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# WE WHO WERE WITH HIM:

A Contribution  
to the Franciscan Question

by

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## A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

Since its publication in 1980, Raoul Manselli's study of the remembrances of Francis's companions, *Nos Qui Cum Eo Fuimus*, has been regarded as a classic. In many ways it has brought contemporary scholars to the sophisticated, critical appreciation of the literary sources of Francis's life that exists today. Thanks to the translating skills and dedication of Edward Hagman, O.F.M. Cap., and to the generosity of the friars at the Capuchin Historical Institute, who permitted publication of this translation, Manselli's work is now available in English.

The reader will find it helpful to recall that Manselli was influenced in his work by the different titles given to the different editions of the writings of the companions: Delorme's *Legend of Perugia*, Brooke's *Scripta*, Bigaroni's *Assisi Compilation*. This presents confusion when attempting to follow Manselli's work and the titles and the numbering used in these different editions. Thus it is important to remember that the so-called *Legend of Perugia*—the remembrances of the companions—is only part of the Manuscript 1046 of Perugia that Bigaroni published as the *Assisi Compilation* and translated in its entirety in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*.

Those familiar with Manselli's original work will notice that his footnotes have been edited to reflect English translations and make his research more accessible. In some instances, the text has been abridged.

The staff of *Greyfriars Review* is pleased to present important work of a dedicated scholar. Raoul Manselli typifies a trend taking place in contemporary Franciscan studies: a layman enamored with the vision and ideals of Francis of Assisi and his first followers, dedicated to investigating objectively the literary sources of his life, and generous in sharing with and encouraging his students.

## PREFACE

We began this work aware of the need to try a new approach to the study of the Franciscan sources. But in no way was it our intention to tackle the so-called Franciscan Question and give an overall answer to it. In fact we are convinced that the only way to make progress is by abandoning Sabatier's attempt to determine the interdependence and genealogy of the biographies themselves. The latest work by Desbonnets, although certainly useful, inevitably shows the limits of this approach. In our own approach, we have had to bring up for discussion old and new theses, ignoring possible accusations that we are repeating—when necessary, of course—things already known.

Our first aim in starting from this new approach was to see if we could isolate from the Franciscan sources texts that were, philologically and historically speaking, autonomous. We thought such a possibility existed. One group of texts, in fact, has a feature that places it—formally—in an unbroken series of testimonies. The series contains a particular expression, deliberately chosen in ways not uncommon in medieval sources of this kind. Though the texts are of three different types, they are similar in that they present themselves as testimonies of people telling what they saw or experienced in each case. So important did this seem to us that it led us to raise once again a difficult and complex philological question. We hope to shed light on it, study it in greater depth, and finally move toward what we think is a valid solution.

The aim of this work, then, is to suggest a new way of studying the Franciscan sources. Perhaps it will serve as a point of departure for further research, either by ourselves or others. The important thing for us has been the discovery that a new approach is possible. We hope this approach will lead toward our goal.

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The first idea for this study came from a friendly conversation with Fr. Ilarino of Milan as we were traveling from Todi to Rome one fall morning. It was first expressed publicly in a 1972 symposium by my late colleague and friend Enrico Castelli, in which the problem of the testimony was discussed. But the philosophers were not interested and it escaped the attention of the historians. We have returned to it several times, with quick explanations; the present draft marks the end of a long period of reflection. Our aim was to understand better the concrete historical reality of Francis of Assisi, in order to understand better his appeal and explain it.

“Why after you? Why after you? Why after you? Why does all the world seem to be running after you, and everyone seems to want to see you

and hear you and obey you? You are not a handsome man. You do not have great learning or wisdom. You are not a nobleman. So why is all the world running after you?" Brother Masseo's question to St. Francis is the historian's question. We think the evidence we have considered will help to answer that question.

Rome, July 29 1979



PART ONE

THE FRANCISCAN SOURCES

and

THEIR LITERARY FORMS



# I.

## The Franciscan Question in the Magic Circle of Paul Sabatier

Study of the Franciscan Question and analysis of the sources for St. Francis are still dominated by the approach taken by Paul Sabatier ninety years ago.<sup>1</sup> This became clear again at the first symposium of the *Società Internazionale di Studi Francescani di Assisi*, which was devoted to the Franciscan Question. There, whether they agreed or disagreed, most of the scholars remained within that “magic circle” in which the great French Franciscanist had enclosed them.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, scholars continue to look for the earliest source or sources from which—in various ways, with genealogies and more or less complicated relationships—the others we still have supposedly came.<sup>3</sup> After the studies of Moorman and Cavallin, the most original attempt was that of Sophronius Clasen. By studying and comparing different texts he tried to discover not only the written sources, but also an oral tradition that somehow supported the others and influenced them. The magic circle reappears perfectly in his work, linked as it always is to the search for and identification of the actual text that accompanied the letter of the three companions, the one document whose undisputed date is a sure reference point.

Here we should make it perfectly clear that we do not feel capable of following such distinguished predecessors. Rather, we have felt the need to devise and develop a method that is entirely different, yet also philologically sound and historically based.

First of all, we must remember that *all* the sources for Francis—whether they have a single known author or circulate anonymously under various titles—are composite texts, with different purposes and modifications

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<sup>1</sup>By now there is a very extensive bibliography on Paul Sabatier and his works dealing with Franciscan questions; but, in our opinion, a critical biography is still lacking. For the purposes of this study it is sufficient to refer to Raoul Manselli, “I biografi moderni di S. Francesco,” *S. Francesco d'Assisi nella ricerca storica degli ultimi ottanta ann.* Atti del I Convegno Internazionale della Società di Studi Mediovali (Todi: La Società, 1971): 11-31; Idem, “Paul Sabatier e la ‘questione francescana,’” *La «questione francescana» dal Sabatier ad oggi.* Atti della Società Internazionale (Assisi: La Società, 1974): 51-70. See also the entire first volume of *Atti della Società Internazionale di Assisi*, which contains numerous references to the French historian.

<sup>2</sup>A thorough up-to-date study and bibliography of the Franciscan Question, including Manselli's role in resolving it, can be found in Jacques Dalarun, *The Misadventure of Francis of Assisi*, trans. Edward Hagman, (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, Summer 2001).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

in style and form. They represent the reworking of written and oral material that was obtained, in a way to be determined, by the person who then compiled it. To take just a few examples: whether it is Thomas of Celano's two *Lives*, Bonaventure's *Major Legend*, the *Legend of the Three Companions*, or the *Legend of Perugia*,<sup>4</sup> those who know historical sources realize that what they have is an aggregate of more or less homogeneous material, obtained and reworked by the author. Despite its exaggerations and paradoxes, Nino Tamassia's ruthless analysis of Thomas of Celano shows how much the author reworked his sources in response to the demands of rhetoric.<sup>5</sup> As for the *Major Legend*, we need only recall the accusations of changes once leveled against it by Ubertino of Casale or Angelo Clarenò.<sup>6</sup> In other texts, we are immediately struck by the fact that material of different origins has been joined together. That is the case with the source to which we will devote most of our attention, the *Legend of Perugia*.<sup>7</sup>

Second, we should stress the crucial importance of the lost circular letter of Crescentius of Iesi, with its request for supplementary material to compile a new biography of Francis.<sup>8</sup> Two unavoidable conclusions, both

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<sup>4</sup>Translations of these texts can be found in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, vol. 1 *The Saint*, 2 *The Founder*, 3 *The Prophet*, ed. Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short (Hyde Park, London, Manila: New City Press, 2000), 66-8 (hereafter FA:ED I, II, III respectively). In the case of the *Legend of Perugia* (hereafter LP), the editors of FA:ED respected the complete edition of MS 1046 of Perugia – of which the LP is part. They have placed cross references to the LP text in the inner margins.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Nino Tamassia, *Saint Francis of Assisi and His Legend*, trans. Lonsdale Ragg (London: T. Fisher University, 1910).

<sup>6</sup>Cf. section IV below.

<sup>7</sup>We are keeping this title, even though we are using Marino Bigaroni's edition, «*Compilatio Assisiensis*» dagli Scritti di fr. Leone e Compagni su S. Francesco d'Assisi, ed. Marino Bigaroni (Sta. Maria degli Angeli, Ed. Portiuncula, 1975). Corrections and improvements to this edition—which we have taken into account—can be found in the study by Adriano Gattucci, "Dalla 'Legenda antiqua S. Francisci' alla 'Compilatio Assisiensis': storia di un testo più prezioso che fortunato," *Studi Medievali* 20 (1979): 789-870.

<sup>8</sup>For background on the general chapter of 1244, cf. Rosalind B. Brooke, *Early Franciscan Government. Elias to Bonaventura*. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Thought. (Cambridge: University Press, 1959), 248. The chapter proceedings have not survived. The *Chronicle of the Twenty-Four Generals*, from the second half of the fourteenth century (1365-1373), says that Crescentius of Iesi enjoined "all the brothers to send him in writing anything they might truthfully know about the life, signs and wonders of blessed Francis" (AF III, 262). The record of this is also preserved in some of the thirteenth-century sources, such as the prologue to the *Remembrance* and the so-called "Letter of the Three Companions," dated August 11, 1246. Concerning Thomas's compilation of a *Life* of Francis, Brother Salimbene (d. 1287) recalls in his *Chronicle* that Crescentius of Iesi "commanded Brother Thomas of Celano, who had written the First Legend of St. Francis, to write another book, because many things about St. Francis had been discovered which had never been written" *The Chronicle of Salimbene of Adam*, trans. Joseph L. Baird, Giuseppe Baglivi, John Robert Kane (Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1986), 166.

very important, seem to flow from this, and there seems to be general consensus on this point. In the first place, only one official legend of Francis was in circulation up until then, and it needed improvement. It is hard to see why Crescentius would have commissioned Thomas to write the new *Life*, unless the author himself had been thinking about redoing his earlier work. Surely he would have been the best choice. But—and this is our second conclusion—the fact that there was only one biography meant that now was the time to redo it. Given its structure, the author had left out a whole series of elements, and this was giving rise to complaints. At the same time, oral traditions had been forming, and these were modifying parts of the picture painted by Thomas. All of this is confirmed by the response of the three companions to the minister general's circular letter. They formally declare that they are accepting the invitation to contribute what material they had on Francis; their intention was not to write a legend but to supplement the material that already existed. But they also say that they are limiting themselves to those things that were most beautiful and worthy of being added to the legend then in use.<sup>9</sup>

Continuing our list of presuppositions, we come to the third. Thomas of Celano's *Remembrance*, which dates from around 1247, shows its composite nature much more than his earlier work. This despite the fact that the author's unquestionable literary skill succeeds in hiding as much as possible the fact that he has used a variety of material, as he himself admits. All compilations that use the *Remembrance* for whatever reason are later, since they are compilations. But it does not follow from this that material in the compilations not derived from Thomas is necessarily later than the *Remembrance*. We need to stress this fact, lest we fall into the trap of apparent, but false, philological rigor, and thus prevent further advances in research. Those familiar with medieval sources know very well that many authors have used texts, sometimes centuries old, leaving them just as they were in the authors from whom they took them, with no attempt at adaptation.

Fourth, among the findings on which there is general agreement, we think it is appropriate to emphasize the above-mentioned "Letter of the Three Companions." The manuscript tradition links this text to a source, the *Legend of the Three Companions*; but it is still an open question whether or not the letter is an integral part of it. This makes us wonder whether the letter, since it is attached to one legend—while explicitly refusing to accompany another one—is not responding to a different need, which still needs to be discovered and explained. Nor must we lose sight of another question, secondary but not irrelevant: Why has the letter not come down to us in the manuscript tradition as a separate and isolated piece?

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<sup>9</sup>For the text, cf. *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, vol. 2, *The Founder*, ed. Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short (Hyde Park, London, Manila: New City Press, 2000), 66-8 (hereafter FA:ED II).



## II.

The Method of *Formgeschichte*

It is hardly necessary to recall that for some time a method of literary analysis with a long history has been used to study what are perhaps the most difficult sources known, those of early Christianity, especially the New Testament. We are referring to the so-called method of *Formgeschichte* as described and used by its three most famous representatives, Karl-Ludwig Schmidt, Martin Dibelius, and Rudolf Bultmann,<sup>10</sup> along with their disciples and followers.

After what may be called the long methodological forerunners of *Formgeschichte*, the question was posed in its essential terms by Karl L. Schmidt in his work *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu*. There, for the first time, he raised the question of the relationship between Jesus' proclamation (the *kerygma*, as it would be called) and the setting in which this *kerygma* is found, namely the *mythos* or story. Schmidt solves this problem by pointing out that, while the *kerygma* or words of Jesus always tend to remain the same, the setting in which they are found changes. It shows traces of the circumstances, and especially the literary *form* (hence the name of this method) in which these words are clothed. At the same time as Schmidt, another important scholar, Martin Dibelius, was wrestling with the problem of *Formgeschichte* in his fundamental and excellent work, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*. He examines and discusses the literary forms found in the Gospel so that they can then be related to the problem of the validity and authenticity of Jesus' message as presented in these same literary forms.

At the same time, another idea was starting to emerge, one that would become increasingly meaningful and important in critical discussion, thanks to the work of Hermann Gunkel.<sup>11</sup> This is the concept of *Sitz im Leben*. The sayings of Jesus and the stories about him are placed in a historical setting that emphasizes their original concreteness, and thus their

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<sup>10</sup>Cf. Karl Ludwig Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu* (Berlin: n.p., 1919); see also Idem, *Le problème du christianisme primitif*, (Paris, E. Leroux, 1938), 7-30; Martin Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 1919); Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. John Marsh (New York: Harper & Row, 1963); Günther Bornkamm, "Formen und Gattungen," *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* II, (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1958), 996-1005. For an evaluation of *formgeschichtliche Methode* in Catholic biblical criticism, see Xavier Léon-Dufour, *The Gospels and the Jesus of History*, trans. John McHugh (New York: Desclee Co., 1967).

<sup>11</sup>For Hermann Gunkel, cf. *Die Stellung der Evangelien in der allgemeinen Literaturgeschichte*, in *Eucharisterion Studien zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments. Festschrift für Hermann Gunkel*, ed. K.-L. Schmidt, (Göttingen: n.p., 1924), 50-134.

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pregnant validity. Various modified and transformed as needed, these are expressed in particular literary forms.

There is no need to go beyond these simple general facts. In the field of New Testament philology, *Formgeschichte* was first considered very radical; it destroyed the very possibility of reconstructing the historical Jesus. But later it showed a flexibility and ability to take a critical approach, from Bultmann's denials to the recognition of positive elements by many critics, Catholics included.

The questions we need to ask ourselves are these. To what extent is it possible to apply *Formgeschichte* to the biography of St. Francis? Is it legitimate to do so? How? One problem concerns the relationship between setting (*Rahmen*) and episodes within this setting. These must be considered in their *Sitz im Leben*. This use of *Formgeschichte* on the Franciscan sources will touch essentially and directly on what we will later call "official" sources. In these, the individual words and deeds of Francis are arranged for a purpose (edification above all), and they receive their *Sitz im Leben* in the context of that purpose. No detailed critical study is needed to recognize the extremely composite nature of Thomas of Celano's *Remembrance*. There is its conspicuous division, one part being arranged chronologically, the other being a *speculum fratrum minorum* [mirror of the Lesser Brothers] with episodes from the life of Francis. In the first as in the second part, even Thomas's consummate literary and compositional skill cannot hide the fact that these are detached episodes somehow joined together. In this case, *Formgeschichte*, especially Schmidt's approach, can aid us in classifying and situating Thomas historically. The same could be said of Bonaventure's *Major Legend* and *Minor Legend*. But, for reasons we will mention later, he remains entirely outside our particular area of research.

For the Franciscan sources that have no unifying framework, the method of *Formgeschichte* works even better, especially if we keep in mind Martin Dibelius's approach, which examines episodes in their formal expression, in other words, as belonging to this or that literary genre. As a matter of fact, these Franciscan sources, more numerous than the New Testament sources, turn out to be less complicated from the standpoint of their forms and manifestations.

Dibelius's type of *Formgeschichte* analyzes primarily the form of a work as it presents itself to us in its complexity, as coming through a tradition, determined only secondarily by the will of an author or compiler. After specifying this aspect of the works being considered, *Formgeschichte* analyzes each of them in comparison with the others, the forms of the individual parts that make up the narratives, the words, the theoretical statements, the prophecies and so forth. In this way a work is not divided into pieces, nor are several works broken up. Rather, we proceed to a "literary" analysis, which allows us to compare relatively homogeneous data, so that potential relationships of dependence, points of similarity and

difference become clearer. But—and here lies the real difficulty of this method—we must never forget that we are dealing with living realities. We must know how to deal with them with a clear and concrete sense of the relationships between the whole and the parts of one or several works. It is a very sensitive process and must be explained clearly, since it has inspired our work and will have to inspire more like it if we really want to get anywhere with the age-old Franciscan Question.

It should also be noted that in 1922 Karl-Ludwig Schmidt addressed an invitation to Franciscan scholars, which has remained unanswered.<sup>12</sup> His study and application of the method of *Formgeschichte* to the synoptic problem led him to apply it in quick and summary fashion to a series of other literary works, including the Franciscan legends. But Schmidt's attempt was still limited to Thomas of Celano's *Life and Remembrance*, to Bonaventure's *Major Legend* and *Minor Legend*, and to the *Legend of the Three Companions*. Since the last of the major Franciscan sources, the so-called *Legend of Perugia*, was not yet widely known, its full importance was not yet apparent. It began to circulate the same year as Schmidt's article and eventually became very important for the Franciscan Question. Right from the start, the *Legend* was shown to be a series of texts of varied and sundry origins, compiled in times and under circumstances that still need to be clarified.

But if the relationship between Thomas of Celano's two *Lives* and Bonaventure's *Major Legend* should be seen as analogous to that between the synoptic Gospels, what about the other sources such as the *Legend of Perugia*, the *Mirror of Perfection*, and the *Legend of the Three Companions*? That question has not yet been answered.

In any case, Schmidt's article, like the use of *Formgeschichte*, passed unnoticed by those engaged in critical study of the Franciscan sources. They continued to debate their questions as usual, not without signs of fatigue and not without a certain fleeting quality in results.

Recently, a learned Franciscan, prematurely deceased—we are referring to Sophronius Clasen—tried to identify in the Franciscan legends a group of original and primitive constants, which in some way were supposed to be the oldest and most authentic.<sup>13</sup> He uses to a greater or lesser extent—especially in his conclusion—the method of *Formgeschichte*, which he borrows from study of the New Testament and tries to apply to study of the Franciscan legends. But, strangely, Clasen did not draw all the necessary

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<sup>12</sup>Cf. Karl Ludwig Schmidt, *Festschrift für Hermann Gunkel*, 50-134; see also Ernesto Buoniauti, "Origini cristiane e movimento francescano," *Ricerche Religiose* 1 (1925). On approach of Buoniauti to the Franciscan Question, cf. Raoul Manselli, "Ernesto Buoniauti e il cristianesimo medioevale," *Ernesto Buoniauti, storico del cristianesimo*, (Rome: n.p., 1978), 55-85, especially pp. 67-69.

<sup>13</sup>Cf. Clasen, *Legenda*, 314-99.

conclusions from this approach, even though in many ways they were already implicit in his work. He merely notes that the legends of St. Francis strive "to keep before our eyes a mirror and example of perfection, so that those who were free from sin might be preserved in humility and those who had fallen might receive hope and forgiveness."<sup>14</sup> In fact this was a firm and deliberate refusal to regard the official and unofficial biographies—whose admitted purpose was to edify the faithful and give an example of religious life—as generally valid sources for St. Francis. Clasen balked in the face of such extreme conclusions. We, for our part, need to arrive at conclusions that are firmer or, if you wish, more radical.<sup>15</sup>

The method of *Formgeschichte* will be our guide in a quick, but necessary, examination of the form of the various biographies and collections of biographical data on Francis of Assisi, i.e., the so-called official and unofficial biographies. We will list the particular characteristics of each one and compare them, although this will necessarily be quick. We cannot engage in an exhaustive discussion of the individual sources here; it is not part of our purpose. Instead, we propose to use this comparative study to clarify how and why the *Legend of Perugia* has a form of its own. This will enable us to identify the texts we want to analyze more closely. For now we can say that these texts—the passages containing the phrase "We who were with him"—will constitute the second and most important part of our critical study. It will be as complete as possible, using whatever methods we judge necessary as we go along.

First, then, we need to indicate the typical forms found in these collections of biographical materials. This will prepare the way for the closer examination we propose to do in Part Two of our work.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 396.

<sup>15</sup>Cf. Raoul Manselli, "La povertà nella vita di Francesco d'Assisi," *La povertà del secolo XII e Francesco d'Assisi*. Atti del II Convegno Internazionale della Società degli Studi Francescani. (Assisi: La Società, 1974): 255-82..

<sup>16</sup>This approach is indirectly rejected by Théophile Desbonnets, "Généalogie des biographies primitives de Saint François," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 60 (1967): 273-316 (hereafter AFH). Desbonnets, aware of the chance to escape from Sabatier's methodological approach, claims he can resolve "the genealogy of the primitive biographies of St. Francis" through philological comparison of the texts, which he thinks is more objective than any other research technique.

### III.

#### Analysis of the Literary Forms of the Franciscan Sources

##### 1. Official Biographies

In the context of this methodology, we can begin with one already established fact: there are official biographies of Francis, and there are private collections of biographical data. Thomas of Celano's *Life and Remembrance* and Bonaventure's *Major Legend* were written to answer a need for something official, linked to the life of the Order. These biographies do not answer individual and personal devotional needs. Instead, through the life of the father and founder, they are meant to be the official manifesto, as it were, of the spiritual role the Order has and intends to play in the Church. This aspect, perhaps less evident in Thomas's two *Lives*, is explicitly stated in the *Legend* of Bonaventure. There, thanks to the author's theological genius, Francis is seen as part of a providential development in the Church.<sup>17</sup>

All the other works, with their different formal and literary trademarks, are to be distinguished from these three. They were meant to answer private needs and desires, which we may sometimes even consider personal. In any case, they were always addressed to more or less restricted groups; thus their purpose was in some way limited.<sup>18</sup>

Sabatier attributed the official sources to the hierarchy of the Order and the community bound to the directives of the Roman Church. He attributed the unofficial sources to Francis's companions or to those who wanted their own Francis, as opposed to the Francis of the official biographies, whom they rejected.<sup>19</sup> This second group, associated with the upheaval caused by the changes taking place in the Order, was identified, for all practical purposes, with the so-called spiritual current.<sup>20</sup> In other words,

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<sup>17</sup>Cf. Giovanni Miccoli, "Di alcuni passi di san Bonaventura sullo sviluppo dell'Ordine francescano," *Studi medievali* 11(1970): 381-95; Idem, "Bonaventura e Francesco," *S. Bonaventura francescano*. Convegni del Centro di studi sulla spiritualità medievale, XIV. (Todi 1974), 47-73; Raoul Manselli, "San Bonaventura e la storia francescana," *1274 Année charnière: mutations et continuités*, Paris 1977, 863-72; Edith Pásztor, "S. Bonaventura: biografo di S. Francesco? Contributo alla 'questione francescana,'" *Doctor Seraphicus* 27 (1980): 83-107.

<sup>18</sup>The *Legend of the Three Companions* (hereafter L3C), the *Anonymous of Perugia* (hereafter AP), the Lemmens edition of the *Mirror* (hereafter IMP), the Sabatier edition of *Mirror of Perfection* (hereafter 2MP), and *MS Little*. A number of important details about these sources were uncovered by Sophronius Clasen, cf. *Legenda*.

<sup>19</sup>Cf. Paul Sabatier, "Critical Study of the Sources," *Life of St. Francis of Assisi*, trans. Louise Seymour Houghton (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), 347-432.

<sup>20</sup>In addition to the histories of the Order in the thirteenth-century by Moorman,

the contrast between official and unofficial biographies in the end reflected the contrast between *community* and *spirituals*. To be sure, Sabatier was sharp enough to recognize that all these biographies could be suspected of partisanship in one way or another. But as a charming historian trying to reconstruct the psychology of Francis, he managed to create an image of the saint that was in fact much closer to the one found in the unofficial, rather than the official, sources.

Today, Sabatier's contrast between community sources and spiritual sources has in some respects been transcended. But his distinction between official sources and sources we have called private is still important and should be insisted upon. From a more strictly critical and technically formal point of view, this distinction is a help in identifying the literary nature of these sources. It is not just a question of whether they are official or not; it is also a question of formal technique and literary structure.

The first work we will consider from this point of view is Thomas of Celano's *Life*, which he was asked to write by Pope Gregory IX himself.<sup>21</sup> It rests on a formal commission that answers two needs. The pope, having canonized the founder of an Order whose way of life was totally new, needed to turn to someone he regarded as capable of doing the job assigned him. As patron, he needed to get something that answered his wishes, but could at the same time be used for the life of the Order, which was not developing exactly as the founder had envisioned. This official life, then, presents itself to us with its own particular features arising from these two needs.<sup>22</sup>

Also official, Thomas's *Remembrance*, the *Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul*, was meant to be an interface for a whole series of testimonies. Even though these were selected and developed in literary fashion, they must have been used of necessity. In other words, in his first legend Thomas was not *obliged* to use any material. But in the second, although he enjoyed great discretion, he had to use what had been given him for the express purpose of completing what he had written in his previous work. On the other hand, the *Remembrance* was not commissioned by the pope but by the minister general of the Order, who later gave his official approval. The use of

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Holzappel, Gratien de Paris, cf. *Franciscains d'Oc: Les Spirituels, ca. 1280-1324*. Cahiers de Fanjeaux, 10. (Toulouse: E. Privat, 1975); *Cbi erano gli spirituali*. Atti del III Convegno della Società Internazionale di Studi Francescani. (Assisi: La Società, 1976), and the ample bibliography assembled by Adriano Gattucci, "Per una rilettura dello spiritualismo francescano. Note introduttive," *Picenum Seraphicum* 11 (1974): 76-189.

<sup>21</sup>Cf. especially Nino Tamassia, *St. Francis*; Walter Goetz, *Die Quellen zur Geschichte des hl. Franz von Assisi* (Göttingen: F.A. Perthes, 1904), 84-88; Clasen, *Legenda*, 343-47.

<sup>22</sup>Cf. Clasen, *Legenda*, 344-45; Clasen speaks of an "angelic life," of a model taken from "early Benedictine monasticism," and criticizes Tamassia because of his attempt to establish parallels between the life of Francis and patristic sources, although he acknowledges "some truth" in it.

material about the fraternity desired by Francis and developments in the Order after his death was meant to reflect a continuity that was part of Crescentius of Iesi's plan.

In a display of truly extraordinary literary ability, Thomas resorted to a clever literary device: he divided the text into two parts. Only the first, shorter part (1-25) was in the form of a biography. In the second part (26-244), he took the material he had received and arranged it according to the saint's virtues. In that way he was able to avoid an overall judgment, both of Francis and his fraternity, which would have been necessary had the individual episodes been joined into a single narrative, and had he been able to overcome the problem of a lack of precise chronological data. In any case, Thomas probably followed a narrative, or better, a biographical outline compiled for personal use. This is evident from the fact that he identifies certain places and specifies certain details that were apparently missing in his sources.

The first part of the *Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul* is more strictly biographical.<sup>23</sup> Its three basic reference points remind us again of the essential and constitutive moments for the founder of an Order: the conversion (3-17), the place of this conversion, the *Portiuncula* (18-20), which is also the place where Francis and the brothers live their *life* (21-25).<sup>24</sup>

The conversion gives Thomas a chance to speak about the life of the young Francis, modifying and correcting what he had said in the *Life*. He has deliberately softened his harsh treatment of Francis's father and mother. Such harshness certainly could not have pleased the saint's family, especially his brothers, who saw their own parents maligned for the sole literary purpose of making their saintly relative's conversion more vivid and dramatic. As for the *Portiuncula*, Thomas stresses its importance in the expression of the spirituality of Francis and his brothers. In the third part, speaking of their way of life, he paints a quick picture of Francis's spirituality, not neglecting to mention his relations with the pope and cardinal protector. We have already touched on the problems caused by the influx of material from the saint's confreres and from other quarters. As far as resolving these problems is concerned, the most interesting part is the second. There, instead of arranging events chronologically, Thomas organized his material according to certain themes. These include the spirit

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<sup>23</sup> Since the primary texts used in this translation of Manselli's work are based on FA:ED, the editor has chosen to use the titles used in that edition. In this instance what Manselli refers to as Thomas of Celano's *Life* will be called the *Life of Saint Francis* or the *Life*, and the *Remembrance of the Desire of A Soul*, or simply the *Remembrance*.

<sup>24</sup> However, the *Remembrance* cannot be regarded simply as a rewriting of the *Life* in order to supply what was missing; actually, the two sources paint two rather different pictures of Francis. Think of how the saint is presented in the *Life* as simply carrying out the wishes of Cardinal Hugolino; see Edith Pásztor, "St. Francis, Cardinal Hugolino and the 'Franciscan Question,'" *Greyfriars Review* 1 (1987): 1-29).

of prophecy, poverty, alms, renunciation of the world, compassion for other poor people, love of prayer, understanding and love of Scripture, avoidance of women, temptations and attacks of the devil, spiritual joy, useless or improper joy, the stigmata, humility, obedience, good example, idle and lazy brothers, behavior of the ministers of God's word, praise of the Creator, charity, detraction, the ideal minister general, simplicity, devotion to the saints, the sisters and the women's Order, the Rule, death.

What should be stressed in this second part is Thomas of Celano's remarkable literary ability in his use of sources. This material was definitely not the stuff of biography, witness the letter that precedes the *Legend of the Three Companions* in the manuscript tradition. Rather it was an assortment of biographical details related to specific episodes; in itself it contained no clear indication of chronology. So, the only way the episodes could be used was by doing what Thomas did. He arranged them systematically according to virtues and exemplary deeds. In other words, the arrangement of the second part of the *Remembrance* is Thomas's artistic-literary solution to the problem arising from the form in which the material had been received by the general curia and in which it had been given him to rewrite. Later we will show what Thomas did with the passages that are of interest to us. A complete study of Thomas and his sources for the *Remembrance* is really needed, but this is not the place to do it.

The type of biography we have here is different from that of the *Life*. While the various episodes are situated between Francis's conversion and death, it is no longer according to a biographical plan, but stepwise, from one virtue to another. In any case, it is striking that the first thing we meet is the spirit of prophecy, which is presented as one of the most salient features of Francis's personality. This spirit of prophecy appeared in the first half of the thirteenth century and reoccurred in the decades that followed.<sup>25</sup>

The fact that a second part concerns poverty and attitudes toward the poor fits in perfectly with the logic of Thomas's account. As we said, he wants to bring out the basic elements in Francis's holiness.

It is not important to analyze this arrangement here. But it is clear from his approach that Thomas must have been forced to choose from the material he received from the minister general only those things that fit in with his plan and purpose. First, he had to eliminate all repetitions, then choose just one of the available versions. Once chosen and inserted into his

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<sup>25</sup>Recently, scholars have sometimes spoken of Francis's so-called gnosis in reference to the prophecies he is said to have made to his brothers, especially concerning the Order. They have claimed to detect in this an important element of "spiritualism." Although Thomas of Celano refers to a "spirit of prophecy" attentive to historical events and happenings in the daily life of the Order, we can see from his testimony that prophecy was attributed to Francis by everyone, not just by one or the other part of the Order. But this is a point that deserves further study.



plan, the episode had to be summarized, rewritten, and expressed in literary form. He strove for a uniform style that would transform a pile of separate accounts into a hagiographic unity. Nor did he hide his literary aspirations.

So far we have not had a chance to describe the methods and technique used by Thomas to transform his texts. But based on philological comparisons, we can, in some cases,—and perhaps others in the future—now explain the dynamic, the methods, and the reasons for these transformations. A knowledge of the literary techniques used at the time will help us here. On the one hand, he used them to create a rhythmic prose; on the other hand, he wanted to convey a certain idea of Francis, either because of his personal need as a writer, or in obedience to the man who had commissioned the biography. This alone leads us to conclude that Thomas's texts are inevitably *secondary* from a textual standpoint, since they are inevitably reworked. Surprisingly, even today there are scholars for whom Thomas of Celano represents a primary and direct source. But all we have to do is recall the two different ways the young Francis is presented in the *Life* and the *Remembrance*, and we recognize the limited validity of Thomas's account. This does not mean that Thomas is a fabricator, only that, obedient to literary forms and hagiographic *topoi*, he adapts and transforms his material.

The *Remembrance* of Thomas of Celano is a literary composition. Its hagiographic purposes are expressly stated; its intention is to make use of a body of supplementary material concerning the life and holiness of Francis. This material, which Thomas had found helpful, lay dormant but was not forgotten—a point to be kept in mind if we want to understand how and why a series of private compilations was able to emerge.

Thomas's task, as we have described it, becomes even greater in the case of Bonaventure, not only because he was more learned, but also because he was asked to write his biography when he was already minister general of the Order. This happened at the general chapter of Narbonne in 1260, where he presented the new constitutions he had drawn up for the Order. His *Major Legend*, however, is more important for placing Francis within the plan of Providence for the history of the Church than for any new data it provides.<sup>26</sup> But we certainly cannot doubt his statement that he went to Assisi, where he spoke with the saint's companions who were still alive, "especially those who had intimate knowledge of his holiness and were his outstanding followers. Because of their acknowledged truth and their proven virtue, they can be trusted beyond any doubt."<sup>27</sup> It seems that these new

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<sup>26</sup>For John R.H. Moorman St. Bonaventure is based essentially on the works of Thomas, cf. John R.H. Moorman, *The Sources for the Life of St. Francis of Assisi* (Manchester: University Press, 1940), 142. For Samuel Cavallin, the *Major Legend* is "essentially a résumé of the three works...of Thomas of Celano;" cf. Samuel Cavallin, "La question franciscaine comme problème philologique," *Erano* 52 (1954): 242.

<sup>27</sup>Prol. 4.

elements are in fact very few, or at least are eluding the careful analysis of historians.

The work is based on a division that is entirely deliberate. The first part (ch. 1-4), which is biographical in the stricter sense of the word, is followed by an account of the saint's virtues (ch. 5-12), the account of his death and, finally, some miracles (ch. 13-15).

But it is worth noting that the two models that most affected the creation of legendary elements in the lives of the founder are developed here: Francis as "another Christ" and Francis as "the angel of the sixth seal."<sup>28</sup>

The official status of the *Major Legend* received special confirmation from the fact that, in 1266, any and all previous biographies were ordered destroyed, including the two by Thomas of Celano, which were no less official.<sup>29</sup> This had extremely important consequences. For one thing, biographies were eliminated about which we can say nothing, for example, that of John of Ceprano (*Quasi stella matutina*). Although Angelo Clareno considered it on a par with the three just mentioned,<sup>30</sup> from the standpoint of *Formgeschichte* we have nothing on which to judge its consistency.

## 2. Unofficial Collections

The existence of official biographies provoked a series of repercussions whose historical importance needs to be explained.

All the testimonies about Francis that have survived unanimously agree that he was a man of great holiness, asceticism, and exemplary life. Not only that, he possessed a unique personal attractiveness, a real charisma as sociologists would say today.<sup>31</sup> Thus, any group or brother that desired to

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<sup>28</sup>Cf. Raoul Manselli, *La «Lectura super Apocalipsim» di Pietro di Giovanni Olivi. Ricerche sull'escatologismo medioevale*, (Rome: Nella Sede dell'Istituto, 1955); Idem, "L'Umbria nell'età di Dante," *Bollettino della Deputazione di Storia Patria per l'Umbria* 62 (1965): 167-69; Idem, "La resurrezione di san Francesco dalla teologia di Pietro di Giovanni Olivi ad una testimonianza di pietà popolare," *Collectanea Franciscana* 46 (1976): 309-20; Stanislao da Campagnola, *L'Angelo del sesto sigillo e l'Alter Christus* (Rome: Laurentianum, 1971).

<sup>29</sup>Cf. Clasen, *Legenda*, 370-1.

<sup>30</sup>In fact Clareno uses the reference to indicate four of Francis's biographers, whom he compares to the four evangelists in his interpretation of Francis as "another Christ." On the Christlike image of Francis and Franciscanism for Angelo Clareno, see Edith Pásztor, "L'immagine di Cristo negli Spirituali," *Chi erano gli Spirituali*. Atti del III Convegno Internazionale della Società Internazionale degli Studi Francescani. (Assisi: La Società, 1976), 107-24.

<sup>31</sup>See also Kaspar. Elm, "Die Entwicklung des Franziskanerordens zwischen dem ersten und letzten Zeugnis des Jacob von Vitry," *Francesco d'Assisi e francescanesimo dal 1216 al 1226*. Atti del IV Convegno della Società Internazionale degli Studi Francescani. (Assisi: La Società, 1977), 193-233; Raoul Manselli, "Il punto su recenti studi relativi a S. Francesco ed al

refer to its father and founder, ended up wanting to create an image of him that would respond in some way to the ideal it had been creating for itself. This explains the array of texts that speak to us about Francis. It is these texts, which differ in genre, structure, and composition, that we must try to classify using the method of *Formgeschichte*.

a) Sources that are systematically arranged

At this point, a preliminary and essential distinction spontaneously arises. Some of these unofficial works are formally complete; in other words, they start with a pre-established plan for organizing the material they are going to use. Others lack this entirely. Of course, even those in the first group are not official biographies. Not only are they anonymous; they also lack any official approval on the part of the Order. Yet they are arranged in such a way as to present their own specific response to specific questions about Francis. For the purposes of our research, we would like to determine the forms in which their subject matter is presented. In other words, which element is the anonymous writer trying to develop: the biographical, the ascetical, or the exemplary. This will become clearer if we compare some well-known texts, much discussed and very different, from this first group of sources. For example, let us compare the so-called *Legend of the Three Companions* and the *Anonymous of Perugia* with the *Mirror of Perfection* and the *Legend of Perugia*. We are allowed to associate the *Legend of the Three Companions* with the *Anonymous of Perugia*, since the two sources are very closely linked, even though Franciscan scholars are still debating which came first.<sup>32</sup>

Whoever its author, the *Legend of the Three Companions* is the most clearly biographical of these sources. Its essential and primary purpose is to present the historical figure of Francis in the setting of the city. Despite differences in the manuscript tradition,<sup>33</sup> its parts are complete, and these consist of two characteristic sections. The first deals with Francis's life from his birth to his conversion, ending with the establishment of the fraternity by presenting it to the pope, and the sending of the brothers into the world. Sabatier, whose observation is still valid, noticed a very strange fact.<sup>34</sup> Whereas sixteen chapters are devoted to Francis's life before he presents his rule to Innocent III and begins to preach, only two chapters deal with Hugolino, the protector of the Order, and Francis's preaching outside Assisi

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francescanesimo primitivo," *Frate Francesco* 45 (1978): 8-25

<sup>32</sup>For the relationship between the two sources, cf. *La «questione francescana» dal Sabatier ad oggi*, Assisi 1974; also Guy Philippart, "Le Bollandiste François van Ortoy et la 'Legenda trium sociorum,'" *Analecta Bollandiana* 90 (1972): 171-97.

<sup>33</sup>Cf. Sophronius Clasen, *Die Dreieifährtenlegende des heiligen Franziskus* (Werl/Westphalia: Dietrich-Coelde-Verlag), 1972, 24-166; Idem, *Legenda*, passim.

<sup>34</sup>Cf. Sabatier, *Life*, 374-6.

and Italy. Two additional chapters take us back to Assisi for a quick account of Francis's death and canonization. What we have is a biography in which the compiler's attention is focused on events in Assisi, with a wealth of details and specific information.

The legend intends, then, to speak of Francis in Assisi, how his conversion took place in Assisi, how his first companions included citizens of Assisi, how this first group of followers went to Rome to obtain papal approval and how, upon their return to Assisi, the fraternity began to take shape and spread everywhere. Finally, if we are willing to accept the last two chapters as part of the work, we have Francis's return to his city to die among his fellow citizens. Thomas of Celano says bluntly that they were hoping he would die in their city and that he would die there before moving somewhere else."

Most of the information we have about Francis from the *Legend of the Three Companions* is found in Thomas of Celano's *Remembrance*.<sup>15</sup> But the close connection with Assisi is unique to the *Legend of the Three Companions*. It is regarded as the essential and privileged place in Francis's life.

Here the question arises as to the legend's form. Compared to the other biographies of Francis or to the genre of hagiography, it seems in general rather unusual, to say the least.<sup>16</sup> This can be explained if we take it as the story not only of a religious founder, but of a local saint. It seems to have been written in Assisi to honor a fellow citizen, to praise the city where his conversion had taken place and where in the end he was buried. In other words, the *Legend of the Three Companions* should be seen as the Assisi legend of Francis. We find confirmation for this in a series of considerations that led Clasen and others to move back the date of the legend's composition, placing it before the *Remembrance*.<sup>17</sup> In fact, it could be seen as Assisi's response to the official legend of Thomas of Celano, which, quite frankly, had diluted many aspects of Francis's personality through its use of the great saints of the past as models. What is more, the first part of the work had presented Francis's parents as neglectful or even guilty in his upbringing, making him a young man addicted to vice. This of course made his conversion all the more impressive. But historians should not forget that these pages were condemning an entire social class, the merchants of Assisi, and were thus offensive to a good part of the city of Francis. Today we do not have stories in *The Assisi Gazette* about the flood of protests that must have come from those who had read the first chapters of Celano's *Life*. But anyone who knows anything about city life—especially in a small city like

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<sup>15</sup>Cf. R. Manselli, *La povertà*, 274-75.

<sup>16</sup>2C 1-25; for a careful comparison, see Clasen, *Legenda*, 314-24.

<sup>17</sup>Cf. *La «questione francescana» dal Sabatier ad oggi*, especially the intervention by G. Philippart, 239-41.

<sup>18</sup>Cf. Clasen, *Legenda*, 314-24.

Assisi in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century—can well imagine what a ripple effect this must have caused! In any case, we need only compare the beginning of the *Life* with the first chapter of the *Legend of the Three Companions* to see the difference in the two presentations of Francis.

In the *Legend of the Three Companions*, Francis is an intelligent and capable businessman who practices his father's trade, even though he is more light-hearted and spendthrift, a lover of music, good company and the happy-go-lucky life of youth. The legend also tells us that his parents were tolerant of their son's excessive high spirits. The concern of his mother, talking to the neighbors about her son, is an exquisite bit of real life. It is certainly no literary invention, but the fruit of concrete everyday life. What would become of this son of hers? "He will still be a son of God through grace" [L3C 2].

Equally interesting is what the legend says about his temperament: "He was naturally *curialis* [courteous] in manner and speech" [L3C 3]. We need to take a moment with this term, since it describes an essential trait in Francis's psychology. While this trait will be nurtured and purified until it becomes self-dedication to others, it springs from his natural courtesy, in other words, his readiness to give generously—with refinement or distinction, as we would say today."

In addition, although the *Legend of the Three Companions* speaks of his almsgiving, it also says that he was a "merchant." It reminds us, in no uncertain terms, that after refusing to give an alms to a poor man, he accused himself of *magna rusticitas*, that is, discourtesy or rudeness.<sup>40</sup> There is, to be sure, a religious spirit—youthful high spirits and good humor are not opposed to that—but the essential trait remains courtesy. Francis realizes that he has been discourteous to the poor man and thus to God. At the same time, his *curialitas* is confirmed by his desire to do great things. His desire to set out for Apulia as a knight is simply a consequence of his desire for ennoblement, which this legend, despite its pieties, is quick to condemn in no uncertain terms.

We cannot take time here to analyze Francis's conversion as presented in the *Legend of the Three Companions*. Yet we cannot help but notice how it modifies Francis's psychological journey as he himself describes it in his *Testament*—although it is closer to the truth than Thomas of Celano. The *Legend of the Three Companions* wants to give us a Francis who first of all experiences poverty. This means that he was already the saint of poverty when the legend was written. But if we look carefully, we will find elements that confirm what we are told in the *Testament*. Chapter 3 speaks

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<sup>40</sup>Cf. Cinzio Violante, "Motivi e carattere della Cronica di Salimbene," *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*, Ser. II, 22 (1953): 1-41 of the abstract. Pages 14-27 deal especially with *courtesy*. Violante's work dispenses from the need for a bibliography on courtesy.

<sup>41</sup>This was the worst fault according to the thinking of the world of "courtesy."

of his disdain for the things of the world—although it says that he told his friends he was in love with a lady more beautiful and wealthy than they had ever seen. But what is really highlighted as the sign of Francis's conversion is his meeting with the leper. Note that this meeting takes place before his decision to become poor. It takes place outside the city while the young Francis was riding his horse. What we read about his horror of lepers seems to echo a bit of firsthand testimony, for the author of the legend says that "he made himself dismount, and gave him a coin, kissing his hand as he did so" [L3C 11]. We are standing in the light on the road to Damascus, which begins, not with poverty, but with mercy toward the leper. Beneath the hallowed tradition, there appears what seems to us a local element that confirms the Assisi setting of the *Legend of the Three Companions*. Another important detail is that while he takes a large sum of money, it is not for the poor. Instead he goes to the leper hospice and gives the money to them—another precise feature of city life. Who except someone from Assisi would know that such a place existed in Assisi?

It seems established, then, that what we have is an Assisi account, linked to the world of the city and the still-living memories of Francis. Could it originally have been part of the material that was sent to Crescentius of Iesi? This is no more than a question; we are not even framing a hypothesis.<sup>41</sup> Obviously, it might be worth discussing. Here we do not wish to get into questions of priority, also with respect to the *Anonymous of Perugia*.

What we want to stress now is that this is a biographical text—unofficial and with a unity of its own. Its apparent purpose is to recall Francis's native city and its link to some of the most important moments in his life, including the institution of chapters and his death and canonization. If we think of the jealous and eagle-eyed attention paid by different cities to the saints that had made them famous,<sup>42</sup> we can easily imagine someone who knew how to write well putting together the facts that linked Francis to the place of his birth.

Characterizing this legend further, we must add that its purpose is not to extol a miraculous local saint. It speaks of no miracles; even the miracles after Francis's death are completely missing. Apparently the author was fully aware of Francis's identity and importance—as a man from Assisi, certainly—but also as a saint outside his city. All this is easy to see, especially in the work's last chapter, on Francis's canonization.

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<sup>41</sup>Here we must immediately make it clear that in no way do we wish to enter the controversy about the relationship between this source and the letter of Francis's companions.

<sup>42</sup>Cf. Hans Conrad Peyer, *Stadt und Stadtpatron im mittelalterlichen Italien* (Zürich: Europa, 1955); Alba Maria Orselli, *L'idea e il culto del santo patrono cittadino nella letteratura latina cristiana* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1965).

Compared to the so-called *Legend of the Three Companions*, our other text—the Sabatier edition of the *Mirror of Perfection*—is very different. Its purpose is not to give us a biography of Francis, but a *mirror* of his perfection. In this it reminds us of Celano's *Remembrance*, which proposes the holiness of Francis as an example—in the prologue to the entire work, and again in the introduction to the second part. It uses expressions such as “perfection,” “mirror,” and “image of perfection.” Let us look at the relevant passages:

“We will attempt to express and carefully state the good, pleasing and perfect will (Rom 12:2) of our most holy father. This concerns both himself and his followers, the exercise of heavenly discipline and that striving for highest perfection which he always expressed in love for God and in living example for others” [2C 2]. This is from the prologue. Then, at the beginning of the second part, the author explains why he is abandoning chronology in order to systematically collect and present Francis's virtues: “I consider blessed Francis the holiest mirror of the holiness of the Lord, the image of his perfection” [2C 26].

The compiler of the *Mirror of Perfection*—strangely, Sabatier did not notice this—does not refer to the chronology of Francis's life, either in the title or in the overall plan of his work. Instead he offers a *mirror*, a model of holiness presented through Francis's words, deeds, and conduct.

In the Middle Ages, many *specula principum* presented the ideal model of a sovereign, an ideal that princes seldom lived up to in reality.<sup>4</sup> Here we have a “mirror of perfection,” not considered abstractly but summed up in a real person. Once again we find a different *form*, some of whose essential elements we need to describe.

The work is divided according to the different virtues, those that comprise and constitute Christian perfection, summed up in their essence and put into practice by Francis. But it is made up of composite material. We have, then, another difference from the so-called *Legend of the Three Companions* or the *Anonymous of Perugia*, two works written with a sense of literary unity. The *Mirror of Perfection* is a collection of material, systematically organized and arranged. But as anyone who has some feel for medieval prose can plainly see, it is very different stylistically. This was shown sixty years ago by Benvenuto Terracini in a study of the *Mirror of Perfection*. His study is still very valuable, although it is flawed by certain assumptions related to Sabatier's approach that misled him and diminished somewhat the value of his results.<sup>5</sup> But the important thing is that he

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<sup>4</sup>Cf. Wilhelm Berges, *Die Fürstenspiegel des hohen und späten Mittelalters* (Stuttgart: A. Hiersemann, 1955).

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Benvenuto A. Terracini, “Il ‘Cursus’ e la questione dello *Speculum Perfectionis*,” *Studi Medievali* 4 (1912-13): 65-109.

pointed out that the texts were put together with very few modifications. This point has an importance and significance all its own.

What we have said so far about the *Mirror of Perfection* should not lead us to conclude that the juxtaposed passages were modified only insofar as absolutely necessary to fit them into the unified plan of the *Mirror*, whose purpose was to highlight those virtues that constituted the perfection of Francis. Later, when we survey the texts taken from the *Mirror of Perfection*, we will note the modifications, for the most part very small. Since the passages were modified so little, we feel authorized to say that they must have enjoyed the greatest respect and been regarded with attention and reverence. While it is true that in some cases there are changes and omissions, we believe we can explain this, taking into account the approximate time and circumstances in which the *Mirror of Perfection* was written. Current research seems to place it in the first decades of the fourteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

The *Mirror of Perfection* is the last of the unofficial works that have a unified plan of their own and that were most likely written to answer the specific needs of a group, such as the citizens of Assisi or the rigorists. But a study of this question goes beyond the subject at hand.

*b) Sources that are not systematically arranged*

Continuing our analysis of the literary forms of the texts about Francis, we come to a group of three collections of episodes about the saint in which we seem unable to discern any unified plan whatsoever. Instead they seem to be collections of fragmentary passages, put together in various ways. We are referring to three texts, well known and much discussed: the *Legend of Perugia*, the Lemmens edition of the *Mirror*, and *MS Little*.

What these three sources seem to have in common is that they are not constructed to serve any specific purpose; they are not divided according to Francis's virtues or other unifying principles. They presuppose the existence of the official sources. We can venture the hypothesis that those who compiled them knew at least Thomas of Celano's *Remembrance*. The compiler of the smaller version of the *Mirror* perhaps also knew Bonaventure's *Major Legend*, depending on the interpretation of a gloss that was added later to his text.

One conclusion is that these three works are collections of material for private and personal use. Someone either wanted to preserve memories or testimonies that were special to him—for what they say about Francis, or because of those who transmitted them—or else he wanted to include memories of facts and events that others had already mentioned, but too quickly and briefly.

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<sup>4</sup>Cf. Clasen, *Legenda*, 388.



The *Legend of Perugia* was discovered in 1922 in MS 1046 of the Biblioteca Augusta of Perugia. Later it was found in other codices, which are interesting for the text, but not for the question of its compilation. Since it first appeared among the Franciscan sources, it has been the subject of critical studies—by its discoverer, Ferdinand Delorme, as well as by Franciscan scholars.<sup>46</sup> It was immediately evident that the work was unique. It contained a substantial nucleus of chapters that paralleled certain chapters in Celano's *Remembrance*, and another group of texts in which scholars thought they could see a unified work, to which they gave an attribution on the basis of its internal characteristics.<sup>47</sup> Strangely, it did not receive the attention it really deserved in Sabatier's second edition of the *Mirror of Perfection*.

Discussed by Moorman,<sup>48</sup> the *Legend of Perugia* recently found three enthusiastic scholars in the persons of Jacques Cambell, Rosalind Brooke, and Marino Bigaroni. Bigaroni also gave it a new name, the *Assisi Compilation*, since he wanted to stress the fact that the Perugia manuscript comes from Assisi.

Delorme, Cambell, and Brooke variously grouped the chapters of what they considered the original part of the text (Delorme actually did this twice). These first scholars certainly consider the work to be a unit and agree that it was written by the three companions of Francis. Cambell and Brooke, picking up on a suggestion by Delorme, do not hesitate to preface it with the 1244 letter of the three companions to Crescentius of Iesi, which is entirely absent in the manuscripts of the *Legend of Perugia*. Bigaroni, although he omits the letter, calls the legend a compilation made from the "writings of Brother Leo and the companions." Needless to say, for all these authors this is simply a hypothesis. The hypothesis was severely criticized and decisively rejected by Clasen, who until his death maintained that the real work of the three companions was the *Legend of the Three Companions*.

Unlike the Lemmens *Mirror* and the *MS Little*, the *Legend of Perugia* contains no clear statement of the author's purpose. No doubt he was able to use—how and why we do not know—at least part of the material that had been sent to Crescentius of Iesi, most—though not all—of which had already been used by Thomas of Celano. From these texts the compiler of the *Legend of Perugia* selected certain chapters for his collection, using criteria whose logic seems to escape us. His technique of selection, on the other hand, leads us to another, equally valid conclusion. The compiler was either working in an almost absurdly nonchalant manner—but then it would

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<sup>46</sup>For Cavallin, for example, the *Legend of Perugia* seems to be one of the older versions of 2MP. Cf. Cavallin, *La question franciscaine*, 27.

<sup>47</sup>See Delorme's division of the text into sections in the 1922 edition, 30-70, and what Brooke writes about the "Celano sandwich," *Scripta*, 75-76.

<sup>48</sup>Cf. Moorman, *Sources*, 82-109.

be hard to fathom his recourse to original texts whenever he found modifications in Thomas of Celano—or else he had a remarkable knowledge of the texts and an ability to distinguish that allowed him to choose exactly what he wanted for his compilation. This also presupposes that he knew the status of the documents and how they had been used, all of which enables us to place the compilation at a moment in history when, even though the *Remembrance* existed, people were still aware that Thomas of Celano had not used all the collected material.

What is the purpose of this compilation? Maybe the author was simply a brother who wanted to get to know the life of Francis from reliable sources, seeing that he had been utterly fascinated by it. So, he turned to the people who had been with Francis, with no regard for persons. His approach is one that would later be used by the rigorists, but at this point there is only an intense desire to rediscover the life of a great figure. Despite its lack of unified structure, we seem to see in the *Legend of Perugia* a need to look Francis in the eye and read his essential soul and spirit.

The compiler of the *Legend of Perugia* tends to reject any kind of biographical or systematic arrangement. Some episodes at the beginning, however, seem to refer to the early days of the Order, while others near the end refer to events that precede Francis's death.

In any case, what is most important is the fact that almost nothing is said about Francis prior to the foundation of the Order. We do not mean to be disrespectful, but it is as if Francis were born a friar—indeed, already a middle-aged, sick man.

This leads us to believe that the compiler had no intention of writing a real biography. Instead, for reasons we cannot really determine, he wanted to collect a series of facts and information—firsthand, if possible—about Francis, especially his last days. The absence of information about Francis's youth may also be explained by the fact that whoever collected the texts of the *Legend of Perugia*—he seems to be collecting them for his own personal use—did not need any Assisi sources. Either he was living there himself, or else he had obtained facts and information orally and was so familiar with them that he had no need for anyone to send them to him in writing.

The fact that the *Legend of Perugia* is a compilation permits us to make yet another point. Both Thomas of Celano and the anonymous author of the *Mirror of Perfection* use the material left by the companions. But the very nature of their work forces them to rework it, as in the case of Thomas, or respectfully adapt it, as with the compiler of the *Mirror of Perfection*, according to their chosen plan. Thus they introduce modifications and changes into the episodes themselves, something that was unnecessary in the *Legend of Perugia*. Its compiler, in fact, was quite content to place his passages one after the other.

Another edition of the *Mirror* was published in 1901 by Leonard Lemmens<sup>49</sup> and is often called the *Speculum Lemmens* to distinguish it from the *Speculum Sabatier* or *Mirror of Perfection*. It is found in a fourteenth-century codex, *MS Isidoriano 1/73*, which contains the following initial rubric: "In the name of the Lord begins the Mirror of the perfection, Rule, profession, life, and calling of a true Lesser Brother according to the will of Christ and the intention of blessed Francis, and of his other companions, which are not in the common Legend."<sup>50</sup> As can be seen, this rubric is in several parts. First, the purpose of the work is stated: to portray the ideal of the true lesser brother.<sup>51</sup> Then the compiler identifies the source from which he drew his material: the writings of Brother Leo and the saint's other companions. Finally, he says that the text includes only episodes not found in the "common legend." Lemmens identifies the latter quite simply as Bonaventure's *Major Legend*. And so these are not just any old texts; they are taken from the writings of those who could have known Francis well since they were his companions—not just Brother Leo, but also others. In any case, we cannot expect to find unity of narrator or testimonies; the rubric is very clear about this. In other words, what we have once again is a work based on collective testimony.

Given that this work is a *mirror*, Lemmens immediately compared it with the one published by Sabatier. He maintained that not only was this a shorter version of the latter; it was also the *first* version. But it must be noted that, unlike the *Mirror of Perfection*, Lemmens's *Mirror* is not arranged according to the virtues.<sup>52</sup> It follows an internal arrangement different from that of the longer text. All forty-four chapters of the Lemmens *Mirror* are also found in the *Legend of Perugia*, with major or minor variations.<sup>53</sup>

The source is an important witness to the Franciscans' state of mind, seeing that a brother felt the need to collect for himself, in an unofficial manner and form, episodes from the life of Francis. It is an undisputed witness to the uneasiness within Franciscanism, to the ongoing ferment Francis's example was causing in the hearts of his followers. This little work shows us that a number of brothers—few or many, we will never know—were not sticking to mere observance of the Rule, were not resigned to the clericalization of the Order, were not accepting the image historically

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<sup>49</sup>Cf. Leonard Lemmens, *Documenta Antiqua Franciscana*. Part II: *Speculum perfectionis* (Version I), Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi) 1901; see also Clasen, *Legenda*, 373-75.

<sup>50</sup>Cf. Lemmens, *Documenta*, 23. The *Mirror* occupies ff. 34a-58b of the *codex Isidoriana*. Lemmens does not say, however, whether this rubric was written at the same time as the text or whether it was added later.

<sup>51</sup>The part with the rubric is much larger than the title and end in the Sabatier edition of the *Mirror of Perfection*.

<sup>52</sup>The individual episodes, like those contained in the *Legend of Perugia*, also lack titles.

<sup>53</sup>Delorme already compared these two sources in his 1922 edition.

framed in the plan of providence as found in the "official" tradition. That image, though virtuous and exemplary in every aspect of Christian asceticism, lacked a human touch. This source is a witness to the anxious search for the man Francis, for his unique and distinct characteristics. Strange though these may have been, they were fascinating and able to lead, by example, to imitation. Everyone agreed on this point: imitation of Francis was the only way people at that time felt they could imitate Christ.

This brings us to a collection of episodes about the life of Francis, an Oxford manuscript, *Bodleian Library cod. lat. theol. d 23*. It is better known to scholars as *MS Little* from the name of the man who first announced it, described it, and published a partial edition.<sup>54</sup> The codex is a hodgepodge. It contains the Rule and a collection of papal bulls concerning the Order, followed by works of John Peckham and Bonaventure, and commentaries on the Rule by the Five Masters and Peter John Olivi. Finally there are four groups of accounts about Francis.<sup>55</sup> The first brings together episodes drawn from the *Deeds of Saint Francis and His Companions*, with no introduction or description.<sup>56</sup> But within this division is another division introduced by the words: "Here are some extraordinary deeds and miracles from the companions of Saint Francis." But, once again, it draws from the *Deeds*. After a large section taken from the *Deeds of Saint Francis*, there is another group of chapters entitled: "Other examples from the life of our holy father Francis and his companions."<sup>57</sup> This long series of chapters follows the *Mirror of Perfection*.<sup>58</sup> Although the continuity is not perfect, it stays very close to the *Mirror*.<sup>59</sup> One exception is chapters 133-140, whose source is not the *Mirror of Perfection* but the *Legenda vetus*.<sup>60</sup> Chapter 141 begins a new division, introduced by the words: "A remembrance, worthy of note, from

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<sup>54</sup>Cf. Andrew G. Little, "Description of a Franciscan Manuscript, formerly in the Phillipps Library, now in the possession of A.G. Little," *Collectanea Franciscana* I (1914): 9-113; also Idem, "Some recently discovered Franciscan Documents and their Relations to the Remembrance of Celano and the Speculum Perfectionis," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 12 (1926): 147-78. For the present location, see Clasen, *Legenda*, 123-24.

<sup>55</sup>For a description of the first part of the manuscript, cf. Little, *Description*, 18-22.

<sup>56</sup>Cf. Little, *Description*, 22-58; a passage from the *Exposition of the Rule* by Angelo Clareno is inserted among the episodes from the *Deeds*, cf. pp. 31-32.

<sup>57</sup>Little, *Description*, 47. It is worth recalling that, as Little already noted (*ibid.*, n. 1), another hand has written in the margin: "Beginning of the little flowers of the life of the companions of our holy father Francis."

<sup>58</sup>Little, *Description*, 58.

<sup>59</sup>Little, *Description*, 58-107.

<sup>60</sup>It is worth noting that the *Mirror of Perfection* as found in *MS Little* is very close to codex *Vat. lat. 4354* and preserves many of its characteristic readings. We cannot say, as Little has done for the *Deeds*, whether and to what extent this manuscript's readings are preferable to those of Sabatier. We only wish to note that it will be important for whoever will have to focus some day on those parts of the *Mirror of Perfection* contained in this manuscript.

the companions of Saint Francis."<sup>61</sup> A new group of chapters begins, taken from a great variety of sources: the *Mirror of Perfection*, the *Deeds*, the *Lemmens Mirror*, the *Intention of the Rule* and the *Remembrance* of Celano. Gradually the *Mirror of Perfection* becomes predominant, together with Thomas of Celano's *Remembrance* and *Treatise on the Miracles*. The last part of this group of chapters presents a series of testimonies about the Portiuncula and some miracles of Francis.<sup>62</sup> The fourth part, on the other hand, concerns Brother Giles and is taken from the *Deeds of Saint Francis*.<sup>63</sup> A fifth part contains some miscellaneous texts, including Peter Aureoli's commentary on the Apocalypse and a series of biblical texts. The *explicit* says that the work was written by order of "Brother Lawrence of Rieti, minister of the Province of St. Anthony."<sup>64</sup>

Information gathered by scholars dates this manuscript from the first half of the fifteenth century.<sup>65</sup> The compilation was created as a compendium of legal texts and episodes about Francis. Once again we have the juxtaposition of legal norms and examples from the life of the father and founder. The compiler's tendency, which in another age would have been called *spiritual*, is easily seen from some of its characteristic texts, from Olivi's commentary on the Rule, to Aureoli's commentary on the Apocalypse, to the texts he turns to for information about Francis. But we cannot call him a spiritual, for that term would have been completely anachronistic in the fifteenth century. In any case, this person's positions are very close to what we may call those of the Observance. Thus it seems significant that although he takes Olivi's commentary on the Rule, for the Apocalypse he chooses Peter Aureoli's commentary, which is beyond suspicion. On the other hand, it seems to be no accident that he uses texts such as the *Mirror of Perfection* and the *Deeds of Saint Francis*, which were certainly created in a "rigorist" environment, where the Observant phenomenon had silently grown to maturity.

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<sup>61</sup>For this source cf. Clasen, *Legenda*, 32; Little, *Description*, 72-73.

<sup>62</sup>Little, *Description*, 74.

<sup>63</sup>Little, *Description*, 104-07. We are not venturing a solution as to the possible choice of the texts in part three. While *MS Little* certainly follows the texts we have, as far as the *Deeds of Saint Francis* and the *Mirror of Perfection* are concerned, albeit with the different readings indicated by Little himself, some of the texts in part three are unique witnesses. Thus for example chapter 187, which will be of special interest to us, seems to have been taken from an unknown text, in which the compiler found a fuller and more extended form of a passage he already knew from Thomas of Celano, which is here set aside, as we shall show. In other words, our compiler informs us that he knows the texts, but that he chose the one that seemed preferable to him. Unfortunately we can go no further, saying only that he recognized that the text he chose in preference to the *Remembrance* was more valuable. There is much evidence pointing to what remains for us a hypothesis, albeit an intriguing one.

<sup>64</sup>Little, *Description*, 108-9.

<sup>65</sup>Little, *Description*, 109-13.

We are interested especially in Chapter 187 of *MS Little*, which we will speak of later, but whose location we want to clarify now. It is not included in the part that contains the *Deeds of Saint Francis*, nor in the second part, which contains chapters taken from the *Mirror of Perfection*. It is in the third part, which contains texts from various sources, chosen on the basis of criteria that seem to elude us. But perhaps it is just a simple desire to collect episodes from the life of Francis not found in the first two series, forming, as it were, a collection within a collection. The whole thing, if we are not mistaken, was supposed to form the central part of a collection of episodes from the life of Francis, for spiritual edification and for the preparation of lesser brothers. The name of a provincial from the community of St. Anthony may be extremely important. If we keep in mind that this was someone who felt the need for legislative, exemplary, and exegetical texts related to the Franciscan Order, then the apparent chaos turns out to have an inner logic of its own. Granted, it is not what we with our twentieth-century mentality would like; but it is the logic of someone working at a difficult time of crisis in the Order, which was precisely the case between the end of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth. Historians find it providential that something of such rare and special interest was placed among so many texts that are well-known. We will say more about it later.

As others seem to have been able to suggest concerning the *Mirror of Perfection*, it has been suggested that this group of sources contains arbitrary amplifications of Thomas of Celanos's text where it had covered things too quickly or only alluded to them. But here we have several questions. Given the existence of texts that were well known, based on sound testimony, and superior from a literary standpoint, why would anyone have had to amplify them for personal use? What was the purpose in adding details, seeing that these additions would inevitably fail to become widely known, given the norms in effect in the Order and the situation at the time? Moreover, why were some of these passages seemingly taken from one work and repeated in another without altering any essential points?

First of all, the presence of parallel and, in some cases, almost word-for-word identical material raises the question of analogies and the transposition of texts. The obvious conclusion is that there may have been a common fund from which everyone drew. That said, and postponing an internal comparison of these texts until Part Two, our attention is drawn to the fact that in every case these are personal compilations. But we should not be thinking about conflicts in the Order. We should beware of what Sabatier did, for example, with the *Mirror of Perfection*; we should not consider these three texts as *spiritual* texts. To understand their true meaning and importance, we need to recognize that they are compilations of texts about Francis. They were made for intensely personal reasons, and no psychological study, no matter how perceptive, can probably ever say exactly what these were. Some of these texts can also be found in the official sources

and in those that are systematically arranged. But here they are collected in various editions and are found only in texts that can be traced to certain Franciscan circles. By way of hypothesis, we could imagine a desire for more information and details, for clarification of the official sources or some addition to them, both before and after Bonaventure, although Bonaventure apparently uses none of these texts directly. Finally, someone for reasons of his own, even with an eye to a future narrative, may have collected "material" for a possible legend or a book of spiritual edification. Thus, for example, even the author of the *Mirror of Perfection* probably had to collect material for his work at some point. The anonymous authors of the three compilations we are discussing here may have gathered material precisely with the idea of using it in this way.

They are an *Italian*, indeed an *Umbrian* phenomenon, based as they are on material not available to everyone, but only to those few who could have known and used it, most likely in Assisi. To be sure, the material received in 1246 was not secret. But it did consist of a group of texts that were not easily accessible, or at any rate, not available for general reference. Initially then, the collection of these texts, in different ways and at different times, must be seen as a local phenomenon that developed over time. It involved only a few people: the minister general, Francis's companions, Thomas of Celano, and the compilers of our collections—a limited number of people for whom it was somehow important to create their own image of Francis. Once Celano's *Remembrance* was finished, these texts had a very limited circulation and attracted little attention, and that only in limited circles. When Celano's *Remembrance* became the official legend of the Order and was later replaced by that of Bonaventure, no one cared any more about the testimonies Thomas had used or, in Bonaventure's case, those he had ignored. But they were not destroyed. Being a detached collection of testimonies and not a legend, they did not necessarily fall under the 1266 command to destroy all earlier legends.

If we examine these three texts from the standpoint of differences in content, we can list several types: a) episodes from the life of Francis that have an exemplary value; b) *logia* or sayings of Francis related to a correct understanding of his intentions and his Rule;<sup>6</sup> c) miraculous episodes; d) revelations.

But when viewed and classified in this way, our texts take us back to a comparison of parallel passages. So far these have not produced genuinely sound and convincing results. It is precisely here that a *study of the forms* in which our texts manifest themselves seems to prove its validity.

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<sup>6</sup>These have also been collected in particular works such as the *Intentio regulae* or the *Verba Francisci*; for these Cf. Edith Pásztor, "Gli scritti leonini," *La «questione francescana» dal Sabatier ad oggi*. Atti del I Convegno della Società degli Studi Francescani. (Assisi, La Società, 1974): 199-212.

## IV

### Passages Containing the Phrase "We Who Were with Him"

From the sources we have discussed so far, we propose to isolate a group of texts whose *forms* are typical. In the *Legend of Perugia*, the *Sabatier Mirror of Perfection*, the *Lemmens Mirror*, and *MS Little*, a certain number of passages, varying in length but narrative in nature, contain an utterly new and unique form, whose meaning and significance we will need to explore. We are referring to those episodes that have incorporated, according to differing circumstances, the expression "We who were with him" or something similar.<sup>67</sup>

Some of these episodes are also found in Thomas of Celano's *Remembrance*, often developed and adapted in some way, but always without this signature phrase. This expression reminds us in some ways of the signatures we find in medieval acts. Let us be clear: in no way do we mean to say that these are "notarized" documents. But neither can this expression be accidental or a literary or biblical *topos*. We must always remember that seventeen of these passages have a more-or-less identical formula. Two others are similar, but different from the previous seventeen,<sup>68</sup> and a third one is entirely personal and unique.<sup>69</sup> This last episode is used in full by Thomas of Celano, who says that it is attested to by the one who "was at that time thrown out from that house while he was sick."<sup>70</sup> Some have even said that the incident refers to Thomas himself. In that case, what we have is an extraordinary tale, such as might have been fabricated by a learned man who borrowed and amplified the episode, making himself the protagonist, in order to corroborate Thomas.<sup>71</sup> Here we need courage to approach the problem critically. Either we must show, with the necessary proof, that these passages are false, deliberately fabricated to distort the life of Francis; or else we must wrestle with them, discuss them and analyze them in detail. In that case they must be considered real and substantial testimonies, to be

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<sup>67</sup>Cf. Raoul Manselli, "Nos qui cum eo fuimus". *Saint François et le témoignage des trois compagnons*, *Archivio di Filosofia*, (Rome 1972), 505-16; Idem, *La povertà*, 273-82.

<sup>68</sup>"The one who wrote this, saw it and bore witness to it" (64); "He who writes has seen this many times, and bears witness to it" (96).

<sup>69</sup>"A brother who was sick, and was thrown out of that house, writes this and bears witness to it" (2MP 6).

<sup>70</sup>2C 58; cf. Part Two below, Episode [XX].

<sup>71</sup>On the contrary, 2C 58 proves the existence of a witness who recounts the episode. Why could Thomas's source not have been the first-person testimony that has come down to us in 2MP 6? Who would have had to take material from Thomas for a falsehood that served no purpose? And why? The same holds true, then, for the others. For all of this, see below.



examined with utmost rigor, certainly, but also with a mind free of all preconceptions.

What we have, then, in these passages is a classic case of *identity of form*. Twenty of them have the same form in that they present themselves as testimonies. And within these twenty, seventeen contain a formula, almost always the same, that distinguishes them as personal testimonies. In the past, these important texts have been too lightly regarded, even by great scholars. They have been dismissed, either as arbitrary amplifications by Thomas of Celano, or as bits of sources lacking historical consistency.

Already in 1894, in his critical study of the sources for the *Mirror of Life*, and again in 1898 when he published his first edition of the *Mirror of Perfection*, Sabatier noticed the presence of a characteristic formula, "the sacramental phrase," as he called it. According to him, it indicated that the work had been written by the companions of Francis, Brother Leo in particular.<sup>23</sup> A note in his edition explained that the expression "We who were with him" was also found in other Franciscan texts, including Angelo Clareno's *History of the Seven Tribulations* and Ubertino of Casale's *Tree of the Crucified Life of Jesus*.<sup>24</sup> He also singled out a passage that mentioned a brother who had been sick in Bologna and whom Francis had thrown out of the house that had been built for the brothers. Sabatier identified him as Brother Leo and used the passage to support his thesis that the *Mirror* was written by the companions, Brother Leo in particular.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Cf. Sabatier, *Life*, 360-61; idem, *Speculum perfectionis seu S. Francisci Assisiensis Legenda antiquissima auctore fratre Leone*, nunc primum edidit Paul Sabatier. Collection d'études et de documents sur l'histoire religieuse et littéraire du moyen-âge, tom. I (Paris 1898), XXIII. The author is not correct, however, in what he says about the presence of this formula in the letter of the three companions, even though the expression is undoubtedly similar: "We who, though unworthy, lived for a long time in his company, thought it opportune to recount truthfully to your holiness a few of his many deeds. We ourselves have seen or heard about them from other holy brothers."

<sup>24</sup>Sabatier, *Speculum* XLIX. On pp. XLIX-L, Sabatier also has some other observations about the significance of the "We." The formula, he states, "recurs...like a refrain on almost every page...and this constant recall gives the *Mirror of Perfection* a unity of viewpoint that is noticeable on first reading." The words have different meanings: "They are the proud response of Francis's immediate circle to glossers of the Rule...; sometimes they are simply nostalgia for the past, which has disappeared forever...; sometimes they are an expression of humble admiration for a moral stature whose greatness they would like to retell...; finally, this phrase sometimes sounds like the sob of a man whose chest swells, suddenly and irresistibly, because he has relived the moment of supreme anguish when his only friend passed away in his arms." Sabatier, however, cites nineteen references (see p. L). The expression "So he often used to say to us, his companions" from 2MP 11 is listed separately; both references to the "We" from 2MP 115 are listed; also included here is 2MP 92, which refers to the testimony of a "spiritual man."

<sup>25</sup>Cf. Sabatier *Speculum* LXIV; see also *ibid.*, n. 3.

Although Sabatier himself never changed his mind on this point, we know today that the *Mirror of Perfection* is not only not the work of Brother Leo; it is a late source, whose purpose is to give specific examples of Franciscan life. Left hanging, however, was an appraisal of those parts where these witnesses speak in the first person and vouch for the truth of their account. Indeed, the importance of this fact did not escape one of the finest scholars of early Franciscanism, also a shrewd critic of Sabatier. We are referring to Walter Goetz, whose importance cannot be underestimated, even though as a Franciscanist he is still perhaps not as appreciated as he should be.<sup>75</sup> His work confronts the problem of the "We who were with him" and recognizes its importance.<sup>76</sup> In fact, his is the only work in which our passages are examined carefully and in detail. His general aim is to show the priority of Thomas of Celano, especially the *Remembrance*, and the late composition of the *Mirror of Perfection*. But in his need to do this, he failed to realize that the passages in question were part of a unique and distinctive tradition and, for that reason, borrowed and repeated regularly in a variety of other texts.

Not wishing to be petty, we would not blame Goetz for something he could not know, namely, the existence of the so-called *Legend of Perugia*, which is what suggested to us the whole question of the "We who were with him." But this more-or-less unchanged transfer from one compilation to another is what gives the *Legend of Perugia* passages their unique value, not as individual passages, but in the mutual consistency of the group. In other words, the critical question is no longer that of knowing whether or not these texts are interpolations or alterations. A kind of absolute certainty emerges: these passages are either all of equal value or there is no criterion to distinguish them. But their value and their significance are confirmed by the fact that they appear regularly in various compilations, with minor changes. This means they were considered worthy of special respect, as particularly important and worth emphasizing. In Ubertino of Casale, we will see that the name of Brother Leo is explicitly mentioned, as well as his scrolls. On the other hand, Goetz's attempt to establish a relationship between Thomas of Celano and the passages in the *Mirror of Perfection* does not stand. In reality, Thomas of Celano is dependent upon, not a model for, those who are hiding behind the formula "We who were with him." In other words, Thomas has used these testimonies more freely, adapting them and abbreviating them according to the requirements of his work. But when the words of Francis appear, he tries to leave them as intact as possible with regard for the context in which they are inserted into his work.

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<sup>75</sup>However see Engelbert Grau, "Walter Goetz und die «franziskanische Frage» im deutschen Raum," *La «questione francescana» dal Sabatier ad oggi*. Atti del I Convegno della Società Internazionale degli Studi Francescani (Assisi, La Società, 1974): 81-118; on the "We," cf. page 105. The part on the "We" is on pages 151-76 and 217.

<sup>76</sup>Cf. Tamassia, *St. Francis*, 131-40.

Thus we are no longer bound by the controversy concerning the *Mirror of Perfection*, which no longer makes sense today. Nowadays everyone admits that Sabatier was mistaken about the date of the *Mirror*, and today we have a number of texts not available to Goetz seventy years ago. This explains why—even though he was always concerned with the *Mirror of Perfection*—he gave equal importance to a series of testimonies that are, and claim to be, firsthand, but do not contain this characteristic expression. It seems he forgot to make full use of important information in Crescentius of Iesi's collection of testimonies. These, naturally, include the testimonies from the "We who were with him" as well as others with similar expressions. But what we consider to be the complete and substantially intact presence of these other testimonies in the *Mirror of Perfection*, guarantees that the first group, the ones of interest to us, are also complete and truthful, and have not been profoundly manipulated or altered.

On the other hand, we do not feel we can follow Goetz when, still influenced by Sabatier, he tends to judge his sources historically and critically on the basis of their supposed partisanship. We can easily agree that each of the Franciscan sources is anxious to paint its own picture of Francis, but we think the idea of partisanship should be dropped. Even though we lean toward a rather early date for the conflict between the community and the rigorists, we do not think the value of the sources depends on their adherence to one or the other of these tendencies.

Here we need to make a distinction. There may have been disciples more or less inclined to imitate Francis and follow his example; but there also may have been a certain partisanship, capable of distorting the data of the testimonies. My feeling is that the various Franciscan sources, once thought to be contradictory and opposed, are much closer than is usually believed. It is one thing to be aware of the narrative structures, the setting of the stories and facts, the *Rahmen der Geschichte* as Karl-Ludwig Schmidt would say; it is another thing to conclude that these are radically opposed. We think it is highly significant that whenever Thomas of Celano draws from the testimonies of the "We who were with him," he cites the words of Francis as completely as the *Sitz im Leben* of his episode will allow. We cannot dwell on this point, but it is worth recalling that while the true spirituals, such as Angelo Clareno, Ubertino of Casale, or the author of the *Deeds of Saint Francis and His Companions*, challenged Bonaventure's administrative acts, they never accused him of having falsified or completely altering the biography of Francis. To be sure, they criticized him for having downplayed some of the severity, for wanting to present a founder and teacher who was more conciliatory and moderate—but not a counterfeit.

Should Goetz's work, then, be considered completely *dépassé*? Not at all. As a critical exercise, his lengthy, acute, and detailed study is of the highest quality. It demands an attention and rigor that are bound to be useful in a work such as ours, where we are wrestling with such delicate and technically demanding problems. No wonder, then, if at various times in the

course of our study we will have occasion to refer to this work. We consider it essential, not only for proving that Thomas of Celano is prior to the *Mirror of Perfection*, but also for its many individual critical studies.

Goetz maintained that the references to the "We" were just *piae fraudes* meant to lend veracity to the accounts. Since they were being employed gradually, they were to be rejected. Curiously, his point of view is confirmed in two passages from the Gospel according to John, where the one who testifies speaks in the first person, attesting to the truth of what he has seen and heard.<sup>77</sup> We should immediately say that our texts contain not only the formula "We who were with him," but also two testimonies that speak in the plural, confirming what is being attested, and one testimony in the first person. Since these are all friars, they certainly could have read the Gospel according to John. But can we really imagine that all three of them were influenced by it? Then why not also use the testimony formulas that appear in Luke, for example, since these would have been much more useful in the cases in point? With all due respect to a famous scholar, it must be said that a great difference in mentality exists between the New Testament and the people of the Middle Ages. Given this different intellectual approach, the use of "We who were with him" and similar expressions cannot possibly have been accidental. The so-called *Sitz im Leben* is completely different.

At any rate, it was Goetz who long ago emphasized the presence of these passages. The problem was taken up and re-emphasized by a great teacher of the history of law, a man with an unusually penetrating ability to discuss these problems critically. We are referring to Nino Tamassia and his *S. Francesco d'Assisi e la sua leggenda*, a book that did very well in Italy but was less successful elsewhere. It represents one of the most radical attempts at criticism of the Franciscan sources. Tamassia's methodological approach is meticulous and perceptive; his real aim is to devaluate all the sources except the works of Thomas of Celano. The two biographies are taken apart, one passage at a time, and traced back to earlier sources that supposedly served as the model for the individual episodes in the life of Francis. This leads him to the conclusion that Francis is rendered ineffectual in the legend. He wrestles in particular with the *Mirror of Perfection*, and, following Sabatier, does not ignore the passages from the witnesses who refer to themselves as "We who were with him."<sup>78</sup>

He deals with the *Mirror* and these passages very quickly. Without giving any reason, he simply says that "The so-called *Mirror of Perfection*, which is said to be the work of *those who were with him*, that is, the companions of Francis, is an obvious elaboration of the *Remembrance*. And so for us it is as if it never existed, and we fall once more under the influence

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<sup>77</sup>Jn 19:35; Jn 21:24.

<sup>78</sup>Cf. Tamassia, *St. Francis*, 135-36.

of Thomas." In a note, after referring to Goetz,<sup>79</sup> he repeats the idea that the "We who were with him" was copied not only from the Gospel according to the John, but also from the *Historia Lausiaca*, which contains similar phrases. Yet it is easy to see that a quick statement of the dependence of one source on another is not enough, unless this dependence is proven, which Tamassia does not do.

In fact, the problem became quite a bit more complicated. During that same time, two of the passages that Tamassia was so quick to dismiss were edited by Lemmens in the so-called *Intention of the Rule* attributed to Brother Leo.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, a series of statements by Ubertino of Casale<sup>81</sup> was becoming increasingly important for proving the connection of these passages with Francis's companions. Also important was the presence of some of these passages in the *History of the Seven Tribulations*.<sup>82</sup> In other words, a problem could not be eliminated and had to be faced. What were these passages? Why were they not only in the *Mirror*, but also in other texts? And why were they attributed to Brother Leo by people better informed than we? The question served to shift the focus to the person of Brother Leo and the companions, even though the scholars who wrestled with these problems were not always aware of the repercussions and philological importance these questions were to have.

From these works it seemed certain that the passages in the *Mirror*—even granting that the *Mirror* is much later than Sabatier suggested—were definitely not an amplification of Thomas of Celano or derived from him. The reason, quite simply, is that they were in later texts. These texts gave information, facts, and details from real life that Thomas of Celano reduced to skeleton form, even when a basis for comparison really existed.

These positions, especially those of Tamassia, received their deathblow in 1922, after the long silence caused by the war, with the publication of the so-called *Legend of Perugia* edited by Delorme. From this legend it became clear that quite a few chapters, sixteen to be exact, were accompanied by the "We who were with him." But they were not derived from Thomas of Celano's work, nor could they be, since it did not exist. Thus it is hard to see how they could have been an amplification of it.

It is also hard to see what purpose this formula might have had in a text such as the *Legend of Perugia*, which has no structural plan, no desire to prove anything, only to put together a series of facts about St. Francis. So true is this that, when the compiler has no other sources available, it is Thomas of Celano's *Remembrance* that he uses. This means that the compiler knew exactly how the *Remembrance* had originated. It was a literary

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 135, n. 2.

<sup>80</sup>Cf. Pásztor, *Gli scritti leonini*, 199-212.

<sup>81</sup>Cf. *Tree of the Crucified Life*, see Clasen, *Legenda Antiqua*, 242-44.

<sup>82</sup>For the works of Clareno see Clasen, *Legenda*, 245-46.

reworking of sources that came to Thomas from especially important witnesses and thus had to be added to his others, with a careful process of selection. In other words, the compiler knew that Thomas had chosen from among the testimonies that had come into the general curia by order of the minister general, Crescentius of Iesi. It is no accident, then, that the *Legend of Perugia* copies texts from Thomas, particularly those it was not acquainted with from any other source except Thomas himself. These were oral testimonies or testimonies that had been lost before the anonymous compiler of the *Legend of Perugia* was able to make use of them.

Before we go further, we need to ask ourselves what possible significance these formulas might have. Do they have a meaning and are they an integral part of the accounts, as these are gradually developing in the *Legend of Perugia* and in the other compilations? Or are they just a rhetorical embellishment, with no real significance? Using the critical method we have been explaining with regard to the Gospels—the method of *Formgeschichte*—we will examine the setting and significance of these passages. We will examine parallel passages according to what is called their *Sitz im Leben*, that is, their place within the account and in the internal logic of the account itself. We will have to see whether and to what extent these passages have been borrowed by Thomas of Celano. Our first concern will be to show whether or not Thomas actually depends on these passages, as would be required by the information that comes from the texts; or is he the source used by the compilers, in which case they would be “fabricators.” Finally, we will examine the *Mirror of Perfection* and ask why its anonymous author used these passages with minimal changes. The passages must surely have been important if they were borrowed and used to present a certain ideal of Francis and Franciscanism contrary to another that was more widespread. In short, we must ask whether and why the author of the *Mirror* would have had to use such poor weapons, namely, *texts created by a fabricator*, to prove the loftiness and authenticity of his ideal.

In the final analysis, we believe this research is more important today for a knowledge of the Francis sources. If we want to maintain a genuinely critical attitude, we cannot escape the alternatives. Either the “We who were with him” are brazen liars, charlatans who boast of a closeness and familiarity with the saint that never existed; or else they are his companions and, in the case of the last three isolated testimonies, persons who were in direct contact with him. If the second alternative is true, then these are the most reliable and immediate testimonies we have about Francis of Assisi. This is no way meant to deny the importance of the first biography of Thomas of Celano. As for the second, we will have to deal with the problem of its sources, within the limits of what relates to our testimonies. This comparison will enable us either to reject a group of liars, once and for all, and condemn them as guilty of fabrication, or else recover the most authentic voices of Francis’s companions.

In any case, it is possible to establish certain incontrovertible points, which we list in order to dispose of them once and for all: 1) none of the passages in question are found in Thomas of Celano's *Life*; 2) none appear in the so-called *Legend of the Three Companions* or in the *Anonymous of Perugia*; 3) many of these passages, as we will show in our analysis, are found in Thomas of Celano's *Remembrance*; 4) all of these passages, except one, are found in the *Mirror of Perfection*; 5) this single passage is found in isolation in *MS Little*, but it is also present in the *Remembrance*; 6) the other three testimonies are found in the *Remembrance* and in the *Mirror of Perfection*, while the *Legend of Perugia* contains only two of them, the ones we have called multiple.

Four of the seventeen passages seem to be found in the *Major Legend* of Bonaventure. But textual comparison reveals beyond a doubt that Bonaventure got these from the *Remembrance*, which he often borrows, here as in other cases, word for word. The seventeen passages take us back to Francis's last years, a fact that is important for the significance of these testimonies. We know from Thomas of Celano, who on this point is absolutely reliable, that during the last two years of his illness Francis was able to count on the constant help of a certain number of brothers. In the *Life* he says: "For nearly two years he [Francis] endured these things with complete patience and humility, in all things giving thanks to God. But in order to devote his attention to God more freely, he entrusted his own care to certain brothers, who with good reason were very dear to him. Thus he could more freely explore in frequent ecstasy of Spirit the blessed dwelling places of heaven, and, in the abundance of grace, stand in heavenly places before the gentle and serene Lord of all things."<sup>83</sup> This explanation is followed by a eulogy of these brothers. The only point we would like to recall here is the omission of their names: "I omit their names for the present, out of regard for modesty, which is a close friend of these spiritual men."<sup>84</sup> Although, obviously, no certain identifications can be offered, it should be stressed that the "We" devote themselves primarily to the last part of Francis's life, and in their accounts they cloak themselves in anonymity. Thus we do not think it would be arbitrary to suggest that the seventeen passages come from those brothers whose nearness and constancy at Francis's side is attested in the *Life*.

Now it is time to move on to a critical discussion of the relationship between the passages we have spoken of in general terms so far. We will always start by analyzing the *Legend of Perugia*, which we will examine by comparing our special passages with the other parallel Franciscan sources we have mentioned. Our purpose will be to point out which of the texts that have come down to us is the oldest and thus the most trustworthy.

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<sup>83</sup>1C 102.

<sup>84</sup>1C 102.

Examination will, from time to time, uncover data that will indicate their importance and value.

Naturally, in the course of our analysis we will need to have recourse to a series of clarifications—textual, historical, chronological, stylistic—all of which should lead us to eventually identify, from among the passages compared, those that are more trustworthy from a historical and philological point of view.





PART TWO

PASSAGES CONTAINING  
“WE WHO WERE WITH HIM”



# I<sup>85</sup>

## Passages in the: "Legend of Perugia," the Sabatier edition of the *Mirror of Perfection*, and the *Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul*

### 1

LP 11, cf. 2C 151; IMP 14-16; 2MP 46; MSL 158<sup>86</sup>

Blessed Francis wanted to be humble among his brothers. To preserve greater humility, a few years after his conversion he resigned the office of prelate before all the brothers during a chapter held at Saint Mary of the Portiuncula. "From now on," he said, "I am dead to you. But here is Brother Peter of Catanio: let us all, you and I, obey him."

Then all the brothers began to cry loudly and weep profusely, but blessed Francis bowed down before Brother Peter and promised him obedience and reverence. From that time on, until his death, he remained a subject, like one of the other brothers. He wished to be subject to the general minister and the provincial ministers, so that in whatever province he stayed or preached, he obeyed the minister of that province. What is more, a long time before his death, for the sake of greater perfection and humility, he said to the general minister: "I ask you to put one of my companions in your place regarding me, so that I may obey him as I would obey you. For the sake of good example and the virtue of obedience, in *life* and in death I always want you to be with me."

From that time until his death, he always had one of his companions as a guardian whom he obeyed in place of the general minister. One time he said to his companions: "Among other favors, the Most High has given me this grace: I would obey a novice who entered our religion today, if he were appointed my guardian, just as

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<sup>85</sup>At this point, Manselli's publication presented two tables: the first comparing the various editions of the *Legend of Perugia*; the second, a list of the texts analyzed in this section of his work. To avoid confusion, these tables, together with appropriate references, are presented in an Appendix to this edition.

<sup>86</sup>Ed. note: It must be remembered that Manselli used Bigaroni's edition, the Assisi Compilation, and numbered his text accordingly. This presents confusion to contemporary readers who might be using different translation-and titles-of these works. MSL = The Manuscript of A.G. Little, cf. supra 27.

readily as I would obey him who is the first and the eldest in the life and religion of the brothers. A subject should not consider his prelate, a human being, but God, for love of Whom he is subject to him." He likewise said: "There is no prelate in the whole world who would be as feared by his subjects and brothers as the Lord would make me feared by my brothers, if I wished. But the Most High gave me this grace: that I want to be content with all, as one who is lesser in the religion."

We who were with him witnessed this often with our own eyes. Frequently, when some of the brothers did not provide for his needs, or said something to him that would ordinarily offend a person, he would immediately go to prayer. On returning, he did not want to remember it by saying "Brother so-and-so did not provide for me," or "He said such-and-such to me."

The closer he approached death, the more careful he became in complete perfection to consider how he might live and die in complete humility and poverty.

The passage mentions the presence of Francis at a general chapter. Perhaps it was the chapter held at the Portiuncula on September 29, 1220, immediately after Francis's return from Palestine, and after the religion had been disturbed by certain developments that took place during his absence—but the date is still debated.<sup>87</sup> In words that are extremely significant, he rose to say that he was going to resign the *officium prelationis* [office of prelate]: "From now on, I am dead to you. But here is Brother Peter of Catanio: let us all, you and I, obey him." The brothers began to cry loudly and weep because he had resigned his office. But he, bowing down before Brother Peter, promised him obedience and reverence. And from that time on, he was always subject to someone, "like one of the other brothers." What is more, a long time before his death, he said to the general minister: "I ask you to put one of my companions in your place regarding me, so that I may

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<sup>87</sup>Cf. Brooke, *Government*, 78-83 and 106. Brooke is more inclined to move the date back to Pentecost 1217, repeating what was Golubovich's hypothesis. This date, however, does not seem justified: see Clement Schmitt, "I vicari dell'Ordine francescano da Pietro Cattani a frate Elia," *Francesco d'Assisi e francescanesimo dal 1216 al 1226*. Atti del II Convegno della Società Internazionale degli Studi Francescani. (Assisi: La Società, 1977): 242-43. What interests us here is the fact that the "We" speak of this chapter as taking place "a few years" after Francis's conversion. Since this obviously cannot refer to an event that took place after Francis's "conversion" to religious life (c. 1206), it raises the question of what the term *conversio* means for the "We." It should be noted that this chronological detail agrees fully with LP, 2MP, 2C and IMP, which no doubt attests to the existence of a common source. But we cannot expect reliable dates from the "We," since their narrative is based on memory. We see this also in another chronological reference in LP 11 to "a long time before his death." By a pure association of ideas, the account of Francis's resignation and promise of obedience is followed in the account by his desire to have his own guardian. This shows that there was no concern at all about arranging the memories in any kind of order.

obey him as I would obey you. For the sake of good example<sup>88</sup> and the virtue of obedience, in life and in death I always want you to be with me." And so, until his death, he had one of the brothers as guardian.<sup>89</sup>

After Francis's statement of his desire to be humble and obedient—since a brother should regard his superior as if he were God—there follows a passage that is among the most disconcerting. It is omitted by Thomas of Celano, as we shall see, yet it is so important psychologically and historically that it deserves to be quoted verbatim: "There is no prelate in the whole world who would be as feared by his subjects and brothers as the Lord would make me feared by my brothers, if I wished. But the Most High gave me this grace: that I want to be content with all, as one who is lesser in the religion."<sup>90</sup>

In other words, Francis is aware of his divine mission and the enduring grace of God. Indeed, he knows that with the Lord's help he could have been the most feared of heads, had he wished. But, as he explicitly says, he had received a greater gift from God, that he wants to be content with all, "as one who is lesser in religion," in other words, as one who has less power to judge than anyone else in the religion.<sup>91</sup> And the companions, the "We who were with him," add a page that is so disconcerting in its reality that it lets us see, better than any dramatic literary episode, the human tragedy of Francis. As they tell us, they often witnessed with their own eyes that when one of the brothers did not provide for his needs or answered him disrespectfully "said something to him that would ordinarily offend a person"—he would immediately go to prayer. "On returning, he did not want to remember it by saying 'Brother so-and-so did not provide for me,' or 'He said such-and-such to me.'" And they explain that the closer he approached death, the more he considered how he might live and die in humility and poverty.

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<sup>88</sup>For the sake of completeness, Brooke adds the word "example" after the word "good" (*bonum*), mentioning in the critical apparatus that it is missing in all the manuscripts. But the author forgot that this reading is found in IMP 15. On the other hand, we do not see this addition as necessary, since *bonum* is not an adjective here, but a noun, corresponding to the Italian word *bene*, which is still used. That this addition is superfluous is shown by 2MP 46, which says explicitly: "for the good of obedience, in life and in death I want you to be with me always."

<sup>89</sup>LP has "*de sociis suis*." Does this mean one of the first companions? For the presence of a *socius* at Francis's side, Cf., for example, LP 117.

<sup>90</sup>We do not want to attribute too much significance to the term *minor* in this saying of Francis. Yet we believe it is possible to see it as being in accord with the name given to a member of the Franciscan fraternity: *Frater Minor*. In the *religio minorum* [religion of the lesser ones], Francis wishes to be lesser still. This helps to explain the meaning of Francis's resignation and his presence and significance within the community of the brothers. Indeed, if the brothers are supposed to be lesser ones, Francis cannot be their juridic head, but will have to be the example for them, since he is lesser in the religion. On the name of the Order of Lesser Brothers, see LP 101.

This passage provides a chance to make a few rather important observations. As soon as Francis realized that his religion was slipping out of his hands, he resigned from government, from valid jurisdiction, from command, from the ability to impose his authority, even with severity. Francis did not feel he had to be "an executioner who beats and scourges, like a power of this world."<sup>2</sup> He chose the more important role of spiritual guide for the brothers. Rather than juridical norms, he preferred spiritual power. As a simple brother he could better fulfill his obligation to be an example.<sup>2</sup>

As we said, it is no accident that he asks to have someone with him whom he will always obey. This proves, if proof were needed, his profound humility. But what we see as emerging with extraordinary vividness and psychological clarity is that this humility was not a masochistic desire to be under others. It was the result of an iron will to become humble for love of Christ and to imitate him. He knows and is aware of his divine mission—the *Testament* is always there to give us his personal and unequivocal testimony. He is deeply convinced that he must act and be present among his brothers. But this awareness gives him a sense of the difficulty and seriousness of the task God had given him, the obligation—as the companions stressed so many times—to be an example. And this is not something that is purely and simply *pro forma*.

We have a chance, then, a really rare chance to see the concrete situation in which Francis found himself at the end. The hagiographic tradition tends to present Francis's life, from a certain point onward, as that of a man who is respected, adored, even idolized. But here we read explicitly that some of the brothers ignored him and even mistreated him. Thus he felt the need to go to prayer to find the strength to overcome his anger at the mortification inflicted on him. It is a precise and specific detail, one that could come only from eyewitnesses who are not worried or afraid of saying unpleasant things. They know what they are presenting is absolutely true

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<sup>2</sup>Cf. LP 106.

<sup>2</sup>We should recall how the companions, in another episode, mention an explanation given by Francis himself for his resignation from the government of the religion: "But afterwards I realized that the Lord multiplied the number of the brothers daily and that through tepidity and lack of spirit they began to turn away from the straight and sure way on which they used to walk and take, as you said, a broad way, without paying attention to their profession and calling and good example, or would not give up the journey that had already begun despite my preaching and my example. I entrusted the religion to the Lord and to the ministers. When I renounced and gave up among the brothers, I excused myself before the brothers at the general chapter saying that, because of my illness I could not take care of them and care for them. And yet, if the brothers had walked and were still walking according to my will, for their consolation I would not want them to have any other minister except me until the day of my death.... My office, that is, a prelaty over the brothers, is spiritual, because I must overcome vices and correct them" (LP 106). For further details about this passage, see Episode XV.

because they saw with their own eyes, and it cannot and must not be lost. In this sense, this episode becomes one of the most pregnant; there is no whitewashing or sugarcoating, only complete adherence to the facts as they saw them. Once more, it is singular and noteworthy that there is not a word of criticism for those who had acted so disrespectfully toward the saint. What stands out in the memory is the human and spiritual greatness of Francis, not the pettiness of those around him. What we have is a testimony we get from no other Franciscan source, a page unique in its genre. It could, and no doubt did, create resentment and bad feelings, witness the fact that Thomas of Celano omits it. The companions show us a Francis who is not spontaneously humble by nature but only after he wins the battle through tremendous willpower. In this sense it is also, as far as we know, a unique presentation of a saint. If we are not mistaken, the hagiography of the time mentions saints who were mistreated or disliked; but what should be stressed is what the companions tell us about Francis—that he was treated disrespectfully by his very own brothers.

The result is a more modern kind of humility, more vivid than we are used to finding in saints. Here, as in other passages—the mother of the two brothers,<sup>93</sup> the woman with the eye disease<sup>94</sup>—Francis reveals himself to us in his concreteness and, we would say, his psychological nakedness, with his mind fixed on God.

On the other hand, this proves that he is not opposed to hierarchy in the religion and the respect that is its due. This, even though he had voluntarily resigned as prelate who could demand strict obedience like no one else, if he wished. The religion has a real structure, required by the Rule, a consistency and juridic structure of its own. But, at the same time, it must be permeated by a spirit that is not crushed in the formality of the organization, but is enkindled, for the love of God, with humility and poverty. Thus it is willing to accept even those mortifications and offenses that are sometimes inevitable when living with others.

At this point we must settle one doubt. This self-awareness, these offenses by the brothers, this neglect of the saint by his brothers—are these not just something “invented” by the companions to bring out Francis’s humility? Here let us refer to something we already said, namely, that Thomas of Celano omits this passage. In the hands of this scholar, hagiographer, and man of letters it could very well have been reworked, had it served his purposes; instead he omitted it. On the other hand, there are other passages that testify to the saint’s concern about those who are murmuring against him. He would not have acted in this way unless there had been discontents.<sup>95</sup> Fraternal love, certainly, but fraternal love that is not

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<sup>93</sup>Cf. LP 93.

<sup>94</sup>Cf. LP 89.

<sup>95</sup>Eg, LP 106: “Woe to those brothers who are opposed to what I know to be the will of God...”

blind or foolish or, above all, detached from reality. And the reality is that he was dealing with ordinary men, who were quite capable of murmuring, resentment, and disrespect. There emerges from this passage a Francis who is conscious of himself and his divine mission, adamantly determined to be poorer and humbler than anyone else. But it is also a Francis with no illusions, eyes open to the human heart's potential for pettiness, a saint who has had clear and distinct experience of the human condition. Seen this way, the concerns about the future of the religion, the attempts to set up obstacles at every step in the direction of a transformation that ends in distortion take on quite a different meaning and historical reality. This is the human drama of Francis, clairvoyant and tormented, yet humble and obedient.

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After these considerations, we should point out that the episode of the resignation from the office of prelate is also found, with significant variations, in the *Legend of Perugia* 39. First, let us compare the two versions:

**LP 11**

To preserve greater humility, a few years after his conversion he resigned the office of prelate before all the brothers during a chapter held at Saint Mary of the Portiuncula.

"From now on," he said, "I am dead to you. But here is Brother Peter of Catanio: let us all, you and I, obey him."

...blessed Francis bowed down before Brother Peter and promised him obedience and reverence.

**LP 39**

In order to preserve the virtue of holy humility, a few years after his conversion, at a chapter, he resigned the office of prelate before all the brothers of the religion, saying:

"From now on, I am dead to you. But here you have Brother Peter of Catanio; let us all, you and I, obey him."

And bowing down immediately, he promised him obedience and reverence.

If the two accounts are essentially the same until this point, they continue in different directions.

The *Legend of Perugia* 11, as we have already said, goes on to give an example of Francis's obedience, whereas the *Legend of Perugia* 39 sticks to the resignation, describing how Francis entrusted his *family* to God. Later we will see what the other sources that contain this episode do with these two different traditions. For the moment, let us examine the second part of the *Legend of Perugia* 39. The account continues, paraphrasing a statement also contained in the *Legend of Perugia* 11:

**LP 11**

Then all the brothers began to cry loudly and weep profusely.

**LP 39**

The brothers were weeping, and sorrow drew deep groans from them, as they saw themselves orphaned of such a father.

Next there is a remarkable statement by Francis about his inability to take care of his family because of his infirmities and his intention to entrust it to the ministers, who on the day of judgment will have to render an account for it before God. The chapter ends with a sentence also found in the *Legend of Perugia* 11:

**LP 11**

From that time on, until his death, he remained a subject, like one of the other brothers.

**LP 39**

From that time on, he remained subject until his death, behaving more humbly than any of the others.

The *Legend of Perugia* 39 justifies a decision that was difficult and naturally much-discussed in the religion. We see this in the reaction of the brothers and in the words later attributed to Francis by the witnesses, namely, that he was entrusting it to God and to the ministers because of his illness. On the other hand, the ministers are reminded in this chapter of their grave duty and difficult task.

The *Legend of Perugia* 39 is one of the chapters copied by the author from Thomas of Celano's *Remembrance*, where it is number 143. Thus the legend mentions Francis's resignation twice. In one case, the *Legend of Perugia* 11, a spiritual reason is given: authority based on valid jurisdiction is replaced by the power of personal example. In the other case, all that is mentioned is his infirmities. But here we cannot disregard what the companions report Francis as saying in the *Legend of Perugia* 106: "When I renounced and gave up among the brothers, I excused myself before the brothers at the general chapter saying that, because of my illness I could not take care of them and care for them. And yet, if the brothers had walked and were still walking according to my will, for their consolation I would not want them to have any other minister except me until the day of my death."

Each chapter places the resignation in a different context.

The *Legend of Perugia*, then, contains two accounts of the same episode, derived from two different parts of the tradition, a fact we will need to keep in mind as we examine this source. But for our purposes this fact is only of indirect interest; the comparisons made above are sufficient.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>The relationship between these first two parts raises the question of the composition of LP, on which we cannot and should not dwell. In any case chapter 11, with its unique passage from one memory to another and, let us not forget, the typical phrase "We who were with him," has an importance of its own. The question arises as to the relationship of chapter 39 with chapter 11. It would seem to depend on the initial part we are discussing, but could there not have been a brief written piece that was used for both of them? In other words, from an identical starting point (chapter 11?) the initial and common part could have been developed differently at the hands of a different compiler. If what we are presenting as a possibility could be accepted, the composite nature of LP would be confirmed. It is hard to imagine one and the same person, or one and the same group of persons, beginning a reminiscence in almost the same words and then going on to develop it differently. To be sure,



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If we go on to examine the *Remembrance* by Thomas of Celano, we find that it contains just one account of the resignation, in number 143, with which the *Legend of Perugia* 39 is closely linked. As far as our episode, the *Legend of Perugia* 11, is concerned, only the middle part is found in the *Remembrance* 151.

In number 151, Thomas regards Francis's resignation as having already taken place. He says that Francis "resigned the office of general" and under obedience submitted himself "to the rule of another." The only thing mentioned is the saint's request for a brother as guardian and his total willingness to obey him. Completely absent is the role of those who present themselves as "We who were with him." Also dropped is the passage where Francis expresses his awareness of the authority God could give him, if he wished. Those who were his witnesses present him, not as a conventional humble and obedient religious, but as a man who heroically, consciously, and painfully renounces an authority that would have been conferred on him in all its fullness with God's help, had he not decided to renounce it. But in the *Remembrance* 151, Francis's words are again omitted. On the other hand, his words to Peter of Catanio and to his companions are reported almost verbatim.

## LP 11

"I ask you to put one of my companions in your place regarding me, so that I may obey him as I would obey you"

"Among other favors, the Most High has given me this grace: I would obey a novice who entered our religion today, if he were appointed my guardian, just as readily as I would obey him who is the first and the eldest in the life and religion of the brothers. A subject should not consider his prelate, a human being, but God, for love of Whom he is subject to him."

## 2C 151

"I beg you for God's sake to entrust me to one of my companions, to take your place in my regard and I will obey him as devoutly as you."

"Among the many things which God's mercy has granted me, he has given me this grace, that I would readily obey a novice of one hour, if he were given to me as my guardian, as carefully as I would obey the oldest and most discerning. For a subject should not consider his prelate a human being, but rather the One for love of whom he is subject. And the more contemptibly he presides, the more pleasing is the humility of the one who obeys."

All of this proves to us that the *Legend of Perugia* 11 predates the *Remembrance* 151—Thomas, in fact, uses it and distorts it—and is considerably closer to the human reality of Francis's relationships with the brothers.

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those who are having these reminiscences around 1246 are getting old, but they are not stupid; they do not repeat the same thing twice for no reason.

As already mentioned, we can see why these last details had to be left out of the *Remembrance* 151. They were not about obedience, but humility, and in the chapters in question Thomas of Celano limits himself to obedience. He never mentions humility, which—it should be remembered—had absolutely no place in his arrangement of the material."

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As for the *Mirror of Perfection*, it should be noted that the anonymous compiler tends to situate this episode at a carefully chosen point in this work: between humility, which precedes, and obedience, which follows."

But what is most interesting is the fact that this source, like the *Remembrance*, lacks the first part of the episode, the part about the resignation. The *Mirror of Perfection* 46 begins immediately with Francis asking for one of the companions to be his personal guardian, whom he will obey. Then it continues with the third and fourth parts of the *Legend of Perugia* 11. But there is no mention of the fact that Francis has already resigned as head of the Order, which we saw in the *Remembrance* 151. Everything about that episode is found in the *Mirror of Perfection* 39, which faithfully follows the *Legend of Perugia* 39 and the *Remembrance* 143. So, the first part of the *Legend of Perugia* 11 is missing both in the *Remembrance* and in the *Mirror of Perfection*.

Now let us look at the two corresponding parts of the *Legend of Perugia* 11 and the *Mirror of Perfection* 46:

LP 11

What is more, a long time before his death, for the sake of greater perfection and humility, he said to the general minister....

2MP 46

Wishing to persevere in perfect humility and obedience until his death, for a long time before his death he said to the general minister....

As we can see, the *Mirror of Perfection* 46 makes a slight change at the beginning of the chapter, introducing the idea that Francis wished to live in perfect humility and obedience until his death. The next part of the chapter agrees with the *Legend of Perugia* 11. There, contrary to what occurs in the *Mirror of Perfection* 46, we are reminded that Francis wished to obey not only the general minister, but also the provincial ministers. Indeed, the author explains that in whatever province Francis stayed or preached, he obeyed the minister of that province.

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"2C 151 is part of the section entitled "Obedience."

"Here is the exact position of our episode in the 2MP 45 "How he wished to attribute glory and honor to God alone for all his good words and deeds"; 2MP 46 "How until his death he wished to have one of his companions as his guardian and live in subjection"; 2MP 47 "The perfect manner of obeying which he taught." For 2MP 46 see Goetz, *Die Quellen*, 183-84.

Here it is worth recalling that the beginning of this chapter—if its data turn out to be confirmed by further evidence of the same or a different kind—allows us to suggest a date for the *Mirror of Perfection* based on historical facts rather than on hypotheses about the manuscripts. Recall that at the very beginning of the fourteenth century, anticipating the Council of Vienne, there was a lively debate between the community and the Spirituals. This debate arose precisely because some of the provincials in southern France were misusing their authority over their subjects. What is more, as Angelo Clareno attests in his *History*, the Italian provincials also dealt harshly with those who were not quick to obey. In its chapters on obedience, it is no accident that the *Mirror of Perfection*, after comparing obedience to a dead body, adds that commands under obedience should be given only as a last resort. And chapter 49 of the *Mirror of Perfection* ends with these words: “Nothing could be truer. For, what is command in a rash leader, but a sword in the hands of a madman? And what could be more hopeless than a religious who neglects and despises obedience.”<sup>10</sup>

In concluding this comparison, we believe the priority of the companions’ testimony has been abundantly confirmed and supported. Not only that, their authority was such that when it was necessary to use one of their texts—as in the case of the *Mirror of Perfection*—anything considered awkward was toned down. This also leads us to believe that these passages from the companions may have been better known and more widespread than believed. The hallmark phrase “We who were with him” gave them an authority that would have made no sense were they not known and in some way recognized.

The first part of the *Legend of Perugia* 11, the part about the resignation, makes up the Lemmens *Mirror* 14. This source lacks the other version, the one contained in the *Legend of Perugia* 39. The Lemmens *Mirror* 15 includes the second, third and fourth part of the *Legend of Perugia* 11, with one interesting variant. It lacks the last sentence of the *Legend of Perugia* 11, which is contained instead in the Lemmens *Mirror* 16:

**LP 11**

The closer he approached death, the more careful he became in complete perfection to consider how he might live and die in complete humility and poverty.

**1MP 16**

Thus, the closer he approached death, the more careful in complete perfection he became in considering how he might live and die in complete humility and poverty.

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<sup>10</sup>This is really not the place to take up the question of obedience and Francis and the Rule. For this, see ER IV 2 and LR X 4. What should be noted is how strongly 2MP insists on this question, which it deals with in chapters 46-49; the statement that a truly obedient person is like a dead corpse is found in 2MP 48.

A comparison between the *Legend of Perugia* 11 and the *Lemmens Mirror* 14-16 reveals that the latter source is a longer text. It contains not only the four parts already found in the *Legend of Perugia* 11, but also another passage in which Francis forgoes the right to a permanent companion—which is absent in the *Legend of Perugia*.

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We can do one more final comparison, between the *Legend of Perugia* 11 and *MS Little* 158. This source contains the *Legend of Perugia* 11, the *Legend of Perugia* 39 and the *Lemmens Mirror* 16. It also adds a passage from the *Testament*.

The question here is this—was there originally a long text (scroll?), such as that found in *MS Little* 158, from which the various compilers selected and adopted only certain parts? Or did the author of the collection contained in *MS Little* put together various passages that were originally separate? The question can be answered only after a critical study of *MS Little*, which has not yet been done, and which is obviously not part of the purpose of this study.

But we cannot fail to note that the language of the added passages in *MS Little* 158 does not seem to match the tone and vocabulary of the "We who were with him."

If our impression turns out to be true, the *Legend of Perugia* assumes an even greater importance. It is the source that has best preserved the testimonies received from the companions of Francis's last days on earth.<sup>100</sup>

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**LP 14, cfr. 2C 199-200; 2MP 113-114; 1MP 19; also 3C 32**

Saturday evening before nightfall, after vespers, when blessed Francis passed to the Lord, many birds called larks flew low above the roof of the house where blessed Francis lay, wheeling in a circle and singing.

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<sup>100</sup>Our conclusions are not contradicted by what 1MP 16, 2C 144, and *MS Little* 158 say—that at a certain point toward the end of his life Francis asked that no one any longer be assigned as his personal assistant. Instead, "for the love of the Lord," he wanted the brothers with whom he had to live at times to assist him. His words in this regard are typical: "I have seen a blind man who had no guide for his journey except one little dog," words that are all more poignant when we remember that Francis was nearly blind. The episode is important because it tells us of Francis's difficulties living with his brothers. If he rejected any special help, no doubt it was because he enjoyed no special standing. On the other hand, his being left alone explains why he may have been a burden to the brothers with whom he was living at times—to the extent that they were disrespectful to him, as has been mentioned. The question as to the original form of this episode still remains; *MSL* contains a longer version.

We, who were with blessed Francis, and who wrote these things about him, bear witness that we often heard him say: "If I ever speak to the emperor, I will beg him, for the love of God and by my entreaties, to enact a written law forbidding anyone to catch our sister larks or do them any harm. Likewise, all mayors of cities and lords of castles and villages should be bound to oblige people each year on the Nativity of the Lord to scatter wheat and other grain along the roads outside towns and villages, so that all the birds, but especially our sister larks, may have something to eat on such a solemn feast. Also, out of reverence for the Son of God, whom His Virgin Mother on that night laid in a manger between an ox and ass, everyone should have to give brother ox and brother ass a generous portion of fodder on that night. Likewise, on the Nativity of the Lord, all the poor should be fed their fill by the rich."

For blessed Francis held the Nativity of the Lord in greater reverence than any other of the Lord's solemnities. For, although the Lord may have accomplished our salvation in his other solemnities, nevertheless, once He was born to us, as blessed Francis would say, it was certain that we would be saved. On that day, he wanted every Christian to rejoice in the Lord, and, for love of Him who gave Himself to us, wished everyone to be cheerfully generous not only to the poor but also to the animals and birds.

Concerning larks, blessed Francis used to say, "Our Sister Lark, has a capuche like religious, and is a humble bird, who gladly goes along the road looking for some grain. Even if she finds it in the animals' manure, she pecks it out and eats it. While flying, she praises the Lord, like good religious who look down on earthly things, and whose life is always in heaven. Moreover, her clothes, that is, her feathers, resemble earth, giving an example to religious not to wear clothes that are colorful and refined, but dull, like earth." And because blessed Francis considered all these things in sister larks, he loved them very much and was glad to see them.

The *Legend of Perugia* 14 is certainly one of the most interesting chapters from the standpoint of the relationship between the *Legend of Perugia*, the *Mirror of Perfection*, and the *Remembrance*. With respect to the *Legend*, the *Mirror* contains some interesting changes and the *Remembrance* some major omissions. Of all the episodes we are studying, this is one of those closest to the spirit of Francis. It is such a composite piece that it gives the impression of being the product, not of a literary narrative, but of a convergence of memories.

It begins by saying that on the evening of Francis's death larks were flying over the roof of the house where he lay, wheeling in a circle and singing. This creates a flood of memories. Mention of the larks leads to the memory of Christmas; the companions note that Francis preferred this

solemnity to all others. The reason they give for this is very typical of Francis's religiosity, which is *popular* rather than *theological*.

In the *Legend of Perugia*, this passage is inserted after the mention of Francis's death, but obviously it is an addition made possible by the reference to the larks and their flight the evening of his death. If we look at the structure of the episode, we will see that it has a unity of its own, which extends to each thread of a tapestry of memories. This is confirmed by the fact that it begins by speaking of larks, and it ends by justifying Francis's love of larks. Despite the apparent presence of at least two centers in the account—the larks and the importance of the feast of Christmas for Francis—there is still a unity of composition.

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Only one of these centers is borrowed by Thomas of Celano in the section of the *Remembrance* entitled "The Saint's Special Devotions."<sup>101</sup> There, after mentioning the angels, St. Michael and our Lady, the importance of Christmas for him is highlighted in numbers 199-200.

Thomas is well aware of Francis's unique view of Christmas and, we might add, he even adds to it with a comment not found in earlier sources: it is not fitting to abstain from meat when Christmas falls on a Friday.<sup>102</sup>

That said, all of Francis's beautiful talk about the larks, the ox, the ass, and the obligation to help the poor is reduced to a few words.<sup>103</sup> But the

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<sup>101</sup>The section in question is 2C 196-203. It is introduced by a passage about Francis's readiness to do everything "for the love of God"—a fact we have already mentioned in connection with LP 11. It goes on to describe the saint's devotion to the angels, especially St. Michael, our Lady, the feast of the Nativity (our episode is reported here), the Eucharist ("Corpus Domini"), relics and the cross, with an allusion to the stigmata.

<sup>102</sup>Thomas presents the episode in this way. He begins by speaking of Francis's custom of celebrating Christmas, with an emphasis on the image of the child Jesus, which is missing in the LP 14: He affirmed that it was "the Feast of Feasts, when God was made a little child and hung on human breasts. He would kiss the images of the baby's limbs thinking of hunger, and the melting compassion of his heart toward the child also made him stammer sweet words as babies do." He goes on to explain that when Christmas falls on a Friday there is no obligation to abstain. Thomas attributes to Francis the words: "You sin, brother, when you call 'Friday' (*diem Veneris*) the day when unto us a Child is born." Here we can sense an antithesis between the pagan name for the day ("Venus's day") and Christmas, which is the Christian "feast of feasts" and thus takes precedence over any obligation attached to Friday.

Next is Francis's desire to assure food for everyone on Christmas, with an appeal to the emperor and the sad memory ("he could not recall without tears") of the poverty of Mary at the birth of Christ. Here Thomas inserts an episode, missing in the LP 14, which tells how one day during dinner, Francis, hearing a brother mention the poverty of the Blessed Virgin and Christ, got up from the table, burst into tears and "ate the rest of his bread on the naked ground." (But reading during meals definitely takes us far from the time of Francis, to the time when Thomas was writing and the life of the brothers in the friaries had its own rules, including reading at table).

passage's dependence on the *Legend of Perugia* is confirmed by verbal similarities, especially in the first part. The introduction is word-for-word the same: "If I ever speak to the emperor." But what for Francis would have been just a "written law" with no further technical or juridic specification, becomes "a general decree"—a very precise term—when it is Thomas of Celano who is writing. It is limited, however, to the larks and the other birds. And what Francis enthusiastically saw as a universal obligation ("all") to provide for the birds, becomes more modest ("all who can"), toning down or almost eliminating the saint's enthusiastic love. Thus, the kind of cosmic celebration Francis would like to have for the Nativity of the Lord disappears.

In the *Miracles of St. Francis* 32, the first part of our episode, the part about the larks flying around the Portiuncula on the eve of Francis's death, is one of Francis's "miracles." Let us compare the two texts:

## LP 14

Saturday evening before nightfall, after vespers, when blessed Francis passed to the Lord, many birds called larks flew low above the roof of the house where blessed Francis lay, wheeling in a circle and singing.

## 3C 32

Larks are birds that are the friends of light and dread the shadows of dusk. But in the evening when Saint Francis passed from this world to Christ, when it was already twilight of nightfall, they gathered above the roof of the house, where they circled about noisily for a long while. Whether they were showing their joy or their sadness with their song, we do not know. They sang with tearful joy and joyful tears, either to mourn the orphaned children, or to indicate the father's approach to eternal glory. The city watchmen who were guarding the place with great care were amazed and called others to admire this.

Despite Thomas's rhetorical elaboration, it is clear that the two versions go back to a common source. But it is interesting how the episode was situated differently in the two sources, corresponding to the two ways in which it was exploited. In the *Legend of Perugia* the memory of the larks predominates; in the *Remembrance* it is the memory of Christmas. This may explain why Thomas, although not wanting to omit the episode, used it in a different place.

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<sup>103</sup>"He wanted the poor and hungry to be filled by the rich, and oxen and asses to be spoiled with extra feed and hay."

Our episode also appears in the *Mirror of Perfection* 113-114. There the material furnished by the memory of the companions is placed and arranged—with some shifting of parts—in section 12, “His Love for Creatures, and Creatures’ Love for Him.”<sup>104</sup>

Of the two poles we have seen in the memories,<sup>105</sup> it is Francis’s love for creatures that is highlighted here. Thus, the praise of the lark as a quasi-symbolic figure of the religious is found in the first place, whereas in the chain of memories it had been in the last place. In accord with the purpose of the chapter, Francis’s love for larks leads to the other memory, that of the flight of larks on the evening of his death. Then, at the beginning of chapter 114, the anonymous compiler skillfully introduces the testimony of the companions. It is limited to the imperial decree, which is called a “special law” rather than a “written law” or “general decree”—a significant reminder of the *Mirror’s* late date. At the end, Francis’s reverence for the feast of Christmas is recalled, but with just a brief mention and in a minor key, as in the *Legend of Perugia*. There is none of the special emphasis given it by Thomas of Celano. Note the modification in the reason why Francis preferred Christmas:

LP 14

For, although the Lord may have accomplished our salvation in his other solemnities, nevertheless, once He was born to us...it was certain that we would be saved.

2MP 114

After the Lord was born to us, it was certain that we would be saved.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that the *Mirror of Perfection* 114 is found immediately before the episode about the fire (our Episode VII), which is described as Francis’s friend and loved by him.<sup>106</sup> The Lemmens *Mirror* 19 contains the episode just as it is found in the *Legend of Perugia*, with very minor textual variations.<sup>107</sup> It is missing from *MS Little*.

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<sup>104</sup>The title of 2MP 113 is “[T]he love he had especially for birds which are called hooded larks because they symbolize a good religious,” and 2MP 114 is entitled “How he wanted to persuade the emperor to enact a special law that on Christmas day people provide generously for birds, cattle, asses and the poor.” The text of LP 13 is divided between 2MP 113-114 as follows: (a) 2MP 113 : the first part is not found in LP 14; (b) the end of LP 14; (c) the first lines of LP 14; (d) 2MP 114 : the middle part of LP 14.

<sup>105</sup>These two poles are Francis’s love for creatures and the emphasis given to the feast of Christmas.

<sup>106</sup>Goetz thinks it is possible that the author of 2MP drew the reference to the larks from the LMj XIV 6 (Cf. Goetz, *Die Quellen*, 213). But Goetz evidently forgot that this episode is already found in Thomas (3C 32). It should be emphasized that the companions’ expression “we give testimony” also occurs in the *Major Legend*, but there it refers to the larks who are testifying to their love for Francis.

<sup>107</sup>It should be noted that 1MP follows the reading of LP rather 2MP.



## 3

**LP 50, cf. 2C 21-22; 1MP 24; 2MP 27; MSL 160)**

One time in the very beginning, that is, at the time when blessed Francis began to have brothers, he was staying with them at Rivo Torto. One night, around midnight, when they were all asleep in their beds, one of the brothers cried out, saying: "I'm dying! I'm dying!" Startled and frightened all the brothers woke up.

Getting up, blessed Francis said: "Brothers, get up and light a lamp." After the lamp was lit, blessed Francis said: "Who was it who said, 'I'm dying?'"

"I'm the one," the brother answered.

"What's the matter, brother?" blessed Francis said to him. "Why are you dying?"

"I'm dying of hunger," he answered.

So that that brother would not be ashamed to eat alone, blessed Francis, a man of great charity and discernment, immediately had the table set and they all ate together with him.

This brother, as well as the others, were newly converted to the Lord and afflicted their bodies excessively.

After the meal, blessed Francis said to the other brothers: "My brothers, I say that each of you must consider his own constitution, because, although one of you may be sustained with less food than another, I still do not want one who needs more food to try imitating him in this. Rather, considering his constitution, he should provide his body with what it needs. Just as we must beware of overindulgence in eating, which harms body and soul, so we must beware of excessive abstinence even more, because the Lord desires mercy and not sacrifice."

And he said: "Dearest brothers, great necessity and charity compelled me to do what I did, namely, that out of love for our brother we ate together with him, so he wouldn't be embarrassed to eat alone. But I tell you in the future I do not wish to act this way because it wouldn't be religious or decent. Let each one provide his body with what it needs as our poverty will allow. This is what I wish and command you."

The first brothers and those who came after them for a long time mortified their bodies excessively, not only by abstinence in food and drink, but also in vigils, cold, and manual labor. Next to their skins those who could get them wore iron rings and breastplates and the roughest hair shirts, which they were even better able to get. Considering that the brothers could get sick because of this, and in a short time some were already ailing, the holy Father therefore

commanded in one of the chapters that no brother wear anything next to the skin except the tunic.

We who were with him bear witness to this fact about him: from the time he began to have brothers, and also during his whole lifetime, he was discerning with the brothers, provided that in the matter of food and other things, they did not deviate at any time from the norm of the poverty and decency of our religion, which the early brothers observed.

Nevertheless, even before he had brothers, from the beginning of his conversion and during his whole lifetime, he was severe with his own body, even though from the time of his youth he was a man of a frail and weak constitution, and when he was in the world he could not live without comforts.

One time, perceiving that the brothers had exceeded the norm of poverty and decency in food and in things, he said in a sermon he gave, speaking to a few brothers, who stood for all the brothers: "Don't the brothers think that my body needs special food? But because I must be the model and example for all the brothers, I want to use and be content with poor food and things, not fine ones."

The *Legend of Perugia* 50 is especially interesting because it takes place in the very early days of the Order. Francis, wanting to devote himself to the service of lepers, had found a first place for himself at Rivo Torto, near the San Lazzaro leper hospital.<sup>108</sup> This was around the time of the first papal approval, between 1209 and 1210.

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<sup>108</sup>For this second place, see Episode 4 below. The sources say little about Rivo Torto, the first place where the fraternity lived and where, according to LP 50, "blessed Francis began to have brothers." We find a description of it in 1C 42, which is repeated in L3C 55 and, in part, by Bonaventure in LMj IV, 3. Thomas of Celano speaks of an "abandoned hut," and goes on to say: "All his sons and brothers were living in that same place with the blessed Father, with great labor, and lacking everything. Often they were deprived of the comfort of bread, content with turnips they begged in their need here and there on the plain of Assisi. The place in which they were staying was so narrow that they could barely sit or sleep in it." Thus for Thomas the characteristic features of this first fraternity were work, absolute poverty and begging. We are told in 1C 43 that the hut was along the route taken by Otto IV on his way to Rome for his coronation. Other characteristic details are provided by L3C 55: the place was "near Assisi"; it was "a hut abandoned by all"; it was very small, "so cramped that they could barely sit or rest"; the food was simple: "Very often for lack of bread, their only food was the turnips that they begged in their need, here and there." These examples are enough to show the close connection between the two texts. Bonaventure's comments are few and brief. He does not mention Rivo Torto by name but speaks of "an abandoned hut near the city of Assisi," where the brothers "kept themselves alive...in much labor and want." Another detail in this description of the place, missing in 1C and LMj, is supplied by L3C 55: Francis wrote the names of the brothers "on the beams of that hut" so that everyone would have a place to rest and pray. On the other hand, none of the sources—LP, 2MP, 1MP, MS Little—describe the outside of Rivo Torto. It is, however, present in the background of four episodes: a) the

In this episode that in the beginning, that is, “at the time when blessed Francis began to have brothers,”<sup>109</sup> at midnight, when all were asleep, one of the brothers began to cry out, “I’m dying! I’m dying!” causing everyone to wake up. Then Francis, who in this episode definitely acts as head, ordered them all to get up and light a lamp.<sup>110</sup> The episode allows the authors of the passage to recall that in the early days, just after their conversion, Francis and his companions were given to excessive penances.<sup>111</sup> But as a result of this episode, Francis realized that the same rigor could not be imposed on everyone; each would have to adjust his practices according to his own strength. Later, repeating this idea, he says again: “Let each one provide his body with what it needs as our poverty will allow. This is what I wish and command you.”<sup>112</sup>

After a description of the lifestyle of the early Franciscan fraternity, including the typical zeal and rigor of the neophytes, we have the testimony of the “We who were with him.” Here they want to take note of a very important fact: from the time he began to have brothers, and also during his whole lifetime, Francis was very “discerning” with his brothers, “provided they did not deviate at any time from the norm of the poverty and decency of our religion” Note the absence of any explicit reference to the Rule.<sup>113</sup>

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starving brother (LP 50, 2MP 27, 1MP 24, MSL 60; b) Brother Giles (the identification is from 2MP) is asked to give his mantle to a new brother (LP 92, 2MP 36); c) Brother Fly (last part of LP 97, 2MP 24, 1MP 3); d) the sick brother (LP 53, 2MP 28, 1MP 26). Only LP belongs to the group of testimonies marked by the “We.” A fifth episode—missing in the preceding sources—is added by 1C 44 and L3C 55, that of the peasant and his donkey. The position of 2C is unusual in that it does not contain the name Rivo Torto; we do find the episodes of the starving brother, Brother Fly, and the sick brother—but with no indication of the place.

<sup>109</sup>The expression imitates, more or less consciously, Francis’s formula in his *Testament*: “After the Lord gave me some brothers.” This is an interesting coincidence, since the time to which Francis is referring is considered the beginning of the fraternity.

<sup>110</sup>The expression in this passage, “so that that brother would not be ashamed to eat alone,” occurs in identical terms in LP 53 (which is not part of our group), “so that the brother would not be ashamed to eat alone.” This episode also refers to the early days of the fraternity. It does not describe a meal in common, however, but an act of kindness on the part of Francis toward a sick brother.

<sup>111</sup>“They afflicted their bodies excessively.” In LP 53 we read: “They did not take medicines in their illnesses, but more willingly did what was contrary to the body.”

<sup>112</sup>This is one of Francis’s characteristic traits emphasized by the “We.” He knows how to condescend to the needs of his brothers and take into account the difference between the ideal of life established by him and the human situation in which it can be realized. See also LP 101, 106, 111.

<sup>113</sup>In this passage we can see clearly the “We” and their sense of time. The division into periods is simple and linear. For them, there is the period of Francis’s youth, spent in the world (“from the time of his youth...in the world”), followed by the period of his conversion (“from the beginning of his conversion”), introducing what will now be his entire life (“during his whole lifetime”). In the time sequence that follows his conversion, the “We” distinguish two

Although the last part of the passage may not be the most important, it is perhaps the most significant. It shows very clearly how already in Francis's time there had begun to be a distinction between the lifestyle of the saint and his first followers and the behavior of the brothers who came later. These no longer observed his norm of poverty in food and other things. Another theme on which the "We" insist at various times also appears very clearly in this passage: Francis wishes to be "the model and example for all the brothers." He does not want to appear as someone who follows an abstract juridic norm based on the statements of some rule, but rather as a living example by his behavior.<sup>14</sup> Francis experiences his fraternity as a group of persons bound together not by norms, but by mutual example. He must be the first in this if he wishes to impose a reality and way of life. That is why he does not rebuke those who exceed "the norm of poverty and decency," but counters them with his own example.

In this episode the companions introduce us to a dialectic between the first brothers and those who came later. Several important points become evident from this. First, we have an indication of how Francis manifests the necessity of the type of life he desires. It is not a matter of appealing to juridic norms but of giving example.<sup>15</sup> Secondly, what Francis says here also confirms the polarity existing within the religion between a disciplinary and organizational hierarchy and one that is spiritual and exemplary.<sup>16</sup>

Following this line of interpretation, the witnesses that speak to us here have an importance that goes well beyond simply telling us about Francis's rigorous asceticism.

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None of this has passed into Thomas of Celano's *Remembrance*, where the account is divided into two paragraphs, 21 and 22. It should be immediately noted that, unlike the others, these chapters are inserted into the first part of the *Remembrance*, which deals with the biography of Francis. The episode of the starving brother constitutes paragraph 22 of the *Remembrance*, which is entitled "The Discernment of Saint Francis." Some passages from the *Legend of Perugia* 50 are found in the *Remembrance* 21, which is entitled "Their Strict Discipline," but Thomas profoundly changes

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other phases: the time "before he had brothers" and the time "when he began to have brothers."

<sup>14</sup>Cf. LP 82, 111, 117.

<sup>15</sup>It should be noted that there is no reference to the *Later Rule* in the "We" passages; the only Rule mentioned is that presented by Francis to Innocent III, cf. LP 101.

<sup>16</sup>Cf. Raoul Manselli, "L'ultima decisione di S. Francesco. Bernardo di Quintavalle e la benedizione di S. Francesco morente," *Bullettino dell'Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo e Archivio muratoriano* 78 (1967): 137-53; idem, "From the Testament to the Testaments of St. Francis," *Greyfriars Review* 2 (1988): 91-9.

and modifies the testimony about the very strict asceticism of Francis and the first brothers. The textual relationship between the two sources would be quite unrecognizable were it not for certain elements that are absolutely decisive.

The first part of the *Legend of Perugia* 50 also undergoes profound reworking at the hands of Thomas. In the *Legend*, the night scene is presented with a vivid sense of reality. Everyone is asleep when one of the brothers begins to cry out, awakening and frightening the others. This gives rise to a series of disturbances that are in clear contrast to the silence of the night. Francis gets up and has the other brothers get up and light a lamp. He wants to find out what has happened, and so he asks who cried out. The passage first describes the conversation between Francis and the brother ("What's the matter, brother?") and only then what Francis did. Thomas of Celano, on the other hand, gives a summary, though not unrhetoical, version of all this: "One night while all were sleeping, one of his flock cried out: 'Brothers! I'm dying! I'm dying of hunger!' At once that extraordinary shepherd got up, and hurried to treat the sick lamb with the right medicine." This is no longer a real-life account but more simply the introduction to an exemplary act on the part of Francis. It is one of the things that makes Thomas's manner of reworking his sources stand out in greater relief. It is also clear evidence that the *Legend of Perugia* 50 is prior to Thomas's text. In the account of the *Legend of Perugia* 50 the food is not important; the episode concludes with the statement that Francis "immediately had the table set" and they all ate together. Thomas does not follow the sequence of an event that took place, but is all intent on showing Francis's example. Thus even these few words become a chance to explain something about the food of the first community: "[Francis] ordered them to set the table, although filled with everyday fare. Since there was no wine—as often happened—they made do with water." In the *Remembrance* 22, Francis's words at the end of the meal become a generic "long parable."<sup>17</sup> True, it contains words and expressions found in the *Legend of Perugia* and basically follows its sequence; but it lacks its immediacy and human thrust. And the first part is narrated in indirect discourse, unlike the *Legend of Perugia*, which is in direct discourse.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>It speaks about being aware of the different needs of different individuals.

<sup>18</sup>The expression "so that that brother would not be ashamed to eat alone" in LP, becomes in 2C "so their brother would not be embarrassed." The expression "considering his constitution, he should provide his body with what it needs" becomes "in offering service to God each one should consider his own strength." In LP Francis does not say that too much abstinence was a sin, unlike what is said in 2C: "He insisted that it was just as much a sin to deprive the body without discernment of what it really needed as, prompted by gluttony, to offer it too much." The second part of Francis's discourse, which emphasizes the presence of charity in the gesture of the meal, also undergoes a profound change in 2C. This is to be noted, seeing that Thomas usually preserves the sayings of Francis unchanged.

The discrepancies between the second part of the *Legend of Perugia* 50 and the *Remembrance* 21 are even greater. Here it is essential to first give some parallel passages from the two sources in order to avoid suspicion that the internal analogies are merely accidental and not the result of Thomas's adaptation of the text also used by the compiler of the *Legend*.

LP 50

The first brothers and those who came after them for a long time mortified their bodies excessively, not only by abstinence in food and drink, but also in vigils, cold, and manual labor. Next to their skins those who could get them wore iron rings and breastplates and the roughest hair shirts, which they were even better able to get.

2C 21

Those enrolled in that first school also subjected themselves to every discomfort. It was even considered criminal to seek any consolation except that of the spirit. Wearing iron belts and breastplates they grew weak from constant fasting and frequent vigils. They would have collapsed many times, were it not for their devoted shepherd's constant warnings that made them relax the rigors of their self-denial.

The comparison reveals the interdependencies. "The first brothers" of the "We who were with him" become, in Thomas of Celano, "those enrolled in that first school." The latter expression arises from the fact that at the beginning of the chapter Francis is presented as "the resolute knight of Christ" who exposes his body, as if it were a stranger, "to every kind of injury, whether in word or deed." So Francis, the knight of Christ, is seen with his first brothers as a school, that is, as a group of knights preparing for arms. Interestingly, while the companions see the relationship between Francis and his brothers as a relationship between father and sons or as brothers in Christ, for Thomas of Celano Franciscanism is already seen in terms of a *militia Christi*. This of course fits in with a Pauline expression (2 Tm 2:3), but it is developed significantly in terms of medieval chivalry. And even though the companions' passage takes place in an atmosphere of penitents and sacrifice for Christ, this is based on Francis's lived experience and is considered in terms of asceticism—in which the saint, in his austerity, is also an example—not in terms of war. Francis is always opposed to anything warlike whatsoever; nor would he who had rejected worldly chivalry have thought about being a knight of Christ.

There is, then, a dissimilarity and difference not only in the structure of the discourse, but also in the interpretation of Franciscanism. Without going into the thorny question of whether or not change within the Order was appropriate—in some ways Thomas is the expression of this—it is certain that the companions are viewing the early days of the Order with a sense of quiet, though real, nostalgia. And a final point highlighted by the companions is interesting: the saint's discernment. The account, in fact, takes place on two levels. Francis is discerning toward those who went

overboard in their asceticism; but he protests those who were disregarding asceticism itself. It is this second part that is dropped by Thomas of Celano.

If we move on to the *Mirror of Perfection*, we will see that chapter 27 of this work follows the *Legend of Perugia* 50 to the letter, with very few changes. Some of these are simply textual variants, as can be easily seen by consulting Sabatier's critical apparatus, while others arise from the time that has elapsed between the *Legend of Perugia* and the *Mirror of Perfection*. For example, mention of the early brothers or Francis's youth may have been interesting when the companions were sending in their memoirs, but it would have been much less interesting almost a century after the saint's death. There was also a need to simplify the text of the *Legend of Perugia*, slightly and with great respect, and to refine it stylistically. But a passage at the very end clarifies for us a certain rigorist spirit that tends to crop up in the *Mirror of Perfection*, as we can see from this brief comparison:

**LP 50**

But because I must be the model and example for all the brothers, I want to use and be content with poor food and things, not fine ones.

**2MP 27**

But because I must be the model and example for all the brothers, I want to use and be content with meager and poor food and all other things in accordance with poverty, shunning everything that is expensive and delicate."

From the comparison we can see that in the last words the author of the *Mirror of Perfection* wanted to make even more explicit what the companions had already clearly said. The fact is that when the *Mirror of Perfection* was written, the problem was no longer about eating and drinking, but about everything else that had become part of life in a Franciscan friary, such as furniture, however modest, and books, though they were few and poor, as well as other things. In other words, we are in a different atmosphere, one that is rigorist, which will surely not surprise us.

The episode is also found in Bonaventure's *Major Legend* V 7, where it is taken from the *Remembrance* 22. But the scene of the brother who wakes the others and of Francis who makes everyone eat is completely changed in spirit and essence. An episode that had featured Francis's "discernment" and recalled his fraternal love in having everyone sit down and eat in order to avoid embarrassment to one of their brothers, becomes two episodes. Francis alone comes to the aid of the starving brother and eats with him, and only the next morning does he speak to the brothers, concluding with the words: "Brothers, in this incident let charity, not food, be an example for you." It is interesting to point out here that while the passage is certainly taken from Thomas of Celano, it has been transformed and stripped of

everything most characteristic of Francis it originally had—as Sabatier already noted long ago.<sup>119</sup>

In conclusion, it is not out of place to add a few considerations that confirm and reinforce what has already been said about the priority of the “We who were with him” passages in the *Legend of Perugia* with respect to Thomas of Celano, Bonaventure, and the *Mirror of Perfection*.<sup>120</sup>

The *Legend of Perugia* 50 has a perfect unity of its own in telling us about three stages in Franciscan life. They are clearly defined in terms of historical development and internal growth in the practice of the Order. As always, Francis is seen as consistent, but with a spiritual attitude that differs greatly with regard to the brothers’ behavior. When they go overboard in their penance, Francis, while maintaining his rigorous asceticism, tempers their excesses. He is presented as “discerning” or balanced, even while his strictness remains. But he is presented without false modesty, as an example of a strict life, even when his brothers begin to slacken. This means that those who are hiding behind the formula “We who were with him” can testify to a life that goes almost from Rivo Torto to death, even though they honestly admit that they lived with him, as persons charged with his care, for only a relatively short time. This proves that what we have here is one of the testimonies given on the occasion of Crescentius of Iesi’s inquiry. Moreover, these testimonies were by no means a chronologically ordered biography or a systematic hagiography based on the virtues. Rather they were separate and distinct pages of memoirs about events, attitudes, and directives that came from Francis himself.

The episode constitutes Lemmens’s *Mirror* 27 with noteworthy variants. First of all, the account of the night scene is omitted. The compiler is evidently interested only in Francis’s discourse, without specifying the time or occasion when it was given. We find this same approach in other chapters of Lemmens’s *Mirror*. The text begins *in medias res*, with “Blessed Francis said,” and follows the *Legend of Perugia* 50 with minor variants, except for a reference to the “supper” at night shared by all. The only thing left from the second part of the short discourse is the last sentence. For the rest, Lemmens’s *Mirror* 24 is faithful to the text of the *Legend of Perugia*, with textual variants. The episode constitutes *MS Little* 160.

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<sup>119</sup>Cf. Sabatier, *Speculum*, Paris 1898, 56, n. 1.

<sup>120</sup>Goetz, *Die Quellen*, 173-74, accepts the priority of 2MP 27 with respect to 2C 22 and 21; he considers the latter to be just an extract from 2MP 27. But he does not think that this passage has preserved the companions’ original text, because, for example, Francis’s discourse seems too long to be authentic, to have been actually delivered as it is presented to us. Thus, with regard to this passage, Goetz confirms what we hold to be valid for all the passages containing the phrase “We who were with him,” namely, that, like the others, it is the source used by Thomas of Celano.



**LP 56, cf. 2C 18, 19; 1MP 27-28; 2MP 55; MSL 140, 165**

Seeing that the Lord willed to increase the number of brothers, blessed Francis told them: "My dearest brothers and sons, I see that the Lord wants us to increase. Therefore, it seems good and religious to me to obtain from the bishop, or the canons of San Rufino, or from the abbot of the monastery of Saint Benedict, some small and poor little church where the brothers can say their hours and only have next to it a small and poor little house built of mud and branches where they can sleep and care for their needs. This place is not suitable, and this house is too small for the brothers to stay in, since it pleases the Lord to increase them, especially because here we do not have a church where the brothers can say their hours. And, should any brother die, it would not be proper to bury him here or in a church of the secular clergy." This speech pleased the other brothers.

So blessed Francis got up and went to the bishop of Assisi. The same speech he made to the brothers he made to the bishop. "Brother," the bishop answered him, "I do not have any church that I can give you." Then he went to the canons of San Rufino and said the same thing to them. But they gave him the same answer as the bishop. He went, therefore, to the monastery of Saint Benedict on Mount Subasio, and made the same speech to the abbot he had made to the bishop and the canons, informing him also of how the bishop and the canons had responded. The abbot was moved to piety and took counsel with his brothers about this.

As it was the will of God, they granted blessed Francis and his brothers the church of Saint Mary of the Portiuncula as the poorest little church they had. In fact, it was also the poorest little church in the area around the city of Assisi, something blessed Francis had desired for a long time.

"Brother, we have granted your request," the abbot told blessed Francis. "But, if the Lord increases your congregation, we want this place to be the head of all your places." And this speech pleased blessed Francis and his brothers.

Blessed Francis was overjoyed at the place granted to the brothers, especially because of the name of this church was of the Mother of Christ, and because it was such a poor little church, and because of the surname it had, for it was surnamed: "of the Portiuncula." This name foreshadowed that it was to be the mother and head of the poor Lesser Brothers. It was called "Portiuncula" after the neighborhood where that church was built, which from earliest times was called "Portiuncula." Blessed Francis used to say: "This is why the Lord willed that no other church be granted to the

brothers, and why the first brothers would not build any completely new church, and would not have any other but this one. For this church was a prophecy that has been fulfilled in the coming of the Lesser Brothers." And although it was poor and almost in ruins already for a long time, the people of the city of Assisi and its neighborhood had always held the church in great devotion and hold it in even greater devotion today.

As soon as the brothers went to stay there, almost daily the Lord increased their number; and their fame and reputation spread throughout the whole valley of Spoleto. From old times, it was named Saint Mary of the Angels, and called by the local people Saint Mary of the Portiuncula. But after the brothers began to repair it, the men and women of that region would say: "Let's go to Saint Mary of the Angels."

Although the abbot and the monks had freely granted that church to blessed Francis and his brothers without any payment or annual tax, blessed Francis, a good and experienced teacher who wished to build his house on solid rock, that is, his congregation on great poverty, every year he used to send the abbot a basket full of small fish called "lasche." He did this as a sign of greater humility and poverty, so that the brothers would not have any place of their own, and would not remain in any place that was not owned by others, and thus they in no way had the power to sell it or give it away. Each year, when the brothers brought the little fish to the monks, they in turn, because of the humility of blessed Francis, who had done this of his own will, gave him and his brothers a jar filled with oil.

We who were with blessed Francis bear witness that he spoke of that church with great conviction, because of the great preference that the Lord indicated there and revealed to him in that place, namely that among all the other churches of this world the blessed Virgin loves that church. Therefore, during his whole lifetime, he had the greatest reverence and devotion toward it. And so that the brothers would always keep its remembrance in their hearts, at his death he wanted it written in his Testament that the brothers do likewise.

About the time of his death, in the presence of the general minister and the other brothers, he said:

"I want to leave and bequeath to the brothers the place of Saint Mary of the Portiuncula as a testament, that it may always be held in the greatest reverence and devotion by the brothers. Our old brothers did this: for although the place itself is holy, they preserved its holiness with constant prayer day and night and by constant silence. And if, at times, they spoke after the time established for silence, they discussed with the greatest devotion and decorum matters pertaining

to the praise of God and the salvation of souls. If it happened, and it rarely did, that someone began to utter useless or idle words, immediately he was corrected by another. They used to mortify the flesh not only by fasting, but also by many vigils, by cold, nakedness, and manual labor. In order not to remain idle, they very frequently went and helped poor people in their fields, and sometimes these people would give them some bread for the love of God.

“By these and other virtues, they used to sanctify themselves and the place; and others who came after them for a long time did the same, although not as much. Afterwards, however, a great number of brothers and others would come to that place more than was usual, especially when all the brothers of the religion had to visit there, as well as those who intended to join the religion. Moreover, the brothers are colder in prayer and other good works than in the past, and are more careless about exchanging idle and useless words and even worldly news. Therefore, the brothers who stay there and other religious do not hold that place in such great reverence and devotion as is proper and as I would wish.

“Therefore I want it always to be under the jurisdiction of the general minister, that he may show greater concern and care in providing for it, especially in placing a good and holy family there. The clerics should be chosen from among the holiest and most upright brothers of the entire religion and who know how to say the office best. In this way, not only other people, but also the brothers will gladly listen to them with great devotion. And some holy lay brothers should also be chosen, who may serve them, discerning and upright men.

“I also wish that none of the brothers or any other person enter that place except the general minister and the brothers who serve him. And they may not speak to anyone except the brothers who serve them and to the minister when he visits them.

“I likewise want the lay brothers who serve them to be bound not to pass on to them any word or news of the world which they have heard which is not useful to the soul. And that is the reason why I particularly want no one else to enter that place, so that they may better preserve their purity and holiness, and not exchange in that place any idle words, useless to the soul. Rather, the entire place should be kept and held pure and holy in hymns and praises of the Lord. And when any of these brothers passes, let the general minister have another holy brother come there, no matter where he is staying, to replace the one who died. If some day the brothers and the places where they stay stray from the purity and holiness and decency befitting them, I want this place to be a mirror and a good example for the entire religion, a candelabra before the throne of God and

before the blessed Virgin. Thus may the Lord have mercy on the faults and failings of the brothers and always preserve and protect this religion, His little plant."

One time, close to a chapter that was to be held—which in those days was held annually at Saint Mary of the Portiuncula—the people of Assisi considered that, by the Lord's grace, the brothers had already increased and were increasing daily. Yet, especially when they all assembled there for a chapter, they had nothing but a poor, small hut, covered with straw, and its walls were built with branches and mud, as the brothers had built when they first came to stay there. After a general meeting, within a few days, with haste and great devotion, they built there a large house with stone-and-mortar walls without the consent of blessed Francis while he was away.

When blessed Francis returned from another region and came to the chapter, and saw that house built there, he was amazed. He considered that, seeing this house, the brothers would build or have built large houses in the places where they now stayed or where they would stay in the future. And especially because he wanted this place always to be a model and example for all the places of the brothers, before the chapter ended he got up one day, climbed onto the roof of that house, and ordered the brothers to climb up. And, intending to destroy the house, he, along with the brothers, began to throw to the ground the tiles covering it.

The knights of Assisi saw this, as well as others who were there on behalf of the city's Commune to protect that place from secular people and outsiders who were outside the place, arriving from all over to see the brothers' chapter. They saw that blessed Francis and the other brothers wanted to destroy that house. They immediately approached them and said to blessed Francis: "Brother, this house belongs to the Commune of Assisi and we are here on behalf of the same Commune, and we're telling you not to destroy our house." "If the house belongs to you," answered blessed Francis, "I don't want to touch it." He and the brothers who were with him immediately came down. That is why for a long time the people of the city of Assisi decreed that every year their podestà, whoever he is, is obliged to have it roofed and repair it if necessary.

Another time the general minister wanted to build a small house there for the brothers of that place where they could sleep and say their hours. At that time especially, all the brothers of the religion, and those who were coming to the religion, were coming and going to that place. For this reason those brothers were being worn out almost daily. And because of the large number of brothers gathering in that place, they had no place where they could sleep and say their hours, since they had to give up the places where they slept to others.

Because of this they frequently endured a lot of trouble because, after so much work, they could hardly provide for the necessities of their own bodies and the good of their own souls.

When that house was already almost finished, blessed Francis returned to that place. While he was sleeping in a small cell one night, at dawn he heard the noise of the brothers who were working there. He began to wonder what this could be. "What is that noise?" he asked his companion. "What are those brothers doing?" His companion told him the whole story.

Blessed Francis immediately sent for the minister and said to him: "Brother, this place is the model and example for the entire religion. And it is my will that the brothers of this place endure trouble and need for the love of the Lord God, so that the brothers of the whole religion who come here will take back to their places a good example of poverty, rather than have these brothers receive satisfaction and consolation. Otherwise, the other brothers of the religion will take up this example of building in their places. They will say: 'At Saint Mary of the Portiuncula, which is the first place of the brothers, such and such buildings are built, so we can certainly build in our own places, because we do not have a suitable place to stay.'"

One of the most important episodes, from a critical point of view and from the viewpoint of the testimony of those who call themselves "We," is found in the *Legend of Perugia* 56, the *Remembrance* 18-19 and the *Mirror of Perfection* 55. It is a very long chapter, not only in the *Legend of Perugia* but also in the *Mirror of Perfection*, which reproduces it in full with a few changes. That it constitutes a single unit and is not to be divided<sup>111</sup> is proven by the fact that its essential elements are found in Thomas of Celano's *Remembrance*, although greatly shortened and adapted, as Sabatier already noted long ago.<sup>112</sup> Despite its length, the chapter has a center of its own around which it revolves from beginning to end: Francis's love for the Portiuncula, the meaning it had for him and should have for his brothers.

The episode begins by saying that when Francis saw that the number of brothers was increasing, he told them they needed to obtain "some small and poor little church" from the bishop, the canons of Assisi, or the monks of St. Benedict. "This place" where they were was no longer adequate for even a minimum of decorum. It had become too small, and above all it had no church where the brothers could say their office. And should someone die, it would not be *honestus* [proper] to bury him there or in a church of the secular clergy.

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<sup>111</sup>Cambell's edition divides this passage (57, in his numbering) into seven parts, a-g; Brooke divides it into five chapters, 8-12.

<sup>112</sup>Cf. Sabatier, *Speculum*, 267-73: «Comment la Portioncule fut donnée à François».

These words of Francis lead to several rather interesting conclusions. First of all, the growing number of brothers must have been mostly men from Assisi, since Francis was looking for a place near the city. Moreover, the number must have actually been quite small, seeing that the relatively modest capacity of the Portiuncula would be enough.<sup>133</sup>

The *Legend of Perugia* 56 continues with a passage that recalls how from the beginning the brothers kept this admonition, living in strict silence, constant work, and penance.<sup>134</sup> But afterwards, when it became the center of the Order, people were coming and going as required by religious life (it was here that novices were received), and a certain relaxation took place in the brothers' religious life. For these reasons it lost its original significance.

In our view, the logic of the discourse does not allow us to attribute this statement to Francis; it must be interpreted as a statement by the "We who were with him." Opposed to this interpretation, however, is that fact that the word *vellem* [I would wish] occurs at the end of the parenthetical statement: "Therefore, the brothers who stay there and other religious do not hold that place in such great reverence and devotion as is proper and as I would wish." The problem is no doubt real, but here we should note that in the *Legend of Perugia* 56 it is the narrator who speaks of the "first brothers" and the "old brothers," never Francis himself. We should also note that it is hard to imagine these words on the lips of Francis, for then we would apparently have to say that while he was still alive he tolerated a decline in discipline at the Portiuncula. In that case, why would he have to record it in his Testament and give the long list of directives that follow this parenthetical interruption? There remains the problem of the *vellem*, but perhaps this could be changed to *vellet* and be explained as a copier's misreading, subsequently repeated by others.

In any case, no Franciscan testimony mentions a decline at the Portiuncula during Francis's lifetime. However, at least two other times the "We who were with him" have interrupted Francis's words to insert reflections and personal memories, as we have seen in the *Legend of Perugia* 50, and as we shall see later in the episode of Riccerio in the *Legend of Perugia* 101.

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<sup>133</sup>It should also be noted that the increase in the number of brothers is seen as God's will and thus a providential act.

<sup>134</sup>It should be noted that the experience described in their memoirs is really more monastic in nature. What is emphasized is the constant prayer, the observance of silence—it even speaks of a time established for silence—the prohibition of useless and idle words, mortification of the flesh by fasting and vigils. Manual labor appears here as an ascetical practice and means of avoiding idleness, as also in LP 50. There is no mention of the need for preaching or of presence among the people.

The part between "our old brothers did this" and "as I would wish" is thus an interruption of the previous discourse, which resumes immediately after this with expressions typical of Francis. Continuing this "testament," he orders that the Portiuncula be always under the direct authority of the minister, that the best members of the religion should live there, that the clerics should be chosen from among the holiest brothers in order that they might be an example to the others, that the lay brothers be among the best, and that all are bound to lead a holy life, in silence and solitude, in recollection, prayer, and the praises of the Lord. When any of the brothers dies, the minister should have another holy brother come there, no matter where he is staying, to replace him. Francis wanted the Portiuncula to be "a mirror and a good example for the entire religion, a candelabra before the throne of God and before the blessed Virgin. Thus may the Lord have mercy on the faults and failings of the brothers and always preserve and protect this religion, his little plant."

A comparison with the *Mirror of Perfection* 55 reminds us that the chapter ended at this point. Unfortunately, a lacuna in the Perugia manuscript does not allow us to determine whether this was really the case or not. At any rate, the passages that follow, which Bigaroni takes from *MS Little* 165, are found in chapters 7 and 8 of the *Mirror of Perfection*, not in chapter 55.

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The *Legend of Perugia* 56 is very important for its undoubted similarities to the *Remembrance* 18-19. These sections, devoted to St. Mary of the Portiuncula, comprise Chapter XII: "How the saint loved this place, how the brothers lived there, and how the Blessed Virgin loved it."

Thomas says nothing about how Francis came to possess the chapel; he says only that "here the Order of Lesser Ones had its beginning." But the relationship between the *Legend of Perugia* 56 and Thomas's text is undeniable:

LP 56

We who were with blessed Francis bear witness that he spoke of that church with great conviction, because of the great preference that the Lord indicated there and revealed to him in that place, namely that among all the other churches of this world the blessed Virgin loves that church

2C 19

According to the stories of the old neighbors, that church used to be called by another name, "Saint Mary of the Angels." As the blessed Father used to say, God revealed to him, that among all other churches built in her honor throughout the world, the blessed Virgin cherished that church with special affection. For that reason the saint also loved it more than all others.

Significantly, Thomas of Celano has failed, as usual, to mention Francis's companions. And, eliminating a long account of what the saint said

about the Portiuncula when at the point of death, he uses those things that can help him create a chapter about Francis's love for the Portiuncula.

While the witnesses mention the first brothers, their mortification and their strict life, Thomas prefers to recall that the Order of Lesser Brothers had its beginning in that church. It is also rather interesting that while the companions speak about "old" brothers and their holiness, but not about the Order, here it is precisely the organizational and juridic aspect that is stressed. Moreover, while Francis's words are not reported, they are referred to when Thomas notes that the saint loved that place and commanded the brothers to hold it in special reverence, even though he arranged things in such a way that they would never own it.

We can find another parallel in his praise of the brothers' rigorous life at the Portiuncula. But while the companions speak of strict asceticism, long and constant silence, fasting, vigils, cold, nakedness, and manual labor, Thomas merely says that "there the most rigid discipline was kept in all things: as much in silence and in labor as in other religious observances." The spontaneous ascetical thrust described by the companions, while not excluded, is referred to religious life in conformity with the precepts of the Rule.

Other points of contact between Thomas of Celano and the companions could also be mentioned, but again what we need to insist upon is the undisputed priority and real authority of the testimony given by those who call themselves "We who were with him," in the form in which we find it in the *Legend of Perugia*.

Thomas places the memory of the Portiuncula in a biographical context, namely, between Francis's trip to Rome to see the pope and a description of his strict way of life. For the companions, the problem is to explain and make sense of the choice of the Portiuncula over other churches. It is no accident that their testimony is placed right after the explanation of how the Portiuncula was the only refuge offered Francis after he began to have brothers.

Equally important is the fact that, while the *Legend of Perugia* and the *Mirror of Perfection* tend to stress that the bishop and canons of San Rufino refuse to help Francis by giving him a church, even a very modest one, Thomas says only that it came from the abbot of Subasio, with no mention of the bishop and canons. But this is no casual omission, since he cannot contradict himself too much with regard to what he said earlier about the Portiuncula in the *Life*.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>125</sup>Here Thomas's explanation of how Francis received the Portiuncula is quite different: "From there he moved to another place, which is called the Portiuncula, where there stood a church of the Blessed Virgin Mother of God built in ancient times. At that time it was deserted and no one was taking care of it. When the holy man of God saw it so ruined, he was moved by piety because he had a warm devotion to the Mother of all good and he began to stay



The episode also figures in Bonaventure's *Major Legend* II, 8, where he follows Thomas rather than the tradition linked to the *Legend of Perugia* 56. Consequently he omits the manner of its acquisition by the fraternity.

The account is also found in Lemmens's *Mirror*, with notable modifications. Thus the entire first part, which describes the brothers' need for a church and Francis's fruitless attempts to obtain one, is omitted. The text begins this way: "The abbot of Saint Benedict of Mount Subasio granted blessed Francis and his brothers the Church of Saint Mary of the Portiuncula as the poorest little church they had. And he wanted that, if the Lord increased the brothers, it be the head of the whole religion. And blessed Francis granted this." That is all. What follows is the account of Francis's joy and the gift of the fish, with the oil in return.

The second part of the chapter—the part authenticated by the testimony of the companions—which contains Francis's testamentary provisions concerning the Portiuncula, is noticeably shortened. One part of Francis's discourse is merely summarized, and the part about the decline in the rigor of life at the Portiuncula is omitted.<sup>126</sup>

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there continually" (1C 21).

<sup>126</sup>This episode is studied very carefully by Walter Goetz, cf. *Die Quellen*, 185-87. He sees it as a chapter in which once again Thomas of Celano has influenced the anonymous authors and a series of revisers. In the end, he says, the original nucleus of the text was greatly altered, though still attested by the expression "We who were with him," which links it to the writings of Leo. Moreover, this episode is rightly linked to a document published by Sabatier, which shows that Francis indeed received the Portiuncula from the Benedictine monks. While we agree with Goetz about the passage that comes between the first and second parts of Francis's discourse—we have given the reasons for this—we believe that in wanting to distinguish between earlier and later parts, a hypercritical position has been allowed to gain the upper hand. The question is not whether a particular part of the episode is authentic or not; we must be brave enough to admit that there is really no way to decide. Instead we must recognize that these episodes have a particular and autonomous transmission of their own. This is proven by the fact that they are copied, as needed, from one text to another, from one compilation to another, always treated respectfully as an object of special devotion. Thomas of Celano is the exception, as we have mentioned several times, but it is here that we see the essential difference between the use of these episodes by him and by the other compilers. For Thomas, these texts are sources to be used freely for the purpose for which they had been requested and collected, namely, the composition of 2C. But for the others, who are well aware of the origin of these episodes, they become an object of respectful veneration, not to be touched or altered. The fact that the episodes pass from one text to another, being copied or changed only very slightly, reminds us that they were the object of special reverence. We are showing this, as we go along, by comparison with 2MP a comparison that could also be extended to other Franciscan texts. Finally, we believe this episode is of special value because it mentions a testament different from the one that has come down to us, which is considered official in the Order.

***Legend of Perugia 57 (cf. 2C 56, 59; 2MP 9; 1MP 29)***

One of the brothers, a spiritual man, to whom blessed Francis was very close, was staying in a hermitage. Considering that if blessed Francis came there at some time he would not have a suitable place to stay, he had a little cell built in a remote place near the place of the brothers, where blessed Francis could pray when he came. After a few days, it happened that blessed Francis came. When the brother led him to see it, blessed Francis said to him: "This little cell seems too beautiful to me. But, if you want me to stay in it for a few days, have it covered inside and out with ferns and tree-branches."

That little cell was not made of stonework but of wood, but because the wood was planed, made with hatchet and axe, it seemed too beautiful to blessed Francis. The brother immediately had it changed as blessed Francis had requested.

For the more the houses and cells of the brothers were poor and religious, the more willingly he would see them and sometimes be received as a guest there. As he stayed and prayed in it for a few days, one day, outside the little cell near the place of the brothers, a brother who was at that place came to where blessed Francis was staying. Blessed Francis said to him: "Where are you coming from, brother?" He told him: "I am coming from your little cell." "Because you said it is mine," blessed Francis said, "someone else will stay in it from now on; I will not."

We who were with him often heard him repeat the saying of the holy Gospel: Foxes have dens and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.

And he would say: "When the Lord stayed in solitude where he prayed and fasted for forty days and forty nights, He did not have a cell or a house built there, but He sheltered under the rocks of the mountain." And so, after His example, he did not want to have a house or cell in this world, nor did he have one built for him. Moreover, if he ever happened to say to the brothers: "Prepare this cell this way," he would refuse afterwards to stay in it, because of that saying of the holy Gospel: Do not be concerned.

Soon before his death, he wanted it written in his Testament that all the cells and houses of the brothers ought to be built only of mud and wood, the better to safeguard poverty and humility.

Although the episode contained in the *Legend of Perugia 57* follows the Portiuncula episode just discussed, and although it also concerns Francis's "residences," it really has more to do with the general question of poverty than specific questions about the manner and appearance of the brothers' dwellings. For the companions, this episode serves as an *exemplum*

to introduce an argument in which they present themselves, using their characteristic phrase and testifying that Francis wished to conform his behavior to the Gospel.

The episode closes with an expression we have already met: *Nam circa mortem suam* [about the time of his death/soon before his death]. It is taken from the *Legend of Perugia* 56, and in both cases it introduces a last wish of Francis. There is a reference—in the first case allusive, in the second case explicit—to a testament of his, written shortly before his death and containing directives about the Portiuncula and the appearance of the brothers' dwellings. "Soon before his death, he wanted it written in his Testament that all the cells and houses of the brothers ought to be built only of mud and wood, the better to safeguard poverty and humility." This passage is even more important since it is repeated word for word by the "We" in the *Legend of Perugia* 106: "Thus he had it written in his Testament that all houses of the brothers should be built of mud and wood, as a sign of holy poverty and humility and the churches constructed for the brothers must be small." What we have, then, is a passage that was written down and thus could be cited verbatim.<sup>17</sup>

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The corresponding episode in Thomas of Celano's *Remembrance* is found under the general heading "Poverty of Houses."<sup>18</sup> It is divided between two non-consecutive chapters, 56 and 59. In the *Remembrance* 56 we are told that Francis taught his own to build poor little dwellings, and the citation "The foxes have dens..." is repeated. As is usual with Thomas, the companions are not mentioned at all. The *Remembrance* 59, recalling the continuation of the *Legend of Perugia* 57, says that as a sign of his love for poverty Francis refused to enter the cell he heard someone say was his.

It is interesting to examine Thomas's procedure more closely. With undisputed ability and a keen sense of the structure of one of Francis's characteristic virtues, he adopts the text of the companions, dividing it and adapting it to his purposes. In fact, the gospel passage and the general exhortation to have "poor little dwellings" serves as introduction to the entire chapter on poverty of houses (2C 56). This is followed by the account of the destruction of the house being built by the citizens of Assisi next to the Portiuncula, summarized with great sensitivity and a sense of style (2C 57 is the last part of our Episode IV). Then comes the episode of the sick brother who was thrown out of the house being built in Bologna (2C 58 is our Episode [XX]). Finally, he concludes with the episode of Francis's refusal to enter the cell they called his (2C 59).

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<sup>17</sup>Cf. Manselli, "Testament."

<sup>18</sup>This consists of a group of four chapters, 56-59. We will speak of 2C 58 later, in Episode [XX]; 2C 57 is part of LP 56, which was discussed above.

Thomas keeps almost all the words of Francis contained in the *Legend of Perugia* 57; but the narrative framework is eliminated and—even more characteristic—the personal testimony of the saint's companions. Moreover, in the *Remembrance* 59 the account itself is modified. In the *Legend of Perugia* 57 the protagonists are Francis and "one of the brothers" who was coming from "Brother Francis's cell." In the *Remembrance* 59 there is a conversation between two brothers; Francis intervenes only when he hears that someone is calling a cell his, as if it were his property.<sup>129</sup> What we have, then, is a very definite change of perspective from that of the eyewitnesses to Francis's life. The episode they narrate, with all the other added observations, is reduced to the need for an admonition and an example of Franciscan life, with a meaning that is not changeable, but permanent.

Here we have Francis who refuses to stay in a cell that someone might possibly think had always been his. He could not allow any kind of ownership, not even in the name of the affectionate concern and the understandable respect of his confreres. And so, a moment in Francis's life becomes the occasion for a little discourse aimed at clarifying the Rule. While it is quite characteristic of Thomas to report faithfully the words attributed by the witnesses to Francis<sup>130</sup> (which confirms beyond doubt his dependence on our group of testimonies), he always adds other words that contain a normative exhortation, which it is really hard to imagine Francis ever saying. Given the saint's indifference to juridic matters and his hatred of formalism, it is hard to believe he could have said: "We can follow him in the way prescribed: holding nothing as our own property, even though we cannot live without the use of houses." These words, in fact, refer to the *Later Rule* VI—highly unusual on the lips of Francis! And then, besides the reference to the Rule, there is the added juridical-notarial expression that the brothers cannot live "without the use of houses." This is even more unusual and borders, quite frankly, on the improbable.

Here we see again an example of the process by which Thomas reworks his sources to make them fit his purpose. An exquisite and naively simple episode, such as Francis's not wanting to have anything that could be called his own, is turned into a living example of the precepts of the Rule.

On the other hand, it must be noted again that Thomas of Celano recognizes as the words of Francis those recorded by the witnesses as spoken by him, even when there is a certain vagueness or imprecision in language.

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<sup>129</sup>"...one brother asked another brother where he was coming from. 'I'm coming from Brother Francis's cell,' he answered. The saint heard this and replied...."

<sup>130</sup>But there has doubtless been a rhetorical reworking on his part, as a close comparison shows: LP57 "Because you said it is mine, someone else will stay in it from now on: I will not." 2C 59 "Since you have put the name 'Francis' on the cell making it my property, go and look for someone else to live in it. From now on I will not stay there."

For example, he calls the desert where Christ fasted a *carcere* [solitude/cell], and he explains that Christ stayed "beneath a rock on the mountainside" as though it were an Umbrian hermitage rather than the Judean desert.

A final point. Thomas of Celano sets the action at the Siena hermitage of Sarteano; the three witnesses do not specify the place. Here, unlike in the previous case of Rieti, we can think of no obvious or immediate reason for this. In the *Major Legend* VII, 2, Bonaventure is faithful to the *Remembrance* 56 and 59 (first part). After an introduction in which he borrows other sentences from Thomas (2C 194, 140), he transcribes the second sentence and the gospel citation found in the *Remembrance* 56 word for word. Shortly after that, he continues with the *Remembrance* 59 until the episode of "Brother Francis's cell," which, significantly, he omits.

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The passage appears almost verbatim in the *Mirror of Perfection* 9, save for a few minor formal corrections, a few minor abbreviations at the beginning of the chapter, and a few changes in word order. These things are probably due to a desire for a slightly tighter, and perhaps more elegant, sentence structure. The chapter is entitled: "How blessed Francis was unwilling to remain in a well-built cell, or one that was called his own."

The words of Francis are always faithfully reported in the *Mirror of Perfection* 9, especially when they are statements of principle. In fact, the conversation with the brother who says he is coming from Francis's cell, the passage where the companions reveal themselves, and the one that recalls Christ in the desert are absolutely identical. A final point is very important for the textual value of the Perugia manuscript and incompatible with any arbitrary shifting of its parts. As in the *Legend of Perugia* 57, the last sentence *Nam et circa mortem suam...* is part of the *Mirror of Perfection* 9 and forms its conclusion. While the next chapter in the *Legend of Perugia* 58 contains an *unde* that seems to link the two chapters, this is completely absent in the *Mirror of Perfection*, which presents the two texts in succession, but as distinct.<sup>11</sup>

Lemmens's *Mirror* 29 follows the *Legend of Perugia* 57 faithfully until the end of the first part of the episode. It skips the second part

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<sup>11</sup>Goetz thinks that the text reported in 2MP 9—of which he believes 2C offers only an extract—is not original but only a reworked version. He bases this statement, which is in some ways strange, on the fact that it adds a citation of the Testament that does not agree with the commonly accepted text. Since 2C says that Francis often talked to his brothers about the subject of poverty, Goetz maintains that this may have led someone to place a reference to the "We" in the passage. The argument is absolutely unconvincing. As we discussed in the article cited in note 2, along with to the "real" Testament there must have been other "testaments," that is, expressions of Francis's last wishes about this or that aspect of Franciscan life. Cf. *Die Quellen*, 166.

completely and joins its concluding lines—except for the last sentence—to the first part.

**LP 57**

For the more the houses and cells of the brothers were poor and religious, the more willingly he would see them and sometimes be received as a guest there. As he stayed and prayed in it....

And so, after His [the Lord's] example, he did not want to have a house or cell in this world, nor did he have one built for him. Moreover, if he ever happened to say to the brothers: "Prepare this cell this way," he would refuse afterwards to stay in it, because of that saying of the holy Gospel: Do not be concerned.

Soon before his death....

The abbreviated text of Lemmens's *Mirror 29* also fails to mention the testimony of the "We" contained in the transition from the first to the second part of the episode. The episode is missing in *MS Little*.

**6**

**LP 82, cf. 2C 132; 2MP 63**

Another time, he was going through the city of Assisi and many people went with him. A poor old woman asked him for alms for the love of God and he immediately gave her the mantle he had on his back. And, at once, he confessed before everyone that on that account he felt vainglory.

We who were with him saw and heard many other examples similar to these but we cannot tell them because it would take too long to write or recount them.

Blessed Francis's highest and principal concern was that he should not be a hypocrite before God. Although he needed special food for his body because of his infirmity, nevertheless, he thought that he must always offer good example to the brothers and to others, so that he might take away from them any reason for complaining and bad example. He preferred to endure bodily needs patiently and willingly, and he did endure them until the day of his death, rather than satisfy himself, even though he could have done so according to God and good example.

The episode that makes up the *Legend of Perugia* 82 helps us in many ways to understand the value of the testimony of Francis's companions and the composition of their memoirs, which tend to be connected and complement each other. This passage highlights Francis's pains to overcome all temptations to hypocrisy and his effort to conquer it by continuous mortification.

It is well to compare the memory of the companions with the words they report in chapter 50 as spoken by Francis:

**LP 50**

"Don't the brothers think that my body needs special food? But because I must be the model and example for all the brothers, I want to use and be content with poor food and things, not fine ones."

**LP 82**

Although he needed special food for his body because of his infirmity, nevertheless, he thought that he must always offer good example to the brothers and to others....

Clearly, these statements are of the same tenor. To them can be added a third passage that—like the *Legend of Perugia* 82—is also from the companions: "We who were with him could not say how many and how great were the necessities that he denied his body in food and clothing, to give good example to the brothers and so that they would endure their necessities in greater patience" (LP 111).<sup>12</sup> This last passage contains a word-for-word correspondence with the *Legend of Perugia* 82.<sup>13</sup>

**LP 82**

Blessed Francis's highest and principal concern....

**LP 111**

At all times...blessed Francis had as his highest and principal goal....

And so, according to the companions, Francis practiced rigorous mortification, even when he was sick or suffering, because he wanted to be the model and example for his brothers. This way of being and acting on the part of the saint is distinctive and significant; it is said to be characteristic of him and one of his constant aims.

Thus, if we are not mistaken, we are touching on one of the most sensitive moments in the history of Franciscanism and the relationship between Francis and the hierarchical institutions that in the end the Order had to adopt. Francis had peacefully accepted this hierarchy; as a sign of

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<sup>12</sup>But unlike LP 82, in LP 111 it is Francis himself who explains his duty to give good example. And, what is also of interest to us for clarifying the hallmark formula's role within the episode, is that the companions only confirm things already expressed by the saint.

<sup>13</sup>The object of the duty is different. In LP 82 it is to avoid hypocrisy in the eyes of God; in LP 11 it is good example. But we have already seen an interweaving of these two ideas in LP 82.

greater humility, he had wanted to be subject to the superiors.<sup>14</sup> But these passages, along with the *Testament*, highlight for us the non-juridic, yet *de facto* and psychologically important reality of Francis's action within his community. He did not want to exercise jurisdictional authority over it; but since this was his one fraternity, whose goal was to become more and more Christlike by living the gospel life, he could not refuse the task assigned him by the Lord ("The Lord revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel").<sup>15</sup> In other words, he had to express "the pattern of the Holy Gospel" and teach others how to do the same. Just as Christ was the model and example he kept ever before him, he wanted to be the same for his brothers. Once more we have proof of something I stressed years ago on the subject of Francis's last blessing.<sup>16</sup> Alongside a hierarchy of discipline and organization, he believed he could also establish the example of his personal life and interpretation of the imitation and following of Christ.

But that is why the companions feel it necessary to recall the role that Francis, even as a simple brother, played in the Order. We will never know, of course, whether this memory of the saint's exemplary role sprang from the affirmation of a lived and proven reality, or whether it comes from an unspoken, yet no less real, controversy.

In any case, it is clear that this idea of Francis was silently, but firmly, rejected, especially by Brother Elias; nor in fact was it accepted by his successors. This explains perfectly why the companions' explanation was omitted in the *Remembrance*: it recalled and pointed to an understanding of the organization of the fraternity that had been cast aside once and for all.

In fact, in the *Remembrance* 132 the episode is presented as proof that Francis was also strict with himself.<sup>17</sup> The companions' account is enriched by the addition of references to the Gospel and St. Paul and by a series of careful, but unequivocal, rhetorical amplifications. Thus the mantle, which the companions say was given "immediately," is said by Thomas to have been offered with "quick generosity." The spontaneous immediacy of the gesture becomes a psychological trait—generosity—which

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<sup>14</sup>Cf. LP 11.

<sup>15</sup>"The Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel" are the actual words of the *Testament*.

<sup>16</sup>Cf. Manselli, *L'ultima decisione*.

<sup>17</sup>This chapter, part of the section on "False Joy," is entitled "How he accused himself of vainglory." The chapter consists of an introductory sentence and the account of the aid given to the old woman. The introduction, missing in LP 82, serves to emphasize how Francis immediately confessed the vainglory as soon as he recognized it. It is repeated in the last sentence of the passage, as a comparison of the two citations shows: "With the same fervor, whenever his spirit was moved to vainglory, he at once displayed it naked before everyone with a confession," and the last sentence, "But then he felt an impulse of empty congratulations, and at once he confessed before everyone that he felt vainglory."



Thomas mentions several times elsewhere. Similarly, while the companions speak of an immediate confession of vainglory, Thomas feels the need to amplify in literary terms and explain why it is that Francis considers himself guilty. He says that the saint "felt an impulse of empty congratulations," once again explaining the spontaneous immediacy of Francis's reactions in psychological terms. But in both cases the conclusion is almost perfectly identical: "At once he confessed before everyone that he felt vainglory."

For the purposes of our critical discussion, it is important to note that the second part of the episode is omitted by Thomas in his text.<sup>18</sup>

The episode occurs again, almost literally parallel, in the *Mirror of Perfection* 63, but in the section on humility. In other words, the original episode has been moved to an essentially different part of the story. The passage is entitled: "How he immediately accused himself of the vainglory he had when giving alms." In fact, right where the testimony of the companions occurs, there is an extremely interesting interpolation:

## LP 82

We who were with him saw and heard many other examples similar to these but we cannot tell them because it

## 2MP 63

We who were with him have seen and heard many other examples of *his great humility* similar to these that we

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<sup>18</sup>The incomplete nature of 2C 132 leads Goetz to several observations that must be carefully discussed. He minimizes the importance of the second part of the text and regards the presence of our "We" formula as a meaningless addition ("ein absichtloser Zusatz"). But we must point out that it is precisely this "meaningless" fact that confirms its authenticity and indicates its importance. Forgers arrange everything in order, even more so than necessary, while in this case what we would have is a potential forger who adds things that are sometimes purposeful, sometimes meaningless. We confess that this does not seem logical to us, at least historically speaking. Actually, the second part of the passage is very important for the reasons we have stated above in the text, and also because here the companions themselves are summarizing what they have presented several times before, and in the same words, as Francis's position. From this we can see either how they interpret a saying of Francis, or how they frame the saying with reference to Francis's own personality. Here the saying serves to preclude the impression that somehow he might actually have been a hypocrite in the eyes of God, an impression that would certainly not come to mind in this regard. Moreover, the fact that the so-called meaningless formula occurs in at least three other episodes (LP 50, 82, 111) indicates that these three episodes come from the same pen and, no doubt, from the same witnesses. In conclusion, let us point out that texts are like accused persons; they should be considered genuine until there is proof—intrinsic or extrinsic, beyond criticism and rationally sound—that they are false. Everything we have said here thus far runs counter to this possibility. Cf. Goetz, *Die Quellen*, 90.

<sup>19</sup>The formulation of the hallmark phrase is also different from what we find in LP 111 (= 2MP 11). LP 82 "We who were with him...cannot tell them because it would take too long to write or recount them...so that he might take away from them any reason for complaining and bad example. He preferred to endure bodily needs patiently and willingly, and he did endure them until the day of his death, rather than satisfy himself, even though he could

would take too long to write or recount them. cannot relate in spoken or written words.<sup>139</sup>

It is obvious from the episode's place within the work that the exemplary and psychological context are different, namely, that of humility. This is what the author of the *Mirror of Perfection* accomplishes with his three added words. These, in our opinion, also involve (especially for reasons of style) a change in the rest of the sentence. The last lines of the last part of the chapter are abbreviated slightly, but this is of no importance for our considerations of this text.

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**LP 86, cf. 2C 166; 2MP 115-116**

It happened that, when the season conducive to healing of the eyes arrived, blessed Francis left that place, even though his eye disease was quite serious. He was wearing on his head a large capuche the brothers had made for him, with a piece of wool and linen cloth sewn to the capuche, covering his eyes. This was because he could not look at the light of day because of the great pain caused by his eye disease. His companions led him on horseback to the hermitage of Fonte Colombo, near Rieti, to consult with a doctor of Rieti who knew how to treat eye diseases.

When that doctor arrived there, he told blessed Francis that he wanted to cauterize from the jaw to the eyebrow of the weaker eye. Blessed Francis, however, did not wish the treatment to begin until Brother Elias arrived.

He waited for him, and he did not come because, on account of many engagements he had, he could not come. So he was in doubt about beginning the treatment. But, constrained by necessity, and especially out of obedience to the Lord Bishop of Ostia and the general minister, he proposed to obey, although it was difficult for him to have any concern about himself, and that is why he wanted his minister to do this.

Afterwards, one night when the pain of his illness prevented him from sleeping, he had pity and compassion on himself. He said to his companions: "My dearest brothers and sons, do not grow weary or burdened because of your care for me in my illness. The Lord, on my behalf, His little servant, will return to you, in this world and the

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have done so according to God and good example." 2MP 63 "We who were with him...cannot relate in spoken or written words...lest he give someone reason to complain, he patiently endured every privation so he patiently endured every privation."

next, all the fruit of the good work that you are unable to do because of your care for me in my illness. In fact, you will obtain an even greater profit than those who assist the whole religion and life of the brothers. You should even tell me: 'We're paying your expenses, but the Lord, on your behalf, will be our debtor.'

The holy father spoke in this way because he wanted to help them and lift them up in their faint-heartedness and weakness. He did this so that they would not be tempted to use this work as an excuse to say: "We can't pray and we can't put up with all this work;" and so that they would not become weary and faint-hearted, and thus lose the fruit of their labor.

One day the doctor arrived with the iron instrument used for cauterizing in eye-diseases. He had a fire lit to heat the iron, and when the fire was lit, he placed the iron in it.

To comfort his spirit so it would not become afraid, blessed Francis said to the fire: "My Brother Fire, noble and useful among all the creatures the Most High created, be courtly to me in this hour. For a long time I have loved you and I still love you for the love of that Lord who created you. I pray our Creator who made you, to temper your heat now, so that I may bear it." And as he finished the prayer he made the sign of the cross over the fire.

We who were with him, overcome by pity and compassion for him, all ran away, and he remained alone with the doctor.

When the cauterization was finished, we returned to him. "You, faint-hearted, of little faith," he said to us, "why did you run away? I tell you the truth: I felt no pain or even heat from the fire. In fact, if it's not well cooked, cook it some more!"

The doctor was greatly amazed, and noting that he did not even move, considered it a great miracle. "My brothers," the doctor said, "I tell you, and I speak from experience: I doubt that a strong man with a healthy body could endure such a severe burn, much less this man, who is weak and sick."

The burn was a long one, extending from the ear to the eyebrow, because, day and night for years fluid had been accumulating in his eyes. This is the reason, according to the advice of the doctor, for cauterizing all the veins from the ear to the eyebrow, although, according to the advice of other doctors, it would be very harmful. And this proved to be true, since it did not help him at all. Similarly, another doctor pierced both his ears, but to no avail.

It is not surprising that fire and other creatures sometimes showed him reverence because, as we who were with him saw, he loved and revered them with a great feeling of charity. He took great delight in them and his spirit was moved to so much piety and compassion toward them that he was disturbed when someone did

not treat them decently. He used to speak with them with joy, inside and out, as if they could hear, understand, and speak about God. And for that reason he was often caught up in the contemplation of God.

Once when he was sitting close to a fire, without being aware of it, his linen pants next to the leg caught fire. He felt the heat of the fire and his companion saw that the fire was burning his pants and ran to put out the flame. Blessed Francis told him: "No, dearest brother, do not hurt Brother Fire." And he did not permit him to extinguish it. So the brother ran to the brother who was his guardian and brought him to blessed Francis and, against his wishes, he began to put it out.

He was moved with such piety and love for it that he did not want to blow out a candle, a lamp, or a fire, as is usually done when necessary. He also forbade a brother to throw away fire or smoldering wood, as is usually done, but wanted him simply to place it on the ground, out of reverence for Him who created it.

Among the episodes marked by the hallmark phrase "We who were with him," the testimony given us by the *Legend of Perugia* 86 is extremely convincing. The witnesses mention the reaction of the doctor, who was amazed that Francis did not move. He felt he had witnessed a great miracle, since there had been almost no reaction during the operation. The doctor said that even a healthy man would have found it hard to endure such a serious operation, much less Francis, weak and sick as he was. If the doctor's words transformed an act of heroic endurance into a miracle, the medical discussion that follows is certainly no less interesting. The companions say that there was disagreement among the doctors about whether or not to operate and about the type of operation itself.<sup>140</sup> At this point the episode of the fire and cauterization is broadened into a consideration of the saint's whole attitude toward fire and other creatures. He wanted them to be treated with reverence and compassion, and he even spoke to them as though they were living; often he was lifted from the contemplation of nature to the contemplation of God. Using the formula that by now has become customary, the companions say they are witnesses of this, decisively confirming a memory so remarkable that they have to intervene in the first person to attest its truthfulness.

In the second episode. Francis was sitting so close to a fire that his pants began to burn. The entire episode as a whole merits a number of interpretive reflections. First of all, we should remember that Francis's love

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<sup>140</sup>The entire account of the operation is given by the "We," who juxtapose scenes and images. Thus we see, first of all, the suffering and blindfolded Francis carried on horseback to Rieti; this is followed by the doctor's diagnosis and the waiting for Brother Elias. Then comes the night, the increasing pain, and Francis's very human reaction: compassion for himself and concern that the brothers attending him might become weary caring for him and keeping watch over him. The series concludes with the operation, the companions' flight and the bitter observation about the futility of the medical procedures.

for fire is unequivocally asserted *even after the cauterization*, in the *Canticle of Brother Sun*:

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,  
through whom You light the night,  
and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.<sup>141</sup>

The very "cooking," however frightening, in no way lessened or changed Francis's attitude toward fire. For him it remains one of the most wonderful manifestations of God's creative power. We believe it is even more important if we recall that for a long time fire tends to be identified in the medieval mind with hell and its pains, becoming at times an instrument of God's wrath, at times a means of punishment or at least painful purification. In Francis—as our witnesses understand very well—it becomes once again God's creature, which he treats with the same respect as everything God created.

The same passage is found in its entirety in the *Mirror of Perfection* 115-16. The *Remembrance* 166 contains only the first episode, its spirit profoundly changed. This first episode also occurs in Thomas of Celano's *Treatise on the Miracles* and in Bonaventure's *Major Legend* V 9.<sup>142</sup>

If we examine the *Mirror of Perfection* 115, we will find an account very close to that of the *Legend of Perugia*, although with some modifications whose importance we must indicate. First of all, the episode is placed in a particular section of the *Mirror*. This is evidence of a deliberate

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<sup>141</sup>Since someone might say that Francis's words to the fire were inspired by the verse of the *Canticle of Brother Sun* devoted to fire, it is worth noting that the two things may very well be mutually independent. In fact, assuming that the "cooking" is absolutely beyond question (let us not forget that it is borrowed, and thus confirmed, by Thomas of Celano), nevertheless in the *Canticle of Brother Sun* Francis praises the Lord through the fire that had caused him to suffer in the cauterization. So it is hard to see why, before the cauterization, he could not have addressed the fire in the words attributed to him by the companions. Another confirmation comes from Francis's love for fire, however and wherever he encountered it. The independence of the two passages in praise of fire also seems confirmed by the addition of another beautiful attribute in the *Canticle of Brother Sun*: "...through whom You light the night." I do not know if anyone has noticed yet that these words express nostalgia for the light that by now had been practically taken away from Francis, who was living in the darkness of night. But in the preceding episode fire is a frightening thing, which he asks to be courtly precisely "in this hour," the moment of the trial of cauterization. And, to shed light on Francis's psyche, we think it should be said that after this terrible episode, not only does he see fire as light in the night; he also admires it as "beautiful and playful and robust and strong." In the chain of memories we have already mentioned several times, it is interesting to note how the fire's "courtliness" toward Francis seems to correspond to Francis's "courtliness" toward the fire that he does not even want extinguished.

<sup>142</sup>We will not discuss the 3C III, 14 since it repeats the *Remembrance* almost verbatim, with no change worth noting from our point of view. Here, as elsewhere, Bonaventure's LMj is of even less interest; it depends entirely on Thomas of Celano.

compositional choice, absent in the *Legend of Perugia*. It is in the part entitled "On His Love for Creatures, and of Creatures for Him," which speaks first of Francis's love for animals (cf. LP 14), then of his love for fire.<sup>143</sup> But the beginning of the chapter, which tells what the brothers had done to alleviate the suffering caused by his eye disease, is missing, and everything regarding his condition is summarized.<sup>144</sup>

But from the point where it speaks of the cauterization, the agreement is nearly perfect, even though it practically omits the whole part where the saint encourages his brothers and where he says he would have gained merit that would have redounded to their advantage. There is a reason for the omission. Unless we are mistaken, it is certainly very questionable from a theological viewpoint, even though it appears to shed light on Francis's concept of the *thesaurus meritorum*. It is no accident, then, that it was dropped. When the doctor arrives, the account again parallels that of the *Legend of Perugia*, especially in the prayer addressed to the fire, which is borrowed verbatim. The same is true of the part where the "We who were with him" are presented as frightened deserters, while Francis's steadfastness is revealed and affirmed.

Equally interesting is one omission, worth noting, which is evident from this comparison:

**LP 86**

The doctor was greatly amazed, and noting that he did not even move, considered it a great miracle. "My brothers," the doctor said...

**2MP 115**

The doctor was greatly amazed and said: "My brothers...."

What is missing is the phrase, "[he] considered it a great miracle." We will see later why this phrase has been omitted.

The *Mirror of Perfection* 115 also eliminates the whole discussion about the treatments Francis had undergone. It immediately introduces the question, which seems central to us, of the relationship between Francis and creatures: he sees in all of them the hand of God. Here there is a difference, once again interesting, as shown by a comparison:

**LP 86**

It is not surprising that fire and other creatures sometimes showed him reverence because, as we who were with him saw, he loved and revered them

**2MP 115**

It is not surprising that fire and other creatures obeyed and showed him reverence because, as we who were with him very often saw, how much he loved

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<sup>143</sup>2MP 115: "The love and obedience of fire toward him when he was cauterized."

<sup>144</sup>Here is this brief and summary introduction: "Ordered by obedience by the Lord of Ostia and by Brother Elias, he came to the hermitage of Fonte Colombo near Rieti to undergo a cure for his eyes. One day a doctor came to see him."

with a great feeling of charity. He took great delight in them and his spirit was moved to so much piety and compassion....

them, and how much delight he took in them. His spirit was moved to so much piety and compassion toward them....

We can see immediately that for the author of the *Mirror of Perfection* creatures obey Francis, not just reverence him, as the author of the *Legend of Perugia* says. There is an emphasis on the saint's power over nature.

Significant also, in an almost perfect agreement between the *Legend of Perugia* and the *Mirror of Perfection*, is an addition concerning fire. In the context of the *Mirror*, which is an edifying account, it is an attempt to explain Francis's love for fire. It provides a setting for the example that follows, namely, the prohibition—which certainly must have seemed strange—to put out the fire that was burning his clothes. Once again let us make a comparison:

**LP 86**

...he was often caught up in the contemplation of God.

Once when he was sitting close to a fire, without being aware of it, his linen pants next to the leg caught fire.

**2MP 115-116**

...on which occasions he was rapt in God.

Among all the lesser and inanimate creatures, he loved fire with singular affection because of its beauty and usefulness. That is why he never wanted to impede its function.

Once when he was sitting close to a fire, without being aware of it, his linen pants or breeches next to the knee caught fire.

Obviously, the anonymous author of the *Mirror of Perfection* wanted, first of all, to distinguish between animate and inanimate creatures, something Francis did not do. He also felt the need to explain why Francis calmly allowed his linen underclothes to burn, wanting to avoid an obvious impression of singularity, not to mention eccentricity.<sup>145</sup>

Proof of what we are saying comes from the additions to the *Mirror of Perfection*, which this time are significant. In no uncertain terms they try to remove anything that ordinary psychology might consider strange or surprising in Francis's behavior. Let us compare these two texts:

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<sup>145</sup>It would not be out of place to mention that at the beginning of the fourteenth century, which many believe is the date of 2MP, the community had for some time been accusing the rigorists of singularity. This particular charge would be repeated many times.

LP 86

He used to speak with them with joy, inside and out, as if they could hear, understand, and speak about God. And for that reason he was often caught up in the contemplation of God.

2MP 115

He used to speak with them with joy, inside and out, as if they were rational creatures, on which occasions he was rapt in God.

A comparison reveals one interesting elimination and one no less interesting addition. The elimination concerns his speaking to fire and other creatures with inward and outward joy, as if they could hear, understand, and speak about God. Here there is evidently a concern to omit any quasi-divinization of nature, which could give rise to misunderstandings. In any case, it might not seem to fit too well with what by now was the accepted image of Francis: a saint whose embarrassing singularities had been downplayed in order to isolate above all the man of poverty, the ascetic, the wonderworker. It is interesting how the *Mirror of Perfection* gives us instead a Francis who speaks to things as if they were persons, which is neither more nor less than was said in the preceding episode. Such a tactic serves to link the new episode to the one before, even more since another addition tends to justify the new episode reproduced by the *Mirror of Perfection* in all its singularity and in almost the same words as the *Legend of Perugia*. But, I repeat, this is by way of clarification and preliminary explanation: "Among all lesser created things he had a special love for fire, because of its beauty and usefulness, and would not allow it to be denied its natural function."

Granted, it is a subtle and well-chosen justification and clarification. But it is always aimed at removing our episode's impression that Francis was singular and strange since he did not allow the fire that was burning his clothes to be put out.

Moving from this comparison with the *Mirror of Perfection* to Thomas of Celano, we are faced with an extremely interesting text. The passage, from the *Remembrance* 166, is worth quoting in its entirety so that we can more easily use it for necessary comparisons and later references.

All creatures, therefore, strive to return the saint's love, and to respond to his kindness with their gratitude. They smile at his caress, his requests they grant, they obey his commands.

It may be good to tell of a few cases. At the time of an eye disease, he is forced to let himself be treated by a physician. A surgeon is called to the place, and when he comes he is carrying an iron instrument for cauterizing. He ordered it to be placed in the fire until it became red hot. But the blessed Father, to comfort the body, which was struck with panic, spoke to the fire: "My brother Fire, your beauty is the envy of all creatures, the Most High created you strong, beautiful, and useful. Be gracious to me in this hour; be courteous! For a long time I have loved you in the Lord. I pray the



Great Lord who created you to temper now your heat that I may bear your gentle burning."

When the prayer is finished, he makes the sign of the cross over the fire and then remains in place unshaken. The surgeon takes in his hands the red-hot glowing iron. The brothers, overcome by human feeling, run away. The saint joyfully and eagerly offered himself to the iron. The hissing iron sinks into tender flesh, and the burn is extended slowly straight from the ear to the eyebrow. How much pain that burning caused can best be known by the witness of the saint's words, since it was he that felt it. For when the brothers who had fled return, the father says with a smile: "Oh, you weak souls of little heart, why did you run away? Truly I say to you, I did not feel the fire's heat, nor any pain in my flesh." And turning to the doctor, he says: "If the flesh isn't well cooked, try again!" The doctor had experienced quite a different reaction in similar situations, exalts this as a divine miracle, saying: "I tell you, brothers, today I have seen wonderful things!" I believe he had returned to primeval innocence, for when he wished, the harshest things grew gentle.

What is interesting, first of all, is Thomas of Celano's great respect for the words attributed to the saint. These are modified only so that he might insert scriptural citations, in accord with his compositional technique and manner of enriching and embellishing Francis's words and deeds.

But the comparison is even more interesting if we examine the narrative setting of Francis's words. The account in the *Remembrance* is abbreviated; the psychological trait that leads the saint to pray to the fire is different. The *Legend of Perugia*, in a very human way, presents us with a Francis who prays in order to "comfort his spirit so it would not become afraid." Even Francis the saint is afraid of the terrible operation. Thomas of Celano, on the other hand, presents us with a man who is not afraid, but who "comforts his body, which was struck with panic." In other words, it is not he who is afraid; it is his body. Indeed, he is presented as one who "remains in place unshaken." And at the moment of the operation, in the face of the saint's courage, there is a contrast: "The brothers, overcome by human feeling, run away. The saint joyfully and eagerly offered himself to the iron."

What is more, Thomas of Celano describes the procedure with horrified delight, while the *Legend of Perugia*, like one who was not actually there, summarizes the whole thing in just two words, *facta coctura* [when the cauterization was finished]. But the most interesting thing is that when the saint speaks for a second time, the same words recur. Again the modifications are very significant. This time the scriptural citation is placed on Francis's lips, but the essentially simple passage is now modified by Thomas of Celano. After describing the saint as unshaken, he has him

rebuke the brothers who ran away as "weak souls of little heart." In other words, they are not men of little faith, but of little courage.

Also interesting in this comparison is the figure of the doctor. In the *Legend of Perugia* he explains his amazement in terms of the real diagnosis and refers to his clinical experience. The conclusion is that he believed the incident was "a great miracle." Thomas of Celano who, it should be noted, does not speak of the "companions of St. Francis" but of the "brothers," immediately transforms the doctor's opinion into the exaltation of a miracle. The conclusion, "I tell you, brothers, today I have seen wonderful things," allows him to add another edifying citation.

From what has been said thus far, it seems safe to conclude that the account in the *Remembrance* clearly depends on our passage. Its literary style has been transformed into something more elevated, and it has been modified in the direction of hagiography and the miraculous.

Equally important is the observation that Thomas of Celano's Francis is already superhuman. Even though he is still living on earth, in reality he was already beyond it. He is not the touchingly human figure that emerges from the witnesses present at the scene, the man who had left an impression on their minds and whose painful and sad image they still remember. To be sure, many aspects of the companions' testimony allow us to describe it as being like that of a chronicle, including its intimate and deep sense of participation; but it is undoubtedly original, immediate, and direct. What we have is a text that is living and true.

As for the second part of the passage, we will say simply that it does not appear in Thomas of Celano. And so we must ask ourselves why he thought he should not use it.

The reason seems to arise from the structure Thomas himself imposed on his work. Here we may recall that the first part, to which we have already referred and which in the *Legend of Perugia* 86 is heart-rending and painfully human, is transformed by Thomas into a quasi-miracle. After that first and extraordinary account, the second seems totally disconcerting. A Francis who talks to fire and inanimate creatures, whose experience of its divine beauty is such that he allows himself to become nearly ecstatic, definitely does not fit easily into the edifying and exemplary categories of Thomas's work. Indeed, it is hard for an earthbound psychology, devoid of spiritual drives, to understand the sense of the divine that a reality such as fire can have for someone able to understand and experience it.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>146</sup>Goetz stresses the unique significance of the hallmark phrase: "It is not a question, as it usually is, of knowledge and attestation; in this case the author wants to have been at the eye operation in Rieti." He believes the original texts can be found with greater fidelity 2C rather than in 2MP, given that in the latter Elias is twice called general minister. But we believe too much importance should not be given to this fact when we recall that 2C, LP (which calls Elias general minister) and 2MP were written after Elias's actual term as general. Unlike

Thus it is clear why Thomas of Celano did not mention it and why the *Mirror of Perfection* had to introduce some modifications. But perhaps it would be well, given the unique nature of this episode, to try to understand and figure out what it was in Francis that led him to make decisions and assume attitudes that are certainly disconcerting to the modern mind. Let us not forget that in the medieval mind fire is closely associated with the devil. Hell is fire, and devils are often accompanied by flames. So there is a tendency to make fire a creature more diabolical than divine. Francis reacts to this widespread sentiment in his desire to affirm that nature is completely positive. It is a divine reality, not only in its living expressions, but also in inanimate things. The explanation of the *Mirror of Perfection* thus contains an element of truth, but this truth must be deepened and extended until its meaning and validity become cosmic. What Francis praises is not this or that individual fire, but fire as created by God who through his divine providence acts and is at work in the world. It burns clothing, but it also gives light in torches and candles; it provides heat, but it is also an instrument for punishing the damned. He is not thinking of these sufferings when, in the *Canticle of Brother Sun*, he mentions not only bodily death—a sister, like everything in nature—but also the second death, damnation, which is felt like a shiver. Now we realize that it is not fire that Francis fears, for it concerns the damned. It is the “second death,” the loss of God and his infinite goodness, beauty, and creative power. Through fire and Francis’s consideration of it we see the cosmos that presents itself as the work of the Creator.

## 8

## LP 88, cf. 2C 165; 2MP 118

When he washed his hands, he chose a place where the water would not be trampled underfoot after the washing. Whenever he had to walk over rocks, he would walk with fear and reverence out of love for Him who is called “The Rock.”

Whenever he recited the verse of the psalm, *You have set me high upon the rock*, he would say, out of great reverence and devotion: “You have set me high at the foot of the rock.”

He also told the brother who cut the wood for the fire not to cut down the whole tree, but to cut in such a way that one part remained while another was cut. He also ordered the brother in the place where he stayed to do the same.

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Thomas of Celano in the case of his biographical data, not everyone could remember that Elias had first been vicar, then general minister. Instead they tended to give a single name to the functions he had carried out both before and after Francis’s death. Cf. Goetz, *Die Quellen*, 213-14.

He used to tell the brother who took care of the garden not to cultivate all the ground in the garden for vegetables, but to leave a piece of ground that would produce wild plants that in their season would produce 'Brother Flowers.' Moreover, he used to tell the brother gardener that he should make a beautiful flower-bed in some part of the garden, planting and cultivating every variety of fragrant plants and those producing beautiful flowers. Thus, in their time they would invite all who saw the beautiful flowers to praise God, for every creature announces and proclaims: "God made me for you, O people!"

We who were with him saw him always in such joy, inwardly and outwardly, over all creatures, touching and looking at them, so that it seemed his spirit was no longer on earth but in heaven. This is evident and true, because of the many consolations he had and continued to have in God's creatures. Thus, shortly before his death, he composed *the Praises of the Lord* by His creatures to move the hearts of his listeners to the praise of God, and that in His creatures the Lord might be praised by everyone.

In the *Legend of Perugia* 88 the testimony of the companions describes Francis's love for creation. This passage, we believe, is especially important for interpreting the *Canticle of Brother Sun*. It allows us to exclude beyond doubt the interpretation of Luigi Foscolo Benedetto, who tended to transform the meaning of the word *per* in the *Canticle* from causality to agency.<sup>147</sup> The companions who witnessed the composition of this work assure us that Francis wanted God to be praised through Brother Sun, in other words, not *by* Brother Sun, as Benedetto would have it, but because of Brother Sun or by means of Brother Sun. We think this point is worth stressing. It becomes particularly important for the various interpretations since it derives not only from contemporaries, but from persons who witnessed and shared the creative experience. In fact, they recall it again later, in the famous episode of the conflict between the bishop of Assisi and the podestà (Cf. LP 84).

This time the *Remembrance* 165 follows the text of the *Legend of Perugia* 88 quite faithfully, even though it places the companions' references in a broad context with greater wealth of detail. Thomas places this chapter, which is entitled "The Saint's Love for Creatures Animate and Inanimate,"

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<sup>147</sup>Cf. Luigi Foscolo Benedetto, *Il Cantico di Frate Sole* (Florence: n.p., 1941); see Ignazio Baldelli, "Il Cantico di Francesco," *San Francesco nella ricerca storica degli ultimi ottanta anni*, (Todi: L'Accademia Tubertina, 1971): 79 and Idem, "Il 'Cantico': problemi di lingua e di stile," in *Francesco d'Assisi e francescanesimo dal 1216 al 1226* (Assisi, La Società, 1977): 77-79. These studies, extremely valuable though they are, did not, in our opinion, make sufficient use of the testimony of the companions.

at the beginning of the section entitled "The Contemplation of the Creator in Creatures, Animate and Inanimate."

Thomas makes the episode part of a kind of general reflection. He tries to give a deeper philosophical and theological explanation, one that will reconcile the saint's love for the world and his delight in it with his ascetical detachment from it. These two attitudes, he believes, are characteristic of Francis. He uses this line of reasoning to give a quick summary list of the animate and inanimate creatures toward which Francis cultivated love and respect. For this purpose, he takes our passage and adds a description of the saint's attitude toward lanterns, lamps, and candles. And at the end of the chapter, wishing to speak at greater length about Francis's love for animals, he mentions that he avoided stepping on worms, he helped bees, and he called all animals brothers, especially those that are meek.

Comparing these two narratives, the point to be stressed most is that once again Thomas of Celano depends on Francis's "companions," even though he manipulates the material he borrows from them, expressing it in his own more learned style. Here are some examples:

## LP 88

Whenever he had to walk over rocks, he would walk with fear and reverence out of love for Him who is called "The Rock."

Whenever he recited the verse of the psalm, *You have set me high upon the rock*, he would say, out of great reverence and devotion: "You have set me high at the foot of the rock."

He also told the brother who cut the wood for the fire not to cut down the whole tree, but to cut in such a way that one part remained while another was cut.

Moreover, he used to tell the

## 2C 165

He walked reverently over rocks, out of respect for Him who is called *the Rock*.

When he came to the verse *You have set me high upon the rock*, in order to express it more respectfully, he would say: "You have set me high *under the feet* of the Rock."

When the brothers are cutting wood he forbids them to cut down the whole tree, so that it might have hope of sprouting again.<sup>148</sup>

He even orders that within the

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<sup>148</sup>It is worth pointing out that when Thomas of Celano transforms the episode from the companions in his 2C, a different psychology of Francis emerges. In the companions, Francis wants only as much wood as necessary to be taken from the tree, out of respect for the tree itself and for nature in general. In Thomas of Celano, Francis becomes—forgive the unintended irony—a kind of agronomist who is concerned not to cut the tree too much, "so that it might have hope of sprouting again." This shows how Thomas, even though motivated by a desire for embellishment and praise, actually distorts the testimony received from the companions. This observation should also be kept in mind as a counter to the current belief that the companions took part directly and as a group in the composition of Thomas's 2C.

brother gardener that he should make a beautiful flower-bed in some part of the garden, planting and cultivating every variety of fragrant plants and those producing beautiful flowers.

garden a smaller garden should be set aside for aromatic and flowering herbs....

We find the passage again in the *Mirror of Perfection* 118, which follows closely the *Legend of Perugia* 88, with some interesting variants. The compiler of the *Mirror* inserts into the earlier text an explanation of Francis's love for water, trees, and flowers. Water symbolizes "holy penitence and tribulation...by which the soul is washed clean," and because of which "the first cleansing of the soul takes place through the waters of Baptism." Trees reminded him of Christ, "who willed to accomplish our salvation on the wood of the cross." Flowers reminded him of Him "who is called (Sg 2:1) *the flower of the field* and *the lily of the valley*." That which in the *Legend of Perugia* 88 was a spontaneous expression of Francis's love for creation is thus transformed into theological meditations, meant to be both symbolic and explanatory. Those who knew the saint personally certainly did not see, for example, anything symbolic or penitential in his refusal to trample upon water, only a pure and simple expression of love for nature.

Finally, it is interesting to note that the anonymous compiler of the *Mirror*, eager as he is to stress Francis's example, ends up keeping the structure and transformation that Thomas of Celano gives this episode.<sup>147</sup>

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**LP 89, cf. 2C 92; 2MP 33**

At that time a poor woman from Machilone came to Rieti with an illness of her eyes. One day, when the doctor came to visit blessed Francis, he said to him: "Brother, a woman with eye trouble came to see me. But, she is so poor that I have to help her for the love of God and give her expenses."

When blessed Francis heard this, moved by piety for her, he called one of the companions, who was his guardian, and said to him: "Brother Guardian, we have to give back what belongs to someone

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<sup>147</sup>Goetz is concerned with this episode in his attempt to determine whether the oldest text is preserved by 2MP 118 or 2C 165. He finds it hard to decide because of the greater richness of Celano's account and because of the contradictions in chronology regarding the composition of the *Canticle*. 2MP 118 says "shortly before his death;" on the other hand, 2MP 100 says "two years before his death," and 2MP 119 says "when the Lord had assured him of His kingdom." Cf. Goetz, *Die Quellen*, 204, and Baldelli, *Il Cantico*, 19-24. Goetz believes that in this episode the compiler of 2MP followed his source less carefully than in other chapters. Although for quite different reasons of a theological nature, we too have reached the same conclusion based on a comparison between the LP 88 and 2MP118.

else." "And, what is that, brother?" he said. "That mantle," he replied, "which we received as a loan from that poor woman with eye trouble. We must give it back to her." "Do what you think best, brother," the guardian answered.

With joy, blessed Francis called a spiritual man, who was extremely close to him, and said to him: "Take this mantle and a dozen loaves of bread with you, and go to that poor and sick woman whom the doctor, who is taking care of her, will point out to you. Say to her: 'The poor man to whom you lent this mantle thanks you for the loan of the mantle which you made with him. Take what is yours.'"

He went then and told her everything as blessed Francis had told him. Thinking he was joking, she replied with fear and embarrassment: "Leave me in peace. I don't know what you are talking about!" He placed the mantle and the dozen loaves of bread in her hands.

When the woman reflected that he had spoken the truth, she accepted everything with trembling and her heart filled with joy. Then, fearful that he would take it back, she secretly got up during night and joyfully returned to her home.

We who were with blessed Francis bear witness that, sick or well, he displayed such charity and piety, not only to his brothers, but also toward the poor, whether healthy or sick. Thus, he deprived himself of the necessities of his body that the brothers procured for him with great devotion and solicitude. At first coaxing us not to worry, with great inner and outer joy, he would then offer to others things he had denied his own body, even though they were extremely necessary for him.

And that is why the general minister and his guardian ordered him not to give his tunic to any brother without their permission. Because the brothers, out of the devotion they had for him, would occasionally ask him for his tunic, and he would immediately give it to them. Or, he himself, if he saw a sickly or poorly clad brother, would at times cut his habit in half, giving one part to him and keeping the other for himself, for he wanted to have and to wear only one tunic.

The *Legend of Perugia* 89 describes an act of charity done by Francis for a woman with eye trouble, who needed treatment from the same doctor in Rieti who was also taking care of Francis. It is the doctor who tells the saint that the sick woman is "so poor" that he has to help her and "give her expenses."<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>150</sup>The doctor speaks of helping the woman "for the love of God." Cf. LP 90, which explains the importance of this expression for Francis.

Francis calls one of the companions who was acting as his guardian<sup>11</sup> and tells him they have to return something that does not belong to the fraternity. When the guardian questions him, he explains that there is a mantle that had been loaned to them by the poor sick woman. Here we hear echoed one of Francis's own ideas: he considers everything he has as being loaned to him by a poor person.<sup>12</sup>

It should also be stressed that in this episode the companions not only recount an example of human kindness typical of their master; they also tell us that when the brothers procured for him something for his bodily needs, he immediately felt he must give it to someone who needed it. But he knew quite well that he would meet resistance, or at least reluctance, from those attending him, namely, the "We." And so, in order not to upset them, he would first coax them, or soften them up, as we might say today, and thus get their permission. Then he would give to others "with great inner and outer joy," depriving himself even of those things he needed. Here, besides the usual plain and simple witness to their presence, the "We" add and stress a trait that is mentioned only here, but which by its nature was surely neither unique nor rare. We are referring to Francis's delicate sensitivity toward those who were taking care of him and getting for him anything he might need. The testimonial formula is thus expanded and clarified, in a real-life relationship. Like a flash of lightning—but with perfect visibility, it sheds light on Francis and his companions, even in little things. His "coaxing" suggests something childlike, playful perhaps, that distinguishes their relationship. But it reveals the truth of a psychological attitude that comes only from direct and concrete experience, from the affectionate sharing of the little—or not so little—events of everyday life.

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Nothing of this intimate moment, once described so explicitly, remains in Thomas of Celano. The episode is cut at least in half, and not only that, Francis's charity is limited solely to the gift of the mantle. There is also an additional detail in Thomas of Celano, not found in the *Legend*. It is worth special discussion, since it apparently points to a more exact identification of the place than does the *Legend of Perugia*. But careful comparison of the two passages reveals that this greater precision is more apparent than real.

While the *Legend of Perugia* speaks only of Francis's stay in Rieti, Thomas of Celano explains that the episode took place in the bishop's palace. But in fact the palace is mentioned because in another place—the *Remembrance* 41 to be exact, where Francis is also said to be sick—the incident is situated in the palace of the bishop of Rieti. This stay in the

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<sup>11</sup>See LP 11, where Francis says to Peter of Catanio: "I ask you to put one of my companions in your place regarding me, so that I may obey him as I would obey you."

<sup>12</sup>Cf. LP 15, 32.



palace is also confirmed in the next paragraph, 42. We get the impression that here Thomas of Celano is probably using a series of Rieti testimonies about Francis's stay in that city. So, he adds to the account of the "We who were with him" a detail that came to him from elsewhere. In this regard, it is noteworthy that the *Mirror of Perfection*, which had a choice between the text of the *Legend of Perugia* and that of Thomas of Celano, does not mention the bishop's palace in Rieti, but borrows in full the testimony of the "We who were with him." This particular point is very important for the text of the *Legend of Perugia* and for the way Thomas of Celano reworks the sources he received.

This process of reworking becomes quite considerable and thus worth discussing with regard to the entire episode. Thomas eliminates a whole series of elements that do not serve to illustrate the particular point he wishes to examine just then: Francis's compassion toward the poor. Thus, the entire testimony of the "We who were with him" is cut off from Francis's piety and tenderness toward the woman who, like him, was suffering from an eye disease. What is emphasized most is the woman's poverty and the need to help her. Also noteworthy is the fact that Thomas's account lacks the entire part about the woman's attitude in the face of Francis's kindness. Psychologically speaking, it sheds light on the reaction of those whom Francis helped. But Thomas of Celano eliminates this psychological note completely, and thus Francis—without wishing to, of course—seems to lack charity toward the woman he has helped. The woman's frightened concern is transformed: "She saw that this was in fact no deception, but fearing that such an easy gain would be taken away from her, she left the place by night and returned home with the mantle, not caring about caring for her eyes." In this way the fearful anxiety of a poor woman has become the desire not to lose "an easy gain." In fact, she no longer cares about her eyes—note the rhetorical figure, "not caring about caring"—and returns home.

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We have already mentioned that the episode occurs practically unchanged in the *Mirror of Perfection*, and we have already shown the significance of this choice from between the two possible sources. But we must conclude by saying that the testimony of the "We who were with him" as preserved in the *Legend of Perugia* is definitely prior to this passage. It is a more valid account, philologically speaking, as well as from an exegetical-literary and historical point of view. Although the words of Francis remain essentially unchanged in the texts, their *Sitz im Leben* in the first work is marked by a certain fuller truth and the flavor of real life. All this is completely ignored and disregarded in Thomas's *Remembrance*.

This episode, with the others that have preceded it, proves the value and importance of the witnesses who call themselves Francis's companions. We think we can now say explicitly that their testimony is unquestionably

more valid from the point of view of their actual presence. What we would like to say here by way of anticipation—but which will be confirmed by the passages we still must examine—is that the testimony of the “We who were with him” is not more valid only because it is more true; it is also more expressive and indicative of a lived experience and a human sharing. It is no accident that in this passage the words “We who were with him” do not occur incidentally. Rather, from the episode an argument is drawn, leading to a whole series of clues about Francis’s character, stature, and actual reality. All this is dropped in Thomas of Celano.

In other words, for the witnesses who were with him, the episode of the woman with the eye disease, the mantle, and the twelve loaves of bread is a chance to point out that Francis was a man of infinite piety and love. This was true not only when he was sick, but also when he was well; and not only toward his brothers, but toward the poor, whether healthy or sick. He even went so far as to give away what was his “with great inner and outer joy,” depriving himself of necessities.

Here we see the Christian and gospel significance of Francis in all its depth and intensity. Although he was neither philosopher nor theologian, he sensed fully the meaning of dedication and sacrifice as expressed in St. Paul’s hymn to love. In him it was translated into a higher joy, which was inner because it sprang from the depths of a soul filled with love, and which was expressed outwardly in joyful song. This is the living Francis who comes to us. He is even a little eccentric, when we recall that the general minister and guardian had to order him not to give away his tunic without their permission. And—another bit of living and unvarnished truth—this was all the more necessary since the brothers, “out of the devotion they had for him,” used to ask him for things that belonged to him, especially his tunic or a part of it.

And so, with their contribution and personal judgment, these witnesses speak not only about Francis, but about his unique position within the Order. He was an object of devoted admiration and at the same time, if you will, of careful and solicitous attention, but also of constant surveillance.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Goetz points out the textual differences between 2MP and 2C and asks whether the testimony of the “We who were with him” might not be an addition on the part of the compiler of 2MP. He answers negatively, since the formula includes a confirmation of Francis’s charity toward those in need, where we would really see no reason for falsification. He suggests, as a possible reason for Thomas’s omission, that the author has already described Francis’s feelings earlier. Cf. Goetz, *Die Quellen*, 175.

## 10

## LP 93, cf. 2C 91; 2MP 38

Another time while he was staying at Saint Mary of the Portiuncula, a poor old woman who had two sons in religion, came to that place seeking some alms of blessed Francis because that year she did not have enough to live.

Blessed Francis said to Brother Peter of Catanio, who was the general minister at the time: "Have we anything to give our mother?" For he used to say that the mother of any brother was his own and that of all the brothers in the religion. Brother Peter told him: "We do not have anything in the house that we can give her, especially since she wants such alms as would provide for her corporal needs. In the church we only have one New Testament for reading the lessons at matins." At that time, the brothers did not have breviaries and not many psalters.

Blessed Francis responded: "Give our mother the New Testament, so she can sell it for her needs. I firmly believe that the Lord and the Blessed Virgin, His Mother, will be pleased more by giving it to her than if you read in it." And so he gave it to her.

For it can be said and written about blessed Francis, what was said and written about Job: *Mercy grew up with me and it came out with me from my mother's womb.*

For us, who were with him, it would take a long time to write and recount not only what we learned from others about his charity and piety toward the poor, but also what we saw with our own eyes.

Our hallmark phrase is found again in one of the most remarkable and significant episodes of the *Legend of Perugia* concerning Francis's attitude toward people in need. It is the story about the copy of the New Testament that was given to the poor mother of two of the brothers. If we compare the *Legend of Perugia* 93 with the *Remembrance* 91, it seems beyond doubt that the text preserved in the *Legend* is earlier than that found in the *Remembrance*.

First of all, Thomas's text is shorter. But this brevity is due, not to a more concise presentation of the facts, but to a hasty and not entirely exact summary of the account contained in his source. He omits the name of the place,<sup>154</sup> he fails to say that the woman was old and poor,<sup>155</sup> and he does not

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<sup>154</sup>At the church of the Portiuncula. It is interesting to note that the "We" do not use terms like "house" or "friary" for the dwelling at Rivo Torto or the Portiuncula. They simply say "at Rivo Torto" (LP 50) or, as here, "at St. Mary of the Portiuncula."

<sup>155</sup>"The mother of two of the brothers."

mention that she had been poor for a whole year.<sup>156</sup> As for the careful distinction between *house* and *church* found in the account of the *Legend of Perugia*, Thomas mentions only the first,<sup>157</sup> and he omits the fact that the alms is indeed for the woman's support.<sup>158</sup> As a result, the gift is disproportionate. Thomas confirms this in a way in his conclusion, which is quite different from the one preserved in the *Legend*.<sup>159</sup> Moving on to the differences, the most noticeable one has to do with the office held by Peter of Catanio at the time this episode takes place. In the *Legend of Perugia* 93, Peter "was the general minister at the time," whereas Thomas of Celano says that Francis "said to his vicar, Brother Peter of Catanio." Seeing that between 1220 and 1221 Peter of Catanio seems in fact to have been general minister and not vicar, the text of the *Legend of Perugia* is technically and institutionally more correct on this point.<sup>160</sup>

Now let us look at Thomas's account. The woman, old and poor in the *Legend of Perugia*, becomes here simply "the mother of two of the brothers" who asks for alms "confidently," a detail that does not figure elsewhere. And so, the request to Francis is from a mother of two of the brothers; nothing is said about her material needs. But the original story must have been different, as can be seen from the episode's title; "How he had the first New Testament in the Order given to the *poor* mother of two of the brothers," as well as from the way the text continues. According to Thomas, Francis feels compassion for the woman, "sharing her pain," and so speaks to Peter of Catanio. Such a feeling would really have been quite strange if it derived simply from the fact that she is a mother of two of the brothers as Thomas's narrative says. That the original text has been shortened is also confirmed by the words we find later. Francis has the New Testament given to the woman "so she can sell it to care for her needs." Thus, the importance and value of the gift are also explained in the

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<sup>156</sup>In fact, LP 93 says "because that year she did not have enough to live." This is an important detail. It shows that the woman did not come to ask for a small offering but for the means to live for a whole year. This detail also answers the question of whether there might be some reference to a lack of food. We should not forget that in 1222 the sources speak about a year of great famine. Cf. F. Curschmann, *Hungersnöte im Mittelalter. Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Wirtschaftsgeschichte des VIII. Bis XIII. Jahrhunderts*, (Leipzig, n.p., 1900).

<sup>157</sup>Cf. note 1. Thomas says that Peter replied: "There is nothing left in the house...." Then he added: "We do have one New Testament...."

<sup>158</sup>"As would provide for her corporal needs," explains LP 93.

<sup>159</sup>In 2C 91 we read: "The first Testament in the Order was given away through this sacred piety."

<sup>160</sup>Cf. Clement Schmitt, "I vicari dell'Ordine francescano da Pietro Cattani a frate Elia," *Francesco d'Assisi e francescanesimo dal 1216 al 1226*. Atti del IV Convegno Internazionale della Società di Studi Francescani (Assisi: La Società, 1977), and our note 12 below concerning Goetz's explanations.

*Remembrance* 91 by the woman's poverty, even though the author failed to explain this at the beginning.

The explanation of why Francis calls the woman his mother and the mother of all the brothers remains unchanged.<sup>161</sup> Thomas then summarizes the bit about the liturgical practice of the Franciscans in the years 1220-1221 with a terse "we don't have a breviary," meaning the brothers. The *Legend of Perugia* explains: "At that time, the brothers did not have breviaries and not many psalters."

The general part about the gift is the same in both texts, a crucial factor when it comes to determining beyond doubt their textual relationship. But Thomas of Celano wants to draw from the episode a lesson for all: they must give the woman the New Testament so that she can sell it, "for through it we are reminded to help the poor." In the *Legend*, on the other hand, there is an immediate human act of charity and love, not overshadowed by an admonition for the others ("I firmly believe that the Lord and the Blessed Virgin, His Mother, will be pleased more by giving it to her than if you read in it.") The act is meant to be an experience, in Christ and in his Mother, of a loving participation in that charity and piety which goes beyond all expressions of liturgical observance.

The last part is again different. In the *Legend of Perugia* 93 the narrators, faced with an act that in many ways is embarrassing, break in to assure us that they are witnesses that this was only one of Francis's many acts of charity. Thomas of Celano, on the other hand, is anxious to stress that this book, the first New Testament in the Order, was taken away from it thanks to the piety of Francis.

Actually, if we examine the two accounts—the episode's identity and authenticity remaining established, the first account in the *Legend of Perugia* offers us an interesting scene that reveals a deep social awareness. It is not afraid to point out certain family crises caused by the Franciscan movement. As a not-too-far-fetched example, we may recall that the male branch of Salimbene de Adam's family died out because the two sons became friars. Such is the case with this mother who was left alone, old and abandoned. The second account merely illustrates an act of charity by Francis. It is perhaps even more interesting that the size of Francis's gift shows not only his undoubted, limitless compassion and love; it also shows his awareness that he is personally responsible for this and other social and family problems his fraternity was causing. To say that Christ and his mother will be more pleased by this gift than by the brothers' reading from it, is to see in the sad story of the mother abandoned by her sons a suffering that likens her to the mother of Christ. Note how awkwardly the mother of Christ disappears in Thomas of Celano. He does not realize that this had to do

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<sup>161</sup>But even here there is a variant that merits attention. Thomas omits the word "religion," which we find in LP.

with a mother's crisis, a fact that did not escape Francis. And as we have said, this trait, so deeply embedded in Francis's soul, escapes Thomas. He does not present the human image of Francis as seen and experienced by those who followed him with their eyes and attention and kept him in their memory. His only concern is to construct the image of one who is now a *Saint*.

The *Mirror of Perfection* 38 closely follows the account in the *Legend of Perugia* 93,<sup>162</sup> with just one significant variant. It omits the extremely important detail that "that year she [the woman] did not have enough to live."<sup>163</sup>

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LP 117, cf. 2C 119-120; 1MP 20; 2MP 67

Blessed Francis once went to Rome to visit the Lord Hugolino, the bishop of Ostia, who later became pope, and stayed with him a few days, and with his permission he visited Lord Leo, Cardinal of Santa Croce, who was a very kind and courtly man. He was happy to see blessed Francis whom he greatly revered. With great devotion, he asked him to spend a few days with him, especially because it was winter and very cold and almost every day there was heavy wind and rain, as happens during that season.

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<sup>162</sup>Whether Peter of Catanio was general minister, as LP says, followed by 2MP, or whether he was Francis's vicar, as Thomas of Celano says in 2C 91, the question really does not matter from our point of view. Neither can we say with Goetz (*Die Quellen*, 177f) that Thomas of Celano is prior to 2MP (Goetz did not know LP) because it calls Peter of Catanio vicar, whereas 2MP calls him general minister. The legal status of Peter of Catanio and Brother Elias, who succeeded him, was that of being first in the Order. Whether he is called vicar or general minister is irrelevant from the viewpoint of information about priority. At any rate, it is not enough to cast doubt on our entire proof that "We who were with him" is prior to Thomas of Celano. And as we have shown, in the last section for example, more than once (probably on the basis of personal information that we have no reason to exclude or ignore) Thomas has retouched, completed, or added details to the text of "We who were with him." For him, it was less important to give exact times and places than to give examples from the life of Francis. For them, the *Sitz im Leben* does not consist of details about times and places, but about the saint's attitude and position in the face of the realities and problems of life. Finally, who would want to exclude the possibility that some manuscripts were subject to glosses or modifications? At any rate, for Peter of Catanio, see Brooke, *Government*, 76-83 and Schmitt, *I vicari*, 239-46.

<sup>163</sup>In connection with this episode, we might also recall 2C 67, which seems to have no parallel in either LP or 2MP. There Francis even imagines the possibility of stripping the altars, at least to help those in need: "Strip the Virgin's altar and take its adornments when you can't care for the needy in any other way. Believe me, she would be happier to have the altar stripped and the Gospel of her Son kept than have her altar decorated and her Son despised. The Lord will send someone to return to his Mother what He has loaned to us."

"Brother," he said to him, "this weather is unsuitable for traveling. If it is agreeable to you, I want you to stay with me until there is good weather for travel. Since I feed a number of poor people in my house, you will receive food from me in place of one poor person." The Lord Cardinal said this, knowing that blessed Francis, because of his humility, always wanted to be received wherever he lodged as a poor person. And yet his holiness was so outstanding that the Lord Pope, the cardinals, and all the mighty of this world who knew him venerated him as a saint. And he added: "I will give you a good remote house where you can pray and eat if you wish."

Brother Angelo Tancredi, one of the first twelve brothers, was staying with the cardinal. He said to blessed Francis: "Brother, near here there is a beautiful tower on the city walls, quite ample and spacious on the inside, with nine chambers where you can stay as removed as in a hermitage."

"Let us go to see it," blessed Francis told him. On seeing it, he liked it, and returning to the Lord Cardinal said to him: "Lord, perhaps I will stay with you a few days." The Lord Cardinal was pleased.

So Brother Angelo went and prepared it so blessed Francis could stay there night and day with his companion. Blessed Francis did not wish to come down day or night as long as he was staying with the Lord Cardinal. Brother Angelo suggested that he bring food for blessed Francis and his companion each day, leaving it outside, for neither he nor any other was supposed to enter.

Blessed Francis went to stay there with his companion. But when he wanted to sleep there on the first night, demons came and beat him severely. He immediately called his companion who was staying some distance away: "Come to me." He got up at once and came to him. "Brother," blessed Francis told him, "the demons have beaten me severely so I want you to stay next to me because I am afraid to stay here alone." His companion stayed by him the whole night for blessed Francis trembled all over like a man suffering a fever. Both of them remained awake that whole night.

During that time, blessed Francis talked with his companion: "Why did the devils beat me? Why has the Lord given them the power to harm me?"

And he began to say: "The devils are the police of our Lord. Just as the podestà sends his police to punish a wrong-doer, in the same way, the Lord punishes and corrects those whom He loves through the demons, who are His police and act as His ministers in this office.

"Even a perfect religious very often sins in ignorance. Consequently if he does not realize his sin, he is punished by the devil

so that he may see and carefully reflect internally and externally because of that punishment how he may have offended. For in this life the Lord leaves nothing unpunished in those whom He loves tenderly. By the mercy and grace of God, I do not know if I have offended Him in any way which I have not corrected by confession and satisfaction. Indeed the Lord in His mercy granted me this gift. He makes me understand through prayer any way in which I please or displease Him.

"It seems to me that it could be that the Lord punished me through His police because, although the Lord Cardinal gladly does this mercy to me and my body needs to accept, and I can accept it from him confidently, nevertheless, my brothers, who go through the world suffering hunger and many hardships, and other brothers who stay in poor little houses and hermitages, may have an occasion for grumbling against me when they hear that I am staying with the Lord Cardinal: 'We are enduring so many hardships while he is having his comforts.' I am bound always to give them good example; because I was given to them, especially for this. For the brothers are more edified when I stay in poor little places among them rather than in other places. When they hear and know that I am bearing the same trials, they endure theirs with greater patience."

Blessed Francis was always sickly. Even in the world he was by nature a frail and weak man, and he grew more sickly until the day of his death, yet he considered that he should show a good example to the brothers and always take away from them any occasion for complaining about him, so the brothers could not say: "He has all he needs, but we don't."

Whether he was healthy or sick, until the day of his death, he wanted to endure so much need, that if any of the brothers who knew this, as we did, we who were with him for some time until the day of his death, and if they brought this back to mind, they would not be able to restrain their tears; and when they suffer some need or troubles, they would bear them with greater patience.

Very early in the morning, blessed Francis came down from the tower, and went to the Lord Cardinal, telling him all that had happened and everything that he said to his companion. And he added: "People have great faith in me and think that I am a holy man, and as you see the devils have driven me from the cell." He wanted to stay there as if in a remote cell, not speaking to anyone except his companion.

The Lord Cardinal was very happy with him. Nevertheless, since he knew and venerated him as a saint, he was satisfied with his decision not to stay there any longer.



Thus, blessed Francis with permission returned to the hermitage of Saint Francis at Fonte Colombo near Rieti.

The account presents us with Francis who has gone to Rome to visit Cardinal Hugolino of Ostia. After visiting him, he went to see Leo Brancaleone, cardinal priest of Santa Croce.<sup>164</sup>

But during the night Francis is attacked and beaten by demons; he is forced to call to his companion for help. The companion comes running and is told: "Brother, the demons have beaten me severely so I want you to stay next to me because I am afraid to stay here alone." As he said this, he was trembling all over, "like a man suffering a fever." And so they remained awake together until morning. But during this time Francis asked why the devils had beat him, since God never gave them power to harm him.

It is not a casual or chance question. This is the time when the upheaval caused by the Cathar heresy made the question of the devils' power a burning question, inevitable in some respects. Some of these heretics regarded them as fallen angels, creators of the world of matter; others considered them equal to God, a principle opposed to him.

This is the time when the problem of Satan and the demons is being traced by theologians to the problem of evil and the theological meaning of Satan's primordial rebellion.<sup>165</sup> Francis, however, stoops to an explanation typical of popular religiosity, where the context is contemporary Italy and its concrete social and administrative organization. The saint explains that the demons are the Lord's *gastaldi* [police], sent by God to punish those who offend Him. This is just what the podestà does when he sends his *gastaldo* to punish a citizen who has committed a crime. In the same way, God sends the demons to punish, in this way warning and admonishing wrong-doers. For, as Francis explains, "Even a perfect religious very often sins in ignorance." So, God sends the demons in order that the religious might examine himself carefully, in his heart and in his external behavior—"internally and externally]. And he adds one other thing. By the grace and mercy of God, he is spiritually certain he has never committed a sin he could not make amends for by confession and penance.

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<sup>164</sup>For Cardinal Leo Brancaleone, Cf. *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani XIII*, Rome 1971, 814-17.

<sup>165</sup>On this question, a complete overview from the standpoint of traditional theology may be found in Egon von Petersdoff, *Daemonen, Hexen, Spiritisten, Mächte der Finsternis einst und jetzt, ein Daemonologie aller Zeiten* (Wiesbaden: Credo-Verlag, 1960), Vol. II, "Daemonen am Werk," p. 220. A more modern approach, but which does not deal at all with the questions that interest us here, is found in the volume *Satan, Etudes Carmélitaines 27* (1948). For other bibliography, especially for demonology in popular religiosity, allow us to refer to R. Manselli, *La Religion Populaire au Moyen Âge: Problemes de Methode et d'Histoire*. (Montreal: Institut d'Etudes Medievales Albert-le-Grand, 1975), 75-83.

We would like to make one more comment before continuing. There is nothing philosophical or theological in this approach. It is the kind of concrete example that enabled Thomas of Spalato to say that, when Francis preached, he spoke to the people *per modum concionandi* [in the style of popular oratory].<sup>166</sup> But such a rhetorical—and clerical—explanation should not lead us to imagine that this *modus concionandi* was just an oratorical trick or, as Delaruelle perceptively noted, the limit within which Francis kept his penitential preaching.<sup>167</sup> We would rather say that while this *modus concionandi* did correspond to what scholars have said, it was even more. It was the clear expression of a kind of religiosity and of a mental and spiritual attitude. In other words, Francis's style of preaching, unlike that of Caesarius of Arles or other preachers, for example, does not spring from a desire to get closer to his audience, but from the mentality, religion and piety of Francis himself.<sup>168</sup>

From the function attributed to the demons, namely, that they are the Lord's police, Francis concludes that he must examine himself and try to understand why the Lord has sent them to punish him. Here a point emerges on which the witnesses who call themselves "We who were with him" constantly insist: the need for example. In his examination, he admits that thanks to the cardinal's mercy and charity he had been received like any other poor man, and since his body needed that hospitality he could accept it with a clear conscience. But he concludes that he had reflected on the fact that the other brothers "who go through the world suffering hunger and many hardships, and other brothers who stay in poor little houses and hermitages" might have occasion to grumble against him when they hear that he had been a cardinal's guest: "We are enduring so many hardships while he is having his comforts."

The poverty of Francis and the first days of the Order typifies uncertainty about tomorrow. The brothers' "hardships" were due not only to the cold, but to the fear of hunger. Among Francis's "comforts" were the security of the tower, but above all the fact that he could count on a meal every day, plain and simple though it might be. This causes a problem for Francis, not moral to be sure, but spiritual and ascetical. Unless he wants to stop being an example for his brothers, in no way can he have a lifestyle that is even a little better than theirs.

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<sup>166</sup>On Francis's preaching, cf. Carlo Delcorno, *Origini della predicazione francescana*, in *Francesco d'Assisi e francescanesimo dal 1216 al 1226*. Atti del IV Convegno Internazionale della Società di Studi Francescano. (Assisi: La Società, 1977): 125-60.

<sup>167</sup>Cf. Etienne Delaruelle, "Saint François d'Assise et la piété populaire," *San Francesco nella ricerca storica degli ultimi ottanta anni*. (Todi: L'Accademia Tubertina, 1971): 125-55; *La piété populaire au Moyen Age* (Turin: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1975), 247-75.

<sup>168</sup>Cf. Manselli, *La Religion Populaire*.

Good example, then, plays an essential role for Francis. When he says in his Testament that "the Most High himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel" and states that this happened after the Lord had given him some brothers, we see the psychological reason for this need to give example. The revelation was made to him, Francis, precisely in order that he might be a model for the others. This gives rise to a clear and direct obligation to God. Seen thus, the Testament again reveals its spiritual depth and is a very useful key for understanding Francis's lively awareness of his mission.

Consideration of the passage permits the possibility of identifying the source of the episode and naming, just once, one of the "We who were with him." Help in this regard comes from the "Letter of the Three Companions," one of whom is Angelo Tancredi, the brother who was at the house of Cardinal Leo Brancaleone. He appears in the account as intermediary between Francis and the cardinal, and he is one of those present when Francis describes his restless night of diabolical torment. The testimony is not intermediate but direct. While it is true that the formula "We who were with him" refers, not to the account of the episode but to Francis's example, this time we think there can be no question that one of the witnesses hidden behind the formula "We who were with him" is Angelo Tancredi. Another, certainly, is Francis's companion, but he remains anonymous.

The context states very clearly that the lifestyle of Francis and his first brothers was different from that of the authors' contemporaries. The statement is even more important since it does not arise from a spirit of controversy nor from a desire to impose any particular lifestyle at all. It is simply the statement of a fact whose significance and emotional import have been grasped. What the companions wish to say is this: Let the brothers who are complaining about how hard and difficult a life they have, reflect on the sufferings and discomforts Francis voluntarily accepted in order to be an example, not only to the brothers of his own time, but to the brothers of all times. If they did this, they would be moved to tears of compassion and sorrow. How different the life of the mid-thirteenth-century brothers was from that of their first confreres did not—and could not—escape those who had lived with Francis and shared emotionally his love for the brothers that led him to set himself up as an example for all. Along with the episode related by the authors and their statement about different lifestyles, what is truly moving is their profound sense of Francis's inner devotion. Overcoming all physical weakness, it drove him to heroic sacrifice so that his need to be an example might remain steadfast and unshaken. Toward the end of his life, this need was fed by an anguished concern that his deepest intuition about the true meaning of the gospel life—living like poor people, uncertain about tomorrow, loving them like a brother, as Christ had loved them—might be rendered trivial by a lifestyle that was regular, to be sure, but lacked inner depth. Here, in the line running from the companions' memory

to the conclusions they draw from it, we seem to sense Francis's real anguish. He was not afraid of what the Church might do to his Order. He was afraid that relaxation would creep into his essential intuition, lessening its enthusiasm, attractiveness, and power of example. Human intentions are weak and frail; bold in the beginning, they surrender at the first difficulty. This episode, like a whole series of clues that culminate in the Testament, proves that Francis's great fear was that the Order would go from the poverty of the poor, the poverty of daily life, to the religious poverty of other Orders. While the latter was certainly uncomfortable and inconvenient, it lacked the sharp sting of uncertainty about tomorrow. In this sense Francis's good example was a lesson, as he always said, and this explains why he was so strict with himself. It was not simply a case of masochism or delight in one's own suffering. Rather it expresses a firm desire to hold fast to his ideal, giving expression to a heroic proposal, which as historians we must learn how to understand, and as human beings have the courage to admire.

Our final observation concerns Francis's companions, those who hide behind the formula "We who were with him." We have almost certainly identified one of them. But, interestingly, he does not reveal himself in the episode nor turn the spotlight himself. He appears anonymously along with the others, not in the story itself, but in a general statement about one aspect of Francis's life. This shows the importance of the collective testimony of one or more of the "We who were with him," which we have been able to use each time. But they always present themselves together, let us stress once again, even though we have mentioned it several times. The observation is even more interesting seeing that Angelo Tancredi appears in the episode from beginning to end. He experienced it, yet does not reveal himself. Humble as he is, he wishes to be a witness just like the others. It is as if to say that their testimony is not testimony about facts, episodes, or individual incidents. It is about a life as a whole, different aspects of which they witnessed in different circumstances and compared, which gives their testimony its global aspect. This gives our episodes a singular and extraordinary importance. They are, in their genre, unsurpassed and unmatched. Without intending to be a legend, they tend to juxtapose living concrete realities. Thus they construct a biography, not chronological or systematic like Thomas of Celano's *Remembrance*, but a series of accounts designed to show the most important traits of Francis's personality. If what we are saying here is correct, we must draw from it a conclusion that seems particularly interesting in the context of the biographies of Francis and medieval historiography and hagiography.

Neither a biography nor a legend, but the presentation of a living person. Here our discussion shifts to what we might call the Italian mentality that was evolving amid the difficult life in the communes at the time. In these cities, there exists official history writing, which may have been the task of the notaries, even formally and by law. These histories

continue the themes of the chronicle and are linear in time. But there exists a kind of history writing, more attuned to people's real lives, eager to collect episodes from them so that from the resulting combination a more sharply-focused picture of reality might be created. Not coincidentally, we think at once of another Franciscan from the same social class as Francis's first companions, which included the "We who were with him." That person is Salimbene de Adam. And so, what we have is a shattering of the traditional categories of biographies of Francis. That is why I believe that alongside the legends, alongside the systematic works devoted to Francis's example, such as the *Mirror of Perfection*, even alongside patched-together compilations of material, such as the *Legend of Perugia*, we will have to make room for these immediate and direct witnesses. Obviously, their clear and mutual consistency cannot be reduced to the single person of Brother Leo, even though we do not know whose hand held the pen that wrote our passages.

The importance of this episode becomes even greater if we compare it with what happens to it at the hands of Thomas of Celano in the *Remembrance* 119-120.

First of all, Thomas eliminates completely the part about Francis's example and his desire to present himself as form and model for all the other brothers. There is even more. Francis is presented as an example in this chapter, but that is because he avoids courts, suffers want and strengthens the others "by putting up with the same things." But let us go on to see how Thomas of Celano interprets this episode.

It is located in a group of chapters entitled "How demons struck him" and tends to show Francis's strength and resistance to worldly temptations and the suggestions of the devil. In this way the episode is completely changed, even though this time the account follows that of the companions very closely. Also interesting is the fact that the saint's words are repeated almost verbatim, even though scriptural passages are inserted, plus the usual rhetorical and literary touches. At the end of the chapter, quite strangely, Thomas draws from the episode an argument against the *palatini*, those brothers who perform religious service in the houses of prelates or nobles. According to Thomas, this was causing harm to their religious life. And since some of these brothers were assigned to such service under obedience, he distinguishes between obedience and harm to one's soul. Court life leads to ambition, idleness, and love of comfort—or, as he says, "luxuries."

It is obvious, then, that even though Thomas certainly had the passage of the companions in front of him, he has definitely changed its spirit. By way of example, let us do some textual comparisons.

## LP 117

And he added: "I will give you a good remote house where you can pray

## 2C 119

On one occasion Lord Leo, the Cardinal of Santa Croce, invited him to

and eat if you wish." Brother Angelo Tancredi, one of the first twelve brothers, was staying with the cardinal. He said to blessed Francis: "Brother, near here there is a beautiful tower on the city walls, quite ample and spacious on the inside, with nine chambers where you can stay as removed as in a hermitage." "Let us go to see it," blessed Francis told him. On seeing it, he liked it, and returning to the lord cardinal said to him: "Lord, perhaps I will stay with you a few days."

And he began to say: "The devils are the police of our Lord. Just as the podestà sends his police to punish a wrong-doer, in the same way, the Lord punishes and corrects those whom He loves through the demons, who are His police and act as His ministers in this office. Even a perfect religious very often sins in ignorance."

"...my brothers, who go through the world suffering hunger and many hardships, and other brothers who stay in poor little houses and hermitages, may have an occasion for grumbling against me when they hear that I am staying with the lord cardinal: 'We are enduring so many hardships while he is having his comforts.'"

In this last passage Thomas eliminates something else that makes us wonder. The companions, speaking about the Order through the mouth of Francis, mention two types of brothers. There are those "who go through the world suffering hunger and many hardships," and there are "other brothers, who stay in poor little houses and hermitages." The first group disappears in Thomas of Celano; no longer are there brothers who wander about in the world. Let us not forget that, when Thomas is writing, accommodations exist in Franciscan houses, and there are no more itinerant brothers. But there are still those who live in poor places, in poor friaries, and in hermitages. Consciously or unconsciously, Thomas regards the brothers of the past as being like those of his own time, and so the itinerants are omitted. Additional proof of this switch from the Order of the past to that of the present is Thomas's criticism of the *palatini*, mentioned above.

stay with him for a little while in Rome. He chose to stay in a detached tower, which offered nine vaulted chambers like the little rooms of hermits.

"Demons are the police of our God, whom he assigns to punish excesses. It is a sign of special grace that he does not leave anything in his servant unpunished while he still lives in the world."

"When my brothers who live in poor little places hear that I'm staying with cardinals, they might suspect that I am living in luxury."

The companions do not mention them because there were none in Francis's time. While the context does suggest that Angelo Tancredi was staying at the cardinal's house, it was not as his *palatinus*, which apparently he never was.

Finally this proves—beyond the shadow of a doubt, we would say—that Thomas depends on the “We who were with him,” whose testimony is once again shown to be valid and important.

Philologically speaking, the comparisons we have made—and others that could still be made—setting the two chapters alongside each other, show clearly that Thomas is writing later than the companions. He uses them as he writes the *Remembrance*, but his compositional technique involves an arrangement all his own.

Since we have often said that Thomas of Celano collects and condenses, let us use this passage to point out that the longer account of the “We who were with him” contains no legendary or useless additions. It is simply a longer, concrete, precise organization of the facts. One detail in this passage appears crucial: the name of the witness who saw the episode, Angelo Tancredi. In the *Legend of Perugia* he plays an essential role, whereas he disappears completely in Thomas of Celano. This omission is not accidental. Thomas knows very well that Angelo Tancredi was one of Francis's first twelve companions, one of the disciples who was with him, even as the myth of the saint as “another Christ” was taking shape. But how could he say that Angelo was at the cardinal's curia, if at the end of the chapter he had to oppose and criticize the *palatini*? And so, like it or not, the elimination of the witness was necessary, even had he wished to mention him.

The problem of the *Mirror of Perfection* 67 is much simpler, even though it is not a simple copy of the *Legend*, as we have seen in several cases before. Let us begin by saying that the episode in the *Mirror of Perfection* is slightly shorter and tends to eliminate certain details that appear useless to the compiler. Thus, for example, while it mentions a tower where Francis could spend some time in solitude, it does not say that the tower had nine chambers. The rest of the account also omits some details, while it emphasizes Francis's desire to give good example. It is this apparently insignificant detail that guarantees the priority and importance of the episode as found in the *Legend of Perugia*. Indeed, let us not forget that the nine chambers are mentioned by Thomas of Celano, who in turn omits the part about the saint's example. An important consequence for our entire discussion derives from this. Ignoring precise statements of chronology, both Thomas of Celano and the *Mirror of Perfection* draw from the passages of the “We who were with him,” but independently of each other. The compiler of the *Legend of Perugia* uses these passages with total and complete freedom, while preserving the oldest version of them. At this point—although very cautiously—we feel even more entitled to say that the episodes bearing the

hallmark "We who were with him" constitute, as far as we can see, an independent group, even though they have been used in different ways. In any case, our present understanding would seem to allow us to say that these episodes have a special autonomy of their own. That is why, although they themselves have been used, they have never claimed to make use of other texts. From the standpoint of source criticism, we should consider these sources as primary, barring new information. Interestingly, the compiler of the *Legend of Perugia* is extremely respectful of the integrity of the passages we have considered so far. All of which leads us to say that he must have known very well the importance and authority of the anonymous "We who were with him." We do not think this is just a hypothesis, but a statement of fact. Elementary observation has it that contemporaries always know an infinite number of details that seem quite obvious, if not trivial, to them. Unfortunately, these details escape those who come later; they can even be deceptive.<sup>109</sup>

The *Legend of Perugia* is definitely a compilation that, very respectfully, uses and assimilates these disconnected and fragmentary passages that bear the hallmark "We who were with him."

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<sup>109</sup>Goetz maintains that 2MP 67 is prior to 2C 119-120, appealing not only to the presence of the formula "We" in the former, but also to the fact that Thomas and Bonaventure are much more hostile to the *palatini* than is the anonymous compiler. Cf. Goetz, *Die Quellen*, 193.



## II

**Passages in the: "Legend of Perugia" and the Sabatier edition of the *Mirror of Perfection* but not in the *Remembrance***

Now we move on to consideration of another series of episodes from the *Legend of Perugia*, still always with the phrase "We who were with him," but reappearing only in the *Mirror of Perfection*. Thus we lack an element for corroboration and dating that we have found invaluable. On the other hand, we will try as we go along to suggest plausible reasons why Thomas is silent. It seems, as a rule, that it is because he is afraid of saying something that might displease church authorities or emphasize the conflict between those attached to Francis's person and lifestyle and those who, while respecting and venerating the founder, wanted to identify more closely with the structures of the thirteenth-century church.

## 12

**LP 67, cf. 2MP 104**

Because of the disease of his eyes, blessed Francis at that time was staying in the church of San Fabiano near the same city, where there was a poor secular priest. At that time the Lord Pope Honorius and other cardinals were in the same city. Many of the cardinals and other great clerics, because of the reverence and devotion they had for the holy father, used to visit him almost every day.

That church had a small vineyard next to the house where blessed Francis was staying. There was one door to the house through which nearly all those who visited him passed into the vineyard, especially because the grapes were ripe at that time, and the place was pleasant for resting.

And it came about that for that reason almost the entire vineyard was ruined. For some picked the grapes and ate them there, while others picked them and carried them off, and still others trampled them underfoot.

The priest began to be offended and upset. "I lost my vintage for this year!" he said. "Even though it's small, I got enough wine from it to take care of my needs!"

When blessed Francis heard of this he had him called and said to him: "Do not be disturbed or offended any longer. We can't do anything about it. But trust in the Lord, because for me, His little

servant, He can restore your loss. But, tell me, how many measures of wine did you get when your vineyard was at its best?"

"Thirteen measures, father," the priest responded.

"Don't be sad over this any more," blessed Francis told him, "and don't say anything offensive to anyone because of it, or argue with anyone about it. Trust the Lord and my words, and if you get less than twenty measures of wine, I will make it up to you."

The priest calmed down and kept quiet. And it happened by divine dispensation that he obtained twenty measures and no less, just as blessed Francis had told him. Those who heard about it, as well as the priest himself, were amazed. They considered it a great miracle due to the merits of blessed Francis, especially because not only was it devastated, but even if it had been full of grapes and no one had taken any, it still seemed impossible to the priest and the others to get twenty measures of wine from it.

We who were with him bear witness that whenever he used to say: "This is the way it is...or this is the way it will be...", it always happened as he said. We have seen many of these fulfilled not only while he was alive but also after his death.

The *Legend of Perugia* 67 recurs only in the *Mirror of Perfection* 104.<sup>179</sup> The episode is very striking and, at the same time, indicative of an attitude toward the Curia on the part of at least some of the brothers, especially those who had been closer to Francis.

Since it was curiosity about Francis that had caused damage to the priest's grapes, God, in his love for Francis, will help the priest. And so he did, say the witnesses, explaining that they had noticed that whenever Francis would say "This is the way it is," or "This is the way it will be," what he said always happened. And, equally significant, they add: "We have seen many of these fulfilled not only while he was alive but also after his death." This testimony is extremely significant for the idea of Francis as prophet, an idea that was to be so important in history, especially among the Franciscan spirituals where prophecies abounded, whose certain fulfillment they awaited.

On the other hand, it should also be noted that the companions do not call this episode a miracle, even though they say others regarded it as such. They describe it as a prophecy.

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<sup>179</sup>Thomas of Celano's silence about this episode is all the more significant since in 1C 99, he tells us that Francis went to Rieti to seek treatment for his eyes while the Roman Curia was staying there. And so, the passage from the "We" lets us think in terms of a deliberate choice intended to complete and fill in Thomas's account. This should not surprise us if we recall that the author of these passages must have been acquainted with 1C. There is, then, a complementary relationship that makes the presence of this passage and Thomas's silence all the more interesting.

This point is highlighted by the fact that the *Mirror of Perfection* 104 places this episode in the section entitled "The spirit of prophecy." It is a section that groups the prophetic elements in Francis's words; thus, in this section the testimony of the companions is particularly valuable and important.

The episode is borrowed almost verbatim. There are only a few stylistic retouches, and these do not change its spirit,<sup>171</sup> except perhaps in the last part, where two items of some importance are left out. One of these is the mention that the incident was regarded as miraculous by the priest and the others who were present. The other, more important, is the words explaining Francis's prophecy, which say that whatever he foretold took place, when he was alive and after his death.<sup>172</sup> Unless we are mistaken, a subtle current of hostility runs through the episode. It is directed against the cardinals and other prelates who, in their insensitivity, had caused harm to the priest and had indirectly caused suffering to Francis, who is resigned since he has learned by now that there is nothing he can do. It is no accident, then, that Thomas of Celano decided he did not need to make use of an episode that did not fit in with any of his objectives, all the more so seeing that one of the categories in the *Remembrance* is "the spirit of prophecy." But he seems not to allow for or want to use an incident that implied a hostile attitude toward the Curia.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup>We see on the part of the compiler of the 2MP 104 a tendency to give the account a more polished form. This, no doubt, points to the presence of a text that has been reworked with respect to the LP 67, and which is thus later than it. LP 67 "Because of the disease of his eyes, blessed Francis at that time was staying in the church of San Fabiano near the same city, where there was a poor secular priest." 2MP 104: "Because of the disease of his eyes, blessed Francis was staying with a little poor priest in the church of San Fabiano near the city of Rieti." In the 2MP, "reverence" disappears as one of the reasons why the prelates come to visit Francis. The "stripping" of the vineyard is also less detailed in this account: LP 67

"And it came about that for that reason almost the entire vineyard was ruined. For some picked the grapes and ate them there, while others picked them and carried them off, and still others trampled them underfoot." 2MP 104: "...the entire vineyard was ruined and almost stripped of its grapes."

<sup>172</sup>The episode occurs again in the *Deeds of Saint Francis and His Companions*, but for many reasons we must consider this source as outside our area of research.

<sup>173</sup>Since we do not have 2C as a control, we need to pay more attention to what Walter Goetz says about this chapter as contained in 2MP. He notes the presence of the formula "We who were with him," but explicitly says that he is unable to judge its validity, since he cannot understand why it is not also listed by Thomas among the miracles of Francis. He also says he cannot help but suspect that this is a mechanical repetition of the formula. Thus he is more inclined to think in terms of a "compiler" than of a "close friend of the saint." Although what we have already said constitutes a reply to Goetz's objections, it is well to note that the formula's recurrence should not be considered a mechanical repetition. It is a literary form, deliberately chosen by a particular group of people for a very specific reason, as we believe we have shown. But if we want to base ourselves on internal criteria, we cannot fail to notice that

13

LP 84, cf. 2MP 101

At that same time when he lay sick—the *Praises of the Lord* had already been composed—the bishop of the city of Assisi at the time excommunicated the podestà. In return, the man who was then podestà was enraged, and had this proclamation announced, loud and clear, throughout the city of Assisi: no one was to sell or buy anything from the bishop, or to draw up any legal document with him. And so they thoroughly hated each another.

Although very ill, blessed Francis was moved by piety for them, especially since there was no one, religious or secular, who was intervening for peace and harmony between them. He said to his companions: "It is a great shame for you, servants of God, that the bishop and the podestà hate one another in this way, and that there is no one intervening for peace and harmony between them."

And so, for that reason, he composed one verse for the *Praises*:

Praised be You, my Lord,  
through those who give pardon for Your love  
and bear infirmity and tribulation.  
Blessed are those who endure in peace  
for by You, Most High, they shall be crowned.

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the text presented us by the *LP* belongs to a group of other passages that form a unit and have a characteristic structure. Goetz frankly admits that in some cases he lets himself be led by impressions, as, for example, the "mistrust" and "warning" he speaks of on pages 208-209. The account has a liveliness that can come only from eyewitnesses, as we are reminded by this exquisite detail: "There was one door to the house through which nearly all those who visited him passed into the vineyard, especially because the grapes were ripe at that time, and the place was pleasant for resting. And it came about that for that reason almost the entire vineyard was ruined. For some picked the grapes and ate them there, while others picked them and carried them off, and still others trampled them underfoot." Were this some great writer, the scene would possess an unusual liveliness. But it is not a great writer who is recounting these things; it is an attentive observer who remembers. The descriptions are based on having seen and remembered these things, not on a narrator's inventive ability. Let us also recall certain characteristic terms such as *scandalizari* and the memory of Francis's prophetic power, a normal expression also found in similar situations in passages that are undisputed. A final observation. It is hard to imagine why anyone would have invented this account, which—let us remember—does not refer to a miracle, but to Francis's ability to see into the future. Nor is it about something important and unusual, such as the fate of the Order or the course of its history. It is about comforting a poor man who has been trampled upon by the powers that be. It seems hard to believe that the episode did not happen, since it certainly does not cast the cardinals or prelates of the Curia in a very favorable light, not to mention its animosity and spirit of criticism. Finally, we would like to say that the account has a flavor resembling that found in other of our episodes. To say this is not to indulge in impressions, but to state a fact whose importance should not be ignored. Cf. Goetz, *Die Quellen*, 208-09.

Afterwards he called one of his companions and told him: "Go to the podestà and, on my behalf, tell him to go to the bishop's residence together with the city's magistrates and bring with him as many others as he can."

And when the brother had gone, he said to two of his other companions: "Go and sing the *Canticle of Brother Sun* before the bishop, the podestà, and the others who are with them. I trust in the Lord that He will humble their hearts and they will make peace with each another and return to their earlier friendship and love."

When they had all gathered in the piazza inside the cloister of the bishop's residence, the two brothers rose and one of them said: "In his illness, blessed Francis wrote the *Praises of the Lord* for His creatures, for His praise and the edification of his neighbor. He asks you, then, to listen to them with great devotion." And so, they began to sing and recite to them. And immediately the podestà stood up and, folding his arms and hands with great devotion, he listened intently, even with tears, as if to the Gospel of the Lord. For he had a great faith and devotion toward blessed Francis.

When the *Praises of the Lord* were ended, the podestà said to everyone: "I tell you the truth, not only do I forgive the lord bishop, whom I must have as my lord, but I would even forgive one who killed my brother or my son." And so he cast himself at the lord bishop's feet, telling him: "Look, I am ready to make amends to you for everything, as it pleases you, for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ and of his servant, blessed Francis."

Taking him by the hands, the bishop stood up and said to him: "Because of my office humility is expected of me, but because I am naturally prone to anger, you must forgive me." And so, with great kindness and love they embraced and kissed each other.

And the brothers marveled greatly, considering the holiness of blessed Francis, that what he had foretold about peace and harmony between them had been fulfilled, to the letter. All the others who were present and heard it took it for a great miracle, crediting it to the merits of blessed Francis, that the Lord had so quickly visited them, and that without recalling anything that had been said, they returned to such harmony from such scandal.

Therefore we who were with blessed Francis bear witness that always whenever he would predict "such-and-such a thing is or will be this way," it happened almost to the letter. We have seen with our own eyes what would be too long to write down or recount.

The *Legend of Perugia* 84, which we have to discuss now, is so closely linked to the *Legend of Perugia* 67 that in the *Mirror of Perfection* 101,

it is placed under the same heading: "On the spirit of prophecy."<sup>174</sup> It refers to an episode from city life, and its flavor and tone are completely Italian.

Francis was sick and had already written his *Canticle of Brother Sun* when a violent conflict broke out between the bishop and the podestà of Assisi. What we see, then, is a man deeply upset, one to whom it had been revealed that his greeting should be "May the Lord give you peace,"<sup>175</sup> but who was seeing this peace forgotten in his own city.

The story is told from a particular point of view that deserves emphasis. Seeing that the saint had foretold that peace would be restored between the two,<sup>176</sup> "they took it for a great miracle, crediting it to the merits of blessed Francis, that the Lord had so quickly visited them, and that without recalling anything that had been said, they returned to such harmony from such scandal."<sup>177</sup> The companions go on to explain that they who were with Francis "bear witness that always whenever he would predict 'such-and-such a thing is or will be this way,' it happened almost to the letter. We have seen with our own eyes what would be too long to write down or recount." By now we can say that this is a set phrase. Yet, even as they are testifying to Francis's prophetic power, they add that they have seen so many other similar episodes with their own eyes that it would take too long to write them down or tell them. Besides the telling, there is the seeing. Because all the witnesses were around the dying Francis at the time, the episode acquires a special clarity of its own. Again, there is a clear distinction between the others, who regard it as a miracle, and the evidence confirming the fact that Francis possesses the gift of prophecy.

The episode occurs again in the *Mirror of Perfection*. It is almost completely identical except for a different beginning, designed to link it both to the previous chapter (2MP 100) and to this part of the work regarding the spirit of prophecy.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>174</sup>This close connection is related to the fact that both episodes speak of the fulfillment of a prediction made by Francis.

<sup>175</sup>Cf. LP 101.

<sup>176</sup>"Go and sing the *Canticle of Brother Sun* before the bishop, the podestà, and the others who are with them. I trust in the Lord that He will humble their hearts and they will make peace with each other and return to their earlier friendship and love."

<sup>177</sup>This point of view is seen clearly in the title given the episode in 2MP 101: "Firstly, how he foretold the restoration of peace between the bishop and podestà of Assisi through the influence of the *Praises of the Creatures* which he had composed and ordered his companions to sing before them."

<sup>178</sup>2MP 100 is part of the chapter on Francis's temptations; it contains part of the LP 83, but without the references to the composition of the *Canticle of Brother Sun*. The latter forms the subject of 2MP 119. Given this division of the text into two episodes, the account of the origin of the *Praises* is less of a unit in 2MP than in LP, where it is the subject of two adjacent episodes (LP 83-84).

The first part of the *Mirror of Perfection* 101 is not without certain characteristic details. It begins by explaining that at first the *Praises of the Creatures* had been called the *Canticle of Brother Sun* by Francis. These two names are already found in the *Legend of Perugia* 84 (which we are discussing), as well as in Chapter 83 (which is not part of our analysis). Both chapters tend to point out that the *Praises of the Creatures* and the *Canticle of Brother Sun* are the same thing.<sup>179</sup> Other differences have to do with minor details or stylistic retouches, although some things suggest a more definite development and spiritual difference between the two works. For example, the statement that “no one, religious or secular” was interested in making peace between the bishop and the podestà becomes, very simply, “no one.” This very bland expression is not so much a sign of greater respect for the clergy as of greater prudence in not mentioning a shortcoming of theirs in the area of peacemaking.<sup>180</sup>

Were we to ask why this chapter never found its way into Thomas of Celano’s *Remembrance*, we would say, first of all, that it did not fit in with the categories he had decided to use. While he speaks of prophecy as one of Francis’s gifts, it is not the same as that envisioned in this episode or in the *Legend of Perugia* 67. For them it means correctly foretelling the future with the help of God, but for him it means the real gift of predicting the contingent future. In short, it is a miraculous power, not something that in essence is little more than human, like what is mentioned here. Besides, we must not forget that Thomas of Celano was writing for the brothers who by this time had spread throughout Europe. They would have found it hard to explain a civic conflict in Assisi whose meaning and importance they could not exactly understand. A brother in England or the Holy Land, who knew nothing about the internal affairs of Italian cities, could not know what a podestà was or what was the importance of the conflict with the bishop.<sup>181</sup> A

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<sup>179</sup>Because 2MP 119 was to speak only of the *Canticle*, it was necessary to add an introduction to 2MP 101, explaining the identity. It reads: “After blessed Francis had composed the *Praises of the Creatures*, which he called the *Canticle of Brother Sun*, a serious misunderstanding arose between the bishop and the podestà of the city of Assisi.” That the *Praises* had this name is already mentioned in the LP 83. And so the LP 84 begins: “At that same time when he lay sick—the *Praises of the Lord* had already been composed....” It is worth noting that while the LP 83 speaks of the *Canticle* [*Canticum*] of Brother Sun, the term *Cantus* appears in Chapter 84. In 2MP it becomes *canticum*, which means the anonymous author has eliminated what looked to him like an Italianism.

<sup>180</sup>Note, for example, that 2MP 101 does not stress the fact that the bishop and podestà hated each other. It also says that the podestà not only considers it his duty to respect the bishop, but that he wishes to do so.

<sup>181</sup>Goetz offers a different reason for the absence of our episode from 2C: “In this account...there is nothing that could have led Thomas to omit it, had he known of it.” In his opinion, then, this passage was not among the material sent in 1246, although he stresses that its tradition is solid. Actually, we are surprised that Goetz, given his scholar’s knowledge of the history of Italian communes, did not realize that this episode may have interested Thomas as an

counterproof comes from the fact that the episode is found in the *Mirror of Perfection*. But if this work, which is certainly much later than the *Legend of Perugia*, was produced in the spiritual climate of Umbria-Tuscany, as many things lead us to believe, then it was written by Italians (probably from central Italy) for other Italians. It is not found, however, in Lemmens's *Mirror* and *MS Little*.

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**LP 101, cf. 2MP 2, 26; IntReg 1-4**

Brother Riccerio of the Marches of Ancona, noble by birth and more noble by holiness, was loved by blessed Francis with great affection. One day he came to visit blessed Francis in that palace. Among other points he discussed with blessed Francis about the state of the religion and observance of the *Rule*, he asked him: "Tell me, Father, when you first began to have brothers, what was your intention? And what is it today, and what do you believe it will be until the day of your death? Because I want to be sure of your intention and of your first and last wish, so that we, cleric brothers who have many books, may keep them although we will say that they belong to the religion?"

Blessed Francis told him: "I tell you, brother, that it has been and is my first and last intention and will, if the brothers would only heed it, that no brother should have anything except a tunic as the *Rule* allows us, together with a cord and underwear."

Another time, blessed Francis said: "The religion and life of the Lesser Brothers is a little flock, which the Son of God in this very last hour has asked of His heavenly Father, saying: 'Father, I want you to make and give me a new and humble people in this very last hour, who would be unlike all others who preceded them by their humility and poverty, and be content to have me alone.' And the Father said to His beloved Son: 'My Son, Your request has been fulfilled.'"

This is why blessed Francis would say: "Therefore, the Lord has willed that they be called Lesser Brothers, because they are the people whom the Son of God asked of the Father. They are the ones of whom the Son of God speaks in the Gospel: *Do not be afraid, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom; and again: What you did for one of these, the least of my brothers, you did it for me.* For, although the Lord may be understood to be speaking of all the

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*Italian*, but certainly not as the author of a work meant for brothers who by now were to be found from Spain to northern Europe. Goetz, *Die Quellen*, 208.



spiritually poor, he was nevertheless predicting the religion of the Lesser Brothers that was to come in His Church."

Therefore, as it was revealed to blessed Francis that it was to be called the Religion of the Lesser Brothers, he had it so written in the first *Rule*, when he brought it before the Lord Pope Innocent III, and he approved and granted it, and later announced it to all in the Council. Likewise, the Lord also revealed to him the greeting that the brothers should use, as he had written in his *Testament*: "The Lord revealed a greeting to me that we should say 'May the Lord give you peace.'"

At the beginning of the religion, when blessed Francis would go with a brother who was one of the first twelve brothers, that brother would greet men and women along the way as well as those in their field, saying: "May the Lord give you peace."

And because people had never before heard such a greeting from any religious, they were greatly amazed. Indeed, some would say almost indignantly: "What does this greeting of yours mean?" As a result that brother began to be quite embarrassed. Then he said to blessed Francis "Let me use another greeting."

Blessed Francis told him: "Let them talk, for they do not grasp what is of God. But do not be embarrassed, for one day the nobles and princes of this world will show respect to you and the other brothers because of a greeting of this sort." And blessed Francis said: "Isn't it great that the Lord wanted to have a little people among all those who preceded them who would be content to have Him alone, the Most High and most glorious?"

If any brother wanted to ask why blessed Francis in his own time did not make the brothers observe such a strict poverty as he told Brother Riccerio, and did not order it to be observed, we who were with him would respond to this as we heard from his mouth. Because he told the brothers this and many other things, and also had written down in the *Rule* what he requested from the Lord with relentless prayer and meditation for the good of the religion, affirming that it was completely the Lord's will.

Afterwards when he showed them, they seemed *harsh and unbearable*, for they did not know what was going to happen to the religion after his death. And because he feared scandal for himself and for the brothers, he did not want to argue with them; but he complied with their wish, although not willingly, and excused himself before the Lord. But, that the word of the Lord, which He put in his mouth for the good of the brothers, would not return to Him empty, he wanted to fulfill it in himself, so that he might then obtain a reward from the Lord. And, at last he found peace in this and his spirit was comforted.

The *Legend of Perugia* 101 is among the most interesting episodes related to our discussion here. It provides clear evidence of the compositional technique used in these passages. Even though they are not arranged in any order, they tend to group the saint's words and sayings around a single subject or particular question. People and events are not stressed. Francis speaks, explaining the true meaning of his proposal and the reasons why it was later changed and modified.

The chapter is developed very simply. It begins with a minor character from the early days, Brother Riccerio of the Marches of Ancona, who was very dear to Francis. Riccerio went to visit the saint, by then gravely ill, in the palace of the bishop of Assisi.<sup>182</sup> He asked him a very specific question: "Tell me, Father, when you first began to have brothers, what was your intention? And what is it today, and what do you believe it will be until the day of your death?"<sup>183</sup>

Francis says unequivocally that he has never changed his position. He seems to avoid a direct answer and unequivocally restates the fundamental principles that should guide the life of the lesser brothers: they should have nothing except a tunic, with a cord and underwear.<sup>184</sup> Thus the question about books is reduced to the fundamental principles of poverty

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<sup>182</sup>The text says only "in that palace," like the previous episode (LP 100). The reference is to the LP 99, where we read: "When blessed Francis lay gravely ill in the palace of the bishop of Assisi...." We also know from the LP that Francis, by now very sick, was brought there at the wishes of the people of Assisi, from "Bagnara, north of Nocera" LP 99 says explicitly that Francis was returning from Bagnara, and from there he wanted to be carried to the Portiuncula, "realizing that he was getting sicker by the day" (LP 5). We have mentioned these details in order to emphasize that the words "in that palace" contained in this passage presuppose a relationship between it and LP 96, 99-100. The compiler of LP has no doubt intervened to arrange material of different origins within his text.

<sup>183</sup>Riccerio's question implies that he is wondering whether Francis had changed his mind on the question of poverty between the time when he "began to have brothers" and the time of their conversation. The question of further possible changes is left open: "And what is it today, and what do you believe it will be until the day of your death?" In any case, Riccerio's question raises the possibility that Francis had a "first wish" and a "last wish" and that these were not necessarily the same. Implicit in this short passage is the dramatic statement that poverty is no longer being observed in all its rigor. That this could have happened while Francis was still alive, without protest from him, had created a climate of uncertainty. The fact that the companions consider it proper to mention Francis's lack of protest also helps us understand the atmosphere in which these memoirs originated and took shape.

<sup>184</sup>Cf. ER II 8, 13; LR II 9; Test 16. The term *femoralia* [underwear] is not used in either of the Rules or the Testament, where we find instead *braccae* [short trousers]. It should be noted that this passage from LP 101 is also found, with an addition, in LP 102: "I want to understand it in this way, that the brothers should have nothing except a tunic with a cord and underwear, as contained in the *Rule*, and those compelled by necessity, may have shoes."

and becomes *dépassé*. Total poverty excludes all ownership, and this implies books as well.<sup>185</sup>

We have here a very clear awareness of the change Francis could see gradually creeping into the concept of Franciscan poverty. Slowly but surely, there was a shift toward monastic poverty, which Francis had rejected and continued to reject vigorously. The reply to Brother Riccerio does not deny that the clerics might indeed need books, and that this could be blamed on their non-observance of the *Rule*. But, it says, this was certainly not Francis's intention when he founded the Order. And even as he lay dying, it was still not his intention. The very human expression, "if the brothers would only heed it," shows that he was clearly and palpably aware that behind the signs of enthusiasm and devotion—which were not enough to console him—he saw that poverty as he intended it, in the deepest and fullest sense of the term—to have nothing except poverty itself—was not being observed.

At this point the authors, feeling the need to explain and corroborate the episode of Brother Riccerio, add a series of other sayings of Francis about the Order, its meaning and destiny, including some apocalyptic and eschatological material. The latter would represent true revelations—unless what we are seeing is the need to add, in the form of a revealed account, Francis's firm conviction about what he saw as the Order's providential role in the Church. What he said is this: the religion and life of the Lesser Brothers is "a little flock," which the Son of God in these last days asked of his heavenly Father, saying: "Father, I want you to make and give me a new and humble people in this very last hour, who would be unlike all others who preceded them by their humility and poverty, and be content to have me alone." And the Father said to His beloved Son: "My Son, Your request has been fulfilled." The account is steeped in popular religiosity and feeling. What theologian would have dared to imagine a dialogue between the heavenly Father and Christ in such tones, in which we hear echoes of a true father-son relationship?<sup>186</sup> Francis adds that because

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<sup>185</sup>Books are mentioned in ER III 7, 9, where only the cleric brothers are allowed to have them, and only "the books necessary to fulfill their office." The LR and Test say nothing on the subject. The problem of books is also discussed in LP 102-105, in the well-known episodes of the provincial minister and the novice. As for what we have described as Francis's apparent avoidance of a direct answer, we should recall that the same thing occurs in LP 102. To the worried minister's question, "What shall I do, for I have so many books worth more than fifty pounds?" Francis replies, "Brother, I cannot and must not go against my own conscience and the perfection of the holy Gospel which we have professed." On Francis's attitude toward studies, see especially LP 103.

<sup>186</sup>We trust we will not be accused of trying to play psychologist if we hear, in this dialogue, an echo of the dialogue Francis wished he could have had with *his* father, so that his father would not have been forced to disown him before the bishop of Assisi. Here, God the Father immediately grants his Son's request, quite unlike what his father Bernardone had done

they were "a little flock," God willed that they be called Lesser Brothers, and he had this name written in the first *Rule* when he took it to Pope Innocent III and had it approved.

Strangely, the account of this revelation is accompanied by another account, mentioned in the *Testament*, where he says that the Lord had revealed to him the greeting, "May the Lord give you peace."<sup>187</sup> The account goes on to say that at the beginning of the Order, when Francis would go with a brother who was one of the first twelve, that brother would greet men and women along the way and in the fields, saying, "May the Lord give you peace." Since this was a new kind of greeting, everyone was amazed at it. Francis, seeing his confrere's embarrassment, told him not to worry about it, and consoled him by saying that one day nobles and princes would show respect to him and the brothers because of such a greeting. Finally, linking this greeting to the earlier revelation about the "little flock" content to have God alone, he concluded: "Isn't it great that the Lord wanted to have a little people among all those who preceded them who would be content to have Him alone, the Most High and most glorious?" With this question the witnesses come full circle and close the parenthesis that began with the reply to Brother Riccerio. They felt the need to add a clarification that would justify and shed further light on what Francis had said.<sup>188</sup>

Once again the brothers are presented evidence that is unambiguous and, at the same time, crucial for a historical understanding of Francis. The question they ask is a very concrete one: If Francis had such clear and definite ideas on poverty, why did he not order the brothers to observe it and make them observe it, with no concessions whatsoever?<sup>189</sup> The companions answer with the full weight of their testimony. Not only were they with him; they also heard him tell the brothers this and many other things. What is more, they knew he had many of these things written down in the *Rule* and used to ask them from God for the good of the Order, saying it was God's will. But, they note—here the accusation becomes explicit and serious: "Afterwards when he showed them, they seemed harsh and unbearable, for they did not know what was going to happen to the religion after his death." In other words, Francis was forced to admit that his admonitions and exhortations to total poverty seemed unbearable to his

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with him. This is the same Francis who at Greccio thought of the crib, who wanted everyone to be happy on Christmas, but who would also be able to see Christ on the cross, not triumphant, but twisted in pain as if no longer human.

<sup>187</sup>Cf. Test 23.

<sup>188</sup>There are really two concentric circles. The first, which is bigger, includes the conversation with Brother Riccerio; within it is the second, about the "little flock." At the center of these two circles is the section about the greeting, which is divided into the statement that these words were revealed, and the story of the brother who was embarrassed by the fact that the wish of peace caused such surprise.

<sup>189</sup>This question comes up again in other episodes of LP, for example, LP 106.

brothers since they did not know what would happen to the Order after his death.

Yet these general words seem to reflect the whole sad story of estrangement from poverty in its original rigor and from the living example of Francis—both of which began with Gregory IX and *Quo elongati*. It goes without saying that this bull, even though it did not affect the juridical norms governing the Order, broke the connection between the living example of Francis and the life of the brothers that the *Testament* had wished to establish.

Francis, it is said, decided not to protest violently because he did not want to be a source of scandal or potential conflict. Thus “he complied with their wish, although not willingly, and excused himself before the Lord.” In other words, he felt before God that it was his fault that this form of life, which he believed to be revealed by God himself and exemplified by Christ in the Gospel, was impossible. The companions conclude the episode, emphasizing one thing: “But, that the word of the Lord, which He put in his [Francis’s] mouth for the good of the brothers, would not return to Him empty, he [Francis] wanted to fulfill it in himself, so that he might then obtain a reward from the Lord. And, at last he found peace in this and his spirit was comforted.”<sup>100</sup>

Without hesitation we would call this the episode of total poverty. It ends up being of crucial importance, since Thomas of Celano does not include it in his *Remembrance*, even though he mentions Riccerio in his *Life*.<sup>101</sup> This seems to be intentional. Implicit in Riccerio’s conversation and the companions’ explanation is a deep and bitter disappointment at those who had joined the fraternity and even become important members of it, yet had not fully grasped the meaning of commitment to the Gospel. Francis’s words here are in utter contradiction to the entire practice followed by the hierarchy of the Order after his death. This episode is basically a protest against this practice.

We can draw from it a very important point that helps us explain further, should we need to, Thomas of Celano’s freedom with regard to those who call themselves “We who were with him.” He sees them as a source, to be used or not, depending on whether they fit in with the overall

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<sup>100</sup>For references to Francis’s “condescension,” see LP 101, 106, 111.

<sup>101</sup>Cf. 2C 71 where Francis says: “Go, for in this last hour the Lesser Brothers have been given to the world so that the elect may carry out for them what the divine Judge will praise: What *you did for one of my lesser brothers, you did for me*’. Because of this he used to say that this religion was privileged by the Great Prophet, who had so clearly expressed the title of its name.” That is all. Paul Sabatier and Livarius Oligier, seem to hold, based only on this verbal similarity between the two texts, that Thomas was acquainted with this part of LP 101. But the biblical passage is not a sure proof, in our opinion, since it is used so often. Cf. Sabatier, *Speculum*, 53; *Expositio Quatuor Magistrorum super Regulam Fratrum Minorum*, ed. Livarius Oligier, (Rome, n.p., 1950), 16, n. 1.

plan of his work. And all the while he keeps an eye on the situation in the Order. Needless to say, he ignores this rigorous practice of poverty in the *Remembrance*, which was written at a difficult time in the history of the Order. Yet, significantly, the anonymous authors of these testimonies felt it necessary to attribute these words to Francis, to insist on the need for poverty, and to emphasize that the saint never changed his mind. This despite the fact that he had to resign himself to the idea of allowing certain relaxations (his so-called condescension), which he personally did not feel like accepting and never accepted in his own life.

Of no less interest is the way this episode is treated in the *Mirror of Perfection*. There the anonymous author splits it up and uses it in two places, according to the logic and plan implicit in the *Mirror* itself. Thus the *Mirror of Perfection 2* contains the first and last parts of the *Legend of Perugia 101*, whereas the middle section is moved to form the *Mirror of Perfection 26*. In other words, the compiler of the *Mirror of Perfection* has used the single text of the *Legend of Perugia 101*, dividing it in a way that seemed best suited to his discussion and his ideal plan of Franciscan perfection. The memory of Brother Riccerio is placed at the beginning of the chapter "On Perfect Poverty,"<sup>192</sup> without the middle section, which is skillfully moved forward, thus knitting the passage's two reference points into a newer and more well-defined unit. With this different distribution of the elements that make up the episode, the testimony of the "We who were with him" becomes very important, since it is linked immediately and directly to Francis's conversation with Riccerio. On the other hand, the middle section remains in the same chapter on poverty, but as its last part.<sup>193</sup> It is, as it were, a final linking together and definitive seal on everything that has been said about Franciscan poverty and the manner and forms of expressing it.

The text of the *Mirror of Perfection 26*, which in the *Legend of Perugia 101* really looks like a filler from the standpoint of Francis's companions—but we have shown the episode's inner logic—acquires a different thrust. The ideal and the practice of Franciscan life are, in a certain sense, confirmed by revelation. This revelation concerns the "little flock, which the Son of God in this very last hour has asked of His heavenly Father." Mention of revelation and the terms in which it is expressed is not accidental; the passage, now isolated, becomes the revealed expression of the truth of the spiritual position. With its new thrust, it fits in perfectly with the *Mirror of Perfection* and the time of its compilation, when the Spirituals were seeking to justify their own existence, historically and providentially. Faced with the now numerous and powerful community, the Spirituals recall that God had revealed to Francis that the true Lesser Brothers were few in

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<sup>192</sup>It is entitled "...how blessed Francis made known his will and intention which he maintained from the beginning to the end concerning the observance of poverty."

<sup>193</sup>It is entitled "How it was revealed to him by the Lord that the brothers are to be called Lesser and should announce peace and salvation."

number, since they would be “unlike all others who preceded them by their humility and poverty.” And this is what the Spirituals wanted to be in the Christian society of their time. Emphasis on the “very last hour” also fits in with this idea. We need not dwell on this if we just think of how insistently the *spiritual* world has hammered on ecclesiological themes.

At this point the question arises whether, in the case of the *Legend of Perugia* 101, the section between the two parts of the conversation between Francis and Riccerio might be a later interpolation. The absence of this middle section of the *Legend of Perugia* 101 in the *Mirror of Perfection* 2 is one thing that would lead us to think this. But it also happens that the middle section’s sentences regularly begin, unusually, with the word *unde* [not reflected in the English translation]: “Another time blessed Francis said...”; “This is why blessed Francis would say...”; “Therefore it was revealed to blessed Francis...”; “At the beginning of the religion...” Each *unde* marks a precise, though self-enclosed, episode; in fact, the last of these, the longest as far as number of lines is concerned, is definitely a unit. But against this hypothesis several things should be remembered. The text of the *Legend of Perugia* 101 is found, with a few different readings but with the same continuity, in the *Intention of the Rule* and in the *Tree of Life*—except for the part about the greeting, which is preserved in Lemmens’s *Mirror* 6. There are also the references in the *Remembrance* 71 to the “last hour” and the name Lesser Brothers. Rather than an interpolation in the *Legend of Perugia* 101, what we have is a skillful intervention by the author of the *Mirror of Perfection*, who is not afraid to rework and modify the companions’ text in order to adapt it to the plan of his work.

In this sense it is worth noting the differences—essentially literary improvements—between the two texts:

## LP 101

Among other points he discussed with blessed Francis about the state of the religion and observance of the Rule, he asked him:

## 2MP 2

Among other points he discussed with him about the state of the religion and observance of the Rule, he asked him specifically:

The stylistic change is evident from the comparison. It tends to emphasize even more the precise nature of his question about the *Rule*. While the companions are by no means vague, they are certainly less relentlessly precise. On the other hand, we should note that Francis’s response is exactly the same in the two texts.

A slight difference exists in the middle part of the passage that has become the *Mirror of Perfection* 26. With regard to the name Lesser Brothers, Francis:

## LP 101

had it so written in the first Rule,

## 2MP 26

...he had it so written in the first

when he brought it before the Lord Pope Innocent III, and he approved and granted it, and later announced it to all in the Council.

Rule, when he brought it before the Lord Pope Innocent III, who approved and granted it, and later announced it to all in a consistory.

We see clearly a shift from the juridically inexact term "Council" to the technical term "Consistory." This slight difference, it seems, gives us a direct glimpse of the cultural divide between the first generation of Franciscans and those that followed.

Perhaps the biggest difference—but it, too, is essentially modest—is in the conclusion:

LP 101

"Isn't it great that the Lord wanted to have a little people among all those who preceded them who would be content to have Him alone, the Most High and most glorious?"

2MP 26

"Isn't it great that the Lord wanted to have one, new and little people, singular and unique in life and in word all those who preceded them, who would be content to have Him alone, the Most High and most glorious?"

The *Mirror* insists that these chosen people, providentially willed by God, are new, unique and little. For this reason, they are particularly devoted to him and distinguish themselves from all who preceded them.

If we proceed to an internal analysis of the passage, we will see that it has an internal logic of its own, different from that of a narrative or a logical proof of a thesis or way of life. Instead, as we have stressed before and will stress again, the passage is filled in through an association of ideas and flood of memories. Here we must emphasize once again that these are not the memories of one person. Brother Leo, mentioned by Ubertino of Casale, may be the one who wrote, but we are quite sure that he is not the only one who is remembering.<sup>104</sup> What we have, in other words, is a chapter

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<sup>104</sup> In his *Tree of Life* Ubertino of Casale mentions Brother Leo when citing his work, but he straightforwardly reports our episode with "We who were with him would respond..." in other words, in the plural. We should point out here—it almost goes without saying—that this is not the majestic plural, which is completely out of place, given the meaning as well as the modesty and humility of whoever was writing. But that seems to be the opinion of Goetz with regard to this episode. Cf. Cf. Ubertinus de Casali, *Arbor Vitae Crucifixae Jesu*, Monumenta Politica et Philosophica Rariora. Series I, Numerus 4. With an introduction and bibliography by Charles T. David, (Torino, Bottega d'Erasmus, 1961), 426-7.

When discussing the *Mirror of Perfection*, Goetz mentions our episode twice: as 2MP 2 and 2MP 26 He recognizes the *Mirror of Perfection 2* as "an authentic account of Leo" for two reasons: the presence of the "We" (which for him is "a testimonial phrase for the authors as direct witnesses") and the episode's content. There is Francis's reply about the brothers' manner of living totally poor, and there is his behavior in the face of the conflict that arose over it in the Order. Here we have one of the finest pages written by the great German medievalist; it shows his deep understanding of the history of Franciscanism. He points out how the



whose composition is a literary anomaly, if you wish, but which functions psychologically. Proof of this comes from the part that is missing in the *Intention of the Rule* but present in Lemmens's *Mirror* and—with the same arrangement as in the *Legend of Perugia* 101—in the *Mirror of Perfection* 26. We are referring to the passage about Francis's greeting. Indeed, the revelation of the greeting is mentioned in the context of another revelation, and is immediately linked to the memory of the beginning of the Lesser Brothers, when those who were greeted with "May the Lord give you peace" were amazed at this.

Finally, we would like to say that the resumption of the narrative after the sentences beginning with *unde* is more easily understood *after this interruption*, rather than immediately after Francis's reply to Riccerio. The words "If any brother wanted to ask" are, in fact, a formula for resuming something that was begun earlier and then momentarily interrupted. After a group of memories, the first one returns, the one that began everything. It reconfirms the whole group and marks it explicitly with that sign of authenticity ("We who were with him would respond to this") which at first, given the flood of memories, had not been affixed to it. Let us say in this regard that when we study these episodes—which are memories, not histories—we must not be guided by *our* logic or *our* form of narrative; rather we must stick with the style of what we are given.

We have seen what the *Mirror of Perfection* does to this chapter, taking from its nucleus a group of memories that seem to interrupt the logical flow of the conversation with Brother Riccerio. This nucleus is moved to a more suitable place, an exception, certainly, to the anonymous author's usual manner of compilation. But after what we have said, we can conclude that this passage has also come to us in its original form, a complete and coherent whole (with only a few minor changes at the beginning).

The "Poverello of Assisi," usually portrayed as humble and submissive, is seen here in all his moral severity and rigor. On the subject of poverty he never changed his mind, even though he had to "condescend" and accede to the wishes of his brothers, above all so that their differences would not give scandal. Personally, however, his ascetical rigor was exactly the same as it had been in the beginning. The very fact that Francis is insisting on his idea of poverty in all its rigor leads him to notice with concern that the brothers are studying and have books. Francis does not

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meaning of Francis's attitude was later lost and transformed, as his desires were suppressed by the community. On whether 2MP 26 belongs to the writings of Leo, Goetz bases himself on the testimony of Ubertino. He maintains that the passage is an amplification, in terms of the miraculous, of a statement in the *Life*, where the name chosen by Francis for his fraternity is mentioned. On the other hand, he is suspicious of the part about Innocent III's proclamation in Consistory of his approval of the *Rule*, since neither the *Life*, 2C nor LMj mention this. Cf. Goetz, *Die Quellen*, 160, 172-73.

forbid this, of course, because he knows that books are useful for those who study. But then comes the conviction that the important thing is not words, but examples, and Francis offers two: the *Rule* and its norms, and his own good example. It is no accident that he refers to the *Rule* and its norms, which say that the brothers must be content with a single tunic, together with a cord and trousers. As for his own example—revealed in the words of the companions—it is that of total poverty. What is also revealed, in the part that seems to be inserted here almost as a digression, is Franciscanism's deepest and most distinctive ideal. Francis was thinking, not in terms of a large Order, but of a "little flock" that should give heroic example through its poverty and preaching. We believe it is possible to see an exact parallel between the poverty he meant, which was so strict that to many it seemed unbearable, and preaching among the infidels, which included the desire for martyrdom.

Here, imitation of Christ crucified is not an ascetical ideal; his example is direct and immediate. A poor life should be matched by a heroic death that repeats, if possible, the immolation and sacrifice of the cross. This agrees with what we know about the young Francis, his "courtliness," his love for lepers and the poor, his desire to deepen, religiously and spiritually, what he as a layman had known as *amor cortese*. Just as a knight endured countless hardships for the sake of his lady, just as he risked honor and life, so a lesser brother should not be afraid of countless sufferings, hardships, and dangers. Thus Francis's ideal reveals itself as heroic and only for a few, aristocratic perhaps in the context of chivalry. But it is an aristocracy that originates in Paul's hymn to charity, in a love that is sublimated only when expressed as heroism. Such heroism includes "condescension" toward those brothers who were unable to be heroic. Fraternal love is even willing to accept the modification and lowering of its ideal, not for itself, but for others. But this does not mean refusal to maintain an example of strict poverty, because "to condescend to the brothers," to be understanding of human weakness, does not mean to renounce the ideal of a lifetime.

This episode reveals the drama implicit in the Franciscan message itself, heroic in its openness and humble in its condescension. Between these two poles is Francis who suffers the consequences. On the one hand, his heroism makes him an irresistible pole of attraction; on the other hand, since his ideal is so lofty he is forced to see it constantly lowered, if not abandoned. Thus the inevitable split within Franciscanism stands out, in all its psychological and human reality. It cannot be for heroes, yet it cannot do without them, and so the way is prepared for the quarrels that lie ahead. We need to realize that the bitter conflicts over the observance and application of the *Rule*, with which the first hundred years of Franciscan history is filled, cannot be reduced to mere legal questions or formalities. As was often true in the Middle Ages, external events are only a particular, or it would be better to say symbolic, expression of ruptures, splits, deeper realities. Franciscanism, ever since Francis, experienced the problems of its time too

intensely not to feel their deeper repercussions. The knights of Lady Poverty were not all heroes, yet they at least shared their founder's fascination with heroism. To affirm the loftiness of an ideal in a society such as that of the thirteenth century, which was already very attuned to the useful, the practical and the profitable—such a return to heroism is not as quixotic as it might seem. Francis lives poverty, choosing the company of the poor, lamenting the fact that, although he is voluntarily poor, it is not because he is socially destitute, weak, or defenseless. Herein lies his heroism, confirmed, as no one seems to have noticed, by his rejection of all privileges from the Roman Church. This act, and this alone, could make the brothers truly poor, for, like the poor, it placed them not only in a state of destitution, but one of inferiority and weakness within the society in which they lived.

In the words of the dying Francis to Brother Riccerio we seem to sense the supreme heroism of a life that has felt, in all its urgency, the need to be a knight of poverty, a faithful follower of Christ crucified.

It is worth emphasizing here the psychological significance of the testimony of the "We who were with him." Even if the rhetorical limitations of the writer—Brother Leo or whoever—do not always allow him to shed light on Francis's innermost thoughts, and even if we sometimes get the impression that the companions had a better grasp of the external aspects, this does not mean they did not understand. In the series of episodes we have considered, they are forceful and frank in pointing out the saint's heroism, the brothers' weakness, and the "condescension" of the former toward the latter. They have seen very well in this regard, and it is a theme they continue to harp on, because they do see their testimony as based on personal pride. No one ever appears in the first person, even when we can figure out which brother is the eyewitness. In short, these companions are not inert hagiographers or mere servants of a heroic ascetic; they are really his companions, sharers in an intense and vibrant life together. The Francis whom the companions show us ends up greater as a result of this. And for their ability to understand more deeply, for their humility, for their love for their father and master, those who call themselves "We who were with him" also end up greater.

## 15

**LP 106. cf. 2MP 71, 11; MSL 184, 185; IntReg 13-16**

One day while blessed Francis was staying in that palace, one of his companions there said to him: "Father, excuse me, because what I want to say to you, many have already thought. You know," he said "how formerly through the grace of God, the whole religion flourished in the purity of perfection, that is, how all the brothers fervently and zealously observed holy poverty in all things, in small

and poor dwellings, in small and poor furnishings, in small and poor books, and in poor clothing. And as in these things, as well as in other exterior things, they were of one will, concerned about observing everything that had to do with our profession and calling and good example. In this way they were of one mind in the love of God and neighbor.

"But now for a little while, this purity and perfection have begun to change into something different, though the brothers make lots of excuses saying that because of large number, this cannot be observed by the brothers. In fact many brothers believe that the people are more edified by these ways than by those mentioned, and, it seems to them, more fitting to live and behave according to these ways. Therefore they consider worthless the way of simplicity and poverty, which were the beginning and foundation of our religion. Thinking this over, we believe that they displease you, but we really wonder why, if they displease you, you tolerate them and do not correct them."

"May the Lord forgive you," blessed Francis said to him, "for wanting to be against me and opposed to me and involve me in these things that do not pertain to my office." And he said: "As long as I held office for the brothers, and they remained faithful to their calling and profession, and, although I was ill from the beginning of my conversion to Christ, with a little of my care, I satisfied them by my example and preaching. But afterwards I realized that the Lord multiplied the number of the brothers daily and that through tepidity and lack of spirit they began to turn away from the straight and sure way on which they used to walk and take, as you said, a broad way, without paying attention to their profession and calling and good example, or would not give up the journey that they had already begun despite my preaching and my example. I entrusted the religion to the Lord and to the ministers. When I renounced and gave up among the brothers, I excused myself before the brothers at the general chapter saying that, because of my illness I could not take care of them and care for them. And yet, if the brothers had walked and were still walking according to my will, for their consolation I would not want them to have any other minister except me until the day of my death. As long as a faithful and good subject knows and observes the will of his prelate, then the prelate has to have little concern about him. Rather, I would be so happy at the goodness of the brothers and be so consoled, both on their account and my own, that even if I were lying sick in bed, it would not be considered a burden to me to satisfy them."

He said: "My office, that is, a prelaty over the brothers, is spiritual, because I must overcome vices and correct them. Therefore,

if I cannot overcome and correct them by preaching and example, I do not want to become an executioner who beats and scourges, like a power of this world. I trust in the Lord; invisible enemies, the Lord's police, who punish in this world and in the next those who transgress the commandments of God, will take revenge on them, having corrected men of this world, and thus they will return to their profession and calling.

"Nevertheless, until the day of my death, I will not cease teaching the brothers by example and action to walk by the path which the Lord showed me, and which I showed and explained to them. Thus, they will have no excuse before the Lord, and I will not be bound to render any further account about them or about myself before the Lord."

Thus he had it written in his *Testament* that all houses of the brothers should be built of mud and wood, as a sign of holy poverty and humility and the churches constructed for the brothers must be small. In fact, he wanted reform on this matter, that is, houses constructed of wood and mud, and in every other good example to begin in the place of Saint Mary of the Portiuncula. This was the first place where, after they settled there, the Lord began to multiply the brothers, and should be an external reminder to the other brothers who are in religion and those who will come to it.

But some told him it did not seem good to them that the houses of the brothers had to be constructed of mud and wood because in many places and provinces wood is more expensive than stone. But blessed Francis did not wish to argue with them because he was very sick and close to death, and, he lived only a short time afterwards.

This is the reason he wrote in his *Testament*: "Let the brothers be careful not to receive in any way churches or dwellings or any other things built for them, unless they are according to the poverty we have promised in the *Rule*, as pilgrims and strangers let them always be guests there."

We who were with him when he wrote the *Rule* and almost all his other writings bear witness that he had many things written in the *Rule* and in his other writings, to which certain brothers, especially prelates, were opposed. So it happened that on points where the brothers were opposed to blessed Francis during his life, now, after his death, they would be very useful to the whole religion. Because he greatly feared scandal, he gave in, although unwillingly, to the wishes of the brothers. But he often repeated this saying: "Woe to those brothers who are opposed to what I know to be the will of God for the greatest good of the religion, even if I unwillingly give in to their wishes."

He often said to his companions: "Here lies my pain and grief: those things which I received from God by His mercy with great effort of prayer and meditation for the present and future good of the religion, and which are, as He assures me, in accordance with His will, some of the brothers on the authority and support of their knowledge nullify and oppose me saying: "These things must be kept and observed; but not those!"

But, as was said, because he feared scandal so much that he permitted many things to happen and gave in to their will in many things that were not according to his will.

The *Legend of Perugia* 106 is one of those chapters that recounts Francis's words and at the same time draws from them admonitions and examples to show the contrast between the Order's early, primitive ideal, and how it was changing even during Francis's lifetime.

The structure of this chapter is remarkably similar to that of Chapter 101, which describes the conversation between Brother Riccerio and Francis.<sup>195</sup> Some believe that because the Order is better off externally, many are more edified than they were when it maintained its original strictness. Therefore "they consider worthless the way of simplicity and poverty, *which were the beginning and foundation of our religion.*"<sup>196</sup> Then comes the final and most important consideration: "Thinking this over, we believe that they displease you, but we really wonder why, if they displease you, you tolerate them and do not correct them." Francis's response is very interesting in a number of ways. First of all, for his clear awareness of his role within the Order, what it was when he conceived it and what it became after a regular hierarchy was introduced. As long as he held office for the brothers, he did everything he could to maintain the original rigor, striving to observe it himself, even though he was ill from the beginning of his

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<sup>195</sup>LP 106 begins by immediately establishing a close link with LP 101, for reasons of place: "One day while blessed Francis was staying in that palace...." These first words, in fact, make sense only in relation to the chapters immediately preceding. LP 99-101 describes events that took place in the palace of the bishop of Assisi, while other places are the setting LP 102-105. The presence of these words in LP 101 and LP 106, as well as in IntReg, can be explained by association of subject matter. In any case, these eight consecutive episodes are a sign of the same flood of memories we mentioned in connection with LP101. In the corresponding 2MP 71 no place is mentioned at all. In IntReg 13, the reference is the same as LP 106, with the addition that Francis was "sick."

<sup>196</sup> These lines touch on a question much debated among the Franciscans in the middle of the thirteenth century: Was the spread of the Order a sign from God or a sign of decay? In LP 101 and 106 the position of the "We" on this subject is made perfectly clear. First, they speak of the "little flock" LP 101, then they attribute the idea that the growth of the Order was a sign of its success to those who had abandoned the original practice of poverty. These, in our opinion, are two of the most controversial episodes in the debate, which was to culminate in St. Bonaventure and his concept of Franciscanism.

conversion to Christ. But he is anxious to explain that if the brothers had walked and were still walking according to his will, for their consolation he would not want them to have any other minister except him until the day of his death: "As long as a faithful and good subject knows and observes the will of his prelate, then the prelate has to have little concern about him. Rather, I would be so happy at the goodness of the brothers and be so consoled, both on their account and my own, that even if I were lying sick in bed, it would not be considered a burden to me to satisfy them."<sup>197</sup>

In this chapter we see again—with regard to the hierarchy, and with regard to the houses and churches of the brothers—the distinction between the spiritual and the juridical, between example and adherence to a law. The witnesses mention an objection raised by some of the brothers: in certain places wood for building houses was more expensive than stone. But Francis did not wish to argue with them "because he was very sick and close to death, and, he lived only a short time afterwards." Again there is mention of a testament, this time the one we are familiar with, which says that the brothers should live in houses that are poor and in accord with the poverty prescribed in the *Rule*, and that they should live there "as pilgrims and strangers."<sup>198</sup>

Here, as elsewhere, the "We who were with him" break in to say that he had many other things written in the *Rule* and in his other writings to which the brothers, especially the prelates of the Order, were opposed. Yet, they sadly note, many of the things Francis wrote and had to remove would now, after his death "be very useful to the whole religion."<sup>199</sup> Once again the reason is given. The witnesses insist on it, as though wishing to avoid a criticism that was evidently still heard from time to time in their day:<sup>200</sup> "Because he greatly feared scandal, he gave in, although unwillingly, to the wishes of the brothers." As we have already pointed out, this, for Francis, is the essential problem. It sheds a bright light into what may be one of the more hidden corners of the saint's mind.

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<sup>197</sup>The "We" mention Francis's resignation as head of the Order in the *Legend of Perugia* 11. There the expression used is *officium prelationis*, and the reasons for his resignation are not given. The incident also occurs in LP 39, which does not bear the hallmark "We." Also found there is the expression *prelationis officium*. The resignation is justified for two reasons, presented by two speakers. The one who is explaining the incident mentions Francis's intention to preserve humility; but to Francis himself is attributed a prayer where he says he can no longer care for his "family" because of his "infirmities." Besides these two reasons, LP 106 adds a third: the brothers had turned away from the way he had chosen. Here his illness is mentioned only as the official excuse. Actually, the question is still debated by Franciscan historians; cf. Schmitt, *I vicari*, 235-63.

<sup>198</sup>For the *Testament* Cf. K. Esser, *Testament*.

<sup>199</sup>Cf. LP 106.

<sup>200</sup>There no evidence of this controversy except for our group of sources. It seems the community never offered as an argument the fact that Francis agreed to mitigating poverty.

What does it mean to say that Francis feared scandal? What scandal? This comes up in other passages, like the one about Brother Riccerio, where Francis complains of having to "give in to the wishes of the brothers."<sup>201</sup> The fraternity he had founded was a fraternity in the true sense of the word, a union of hearts and wills, in which the important thing was not obedience to a norm or specific command, but rather the bond of affection and mutual love. As Francis says in this same chapter, he could persuade his brothers by word and example—or at least he could try—but he did not want to be their executioner, beating and scourging them "like a power of this world." His Order neither could nor should know an authority that gives commands like others.

It is worth using this series of statements to elicit Francis's deeper motives for refusing to accept one of the rules already in use at the time. All of them, starting with the Rule of Benedict, provided for punishments, chastisements, and clear affirmations of the principle of authority as a principle of authority, rather than a bond of love. But precisely here is the greatest and most obvious difference between Francis and those who came before him. To paraphrase a famous passage of St. Paul, we might say that poverty is excellent, but love is more excellent.<sup>202</sup> Scandal, then, is to impose oneself with authority, to punish or rebuke in virtue of a right. Francis counters all this with word and example alone. Here lie the essential roots of the Franciscan movement. More than a religion, in the eyes of its founder, it is a fraternity, where conflict is a scandal and where it is better to accept what causes displeasure and suffering rather than break, or in any way weaken, this bond of affection. Therefore the episode concludes with Francis's human recognition of a difference between the ideal revealed to him by God for his and his brothers' salvation, and what was being professed by those who were speaking "on the authority and support of their knowledge." They were nullifying his sentiment of love and were opposed to him, deciding on the basis of legal principles: "These things must be kept and observed; but not those!" Thus the final point of a very human conflict in Francis between fraternal love and law, or better, between love and knowledge. Francis is inexhaustibly driven toward loving relationships that embrace the entire universe, from larks to lepers. This drive surpasses all laws and legal prescriptions.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>201</sup>Cf. LP 67, 101, 106.

<sup>202</sup>Cf. 1Cor 13:3.

<sup>203</sup>On this subject, it may be worth recalling Francis's relationship with Clare of Assisi or Jacoba dei Settesoli, toward whom he behaves with total disregard for the prescriptions of the *Rule* forbidding friendships with women. We notice that ER II forbids the brothers from having suspicious dealings with women, from entering the monasteries of nuns, and from being godfathers to men or women. But when Jacoba dei Settesoli arrives at the Portiuncula, he allows her to enter, overlooking his own prescription forbidding any woman to enter, cf. LP 8. 2C 113, which parallels LP 37 2MP 86, is most enlightening on this very delicate point in



This episode provides a most interesting window into one of the most disturbing and painful aspects of Francis's spirituality at the end of his life. It expresses his sense of regret at what could have been accomplished, but was not. We should not be surprised, then, that the episode is not found in Thomas of Celano.

In Thomas, this entire aspect of Francis's humanness is either completely downplayed or, as in this case, ignored. But the episode is borrowed and used in the *Mirror of Perfection*.

As he did before with the *Legend of Perugia* 101, the anonymous author of the *Mirror of Perfection* disrupts the unity of the passage. The last part, about the construction of the brothers' houses and churches, is found by itself in the *Mirror of Perfection* 11, where it is used to show the contrast between Francis's teaching and the situation that had been developing in the Order. The first part is found in the *Mirror of Perfection* 71,<sup>204</sup> where it is reproduced almost verbatim, except (and only in some manuscripts) for a chronological detail found in the *Legend* but not in the *Mirror*.<sup>205</sup> In the last part, the parallelism is almost exact, except for the usual unimportant differences in readings.

We must turn our attention, then, to Chapter 11, which parallels the *Legend of Perugia*:

LP 106

Thus he had it written in his Testament that all houses of the brothers should be built of mud and wood, as a sign of holy poverty and humility and the churches constructed for the brothers must be small. In fact, he wanted reform on this matter, that is, houses constructed of wood and mud, and in every other good example to begin in the place of Saint Mary of the Portiuncula. This was the first place where, after they settled there, the Lord began to multiply the brothers, and should be an external reminder to

2MP 11

When blessed Francis decreed that the churches of the brothers should be small and that their houses should be built only of mud and wood, as a sign of holy poverty and humility, he wanted this to begin in the place of Saint Mary of the Portiuncula. Thus this would be a perpetual reminder to all the brothers, now and in the future, since this was the first and principal place in the whole Order.

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Francis's psychology.

<sup>204</sup>2MP 11 is part of Chapter I, "On the Perfection of Poverty," and is entitled "How brothers, especially prelates and scholars, opposed his desire to erect humble places and buildings." 2MP 71 is part of Chapter III, "On the Perfection of Holy Humility and Obedience in Himself and His Brothers," and is entitled "His answer to a brother who asked why he did not correct the abuses that occurred in the Order in his own time.

<sup>205</sup> LP 106: "One day while blessed Francis was staying in that palace, one of his companions there said to him...." 2MP 71: "One of blessed Francis's companions once said to him..."

the other brothers who are in religion and those who will come to it.<sup>206</sup>

We hardly need to point out that the difference between the two accounts arises mainly from the fact that the *Mirror of Perfection* inserts the passage in one of its explicitly controversial parts, on how the primitive practice of poverty was being abandoned in Franciscan houses. That is why the anonymous author thought it best to remove the first part, thus giving the passage an autonomous character. But this removal is not accidental. If we take the episode as found in the *Legend of Perugia* 106, the companions' testimony constitutes the whole passage, the episode itself. They want to emphasize Francis's primitive ideal and his sad disappointment. But the *Mirror of Perfection* 11 wants to carry on a controversy against the learned brothers. We see this very well in the following comparison:

**LP 106**

We who were with him when he wrote the *Rule* and almost all his other writings bear witness that he had many things written in the *Rule* and in his other writings, to which certain brothers, especially prelates, were opposed. So it happened that on points where the brothers were opposed to blessed Francis during his life, now, after his death, they would be very useful to the whole religion.

**2MP 11**

We who were with him when he wrote the *Rule* and almost all his other writings bear witness that he had many things written in the *Rule* and in his other writings, to which many brothers, especially prelates and the wise ones among us were opposed. Nowadays these things would be very useful and necessary for the whole religion.

No lengthy proof is needed to show that the second passage is later than the first, especially since the expression "the wise ones among us" recalls the widespread presence of learned brothers in the Order. This was still unthinkable at the time the witnesses were writing.

After clarifying and checking these points, perhaps we should pause a moment to reflect on the witnesses and the kind of testimony they give. As before, everything they say symbolizes the clear distinction between primitive Franciscanism and what it became later, while Francis was still alive. And they tell us, exactly and unequivocally, what his views were, always stamping them with their formula.

Whether it is Brother Riccerio and books and total poverty, or whether it is Franciscan houses and churches, one thing is certain: Francis never changed his ideal, never gave in to the desires of the others in anything regarding his own particular ideals. Although he humbly admits he has been weak and sickly (*infirmicius*) ever since his conversion, yet he

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<sup>206</sup>The difference between "testament" and "decree" corresponds to a new reality, which is also cultural.

remains, and intends to remain until the day of his death, a living example and reproof. But he does not want to exercise legal authority. He has renounced the *officium fratrum* and entrusted it to a regular hierarchy to which he implicitly refuses to belong. In this way he could safeguard the exemplary validity of his ideal, which continued to attract those who were able to recognize it and wished to follow it, and at the same time avoid the scandal of a conflict between himself and the brothers, which would have meant death to that union of hearts he wanted his Order to be. On the one hand, he feared scandal because it would cause dissension in the Order; on the other hand, he maintained the validity of his own life example, while his "condescension" allowed him to make the supreme act of love: to allow the others those concessions he himself did not feel he could accept.

Thus this episode is one of the richest and most useful for understanding Francis. But it is also one of those that help us most to appreciate the importance of the "We who were with him." They are faithful recorders of the past, but they also keep their eyes open to the present. In this episode they repeat what they said before, in Chapter 101, about Francis's "condescension." They also point out that if the brothers and prelates had accepted the provisions Francis wanted to insert in the *Rule*, certain difficulties that arose after his death would have been avoided. Unfortunately we are not told exactly what these difficulties were, unless we take it to mean simply that the Order had turned away from its primitive rigor. Purely by way of hypothesis, let us hazard a guess that it might refer to the norms about the rejection of privileges from the Roman Curia and about the houses of the brothers. These things are in the *Testament* (which, let us remember, is intended to depict Francis's example) but not in the *Rule*. This idea finds some support in the following observation. Even though these memoirs were written after *Quo elongati*, and thus after the *Testament* had been declared legally non-binding, the "We who were with him" not only refer to the testament we know today but also mention others of which no trace remains. But these must not only have existed; they must also have carried some weight if they are referred to as though they were well known.

Although this episode did not find its way into Thomas of Celano's great compilation, it did have the good fortune to reappear in the *Intention of the Rule*<sup>207</sup> and in the *Tree of Life of the Crucified Jesus*,<sup>208</sup> where it is clearly and explicitly attributed to Brother Leo. It is important here to point out that the *Intention* and Ubertino of Casale allow us to say beyond doubt that the episode is a unit, not divided as in the *Mirror of Perfection*. This confirms our interpretation of the passage so far. As for the *Mirror of Perfection* and its expression "to us his companions," a comparison with Ubertino shows that

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<sup>207</sup> Chapters 13-16.

<sup>208</sup> *Tree of Life*, 429-30.

the words "to us" are not part of our episode.<sup>209</sup> Neither are the last lines about the learned brothers who are imposing legal norms. Therefore the latter are given greater importance, whereas the "We who were with him" shift the accent to Francis's "condescension."<sup>210</sup>

16

**LP 111, cf. 1MP 39; 2MP 16**

At one time blessed Francis was staying at the hermitage of Sant' Eleuterio, near the town of Condigliano in the district of Rieti. Since he was wearing only one tunic, one day because of the extreme cold, and out of great necessity, he patched his tunic and that of his companion with scraps of cloth on the inside, so that his body began to be comforted a little. A short while afterwards, when he was returning from prayer one day, he said with great joy to his companion: "I must be the form and example of all the brothers; so, although it is necessary for my body to have a tunic with patches, nevertheless I must take into consideration my brothers who have the same need, but perhaps do not and cannot have this. Therefore, I must stay down with them and I must suffer those same necessities they suffer so that in seeing this, they may be able to bear them more patiently."

We who were with him could not say how many and how great were the necessities that he denied his body in food and clothing, to give good example to the brothers and so that they would endure their necessities in greater patience. At all times, especially after the brothers began to multiply and he resigned the office of prelate, blessed Francis had as his highest and principal goal to teach the brothers more by actions than by words, what they ought to do and what they ought to avoid.

Corresponding to the *Legend of Perugia* 111 are the *Mirror of Perfection* 16 and Lemmens's *Mirror* 39. The great value of this episode is its explicit treatment of a theme often stressed by the companions: mutual love, the deepest sentiment that should unite Francis and his companions, and in this love, good example.

For Francis, success is a problem that presents him with a dilemma. He can impose his ideal by force, as head of the Order, or he can maintain

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<sup>209</sup>Cf. Sabatier, *Speculum*, 29.

<sup>210</sup>Goetz gives credence to 2MP 11 because of the presence of the "We" and because of the passage "So he often used to say to us his companions" and how it portrays Francis in conflict with his brothers. On the other hand, Ubertino's citation of 2MP 71 makes this chapter credible for him. Cf. Goetz, *Die Quellen*, 167-8.

the early community's sense of fraternity and love by placing himself at the head of the Order, not in the juridical sense, but as the supreme example—or, as the companions say in technical terms, as the “form and example.” Here we can truly say we have summed up the essence of Francis's intentions, drama, and internal problems. He was unyielding in his reluctance to accept a legalistic organization with canonical structures, even though he understood this was inevitable if the Order was to survive. In any case, he wanted to remain the attractive force, the incarnation of the ideal, the living example alongside the legally established hierarchy. We have described elsewhere how he tried to perpetuate these two poles of law and example.<sup>211</sup> Here it should be noted that rarely do these two poles stand out more clearly in the biographies of Francis than in this passage.

In short, given a choice between power and government, and the example of love, Francis does not hesitate to choose the latter. In this sense what we have here is an opening that allows us to look into his soul.

Thus a question arises that is certainly not irrelevant, psychologically speaking. How and why did Francis, hurting because his ideal had been compromised, his body racked by illness, still feel that he could sing the praises of God? The question is all the more relevant when we think of the inevitable stupid nonsense about Francis the masochist. Let us not forget that he always keeps his eyes on the crucified Christ, never forgetting that he is God made one of us. Faced with such immense love, faced with another proof of Christ's love, his gift of himself in the Eucharist, Francis sees that nothing human can compare with this.<sup>212</sup> He understands what are the supreme values in nature and life; thus he is victorious over suffering and humiliation, over the crisis (if not the failure) of his ideal; thus the *Canticle of the Creatures*, which, not coincidentally, ends with the praise of death.

If we move now to the *Mirror of Perfection* 16, we will see that it repeats, almost word for word, the *Legend of Perugia*,<sup>213</sup> omitting only some

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<sup>211</sup>Cf. R. Manselli, *L'ultima decisione*.

<sup>212</sup>On Francis's attitude toward the Eucharist, recall what he says in the *Testament*.

<sup>213</sup>The common origin of the two passages is certain, based on the the presence of several identical passages, such as: “so that his body began to be comforted a little”; “he said with great joy to his companion”; “how many and how great were the necessities that he denied his body.” But of the two texts, the one preserved in 2MP seems later; there is a certain amount of retouching, for example, the addition “as was his custom” after the words “only one tunic,” or the omission of the fact that the patch was sewn on the inside of his tunic, and that the necessities Francis denied himself concerned food and clothing. Also to be noted is the change in the meaning of the term “condescend.” The manuscript tradition of 2MP uses another word, “consider.” We should also keep in mind that the testimonial formula itself is different in the two compilations. LP 111 reads: “We who were with him could not say”; 2MP 16 has: “We who were with him cannot express in words or in writing.” The expression contained in 2MP 16 is foreign to the language used by the “We” in LP, where we find, if anything, “to write or

details about the place."<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, it gives the name of the brother whose tunic Francis patched; he seems to have been Brother Riccerio, already mentioned in the *Legend of Perugia* 101. This brother is named only in the *Mirror of Perfection*; we do not know whether this is because the compiler had special information, or because it could be easily deduced from the fact that he knew that this Riccerio was with Francis at Rieti.<sup>25</sup> In the *Mirror of Perfection* the episode is entitled, "How he did not want to satisfy his body with things that he thought other brothers were lacking."

To conclude, the question arises why this passage is not in Thomas of Celano's *Remembrance*. First of all, since this episode repeats other similar passages, Thomas probably regarded it as a superfluous text; on the other hand, it did not fit in with his plan for the *Remembrance*.

Lemmens's *Mirror* 39 omits the first part of the *Legend of Perugia* 111, namely, the episode of the patched tunic. Otherwise, except for slight textual variants, it follows the *Legend* very faithfully, and not the *Mirror of Perfection* 16.<sup>26</sup>

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recount," cf. LP 84, 93. In any case, there is one noticeable difference between LP 111 and 2MP 16. In 2MP Francis's example is attributed solely to the period after the increase in number of brothers ("For after the brothers began to multiply"); but in the *Legend* it is described as a constant attitude ("At all times...blessed Francis had as his highest and principal goal"), only manifested more strongly after the increase in brothers. LP 111 also adds the other characteristic of this period, his resignation from the "office of prelate." So 2MP 16 lacks the expression "especially after," which echoes another, recognized by Delorme as typical of the companions' episodes: "especially because."

<sup>24</sup>Cf. LP 111: "at the hermitage of Sant' Eleuterio, near the town of Condigliano in the district of Rieti"; 2MP 16: "at the hermitage of Sant' Eleuterio in the district of Rieti."

<sup>25</sup>Cf. Bigaroni's note to LP 73, p. 195.

<sup>26</sup>In this episode Goetz mentions only the presence of the "We" and the absence of partisanship; for this reason he does not question its authenticity. But he minimizes the episode's importance, explaining the fact that Thomas omitted it in this way: "It is not so important that 2C is obliged to accept it." Cf. Goetz, *Die Quellen* 168. On the other hand, we believe this is a text of considerable importance. It testifies to the companions' effort to return, over and over, and from different angles, to Francis's duty to be an example for the brothers. It is interesting, in this regard, how the compiler of Lemmens's *Mirror* understands the importance of Francis's words: he reports them and tells us that for him they are more important than the episode in which they are found. Let us underscore this difference between the "We," who always situate Francis's words in a narrative framework, and the compiler of Lemmens's *Mirror*, who is content with the "sayings," a difference that no doubt signifies two different mentalities.

## III

**Passages in the: *Remembrance*, but not in the *Legend of Perugia*, and the Sabatier edition of the *Mirror of Perfection***

After examining the "We" episodes found in the *Legend of Perugia*, the *Mirror of Perfection* and the *Remembrance*, as well as the others not found in Thomas of Celano, we now note the single case of a "We" episode absent in the *Legend of Perugia* and the *Mirror*, but transmitted to us in the *Remembrance*.

## 17

**MSL 187, cf. 2C 51**

One night when he was very weak from serious illness, blessed Francis said to his companions: "I would like to be refreshed, brothers, and to eat something, if I could." His companions said to him: "What would you like to eat, father?" He said: "If I had some parsley perhaps I could eat a little bread with it." His companions said to the brother who was doing the cooking: "Do you think, brother, that you could find some parsley in the garden?" There was a garden next to the palace where blessed Francis was lying. The brother replied: "I couldn't find any in the daytime, let alone at night, especially since the little I found I picked daily." Blessed Francis said to him: "Go, brother, perhaps you'll find some." The brother replied: "It's very dark, and I can't take a light since there is a strong wind, so how will I find it? I can't distinguish the herbs in the dark, and even in the daytime I could hardly find any." Blessed Francis said to him: "Go, brother, and don't worry. Just do this: when you go into the garden, stoop down and put your hand to the ground, and bring me the first herbs you touch." He went then, without a light, and when he entered the garden he could not distinguish the wild plants from the cultivated. Simply to satisfy blessed Francis he stooped down and picked a handful of the first plants he came across, as blessed Francis had told him to, and brought them to him. When one of the brothers saw that they were weeds he began to separate them out, and because of blessed Francis's faith by divine providence he found among them a beautiful, large sprig of parsley. The brothers were greatly delighted and filled with admiration at blessed Francis's holiness and faith. But blessed Francis said to his companions: "My brothers, you shouldn't make me say a thing so many times." And when he had eaten a little

he felt refreshed. Blessed Francis's purity and faith were so great that the Lord worked many great miracles by his faith, both in bodily and spiritual ways, on his own behalf and for others, which we have seen and know, we who were with him for a little while, that it would take us long enough to write or recount.

The episode in *MS Little* 187 tells how one night Francis wanted a bit of parsley to season the bread he was supposed to eat.<sup>217</sup> The companions, presenting themselves again as "We who were with him," emphasize the faith of Francis that worked so many miracles. And, if we are not mistaken, they actually hear again an echo of the saint's words.

This episode also recurs in Thomas of Celano's *Remembrance*, but not in the *Mirror of Perfection*. Thomas places it in the large first part of his second work, where most of our passages are included,<sup>218</sup> as we have already seen.

It is interesting to point out, first of all, that Thomas of Celano adds a chronological detail. Whereas the companions speak of a "serious illness," Thomas thinks he can specify that it was "at the time of his last illness." The parallel between our episode and Thomas of Celano's chapter is mostly textual. But, as always, the companions' account is more spontaneous and familiar, with a genuine feeling for human relationships and everyday life. This time, given his demands as narrator, Thomas condenses, especially at the beginning and end. He also describes the brothers' life in terms of his own time. While the companions speak of a "brother who was doing the cooking," Thomas mentions a "cook," forgetting that Francis would assign the kitchen duties to the one he thought best suited, as we see from the famous stories about Brother Juniper. And so it seems that at that time there was as yet no expressly designated brother cook.<sup>219</sup>

Also very interesting is the conclusion of the episode, where the saint's sad and wistful words about constantly needing to repeat everything are transformed into a rather pedantic little discourse on obedience. While this may be very useful as an admonition for the brothers and for the spiritual life of the Order, it is completely out of place on the lips of Francis at the end of his life.<sup>220</sup> Here, as in another earlier episode,<sup>221</sup> Thomas of

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<sup>217</sup>The text is published by Jacques Cambell and inserted into LP as Chapter 28 cf. *I Fiori dei tre Compagni*. Testi francescani latini ordinati con introduzione da J. Cambell. Versione italiana di Nello Vian (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1967), 64-68, and by Brooke as Appendix 4, cf. Brooke, *Scripta*, 296-98.

<sup>218</sup>It forms Chapter XXII, which is entitled "The parsley found at his command among wild herbs at night."

<sup>219</sup>Cf. *Vita fratris Iuniperi*, in *AF* III, Quaracchi 1907, 62-63.

<sup>220</sup>"Dear brothers, do what you're commanded the first time you're told, and don't wait for it to be repeated. Don't pretend that something is impossible; for even if what I command is beyond your strength, obedience will find the strength."



Celano cloaks in a veil of piety an incident that the companions are not afraid to mention: Francis might be respected and revered, but in the end he suffered all the annoyances of community life. His sickness, especially, was an inevitable burden to everyone and made him something of a nuisance. This real-life trait may not sit well with those who would like to have the circle of people around Francis made up of perfect human beings. But it is invaluable for those who, as historians, would like to get to the real and living human dimension, still free from idealizing, hagiography, and rather artificial praise.

But why was it left out of the *Mirror*? In this case we can answer only by pointing out that it is hard to fit this episode into the *Mirror of Perfection* with its rigorous systematic classification. On the other hand, let us not forget that our text is missing in the *Legend of Perugia*, which leads us to pose again the entire question of the companions' texts and their transmission, at least within the limits of what Thomas of Celano could have known of them. It seems to us that the absences in Thomas can all be explained, and the companions' texts, whether he used them or not, reached him in their fullest form. The present text is proof of this. It shows that the compiler of the *Legend of Perugia* either did not have all the texts of the companions at hand or decided he had to exclude at least one. But since apparently we are talking about only one, it seems much more likely that he did not have it. On the other hand, the fact that Thomas of Celano and the compiler of the *Mirror of Perfection* made use of texts not used in the *Legend of Perugia* is confirmed by another episode, to which we shall return. There we are told that as Francis was passing through Bologna he heard about a house the people regarded as belonging, in some sense, to the brothers. For this reason Francis did not want to enter Bologna; he actually refused to let the brothers stay there. They had to leave the house, as we are told by one of the brothers who was among the sick living there. They could not return until Hugolino of Ostia declared while preaching to the public that the house did not belong to the brothers.<sup>221</sup> Once again we have a text that reached Crescentius of Iesi and was passed on to Thomas of Celano, yet was not used by the anonymous compiler of the *Legend of Perugia*. And once again, without wishing to deal with the whole question of the *Legend of Perugia* and its unity, we must say that this fact leads to a sure conclusion. What we have is not a unified compilation by the three companions, which has been copied after eliminating the passages by Thomas of Celano. Instead it is a group of texts put together to create a series of biographical pieces that are chronologically disconnected. The reasons for this cannot be determined, except by appealing to the very general hypothesis that someone wanted to have for himself memoirs of his spiritual father and master. In this regard, we should remember that at least one other different

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<sup>221</sup>Cf. Episode I.

<sup>222</sup>See Episode 20 *infra*.

testimony appears in the *Legend of Perugia*, namely, "The one who wrote this, saw it and bore witness to it," or with slight variations, "He who writes has seen this many times, and bears witness to it," which is borrowed by Thomas of Celano in the *Remembrance 77*.<sup>23</sup>

In other words, the testimonies we have examined, characterized by the formula "We who were with him," are not the only ones received by Crescentius of Iesi and used, in whole or in part, by Thomas of Celano. They are flanked by at least two other series of testimonies, not collective but personal. And one of these, the one from the brother in Bologna, is certainly foreign to the world of Francis's companions. With regard to the *Legend of Perugia*, this seems reason enough not to consider the group of testimonies left over after Thomas of Celano has been eliminated as exclusively the work of Francis's companions. It is a compilation, as we have said more than once, and that is why we must give privileged status to the episodes containing the phrase "We who were with him."

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<sup>23</sup>See Episode [XIX] below.

## V

**Special Passages Containing Individual and Personal Testimonies**

The texts we intend to discuss in the next pages<sup>274</sup> can in any way be reduced to the form "We who were with him." These are instead individual testimonies, two of which are authenticated with the same phrase, "The one who wrote this, saw it and bore witness to it,"<sup>275</sup> while the third has as formula that is slightly different but also individual and personal.<sup>276</sup>

These testimonies are also important because they show the interest and response created within the Franciscan Order by the request for additional information that came from Crescentius of Iesi and the general chapter. While it is understandable that those who were closest to Francis, especially in his last years, gave a collective response and also became spokespersons for some of the others, the testimonies we are speaking of now come from different individuals. They are all the more valuable since, like the testimonies of the "We who were with him," they were borrowed and reworked by Thomas of Celano.

## 18

**LP 64, cf. 1MP 32; 2MP 58**

Once, when blessed Francis had returned to Saint Mary of the Portiuncula, he found there Brother James the Simple with a leper covered with sores who had come there that day. The holy father had entrusted this leper to him, and especially all the other lepers who had severe sores. For, in those days, the brothers stayed in the leper hospitals. That Brother James was like the doctor for those with severe sores, and he gladly touched, changed, and treated their wounds.

As if reproving Brother James, blessed Francis told him: "You should not take our Christian brothers about in this way since it is not right for you or for them." Blessed Francis used to call lepers "Christian brothers."

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<sup>274</sup>We are referring to LP 64, 96 and 2MP 6, which is missing in LP.

<sup>275</sup>LP 64; in LP 96 we find: "He who writes has seen this many times, and bears witness to it."

<sup>276</sup>A brother who was sick, and was thrown out of that house, writes this and bears witness to it" (2MP 6). It is the only time, as far as we can tell, that a witness identifies himself as an active participant in the events narrated.

Although he was pleased that Brother James helped and served them, the holy father said this because he did not want him to take those with severe sores outside the hospital. This was especially because Brother James was very simple, and he often went with a leper to the church of Saint Mary, and especially because people usually abhorred lepers who had severe sores.

After he said these things, blessed Francis immediately reproached himself, and he told his fault to Brother Peter of Catanio, who was then general minister, especially because blessed Francis believed that in reproving Brother James he had shamed the leper. And because of this he told his fault, to make amends to God and to the leper. Blessed Francis said to Brother Peter: "I tell you to confirm for me the penance I have chosen to do for this, and do not oppose me in any way."

Brother Peter told him: "Brother, do as you please."

Brother Peter so venerated and feared blessed Francis, and was so obedient to him, that he would not presume to change his obedience, although then, and many other times, it hurt him inside and out.

Blessed Francis said: "Let this be my penance: I will eat together with my Christian brother from the same dish."

While blessed Francis was sitting at the table with the leper and other brothers, a bowl was placed between the two of them. The leper was completely covered with sores and ulcerated, and especially the fingers with which he was eating were deformed and bloody, so that whenever he put them in the bowl, blood dripped into it.

Brother Peter and the other brothers saw this, grew very sad, but did not dare say anything out of fear of the holy father.

The one who wrote this, saw it and bore witness to it.

The first of the episodes we are discussing here takes us back in a general way to Francis's relationship with lepers, which was so important in his life. In this episode it is described with a sense of truth and reality that brings out Francis's humanity, with its limitations and weaknesses, but also his ability to overcome this in an act of love.

Too often we forget that Francis's conversion involved a meeting with a leper and a reversal of values. As he says in his *Testament*: "What had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body."<sup>17</sup> This passage is essential for interpreting Francis's psychological growth. But since someone might say, in the words of Goethe, that its value is that of "poetry and truth," and thus be suspected of reconstructing, *a posteriori*, a different psychological process, it is worth recalling that the Franciscan fraternity felt

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<sup>17</sup>Cf. Manselli, *La povertà*, 255-82.

that its basic function and essential task was to serve lepers.<sup>28</sup> It was Francis's desire that these poor outcasts of society, cruelly and utterly marginalized, should never be without his consoling presence and that of his brothers. The leper who had changed his life becomes the symbol of a complete reversal. This could not remain just something for himself; it had to be for the entire Order. Here we get a quick glimpse of the importance and complexity of the Franciscan fraternity as willed by its founder: not a religious Order, but a solid human fraternity, operating on all levels. Not a pauperist phenomenon, not a workers' movement, but a fraternity trying to draw from the example of Christ a model for serving its brothers and sisters, whatever their condition, whatever their misery, whether they inspired horror, piety, or a simple feeling of solidarity.

We, with our modern squeamishness, might even feel disgust at Francis's eating from the same dish as the leper who is taking food from it with his bloody fingers. But if we read this episode carefully, we will find in it something deeper. Inspired by the love and example of Christ, it is more than the gesture of an ascetic. Francis is ashamed and wants to do penance, not because he has rebuked Brother James the Simple, but because he has made the leper feel less than human.<sup>29</sup> That could be overcome only by restoring to him his human dignity, placing himself on exactly the same level. And the only way to do that, under the circumstances, was by eating together. As this episode makes clear, Francis is not an ascetic who mortifies himself in horror and disgust. Rather he is someone who experiences all "Christian brothers" (his name for lepers) as true brothers in Christ, the Christ he knew had died on the cross for all people.

On the other hand, there is a human appeal and spiritual nobility in the way Francis tries, in great simplicity of heart, to perform his chosen penance. Because of the authority he enjoyed by reason of his good example, he exerts psychological pressure on the man he was supposed to obey. Karl Elm has recently noted and given due importance to Francis's resignation

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<sup>28</sup>The attention given by almost everyone to Francis's conversion as a conversion to poverty and poverty alone has prevented scholars from understanding fully the meaning and importance of lepers in the life and spirituality of Francis. But Brother James and many others after him understood this well, as shown by events in the Order during Francis's absence in the Holy Land and the attitudes of Angela of Foligno at the beginning of the fourteenth century.

<sup>29</sup>In giving the reasons for this penance, the narrator repeats one of the most striking traits seen in Francis in the chapters of LP: his fear of embarrassing someone. We cannot help compare the Francis of LP 64, who "immediately reproached himself...especially because [he] believed that in reproving Brother James he had shamed the leper," with the Francis who eats grapes with a brother "so that the brother would not be ashamed to eat alone" (LP 53), and the Francis who "had the table set" for everyone because he wanted to share a meal with the brother who was dying of hunger, "so he wouldn't be embarrassed to eat alone" (LP 50), as the "We" explain. The narrator's final addition in LP 64 is precious; God and the leper are brought together in Francis's penance: "And because of this he told his fault, to make amends to God and to the leper" (Bigaroni, 164).

from offices in the Order, even though in reality Francis still feels himself head in many ways.<sup>230</sup> But perhaps Elm did not sufficiently emphasize that while Francis resigned from the juridic and institutional aspects, he always reserved to himself the role of example and spiritual leadership. It seems to us that what we have is the desire to establish in the Order a hierarchical authority along with a leadership by example, also authoritative in its own way. The motives may be different, but they are no less valid than the juridic ones.

The episode is not found in the *Remembrance*; in his biographies Thomas of Celano mentions the care of lepers only in passing. Thus he omits an episode that was already troubling for an Order that had taken a very different path.<sup>231</sup> Except for the first lines, which are summarized, the passage is quoted verbatim in Lemmens's *Mirror* 32. This means that the author had before him—as in several other cases already mentioned—a text that was identical to the *Legend of Perugia*. We also find it with some variants in the *Mirror of Perfection* 58.<sup>232</sup>

This episode, because of its characteristic omission by Thomas of Celano, points to a fact of some importance. The official sources were not concerned about presenting a picture of Francis that stuck to facts about which they were (or at least could have been) well informed. Rather they wanted to create a portrait of Francis related to the growth and development of the Order. This comes out in Thomas of Celano, in all the chapters we have examined; we should add, in passing, that it is even more evident if we consider Bonaventure's *Major Life*.

That is why we believe the importance of the *Mirror of Perfection* should be emphasized. Like the second part of Thomas's *Remembrance*, it proposes to give us an ideal picture of Francis as an example for all. But it is the Francis who remained in the minds and hearts of those who had witnessed his earthly life and wanted, each in his own way, to testify to his memory of it. With regard to the "We who were with him," it may be well to recall that this episode is to be placed at a time that seems to be prior to their testimony. Strangely, the authors of the seventeen episodes never mention lepers, but we do not see why this should be surprising. As we have

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<sup>230</sup>Cf. Elm, *Die Entwicklung* 193-233.

<sup>231</sup>For lepers see 2C 9, 66. Goetz noted the absence of this episode in the *Remembrance*, all the more significant since it is attested by an eyewitness, cf. *Die Quellen*, 188. But he does not draw any conclusion from this: "Yet did he not have something here, and did the compiler 2MP mean through the last sentence to deceive?" The answer to this question is found in the episode's presence in LP and in 2MP. It is certain that the three texts go back to a common source, which excludes any possibility of deceit on the part of the compiler of 2MP.

<sup>232</sup>In 2MP58 the title already stresses the point from which this passage was seen in the series of episodes: "How he punished himself by eating out of the same dish as a leper, because he had caused him humiliation."

said more than once, they regularly limit themselves to the final years of Francis's life, when he was nearly blind and gravely ill.

Thus the episode has its own validity. No doubt it was troubling to Thomas of Celano and those who, then and later, saw the Franciscans involved in pastoral care, the life of studies, an asceticism of poverty and work. Yet it is significant that Franciscanism, or at least some of its branches, did not forget the example of its master. Not by accident did Angela of Foligno, in her own way, continue this love for lepers and try to imitate the example of her ideal in the spiritual life. We are told that on Holy Thursday she not only served and fed the poor; she also washed the feet of the women and the hands of the men, "especially those of one of the lepers which were festering and in an advanced stage of decomposition. Then we drank the very water with which we had washed him.... As a small scale of the leper's sores was stuck in my throat, I tried to swallow it. My conscience would not let me spit it out, just as if I had received Holy Communion."<sup>33</sup> It goes without saying that, along with her continuation of Francis's example, there is also, in her mortification and penance, a distinct psychological difference.

## 19

### LP 96, cf. 2C 77; 1MP 1; 2MP 22

After returning from Siena and from "Le Celle" at Cortona, blessed Francis came to Saint Mary of the Portiuncula, and later went to stay at Begnara, north of Nocera, where the brothers were staying in a house that had recently been constructed for them. He stayed there for many days. And because his feet, and even his legs, began swelling up because of dropsy, he began to be seriously ill.

When the people of Assisi heard that he was sick there, they quickly sent some knights of Assisi to that place to bring him back to Assisi, fearing that he would die there and others would claim his most precious remains.

While they were bringing him back, they stopped in a small town belonging to the Commune of Assisi, wanting to have dinner there. Blessed Francis and his companions rested in the house of a man who received him with joy and charity. The knights, however, went about the town, attempting to buy things for their corporal needs, but did not find anything. And they returned to blessed Francis, saying to him as a joke: "Brother, you must give us some of your alms, because we can find nothing to buy."

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<sup>33</sup>Cf. Sainte Angèle de Foligno, *Le livre de l'expérience des vrais fidèles*. Texte latin d'après le manuscrit d'Assise par M.-J. Ferré, traduit avec la collaboration de L. Baudry, Paris 1927, 104-06. [English tr. Paul Lachance].

Blessed Francis, with great intensity of spirit, told them: "You didn't find anything because you trust in your flies, that is, in your coins, and not in God. But go back to the houses where you went when you were looking for things to buy, and do not be ashamed, and ask them for alms for the love of God. The Holy Spirit will inspire them and you will find abundance."

So they went and begged alms, as the holy father told them to do. With the greatest joy, those men and women offered them generously whatever they had. Overjoyed, they came back to blessed Francis telling him what had happened to them.

They held this as a great miracle, considering that what he told them had come true to the letter.

For blessed Francis held that to beg for alms for the love of the Lord God was of very great nobility, dignity, and courtesy before God and before the world. He held this because, everything that the heavenly Father has created for a human's use, after the sin, He has given freely, as alms, both to the worthy and the unworthy on account of the love of His beloved Son.

Therefore, blessed Francis would say that a servant of God must beg alms for the love of God with greater freedom and joy than someone, who, out of courtesy and generosity, wants to buy something, and goes around saying: "Whoever will give me a penny, I will give him a hundred silver pieces, nay, a thousand times more." Because a servant of God offers the love of God which a person merits when he gives alms; in comparison to which, all things in this world and even those in heaven are nothing.

Therefore, before the brothers became numerous—and even after they grew in number—when blessed Francis went through the world preaching, and some noble and wealthy person invited him to eat and lodge with him, since as yet there were no places of residence of the brothers in many cities and towns, he would always go begging for alms at mealtime. He did this, even though he knew that his host had abundantly prepared everything he needed for the love of God, to give a good example to the brothers and because of the nobility and dignity of Lady Poverty. Sometimes he would say to his host: "I do not want to renounce my royal dignity, my heritage, my vocation, and my profession and that of my brothers, that is, to go begging alms. Even if I were to bring no more than three alms, I always want to exercise my responsibility."

And so, he used to go begging alms, and, the one who invited him would unwillingly sometimes go with him. The alms that Francis acquired, he would accept and place them as relics out of his devotion.

He who writes has seen this many times, and bears witness to it.



The *Legend of Perugia* 96 tells of the return of the dying Francis to Assisi. The passage begins with a conflict as the saint's death is imminent; then it recalls the episode of the knights sent to beg alms, confirming the importance of this for Francis as a duty; he even considers it the particular royal dignity, heritage, vocation, and profession of himself and the Lesser Brothers. If we pay attention to the development of the episode, we notice that it proceeds by a series of associations, one recalling another. They conclude with the dinner invitation, preceded by begging for alms, for which, as the narrator also tells us, we have a number of other testimonies. Thus, despite its apparent external disunity, the passage has an internal logic of its own. The whole thing is organized and pointed in one direction, that of Francis's example, as a clear incentive to the duty to beg.<sup>24</sup>

If we go now to the parallel passages, we will discover that the episode in the *Legend of Perugia* is found almost word for word, with very minor initial variations, in the *Mirror of Perfection* 22.<sup>25</sup> Given this literal agreement, it is well to recall that, in the second part of the episode, the *Mirror of Perfection* summarizes the *Legend of Perugia* slightly, as follows:

## LP 96

Therefore, before the brothers became numerous—and even after they grew in number—when blessed Francis went through the world preaching, and some noble and wealthy person invited him to eat and lodge with him, since as yet there were no places of residence of

## 2MP 22

Therefore, before the brothers became numerous—and even after they grew in number—when he would go through the world preaching, if he were invited by someone, however noble and wealthy, to eat and lodge with him, he would always go begging for alms at

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<sup>24</sup>The conflict over possession of the saint's body, as well as going to beg, even when invited to dinner, are found in LP 99, 97. Besides Francis's habit of begging, even if he was invited to dinner, both chapters emphasize the royal dignity associated with begging alms, as well as the theme of example. Cf. Pásztor, *St. Francis, Cardinal Hugolino*, 227-28. For the conflict over Francis's body, a comparison of the two texts reveals the following similarities: LP 96: "When the people of Assisi heard that he was sick there [Begnara], they quickly sent some knights of Assisi to that place to bring him back to Assisi, fearing that he would die there and others would claim his most precious remains." LP 99: "When blessed Francis lay gravely ill in the palace of the bishop of Assisi, in the days after he returned from Bagnara, the people of Assisi, fearing that the saint would die during the night without them knowing about it, and that the brothers would secretly take his body away and place it in another city, placed a vigilant guard each night around the palace's walls." The fear persisted, then, not only in Begnara, but also after the saint arrived in Assisi. It expresses a unique moment in the life of the commune: the "people" are concerned lest they be deprived of a powerful intercessor—there is a specific reference to the "precious remains"—between themselves, their physical sufferings and God.

<sup>25</sup>The title corresponds to the content of the first part of the episode: "How, at blessed Francis's advice, the soldiers obtained their needs by asking alms from door to door." Among the initial variations, we note here that "a man" in LP 96 becomes "a poor man" in 2MP 22.

the brothers in many cities and towns, he would always go begging for alms at mealtimes. He did this, even though he knew that his host had abundantly prepared everything he needed for the love of God, to give a good example to the brothers and because of the nobility and dignity of Lady Poverty. Sometimes he would say to his host....

mealtimes. He did this before he went to his host's house, to give good example to the brothers and because of the dignity of Lady Poverty. Many times he would say to his host....

After noting quickly that Lemmens's *Mirror* 1 corresponds perfectly to the *Legend of Perugia* in this part, it will be enough to note that the *Mirror of Perfection* 22 omits the detail that Francis accepted invitations at a time when the brothers did not yet have "places" where they could find shelter. The reason seems to be an very simple fact, related to the *Mirror* and its intended role of edification. The *Legend of Perugia* offers us a recollection in which, among the chain of events that come to mind (and were perhaps also experienced by the one who is writing), there is the fact that the brothers did not yet have a group of designated places where they could find shelter. The *Mirror of Perfection*, on the other hand, tends to show good example that is not linked to a particular fact such as the lack of "places." It is supra-temporal or even atemporal, in other words, valid for all times and circumstances. This is a minor detail, but it seems quite indicative of the psychological difference between a direct recollection from the mid-thirteenth century and the use of an exemplary incident by someone who wishes to show that the duty to beg for alms was an essential and typical element in Francis's behavior.

At any rate, it is very interesting that at the end we have the testimonial phrase. Here again the *Mirror of Perfection* proves that there must have been an independent episode, which the anonymous compiler was able to borrow and use in its entirety.

Lemmens's *Mirror* 1 eliminates the whole first part about the people of Assisi who send their knights to take charge of the dying Francis. But the second part is highlighted, the part beginning with the words "For blessed Francis held that to beg alms..." just before the middle of the episode. A minute discussion is not needed to show what is self-evident. The anonymous author of this *Mirror* wanted to eliminate an incident that might displease or offend the city of Assisi, such as that of the soldiers sent for such an explicit task. Besides, the episode makes sense by itself within the whole passage as the development of a recollection. In any case, the episode ends in Lemmens's *Mirror* 1 with the testimonial phrase, already cited many times.

It is very interesting to note that while Thomas of Celano does borrow this episode in the *Remembrance* 77, he handles it in his own way.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>The chapter is entitled "How he got some secular knights to go seeking alms" and

He eliminates the whole part about the duty of begging alms and the fact that Francis would go begging before he accepted an invitation to dinner. At the same time, Thomas mentions the incident of the knights and does so in such a way as to prove, beyond a doubt, that he depends on a source shared by our passage. This may be shown by the following comparison:

## LP 96

And they returned to blessed Francis, saying to him as a joke: "Brother, you must give us some of your alms, because we can find nothing to buy." Blessed Francis, with great intensity of spirit, told them: "You didn't find anything because you trust in your flies, that is, in your coins, and not in God. But go back to the houses where you went when you were looking for things to buy, and do not be ashamed, and ask them for alms for the love of God. The Holy Spirit will inspire them and you will find abundance."

## 2C 77

So the knights came back to blessed Francis and said: "You must give us some of your alms, because we can find nothing here to buy." The saint replied and said: "You didn't find anything because you trust your flies more than in God." He used to call coins "flies." "But go back," he said, "to the houses you have visited, offering the love of God instead of money, and humbly beg for alms! Don't be embarrassed. After sin everything is bestowed as alms, for the Great Almsgiver gives to the worthy and the unworthy with kind piety."

Once again it is obvious that Thomas of Celano depends on the episode as it has been transmitted by the *Legend of Perugia* and the *Mirror of Perfection*.<sup>27</sup> Paradoxically, both Thomas of Celano, who uses the first part about the knights from Assisi, and Lemmens's *Mirror*, which uses the second part about begging alms, confirm for us the episode's original unity.

But in our opinion this episode is even more significant because it offers us sure proof that Thomas of Celano was completely free with regard to the testimonies he received. Given this freedom, we do not believe, as some suggest,<sup>28</sup> that the *Remembrance* depends on this episode. It is no more than an exhortation to beg for alms, which could derive as well from other testimonies.<sup>29</sup> In this case, as in all the others, it stands proven that Thomas of Celano is not earlier but depends on the episodes included in the *Legend of Perugia*.

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is found in a group of texts about begging: "Seeking Alms."

<sup>27</sup> "It also remains an open question here whether 2C 77 is a direct excerpt from the text given in 2MP, or whether the compiler of 1318 [the compiler of 2MP] is also improving on his model a bit" Cf. Goetz, *Die Quellen*, 170.

<sup>28</sup>Cf. ed. Bigaroni, 278.

<sup>29</sup>Actually, 2C 72 contains only a distant echo of the second part of LP 96, in its mention of the saint's custom of begging, even when "invited by some lord," and in the term "inheritance." See passage quoted in Pásztor, *St. Francis, Cardinal Hugolino* 228.

Here again Thomas shows himself to be a scholar and man of letters. Following his plan to create an edifying work, he adapts his testimonies, however and wherever he sees fit. Thus he is very important—but this is because of the ideal picture he gives us of Francis, not because of his historical or philological faithfulness to the sources he had to work with.<sup>240</sup>

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2MP 6, cf. 2C 58; LMj VII, 2

Passing through Bologna, he heard that a house of the brothers had recently been built there. As soon as he heard that it was called "the house of the brothers," he turned back and left the city. He firmly commanded that all the brothers leave it quickly and not to live there anymore.

Accordingly all of them vacated the house. Not even the sick brothers could stay there, but were evicted together with the others, until the Lord Hugo, the bishop of Ostia and the papal legate in Lombardy, announced publicly that the house belonged to him.

A brother who was sick, and was thrown out of that house, writes this and bears witness to it.

The third episode is an isolated testimony. We can even determine its date, something we have rarely been able to do in other cases. The time was August 1220, when Hugolino, cardinal bishop of Ostia and papal legate in central and northern Italy, was in Bologna.<sup>241</sup> This episode from the *Mirror of Perfection* 6 is not found in either the *Legend of Perugia*<sup>242</sup> or Lemmens's *Mirror*. The entire passage is borrowed by Thomas of Celano (2C 58), who is more faithful here than usual. He adds a series of details, once again related to place. Francis was returning from Verona and wished to pass through Bologna. But he did not enter the city when he heard that a

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<sup>240</sup>To appreciate Thomas's interest even in non-literary matters, it is worth noting that he is concerned to identify the place where the episode supposedly took place: Satriano. This means that he read his testimonies carefully and, as we have pointed out in other episodes, tried to determine the place. It should be recalled in passing—and a historian cannot do this without regretting the fact—that his geographical precision is not accompanied by an equal concern to determine the chronology.

<sup>241</sup>Cf. G. Levi, *Registri dei cardinali Ugolino d'Ostia e Ottaviano degli Ubaldini* (Rome: n.p., 1890); Ch. Thouzellier, "La légation en Lombardie du cardinal Hugolin (1221). Un épisode de la cinquième croisade," in *Revue Historique Ecclesiastique* 45 (1950): 508-42.

<sup>242</sup>Not only is this episode missing in LP, but its absence is somewhat special. The episode constitutes 2C 58, which means it belongs to that group of chapters from 2C which the compiler transcribed at the beginning of the Perugia manuscript. In fact, 2C 56, 57, 59, 60 are found in LP. 2C 57 contains an episode found in LP 56, but the latter does not derive directly from 2C.

“house of the brothers” had been built there. The rest of the episode is the part we have already explained, as seen in this comparison showing the relationship between the two texts:

## 2MP 6

Accordingly all of them vacated the house. Not even the sick brothers could stay there, but were evicted together with the others, until the Lord Hugo, the bishop of Ostia and the papal legate in Lombardy, announced publicly that the house belonged to him. A brother who was sick, and was thrown out of that house, writes this and bears witness to it.

## 2C 58

For this reason the house was abandoned; and even the sick could not stay, but were thrown out with the rest of them. And they did not get permission to return there until Lord Hugo, who was then Bishop of Ostia and Legate in Lombardy, declared while preaching in public that this house was his. And he who writes this and bears witness to it was at that time thrown out from that house while he was sick.

What is interesting in the comparison is the obvious switch from a direct to an impersonal presentation. Also interesting is the fact that the testimonial formula has become a gospel citation (Jn 21:24), proving that Thomas was educated, well-versed in the Bible and literary techniques.

We find this episode extremely valuable because it proves (should proof be needed) that the testimonies Thomas of Celano received were many and varied, even though they did not always deal with major episodes and events of great importance. If we read carefully, what we find is not devotion or affectionate memories of the saint, but the sick brother's irritation and annoyance at suddenly finding himself in the middle of the street because of the holy founder's strict view of poverty. Thomas of Celano, drawing on his literary skills, has toned down this resentment and has included the episode in a series of praises entitled "Poverty of Houses." This only proves that he reworks the material he received, using it as he sees fit according to his objectives. But the episode remains important because of the resentment we seem to sense, and because it shows how, at the wishes of Crescentius and the general chapter, even the smallest incidents reached the hands of the biographer. Thus he not only had a very extensive collection of testimonies; he also had the complete freedom to modify them. The anonymous compiler of the *Legend of Perugia* and the anonymous author of the *Mirror of Perfection* must have been aware of these modifications. So it was not without reason or by accident that they wanted to return—in what manner or circumstances we will never know—to the original testimonies. This is something we should consider essential for understanding these private compilations, which have preserved for us words, attitudes, and spiritual moments from the life of Francis. Otherwise, between Thomas's "literature" and Bonaventure's "providential" reinterpretation, they would have been lost forever.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>249</sup>For this episode, Cf. C. Mesini, *L'Eremo di S. Paolo in Monte o Monte Paolo, nel quale*

## VI

### Special Passages Containing Collective Testimonies

Two other episodes have witnesses who speak of themselves in the plural as "we," but not with the same formula we have regularly met in the group of texts we have been looking at. They are the *Legend of Perugia* 78, to which correspond the *Remembrance* 11, the *Mirror of Perfection* 92, and the *Legend of the Three Companions*, the *Mirror of Perfection* 102, with its parallels in the *Legend of Perugia* 116 and the *Remembrance* 28.

Let us begin, then, by examining these texts in the order we have usually followed. Then we will discuss them.

### 21

#### LP 78, cf. 2C 11; 2MP 92; L3C 14

Once, a few years after his conversion, he was walking alone one day along the road not too far from the church of Saint Mary of the Portiuncula, crying loudly and wailing as he went. As he was walking along, a spiritual man met him, someone we know and from whom we learned about this incident, who had shown him great mercy and consolation, both before he had any brothers and afterwards. Moved by piety toward him, he asked him: "Brother, what's wrong?" He thought that blessed Francis was suffering some painful illness. But he answered: "I should go through the whole world this way, without any shame, crying and bewailing the Passion of my Lord." At this, the man began to weep and cry aloud together with him.

The *Legend of Perugia* 78 is significant for Francis's awareness of the very deep relationship between the life of the brothers and the passion of Christ. As has often been noted, he experienced the passion differently and more directly, and caused others to do the same. But what we want to emphasize here is the "We." The term seems to refer to another group of witnesses and thus should be traced to a different collective testimony. But once again we should refrain from asking ourselves who this "We" might be. Still, the character of the testimony leads us to believe that it is one of those sent to Crescentius of Iesi, but not necessarily the same as those that appear in the "We who were with him" group. Here it is worth repeating what we

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*avrebbe soggiornato S. Antonio di Padova, in Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 55 (1962): 417-67, esp 424-29: «S. Francesco a Bologna». Angelo Clareno also mentions this episode in his *History of the Seven Tribulations* (ed. Ghinato, 45): "I visited a brother who heard him preach in Bologna. Those who saw this told how on entering the city, since he wanted to avoid the place of his brothers (hearing that the house built there exceeded the limits of the vow of poverty), he turned back and went to the house of the Dominicans, who received him with great joy."

said before. The "We who were with him" always refer to things and events that are from Francis's last years or, for some reason, recalled from earlier times. But here the recollection seems to come from the time immediately after Francis's conversion: the "spiritual man" is mentioned as one of those who consoled and supported the "convert," even before anyone joined him. This testimony is extremely interesting because it reveals and proves the composite nature of the *Legend of Perugia* and helps do away with the cliché that Thomas of Celano is taking dictation from his brothers. Actually, Thomas freely reworked what he had received from Crescentius of Iesi, as we shall see with regard to this episode.

It occurs, as mentioned, in Thomas of Celano. It is the first part, which recounts events to which we can assign a chronology. Not incidentally, it forms part of Chapter VI, entitled "The image of the Crucified which spoke to him, and the honor that he gave to it." Our episode is reduced to a few lines, situated within the familiar episode of the San Damiano crucifix that speaks to him, and in the more general context of his deep devotion to the passion of Christ. What had been, if not unique, at least not a daily event in Francis's life, becomes his normal state after what happened at San Damiano. According to Thomas's account, Francis seems to be weeping whenever and wherever, filling the roads with his sobbing and causing a friend to do the same. One of what we would call the most humanly interesting aspects of *Legend of Perugia* account disappears completely. It was not really a friend, but a "spiritual person" who understood Francis from the beginning. Thus it was someone deeply religious, the actual witness of the episode, and the "We" become his spokespersons. It is not hard to imagine that this person was dead and could no longer testify. Once again, what we have is an adaptation, condensation, and transformation—we should be used to this by now—which proves beyond doubt that the text contained in the *Legend of Perugia* is prior to Thomas.

This priority also seems to be confirmed by what we read in the *Mirror of Perfection* 92, where the episode is placed in Chapter VI: "On His Constant Fervor of Love and Pity for the Passion of Christ." The chapter begins by following the *Legend of Perugia* 78 to the letter, although for greater effect the part about the identity of the "spiritual man" is moved to the end, but in almost the same words, as can be seen from this comparison:

**LP 78**

A spiritual man met him, someone we know and from whom we learned about this incident, who had shown him great mercy and consolation, both before he had any brothers and afterwards.

**2MP 92**

A spiritual man met him....

At this, the man began to weep and cry aloud together with him.

At this, the man began to weep and cry aloud together with him. We know this man and learned about this incident from him. He is the one who also has shown great consolation and mercy to blessed Francis and to us his companions.

It is interesting to note how the modest and reserved statement in the *Legend of Perugia* 78 is made explicit in the *Mirror of Perfection* 92, where the writing is definitely better, although, in our opinion, the account does not stick to the *Sitz im Leben* quite so closely.

This passage has its own additional problems, since it is also found—although without the testimonial phrase—in the *Legend of the Three Companions* 14, as we learn from this comparison:

LP 78

Once, a few years after his conversion, he was walking alone one day along the road not too far from the church of Saint Mary of the Portiuncula, crying loudly and wailing as he went. As he was walking along, a spiritual man met him, someone we know and from whom we learned about this incident, who had shown him great mercy and consolation, both before he had any brothers and afterwards. Moved by piety toward him, he asked him: "Brother, what's wrong?" He thought that blessed Francis was suffering some painful illness. But he answered: "I should go through the whole world this way, without any shame, crying and bewailing the Passion of my Lord." At this, the man began to weep and cry aloud together with him.

L3C 14

Once he was walking by himself near the church of Saint Mary of the Portiuncula, weeping and wailing loudly. A spiritual man, overhearing him, thought he was suffering some sickness or pain. Moved by piety for him, he asked why he was crying. "I am crying because of the Passion of my Lord," he said, "for whom I should not be ashamed to go throughout the world crying in a loud voice." That man, in fact, likewise began to cry with him in a loud voice.

The presence of this episode in the *Legend of the Three Companions* certainly causes problems. The fact that it does not appear in the Sarnano manuscript has led some to believe it is an interpolation.<sup>244</sup> If we ever have to

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<sup>244</sup>Cf. Giuseppe Abate, *Nuovi studi sulla Leggenda di St. Francis detta dei «Tre compagni»*, Rome 1939; see also Sophronius. Clasen, *Die Dreigeführtenlegende des heiligen Franziskus*, Werl-Westphalia 1972.



tackle the problem of the *Legend of the Three Companions* we intend to return to this subject. But here we will just say that the important thing for us is that the text of the latter almost parallels the *Legend of Perugia* and thus confirms its value.

Once again the *Legend of Perugia* proves to be a collection rich in testimonies, precisely because it is a compilation that was able to draw from primary sources, even if it did not use them directly.

## 22

### 2MP 102, cf. LP 116; 2C 28; MSL 198

There was a brother who was outwardly a man of decent and holy life, and seemed to concern himself with prayer day and night. He observed constant silence, so that whenever he confessed to a priest, he confessed with signs, not with words. He appeared so devout and fervent in the love of God, that sometimes when he sat down with the brothers, although he did not speak, he rejoiced so much internally and externally on hearing some good words that he often moved the other brothers to devotion.

But after he had been living this way for several years, it happened that blessed Francis came to the place where he was staying. When he heard the brothers tell him about his way of life, he said to them: "Know for a truth that this is diabolical temptation that makes him unwilling to confess." In the meantime the general minister came there to visit blessed Francis and began to praise this brother in front of blessed Francis. "Believe me brother," blessed Francis told him, "this brother is led and deceived by an evil spirit."

The general minister replied, "I find it amazing and almost incredible that this could be the case when the man shows so many signs and works of holiness." But blessed Francis said, "Test him by telling him to go to confession at least once or twice a week. If he does not listen to you, you will know what I told you is true."

So the general minister said to the brother, "Brother, I want you to confess twice or at least once a week." But he put his finger on his lips, shaking his head and showing by signs that he would in no way do that because of his love for silence. And fearing to scandalize him, the minister let him go.

But not many days later this brother left the Order of his own will, and returned to the world wearing secular clothes.

One day while two companions of blessed Francis were walking along some road, they met him. He was walking alone like a very poor pilgrim. Feeling compassion for him, they said: "You wretch, where is your upright and holy way of life? For once you refused to

speak or show yourself to your brothers, and now you go wandering about the world like a man who knows nothing of God!"

He began to speak to them, often swearing on his faith like secular people. "Wretched man," they said to him, "why do you swear on your faith like secular people. You used to abstain not only from idle words, but even from good ones." They left him. And a few days later, he died. And we were all amazed when we realized how everything blessed Francis had predicted when the brothers considered the wretch as a saint had come true to the letter.

We would be able, it would seem, to draw another collective testimony from the *Mirror of Perfection* 102. Instead of "we were all amazed [*admirati fuimus*]" the *Legend of Perugia* 116 has "The brothers and others were quite amazed [*admirati sunt inde*], as they reflected on the holiness of blessed Francis," a reading supported by *MS Little* 198, which is completely identical with the *Legend of Perugia* 116.<sup>245</sup> For this reason we are inclined to say that the passage, although an interesting testimony antecedent to Thomas of Celano (he borrows it in the *Remembrance* 28), should not be included among the testimonies where the witnesses speak and present themselves in the first person plural, the only ones we have considered so far.

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<sup>245</sup>It is possible that the reading in 2MP is original in the *Mirror* itself, since it is found in some Italian translations, as shown by the critical apparatus in the second edition of Sabatier, I, Manchester 1928, 296-97; II, Manchester 1931, 186-88. We suggest by way of hypothesis that a difficult or unusual abbreviation of the words *sunt inde* might have been read as *fuimus*, especially since, as we have seen, first person plurals are very common and could have popped into the mind of a copier who was faced with indecipherable writing or a difficult abbreviation.

## VII

**Concluding Considerations**

Having reached this point, we must spell out the conclusions gleaned from our careful comparison of the texts of the passages. First we need to answer the objection often heard from different quarters, especially since Goetz: perhaps the formula "We who were with him" is merely a rhetorical ornament, a *topos* with no historical value. This is a serious objection since it touches on the very essence of our research. It eliminates a decisive formal element that has enabled us to assemble these episodes, isolating them from the compilation in which they are found.

By way of preliminary remark, we should note that these episodes are always situated in a specific concrete narrative. The formula in question is always invoked to verify some testimony. This may be about the saint's words or about the witnesses themselves—even things that were quite embarrassing to them, such as the fact that they ran away before the doctor cauterized Francis to treat his eyes. Except for the case where the "We who were with him" are telling us that many other episodes could have been mentioned besides the one cited, we must strongly emphasize that in each episode the formula has its own logical position, determined in each case by a different set of rules.

One feature of a *topos* is that it tends to appear in similar forms and circumstances and thus recurs regularly in similar, if not identical, contexts. Let us now examine these individual appearances in the *Sitz im Leben* in which they are placed.

In the *Legend of Perugia* 11<sup>26</sup> the formula is used to attest how Francis humbly accepted rude treatment and lack of respect from his brothers, even though this must have caused him suffering. Here the formula responds to the need for an eyewitness to what is being said, namely, that when he was mistreated he would go to prayer and, on returning, did not want to talk about it any more, in perfect humility. This confirms what they themselves said in the first part of the episode. The fact that they were with Francis follows, guaranteeing that they saw him and that they saw something that caused him suffering and was no credit to his brothers.

In the next episode, the *Legend of Perugia* 14,<sup>27</sup> the statement that they had been with Francis does not attest to something they saw, but rather guarantees their testimony that they heard what Francis said about living

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<sup>26</sup>Cf. Episode I.

<sup>27</sup>Cf. Episode II.

creatures. Here the "We who were with him" is strengthened, since we learn that they were not only with Francis, they are not only giving testimony, but they are writing as well. These small details serve to make clear that our formula is not a stereotyped refrain, but a testimonial sign by which, in each case, they wish to guarantee something.

In the *Legend of Perugia* 50<sup>248</sup> the expression "We who were with him" is found along with another, "we...bear witness...about him." Here again the context is different. After their account the witnesses wish to testify, on the one hand, that Francis understood the human weaknesses of his brothers, and on the other, that he was severe with himself. Within this account, confirming the importance of real-life contact, is the observation that "from the beginning of his conversion and during his whole lifetime, he was severe." The full meaning of this severity is brought out in the additional comment that this was his practice, "even though from the time of his youth he was a man of a frail and weak constitution, and when he was in the world he could not live without comforts." Testimony such as this must necessarily be preceded by a guarantee that the one who is saying these things has been able to observe them personally, through constant living with him. What we have is quite different from a *topos* or rhetorical ornament! Let us not forget that these testimonies, like the others we are discussing, eventually had to come before the official authority of the general minister, who would sift through them. And it is interesting that this testimony was not only approved but found its way into the work of Thomas of Celano.

The *Legend of Perugia* 56<sup>249</sup> is linked to the Portiuncula. It is important to note that the formula does not refer to all the grandiose things about the place. The only thing it affirms—and this by revelation—is that "among all the other churches of this world" the blessed Virgin had a special love for that church. Here we should be very careful not to suggest that the witnesses wanted to appeal to the supernatural and draw up a kind of certificate attesting to the blessed Virgin's preference for the Portiuncula. Quite the opposite. They are affirming Francis's special love, as it already appears in all the other Franciscan sources. The designation of the Portiuncula as a model house of the Order, after it had been given to Francis by the Benedictines of Mount Subasio, is a relatively minor detail within a much larger context. Testimony about such a small matter proves again how, in each case, the formula serves to corroborate testimony, which is what it proposes to do.

In the *Legend of Perugia* 57,<sup>250</sup> in the context of a series of episodes about poverty, the "We who were with him" testify not to something they

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<sup>248</sup>Cf. Episode III.

<sup>249</sup>Cf. Episode IV.

<sup>250</sup>Cf. Episode V.

have seen, not to something they have witnessed, but to a way of speaking often used by Francis. Uniquely, it is a citation from the Gospels: "Foxes have dens and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." Once again—pardon us for our insistence on repeating this—mention of what they heard "often" is especially relevant when recalling the itinerant and wandering life Francis had chosen for himself. Here we will not give in to an easy temptation for critics and say that the companions are arguing against the houses already built everywhere. Rather, we believe that their exquisitely human testimony is trying to evoke an asceticism and way of acting that the Order, in its rapid growth, had been forced to give up, but was still meaningful in the founder's life as a human reality and a desire for renunciation. This way of speaking is then confirmed by another saying, which seems to refer to something not said often but only once: when Christ was in the desert, he did not have a cell or house. The testimonial formula is essential here, since when the testimony was given the "religion" had already resolutely chosen another path. So, it is not an accessory detail they wish to highlight, but a fact and a way of acting that were no less valid as examples for having been superseded by events.

The *Legend of Perugia* 82,<sup>251</sup> 84,<sup>252</sup> and 93<sup>253</sup> are the three chapters in which the "We who were with him," after relating an episode, add that they could tell similar ones but that it would take "too long to write down or recount." The expression, which occurs three times in nearly the same words, tells us that the same person is writing and that he has a tendency to emphasize the same reality with expressions that have become almost habitual. Concerning the fact that two of these three episodes were accepted by Thomas of Celano and one rejected, we refer to what we have said when discussing each one individually.

The *Legend of Perugia* 86<sup>254</sup> is one of the most moving episodes in its description of the cauterization used to treat Francis's eyes. It is also invaluable from a philological standpoint, since the formula "We who were with him" occurs twice in different contexts and is used differently within the narrative. In the first case, it demonstrates a sincerity and loyalty that would be hard to imagine in a fabricator or embellisher. Indeed, it is interesting that in the context of the cauterization the formula appears not only as a testimony, but in the simplicity of an organic account. It says: "We who were with him...all ran away." Here the expressions tends to link words, similar to what we saw in the three earlier episodes with the expression "too long to write down or recount." Whichever witness is doing the actual

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<sup>251</sup>Cf. Episode VI.

<sup>252</sup>Cf. Episode XIII.

<sup>253</sup>Cf. Episode X.

<sup>254</sup>Cf. Episode VII.

writing, he feels close to Francis again, along with the others. He uses the same words he usually uses to testify to what he saw and did. In this case they ran away. But the "We who were with him" return later in the same episode, in a different context. Once again the style is more narrative. There is mention of Francis's love for fire and other creatures, because, "as we who were with him saw, he loved and revered them with a great feeling of charity." In this case we can speak of expressive insistence, but certainly not of a literary *topos*.

Interestingly, the expressive module regarding Francis's love for fire and other creatures is found, in similar terms, in the *Legend of Perugia* 88,<sup>255</sup> which speaks of his love for fire, rocks, wood etc. It says: "We who were with him saw him always in such joy, inwardly and outwardly, over all creatures...." Hence we cannot speak of *topos* but of an expressive echo, which is to be attributed to the writer of these memories rather than to repetitions of *topoi*.

What we have in the *Legend of Perugia* 89<sup>256</sup> is the formula, "We who were with blessed Francis bear witness." Here the testimonial formula has a specific meaning, inasmuch as it wishes to testify to Francis's love for his brothers and for the poor.

In the *Legend of Perugia* 117<sup>257</sup> the formula is situated in a context that makes it necessary, logically and narratively speaking. Its emotional and spiritual significance are such that it is very interesting indeed. Here, the fact of having lived with Francis also has a temporal aspect that is meant to reinforce and, at the same time, clarify and increase the testimonial value of what is being said. There is an implicit comparison—silent, but nonetheless clear—between Francis's behavior and what the witnesses saw in many of their contemporaries. They say: "Whether he was healthy or sick, until the day of his death, he wanted to endure so much need, that if any of the brothers who knew this, as we did, we who were with him for some time until the day of his death, and if they brought this back to mind, they would not be able to restrain their tears; and when they suffer some need or troubles, they would bear them with greater patience."

Here the testimonial formula is placed within a narrative where it is only partly essential. The narrative begins with the observation, already mentioned, that in the world (the words are identical) Francis was "by nature a frail and weak man," yet "until the day of his death, he considered that he should show a good example." At this point the companions break in, presenting themselves not only as those who were with him, but as those who remained with him for some time until his death. The expression "until the day of his death" occurs again."

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<sup>255</sup>Cf. Episode VIII.

<sup>256</sup>Cf. Episode IX.

<sup>257</sup>Cf. Episode XI.

This group of references cannot possibly be false; it takes us instead into the very heart of the companions. There, contrary to what we might expect, there are no polemics (at least not expressed). But the recollection is accompanied by a comparison, inevitable and thus valuable as probative testimony. Instinctively, they cannot refrain from admonishing the brothers of their own time: "If you had seen, as we did, what Francis knew and wished to suffer, you would weep with compassion, and you would be able to put up with the discomforts you meet from time to time." With due respect to scholars who think otherwise, to speak here of *topoi*, of literary inventions, means not to have noticed the real-life immediacy that permeates these lines.

The *Legend of Perugia* 67<sup>258</sup> is one of those episodes that contain what we can by now call the usual testimonial formula. Also mentioned, less clearly and explicitly than in the previous three episodes, is that in giving their testimony they note that something Francis had predicted came true. And they add: "We have seen many of these fulfilled not only while he was alive but also after his death."

The very famous *Legend of Perugia* 84<sup>259</sup> tells how a part of the *Canticle of Brother Sun* was written to bring about peace between the podestà and the bishop of Assisi. As for our formula, it is extremely interesting in this case. First, it appears in its usual form, as a testimony, followed by a second form, linked to the three we have already mentioned and to the one we just discussed, namely, that Francis's predictions regularly came true. The testimony is confirmed in these words: "We have seen with our own eyes what would be too long to write down or recount." We might say that all the different expressive modules in which our formula is articulated are found here.

In the *Legend of Perugia* 101<sup>260</sup> the formula "We who were with him" has an importance that is certainly essential, if not unique. It is used there, not to attest to some fact, but rather as a chance to respond, on the basis of having lived with the saint, to certain objections addressed to the saint later. It presents, in effect, an imaginary objection in these terms: "If any brother wanted to ask why blessed Francis in his own time did not make the brothers observe such a strict poverty as he told Brother Riccerio, and did not order it to be observed," the companions-witnesses break in once, speaking for the saint and saying, "we who were with him *would respond to this* as we heard from his mouth. Because he told the brothers this and many other things...." Here, the possibility of a literary *topos* is excluded by the fact that not only are they testifying to something, but this something is the saint's words as heard by those who lived with him. Unless we are mistaken, there are only

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<sup>258</sup>Cf. Episode XII.

<sup>259</sup>Cf. Episode XIII.

<sup>260</sup>Cf. Episode XIV.

two clear alternatives: either we have a shameless fabricator or a testimony that comes directly from Francis through these companions, who deliberately wish to differentiate themselves in a way that allows for no misunderstanding.

In the *Legend of Perugia* 106<sup>261</sup> the formula is used to attest to a matter concerning the *Rule* and the time when it was written. As in a previous testimony, there is an extraordinary insistence on "until the day of his death," in other words, on their remaining with Francis until he died. The chronology also repeats a point that must have been the subject of some discussion at the time these recollections were written. The companions say: "We who were with him when he wrote the *Rule* and almost all his other writings bear witness that...." It is a precious bit of testimony not only to the lively and bitter discussions about the *Rule*, but to the fact that Francis shared with his companions the experience of its writing.<sup>262</sup>

It is also valuable because it sheds light, albeit very briefly, on the brothers' personal views. It says that many points on which the brothers were opposed to the desires of Francis—and on which he gave in—would "now, after his death," be very useful to the whole Order. On the one hand, the vagueness of the expression reflects a desire not to apply pressure or throw up obstacles to what by now was the way taken by the Franciscan Order; but at the same time, it testifies how far the Order had gradually come to distance itself from Francis's wishes.

The *Legend of Perugia* 111<sup>263</sup> is one of those episodes in which the companions, as always, identify themselves as such ("We who were with him"). They explain that they could not say how many sacrifices and what strict ascetical practices Francis performed in order to give good example. In short, this belongs to a group of texts in which the companions offer one example as a "flower" from among the many they could have given.

The episode in *MS Little* 187,<sup>264</sup> which is missing in the *Legend of Perugia* and the *Mirror of Perfection* but borrowed by Thomas of Celano, is also in the same style. After recounting the story of Francis who wants some parsley to put on his bread, its concluding part recalls—and by now we are

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<sup>261</sup>Cf. Episode XV.

<sup>262</sup>At the same time we wish to note that these companions say they were present when he wrote the *Rule* and "almost all his other writings." This testimony does not seem to have been used to date the writings of Francis. Unfortunately, the words "almost all" and the vagueness of the word "writings" do not allow us to suggest very bold hypotheses. But it seems we can infer that Francis's writing activity is to be situated, at least for the most part, at the end of his life, probably when sickness made travel and preaching harder for him, and when the constantly growing number of brothers made it necessary for him to make use of letters and written communications.

<sup>263</sup>Cf. Episode XVI.

<sup>264</sup>Cf. Episode XVII.



used to such expressions—that “we have seen and know, we who were with him for a little while, that it would take us long enough to write or recount.” The formula occurs many other times, as we have seen, even though the concluding part of the episode raises certain questions.

From what has been said thus far we have been able to observe two essential facts. The first is that this formula is never used in a robotic or mechanical way but is always situated in a context, where sometimes it plays an essential and decisive role and sometimes it serves to clarify something once and for all. On the other hand, the recurrence of such expressions—either the same or with slight modifications—excludes literary artifice. This leads us to conclude that what we have is a situation, quite frequent and not unknown to critics and philologists, where a person or group of persons chooses a set of expressions. Every so often they repeat these word for word, depending on circumstances, as the occasion presents itself. This leads us to think that it may be just one person who is writing, or at least reporting the recollections. As we have seen, the very insistence that often amounts to word for word repetition is, in the end, a guarantee of truthfulness and authenticity.



PART THREE

FRANCIS OF ASSISI IN THE  
MEMORY OF THE COMPANIONS



# I.

## The Relationship between the Episodes

After examining the individual episodes as found in the sources, more specifically in the *Legend of Perugia*, the *Remembrance*, the *Mirror of Perfection*, Lemmens's *Mirror* and *MS Little*, the question arises as to the relationship between the episodes themselves.<sup>265</sup> The question is whether and to what extent an overall unity exists among them which, in their mutual relationship, succeeds in presenting a finished, and in some respects, unified picture of Francis. We do not think it is possible to speak of an overall unity in their presentation of episodes about Francis. On the other hand, there are certainly various indications, many references, a tendency to highlight what the witnesses see as Francis's most important personality traits. There are even repetitions and parallel episodes. Significantly, Thomas of Celano has eliminated these, choosing only one episode when two are offered.<sup>266</sup> This proves that these episodes are not detached pieces of a work conceived as an organic whole. Rather, they are a collection of memories, composed separately from the beginning, stamped by the authors with the hallmark formula "We who were with him" as a sign of their validity. Let us not forget that, in at least one case, there were two reliable witnesses to an episode—the episode of Francis in Rome. Angelo Tancredi was present there and is mentioned by name. And the companions break in, not to attest to the truth of the incident, but to shed light again on the fact of Francis's good example.<sup>267</sup>

On the other hand, this lack of order seems like a flaw only if we look superficially at the external appearance of the episodes presented to us. While their fragmentary nature is certainly deliberate on the part of the companions, this does not mean that the latter do not want to present a mature vision of *their* Francis, based on *their* real-life experience and contact with *their* ideas, as the formula they use to describe themselves ("We who were with him") indicates. That said, for us who are searching not for the

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<sup>265</sup>We repeat here, for the convenience of the reader, the location of our episodes within these sources: LP 11, 14, 50, 56, 57, 67, 82, 84, 86, 88, 89, 93, 101, 106, 111, 117; 2C 19, 21, 22, 51, 56, 57, 59, 91, 92, 119, 120, 132, 151, 152, 165, 166, 200; 2MP 2, 9, 11, 16, 27, 33, 38, 46, 55, 63, 67, 101, 104, 113, 114, 115, 116, 118; 1MP 6, 13-16, 19-20, 27-29, 39; MS Little 140, 158, 160, 165, 184-185, 187. None of these sources, we repeat, contains all seventeen episodes. In this part of our study, also, we will cite only the episodes from LP, referring to the tables of concordance for the others.

<sup>266</sup>Cf. Episode I.

<sup>267</sup>We are referring to LP 117: "...that if any of the brothers who knew this, as we did...."

“mythologized” but for the historical Francis, this fragmentary character is precious when we consider that the Francis we get is always seen in a real-life situation, in a *Sitz im Leben* that in each case is concrete and specific. Despite the convergences we have noted, the presentation of Francis is not monolithic but multi-faceted. But we should not forget that the witnesses corroborate each other’s testimony, no matter which of them—and we will never know who—contributed a particular recollection.

For this reason and despite their fragmentary character, the figure of Francis that emerges from this collection of episodes is complex. But it is also in many ways complete. This is not voluntary, in other words, it is not because of a conscious and deliberate need to produce a unified account. It is worth pointing out that the testimonies, despite their diversity and variety, never conflict or contradict each other. In fact, they are so coordinated that in the end they portray a convincing and lifelike person, both psychologically and humanly speaking.

Our statement that these episodes are fragmentary, rather than a unified whole, leads to a consequence of fundamental and decisive importance as far as historical testimonies are concerned. In medieval biographies, the legend tends to be an edifying presentation of the person; ordinarily it tries to modify, adapt, and rework the traits of the individual’s character.<sup>268</sup> It is commonplace today to observe that all the great abbots end up looking alike, and the saints, no matter from which period, all seem to be cut from the same cloth. This is one of the things historians accuse Thomas of Celano of doing with regard to Francis.<sup>269</sup> But the first seventeen episodes we have studied, those in which the “We” formula appears, are detached episodes; there is no preconceived plan, no overall organizational pattern.

What we have is an example of something not often seen in hagiography: a series of accounts, each one complete in itself, even when admonitions are added to explain the saint’s attitudes, especially with regard to the Order. Here we need to remember that narrative and admonition are kept clearly distinct—always and everywhere. We should be grateful to the “We who were with him” for their conscientiousness, for as far as we can tell, whether reporting and verifying, or exhorting and admonishing, they

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<sup>268</sup>From the rather extensive bibliography on this subject, we will mention only a few of the more recent studies here: B. de Gaiffier, *Hagiographie et historiographie. Quelques aspects de problème*, in *La storiografia alto medioevale*, Spoleto 1970, 139-66; S. Clasen, *Das Heiligkeitsideal im Wandel der Zeiten. Ein Literaturbericht über Heiligenleben des Altertums und des Mittelalters*, in *Wissenschaft und Weisheit* 23 (1970) 46-64, 132-64.

<sup>269</sup>Once again we will limit ourselves to citing some of the more recent works: F. van den Borne, *Thomas van Celano als eerste biograaf van Franciscus*, in *Sint Franciscus* 2, (956) 183-213; F. de Beer, *La conversion de saint François selon Thomas de Celano*, Paris 1963. But, precisely from this standpoint, let us not forget Nino Tamassia, whose analytic search for Thomas of Celano’s sources is truly exasperating: *S. Francesco d’Assisi e la sua leggenda*, Padua-Verona 1906.

always argue from deed to example, not vice versa.<sup>270</sup> This means that the witnesses are primarily interested in the account; the exhortation is a concomitant element, essential if you will, but always secondary. Thus the passages are extremely important since they relate incidents and events from the life of Francis; as historical testimony, they possess a truthfulness that could scarcely be more certain. None of the witnesses presents himself. They narrate and discuss together, a fact that reassures us that what we have is episodes in which there is multiple agreement, but not absolute unanimity. This must have been the view of those who used these testimonies, from the most literate and thus the freest in using them, like Thomas of Celano, to the most respectful, like the *Mirror of Perfection*. We have already mentioned that, in receiving these testimonies, Thomas of Celano threw out some and changed others; but, on the whole, he always tried to keep, as far as possible, the words attributed to Francis. These, then, must almost certainly have been regarded as closest to what the saint actually said, and thus worth citing as fully as possible. As for the *Mirror of Perfection*, even if the context of Francis's words is sometimes changed, the words themselves are generally cited in full and without change. This shows that Thomas of Celano and the anonymous compiler of the *Mirror of Perfection* regarded the compilers of these episodes as fully trustworthy. For this reason their testimony should be used with utmost respect.

The most important consequence of what we have said so far is that these episodes, as conceived by the writers from the beginning, were not meant to be a biography; they were prearranged to serve *as material for a biography*. This eliminates another thing that might lessen their value, namely, the fact that somehow they were supposed to be a eulogy of the saint. Actually, the witnesses do not want to create a person, only to tell what they know so that others might create the person. But the person emerges anyway, because they are dealing with Francis of Assisi.

These episodes are limited, in a way, because they refer essentially to Francis's last years, when he inevitably needed the help of his companions. But this does not mean that they do not occasionally contain information from earlier periods.<sup>271</sup>

Here we would like to highlight the importance of all those things that show Francis, not only as humble and obedient, but also as neglected and even mistreated by his brothers. In the end, he had to do violence to himself to preserve that inward and outward meekness and humility he was proposing as an example to all. Perhaps we should say at once that this is the trait that stands out most in these passages.

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<sup>270</sup>Cf. Part Two, "Concluding Considerations," where we published these testimonial formulas, isolating them from their context.

<sup>271</sup>References to earlier periods are found, for example, in Episodes I, III, IV, XIV.

Completely missing is the kind of decisive and urgent action on the part of the hierarchy and cardinal protector that certain historians, ever since Sabatier, would have liked to see.<sup>272</sup> We do not believe this was the result of prudence on the part of the witnesses. They have no qualms about mentioning Francis's irritation and annoyance when people from the papal curia come to visit him in Rieti and ruin a poor priest's vineyard.<sup>273</sup> Nor does it bother them to recall how, after a "diabolical" night, he refused the hospitality of Cardinal Leo Brancaleone and went to a hermitage.<sup>274</sup> Neither do the witnesses refrain from blaming the hierarchy of the Order for forcing the saint to modify the *Rule*, which he did, but with the certain knowledge that these changes would later prove to be harmful.<sup>275</sup> If, then, these witnesses were not afraid to point out certain negative (or at least not positive) features of the Church and the hierarchy of the Order, they certainly would not have been afraid to mention an inopportune act on the part of the Roman Curia.

On the other hand, the lack of regard and affection for the saint, even in the last days of his life, are extremely significant, especially since they are not presented with an air of criticism, but simply as a chance to show the saint's humility.<sup>276</sup> And yet this group of testimonies portrays, like no other, the human drama of Francis.

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<sup>272</sup>Cf. Pásztor, St. Francis, Cardinal Hugolino, 209-39.

<sup>273</sup>Cf. Episode XII.

<sup>274</sup>Cf. Episode XI.

<sup>275</sup>Cf. Episode XIV.

<sup>276</sup>Cf. Episode I.

## II.

### Francis As Portrayed in the Episodes

But which Francis emerges from these testimonies?

First of all, he is a brother among brothers, aware of having received from God a supremely important mission. He is also aware of his tremendous responsibility for those who, in their desire to follow his example, have joined him. The fact that he wanted to be the founder of a fraternity rather than the head of an order becomes especially important in this regard. It is no accident that the companions record the precise detail that he resigned from all offices because he desired to be subject to the authority of the superiors. Only in this way could he be on the same level as those he considered his brothers. But, at the same time, this was why he felt he had to give special example. For him, to fulfill a series of legal prescriptions, such as the *Rule*, was less important than to live the life of Christ, expressed in free, yet total clinging to Christ himself in his humanity, as in his suffering and poverty. This explains the two characteristic poles seen in the last years of Francis's life. By then the "religion" had a hierarchy and a rule, but living example always remained the responsibility of Francis, thus creating a hierarchy of law and a hierarchy of example, as we have said elsewhere.<sup>177</sup> The later "official" sources have obscured this fact in various ways, but that does not make it any less true or historically important. This bipolarity fits in perfectly with Francis's personality and his vocation itself. He had purposely said in the *Rule* that the brothers should preach by their deeds, and he wanted his example to be a form of preaching. For a lesser brother, example was supposed to be the living sign that spoke of his way of life. It is in this context that Francis's "condescension" becomes so important. It is mentioned in the *Legend of Perugia* 101 and 106, where the saint gives up forms of stricter asceticism and greater poverty in order to "condescend," accepting a more moderate lifestyle so as not to ask too much of his brothers.<sup>178</sup> The companions highlight the drama of the situation. Fearing that the others would not be able to observe the same rigor, Francis placed limits on his strict ascetical practices, in order to give an example to them. It must be stressed, then, that his example was neither extreme nor lacking in necessary fraternal charity. If we are not mistaken, what emerges here is a sense of reality, of explicit and conscious acceptance of the human condition. Francis does not want to impose, but to lead; he does not want to give norms, more or less strict, but to propose a style of life. Although he would have preferred stricter norms,

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<sup>177</sup>Cf. Manselli, *L'ultima*.

<sup>178</sup>Cf. Episodes XIV and XV.

as the *Legend of Perugia* 101 tells us, he gave in (albeit unwillingly) to those who were asking for something more moderate, because he wanted to avoid conflict. He accepted a more modest standard, closer to the average abilities of those less heroic than himself, who, desiring to imitate him, had thought they could also copy his lifestyle. Francis wants to be an example, not only of what can be done, but also of what should be done. And so, when he renounces food that is fine or fancier than usual, he does not fail to mention that he would enjoy "special food," but in order to give an example he wants to "be content with poor food and things, not fine ones."<sup>179</sup>

We can see, then, a balanced expression of good example. Ascetical rigor and a concrete appreciation of individual abilities are harmonized to create an ideal that can be lived, strict but acceptable.<sup>180</sup> And, as many episodes show us, Francis wants to be the first to live it. He realizes that his personal choice, strict as it is, cannot be binding on all; for this reason he wishes to lead once again a more normal life, to be forever a brother among brothers, on the same level.

If all this emerges from the group of episodes we have used so far, it does not in any way diminish or, even worse, deform the figure of Francis. The real value of these episodes lies in their great vitality, their concrete testimony still fresh in the memory, their peculiar and consistent authenticity. For this reason, Francis's "condescension," his desire to lower himself to the level of any brother in the fraternity—which is becoming an Order of lesser brothers—becomes the preamble to the description of an extraordinary figure. But, we repeat, none of this is deliberate on the part of the witnesses.

### Humility - Poverty - Obedience

Francis's love for poverty, which was linked to his rejection of any and all kinds of ownership. That for him this could reach extreme forms has been sufficiently shown, it seems to us, in connection with his "condescension." Here we need only recall his love for the Portiuncula, a very simple and humble dwelling, his desire to see his brothers in poor cells preferably made of mud and wood, and his refusal to enter a cell after a brother gave the impression that it belonged to the saint because he had spent some days there. In these episodes he reveals a love for poverty and, at

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<sup>179</sup>Cf. Episode III.

<sup>180</sup>"My brothers, I say that each of you must consider his own constitution, because, although one of you may be sustained with less food than another, I still do not want one who needs more food to try imitating him in this. Rather, considering his constitution, he should provide his body with what it needs. Just as we must beware of overindulgence in eating, which harms body and soul, so we must beware of excessive abstinence even more, because the Lord desires mercy and not sacrifice." These words are cited by the companions as those of Francis in Episode III; see also Episodes XIV and XV.



the same time, a love for his brothers. He patches his own tunic and that of a companion, giving an example of love for a confrere who, as such, was also poor. As for the poor and needy whom the society of the time caused to cross his path, we do not need to repeat what we have already said about the mantle given to a poor man as "restitution," nor the loaves of bread given to a poor woman who, like himself, suffered from an eye disease. In any case, we will still have a chance to talk about this.

Associated with poverty is humility, which is not a wholesale and ridiculous desire to belittle oneself. Rather, it is an awareness of one's own greatness, which is then voluntarily renounced in order to be more like Christ.

Here the most significant episode comes from the *Legend of Perugia* 11, which tells of Francis's decision to resign from all higher offices in the Order and to be obedient to the superiors. He even asked Peter Catanio for one of his companions whose authority over him would be that of the general himself. In that way he could always give example by being subject to someone. Perhaps the companions who are telling this may themselves have had authority over the saint; thus their testimony on this point becomes especially important. The detail is even more important because it helps us resolve the apparent contradiction between the two "hierarchies" in the Order: the formal, juridic hierarchy, and what we have called the spiritual hierarchy of example.

The contradiction was resolved by the fact that Francis set himself up as an example for the Order or, as he did at his death, chose a brother outstanding in virtue to do this.<sup>291</sup> This meant that he was supposed to be an example of obedience as well. In this way, the possibility of conflict between these two expressions of hierarchical primacy was eliminated. The episode of Bernard of Quintavalle is instructive in this regard. Without reproof, without asserting any kind of authority, with matter-of-fact spontaneity, he comes up to the table of Brother Elias, who was eating alone, and asks if he can join him.<sup>292</sup> It is not an act of insubordination nor disobedience, nor is it a reproof; but, in its own way, it is offered as an example for the general minister at the time, as well as for his brothers.

In Francis's experience, obedience and humility are so linked that he says he would obey even a novice who had been given the power to command, because a subject should consider his "prelate" not as a human being, but as God, for love of whom he is subject to him.<sup>293</sup> And the testimony is explained by what we have already called one of Francis's most

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<sup>291</sup>Bernard of Quintavalle; cf. Manselli, *L'ultima decisione*.

<sup>292</sup>*Ibid.*, 149. See the episode where the companions tell how Francis does not leave the starving brother to eat alone, Episode III. Thus Bernard models his example on that of Francis.

<sup>293</sup>Cf. Episode I.

disconcerting sayings. It deserves greater prominence, seeing that the episode returns, at least in part, in Thomas of Celano, although without the disconcerting part. What Thomas omits is an expression that, wrongly understood, could seem like an act of non-humility on the part of Francis. For he said: "There is no prelate in the whole world who would be as feared by his subjects and brothers as the Lord would make me feared by my brothers, if I wished. But the Most High gave me this grace: that I want to be content with all, as one who is lesser in the religion."<sup>284</sup> This passage, or we should say, this saying of Francis is instructive. On the one hand, it explains his self-awareness and, on the other hand, his profound sense of humility.

This attitude is not limited to this saying. It is a constant and enduring element, at least in the last years of his life. It reappears in the first part of his *Testament*—written during his final months—the part where he briefly reviews his life, and it is expressed in a Francis-God relationship. It was God who brought lepers to him, making possible his conversion; and after he began to have brothers, it was God who taught him how he should live, namely, "according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel." This is not left unexplained. The relationship between Francis and God is established because, as he is anxious to explain in the *Testament*, "no one showed me what I had to do." But what is extremely typical and in accord with the same psychology we find in the above passage is that, in the context, he is anxious to explain his sense that even the humblest priest is superior to him, because the priest has the power to consecrate the Lord's body in the Eucharist. And if we recall that Francis was never ordained, but received only the tonsure, we must conclude that this was a deliberate decision, an affirmation of his humility. Even though he felt he enjoyed full divine assistance to exercise supreme and decisive authority, if he wished, he decided to renounce it in order to cling to his ideal of humility. His humility, then, shows itself in two ways: as submission to the hierarchical authority of the Order according to the prescriptions of the *Rule*, and as deliberate renunciation of all power he had received, even with God's help of which he was absolutely certain.

The greatness of his humility is seen from a detail, pointed out by the companions but prudently omitted by Thomas of Celano. As the companions testify, Francis found that the brothers would not provide for his needs, or things were said to him "that would ordinarily offend a person." In other words—going beyond the companions' somewhat nuanced language—Francis was subject to mistreatment, rejection, and perhaps even real insults.<sup>285</sup>

These facts and biographical details are far removed from the official eulogies and the posthumous apologies. But this is precisely why

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<sup>284</sup>Ibid.

<sup>285</sup>Cf. Episodes I and XVII.

they constitute a testimony that is beyond dispute. Although Thomas is silent, the *Mirror of Perfection* repeats the essentials, toning them down. Against this background of impatience (humanly understandable, but cruel nonetheless) and mistreatment at a time when the saint was sick and close to death, his reaction stands out as all the more significant.<sup>286</sup> It is not that he lacked feelings. Francis's holiness is neither lack of concern nor masochistic pleasure in being insulted. He could have reacted harshly and decisively, like a rich merchant's son who knew he was supported by God's help. But his reaction remained that of a great man: "He would immediately go to prayer." He recollected himself in prayer and no longer wanted to remember what had happened to him. And the companions point out that he never complained; in fact, the closer he approached death, the more he felt the need to live and die "in complete humility and poverty."<sup>287</sup>

### Self-Awareness

On the other hand, Francis's self-awareness in real-life situations is shown by the episode where he intervenes in the quarrel between the podestà and the bishop of Assisi.<sup>288</sup> Although we do not know for sure who the podestà was—Fortini suggests a certain Oportulo<sup>289</sup>—we are quite certain who the bishop was. It was the same Guido II who witnessed Francis's rejection of his father, who apparently supported him at the papal curia in Rome, in a word, one of the first who understood him. Francis appeals to the two of them with the characteristic determination that is part and parcel of his self-awareness and his deep desire for peace. Everyone knew about the conflict, since the bishop had excommunicated the podestà, while the latter had banished the bishop from the city and forbade all citizens from having any business dealings with him. The conflict was so bitter, say the companions, that no one, religious or lay, dared to intervene. Francis felt doubly ashamed—"it is a great shame for us, servants of God"—since no one was offering to act as peacemaker in this conflict. And so he assumes a task whose full truthfulness and historical importance we must learn to appreciate. He begins by composing another strophe to his *Canticle*:

Praised be You, my Lord,  
through those who give pardon for Your love  
and bear infirmity and tribulation.  
Blessed are those who endure in peace  
for by You, Most High, they shall be crowned.

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<sup>286</sup>Cf. 2MP 46.

<sup>287</sup>Cf. Episode I.

<sup>288</sup>Cf. Episode XIII.

<sup>289</sup>Cf. Bigaroni ed., p. 241.

Then he turns to the three companions who were with him and sends one of them to the podestà with an order: "Go to the podestà and, on my behalf, tell him to go to the bishop's residence together with the city's magistrates and bring with him as many others as he can." For anyone who understands the workings of city life, this is the same as saying that he is summoning the entire ruling class of the commune. Moreover, by directing them to go to the bishop's residence, he emphasizes the fact that civil power must respect ecclesiastical power. But no less interesting for understanding Francis and his attitude toward these things is the fact that he sends his other two companions to the meeting to intervene. They have a unique assignment: "Go and sing the *Canticle of Brother Sun* before the bishop, the podestà, and the others who are with them. I trust in the Lord that He will humble their hearts and they will make peace with each other and return to their earlier friendship and love."

The scene that follows, which has been neglected and strangely forgotten until now, is a real episode from city life. Everyone is in the piazza of the cloister of the bishop's residence—generally thought to be the present-day Piazza San Rufino—when the two brothers sent by Francis rise, and one of them says: "In his illness, blessed Francis wrote the *Praises of the Lord* for His creatures, for His praise and the edification of his neighbor. He asks you, then, to listen to them with great devotion." Then they begin to sing. Amid the general commotion the two men are reconciled, each admitting his own faults.

Here the companions marvel at the saint's gift of foresight, since he had anticipated the possibility of reconciliation. But at the same time they failed to notice the presumption, namely, that Francis had real power and authority—as he knew he did—over the people of his time.

This episode also brings out the saint's profound love for peace, for people and for all living creatures.

With regard to the love for peace that is revealed in this episode, we know that it was one of Francis's greatest and deepest wishes. We can appreciate this even more when we recall the wars between the cities of Umbria, during one of which, we know, the young merchant's son was taken prisoner and seems to have spent several months in Perugia, in the dungeons of the communal palace.<sup>20</sup> And he must have heard stories from all sides about discord between cities, or within them, during his travels throughout many parts of Italy.

Finally, the importance of the *Testament* is again borne out. There the desire for peace is illustrated in the greeting the Lesser Brothers receive from the saint as a direct revelation from God: "May the Lord give you

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<sup>20</sup>2C 4; L3C 4.

peace."<sup>291</sup> In other words, the life of a lesser brother is peace, a mission of peace, a wish of peace.

### **Francis among the Poor, Suffering, and Marginalized**

But the saint is not blind to the fact that there is poverty, suffering, pain, and violence in the world. These realities also show up in the episodes of the "We who were with him," and they make the meaning of Francis's holiness clearer for us.

Consider the episode mentioned in the *Legend of Perugia* 82 about the woman to whom Francis gives his mantle.<sup>292</sup> It is simple and quick. Francis was going through the street when a poor old woman in the crowd asked him for alms. He has nothing, so he gives her his mantle, but he takes pleasure in the fact. Here is the new element, the sensitivity, the full and honest testimony by which the companions distinguish themselves from the other biographers and, at the same time, shed light on the psychology of Francis. Although he is aware of God's presence in his life, as we said, he does not think he is perfect but watches himself carefully. And so he is not unaware of his pleasure at the good deed he has done, and he confesses it honestly as a fault. Interestingly, the companions do not hide the fact but mention it, explaining that in this, as in many other things, his ideal was not to be "a hypocrite before God." Here is a passage that does not sound like a eulogy but is based on real life, the experience of a human relationship with the saint. It is one of the distinctive features of these episodes.

Similar to this episode, but in a setting that is even more humanly and spiritually significant, is the story of the poor woman who, like the saint, was suffering from an eye disease.<sup>293</sup> The atmosphere and setting are such that we can even see-through the memory of the witnesses-into the darker corners of Francis's soul. The doctor let him know that he had treated a very poor woman free of charge, to the extent that he even had to support her. The saint reacts with a series of actions that may seem paradoxical, if not deliberately ingenuous. But they reveal completely the soul of Francis, who knows how to cope with difficulties and shrewdly tries to get around them. And so, calling the companion who was supposed to be his guardian, he tells him they have to give back to the poor woman the mantle he has received as a loan from her. The guardian understands what the saint really wants and gives him permission to return it. Then the saint asks another of his companions to help the poor woman, but in such a way that she will not know who the help-the mantle to which he wants added a dozen loaves of bread-is coming from. Here the episode's clarity and simplicity are hard to

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<sup>291</sup>Cf. Episode XIV.

<sup>292</sup>Cf. Episode VI.

<sup>293</sup>Cf. Episode IX.

miss. The woman does not understand what is going on, although she finally accepts the offering "with trembling and her heart filled with joy." But—the psychological truth of the detail is exceptionally profound—"fearful that he would take it back, she secretly got up during night and joyfully returned to her home."

In relating this fact the narrators add that, in fact, Francis had seen that he would have to help her even after, but the woman's fear of losing what she had gotten overcame her desire to be cured.

The episode is interesting because it allows the witnesses, those who refer to themselves as "We who were with him," to explain Francis's attitude toward the poor. The complex psychological motives seem unique, in the episodes we have singled out.

They are meant to emphasize what was a permanent attitude on the part of Francis, whether "sick or well," and "not only to his brothers, but also toward the poor, whether healthy or sick."<sup>294</sup> A particular element emerges here in this group of testimonies, and it is worth stressing.

We have mentioned Francis's being mistreated at times, but here something very different is being described, and, unless we are mistaken, it must certainly be attributed to these same companions. They say that "with great devotion and solicitude" the brothers sometimes procured for him what he needed for his delicate constitution or, as the text says, "the necessities of his body."<sup>295</sup> Here the saint is portrayed as being willing to sacrifice what was given him in order to help the poor. But he does this with the utmost delicacy, "at first coaxing us not to worry," as the companions say. In other words, Francis wants his companions to understand that he appreciates their concern. But at the same time it is good to be able to renounce even the gifts of a loving fraternity in order to help others, those who have no one to think of them, provide for them, and help them. Another point is also of interest. He would do this "with great inner and outer joy," giving to others and depriving his own body even of things that were very necessary to him. Added to this profound observation is another, more emotional, arising from an unexpected expression of popular religiosity. The "general minister and his guardian" who represented him had ordered Francis (the word used is the technical one for commands given under obedience) not to give his tunic to anyone without their permission because the brothers, "out of the devotion they had for him," used to ask him for his tunic. In other words and in sum, they considered it a kind of relic. Again the saint's greatness emerges, because this gift was also spontaneous: "If he saw a sickly or poorly clad brother, "he would give him his tunic or part of it, "for he wanted to have and to wear only one tunic."<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>294</sup>Ibid.

<sup>295</sup>Ibid.

<sup>296</sup>Ibid.

We can see from these passages that Francis's understanding of the poverty of others was indeed complicated. But it was total: he was utterly devoted to others, whether his brothers or not, whether sick or healthy. And here we feel the need to make a distinction. From the moment of his conversion Francis experienced human suffering in the pain of lepers, as he tells us in his *Testament*, and as all the other biographers confirm, whether they depend on the *Testament* or not; this convergence of testimonies should not be underestimated. But we have to say that, strangely, lepers do not appear in these episodes and are only rarely mentioned in the entire *Legend of Perugia*.<sup>297</sup> Obviously, we know, this does not mean that Francis no longer took care of lepers or was unconcerned about them, only that the companions were with him during the last years of his life, when he found it difficult and painful to move. In any case, he could no longer visit anyone he wanted or go anywhere he wanted, as he could in the past when he was unknown. But he still understood the meaning of human suffering. We see this in the episode of the woman with the eye disease.<sup>298</sup> Along with the earlier ones, it shows us the saint's attentiveness to people's situations. Here we should remember that Francis's voluntary poverty was both more prestigious and less uncomfortable than that of a truly poor person. But what seems new here is his feeling that poverty should be considered a "sickness" of the human condition, a state of suffering no less humiliating, no less shameful, no less capable of causing isolation than leprosy. Thanks to the companions' testimony, we can see this as a development in Francis's personality. The "mercy" which, by reason of God's providential intervention, he had felt toward lepers and which had been crucial in his complete change of values, was extended to the poverty and misery of the human condition. We see in this a deeper understanding on his part, which seems to require an increasingly better explanation. Let us not forget that in the episode we are discussing the woman was suffering from eye trouble and, like him, was also poor. Since Francis considers his mantle as a loan from the poor woman, his gesture is really his becoming aware that his poverty, inasmuch as it was freely chosen, was different from and inferior to that of the poor. What he has from the benefactors, from his brothers, is a temporary gift, a loan he has been given by those who are truly poor. Here the companions' testimony has made clearer than any other source for Francis how he is constantly extending the circle of his compassion for others.

This is shown by the episode of the priest from Rieti whose vineyard was ruined by the cardinals and prelates from the curia. To console the priest, Francis forecasts a good harvest, and a good harvest he had indeed.<sup>299</sup> The companions who recount the episode do not speak of a

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<sup>297</sup>Cf. LP 9, 54, 64-65.

<sup>298</sup>Cf. Episode IX.

<sup>299</sup>Cf. Episode XII.

miracle, even though the word is practically floating in the air; they prefer to speak instead of the truthfulness of his prophecies. But what is interesting for us here is the mercy, the compassion, the help for others who are suffering and in pain.

This deep sense of awareness of the human condition is essential for Francis; it involves the highest expression of religiosity to which a person could aim. While it is true that the companions do not stress his imitation of the sufferings of Christ—for them this is presupposed—it is nevertheless in Christ that Francis overcomes his suffering, his human condition, in order to rediscover it in and with others.

Even though not absolutely required by our discussion—our aim is to recover from the companions' episodes the Francis they remembered—we cannot fail to mention the great difference between Francis and Waldo. Our reason for stressing the difference here is not to label anyone as good or bad, orthodox or heretical, but, as we have said several times, to understand better the process of becoming aware of the human condition. For Waldo, too, fraternal love is essential; thus poverty and the duty to preach are also essential. But for Francis of Assisi, the decisive moment is not—we repeat—his rejection of riches and his desire to preach salvation to his fellow human beings. Rather it is his discovery of his brothers and sisters in pain, his serene acceptance of suffering as a reality. This was the trait in Francis's personality that inevitably impressed his contemporaries, confreres and others alike. He has none of the unrest or anger of someone who protests or challenges. Instead he wishes to be like other people, with a particular status, that of a poor person with the poor, one who suffers among the suffering, not concerned whether the others are rich, not requiring the others to do this or that particular thing. This is in order to follow Christ. Francis offers only example, convinced as he is that only example counts. Since this is so, his understanding of people's existential condition and suffering becomes a primary and basic reality. This leads, for an easy comparison, to another no less important fact: this reflection on the human condition must be extended to all other living creatures.

### Francis before Creation and Creatures

This leads to an inevitable question if we are to understand the meaning of some of the episodes about Francis. There seems to be a contradiction between the cosmic joy of the *Canticle of Brother Sun*<sup>100</sup> and the meaning, not only of human suffering, but that of other living things. In other words, while the so-called inanimate world of sun, stars, water, and fire is to be praised for the glory of God, human beings and living things in general experience suffering.

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<sup>100</sup>Cf. Episode XIII.



Although they do not mention the famous episodes of the wolf of Gubbio, the turtle doves, or the birds who listen to his preaching the companions often vigorously portray Francis as someone deeply in touch with the situation of living things, their concrete needs, their hunger and cold. They are not idealized in a rarefied atmosphere to prove a truth.<sup>301</sup> If, as they tell us, he loved larks because they sang the praises of the Lord in their beautiful trills, he also knows very well that, like everyone, they suffer the countless hardships of daily life. It is no coincidence that one of the episodes deals precisely with this question.<sup>302</sup> It shows us Francis wishing he could get the emperor to see to it that birds and animals—and also the poor—would be fed, at least on the day of Christ's birth. But the fact that this desire is described as unattainable means that the saint was well aware of how these creatures—especially the birds—could and had to suffer.

Does not the saint's love for birds, and animals in general, spring from something deeper, namely, intense reflection on the different reaction of animals and people to the same situation of suffering? One thing needs to be duly emphasized here. Birds can suffer, but they sing nonetheless. Animals, too, may have their own sufferings, but they know how to overcome them by being resigned, even joyful. It is only people, as Francis himself says in the *Rule*, who risk appearing "outwardly as sad and gloomy hypocrites."<sup>303</sup> This is the origin of Francis's love for living things; they can even be an example for us of how to overcome pain and suffering, of how to accept life and death in the beautiful things and in the ugly. Francis does not ask why there is suffering in the world. Given his belief in Providence, the question does not exist but becomes another question: in and through God, how do we learn how to overcome pain, suffering and death, with a joy that is deep, genuine, and complete.

This world of Francis is far from idyllic or Pre-Raphaelite. But it seems to go fully hand in hand with the Francis who emerges from the pages of these companions. He is a Francis who is able to see life in the world as rather more complex, painful, and bleak than people usually give him credit for. But his vision is no less well-founded for all that, since it derives directly from the source that reports the impressions and memories of those who assisted him in his last years.

It has to be said that Francis is perfectly aware of the presence of poverty, hunger, suffering, and death in human life, as in that of all living things. In this he could apparently be lumped with the Cathars. But note, *apparently*, because for the Cathars poverty, suffering, and death are evil; they are the manifestation of an evil power in the real world and in the life

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<sup>301</sup>Cf. Episodes II, VII, VIII.

<sup>302</sup>Cf. Episode II.

<sup>303</sup>ER VII 16.

of the cosmos.<sup>304</sup> And it is here that Francis overthrows the Cathar position. The heavens in their beauty praise the glory of God; they do not hide anything evil or sinful. Water is a sister, pure, precious, and chaste. Fire is seen in its physical power and its ability to give light. But the suffering of living things is seen as a manifestation of God's presence in the world. It has its own purpose, and we can understand the reason for it better when we learn how we are to overcome it: with joy, and in the joy of knowing that our situation is similar to that of Christ.

### Francis and the Church

It may seem by now that the presence of the Church is either fleeting or, as it were, inoperative in Francis's awareness. But that is not the case. Like the sacraments, priests are a means that he, like all the faithful, can use to overcome evil, to come closer to God, to draw from its source the joy we must pour out on behalf of our brothers and sisters.

Of course, not all Franciscans actually reached these heights of religious, much less mystical, awareness. But, no less than the practice of poverty, this sense of joy, this need to sing, this enthusiasm and this love of God were among the chief sources of admiration and approval.

If we look at it this way, we will understand why, historically, Francis and his movement had such drawing power. They entered into real-life relationships; they thought of life as joyful. Thus some of Francis's actions no longer seem infantile or puerile, such as his unwillingness to put out a smoldering branch or the fire that was burning his tunic. This marks the establishment of a new relationship between people, animals, and things. It is an effort to express in love and joy the harmony that the outward appearance of creation seems to deny.

Francis moves between two poles: God the creator and Christ crucified. Redemption from all creation's suffering is possible precisely through the presence of the Crucified. Only Christ in his poverty, humility, and acceptance of the human condition, even to death on a cross, can give meaning—in a certain sense, bring redemption—to the paradox of suffering in the world.

So once again Francis's vision grows wider. The young man who dreamed of marrying Lady Poverty, who believed he could restore the Church by working to rebuild San Damiano, who thought he could alleviate the world's suffering by caring for lepers, is now lifted to new spiritual heights, where he understands ever more deeply the human condition and

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<sup>304</sup>May we refer to R. Manselli, *L'eresia del male*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Naples 1980; Idem, *Studi sulle eresie del XII secolo*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Rome 1975; Kajetan Esser, "Der hl. Franziskus und di religiösen Bewegungen seiner Zeit," *S. Francesco nella ricerca storica degli ultimi ottanta anni*, Todi 1971, 95-123.

that of the whole world. Say what you like, at the beginning of his conversion Francis does not see beyond people in their real-life situation, healthy or lepers, rich or poor. But toward the end of his life he discovers something essentially new: the unity of the world in God the creator and Christ crucified, in which all things, from larks to human beings, have their place in a hierarchy of love and joy. Francis's prayer to Brother Fire when he was about to be cauterized would not make sense without this different view of the world, where suffering can be overcome in a cosmic vision in which pain, humiliation, and poverty are redeemed by Christ's suffering and death, and by the hope for what awaits us in the next life, to which we should look forward with joy.

Concluding our discussion of the Francis who emerges from these episodes, we discover in his personality an inner dynamism, of which we see only the final development. The reason, quite simply, is that those who testify to this were present only during Francis's final years. But this development is no less real, no less concrete and consistent with a personality whose deepest manifestations are bound to upset our traditional ideas.

### III

#### **From the Young Francis to the Dying Francis: The Importance of the Companions' Testimony**

We have already noticed how Francis of Assisi, as seen by his companions, is deeply touched by the lives of other people and the concrete experience of suffering. This means that at a difficult time in his life, when he himself is prey to sickness and suffering, the world of joy he experienced as an essential part of a Christocentric view of life, has acquired a new and different dimension through sickness, suffering, and the approach of death.

But it would be naive to say that Francis becomes aware of suffering only later. We know, in fact, that he came to this awareness at the very moment and by the very fact of his conversion. But it is one thing for a young man, full of hope, spiritual fervor, and a desire for action to meet lepers and to care for them; it is another thing to feel in himself the sting of sickness, suffering, and the approach of death. In other words, during the last years of his life Francis is faced, in a real and personal sense, with the problem of evil (as we have said, these are basically the years about which the "We who were with him" testify). He does not regard it from a philosophical point of view; he does not hark back to the analysis of St. Augustine. As the various episodes make clear, because of his deep faith in the goodness of God the creator he does not notice, does not even recognize, that which was called, following St. Augustine, metaphysical evil. For Francis, the ugly or imperfect does not exist. Creation, by the very fact that it is God's work, is good. But he does not come to this conclusion through philosophical reflection. Rather, it is through a general intuition that all reality, because it is the work of God, is for that very reason positive. The hurdle of Augustine's philosophical reasoning is cleared, not by a chain of philosophical arguments, but through Francis's spontaneous impulse to see life as positive. Suffering remains. And here Francis sees himself alongside the crucified Christ, the "human" suffering of humans, which can be overcome only in union with Christ and in the love of Christ. This is perhaps the most difficult and, at the same time, the most revolutionary point in Francis's outlook. For him, the crucifixion is not an event far distant in time and space; it is an ongoing reality, which he has learned to live and experience deeply. During the years 1216-1220 he felt a need to go to Palestine, perhaps desiring to find martyrdom in the very land of Christ. But later he realizes that martyrdom is possible without the Saracens, when a person serenely accepts hunger, sickness, and pain. If we wish to see an interior evolution in Francis—and, in our opinion, this is historically beyond question—then it seems that the final, and perhaps highest, moment in this

evolution is when he becomes aware of the eternal meaning and importance of the example of Christ crucified.

Since all this represents the culmination of Francis's spiritual experience, we can also see how, in the concrete, it could have been a concrete antidote to the message of the Cathars. But the most important thing here is for us to note how, at the end of his life, he gave an example of extraordinary openness to the sufferings of others and to overcoming his own.

Seen this way, the episodes we have studied present us with a series of unequivocal testimonies, unique in their genre. At the same time, they were decisive in setting a whole direction in Franciscan spirituality. Too often this spirituality—with some reason—tends to be reduced to the question of poverty. But, we must strongly emphasize, it has an importance all its own as a spirituality of suffering and pain, united with Christ in our common human condition.

This explains why Francis's attitude influenced his brothers so deeply. While we must keep an eye on expressions of cultural trends, ascetical attitudes, and various directions and tendencies, we must not forget that most of the brothers maintained the saint's attitude and a whole series of his directives. This idea of sharing in the sufferings of the crucified Christ—it seems too much to speak of a theology of suffering—becomes one of Franciscanism's strong points when it becomes identified with the masses of people who, between poverty and suffering, were reflecting on their own hard lives.

And so, in the testimonies we have considered, Francis of Assisi is presented with greater immediacy. He is more open to others, more compassionate, more understanding of people's sufferings. And, let us be very clear—there can be no doubt of this after reading all these testimonies—the people in question are not the great ones of this world, even if they should happen to be ecclesiastics. They are always the poor, the abandoned, the sick, the suffering. And it is precisely through the crucified Christ that Francis of Assisi accomplishes that reversal of values he had certainly understood at the moment of his conversion.

For Francis, the efficaciousness of Christ's cross and redemption are either accepted, and then everything begins to make sense, or all the world's values mean nothing. He does not arrive at this by reasoning—as we said more than once, Francis is not a theologian—but by an overall sense that the world is either divine or else diabolical, that is to say, meaningless. He understood this from his experience as a youth, when the enjoyment of riches could not bring him peace. The restlessness that came from wanting something much higher that could not be had in the world of human things, forced him to recognize that the only possible world was the one offered by Christ. Inevitably, he had to choose between two realities: the all of God or the nothingness of a barren world. The kiss he gave the leper is the result of

this choice. Having made it, he tried to express it in different ways. He presented himself as the herald of the great king, or as a knight in search of Lady Poverty; finally he found himself before the crucified Christ, where he recognized that the human world is tragic. All this derives from that first moment as a necessary consequence. The episodes we have discussed testify, in different ways, to this higher level, which is the ultimate evolution, wonderfully and exquisitely human in its expressions. Francis no longer sings about individual things, not even Lady Poverty; instead he praises God in the universe, and in his flesh he lives Christ crucified.

Characteristically, the "We who were with him" do not speak of the stigmata. They almost give the impression that they do not give this wonder the importance it deserves. But aside from the fact that the other biographers had already mentioned it several times, it is significant that they do not stress the miraculous element in Francis. They see their spiritual father's likeness to Christ, not in the particular fact of the stigmata, but in his real life, his way of being close to Christ. They do not (or do not seem to) emphasize the physical fact of the stigmata. Yet they must have been perfectly aware of it because, as we have said more than once, these are the companions who lived with Francis until the end of his life and thus were among the very few who knew about the stigmata. But, it seems, they had been ordered to keep silent. This old order evidently continues to remain in effect, seeing that they avoid speaking of it. Without wishing to attribute to an argument from silence more importance than it deserves, it is still a fact that cannot be ignored. It means at least that these companions did not feel they had to insist—in the first person and with their collective witness, as they were anxious to say more than once—on the importance of the stigmata itself. Instead they preferred to express and emphasize other, no less significant, aspects of Francis.

As we have indicated along the way, certain historically important data emerge from their testimony. The first is the evolution and internal development in Francis of Assisi. There is, of course, an evolution that emerges from testimonies of another kind, which for that reason must be compared with Francis's own works. But that said, the evolution itself is undeniable.

The second thing to highlight is what we have called Francis's human openness to people's sufferings. We are certainly not the first to point out this trait, but it is, we must strongly emphasize, one of the most interesting sides of the Poverello of Assisi. His impact on the society of his time was due not only to the poverty he preached, but also, and perhaps more so, to the inexhaustible love with which he shared in human suffering. This explains people's fascination with Francis of Assisi. At the beginning, and for several years, it must have been fascination with the penitent, the man of voluntary poverty, the spontaneous preacher; but then it becomes, increasingly, fascination with the man who suffers among his fellow human beings, an example of spontaneity, sacrifice, sharing in the pain of others.

For this reason he represents, beyond doubt, the highest example of charity Christianity itself can express, along with the deepest sharing in human suffering, like what Christ did in the crucifixion. The stigmata found on Francis's body after his death presented the image of a man truly crucified. But his contemporaries had already sensed them, without seeing or knowing about them, in the life of Francis himself.

A unique saint, then, but for that very reason disturbing, just as poverty and pain, humiliation and suffering are disturbing. But all this is what the companions, who present themselves under the formula "We who were with him," wished to speak about. They knew very well that the testimony of their father and teacher would be disturbing testimony, and for that reason they wished to confirm it, in each case, in such a way that no one would ever be able to question it again. In this sense, their act of testimony was not only an affirmation of the truth of the facts; it was also a testimony of truth and love, proof of something so exceptional that in no way could it be legitimately questioned. The fact that this testimony involved, and even accused, popes and cardinals, grumbling and ill-mannered brothers, did not matter to them. The important thing was that Francis be seen in all his Christian grandeur and in his human loneliness. They were able to stay with him, to love and venerate him; but they admitted they had been forced to run away when Francis was becoming superhuman in his love for Christ and his acceptance of suffering. In this sense, we would claim that few historical persons have had witnesses like the "We who were with him." Only it is strange that until now their importance has not been fully grasped, both historically and for a deeper understanding of the meaning of Francis of Assisi.

## APPENDICES

Table 1 - Editions of the *Legend of Perugia*

"We"	Bigaroni <sup>105</sup>	Brooke <sup>106</sup>	Cambell <sup>107</sup>	Delorme 26 <sup>108</sup>	Delorme 22 <sup>109</sup>
1	11	105-106	40c	105-106	10
2	14	110	45b	110	13
3	50	1-1	51	1-2	42
4	56	8-12	57e	8-12	48-49
5	57	13-14	60b	13-14	50
6	82	41	103a-b	41	76
7	86	46-49	110-111	46-49	81-83
8	88	51	113	51	84
9	89	52	115	52	85
10	93	56	120	56	89
11	117	92	46b	92	112
12	67	25	86	25	60
13	84	44	106b	44	79
14	101	66-68	14	66-68	98
15	106	75-77	26a	75-77	101
16	111	85	76	85	106
17	-	App. 4	28	-	-
[18]	64	22	66	22	57
[19]	96	59-60	1-2	59-60	92
[20]	-	-	-	-	-
[21]	78	37	98	37	72
[22]	116	91	84	91	111

<sup>105</sup>"*Compilatio Assisiensis*" dagli *Scritti di fr. Leone e Compagni su S. Francesco d'Assisi. Dal Ms. 1046 di Perugia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Marino Bigaroni (Sta. Maria degli Angeli-Assisi, Ed. Porziuncola, 1992). Cf. FA:ED II 11-230.

<sup>106</sup>*Scripta Leonis, Rufini et Angeli sociorum S. Francisci. The Writings of Leo, Rufino and Angelo, Companions of St. Francis.* Oxford Medieval Texts. Edited and translated by Rosalind B. Brooke. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford at The Clarendon Press, 1990).

<sup>107</sup>*I Fiori dei Tre Compagni.* Testi francescani latini ordinati con introduzione da J. Cambell. Versione italiana di Nello Vian. (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1967).

<sup>108</sup>La "*Legenda Antiqua S. Francisci*," *texte du Ms. 1046 (M. 69) de Pérouse*, ed. Ferdinand M. Delorme (Paris: France Franciscaine, 1926).

<sup>109</sup>Ferdinand-Marie Delorme, "La 'Legenda antiqua S. Francisci' du ms. 1046 de la Bibliothèque Communale de Pérouse," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 15 (1922): 23-70.



Table 2 - List of Texts Analyzed

"We"	LP	2C	2MP-	1MP-	MS Little
I	11	151	46	14-16	158
II	14	199-200	113-114	19	-
III	50	21-22	27	24	160
IV	56	18-19	55	27-28	140, 165
V	57	56, 59	9	29	-
VI	82	132	63	-	-
VII	86	166	115-116	-	-
VIII	88	165	118	-	-
IX	89	92	33	-	-
X	93	91	38	-	-
XI	117	119-120	67	20	-
XII	67	-	1-4	-	-
XIII	84	-	101	-	-
XIV	101	-	2, 26	-	-
XV	106	-	71, 11	-	184-185
XVI	111	-	16	39	-
XVII	-	51	-	-	187
[XVIII]	64	-	58	32	-
[XIX]	96	77	22	1	-
[XX]	-	58	6	-	-
[XXI]	78	11	92	-	-
[XXII]	116	28	102	-	198