synoptic texts, cited more or less verbatim only a few times, but often used quite loosely, personally, according to their gist, and accommodated to the concrete life of the friars. All are fundamental concepts deeply assimilated by St. Francis, as for example: Do to your neighbor what you would have done to you (Matt. 7:12); blessed are the persecuted and those who love their enemies (Matt. 5:10–44); blessed are the pure of heart

(Matt. 5:8); the greater should be as the slaves and servants (Matt. 20:25–28); to go through the world as disciples of Christ without human means, for the sake of peace (Luke 9–10); God alone is good (Luke 18:19); the greater shall be the lesser (Luke 22:26). All this is the marrow of the evangelical Franciscan spirit. These passages certainly were not added by Caesar of Speyer.

3. St. John the Evangelist in the Writings of St. Francis

The importance of the influence of St. John on the writings of St. Francis has recently become the target of a more profound and systematic study. Unfortunately, the principal studies up to now are still in manuscript form, such as Nguyen-Van-Khanh's (the influence of St. John in general), Gallant's (The Influence of John 17 in the Office of the Passion), Walter Viviani's (John 17 in The Writings of Francis). We shall confine ourselves to the analytical area, without presenting a still-premature synthesis. After a brief look at John in the medieval context, we shall speak of the studies already done and of their concrete results regarding the influence of St.

John on the writings of Francis.

We find in the Middle Ages some fairly typical evidence of the presence of St. John in the context of the time. Together with the Savior, St. John the Evangelist was, with St. John the Baptist, co-patron of the Lateran Basilica. The two saints were very popular among the laity in medieval times. Both had two liturgical feasts which in the liturgical calendar held positions only slightly below those of St. Peter and St. Paul. It should be noted that in the writings of Francis their names appear together before those of St. Peter and St. Paul. Together before those of St. Peter and St. Paul. Some very well-known persons of the time were very devoted to the Apostle John, such as Aelred of Rievaulx (an English Cistercian), Marie d'Oignies, mother of the Beguines and spiritual daughter of Jacques de Vitry, Elizabeth of Thuringia, and Joachim of Fiore. The Cathari, on the one hand, were enemies of the apostle as a strong defender of the true incarnation of the Word; nevertheless they loved him as a friend, since, according to them, he was a spirit, like Jesus and Mary.

For Thomas of Celano, Francis is the new evangelist, a title taken from the Divine Office in honor of St. John the Evangelist. For St. Bonaventure, St. Francis as the new evangelist is a basic idea; he was already prefigured in Revelation as the angel of the sixth seal (think of the sign of the Tau).³⁷

But our most concrete and precise reference is found in the very life of Francis. At the end of his life, as Francis celebrated the Last Supper with his brothers as Jesus did, Francis asked that chapter 13 of John's Gospel be read, and probably all the other chapters up to the passion of Jesus. He had these chapters read from a manuscript of the Gospel (not from a Missal or from a Gospel Lectionary or from a Breviary). A unique fact is recorded in

the life of the saint:³⁸ There was a manuscript of the Gospel in the hands of Francis and the friars . . . after the one given away to the poor!

But now let us take each individual passage in detail. The most certain and important results obtained up to now are the following.

(1) John 4:23-24: God is Spirit and must be adored in spirit and in truth.

The idea comes up three times in the writings of Francis.³⁹ The most typical text says: "Let us love God, therefore, and adore Him with a pure heart and a pure mind because He who seeks this above all else has said: 'The true worshipers will adore the Father in spirit and in truth'. For all those who worship Him are to worship Him in the spirit of truth."

Francis never quotes the text entirely word for word. He always changes or adds something. Here, before the scriptural passage in question, he adds super omnia ("above all else"). Next he adds Omnes enim ("for all those"). Then at the end he makes the change "in the spirit of truth" instead of "in spirit and truth". The expression Spiritus veritatis ("the Spirit of truth") is typically and exclusively Johannine. Other aspects are typical of Francis: The saint identifies praying with a pure heart and mind with prayer in spirit and truth; and, moreover, he always unites this text to the one on the need of praying always, and especially the Our Father. Finally, in the Later Rule he clearly says that praying always with a pure heart is the fruit of the Spirit of the Lord desirable above all things (super omnia): "Instead let them pursue what they must desire above all things: to have the Spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working (sanctam eius operationem), to pray always with a pure heart."

Thus the idea of adoring in spirit and truth (or in the Spirit of truth) and of having the Spirit of the Lord, always praying with a pure heart, are intimately united and desirable above any other thing. To adore in spirit and truth, to pray always with a pure heart, is precisely the fruit, the gift of the Spirit of the Lord, Spirit of truth, and of His holy manner of working. The model for constant prayer, in spirit and truth, with a pure heart is especially the Our Father, the Our Most Holy Father, as Francis readily

states - the very same prayer of Jesus for us to the Father!

The reason for this prayer in spirit and truth is: "God is Spirit." That is, the way of being, knowing, 'seeing' and living of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, is Spirit: that is, why the Father can be 'seen', that is, believed, loved, and adored in His Son through the Spirit, as Francis explains in a thoroughly Johannine manner in Admonition 1:43 "God is Spirit, and no one has ever seen God. Therefore, He cannot be seen except in the Spirit since it is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh does not offer anything." Therefore, God is Spirit, is Life, and gives 'divine' life to us.

(2) John 6:64: "My words are spirit and life" ("Verba quae ego locutus sum vobis spiritus et vita sunt").

This thought recurs five times in the writings of St. Francis: twice, verbatim, in the *Earlier Rule*, but without the personal pronoun 'I'. In this context, as in John's Gospel, it refers to the very words of Christ.⁴⁴

On the other hand, on three occasions we find only the words "spirit and life", applied directly to the divine words, as spoken or proclaimed by Francis or by theologians/preachers. This is a proof that Francis identified the ministry of the divine word with the ministry or the mission of Christ, the very Word of God. That is, the divine words are always present, proclaimed by the church everywhere, instilling divine life – spirit and life. The saint explains this intimate, mysterious and salvific meaning of the divine words at work today and always: "I have proposed to set before you in this present letter and message the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Word of the Father, and the words of the Holy Spirit, which are spirit and life." He words of the Holy Spirit, which are spirit and life."

Hence, this Letter of Francis to the Faithful, in which he uses the divine words (and also his own), bears the words of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, which are spirit and life. In fact, the very Word of the Father – a term specific to John⁴⁷ – proclaims and communicates the words of the Father and of the Holy Spirit which, as such, are spirit and life; that is, they instill and communicate the Trinitarian divine life, through the working of the Holy Spirit.

As Francis says in *Admonition* 1: "It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh does not offer anything." These words of John are followed immediately in his Gospel by: "The words which I have spoken to you are spirit and life." ⁴⁸

In his *Testament* he writes: "And we should honor and respect all theologians and those who minister the most holy divine words as those who minister spirit and life to us." 49

In Admonition 7, Francis uses the words of St. Paul to explain the same mystery: "The letter kills but the spirit gives life." That is, the letters or the divine words without the life-giving spirit of the divine letter, are dead and they kill, but the religious who follow the spirit of the divine word, which vivifies, which gives divine life, live this Spirit and life, giving this gift back to God, the giver of all good things: "Those religious are killed by the letter who do not wish to follow the spirit of Sacred Scripture (litterae), but only wish to know the words and how to explain them to others. And those are given life by the spirit of Sacred Scripture who do not refer to themselves any text that they know or seek to know, but, by word and example, return everything to the most high Lord God to whom every good belongs." 50

For St. Francis, the divine words, wherever they are found, always

contain the actual and real God-Spirit, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Trinitarian divine life, if we receive them in the Spirit.

(3) John 10:1-6: The Good Shepherd, the sacrificed Lamb (Revelation).

The Good Shepherd, who gives His life for His sheep and prays for them to His Father at the Last Supper, returns four times in the writings of St. Francis in the context of the prayer of Jesus at the Last Supper: in the two Letters to the Faithful and in the two versions of the Earlier Rule. Once, the text is taken directly from the Divine Office.⁵¹ The other passages on the Good Shepherd are not real citations from John, but rather loose references from memory to the basic idea of the evangelist. Note that according to St. John, and also to Francis, the Christ of the High Priestly Prayer is really the Good Shepherd, the Lamb sacrificed on the cross. The saint was profoundly impressed by the images of the Good Shepherd and of the immolated and exalted Lamb, to whom, according to Revelation, is due all honor, glory and blessing. Many times each day he prayed in the Praises To Be Said at All the Hours: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive . . ." and "Worthy are you, O Lord our God, to receive praise, glory and honor and blessing."52 And also in the Exhortation to the Praise of God as well: "The Lamb who was slain is worthy to receive praise, glory, and honor."53 Finally, in the Second Version of the Letter to the Faithful, the Good Shepherd, who prayed for His sheep at the Last Supper and gave His life on the cross, is identified with the sacrificed Lamb of Revelation, to whom is due praise, glory, honor and blessing.54

In Admonition 6, Francis recalls the Good Shepherd, who suffered for His sheep on the cross; therefore, His sheep follow Him in tribulation.⁵⁵ St. Clare, too, celebrated the Lamb standing before the throne of God and wanted to follow the Lamb wherever He went and wanted to be united as spouse to the spotless Lamb, who takes away the sins of the world.⁵⁶

(4) John 13: The washing of feet at the Last Supper.

Wishing to imitate the Lord, Francis celebrated the Last Supper, asking that chapter 13 of John's Gospel, on the washing of feet, be read.⁵⁷ Francis seems to have been profoundly struck by this gesture of Christ, since he never forgot the title "Lord and teacher," which Christ gave to Himself at that moment, according to John 13:13–14. Francis repeated this title many times daily, in the antiphon Holy Virgin Mary of the *Office of the Passion*: "Your most holy beloved Son, Lord and teacher." ⁵⁸

The example of Jesus, Lord and teacher, remained the divine-human model for the friars, servants and ministers to each other. In the *Earlier Rule* Francis writes: "And no one should be called Prior, but all generally

should be called Friars Minor. And the one should wash the feet of the others." In *Admonition* 4, the office of superior is identified with that of washing the feet of the others. To be servant-minister-lesser one makes one think of the washing of feet.⁵⁹

(5) John 14:6: "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

These words of Jesus, spoken in the farewell discourse, are cited verbatim three times by St. Francis. Admonition 1 begins a profound explanation along Johannine lines, in which Francis wants to prove that Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, in the sense that in the Spirit, we follow, see, believe, love, and live Christ, as the Son of the Father, the God-Man, especially in the Eucharist. Admonition 1 begins: "The Lord Jesus says to His disciples: I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would also have known my Father; and from now on you will know him and have seen Him. Philip says to Him: Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us. Jesus says to him: Have I been with you for so long a time and you have not known me? Philip, whoever sees me, sees also my Father."

The citation is almost word for word and is the longest among those that St. Francis has taken from St. John, without notable changes or omissions. The nucleus consists in seeing – in the Johannine sense of knowing, believing, loving, living – Christ in the Spirit, since God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, is "Spirit"; that is, as true Son of the Father, in the unity of His divine Person, as God-Man. "Seen" in this way, oculis spiritualibus, ("with the eyes of the Spirit"), Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. And received this way, that is, in the Spirit of the Lord, who lives in the faithful, in His Body

and Blood, He is eternal life in a true and vital sense.

There are so many texts, allusions, and Johannine terms in this Admonition 1, that an analysis forces us either to admit Francis as the only author, or to refuse to admit the authenticity of the writing. There are at least a dozen texts and ideas from John, such as: way, truth, and life; seeing-knowing-believing, in the sense of loving-living; God is Spirit; no one sees God; the Spirit lives in us; it is the Spirit who gives life, the flesh accomplishes nothing; to see Christ is to see the Father; to know the truth through faith in the Son of God; eternal life (in the Eucharist); coming from the bosom of the Father. In this way Admonition 1 becomes the most Johannine writing of Francis. It is remarkable, finally, how the Eucharistic life is seen and lived as Trinitarian life, in which we receive Christ, Son of the Father in the Holy Spirit.⁶²

It is difficult to measure the influence of this Johannine idea of the way, the truth and the life on the writings of the saint. We know, however, that the idea of the "way" and of the "truth" and, especially, of the "life" is very

familiar to Francis. It may surprise us to learn that the word "life" is found sixty-three times in the writings, while the word "rule" only twenty-six times. And this "life" is Christ in the Gospel. It is worthwhile recalling this passage from the *Earlier Rule*: "The words which I have spoken to you are spirit and life. I am the way, the truth, and the life. Let us, therefore, hold onto the words, the life, and the teaching and the holy Gospel of Him who humbled Himself to ask His Father for us and to make His name known to us, saying...." There follows the prayer from John 17.63

(6) John 14:23: The coming and the dwelling of the Father and the Son in us through the Holy Spirit (see John 14:16-18; 1 John 3:24, 4:13).

The idea of the Trinitarian indwelling is repeated four times in the writings, specifically in the two Letters to the Faithful, and in the two versions of the Earlier Rule, always within a Johannine context and with words taken from John, but never citing them verbatim. Instead, the idea is assimilated and deepened in a personal and expressly Trinitarian way, even applying this Trinitarian intimacy to the Blessed Mother, to St. Clare and the Poor

Clares, to the penitents, and to all the friars. Here are the texts:

(a) First Version of the Letter to the Faithful, verses 6 to 13. The context speaks about true penitents, called happy and blessed: "... since the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them and He will make His home and dwelling among them. They are children of the heavenly Father ... spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ ... by the Holy Spirit." This is followed by a hymn to the Trinitarian intimacy in our soul, terminating in the joy of having such a Brother and Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, "who gave up His life for His sheep and who prayed to the Father saying ..." There follows the passage from the Last Supper in John 17.64

(b) The Second Version of the Letter to the Faithful, verses 47 to 56. The context deals with those who are poor and humble, servants and subject to every human creature, because upon them "the Spirit of the Lord will rest and He will make His home and dwelling among them. They will be children... spouses, brothers and mothers..." and so forth as above. 65

(c) The Earlier Rule, chapter 22, numbers 27 to 56. The context speaks about loving, serving, adoring the Lord God with a pure heart and a pure mind: "And let us always make a home and dwelling place there for Him who is the Lord God Almighty, Father and Son and Holy Spirit . . . "66 Then the text continues with adoration in spirit and truth, ending with the prayer of Jesus at the Last Supper in John 17.

(d) Another Fragment, Earlier Rule, numbers 16 to 29, contains the same

theme.67

(e) Regarding the Blessed Mother, St. Clare and the Poor Clares: Their Trinitarian and ecclesial-Marian relationships have been the object of a

perceptive study by Leonard Lehmann in his thesis on universalism in the prayers of St. Francis, presented to the Franciscan Institute of Spirituality at the Antonianum. The Johannine inspiration seems clear enough.⁶⁸

Without a doubt, we find ourselves here close to a Francis who reveals to us, in an exceptional way, the secret of his mystical soul, explaining in depth the Trinitarian life in the soul, assimilating the Johannine words and ideas, and expressing them boldly, applying them to all in the church after the model of the Blessed Mother, Virgin made church – an unsurpassable evangelical ideal.

(7) John 17: Jesus' prayer at the Last Supper.

This prayer of Jesus, repeated four times in the two versions of the Letter to the Faithful and of the Earlier Rule, 69 always in a loose, personal way, never verbatim, reveals to us the most extensive and intimate communion of Francis with the Gospel of John. John 17 is the principal source of the saint's prayer. Octavian Schmucki arrived at this conclusion after a penetrating study, as has Walter Viviani, a student at our Franciscan Institute of Spirituality at the Antonianum, in his recent thesis John 17 in the Writings of St. Francis of Assisi, published in Rome in 1979. The author himself should speak on this theme, because his study is the best that exists of the subject. Let me present (I do so with great joy) some of his conclusions.

(a) Of the 125 citations from John dispersed throughout the various writings of the saint, fifty-four are from John 17. The most frequent quote, "Holy Father" (or "Most Holy Father"), occurs twenty-two times, of

which thirteen are in the Office of the Passion.

(b) A special merit of Viviani is his profound analytical study of the individual texts of St. John used by Francis, especially John 17:11 ("Holy Father"). He has thoroughly researched the frequent and typical use of this text in the Office of the Passion. He shows that at least eleven times Francis altered the text of the psalms, changing "God" and "Lord" to "(Most) Holy Father"; and that twice Francis inserted the words "Holy Father" into the Biblical text. Five times "Holy Father" is accompanied by the title "King," added once by Francis. Five times "Holy Father" is accompanied by "My": "My Holy Father". 70 In this fashion, Francis unites himself intimately in the psalms with the Lord Jesus, Son of the Father, king of heaven and humble sufferer on earth. And thus there always appears, with the terrible cross, the glory of the Son, united with His Holy Father during the moments of greatest suffering. The author has discovered, through a detailed analysis, both in the Office of the Passion and in the prayer of the Last Supper, a key to the biblical reading of the saint, which is: the immersing or identifying (Christification) of the praying-Francis with the praying-Christ.⁷¹

(c) Among the most important aspects of Johannine influence are: the revelation of the name of the Father or of His intimate self, that of being "Holy Father", love and charity or affection, total gift to the Son; the intimate union of Father and Son, to which all are called ("That all may be one . . . as we are one"); the intercommunion in living and in acting of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Creator, Redeemer, Savior, seen and deeply lived by the saint; the glory of the Son, in His unity of Person with the Father, during His entire passion and death; fraternal communion; the meaning of nomina ("nouns") and verba ("verbs") in the writings of Francis and John.⁷²

(d) Let us glance also at some new and original views proposed by the author, that is, two hypotheses which he sets forth quite well. The first is the testament-like character of the writings of Francis with regard to John 17. The second is the identification of the saint with Christ Himself, in that Francis makes his own the prayers and words of Jesus, praying them in his own name and applying them directly to his penitents and friars. It is also how he prayed the Office of the Passion in regard to Christ. In this way the prayer of Jesus at the Last Supper becomes the farewell prayer, the spiritual

testament of the saint to his friends-penitents-brothers.⁷³

(e) Among the new discoveries of the author, we note with pleasure the text of John 17:3 ("The only true God") cited four times by Francis, in his usual loose fashion, which has not been noticed by anyone else up to now: "That they may know you, the only true God," that is, the Father. It is interesting also that the author shows that the texts "God is love" (John 4:8–16) and "My words are spirit and life," occur four times in the context of John 17 in the writings of Francis. It is another proof that Francis understood the context of John 17 very well."

(f) For my part, I would like to add the following remarks. The Christ of St. John and of St. Francis in chapter 17 is the Good Shepherd, the sacrificed and exalted Lamb, our Brother. For St. Francis, He is also and

expressly our Son, an expression not found in John.

Secondly, the mission of the Son, in which the disciples in general, the penitents and the friars in particular, as well as the rest of the faithful, participate, is threefold: the Son, proclaiming the name or the very Person of the Holy Father, is sent to make everyone sharers in His filial union with the Father: "That they may be one as we are one." Then in fraternal union among themselves as brothers in Christ, modelled on the union of Christ with the Father: "That they may be one as we are one." And finally in apostolic union with all those in the world who accept their word: "That they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me . . . that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them." All these texts of St. John are in the writings of Francis!

Third, up to now, Franciscan authors have dealt rather with the apostolic, external, missionary mission, while the internal, filial and fraternal mission was bypassed in silence. Instead, St. Francis based his mission profoundly on that of the Son of the Holy Father, according to John 17.75

(g) Independently of Viviani's studies and mine, Lehmann has arrived at a similar conclusion, starting, however, from the universalism of Francis in his prayers. After a careful analysis, the author concludes that this apostolic missionary universalism of Francis was inspired by the intimate, mystical Trinitarian communion in the Johannine sense.⁷⁶

(8) 1 John 4:8-16: God is love.

This passage appears nine times in the writings, but never verbatim; six times in the form "In the love which is God" (once, holy love); three times as: "You are love, charity", "You are our love", "You are love". The idea is also found in the two Letters to the Faithful, in the Earlier Rule, in the Praises

of God, and in the Prayer Inspired by the Our Father.77

The phrase, exclusively of the Apostle John and equally dear to Francis, is used as a refrain. Without a doubt we detect in it a key idea of the saint, which strongly influenced his spirituality and that of his order. Viviani describes it as follows: "It is a phrase which almost has the value of a signature, of a personal seal of Francis, who makes use of it to ask for the things that are closest to his heart, the things which represent his most profound and supreme desires: In the love which is God."78

(9) Revelation 4:8-9, 11; 5:9, 12-13: Glory, honor, and blessing to God and the Lamb; Holy, Holy, Holy... (see 7:12; 19:5: "Give praise.").

Revelation is cited at least twenty times in the writings of St. Francis, especially in the Earlier Rule, the Praises To Be Said at All the Hours, the Praises of God, and the Canticle of Brother Sun. It is no surprise that Revelation aroused the interest of the saint, since this book, as well as it visionary author, was very well known in the Middle Ages. The extraordinary influence of Revelation in Francis's writings, especially in the Office of the Passion, has become more evident through recent studies.⁷⁹

We shall now speak of a very clear and important point – the refrain "Praise, glory, honor and blessing", taken from Revelation and repeated so many times in the writings of the saint. We are dealing with the hymn of praise sung in the heavenly liturgy to God and to the Lamb, in which

Francis participates in his own prayer and in his life.

Even here, as elsewhere, note that Revelation is quoted freely, from memory, and as intimately assimilated by St. Francis. The words come

spontaneously to Francis's lips on so many occasions when he feels the irresistible need to praise, glorify, honor, bless and thank the Lord, source of all good, the only and highest good. But we hardly ever find a verbatim citation of Revelation 5:12.

This hymn of praise is already present in the Exhortation to the Praise of God, a writing which Esser recently placed among the authentic writings in his critical edition. Striking indeed are these repetitions of praise, glory, honor and blessing, and the frequently repeated "praise [Him]" (seven times) and "bless [Him]" (three times). This hymn of praise becomes solemn and Trinitarian in the full sense in the Praises To Be Said at All the Hours: "Holy, holy, holy Lord...." Alongside the "Let us praise and exalt Him above all," taken from Daniel as it is used in the liturgy and repeated ten times, we have the substance of Revelation gathered in this "Praise, glory, honor and blessing to the Lord our God on the throne and to the sacrificed Lamb, together with all of creation in heaven and on earth." And in the prayer after the Praises, in honor of God all-powerful, most holy, most high and supreme good, every good, the total good, who alone is good, there is once again repeated "all praise, all glory, all thanks, all honor, all blessings and all good things. Fiat. Fiat. Amen."

It should be pointed out, as Lehmann has clearly proven, that Francis uses the word "praise" more frequently than John and often adds the word

"all" to underline the universality of his own prayer.83

The special importance of these *Praises To Be Said at All the Hours* becomes very clear when one realizes that they were to be recited at all the hours of the Divine Office and before all the hours of the *Office of the Passion*, preceded by the Our Most Holy Father. How many times each day would these hymns of praise, glory, honor and blessing have been sung!

In our notes we have indicated at least a dozen texts in which the words "praise, glory, honor and blessing," or similar words, are constantly

repeated.84

The Canticle of Brother Sun captures in the very first verse the spirit of Revelation: "Most high, all-powerful, good Lord, yours are the praises, the glory, and the honor and all blessing." "All" is added by Francis to the text taken from Revelation. Striking also is the phrase repeated eight times: "Praised be you, my Lord" and the final conclusion "Praise and bless my Lord, and thank Him and serve Him with great humility."85

(10) John 14-16: The Holy Spirit the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth.

The word "Paraclete", proper to St. John, who uses it five times, occurs seven times in the writings of St. Francis. 86 "The Spirit of Truth", who is the same Paraclete, appears four times in John. Francis knew both expressions from the liturgy and from the Gospel of John. It is clear that chapters 14 to

16 of John, where these expressions are used,⁸⁷ were familiar to Francis. If we consider the fact that the saint had named Mary Most Holy as the "Advocate" of the order,⁸⁸ a title close enough to that of the Holy Spirit (see 1 John 2:1), it is not improbable that Francis might have taken this concept directly from St. John. Further, we know that he had chosen the Holy Spirit to be the minister general of the order.⁸⁹

The phrase "Holy Spirit the Paraclete" was used by Francis five times in a Trinitarian context. Twice, however, the phrase seems to be used as an attribute of the Third Person, understood as spouse of the soul: "Oh, how holy, consoling, beautiful and wondrous it is to have such a Spouse!" 90

(11) John 8:12, 41-44: I am the Light of the world; you are children of the devil, of darkness (the devil wants to inhabit and blind everyone . . .).

The Johannine concept of Christ as the true light, and of the dwelling in us of Christ, the wisdom of the Father in the Spirit, recurs five times in the writings⁹¹ and seems to be profoundly inspired by John 8. The study of NguyenVan-Khanh has shown this quite convincingly.⁹²

In conclusion, the Johannine influence is clear, but more studies are need

in this area.

4. The Psalms in the Writings of St. Francis

Today we can appreciate the importance of the psalms in the life of St. Francis, thanks to the recent studies of Schmucki and Gallant and many others, 93 particularly on the Office of the Passion. In this study, we are

concerned only with the following:

(a) St. Francis knew many psalms by heart, especially from the recitation of the Divine Office. Of the thirty-five psalms we find quoted in the Office of the Passion, only three are cited without any changes, namely Psalms 12, 29, and 69. The most frequently quoted are Psalms 21 and 68. The most modified to his own devotion are Psalm 15, at Vespers of Christmas, in the Office of the Passion; Psalm 6, at None of Good Friday, in the Office of the Passion; and Psalm 7, at Vespers of Good Friday, in the Office of the Passion.⁹⁴

In all of the writings we find almost 125 quotations from, allusions to, and echoes of the psalms – a number more or less equivalent to the quotations from St. Matthew and St. John. As for the subject matter of the psalms, we find it in the Office of the Passion, the Praises of God, the Exhortation to the Praise of God, the Letters to the Faithful, the Earlier Rule and the Canticle of Brother Sun.

(b) The method of using the psalms in the liturgy is typical of the saint, even elsewhere in his writings, that is, freely, from memory, by association,

combining similar words, creating verses like mosaics gathered from different psalms, adding or taking away or fusing quotations. However, he was clearly following his own exact plan for what he wanted to achieve

in his prayer.

(c) Besides the psalms, assimilated, adapted, and theatrically arranged along the lines of Revelation, the *Praises To Be Said at All the Hours*, the often-repeated Glory Be to the Father, the antiphon Holy Virgin Mary, and the orations, also make up an essential part of the *Office of the Passion*. Francis's inmost purpose for the *Office of the Passion* was:

(1) To participate in or celebrate the whole mystery of salvation seen and lived per modum unius ("as one"), together with the whole church in

heaven and on earth and with all creatures (the universe);

(2) Personal and fraternal union with the eternal Son of the Holy (Most Holy) Father, God-Man, in the "now of eternity," that is, living the mysteries of His incarnation, passion and death, resurrection, ascension, coming in glory – everything taken together, in the most universal, total, even cosmic, sense possible;

(3) The Christ of the Office of the Passion is the Johannine Christ: the Lord, God Most High, Son of the Holy Father, humble servant, immolated and exalted Lamb: "The Lord has ruled from a tree;" according to Psalm 7

of the Office of the Passion: our Brother;97

(4) After the seven psalms of the Office of the Passion, the Canticle of Brother Sun could logically follow as the eighth psalm. It is the hymn of praise and blessing for the redeemed universe. In fact, this hymn is already thoroughly prepared for in the Office of the Passion by Psalm 15, Vespers of Christmas;⁹⁸

(5) After rigorous analysis, the most recent studies, such as those of Gallant, Viviani, Lehmann and Gagnan, tend to arrive at this synthesis. Certainly after such studies it becomes more and more difficult to doubt the creative and original genius of Francis and his own deep, personal and mystical insertion into the whole saving mystery of our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Father, our Brother and Son.

Without doubt, some of his profound biblical perceptions are masterpieces: Admonition 1, and the prayer of Jesus at the Last Supper, used in the Letters to the Faithful, in the Earlier Rule, and in the Office of the Passion. However, I prefer to continue the careful analysis of the particular biblical

teachings, before pulling together these magnificent syntheses.

5. The Letters of St. Peter in the Writings of Francis

In Francis's time, texts of St. John and St. Peter were read together in the liturgy of the Mass and in the Divine Office during the weeks following Easter and Pentecost. We know that the selections that were very close to

the saint's heart were part of the Easter liturgy. 99 Especially chapter 2 of the First Letter of Peter especially struck and inspired St. Francis in several basic aspects of his spirit. Let us begin with these very important texts, certainly taken from St. Peter.

(1) 1 Peter 2:21: To follow the footprints of Christ, the Shepherd, unjustly suffering for us (see 1 Peter 2:18-25).

The Petrine text is never quoted verbatim, but only according to its inmost meaning, adapted in various ways to the life of the friars who must imitate the example of Christ, our Lord, following His footprints in suffering, poverty, and humility. The words *sequi vestigia* ("to follow the footprints") occur five times, while the idea of following Christ is repeated nineteen times, and five times in St. Clare.¹⁰⁰

Note that according to Esser and others, "to follow the footprints of Christ" is the vital core of the spirituality of St. Francis and his order. It is interesting that in two pontifical documents regarding the Order of St. Clare, namely in the prologue to the *Rule* and in the *Privilege of Poverty*, the expression "to follow the footprints of Christ" is proposed as the ideal of the Poor Clares.¹⁰¹

(2) 1 Peter 2:13: to be subject to every human creature (Vulgate) for God's sake.

The text is cited almost verbatim, although Francis uses the word *subditi* instead of the Vulgate's *subiecti* ("subject"). The principal passages from the writings are: "The brothers who go [among the unbelievers] can live spiritually among them in two ways. One way is not to engage in arguments or disputes, but to be subject to every human creature for God's sake and to acknowledge that they are Christians" (*RegNB* XVI 6). And: The Spirit of the Lord will rest upon the simple, humble and pure, and upon the servants and those "subject to every human creature for God's sake" (*2EpFid* 37–48). ¹⁰²

It is clear that for Francis, to be "subject to every human creature" signified being a true brother "minor", a true penitent, on whom the Spirit of the Lord rests and in whom the Spirit abides and dwells together with the Father and the Son, so that they become sons, spouses, brothers and mothers. The idea of minority expressed here often recurs in the writings in the form of an inner and outer humility, 103 as a total availability to the Spirit of the Lord and to the Spirit of fraternal obedience to all. In the Salutation of the Virtues, the subjection or obedience to every human creature becomes even broader, indeed cosmic, making one subject even to all the animals and wild beasts. 104

(3) 1 Peter 2:11: Strangers and pilgrims.

This biblical concept, often expressed in the Old Testament, signifies for St. Francis the poverty of the pilgrim, wanderer and beggar, which frees one from everything in order to be ready to run along the way that leads to the land of the living. In chapter 6 of the *Later Rule*, and in the *Testament*, the expression implies a total expropriation in a life of poverty and humility, "without anything of one's own." 105

(4) 1 Peter 1:22 "In the obedience of charity, in the love of fraternity, love one another more earnestly with a sincere heart."

The context of Peter's letter deals clearly with fraternal charity, lived in a sincere and helpful mutual love.¹⁰⁶ St. Francis applies the idea of "loving" obedience, or charity, to perfect obedience to superiors, in patient union with the brothers, giving one's life for them, as Christ did on the cross, without ever separating oneself from them: "For this is loving obedience because it pleases God and neighbor."¹⁰⁷

In the Earlier Rule, Francis offers a profound explanation of this obedience of charity, using also an idea from St. Paul: "Nor should any brother do evil or say something evil to another; on the contrary, through the charity of the Spirit, they should voluntarily serve and obey one another. And this is the true and holy obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ." To the Pauline text (Galatians 5:13), Francis adds the phrase: "They should voluntarily serve and obey one another," an idea taken from St. Peter.

For Francis, charity and obedience are "sister" virtues. 109 Mutually obeying one another, in unlimited goodness and mercy, is more perfect than living in a hermitage. 110

The obedience of charity, this mutual service of the brothers for the love of God, based on the example of the obedience of Christ crucified, so characteristic of Francis and his lesser brothers, takes us without a doubt close to St. Peter, without excluding other biblical influences. In sum, the obedience of charity seems to be the actualization of being subject to every human creature, especially to each other in fraternal life, each as lesser brother to the other, servants and ministers to one another.

In chapter 7 of the *Earlier Rule* we find yet another application, this time in regard to all those who come to our places, welcoming even enemies and thieves, and so forth, without resisting them: not resisting evil (which we shall discuss below).

(5) 1 Peter 2-4: to bless and to do good.

In this case, we are not dealing with textual quotations, but rather with biblical allusions and echoes, which seem to be closer to St. Peter than to other Scriptural sources, whether Synoptic or Pauline. In fact, we often find such ideas as blessing instead of cursing, doing good rather than doing evil, overcoming evil by blessing and doing good, after the example of the suffering Christ, in whose footprints we must follow. The same holds true in the case of our enemies, whom we should not resist but assist. This mission of nonviolence, proclaiming peace and goodness, is that of the Beatitudes, of the Sermon on the Mount, and of the mission of the disciples in the Gospel. St. Francis has extended it and applied it concretely, clearly drawing inspiration also from St. Peter. The fraternal life of the lesser ones is strongly marked by the Petrine idea of obeying one another, of being subject to all, of blessing, of doing good and not evil to one's brothers, indeed to all fraternal creation.

It is worth noting that only St. Peter, in this context, speaks at least five times of the "brotherhood," which is to be loved and served in obedience and humility – a recurrence which is not found in any other part of the Bible, not even in St. Paul. 113 We do find this recurrence in St. Francis, in whose spirituality "fraternity" (the word and the content) is fundamental. 114

In conclusion, the special importance of the Petrine letters as a source of the biblical teachings found in Francis is quite evident. In particular, chapter 2 of the First Letter of Peter is a mine of evangelical ideas for the saint. I do not know of any other biblical writing which has had such a great importance for St. Francis, with the exception of chapter 17 of the Gospel of St. John.

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A slightly edited version of this article was published in G. Cardaropoli and M. Conti, Lettura Biblico-teologica delle Fonti Francescane (Rome, 1979), pp. 83-116.

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de san Francisco de Asís (Aranzazu, 1975); M. Conti, O.F.M., Lettura biblica della Regola francescana (Rome, 1977); Th. Matuna, O.F.M., "Comment François lit et interprète l'Ecriture," in Le projet évangélique de François d'Assise aujourd'hui (Paris, 1977), pp. 43-55; K. Esser, O.F.M., Die Opuscula des Hl. Franziskus von Assisi. Neue textkritische Edition (Rome, 1976); St. Van Dijk, O.F.M., The Ordinal of the Papal Court from Innocent III to Boniface VIII and Related Documents, completed by J.H. Walker (Fribourg, 1975); Frédéric Manns, O.F.M., "François d'Assise, Exégète," in Francesco d'Assisi nel 750^{mo} della morte (1226-1976) (Jerusalem, 1976), pp. 201-24; L. Iriarte, O.F.M.Cap., "Testi del Nuovo Testamento particolarmente cari a San Francesco," in Lau 19 (1978):261-74; Optato van Asseldonk, O.F.M.Cap., "San Giovanni Evangelista negli Scritti di S. Francesco," in Lau 18 (1977):225-55; idem, "Le Lettere di S. Pietro negli Scritti di S. Francesco," in CF 48 (1978):67-76. The manuscript studies were presented at the Catholic Institute of Paris; the thesis of Viviani at the Franciscan Institute of Spirituality at the Antonianum in Rome.

- 3. 2Cel 105; Adm XX 1-2.
- 4. Oktavian Schmucki, O.F.M.Cap., "'Ignorans et Idiota'. Das Ausmass der schulischen Bildung des Hl. Franziskus von Assisi," in *Studia HistoricoEcclesiastica*, ed. Isaac-Vásquez (Rome, 1977), pp. 283-310.
- 5. See RegNB III 7-8; RegB III 1-2.
- 6. See Esser, Die Opuscula, pp. 140, 200-1.
- 7. See San Francesco patrono d'Italia 58 (1978):80-88.
- 8. Textkritische Untersuchungen zur Regula non bullata der Minderbrüder (Grottaferrata, 1974), p. 80.
- 9. See Nguyen-Van-Khanh, Gesù Cristo, pp. 295-99.
- 10. See 2Cel 102-5; LMaior XI 2; Cousins, Bonaventure, pp. 263-64. Bonaventure writes: "Nor should it sound odd that the holy man should have received from God an understanding of the Scriptures, since through his perfect imitation of Christ he carried into practice the truth described in them and, through the abundant anointing of the Holy Spirit, had their teacher within himself in his heart."
- 11. Viviani affirms the same thing even more forcefully in his thesis.
- 12. Manns, "François d'Assise," p. 215.
- 13. Ibid., p. 216. See the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, chap. 3, no. 12.
- 14. She is citing G. Mancini, "Contemporaneità di santa Chiara," in Santa Chiara d'Assisi. Studi e cronaca del VII centenario, 1253–1953 (Assisi, 1954) p. 38.
- 14a. RegNB IV 4. The passage continues with the words: "That which you do not wish to be done to you, do not do to another." The text is freely quoted from the Rule of St. Benedict (see Tob. 4:16).
- 15. The other texts are: Adm XVIII 1; 2EpFid 43; EpMin 17; RegNB VI 2; X 1; Fragm II 8; RegB VI 9. See Adm XVII 22; ExpPat 5. Note that four times Francis speaks of "in a similar position"; three times of "as they would wish to be served themselves"; three times he calls "blessed" those who act in this manner. In addition, the expression "to love one's neighbor as oneself" occurs four more times: 1EpFid I 1; 2EpFid 18, 26; ExpPat 5.
- 16. RegB VI 8-9.
- 17. Matt. 5:10 and 5:44 are cited 9 times all together. Generally passages from Matthew are cited only a few times, never more that 4 times, except Matt. 7:12.
- 18. Matt. 5:8. See Adm XVI; Iriarte, "Testi del Nuovo Testamento," pp. 263-64.
- 19. Adm IV 1; RegNB IV, 6; V 9-12. See Iriarte, "Testi del Nuovo Testamento," pp. 266-67: "Note that Matthew 20:28 is the most quoted scriptural passage in the documents of Vatican II," i.e., more than 10 times, together with John 13:34-35 and 15:12-13 (the new commandment of fraternal love).
- 20. See Van Dijk, *The Ordinal*, pp. 324, 386, 458 (CF 46 [1976]:345; O. Schmucki); Ilarino

da Milano, O.F.M.Cap, "Un prefrancescanesimo nell'evangelismo di S. Stefano di Muret istitutore di Grandmont," in *Miscellanea Melchor da Pobladura* (Rome, 1964), vol. 1, pp. 86–90. Stanislao da Campagnola labels the argument "highly probable, not to say conclusive," in Johannes Joergensen, *San Francesco d'Assisi* (Perugia, 1967), p. 151, no. 30.

- 21. See Campagnola, San Francesco d'Assisi, p. 151, no. 30, following the study of Ilarino da Milano cited above.
- 22. 1Cel 22; L3S 25-26, in the edition by Desbonnets, AFH 69 (1974):109-10.
- 23. Jacques de Vitry, "Historia Orientalis," in *Testimonia Minora Seculi XIII*, ed. Lemmens (Quaracchi ad Claras Aquas, 1926), pp. 81-82.
- 24. RegNB XIV.
- 25. RegB II 13 (Luke 9:62: Hand to the plow); III 13 (Luke 10:5: Let them say "Peace"); III 14 (Luke 10:8: Free to eat of whatever food). Matt.10:22 (Whoever perseveres . . .) is found in RegB X 12.
- 26. W. Egger, "Den Herrn in den Schriften suchen," in Bibel und Kirche, 1976, pp. 122-25. He cites G. Theissen, "Wanderradikalismus. Literatursoziologische Aspekte der Überlieferung von Worten Jesu im Urchristentum," in ZTHK 70 (1973):241-71.
- 27. RegNB XVII 18; Fragm I 55; RegNB XXIII 9; 2EpFid 62; LaudHor 11.
- 28. RegNB V 12. The passage from Luke follows upon that from Matt. 20:26b. Note the use of et ("and") and inter eos ("among them"), typical expressions of St. Francis.
- 29. 2EpFid 42.
- 30. RegNB VI 3; RegNB VII 2. See Iriarte, "Testi del Nuovo Testamento," pp. 269-70.
- 31. Omnibus, p. 260: "For he wrote in the rule: 'and let them be lesser brothers', and when these words were spoken, indeed in that same hour, he said: 'I wish that this fraternity should be called the Order of Friars Minor.'"
- 32. See Burchard, in *Omnibus*, p. 1605. See also Jacques de Vitry, "Testimonia Minora" (*Omnibus*, p. 1608): "... a great number of men and women who... are called Friars Minor and Sisters Minor."
- 33. Chiara Augusta Lainati, O.S.C., "Una 'lettura' di Chiara d'Assisi attraverso le fonti," in *Approccio storico-critico alle fonti francescane*, edd. G.C. and U.C. (Rome, 1979), pp. 155–77.
- 34. See n. 2 above. Without doubt the most perceptive author is Nguyen-VanKhanh, followed by Viviani. There is also a study, still in manuscript form, by J. Priard, O.F.M., Les influences johanniques dans les Ecrits de François d'Assise (Lyon 1970). Some authors, such as López, Garrido, Azzimonti, and Nguyen-Van-Khanh, speak of the basic tension between the spirit and the letter as a central aspect of the Johannine influence on the writings of Francis: It is the Spirit of the Lord who gives life to the letter of Sacred Scripture (and of the Rule); without this Spirit, every letter is dead or letter of the letter of Sacred Scripture (and of the Rule); without this Spirit, every letter is dead or
- 35. RegNB XXIII 6.
- See Optatus van Asseldonk, "San Giovanni Evangelista," cited in n. 2 above, pp. 251– 53.
- 37. Ibid, p. 253. See Damien Vorreux, O.F.M., A Franciscan Symbol: The Tau, trans. Marilyn Archer, O.S.F. and Paul Lachance, O.F.M. (Chicago, 1979), pp. 39ff.
- 38. 2Cel 217; 1Cel 110.
- 39. RegNB XXII 26-31; Fragm I 15-19; 2EpFid 19-21; Adm I 5.
- 40. 2EpFid 19-21. See n. 39 above.
- 41. John 14-16: This Spirit of truth is the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.
- 42. RegB X 8-9.
- 43. Adm I 6-7. "To see" God, for St. John, explained well by St. Francis here, is to believe, to know, to love or "to live" God, the Son of the Father in the Spirit, i.e., God is Spirit, He is Life; it is the Spirit who vivifies, gives divine life . . .

- 44. RegNB XXII 39; Fragm I 25.
- 45. 1EpFid I 2, 21; 2EpFid 3; Test 13.
- 46. 2ĒpFid 3. See n. 45 above. In 1EpFid II 19 we read: "In the love which is God (1 John 4:16), we beg all those whom these letters reach to accept with kindness and a divine love the fragrant words of our Lord Jesus Christ which are written above. And those who do not know how to read should have them read to them frequently. And, since they are spirit and life (John 6:64), they should preserve them together with their holy manner of working even to the end." Esser, however, removed this passage from 2EpFid.
- 47. 1 John 1:1-14; Rev. 19:13. See 1 John 1:1.
- 48. John 6:64.
- 49. Test 13.
- 50. Adm VII.
- 51. I.e. "I am the Good Shepherd who feed my sheep, and I lay down my life for my sheep." See RegNB XXII 32; Fragm I 19; 1EpFid I 13; 2EpFid 56.
- 52. LaudHor 3 and 2. The Praises To Be Said at All the Hours were said before each of the hours of the Divine Office and of the Office of the Passion.
- 53. ExhLD 15.
- 54. After the prayer of John 17, there immediately follows: "To Him..." i.e., the Good Shepherd: "Let every creature in heaven, on earth, in the sea and in the depths, give praise, glory, honor, and blessing to Him Who suffered so much for us, Who has given so many good things, and will do so in the future." The text is based on Rev. 5:13; 4:11.
- 55. Adm VI.
- 56. 4LAg 1-7
- 57. 1Cel 110; 2Cel 217.
- 58. OffPass, ant. 2. In the rubric we read: "First he used to say the prayer which the Lord and teacher taught us: O our most holy Father, etc."
- 59. RegNB VI 3. See Adm XIX 4.
- 60. Adm I; RegNB XXII 40; Fragm I 26.
- 61. Adm I 1-4. Francis added the word "my" to "Father".
- 62. Adm I 12: "Therefore it is the Spirit of the Lord, Who lives in His faithful, Who receives the most holy Body and Blood of the Lord." Note the frequent use of Dominus ('Lord' 7 times) and always applied to the Person of Christ; Spiritus (8 times) and spiritualis ('spiritual' one time). The Spirit of the Lord must therefore be the Spirit of Christ! The author who has done the most work on the Johannine influence on Adm I is Nguyen-Van-Khanh, Gesù Cristo, pp. 219-42. See Optato van Asseldonk, "San Giovanni Evangelista," pp. 238-40.
- 63. RegNB XXII 39-41; Fragm I 25-26. Note that Gregory IX, in the Privilege of Poverty, in order to set forth the ideals of the life of St. Clare and the Poor Clares, uses 4 Gospel texts that are typical of Francis and Clare: "Sell all you have and give it to the poor (Matt. 19:21); "Follow the footprints of Christ" (1 Pet. 2:21); "Who became poor for us" (2 Cor. 8:9); "The way, the truth, and the life" (Jn. 14:6). H. Grau points out that the text of Gregory IX is that of Innocent III (d. 1216), which is clearly authentic. See Grau, "Il 'Privilegium paupertatis' di S. Chiara. Storia e significato," in Forma Sororum 15 (1978):81-82.
- 64. 1EpFid I 6-14.
- 65. 2EpFid 48-50.
- 66. RegNB XXII 27.
- 67. Fragm I 16.
- 68. The principal texts are SalBVM; OffPass, ant. 2; FormViv; 3LAg. See L. Lehmann, O.F.M.Cap., Der Universalismus des Hl. Franziskus von Assisi im Spiegel seiner Gebete

(Rome 1979), pp. 105-27; Optato van Asseldonk, "Lo Spirito Santo negli Scritti e nella vita di Santa Chiara," in *Forma Sororum* 15 (1978):10-12.

- 69. RegNB XXII 41-45; Fragm I 27-28; 1EpFid I 13-19; 2EpFid 56-60. Note that the original texts are not always certain, because of the many variants. See Esser, Textkritische Untersuchungen zur Regula non bullata der Minderbrüder (Grottaferrata, 1974), pp. 95, 164-65; 105-6; 130-45 (chap. 22), 158-65 (hermeneutic criteria). Page 163: The choice of texts has been uncertain more than 110 times!
- 70. Viviani, John 17 in the Writings of Francis, pp. 67-68.
- 71. Ibid., p. 51.
- 72. Ibid., pp. 91–103.
- 73. Ibid., pp. 80-90.
- 74. Ibid., pp. 73-74; 86.
- 75. Nguyen-Van-Khanh, Gesù Cristo, clearly sets forth the Christ who prays for us as our Brother (p. 201-5). Fernando Uribe Escobar, O.F.M., speaks of John 17 along the lines of the itinerant-apostolic mission: Strutture e specificità della vita religiosa secondo la Regola di S. Benedetto e gli opuscoli di S. Francesco d'Assisi (Rome, 1979), pp. 325-27.
- 76. Lehmann, Der Universalismus, pp. 126-27. See Optato van Asseldonk, Altri aspetti giovannei negli Scritti di S. Francesco, soon to be published in Antonianum.
- 77. The texts: 1EpFid II 19; 2EpFid 87; RegNB XVII 5; XXII 26; Fragm I 15, 43; LaudDei 4, 6; ExpPat 2. See van Asseldonk, "San Giovanni Evangelista," cited in n. 2 above, p. 245.
- 78. Viviani, John 17 in the Writings of Francis, p. 86.
- 79. See Gallant, *Dominus regnavit a ligno*, cited in n. 2 above; Dominique Gagnan, O.F.M.Cap., L'Office de la Passion. Prière quitidienne de Saint François d'Assise, *Antonianum* 55 (1980):3–83.
- 80. ExhLD.
- 81. LaudHor, with 5 citations from Revelation: 4:8; 4:11; 4:12; 5:13; 19:5. "Worthy are you, O Lord our God, to receive praise and glory and honor and blessing" (v. 2); "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and divinity, and wisdom and strength, and honor and glory and blessing" (v. 3).
- 82. Oratio: "Omnem laudem, omnem gloriam, omnem gratiam, omnem honorem, omnem benedictionem et omnia bona. Fiat. Fiat. Amen."
- 83. Lehmann, Der Universalismus, pp. 36-39.
- 84. ExhLD; LaudHor, Prayer, see nn. 80-82 above; OffPass, Prayer; RegNB XVII 17-19; XXII 1-2; XXIII 9-11; Fragm I 54-55; 1EpCust 7; 2EpFid 61-62; CantSol 1. See Rev.
- 85. CantSol 14. See Lehmann, Der Universalismus, pp. 154-80, esp. 175-80.
- 86. 1EpFid I 12; 2EpFid 56; EpOrd 33; RegNB XXIII 5-6; SalBVM 3; Test 43.
- 87. The Paraclete: John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; 1 John 2:1. The Spirit of truth: John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13. See 1 John 4:6.
- 88. See 2Cel 198; Optato van Asseldonk, "San Giovanni Evangelista," cited in no. 2 above, pp. 243-45.
- 89. See 2Cel 193.
- 90. 1EpFid; 2EpFid. See n. 86 above.
- 91. 1EpFid I 1-14; 2EpFid 65-71; RegNB XXI 8; XXII 19-21; Fragm I 65.
- 92. Nguyen-Van-Khanh, Gesù Cristo, pp. 178-89.
- 93. O. Schmucki, "Das Leiden Christi im Leben des Hl. Franziskus," in CF 30 (1960):5-30; 129-45; 241-62; 351-97; Gallant, Dominus regnavit a ligno, in three volumes, with a critical edition of the text of the Office of the Passion; Lehmann, Der Universalismus, pp. 128-52.
- 94. Many interesting details can be found in Gallant, *Dominus regnavit a ligno*, vol. 2, pp. 315-487, cited in n. 2 above.

95. Ibid., pp. 320-64: La transformation des textes.

96. For example, the antiphon "Holy Virgin Mary" was recited at each hour as antiphon,

chapter, verse and prayer.

97. See Gallant, Dominus regnavit a ligno, cited in n. 2 above, the title of his study on the Office of the Passion. Gagnan develops the comparison between the Office of the Passion and the Canticle of Brother Sun in Antonianum, cited in n. 79 above.

98. See Psalms 6, 7, and 15 of the Office of the Passion.

99. See Optato van Asseldonk, "Le Lettere di S. Pietro," cited in n. 2 above.

100. The principal texts are RegNB XXII 2; Fragm I 1-2; 2EpFid 13; EpOrd 51-52; Adm VI 2; EpLeo 3; OffPass VII 8; XV 12; UltVol 1; RegNB I 1; XXII 32. For St. Clare, we are struck by the reference to "following the footprints": TestCl 10; 2LAg 2; 3LAg 2, 4. See van Asseldonk, "San Giovanni Evangelista," p. 69.

101. RCl, prologue; Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M.Cap., "The Privilege of Poverty," Clare of Assisi: Early Documents (Mahwah, 1988) pp. 83-84.

102. RegNB XVI 6; 2EpFid 47-48. See 1EpFid I 4-5.

- 103. RegB III 10-11; RegNB XI 1-3; Test 19; RegNB VII 2, 13-15; Fragm I 67-69.
- 104. SalVirt 14-18. See van Asseldonk, "San Giovanni Evangelista," pp. 70-72.

105. RegB VI 1; Test 24.

- 106. Van Asseldonk, "San Giovanni Evangelista," pp. 72-73.
- 107. Adm III 6. See EpOrd 46 (sanctissimi Patris obedientiam).
- 108. RegNB V 13-15.
- 109. See SalVirt 3.
- 110. EpMin 8.
- 111. See the texts in van Asseldonk, "San Giovanni Evangelista," pp. 73-75.

112. See Part 2 of this article.

113. See van Asseldonk, "San Giovanni Evangelista," pp. 74-75.

114. The fact is too well known to have to be proven. Even the word fratres ("brothers") is among the most used in the writings. he Lamb who was slain to receive power and divinity, and wisdom and strength, and

15 Coursel 14 See Lebenson, Der Universalismen, pp. 154-80, esp. 175-80. See 20 at 788; Optato van Asseldonk, "San Giovanni Evangelista," cited in no. 2 above. 94. Highed I I-14; 2Epfiel 65-71; RegVB XXI 8; XXII 19-21; Fugm 1 65. 129-15: 241-62; 351-97; Gallant, Dominus regnavat a ligno, in three volumes, with a

errical edition of the text of the Office of the Passion; Lehmann, Der Universalismis, # Many interesting details can be found in Gallant, Dominus reguevit a figure, vol. 2.