

## Translation, Meaning, and Structure of Admonition XXVII, 4-6

André Jansen

“Traduction, sens et structure de la 27<sup>e</sup> admonition v. 4-6”

*Franziskanische Studien*, no. 1 (1982): 111-127

Translated by Edward Hagman, O.F.M. Cap.

*Ubi est quies et meditatio, ibi neque sollicitudo neque vagatio.*

*Ubi est timor Domino ad atrium suum custodiendum, ibi inimicus non potest habere locum ad ingrediendum.*

*Ubi est misericordia et discretio, ibi nec superfluitas nec induratio.*

It is striking when reading Francis's Admonition XXVII to find in it certain words and expressions that appear strange. Strange because they are hardly found in his other writings, which makes them hard to interpret in the overall context. On the other hand, the use of these terms is not all that surprising to readers familiar with the monastic vocabulary of the Middle Ages. Evidently Francis is here drawing from the sources of that monastic heritage with which he seems to have been perfectly familiar. Yet the difficulty remains. For while certain basic words associated with the monastic tradition—such as humility, poverty, charity, wisdom, patience and so forth—acquired a particular nuance through and from the life of Francis and appear regularly in his writings, these words remain confined to the text of this admonition. They do not seem to be an integral part of his thought or vocabulary. Or, more precisely, their impact and meaning are incorporated in some other form. Francis seems to have come upon these words and repeated them just as they are in this admonition. But he must have found them somewhere, and here the question arises, where? Is it

possible to situate them historically so as better to bring out their meaning? For two of the words, we think we can answer in the affirmative. They are *quies* and *meditatio*. As far as the others are concerned, we think we also have enough clues to clarify their meaning.

## Meaning, Structure, and Translation of Admonition XXVII, 4-5

### Francis's Stay at Camaldoli

One event in the life of Francis not mentioned by any of his biographers is his stay with the hermits of Camaldoli in the company of Cardinal Hugolino. Visitors to Camaldoli in the Appenines are shown the hermitage where Francis stayed, as well as the chapel of the Pope, that is, the hermitage formerly occupied by Cardinal Hugolino and converted into a chapel after his election to the papacy. On the day itself, the feast of St. Francis, the hermits still sing the antiphon *Salve Sancte Pater* in memory of his stay in these places. Is this just a pious legend?

In Augustinus Florentinus we read:

At the time when the emperor Frederick was acting with increasing violence against the Roman Church, Cardinal Hugolino, bishop of Ostia, "decided to turn his back on the world," and putting aside every earthly care, in order to devote himself exclusively to meditation on heaven, he came to the Sacred Hermitage of Camaldoli *accompanied by Saint Francis*. There they lived an austere life as hermits, with incredible steadfastness of soul and body, for six months.<sup>1</sup>

The *Annales Camaldulenses* give a more detailed account:

That year [1220], according to Fortunius, "Hugolino, bishop of Ostia and Velletri and cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, went to the hermitage of Camaldoli, *accompanied by Saint Francis of Assisi*. He erected for himself a cell with a chapel at the summit of the hermitage, which even today is visited by many people. There he decided to live an austere life as a hermit, with incredible steadfastness of soul and body. For the same reason [adds our historian] Saint Francis, esteemed for all his holy deeds, also agreed to go there for six months in order to console him. During that time he lived in his cell, which is very famous and even today is called the cell of Saint Francis...." Wadding, writing in the *Annales Minorum*, agrees when he says: "As he was leaving Bologna, Francis was summoned and invited by Cardinal Hugolino to withdraw with him for several days to the hermitage

---

<sup>1</sup>Augustinus Florentinus, *Historiarum Camaldulensium libri tres* (Florence: n.p., 1575), 189.

of Camaldoli and in that religious solitude, by meditation on heavenly things, find a bit of refreshment for his soul, torn to pieces on account of many things, and for his body, exhausted from many labors and wracked from the long journey.”<sup>2</sup>

It is not really our intention to do a more detailed analysis of these sources. We only want to note Wadding’s mention of Francis’s body wracked from the long journey is probably the best point of historical support. Is this a reference to his journey to the Middle East? In that case, 1220 would indeed be the exact date.<sup>3</sup> In any case, Francis’s stay at Camaldoli has an historical basis. That is enough for us. It explains how Francis was able to learn personally about the characteristic spirituality of the Camaldolese.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, it seems to us that Admonition XXVII bears the clear mark of Francis’s stay at Camaldoli, because it contains the root words of Camaldolese spirituality, *quies* and *meditatio*.<sup>5</sup>

### ***Quies and Meditatio among the Camaldolese***

In the Camaldolese Constitutions we find a chapter specifically devoted to these two basic concepts:

---

<sup>2</sup>J. B. Miratelli and A. Costadoni, O.C., *Annales Camaldulenses OSB IV*, (Venice: n.p., 1755), 263-64. Cf. Luke Wadding, *Annales Minorum I*, 237-38.

<sup>3</sup>Wadding also mentions the dedication, which he dates *Kalendis septembris 1220*. In the tourist guide published by Camaldoli, under “The Church” we read: “The hermits enlarged the church, which was collapsing due to the ravages of time. It was consecrated August 23, 1220, by Cardinal Hugolino, later Gregory IX. Attending the ceremony was a special pilgrim, *St. Francis of Assisi*, who together with the cardinal was a guest of the hermits.”

<sup>4</sup>We should also mention the friendship between Francis and St. Reinhold, bishop of Nocera Umbra and a former Camadolese monk. Francis stayed at the famous hermitage on Monte Serra Santa near the town of Gualdo Tadino. Among those who lived in this hermitage were St. Romuald (founder of the Camaldolese), St. Peter Damian (a great figure in Camaldolese spirituality), and St. Reinhold.

<sup>5</sup>The *Assisi Compilation* 108 (FA:ED II 215) may also contain hints of his stay at Camaldoli: “Although you are traveling, nevertheless, let your behavior be as decent as if you were staying in a hermitage [*heremitorio*] or a cell because wherever we are or wherever we travel, we have a cell with us. Brother body is our cell, and the soul is the hermit who remains inside the cell to pray to God and meditate [*ad orandum Deum et meditandum*]. So if the soul does not remain in quiet and solitude [*in quiete et solitudine*] in its cell, a cell made by hands does little good to a religious.”

*Chapter XLIV - On Silence and Meditation*

Lastly, there is silent meditation in which these two, namely, the rule of silence and watchful attention to meditation, are indivisibly joined. Neither is sufficient for salvation without the other. Silence without meditation is death, like burying a person alive. Meditation without silence is useless, like shaking a person who has been buried. And so it is a great thing when rest is spiritually joined to the soul; it is the perfection of contemplation. There are three kinds of silence or rest: in deeds, on the lips, in the heart.... What good is it, I ask you, to keep silence with your lips, if the noise of vice is present in your deeds and in your heart? The house of God grows through holy silence, and the temple that is built in silence will not fall into ruin. In Solomon's temple no sound of hammer or ax was heard; so also in the temple of the quiet and peaceful soul the hammer of diabolical temptation and the ax of worldly persecution cannot prevail.... If you are silent and humble, you will not fear what flesh can do to you; for where the heavenly dweller rests, the evil one who lies in wait cannot prevail. Upon whom, he says, does my spirit rest, if not upon the one who is humble and quiet and trembles at my words? The sea says, "It is not in me." The abyss says, "It is not mine, it does not dwell in the land of those who live in delights." For the Lord does not dwell in a heart filled with noise, nor in a deceitful mind, nor in the delights of the flesh; but his place is in peace and his dwelling is in Zion. Wisdom abides in the soul that is silent and at rest or meditating.<sup>6</sup>

First, we should note that in this text *quies* and *silentium* are sometimes used as terms with their own particular meaning and sometimes as synonyms. This is because rest can be considered either as a way or a means. It refers, first of all, to exterior rest, which consists in avoiding all disturbance from outside. That is why the hermits, following the example of the desert Fathers, sought solitude and silence. Having attained rest and silence, we are inevitably confronted with interior unrest, the noise of our vices, passions and evil desires. But it is in the human heart that rest and silence must be established. So far, these words can be used as synonyms. But the term *rest* refers more to the fullness of contemplation, the interior pacification that opens our heart to God so that he may establish his

---

<sup>6</sup>*Annales Camaldulenses III*, 534-35.

dwelling there and take his rest. In that sense, *quies* refers to God's rest in our heart. But to attain this fullness, rest and silence must go hand in hand with meditation. The Constitutions strongly emphasize the close relationship between these two elements. Silence and rest, without meditation, are, for a living person, like death or a tomb. Meditation without silence is useless, like shaking a dead person. It is only when these two elements are spiritually joined that they produce their fruits: rest for the soul and access to contemplation.

#### *Meaning of Verses 4-5*

Against this background, the two words *quies* and *meditatio* in Admonition XXVII contain an entire life project. Furthermore, it becomes clear that verse 5 is linked to verse 4 and must be seen in that way. The Camaldolese Constitutions insist on the connection between rest and meditation, on the one hand, and God's dwelling in our heart, on the other, plus the fact that the divine indwelling protects our heart from all attacks of the enemy. Verse 5 also affirms these two elements. Still, the vocabulary used by Francis in these verses is very strange. We would spontaneously translate the genitive *Domini* as objective: to fear the Lord. But such an interpretation of this genitive does violence to the coherence of the entire verse. Against the background of Camaldolese spirituality, it refers explicitly to God in our heart. Therefore, in this case *Domini* must be seen as a subjective genitive. Here, fear of the Lord means that God himself fears in our heart, that heart where he dwells as in his own house. Because God dwells in our heart, there is no longer room for the enemy. This is confirmed by the Constitutions: "Where the heavenly dweller rests, the evil one who lies in wait cannot prevail."

This interpretation of Francis should not surprise us too much. There is a parallel text in the *Earlier Rule* XVII, 16, where divine fear is attributed to God the Father.<sup>7</sup> We might ask ourselves if, according to this

---

<sup>7</sup>See on this subject Theo Zweerman, "Timor Domini. Versuch einer Deutung der 27. Ermahnung des hl. Franziskus von Assisi," *Franziskanische Studien* 60 (1978): 202-23.

A comparison with *S.P.N. Dorothei expositiones et doctrinae diversae. Doctrina IV, De divino timore (Peri tou Theiou phobou)*, PG 88, 1658b-1675b, is striking: "One who possesses true and perfect charity "fears and obeys the will of God, not because he will be chastised, not because he will be punished, but tasting how sweet it is to be with God, he fears he may be deprived of it, he fears he may be robbed of it" (1658d-1659a). "One who abides in goodness is with God and is united to him by analogy; for he tastes and a kind of true goodness enters his senses, and he no longer wants to be separated from it. For, as the Apostle says, who can separate him from the love of Christ (Rom 8:35)? Then he attains the measure of a son, he loves goodness for its own sake, and he fears because he loves (*phobeitai epeidē agapai*). This is great and

interpretation, Francis is crystallizing his own experience. Is he revealing a facet of his mystical experience? In that case, these two verses of the admonition contain a personal note and are a sign. It is no longer a question of a monastic tradition or a theory, but of an inner experience. Francis truly embodied this tradition in his own life and plumbed its depth. This admonition is not only a legacy of the Christian tradition; it is also a witness to Francis and his message, incorporated into his life.

It seems to us that verses 4 and 5 stand out more if we look at them in the context of Eastern hesychastic spirituality.<sup>8</sup> One of Camaldoli's objectives had been to take Eastern spirituality and implant it in the West. The word *rest* or *stillness* is translated into Greek by *hēsychia*. But here rest is considered the way par excellence that leads to union with God. Hence the term *hesychastic*. First of all, we must seek exterior silence. That is why we withdraw into solitude and silence (preferably in the desert). But the ultimate goal is interior peace, which creates a climate that fosters union with God. This peace is likened by the hesychasts to *amerimnia*, the absence of anxiety. Here we see again the two objectives—on the one hand, flight from the cares of this world (Mt 13:22 or 6:25), and on the other hand, the effort to free ourselves from the cares that alienate us in the form of passions, evil desires and vices. By way of illustration, we cite a text from John Climacus. In Step 27 of his *Ladder of Paradise* he writes: "The work of stillness should lead to the absence of all anxiety." And later: "Just as a small hair in the eye clouds the view, so the least anxiety destroys stillness." For the hesychasts, anxiety is considered the chief obstacle to stillness or rest. Thus Francis's contrast of *sollicitudo* with *quies* is no accident. This idea is found among the Camaldolese, but in a less pronounced manner, and certainly not in their Constitutions. Chapters 36 and 37 speak instead of

---

perfect love" (1662a). Here, perfect fear is defined as the opposite of love, the mystery of love that defends itself. Fear is considered to be love's self-defense. Francis's view can be explained when seen from this angle. And, carrying this thought further, if God is love and if fear is the opposite of love, then fear is part of the mystery of God. Similarly, Dorotheus associates perfect love and perfect fear with rest. "For when help comes to him from God and he begins to practice goodness, then he finds rest (*anapausis*), then abundant peace (*eirènè*) comes to him, then he understands what distress there is in war, and what joy and happiness there is in peace. Hence he seeks it, he spares no effort and runs searching for it diligently in order to lay hold of it, possess it perfectly and make it fully abide in him.... No one knows this joy except the one who has experienced it" (1663b). Note the final phrase: "May this God, who loves us so much, graciously grant us his fear (*charisetai hymin ton phobon autou*)" 1674d-1675a.

<sup>8</sup>*Dictionnaire de la Spiritualité Ascétique et Mystique*, VII, (Paris: Beauchesne, 1969): 381-99.

<sup>9</sup>PG 88, 1109b and d.

*inquietudo*. We must refer again to the vocabulary used by the historians when they speak of Hugolino and Francis's stay at Camaldoli. Augustinus Florentinus denounces *cura* as the great enemy of *meditatio* (and, of course, rest): "[P]utting aside every earthly care, in order that he might devote himself to meditation...."

For the hesychasts, two other attitudes are associated with stillness or rest. First, we must keep the remembrance of God (*mnèmè tou Theou*) constantly before us. We must fix our mind on him and practice vigilance (*nèpsis*) lest we be surprised by the enemy, who wishes to make himself master of our heart. These attitudes go hand in hand in the sense that it is of utmost importance that we know who (or what) is master of our heart. This presupposes constant attention to God and vigilance lest the enemy come to take possession of our heart.

First, some thoughts on vigilance. This notion is inspired by the First Letter of Peter, especially 4:7, where the Vulgate translates the term *nèpsate* by *sobrii estote*. Secondly, there is vigilance with regard to the enemy, who is seeking by any means possible to enter our heart and devour it. This concept of vigilance is clearly expressed in verse 5 of our admonition, especially by the term *custodiendum*.

Vigilance is a negative attitude. Against this negative attitude we have the *mnèmè tou Theou*, constant attention to God in order that God might fill our heart. In fact, the First Letter of Peter (4:7) links vigilance and prayer. On this subject, John Climacus writes: "Stillness is worshiping God unceasingly and waiting on him. Let the remembrance of Jesus be present with your every breath. Then indeed you will appreciate the value of stillness."<sup>10</sup> Is this not a clear description of the purpose and technique of meditation? This context allows us to explain what Francis refers to in verse 4 as *meditatio*. It is a persevering effort to keep the remembrance of God before us, to remain in his presence, so that he might take possession of our heart. Meditation is, above all, an act of adoration. Moreover, as John Climacus says, it involves reawakening the memory of God by the rhythm of our breathing. This remembrance of God (maintained by a word or short phrase) is constantly renewed. We know from the life of Francis that he prayed in this way. We have at least two authentic testimonies. The first is from Bernard of Quintavalle, who during the night could hear Francis repeating over and over: "My God, my God."<sup>11</sup> The other comes to us from Brother Leo, who secretly observed Francis on Mount LaVerna and heard

---

<sup>10</sup>PG 88, 112a [trans. Luibheid and Russell].

<sup>11</sup>*Little Flowers* 2 (FA:ED III 567).

him repeat: "Who are you, my dearest God? And what am I, your vilest little worm and useless little servant?"<sup>12</sup>

In the Middle Ages this form of meditation was very widespread in monastic circles.<sup>13</sup> Francis would thus have had many sources from which he could learn its basic elements. This meditation was a kind of prolongation of *lectio divina*. It consisted in the repetition of certain words or phrases. The object was to become imbued with them and assimilate them, so as to understand and savor them interiorly, and thus remain in the presence of God. Writers even spoke of "rumination" or chewing over the words in order to savor their deeper meaning. Nevertheless, the stress lay chiefly on the need to remain in the presence of God, on adoration. In the words of the psalmist, "The meditation of my heart always in your sight" (Ps 18:15), a verse often cited in this regard. There exists, then, a close relationship between *lectio*, *meditatio* and *oratio*.

Now let us focus our attention on the literal meaning of the word *meditari*. The root of this verb is *medium*, which means *middle*. The verb implies the idea of repeated action. On the other hand, the passive voice suggests a middle sense. Meditation can be defined as an effort at interiorization, constantly repeated, in order to achieve equilibrium at the center of our being. But for a religious person this deepest center is God. This means we must constantly strive to be recollected in order to rediscover our center of gravity. Seen thus, restlessness arises spontaneously as the opposite of meditation and is its most formidable enemy. It cannot be taken for granted that we are present in our deepest center. The frequentative form suggests the need for sustained effort in order to reach that point. Where, in reality, are we? We wander aimlessly, our spiritual faculties in disarray; we are restless. First of all, we wander figuratively in the sense that we wander within ourselves, but we also wander literally, restless and dissatisfied. And so it is entirely logical that Francis contrasts *meditatio* with *vagatio*, wandering outside our inner center. He probably borrowed the term from the Camaldolese. In their Constitutions the monks speak of the *vitium vagationis*.<sup>14</sup> This vice is associated with *instabilitas*, which we should

---

<sup>12</sup>*Deeds IX* (FA:ED III 456).

<sup>13</sup>Cf. Jean Leclercq, *Études sur le vocabulaire monastique du moyen âge*. Studia Anselmiana 48 (Rome: Orbis Catholicus Herder, 1961).

<sup>14</sup>*Annales Camaldulenses*, III, *Constitutiones*, ch. 32, p. 527 and ch. 36, p. 529. For comparison, here are some texts from John Climacus: "The lover of stillness keeps his mouth shut, but the man who likes to ramble outside is driven from his cell by this passion." P. G. 88, 854a. He also warns against "footloose people": "Watch out for such people and do not worry about offending them by your devout behavior. Indeed, offensiveness of this kind may stop their footloose career." P. G. 88, 1111e-



take first in the literal sense: a hermit who cannot remain at rest in his cell, who wanders constantly away from it, and (for lack of meditation) never attains peace. Such wandering betrays his basic instability, his inner unrest, his division. On the other hand, the Camaldolese speak of the monk who is “quiet and persevering,” for whom his cell is “sweet refreshment, blessed silence, a portion of paradise.”

*Vagatio*, then, means to wander in the literal sense. This wandering is a result of our disorder within, our lack of an inner focal point that will maintain unity among our faculties and keep them in balance. Our attention is divided, we lack discipline and are thus presumably dissipated. The terms used by Wadding to describe Francis’s stay at Camaldoli are revealing. Francis went there in search of solitude in order, by meditation, to refresh his soul “torn to pieces on account of many things.” He also contrasts meditation with inner division and dissipation.

It seems to us that verses 4 and 5 become clearer when we consider Camaldolese spirituality and the spirituality of the Eastern hesychasts as the background. These verses, thanks to their conciseness and internal coherence, are an excellent summary of this spirituality.

#### *Structure of Verses 4 and 5*

Admonition XXVII is well constructed. Each verse contrasts two positive values with their opposites. The structure of verses 4 and 5 is tightly knit from both a logical and anthropological or theological point of view. Verse 4 contrasts rest with anxiety and meditation (the principle of unity) with restlessness. There is also a close relationship between the two positive values and their opposites. Rest fosters meditation and meditation fosters rest. By contrast, we have *sollicitudo*, which tears us apart, causes us to wander increasingly far from our center, so that we end up basically dissatisfied and empty. Verse 5 is structured the same way. The fear of God

---

1114a.

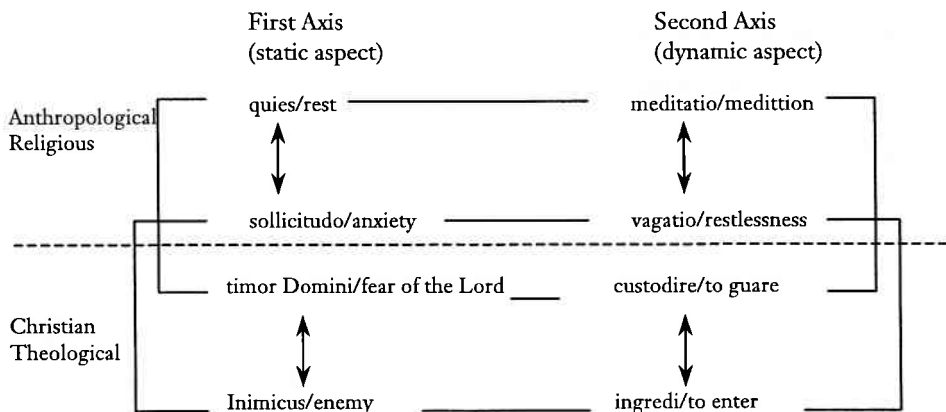
Many of the writings of Peter Damian explain the meaning of *vagatio*, especially his treatise *De contemptu saeculi* (P.L. 145, 251-92). The titles of some chapters are significant and speak for themselves. Chapter 9: Monks who constantly run about (260). Chapter 11: Running about by monks banishes virtue and ushers in a multitude of vices (261). Chapter 20: How wandering about has caused many to perish (271-72). Chapter 21: How Esau gave up wandering and Jacob praised stability (272-74). Chapter 22: In these two brothers we see clearly the difference between monks who wander about and those who practice stability (274-75). Chapter 23: How divine providence grants spiritual rest to the good, while it permits the wicked to be dissipated in external things. Chapter 24: Hermits who are dependent on wandering (277-78). Chapter 25: Habit makes the cell a place of delight, wandering makes it abhorrent (278-79). *Vagari* also echoes the words of 1 Pt 5:8: “Your adversary, like a roaring lion, goes about [circuit]....”

is contrasted with the enemy, and vigilance with forced entrance. These two values, like their opposites, are closely related. Vigilance means the presence of God, whereas it is the enemy who breaks in and tears things apart. What is unusual in this verse is that each line has an added third term: *atrium suum* and *locum*. These terms add to the text, giving it a new and broader perspective. In this way the anthropological religious movement of verse 4 acquires a Christian theological meaning. Our heart is destined to belong to the Lord, to be God's special domain where he wishes to dwell and take his rest. God is our only true center, and we cannot attain unity and wholeness except in God. God is the ultimate fulfillment of meditation and rest. Thus the rhythm of meditation is accompanied by a new way of seeing things. The movement from exterior to interior occasioned by meditation is in some way strengthened by God's vigilant presence, for God jealously guards his own mystery. God cannot be divided. Either he occupies our heart totally or he is not there! There is no room alongside God. Where God is present, his attention can no longer be divided; the enemy can no longer enter. God cannot tolerate or accept division in himself. The expression *non potest* in verse 5b only serves to emphasize this idea. The mystery of God's presence is protected by God himself.

We see, then, the tightly-knit unity of verses 4 and 5. Verse 5 is a Christian theological (or mystical) interpretation of verse 4, which is set in the context of religious anthropology. Each term in verse 4 is enriched with a new dimension, or rather, each term in verse 4 finds its fuller meaning in verse 5.

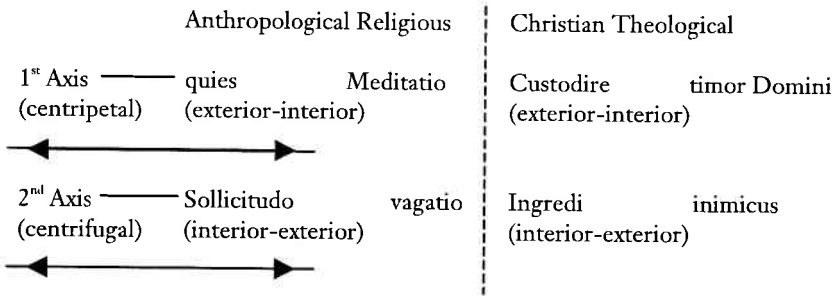
As far as structure is concerned, we suggest placing these two verses on two vertical axes and two horizontal axes. The first vertical axis, which begins with *quies*, is fulfilled in the Christian theological sense in *timor Domini*. The opposites are situated on the same axis: *sollicitudo*, which emerges from its theological background *inimicus*. This axis could be called the vertical static axis. Parallel to it is the vertical dynamic axis. The dynamic aspect of *quies* is *meditatio*, which is fulfilled in the dynamic of the presence of God, especially in God who protects his own mystery. On the same axis is the opposite dynamic. *Sollicitudo* gives rise to *vagatio*, which finds its ultimate theological meaning in the *ingredi* of the enemy.

We suggest the following schema.



Viewed from the standpoint of the movement, this can also be presented schematically on two horizontal axes. The first horizontal axis represents the positive movement involved in our search for our true meaning. This could be called the centripetal movement. From an anthropological religious standpoint, this movement can be viewed as a movement from exterior to interior (*meditatio*). But from a theological standpoint, this movement reveals an entirely different aspect. This centripetal movement begins from the center and is protected from all outside influence. The same movement is then transformed into vigilance. The second horizontal axis represents the centrifugal movement in us. From an anthropological standpoint, this movement presents itself as a movement from interior to exterior (*vagatio*). But from a theological standpoint this movement assumes an entirely different dimension. This movement begins from the outside and tries to get inside of us, in order to project us outside our center. We are transformed in a movement of penetration.

How should we interpret these movements? Should each movement be considered as two movements that are intertwined? Or should this be explained by the fact that each movement presents two aspects, depending on the standpoint from which we view it? That is the question. We suggest the following schema.



This brief analysis shows well the well-knit structure of these two verses. This structure derives not so much from clear and logical thinking as from lived experience, as Francis suggests to his readers by means of certain root words. This admonition, then, cannot be considered a learned framework of ideas. It is really the witness of a lived experience. If we do permit ourselves to analyze its internal structure, it is out of admiration. This analysis only confirms the tightly-knit unity that can be found in a lived experience.

#### *Translation of Verses 4 and 5*

We suggest the following translation:

4. Where there is rest and meditation,  
    there is neither anxiety nor restlessness.
5. Where there is fear of the Lord to guard an entrance,  
    there the enemy cannot have a place to enter.

## II. Meaning, structure and translation of Admonition XXVII, 6

### *Meaning of Verse 6*

Let us first examine the simple meaning of the words. We will take the concepts in pairs.

#### *Misericordia - Superfluitas*

The most difficult word in the verse is *superfluitas*. In classical Latin this word usually has a positive meaning, especially *abundance*. But in our text the meaning is clearly negative. It could be translated as *excess*, but then the problem arises that *excess* cannot be the opposite of *mercy*. We could pair it with *discretio*, in such a way that *induratio* would be the opposite of *misericordia*. But the big objection is that then we have a chiasmus, which we cannot presume, based on the admonition as a whole. Besides, in that case the translation of the word *induratio* would have to be changed. But the problem disappears as soon as we look at the meaning of the term *superfluitas* in medieval Latin. The word comes from the language of law.

There *superfluitas* means an excessive demand that has no legal basis.<sup>15</sup> Figuratively speaking, we leave the “river channel” of our rights and overflow the banks of our legal claims. This explains the use of the term *flood*. For example, a person who claims a piece of land belonging to someone else, even though he has no legal right to it, is *superfluous*. This legal term soon acquired moral connotations. In his Rule, St. Benedict uses it at least twice, especially in chapters 36 and 61. In chapter 36 he admonishes the sick: “Let them not cause sorrow to the brothers who are serving them, by their excessive demands (*superfluitate*).” In chapter 61 he says to monks who are visiting the monastery temporarily and staying there as guests: “Let them not upset the monastery by their excessive demands (*superfluitate*), but let them be quite content with what they find.” Bernard Cassin’s commentary on this is very clear. He cites the example of monks who complain about the food and drink, saying that the cheese stinks, the eggs are rotten, the oil is rancid, the fish is spoiled, the wine makes them sick and the bread is not fit for the dogs.<sup>16</sup> These are the critics, who are hard to please, who make unreasonable demands and, not only that, who consider it their right to condemn when others do not agree with what they think they have coming them. *Superfluitas* is best translated by *claim, excessive demand, recrimination*. It quickly manifests itself in the form of merciless criticism of our neighbor. In this context, the meaning of the first part of verse 6 becomes clear. *Superfluitas* is opposed to *misericordia*.

#### *Discretio - Induratio*

We wonder whether Francis, in choosing this contrast, let himself be influenced by the memory of an event. In fact, the so-called temptation of Brother Rufino is a clear illustration of this contrast.<sup>17</sup> The account in the *Chronicle of the Twenty-Four Generals* probably provides the best historical context. Evidently, Rufino showed little interest in working in the leprosarium, since he thought it was causing him to be distracted in prayer. He wanted to model his life on that of the anchorites. Thus he decided to break with Francis and the entire fraternity, even refusing to take part in the Holy Thursday celebration of the Lord’s Supper and the fraternal agape that followed. Finally, Francis managed to convince him that his decision was not inspired by the Lord, but that he was acting under the influence of

---

<sup>15</sup>Charles DuFresne Du Cange, *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis* (Paris: Firmin Didot Fratres, 1886).

<sup>16</sup>PL 66, 853-54.

<sup>17</sup>*Deeds XXXI* (FA:ED III 501-03) and the passage from the *Chronicle of the Twenty-Four Generals*, placed in parallel by Sabatier. Also *Little Flowers* 29 (FA:ED III 617-20).

the devil. The choice of vocabulary used to describe this event is revealing. The *Chronicle* says: "Then Brother Rufino became extremely set (*induratus*) in that plan." The *Deeds* say: "Brother Rufino...became so darkened (*obtenebratus*) by the Prince of Darkness...." And, a little later on, Francis tells him: "You should also have known that he was the devil because he *hardened* your heart to everything that is good, for that is exactly his job. But the blessed Christ never *hardens* the heart of the faithful man but rather softens it, as he says through the prophet: 'I will take away your heart of stone and will give you a heart of flesh' (Ezek 11:19)." The context makes the meaning of the word *induratio* clear. It refers to interior hardness, hardness of heart that is centered on an idea or plan. It goes hand in hand with spiritual blindness, that is, the inability to distinguish between a noble idea, a good plan, and the real motive behind it. Or, staying with the allegory of the *Deeds*, the inability to distinguish between a noble idea or good plan in disguise (a handsome youth, Christ) and its origin (the devil, ugly and foul-smelling), in short, the inability to discern whether our inspiration comes from God or from the devil. Rufino was unable to see that his fine anchoritic ideal was of questionable origin, especially his concern about his neighbor. He was spiritually blind; his judgment had been mistaken. That his judgment had not been inspired by wisdom, and that he had not acted under the influence of the spirit was shown by his hardness of heart and his irritability. Thus we can see that the two concepts *induratio* and *discretio* are linked by way of contrast.

#### *Translation of Verse 6*

From this point, the translation presents scarcely any further problems. We suggest:

6. Where there is [a heart full of] mercy and discernment,  
there is neither recrimination nor hardness of heart.

#### *Structure of Verse 6*

Now let us examine the internal coherence and structure of verse 6. We have already pointed out how these concepts go hand in hand in the form of contrasts. Mercy is contrasted with recrimination, discernment with hardness of heart. On the other hand, the positive concepts, like their opposites, are mutually related. There is a relationship between mercy and discernment, just as there is between recrimination and hardness of heart. This internal coherence is borne out in the story of Rufino. Although the account deals primarily with his interior hardness, we see at what point this hardness affects his relationship with others. We also notice that Rufino's hardness spills over into bitter criticism of the words of Francis. What is more, he condemns his style of life. He treats Francis as simple and stupid (*idiotia et simplex*), incapable of indicating the right way. He says it is a

disgrace to follow Francis (*sequi eius simplicitates*). His criticism stems from his blindness. This shows the extent to which hardness of heart makes us *superflui*, merciless and harsh in our judgment of others. This hardness of heart is projected onto others in the form of recrimination and bitter criticism.

But the opposite is also true. Only when there is discernment can there be mercy. That is what we want to examine by referring to the text of Admonition XI. Here Francis admonishes us to distinguish between the sin and the sinner. It is self-deception to project our horror of sin on the sinner. However justified this may seem, we can never see the hidden (and questionable) motives behind our holy indignation. According to Francis, such indignation is yet another form of appropriation, which manifests itself by our becoming angry and disturbed (comparable to the irritability caused by hardness of heart). We falsely claim something that does not belong to us. First of all, we claim the right to judge. But judgment belongs to God, not to us. No creature has the right to judge another. Those who allow themselves to do this become *superflui* and exceed the limits of their rights. There is more. Subtlety, beneath this condemnation, lies the hidden demand that our neighbor be better. On this subject let us read Francis's admonition to a minister: "And love them in this and do not wish that they be better Christians" (LtMin, 7). Even our pious demand cannot be held up as an example. It is based on a form of unlawful appropriation. In short, on what basis can we make such a demand? Only on our own moral superiority. In that case the Apostle's admonition is addressed to us: "Take care that you yourselves are not tempted" (Gal 6:1). We forget our own vulnerability. Above all, we forget that we can attribute none of the good we do to ourselves, since it is God who accomplishes it in us. In Admonition II Francis says: "For that person eats of the tree of the knowledge of good who makes his will his own and, in this way, *exalts himself over the good things* the Lord says and does in him."<sup>18</sup> Those who, basing themselves on their moral superiority, make a demand on someone else, are basing themselves on something that does not belong to them. They show that they lack discernment. They ignore the basic distinction between what comes from themselves and what comes from God. They cannot even recognize the questionable origin of their holy indignation and pious demand. They are *superflui* in the true sense of the word. But those who truly distinguish are truly poor, because they give to God what is God's. They know they have no right to allow themselves to make the least demand, much less condemn. Only those who are truly poor, who are able to discern rightly and give to

---

<sup>18</sup>See Adm XII and XVII; LR XVII 17-18.

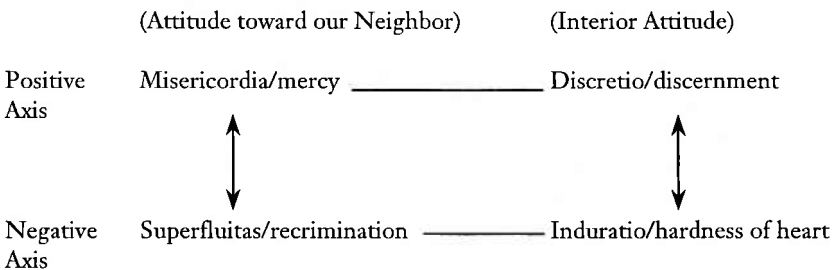
God what is God's, are able to show mercy to their neighbor, even if that neighbor has sinned.

When verse 6 is placed in the context of Rufino's temptation and Admonition XI, its tightly-knit structure and unity are revealed. Not only is each individual concept related to its opposite, but the positive concepts are also related between themselves and with the negative concepts. How can we explain this relationship in greater detail?

The first line of the two verses concerns our relationship with our neighbor (mercy-recrimination); the second line deals with basic attitudes of mind and heart (discernment-hardness). They are related to each other in the sense that our attitude toward our neighbor shows what is in our heart.

These relationships may be arranged on axes according to their meaning. First we draw two vertical axes. On the first axis are placed the first terms of each verse: mercy and recrimination. These two describe for us our attitude toward our neighbor. The other two terms (discernment and hardness of heart) concern our attitudes of mind and are located on the second axis. But these two axes are also linked horizontally in the sense that our attitude toward our neighbor reveals the attitudes in our heart. Discernment translates into mercy, and hardness of heart translates into recrimination. Thus we can confidently suggest that our attitude toward our neighbor is a measure of the authenticity of our spiritual life.

We present this in the following schema:



Verse 6 also seems to be connected with verses 4 and 5. Let us recall the teaching of the hesychasts. They insistently stress the role of vigilance in the face of the enemy. They express this concretely in terms of vigilance with regard to *logismoi*, that is, thoughts and ideas that can infiltrate our heart and take possession of it. Is that not what happened to Rufino? He was caught off guard. He began with a noble idea in his head, which seduced him and hardened his heart. He could no longer discern his



true motives.<sup>19</sup> The *discretio* of verse 6 should be seen first of all in the context of vigilance. Seen thus, it is effectively linked to verses 4 and 5. Also striking is the fact the the Camaldolese Constitutions associate *discretio* with *sobrietas* (the Latin translation of *nēpsis*). In chapter 41 we read: “To be sober is to curb the desires of the flesh and the other vices by means of proper discernment.” And so we can fully say that the spirituality of Camaldoli could have been the backdrop for the sixth verse. The same is true for the first words of each line (mercy and recrimination), where the influence of Camaldolese spirituality is also latent. The Constitutions devote all of chapter 42 to *pietas*. The theme that inspired this chapter is particularly interesting. “Piety is very necessary for hermits, in order that they might be humane, merciful and meek...hermits are accustomed, under the pretext of eremitical austerity, to prove to others that they are very strict and severe.” This text shows that the hermits knew from experience under what subtle forms temptations could present themselves, and especially that, under the pretext of a strict life, they were in danger of no longer being able to distinguish between austerity and pride. There was a very real risk that subtle pride would cause them to be strict and severe with others, even merciless and demanding. Did Rufino, who had shut himself up in the solitude of the Carceri, fall into this trap? He regarded himself as superior to Francis, whom he considered simple and stupid (*idiota et simplex*), able to imagine only simple things (*simplicitates*) for his brothers. That is why *pietas* is essential in the life of the monk. Our relationship with our neighbor is the measure of our basic attitude. True religion is measured by *pietas*, for which vigilance is essential. In other words, we must be able to discern between the austerity of our own life and pride that manifests itself in harshness. Seen this way, verse 6 has a special link with verses 4 and 5. It can be seen as a concrete approach to vigilance and consider it, first of all, as a measure of the authenticity of a contemplative life, of true rest (*quies*).

---

<sup>19</sup>Compare John Climacus, Step 26, *On Discernment*, PG 88, 1014-95. Some texts: “Among beginners, discernment is real self-knowledge” (1014a). “For our God is a fire consuming all lusts, all stirrings of passion, all predispositions, and all hardness of heart, both within and without, both visible and spiritual. Demons, on the other hand, bring about the very opposite to all this. Grabbing a soul, they put out the light of the mind until in our wretchedness we find ourselves lacking sobriety or discernment, self-knowledge or shame; and we are burdened instead with indifference, insensitivity, want of discernment, and blindness” (1014d). “To keep watch over our thoughts means to drive away the forms and images of our thoughts by fighting against them and by prayer. The keeper of the mind is the heart, which can never be taken by the enemy and never turned from the memory of God” (1050c-d). “It is characteristic of the perfect that they always know whether a thought comes from within themselves, or from God, or from the demons” (1075a).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, we would like once more to point out that verses 4, 5 and 6 of Admonition XXVII show a very special internal coherence. There is a real unity rooted in a life experience, which Francis summarizes. It seems entirely admissible that Francis wrote them not only as a remembrance of his stay at Camaldoli, but also in memory of his friend Rufino. The text represents a sort of convergence of three experiences whose mutual relationships intertwine to form a wonderfully harmonious work. The work reflects the experience of the Camaldolese hermits (which echoes that of the anchorites), that of Rufino, and finally that of Francis, to whom it was given to experience and validate this entire spirituality in his own life. The text reveals Francis's great talent as a writer, able to discover the secret of translating such a profound experience into harmonious chords and to sing it. That is why the word *praise* is a more apt description of this admonition.

## Appendix

In our introduction we called attention to the fact that certain words which occur in Admonition XXVII are hardly ever found in Francis's writings. There we suggested that these ideas were probably incorporated into his vocabulary, thought, and life by means of other expressions.

It seems to us that Francis also expresses the rich meaning of the word *quies* by the word *pax*.<sup>20</sup> Interior peace is a subject he often mentions. The most important text is that of the *Earlier Rule* XVII, 14-16, where Francis associates peace with the indwelling of the Trinity: "The Spirit of the Lord, however, wants the flesh to be mortified and looked down upon, considered of little worth and rejected. It strives for humility and patience, the pure, simple and true *peace* of the spirit. Above all, it desires the divine fear, the divine wisdom and the divine love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit." Likewise, in several of his admonitions (XI, XIII, XIV and XV) Francis speaks of the search for interior peace. We also find the theme of the divine indwelling in several other texts, including the second version of the *Letter to the Faithful*, 47-48. Note the expression "the Spirit of the Lord will *rest* upon them." But the *Earlier Rule* XXII is especially interesting, because there we find the ideas of Admonition XXVII, 4-5, especially God's dwelling in our heart (vv. 26-27), and vigilance lest the cares of the world—particularly the enemy who prowls about seeking to devour—occupy our heart (vv. 19-22). Not surprisingly, this chapter probably dates from 1219

---

<sup>20</sup>See the Camaldolese Constitutions, *Ann. Cam.* III, p. 535, which describes the *pacifica mens*.

and is thus prior to Francis's stay at Camaldoli. According to David Flood, it is Francis's testament, drawn up in 1219, just before his departure for the Middle East.<sup>21</sup> The text proves that Francis was already familiar with Eastern spirituality before his stay at Camaldoli, which the *Earlier Rule* XVII allows us to suppose. How? Let us look at the prayer entitled *The Praises of God* where God is addressed in these terms: "You are rest.... You are the protector, you are our custodian and defender." Here again vigilance is attributed to God. Let us also look at the expression "You are refreshment." The hesychasts sometimes use this term as a synonym for *quies*, or in any case, as closely related to *quies*.<sup>22</sup> It is surprising that in this context Francis nowhere uses the term *sit* (*sedere*), a term commonly used in the Middle Ages as a synonym for *quies* and *quiescere* (inspired in part by the story of Martha and Mary, where Mary sat at the Lord's feet).<sup>23</sup>

As for the term *vagatio*, we have already referred to 1 Pt 5:8, cited by Francis in the *Earlier Rule* XXII. Here he also cites the Gospel text: "When an unclean spirit goes out of a person, it *roams* through arid (Mt 12:43) and waterless regions seeking rest (Lk 11:24)." Here we can probably cite the *Earlier Rule* VIII, 12: "Similarly, let all the brothers be careful of *going* throughout the world for filthy gain." Francis also uses the expression *vagari* in other texts, but we typically see that he always uses it in the context of wandering outside obedience or the Rule. In the *Letter to the Entire Order* 45, we read: "I even say this about all those who wander about, having put aside the discipline of the Rule." Likewise, he uses it twice in the same sense in the *Earlier Rule* II, 10 and V, 16.

Although the term *superfluitas* is nowhere found, this concept underlies Francis's writings when he speaks of mercy, anger and discord. Hardness of heart fits into this context. Compare Admonitions IX, XI, XIII and XIV, as well as the *Letter to a Minister*.

The term *meditatio* is more problematic. We can begin with a text from the *Deeds* 33, where we find the following description of Rufino: "Brother Rufino, because his heart was so *attentive* to God and his mind, like that of an angel, was *at rest*...." Here Rufino is described as a great contemplative, and ordinarily we might expect to find the twin concepts *quies* and *meditatio*. Instead of *meditatio*, it seems to us, in line with

---

<sup>21</sup>David Flood, *Die Regula non bullata der Minderbrüder* (Westf/Werl: Dietrich-Coelde-Verlag, 1967), 133-34.

<sup>22</sup>Jean Leclercq, *Etudes sur le vocabulaire monastique du moyen âge*. Studia Anselmiana 48 (Rome: Orbis Catholicus Herder, 1961).

<sup>23</sup>Jean Leclercq, *Sedere. A Propos de l'hésychasme en occident*. Le millénaire du Mont Athos. Vol. I (Chevetogne, n.p., 1963), 253-64.

Franciscan tradition, that we find terms such as *attentio* and *attendere*. It is worth noting that Jean Leclercq does not mention these terms in this sense in his *Vocabulaire monastique du moyen âge*. He gives other synonyms used by the Cistercians, especially *considerare* and *cogitare*. They are no longer found in Francis. Admonition V, which is nevertheless based on Cistercian pedagogy (consciousness of our noble calling and our great fall), does not begin with the term *considera* or the term *cogita*, but with the word *attende*. Admonition VI begins the same way, as well as the *Letter to the Clergy* and chapter XXII of the *Earlier Rule*. The same sense is also found in the *Earlier Rule* XX, 2. What is more, in two other passages we find the added idea of vigilance, but these passages are inspired by biblical texts. The same holds true for the *Earlier Rule* VIII, 2, and IX, 14, and the *Later Rule* X, 8.

We also wonder whether the word *recordar* [*remember*] may have had a similar meaning for Francis. He uses it often, always in a sense close to that of *attendere*. Examples include his *Letter to the Entire Order* 17; the *Earlier Rule* IV, 6; IX, 1; IX, 14; XVI, 10; XX, 5; XXIV, 2; and the *Later Rule* X, 2. This word goes very well with the Greek term *mnèmè*. In this connection, the usual translation of *memoria* or *memento* is not kept by Francis. Could this be due to the fact that he usually dictated in Italian?

Here some questions still remain. We still need to do a more detailed examination of the exact meaning of certain terms used by Francis. It would be extremely interesting to understand them in the context of the monastic tradition. That is what our arguments have tried to show. Are there still more medieval texts in which the terms *attendere* and *recordari* convey such a rich impact? For us this remains an open question.