

Brother Leo, Witness to Saint Francis

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"Frate Leone testimone di San Francesco"

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Between the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth, the expectation of an "angelic pope" and a "spiritual church,"—like the concept of an "antichrist pope" and a "carnal church"—reveals what was unquestionably a deep religious crisis.¹ The

¹This study, like the two previous ones, "San Francesco e il cardinale Ugolino nella 'questione francescana,'" *Collectanea Franciscana* 46 (1976) 209-39, and "San Bonaventura: biografo di San Francesco? Contributo alla 'questione francescana,'" in *Doctor Seraphicus* 27 (1980) 83-107, tries to clarify the images of the saint sketched and transmitted by the various Franciscan sources between the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth. Between my two previous studies and the present one, R. Manselli's work *Nos qui cum eo fuimus* (Rome 1980) [English trans. *Greyfriars Review* 14 (2000) Supplement] has appeared and has provided new perspectives from which to study the Franciscan Question. Now that Manselli's "magic circle of the Franciscan Question" has finally been broken, future studies can no longer focus on trying to determine which of the sources known today is the text that accompanied the Greccio letter of 1246. Instead they will try to identify within the sources, all of which are composites, those nuclei that are interdependent and try to determine to what period their origin can be traced. In this task, which is predominantly philological, our main guideline must be the image of Francis, which undergoes constant transformations, depending on when the various works were compiled and the functions assigned to them. With this method, exegesis of the Franciscan sources becomes an investigation of the historical evolution of the brothers themselves. By determining the character of the individual biographical collections and identifying the relationships between the various images

papacy, whose task of guiding the ecclesial community by the mystical power of the Holy Spirit was recognized, and the hierarchical Church, whose role as mediator of salvation was emphasized, were seen as a common heritage in danger. And precisely because it was common, it must be protected and defended by all Christians. The expectation and condemnation were thus universally shared, as seen in a host of reflections, writings, sayings, prophecies and polemics. These in turn gave rise to a host of initiatives and religious movements, differing in kind and size, which often exploded in lively and even violent displays. Images and language from the Apocalypse were used, often too literally and sometimes even slavishly, but always with too little reference to the text as a whole. This creates the paradoxical, but extremely vivid impression, that during this time when apocalyptic language was on everyone's lips, the Apocalypse as a whole was for many one of the least-read and least-known books of Scripture. Behind the frequent, and by now often trite and worn use of these images and language, it is impossible not to see signs of disappointment, suffering and pain, which are not, however, dissipated but serve as incentives to act, intervene and desire changes.²

The tension within the Franciscan Order, which at the end of the century was going through one of its major crises, is also situated in this agitated and tormented spiritual climate. Two events are visible proof of

of the saint, we arrive at observations that also relate to the evolution of the cultural-religious situation in the Order. From this perspective, research on the "We" is an example. My thanks to Professor Manselli, to whom I am linked by a long tradition of common work on the Franciscan sources, for having overseen this article, in the hope that our critical edition of Angelo Clareno's *Historia septem tribulationum* might also appear very soon.

²On these questions, the extremely valuable work by M. Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages. A Study in Joachimism*, Oxford 1969 (there is now also an abridged edition, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, London 1976), provides a synthesis that has not been sufficiently examined; see the parts concerning *The Antichrist and Last World Emperor* and *The Angelic Pope and Renovatio mundi* 293-504. See the two studies H. Grundmann, *Die Papstprophetien des Mittelalters und Liber de Flore. Eine Schrift der Franziskaner-Spiritualen aus dem Anfang des 14. Jahrhunderts*, now collected in H. Grundmann, *Ausgewählte Aufsätze II*, Stuttgart 1977, 1-57, 101-65; R. Manselli, "L'Anticristo mistico: Pietro di Giovanni Olivi, Ubertino da Casale e i papi del loro tempo," *Collectanea Franciscana* 47 (1977), 5-25; idem, "Il problema del doppio Anticristo in Gioacchino da Fiore," in *Geschichtsschreibung und geistiges Leben im Mittelalter*, Cologne-Vienna 1978, 427-49. On the presence of the Apocalypse during this period, see R. Manselli, *La "Lectura super Apocalipsim" di Pietro di Giovanni Olivi. Ricerche sull'escatologismo medioevale*, Rome 1955; idem, "I commenti biblici," in *Fonti medioevali e problematica storiografica*, Rome 1976, 397-424; idem, "L'Apocalisse e l'interpretazione francescana della storia," in *The Bible and Medieval Culture*, Leuven 1979, 157-170.

this. Although different from each other, they are mutually complementary. The first is the withdrawal from circulation of the all the legends of Saint Francis prior to the work of Saint Bonaventure, which assumes the function of official biography. The second is the real persecution of those Franciscans who, believing in the original values of the "religion," wished to remain faithful to the example of the founder. Ecclesiological themes and Franciscan themes converge. The spiritual Church becomes the group of persecuted brothers, the children born through Abraham "by the freewoman...through the spirit." The carnal Church is the community, the children conceived by the slave girl "in the way of the flesh." If the papacy is considered guilty of having abandoned the example of the Gospel, the Order is portrayed as guilty of abuses against true Franciscanism: "The child born in the way of the flesh persecuted the son born through the Spirit." In Book V of his *Tree of the Crucified Life of Jesus*, Ubertino da Casale points an accusing finger twice in the same context, once at Boniface VIII and once at Saint Bonaventure. Both are guilty of the same sin: usurpation.⁴ The first has usurped the "orb of the Church," the second the features of the true face of Saint Francis. Significantly, these accusations are expressed by appealing to Peter John Olivi's commentary on the Apocalypse, which Ubertino borrows. But he gives it a tension and a relevance that expand and emphasize the original motifs of the work from which it draws its inspiration.⁵ References to the situation of the papacy and the Church, along with references to the tribulations of the Order, also appear in another work: *The Words of Brother Conrad*. This rich series of passages is attributed to Conrad of Offida, whose defiant attitude toward Boniface VIII is criticized by Peter John Olivi.⁶ They refer clearly to the "time of tribulation" when, "having taken on the Rule, [Francis's] poor brothers would scarcely be able to hide among the faithful," and to the canonically invalid election of a heretical pope and a schism "among the people and religious clerics." In fact, in the promise of obedience to "canonically elected" popes, as found in the Franciscan Rule,

³See Ubertino da Casale, *Arbor vitae crucifixae Iesu*, Book V, Chapter 3. I am using the photo reproduction of the 1485 Venice edition of the *Arbor vitae*, edited by C. T. Davis, Turin 1961, (hereafter *Arbor vitae*); see 403 [English trans. of selected passages in FA:ED III, 146-203].

⁴Ibid. 437, 445, 449, 462.

⁵See R. Manselli, "Pietro di Giovanni Olivi ed Ubertino da Casale," *Studi Medievali* 6 (1965) 94-121.

⁶See A.G. Little - P. Mandonnet - P. Sabatier, *Opusculs de critique historique* I, Paris 1903, 370-92: "These are the words passed on by the holy brother Conrad of Offida" [English trans. in FA:ED III 126-37]. On Conrad of Offida, Boniface VIII and Peter John Olivi, see R. Manselli, "L'Anticristo mistico," 13-14.

Franciscan Rule, there is the warning that someone "not canonically elected or corrupted with heretical depravity" will usurp the papacy.⁷

So, a crisis in the papacy and a crisis in the Franciscan Order are interwoven in ecclesiological reflection at the end of this century. Precisely for that reason, some of the most bitter polemicists against Boniface VIII's concept of papal power come from the ranks of the Friars Minor. On the other hand, among the chief defenders and supporters of spiritual Franciscanism, the Cardinals of the Colonna family stand out. New texts are constantly being offered to help understand and interpret events in the late-thirteenth-century Church from a biblical perspective. But there is also a growing effort to collect Francis's words and deeds—which are constantly repeated, although in different groupings—in an attempt to recover his authentic image, rejecting accretions of every kind.

Unfortunately, there are serious gaps in the history of this period. There is still no critical edition of the written material in which we can follow the transition from "angelic pope" to "antichrist pope" and understand its meaning and significance. We do not even have a special study devoted to the world of ideas, to the forms and texts in which that current of Franciscan thought which was dissatisfied in various ways with the image created by Bonaventure and the new direction taken by the Order sought to express its dissent. After the *Major Legend*, which was incomplete, they tried to fill in the account of events that Bonaventure "passed over in silence out of human discretion," or "omitted on purpose, not wanting to include them in his *Legend* for the eyes of all," or "touched on only a little when dealing with them."⁸ Much has been written about the Joachimite and eschatological elements in Franciscanism. In fact, ever since Manselli's original and exact definitions, scholars have for some time too easily indulged in generalizations and tired repetitions, without highlighting new data. Yet very little has been done to trace the image and myth that Francis created, as an influential and immanent force, in a particular spiritual climate.

For these reasons, I would like to reopen discussion on certain aspects of the problem. If we put off the question of how Saint Francis was seen and portrayed by the Lesser Brothers at the transition between the two centuries, I am convinced that we run the risk of derailing research on the history of this period of Franciscanism. We prevent ourselves from reaching a correct understanding of the events and ideas that were at work in the

⁷See *Words of Brother Conrad* 12: "The advice of Blessed Francis for the time of the Order's tribulation" (386-900).

⁸See E. Pásztor, "San Bonaventura: biografo," 86-87.

protagonists of those events, influencing them. In other words, if it is necessary to stress that the Order's official biography was an attempt to conceal certain identifying traits in the historical reality of Francis by presenting a face reflected in a distorting mirror, it is also necessary to try to understand how and why this distortion took place, and what were the external and internal forces that hastened it. On the other hand, why was its validity called into question, and what was the context in which the entire controversy took shape and developed.

First, it must be said that at the center of the conflict that broke out in the Order between the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth, what we find is not the human figure of Francis, but the Franciscan Rule and how it is lived in concrete daily life. Contrary to what we might think, based on what is now the well-established view of historians, the controversy was not only about the need to observe the *Rule* to the letter or spiritually. There was also the question of who was competent to decide what was Francis's true intention expressed in the words of the *Rule*, for "in every article of the *Rule* much attention must be paid to the blessed Francis's intention, explanation and expression."⁹ At the same time, in the eyes of many in the community, the text of the *Rule* was essentially ambiguous in its desire to present itself as gospel norms.

There were two opposing views on the subject. For one group, the only one competent to interpret the *Rule* is the Pope, starting with Gregory IX, who, as Raymond of Fronsac says

stood by blessed Francis as he composed the *Rule* and obtained its confirmation, and conferred very often with blessed Francis with regard to doubts about the *Rule* that were arising at the time. Therefore no *superstitiosus* ought to claim, as he says, that he knows blessed Francis's intention about the things contained in his *Rule* better than that glorious Supreme Pontiff, who learned fully about the saint's intention from the saint himself and his companions, and who knew fully from experience how the saint and his companions lived and observed the *Rule*.¹⁰

⁹This statement is by Ubertino da Casale in *Rotulus iste*, in F. Ehrle, "Zur Vorgeschichte des Concils von Vienne," in *Archiv für Literatur und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters* (hereafter *ALKG*) III (1887) 94.

¹⁰*Sol ortus est*, in *ALKM* 9. See also the community's response in *Rotulus iste*: "The intention of blessed Francis is that which the Order follows in observing the *Rule* according to the declarations. For Pope Gregory IX, in his declarations, says that he stood by blessed Francis as he composed the *Rule* and had his intention and clarified the *Rule* according to his intention. Therefore let no one claim to know the intention of blessed Francis better than the Roman Pontiffs, who answer that they

The *superstitiosi* were the brothers who belonged to the group of Franciscan Spirituals. As Ubertino says: "They call all those who wish to conform to the poverty of the brothers and the *Rule* singular, superstitious and detractors of the Order." But in no way did they mean to claim this knowledge for themselves. They wished to reserve that exclusively to Saint Francis, to the way he had lived his *Rule* and the record he had left in that regard. This was the second opinion that emerged from the controversy.¹¹ I would like to stress immediately that the attempt to interpret the *Rule* in light of the example of the saint's life is a fully and authentically Franciscan idea, as long as we keep in mind that in this way the *Rule* is supported by what Francis regarded as his highest duty: to be a model and example to his brothers.

The Popes' interpretations are contained in the bulls. But Saint Francis had prohibited the brothers "from asking letters from the Apostolic See...for any reason or cause." These are the words of Ubertino da Casale in a report presented to Clement V, in 1310, during the long and well-known debate, which began because "men of peace," having noticed shortcomings in the observance of poverty in the Order, "are forced to complain to the Supreme Father, so that he might see who understands the *Rule* better, blessed Francis or those who are obtaining privileges."¹² For Ubertino, who is speaking here on behalf of many, the search for an authentic interpreter of the *Rule* does not end in the attempt to resolve the conflicts in the Order over *usus pauper* (which was no small problem, since it had caused so much suffering and tribulation to a growing number of brothers). It is also a way of understanding the *Rule* by reaffirming its identity with the Gospel. Seeking to clarify the saint's intention, they sought "to explain the intention he had in the *Rule* from the Holy Spirit and which he declared for certain to be the Lord's will."¹³ Once again we are dealing with an expansion and a deepening of Francis's true thought, as confirmed in the *Testament* 38, where he forbids any gloss on the *Rule*, precisely because it is simply an expression in words of what God was telling him. Seen thus, the only valid link between the *Rule*, as a text inspired by the Holy Spirit, and the Order, which derived from this *Rule* its form of life as willed by the Lord, could really be nothing else than Francis himself. Furthermore, according to a tradition that never ceased to exist in thirteenth-century Franciscanism, he

have clarified the *Rule* according to the saint's intention" (Ibid. 136).

¹¹Ibid., 66 and 137. Ubertino writes: "Therefore we humbly and earnestly beg his apostolic holiness for the perfect observance of our *Rule* and the Gospel of Christ, as contained in the *Rule*, and according to the intention of our blessed father Francis, which he expressed in words and deeds" (Ubertino da Casale).

¹²Ibid., 52-53, *Sanctitas vestra*.

¹³Ibid., 54.

was considered privileged because Christ himself had revealed his will to him.

While it was no problem for the community to present its supporting documents from *Quo elongati* to *Exiit qui seminat*, those who shared the opposite view had to indicate the sources through which the saint's intention could be known. The search and the interest focused on Francis during the last years of his life, between the finalization of the *Rule* and his death, when his life as a Lesser Brother had become conformity to a rule. Bonaventure provides no useful testimony for these years: in the *Major Legend*, the continuous narrative of the saint's life ends with the announcement of the papal confirmation of the *Rule* and its taking effect. This seems to imply that the time when the fraternity lived solely by the founder's spirit, fervor and evangelical impulse had ended and given way to a later stage, in which it was enough to obey to the *Rule* to be a brother.¹⁴ They would have to appeal to other sources.

This is the context in which the recovery of a figure very close to Francis took place, one whom Thomas of Celano and Bonaventure barely mention in passing: Brother Leo. It should be said immediately that his constant presence in this debate is totally unrelated to his human reality and his Franciscanism. He plays only one role in it, that of witness, for the most part indirect and mediate. Not only was Brother Leo already dead for some years when this controversy flared up, but he also left no legend, much less a treatise on Francis in which to find a discussion of how the saint lived according to the precepts of the *Rule*. The only thing attributed to him was a series of episodes or stories in which he transmits the founder's words and deeds. It is there that Francis's behavior and the interpretation of the *Rule* left by him are reflected—indirectly, but with special clarity. These are recollections, partly written down by Leo himself, partly transmitted by word of mouth alone and later put in writing by others.

So there began to circulate, at the end of the thirteenth century, a group of texts that very soon acquired a fundamental role. A special feature was their emphasis on the fact that they came from Brother Leo; the existence of an autograph version is noted several times. A corpus of Leonine writings was formed essentially between 1305 and 1311, thanks to Ubertino da Casale, partly in his *Tree of the Crucified Life of Jesus*, partly in his petitions presented to Clement V. Later it was supplemented and used extensively by Angelo Clareno, between 1321-22 and 1330, in his works such as the *Exposition on the Rule*, the *History of the Seven Tribulations*, and the *Apologia pro vita sua*.

¹⁴All this is discussed more fully in E. Pástor, "San Bonaventura: biografo."

Before we examine the presence of this corpus in the writings of Ubertino and Clareno, I think some preliminary remarks are necessary. The first is chronological in nature. When I gave the date of the formation of the corpus, I was referring to the Leonine texts as a whole, not to the individual passages, which were in circulation well before 1305. Some, as we shall see, were already used by Thomas of Celano in the *Second Life*, though not all. For others, which appeared at the beginning of the fourteenth century as going back to Brother Leo, the stages of transmission are clearly known. It seems that Brother Leo sent some of his reminiscences, in his own name, to Crescentius of Iesi, following the general's circular letter, but the only thing certain is that he took part in gathering the flowers mentioned in the famous Greccio letter of 1246.¹⁵ But I want to make it very clear that when I speak of "Leonine writings" in this study I am not referring to these flowers or to the group of texts marked with the testimonial formula, "We who were with him" (Manselli has recently shown the essential importance of these texts, giving dates for them that are backed by sound arguments). I mean only those texts that are attributed directly and exclusively to Brother Leo. There is an essential difference between the Leonine writings and the passages from the "We." While the latter always describe themselves in the course of their narrative as eyewitnesses or ear-witnesses of the things they are telling, Brother Leo never refers to himself in his accounts. It is the others—Peter John Olivi or Ubertino and Angelo Clareno—who say that he is the author of certain texts.

My second remark concerns Brother Leo as witness to the words and deeds of Francis. Since the formation of the corpus of his writings is linked to the names and works of two people involved in the struggle between community and Spirituals, namely, Ubertino and Angelo Clareno, some might wonder whether we are dealing with an invention or fabrication of testimony *post eventum*. I think I should clarify immediately that the authenticity of the Leonine writings is never questioned or rejected by the community, even though they were used by Ubertino in petitions presented to the Pope, which involved the community in a direct dispute. So, it would have been convenient for them to reject them. In fact—and this is even more interesting here—their truthfulness was never challenged, even though the picture they present of Francis and the last events of his life is clearly very different from the one left by Saint Bonaventure. Furthermore, this was at a time when the *Legend* was now the only text allowed in circulation by the Order.

¹⁵See the letter in the edition of R. B. Brooke, *Scripta Leonis, Rufini et Angeli, sociorum S. Francisci*, Oxford 1970, 86-89 [Also in FA:ED II, 66-68]; Brother Leo, as we know, is the first among the brothers mentioned as authors of the letter.

A final comment on Ubertino's credibility. Even as a controversialist, he never seems to tamper with texts or witnesses. He uses Bonaventure's *Major Legend*, criticizing it strongly, yet faithfully transcribing the passages of interest to him. He makes ample use of the *Commentary on the Apocalypse* by Peter John Olivi, respecting the text. When he says that Brother Leo is the author of certain texts, he says so in a document that is in a sense public, since it was presented to the Pope who discussed it in consistory and sent it to the leaders of the community for their opinions. For this reason I think he can be believed, or at least it remains to be shown that he was a forger. On the other hand—and this is the strongest argument—the best evidence comes from the texts themselves, which, as we shall see shortly, definitely come from someone who knew Saint Francis well, lived with him and shared his ideals, and understood him completely.

For some time now, Franciscan historians have directed their attention to these Leonine writings. But they have done so in terms that, critically speaking, are not entirely acceptable. We must remember that these texts were already gathered in two collections during our period. Preserved in a single manuscript, they were published by L. Lemmens in an edition that was full of lacunae, altered and inaccurate. Yet this edition was so successful that we can say that, until now, the Leonine writings have been considered to be exclusively those published by Lemmens: *The Words of Saint Francis* and *The Intention of the Rule*.¹⁶ On the other hand, a comparison of the manuscript with the edition made me realize that Lemmens had taken many liberties and made many errors. I became convinced that, so far, historians have focused their investigation on two collections, which are indeed attributed to Brother Leo but which, as such, do not go back to him. No doubt this attribution helped give rise to opinions and critical judgments that were incorrect. As a result, the importance of the individual passages and their presence in the controversies of the early fourteenth century passed without raising too many questions.

Thus the need for a new study of the Leonine writings aimed, this time, at examining all the problems. It will try to clarify their place in the Franciscan Question, first trying to ascertain what is the picture of Francis painted by a brother very close to him, and what is the influence of these texts on this picture in the Franciscan crisis between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

¹⁶See L. Lemmens, *Documenta antiqua franciscana* I-III, Ad Claras Aquas 1901-1902, 83-106; on the relevant history, see E. Pásztor, "Gli scritti leonini," in *La "Questione francescana" dal Sabatier ad oggi*, Assisi 1974, 199-212.

Now let us look more closely at this corpus of Leonine writings. Clasen has made a first list of the writings of the different authors who made use of the *Words* and the *Intention* during the period approximately between 1288 and 1322. I will add to it here with the results of my examination of Angelo Clareno's *History of the Seven Tribulations* and *Apologia pro vita sua*.¹⁷

According to Clasen, the first one to use the Leonine contribution, with an explicit reference to its authorship, was Peter John Olivi in his *Exposition on the Rule of the Friars Minor*, which dates from about 1288.¹⁸ His reference is as follows: "Wherefore we read in the papers [*cedulis*] of Brother Leo, which he wrote, about the things he had seen and heard about our father, as his special companion." As I have said elsewhere, it is a precise and concise statement of the value of Brother Leo's testimony. Ubertino of Casale follows it, in chronological order, in the *Tree of the Crucified Life of Jesus*, from 1305. He cites various texts attributed to Brother Leo in Book V, which inserts passages from different sources in the prologue to Peter John Olivi's *Apocalypse*, thus constituting a true anthology of Franciscan sources. Brother Leo is mentioned in Chapters 3, 5 and 7, entitled respectively "Jesus Who Brings Forth Francis," "Jesus Established the Form" and "Jesus Despised Anew," as if to immediately stress that these texts are used to reconfirm Francis's christocentrism, to deal with the interpretation of the *Rule*, and to highlight the critical situation in the Order. It should be noted that in these chapters the Leonine texts are found alongside the *Major Legend*—in Chapter 3 they are preceded by another source close to the spirituality of Francis, *The Sacred Exchange between Saint Francis and Lady Poverty*—as if to immediately suggest a rule for interpretation: starting with the external, biographical, events in the saint's life, he ends by analyzing the innermost depths of his soul.

¹⁷S. Clasen, *Legenda antiqua S. Francisci. Untersuchung über die nachbonaventurianischen Franziskusquellen. Legenda trium sociorum, Speculum perfectionis, Actus b. Francisci et sociorum eius und verwandtes Schrifttum*, Leiden 1967, 234-49. With regard to the *Arbor vitae* (op.cit., 242-43), Clasen's references are not always completely accurate. Thus the first passage omits the important clause concerning the language of Saint Francis: "I insert here the words with his Latin"; the sixth passage does not introduce *Int. Reg.* 8-9, but *Int. Reg.* 9; the seventh, not *Int. Reg.* 10-12, but *Int. Reg.* 11; from the eighth the statement *Idem* is omitted. The presence of the *Words of Francis* 5 in the *Arbor vitae* is not recorded; see n. 60 of this study, below. — For Angelo Clareno's *History* I am using the edition by A. Ghinato, *Angelus a Clarino, Chronicon seu Historia septem tribulationum Ordinis Minorum*, Rome 1959, (hereafter *Historia*); for the *Apologia*, see V. Doucet, *Angelus Clarinus ad Alvarum Pelagium. Apologia pro vita sua* (hereafter *Apologia*) *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 39 (1946) 63-200.

¹⁸See E. Pásztor, "Gli scritti leonini," 201.

In the *Tree of Life* Ubertino refers to Brother Leo's authorship as well as to the existence of actual autographs for some texts. In Chapter 3 we find a long series of them transcribed and cited in succession, with no other intervening texts.¹⁹ In Chapter 5, on the other hand, there is a single passage, but it is preceded by a long introductory note, extremely valuable, and followed by a summary of the contents of the other texts, already transcribed in Chapter 3:

As to the testimony from heaven which this *Rule* received from the Lord Jesus Christ, give ear, reader, and inscribe what follows deep inside your heart. In fact it comes from the holy Brother Conrad [of Offida] mentioned above, who heard it directly from the holy Brother Leo, who was present at the time and did the writing down of the *Rule*. This was done on certain scrolls, in his own handwriting, and these he sent to the Monastery of Saint Clare for safekeeping as a record for the future. After all, it was on these he had written many things he had heard from the lips of the father and many things he had seen him do. Their contents cover important matters about amazing things the saint accomplished, about the future debasement of the *Rule* and its subsequent revival, facts of great note about its institution and restoration on the part of God, and about the way in which the blessed Francis intended it to be observed, the very same way he himself used to say he had received it from Christ.

Those things Brother Bonaventure omitted on purpose, not wanting to include them in his *Legend* for the eyes of all. His main reason was that there were some facts which openly showed there were aberrations from the *Rule* even earlier on, and he had not wished to prematurely disgrace the brothers before outsiders. It is obvious, however, that it would have been much better to write about them; because then the disasters that later occurred might not perhaps have been so bad. Of the greatest significance is what follows next; it was preserved since those earlier days. But I was very sad to hear that those scrolls have been pulled apart and, possibly, some missing; I was quite saddened over some of them.²⁰

The mention of Brother Leo in Chapter 7 turns out to be highly significant. There again he is linked to Saint Bonaventure, thus making it clear that one of the functions of his testimony is to supplement the *Major Legend*: "...as is clear from the words of Brother Leo and from the things the *Legend* says." The importance of Francis's example is seen from his

¹⁹*Arbor vitae*, 427-29.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 445; FA:ED III, 198-99.

reaction to the many abuses that took place in his religion while he was still alive:

When he saw that he was becoming exhausted from working with them to no avail, with a sigh he tolerated what he could not correct. Yet he always used to say, with sorrow, that he foresaw the future, and just as a new man, a new order should not look back to some earlier *status* or order. In these things that lessen poverty and usefulness and contempt and crucifixion, which makes our bodies like Jesus crucified, a new man and a new order should not look back to some earlier *status* or order, but only to the footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ.²¹

But the references to Brother Leo's testimony become really important because they are used immediately, in the heat of the controversy between Ubertino and the community before Clement V, as attested by two petitions from the Franciscan, dating from 1310 and 1311. In the first, the *Responsio*, Ubertino shows a great mastery of the writings left by the companions of Saint Francis. He also says that the desire to know them is an existential problem for him, linked to his Franciscan commitment:

These things were written by Brother Leo, a most holy man and an inseparable companion of blessed Francis, as he heard from his mouth. I read and heard them from our older fathers, since I have been very curious about these things since my youth, as a searcher driven by an awareness of my own profession.... The same Brother Leo wrote down these other things, which are entirely convincing, and that part and other lesser things, which are omitted in order to avoid tiring you, the readers.²²

Then, in the same context of the question of studies, in a precious confrontation between Gregory IX and Brother Leo, we have a succession of witnesses, both authoritative insofar as they are linked to Francis, but contradictory in their testimony:

Although the Pope's declaration can grant, *ex plenitudine potestatis*, whatever he wishes, and granted that the Pope did it with the best of intentions, yet I, bound by obedience, say that blessed Francis expressed his intention with regard to books and study...as is very clear in the words written down by Brother Leo, as he heard them from the holy father's mouth, and as I

²¹Ibid., 450.

²²ALKG III, 53-54.

myself heard from many other companions of Blessed Francis, whom I saw.²³

Here we must also see an allusion to Ubertino's other informers, companions of Francis, whom twice he places alongside Brother Leo, not bothering to verify the respective attributions. As a rule, Ubertino uses the Leonine writings along with other theological or doctrinal interpretations of the *Rule*, such as those of the Four Masters or Saint Bonaventure, thus creating a distinctive and evocative psychological climate. Since Brother Leo is clearly not an authority with the same educational background as the others, attention is at once skillfully diverted from him, as a witness, to that which he has to say. This allows him to be simply the means by which Francis himself is placed alongside the Masters and Bonaventure. At other times, Brother Leo's testimony is associated with the *Testament* and the *Major Legend*—understood as an official text of the Order, I believe, and thus it received confirmation from the *Testament* and from Brother Leo—and an opportunity is found to summarize all the reasons for its importance and authority:

Therefore, in order to show in what manner the *Rule* is not properly observed now, that I might faithfully obey the apostolic command, in many places above I cited the words and deeds of blessed Francis, at times as in the *Legend* and as I heard them from the holy father's companions and read them in the papers of Brother Leo of happy memory, written in his own hand, as he heard them from the mouth of blessed Francis. Because of his holy life and company with the holy father until death, and because he was with him in drawing up the *Rule* and first wrote it down in his own hand, he manifestly asserts, declaring with utmost certainty, that he heard from him those things and many others concerning those articles, that it was God's will and his. And this, when required by the articles of the *Rule*, bears unexpected witness to that truth.²⁴

In the second petition, the *Declaratio*, Ubertino not only relies again on the testimony of Brother Leo; he isolates an especially important nucleus, the words of Francis. He never raises doubts about their authenticity, nor does he deal with the question of Leo's ability to remember. He accepts

²³Ibid., 76.

²⁴Ibid., 85; see also *ibid.*, 79: "Such was the occupation of our fathers in prayer and constant weeping and avoidance of idleness, as appears in the *Legend* of our holy father, and in his *Testament*, and in the words of Brother Leo, and in their examples. He who considers and knows, sees that we have disgracefully abandoned them."

without question the words reported by Leo as textual citations, as actually spoken by Francis:

Although the *Rule* and the *Testament* and his *Legend* make many things clear, everything becomes clear from his explicit words. These were solemnly written down by the holy man Leo, his companion, at the holy father's command and because of the brother's devotion, in the book...²⁵

But precisely because they were so valuable, the writings of Brother Leo, says Ubertino, should have been circulated as widely as possible by the leaders of the Order. Instead, they "strictly ordered, under obedience, that the *Testament* of blessed Francis be taken from everyone and burned." Even those who wanted to inform the other brothers "about the father's intention with regard to observance of the Rule" were labeled "destroyers of the Order, fosterers of disputes, promoters of causes."²⁶

Not many years later, between 1321 and 1323, Angelo Clareno in his *Exposition on the Rule* reaffirms again the importance of Brother Leo's testimony, in a series of particularly rich citations.²⁷ Like Ubertino in the *Tree of Life*, Clareno cites various Leonine texts in a single series, then repeats some of them individually. The longest citation is in the context of an examination of Franciscan poverty, in Chapter Six, in the notes to verses 1-2 of the *Later Rule* VI: "Let the brothers not make anything their own, neither house, nor place, nor anything at all."²⁸

Clareno examines the references to *usus pauper* in the *Earlier Rule*, the *Later Rule* and the *Testament* in order to show that "the first and last intention of blessed Francis was that the brothers should have nothing of their own, neither individually nor in common."²⁹ Then he introduces into

²⁵Ibid., 168. The passage continues, indicating also the place where the Leonine writings are kept: "...that is kept in the cupboard of the brothers in Assisi, and in his scrolls which I have before me, written in Brother Leo's hand. In them the intention of blessed Francis regarding the poverty mentioned in the *Rule* is clearly stated against all the abuses and transgressions that they are trying to gloss over." But with regard to the custody of Brother Leo's manuscripts, see what Ubertino said in 1305: "This was done on certain scrolls, in his own handwriting, and these he sent to the Monastery of Saint Clare for safekeeping as a record for the future" (*Arbor vitae* 445; FA:ED III, 199). Would these be the scrolls found in Ubertino's possession in 1310?

²⁶ALKG III, 168.

²⁷L. Olier, *Expositio regulae fratrum Minorum auctore fr. Angelo Clareno*, Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi), 1912 (hereafter *Expositio*); S. Clasen, op.cit., 245-46.

²⁸*Expositio*, 126-30.

²⁹Ibid., 124.

his discussion the authority who for him assumes the greatest importance, after Francis himself, among the Lesser Brothers, namely Brother Leo: "Therefore, as Brother Leo writes, Saint Francis wished that...."³⁰ Immediately the function of Brother Leo's testimony is described: to transmit one of the saint's wishes. Clareno seems to be working either with individual papers [*cedule*] or with material in which the various Leonine texts are transcribed separately from one another, because this is also their form in the *Exposition*. It is Clareno who establishes a link among them with the words "And he adds..." [*Et subdit, Et infert, Et addicit*], the "he" being always Brother Leo.

In his *History of the Seven Tribulations*, Clareno gives a place of honor to Brother Leo, placing him among the saint's biographers and calling him "a man of marvelous simplicity and holiness" and "the companion of Saint Francis."³¹ But as far as his testimony is concerned, although Clareno makes rather generous use of it, he does not always mention its author.³² Only at times do we find explicit allusions: an "as Brother Leo says," with regard to a text known also from other sources;³³ a reference to him as witness to the events narrated in the case of a conversation between Honorius III and Francis concerning the Rule;³⁴ a "with Brother Leo as witness" regarding a habit of the saint completely unknown in the sources.³⁵ Later he is named among the repositories of a secret of Francis, along with Bernard of Quintavalle, Giles, Angelo and Masseo.³⁶ In his *Apologia pro vita sua*, Clareno bases himself twice on the

³⁰Ibid., 126.

³¹*Historia*, 9; FA:ED III, 380.

³²See for example *Historia* 39-40 and 58-61 (our Texts III and IV).

³³Ibid., 45 (our Text VI).

³⁴Ibid., 61-62.

³⁵See n. 100 below.

³⁶Ibid., 19; FA:ED III, 387-88:

"His companions—namely Bernard of Quintavalle, Giles, Angelo, Masseo, and Leo—related that Saint Francis once said in secret to these five: Brothers, although I may be the most vile man and least worthy creature of God, nevertheless, that you may grow in reverence and faith in your vocation and the promise of the life and Rule revealed to me by the Lord, know that Christ reveals his presence to me with great kindness and familiarity, especially whenever I cry out to him for the benefit of the religion. He so fully and clearly agrees to all the things that I ask for that—as the Lord himself once told me—he gave to very few, to the rarest of saints, such an abundance of his presence. By his kindness and grace alone he called me and revealed himself to me, and he taught me that I should seek confirmation of his spotless life from the Church and the Lord Pope. And Christ swayed the Lord Pope and his

testimony of Brother Leo, in connection with two texts that are part of the group of writings we shall examine more closely in a moment.³⁷

From the references to the Leonine writings used in various ways in the works of the three Franciscans mentioned, there emerges a group of texts that give us a clear picture of Francis and how he is said to have understood the *Rule* of the Lesser Brothers. The picture is painted within a historical pattern that often comes close to open controversy. Before we examine this Francis of the Leonine writings more closely, we should make clear that the texts cited by Olivi, Ubertino and Angelo Clareno generally appear isolated and autonomous. They are not separate pieces of a unified written work, even though Clareno, as we already said, refers to the existence of a biography of the saint written by Brother Leo.³⁸ These texts are directly involved in a very concrete discussion against aspects of the changes in the Order since the time of Francis. But they never become a chronicle of those changes or of the climate in which they took place.

brothers the Lord Cardinals, and they understood that I had been sent to them by the Lord Jesus Christ himself, and the Lord Pope granted me everything that I asked.

'Happy are they who faithfully and devoutly strive to live according to their vocation, and observe purely and simply until the end the things which they promised the Lord, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven with unique glory. And woe to those who attempt to nullify out of their knowledge those things which he deigned to reveal to me to the glory of his grace, for the present and future benefit of the whole religion, and for the salvation of the souls of all the brothers. Because such people deprive themselves of grace, and drag others away from salvation, they deserve the most bitter punishments of Gehenna.'

Attributed to a direct divine intervention, in this passage, are Francis's call (*conversio*), the need he felt to ask the Pope to confirm the fraternity's way of life, and the fact that he obtained it. The two final promises should be underscored: the salvation of those who persevere in their choice to live "purely and simply," and the condemnation of those who abandon the revealed way. These promises echo various passages in the *Legend of Perugia* and the *Mirror of Perfection*. Hereafter I will use these two sources in the following editions: "*Compilatio Assisiensis*" dagli scritti di fr. Leone e Compagni su S. Francesco d'Assisi, ed. M. Bigaroni (Pubblicazioni della Biblioteca Franciscana, Chiesa Nuova - Assisi, 2), [Assisi], Porziuncola 1976 (hereafter LP [AC]) and *Speculum Perfectionis seu S. Francisci Assisiensis Legenda antiquissima, auctore fratre Leone*, ed. P. Sabatier, Paris 1898 (hereafter 2MP).

³⁷*Apologia* 111, 125; see our Texts III and VII below; see *Apologia* 111 ("with Brother Leo as witness") and 125 ("as Brother Leo writes").

³⁸See n. 31 and *Apologia*, 158: "Therefore in the *Legend*, which the holy brother Leo writes..."; with regard to this last reference, it should be remembered that the citation which follows is not a Leonine passage, but one from the "We."

Within the group of texts mentioned so far, two from the *Tree of Life* and attributed by Ubertino to Brother Leo raise questions. They contain the special testimonial formula, "We who were with him," with regard to which I have already mentioned Manselli's recent work.³⁹ Clearly, these are not by Brother Leo alone but belong to that group of writings to which Ubertino refers different times as the work of Francis's companions. Therefore we shall not deal with them here. All that is left to say in this regard is that the two passages, at a time we cannot date, but which is before 1305, were placed among the Leonine writings—probably because they were transcribed by Leo himself and kept with his texts, which were also autographs.

The corpus of authentic texts of Brother Leo, according to what we are told in the works of Olivi, Ubertino and Clarenos, totals nine. They are essentially divided into two groups. One group (I-V) is found in Chapter VI of Angelo Clarenos *Exposition on the Rule*, the other (VI-IX) is in Chapter 3 of Book V of Ubertino's *Tree of Life*. The nine passages will now be examined according to their order in the groups, starting with those in the *Exposition*.

I – True Poverty and Voluntary Poverty

The first of the Leonine writings paraphrases a passage from the *Earlier Rule* IX, 8, which underwent a significant change in passing into the *Later Rule*. The passage reads: "Alms are a legacy and a justice due to the poor that our Lord Jesus Christ acquired for us."⁴⁰ In the text, Brother Leo cites a remark by Francis, repeated frequently to the brothers, that he would always accept less alms than necessary, so as not to defraud those who were truly poor, to whom these alms belonged as an inheritance. To do otherwise would have seemed to him stealing, whereas he was never a thief.⁴¹

³⁹See n. 1 of this study. They are episodes XIV and XV in the above-mentioned work by R. Manselli.

⁴⁰See LR VI, 4, where living by alms is described thus: "This is that sublime height of most exalted poverty which has made you, my most beloved brothers, heirs and kings of the Kingdom of Heaven, poor in temporal things but exalted in virtue." This passage stresses that voluntary acceptance of poverty makes the brothers heirs and kings of the Kingdom of Heaven, a very different idea from that expressed in the passage from the *Earlier Rule*.

⁴¹*Expositio*, 126: "Saint Francis wished the brothers to beware especially of receiving or asking for anything that exceeded the limits of the poverty they had promised. For this reason blessed Francis often said these words to the brothers, 'I have never been a thief, that is, of alms, which are the inheritance of the poor; I always took less than my due, so that I might not defraud the other poor of their portion, because whoever would do the contrary would be a thief.'"

The words are few, but their content is very rich. There is, first of all, a clear contrast between those who were poor because they lacked the material goods needed for their life, and thus belonged to a particular social class, and those who were voluntarily poor and accepted the lack of goods as the result of a free choice of a state of life. For Francis, only the truly poor have a right to alms. Those who are poor by choice can use them only within certain limits, insofar as they have to obtain for themselves what is strictly necessary. Thus the text has a very clear polemic point: it is against the accumulation of alms. But before testing the validity of this argument at the time the Leonine text was being used, I would like to call attention to the fact that this was a much-discussed subject in twelfth-century canon law, with one significant change. It was during the twelfth century that the moral-legal concept of the case of extreme necessity came to be worked out. It even allowed for theft in order to satisfy an urgent need, as for example in the case of famine or starvation.⁴² But while the question arose as an expression of the rights of the poor with respect to the rich, Francis turned it completely around. He was not interested in the conduct of the rich; he was driven by the single idea of poverty, which for him was fundamental. In the context of this state, he felt the need to define the rights of those who were voluntarily poor, specifically himself and his brothers, by explicitly calling those who accumulate alms thieves. It is not an argument against asking for and accepting alms for manual labor, but rather a question of Franciscan pauperism, an affirmation that alms are to be limited.

On this subject, we should keep in mind a passage in 2 *Celano* 87. The story of the meeting between Francis and a poor man, to whom he gives his mantle, develops the saint's idea that it is a wrongful appropriation not to give to those who are truly poor what they need. According to his companion, Francis concludes by saying: "I do not want to be a thief; we will be accused of theft if we do not give to someone in greater need." This clearly echoes the idea expressed in our text.⁴³

Brother Leo, as I have already pointed out, makes no comment in the text, whereas Clareno, who cites it twice in his *Exposition*, explains it

⁴²See G. Couvreur, *Les pauvres ont-ils des droits? Recherches sur le vol en cas d'extrême nécessité depuis la Concordia de Gratien (1140) jusqu'à Guillaume d'Auxerre (1231)*, Rome 1961; R. Manselli *La religion populaire au Moyen Age. Problèmes de méthode et d'histoire*, Montreal-Paris 1975, 132, 144; idem, *Studi sulle eresie del XII secolo*, Rome 1975, 54-55, which emphasizes the importance of the ideas of Raoul Ardens on this subject.

⁴³For Thomas of Celano's *Second Life*, I am using the edition *Fr. Thomas de Celano. Vita secunda S. Francisci Assisiensis* ed. PP. Collegii S. Bonaventurae, Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi) 1927.

thus: "[Saint Francis] wanted all the brothers to rejoice, as in true delights, in the lack of things that is part of poverty, and to strive to be joyful when in want and in need, and to refuse absolutely, as if it were theft and robbery, to accept anything superfluous or to obtain it for themselves." And again: "Saint Francis wanted the brothers to beware especially of receiving or asking for anything that exceeded the limits of the poverty they had promised."⁴⁴ As we can see, Clareno stretches the meaning of Francis's words, bringing together in the same context the rejection of what is superfluous and the need for Franciscan poverty to be joyful. What was a specific argument against the accumulation of alms in the brief text is extended in the commentary to everything that is not strictly necessary, no matter where it comes from. Rather than labeling those who act contrary to this rejection as thieves, and the transgression as robbery, his concern, motivated by a genuine pastoral sense, is to assure the fruits that come from such an attitude: the delights of being poor. So, as used by Clareno, the text is not so much an attempt to curb the brothers' excessive greed, but more of an exhortation "to love most high poverty." I would like to stress this fact in order to show how the use of these Leonine writings not only reflects quite a variety of situations and attitudes, but also offers a glimpse of Clareno's spiritual position, of his personal standpoint on the question he is dealing with.

To understand the importance of Francis's statement and its great relevance in the time period we are concerned about, it is enough to refer to Ubertino's *Responsio*, mentioned earlier. There the accumulation of alms is called an "impurity" of Franciscan poverty and placed in the same category as "excessive buildings" and seeking burial rights, testamentary bequests and dispensations. All of these are means by which "with excessive solicitude and in ways not in keeping with our profession, temporal goods are accumulated."⁴⁵

II – Francis's Poverty and Charisma

The second Leonine text cited by Clareno is much more complicated than the previous one. Brother Leo explains that the ministers were trying to convince Francis to allow them to have something in common, for a practical reason: to provide for the needs of the brothers assembled at the general chapter. Francis consulted Christ, who responded

⁴⁴*Expositio*, 109 and 126.

⁴⁵*ALKG* III, 55.

in the negative, but promising that he would watch over the Lesser Brothers, whom he calls his family.⁴⁶

Once again we find ourselves in the midst of questions related to poverty, a recurring theme in these texts. Brother Leo shows clearly the difference that had arisen between Francis and the ministers (that is, the provincials of the Order) with regard to *usus pauper*. Although he does not intervene directly, he stresses that the departure from the original rigor was initiated by the hierarchy and not by the brothers. The text touches on two essential points of true Franciscanism: renunciation of all ownership, not only personal, but also common, and a promise to abandon themselves completely to divine providence. Especially significant is Christ's promise to provide for the needs of the Order, no matter how much it might grow (*quantumcumque cresceret*), a particularly relevant subject at the end of the thirteenth century, linked to the well-known problem of the growth of the Order. In this regard—contrary to the opinion of the community—the text excludes any and every need to change the original way of life, unlike what is invariably present in the *Major Legend*. But at the end it is emphasized that Christ provides only as long as the brothers put all their hope in him, which is precisely Francis's attitude in this context. In fact, he does not respond to the ministers without first consulting Christ.

Besides the emphasis on Franciscan poverty as unchangeable, because it is willed by Christ, I think the passage also contains another detail of equal, if not greater, importance: Francis's charisma. The saint appears as one who speaks directly to Christ and as one who receives a promise from him. It seems to me that the appeal to a divine intervention has a twofold significance here. On the one hand, it goes beyond the concrete case and assures permanent validity to Francis's refusal to compromise in matters of poverty. On the other hand, it expresses his gospel choice in language that can be understood even by those for whom the meaning of this choice would otherwise be too difficult, precisely because of its novelty. What the saint had actually derived from the Gospel becomes a direct intervention from on high, a dialogue between Christ and Francis, an image to make understandable, even to the uneducated, the inspired character of the *Rule*,

⁴⁶*Expositio*, 126-27: "When the brother ministers urged him to allow the brothers to have something at least in common, so that such a great number would have some resources, Saint Francis called upon Christ in prayer and consulted him about this. Christ immediately responded to him he did not wish to because he himself wanted to take care of them, and that he would take away everything held individually or in common, saying that this is his family for whom he was always ready to provide, no matter how much it might grow, and he would always cherish it as long as it would put its hope in him."

insofar as it is derived from the Gospel and deliberately has the form of Christ. These conversations between Francis and Christ, so frequent in the Franciscan sources, have a twofold function in my opinion. First, there is the biblical function of insuring Francis's credibility (see Ex 19:9), and then the other, of communicating in plain words the fact that Franciscanism is simply the expression of Christ's command to his apostles, with all the guarantees of this choice, but also with the impossibility of changing it. Angelo Clareno appropriated this idea so perfectly that, in the first part of his *History*, he has Christ say to Francis: "Take...the form of life which I kept with my disciples...."⁴⁷ On the other hand, Francis says in his *Testament* 14-15: "...the Most High himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the holy Gospel. And I had this written down simply and in a few words...." Most likely this is the passage that served as a model for the conversations between Francis and Christ and for the *Rule* in its first formulation, as a summary of spirituality derived from the Gospel and accessible to all.

Francis's charisma is a major theme in the Leonine writings. It was extremely relevant at the turn of the century, when the promise to follow the path marked out by Francis was in danger and in many ways had not been followed. What gives special value to the Leonine writings is the function they attribute to this charisma. In fact Saint Bonaventure had also included a series of supernatural events in the *Major Legend*, mostly conversations between Francis and Christ, which he used to emphasize that the founding of the Order had been the will of God. So, these things have a positive significance for him. But in our texts the same theme is developed with a clear polemical intent.⁴⁸ Here Christ's intervention, alongside of and in support of Francis, is used to show that opposition to the saint's choices, especially poverty, is indefensible. We get the distinct impression that, even though the charisma of Francis was stressed in the Order's official biography, it was no longer powerful enough to inspire commitment on the part of all the brothers to imitate him. So it became expedient to reaffirm it, applying it to concrete cases, able also to account for those tendencies that were showing some confusion on the subject. One such tendency was not to have anything "in common," despite the presence of "such a great number." We should note the absence of all discussion or rational explanation in the passage; everything is entrusted to a "higher decision." Clareno cites the passage without comment.

⁴⁷*Historia*, 10; FA:ED III, 381.

⁴⁸See E. Pásztor, "San Bonaventura: biografo," 99-101.

III – Francis, the Ministers and the *Rule*

This text repeats the idea that Francis was a man of charisma and speaks also of the charisma of the *Rule*, understood as a set of norms willed solely by God.⁴⁹ Once again, in an atmosphere of tension between Francis and the ministers, Brother Leo introduces us to characters who in these texts are definitely in the foreground. This time the *Rule* is the focus of the tension. The ministers do not want to be bound by its norms, fearing they are too harsh. Francis, informed of this by Brother Elias, once again asks for divine help, and it is Christ himself who rejects any and every change in the *Rule*, claiming that he is the author of it all. Christ's words also include the requirement that the *Rule* be observed "to the letter" and "without a gloss." Those who are unwilling to do so are invited to leave the Order. Unlike the previous text, the conversation here has its own conclusion: Francis asks the ministers if they have heard the words of Christ, and then, "confused and blaming themselves," they leave.

⁴⁹*Expositio*, 127-28:

"When blessed Francis was on a mountain with Brother Leo of Assisi and Brother Bonizo of Bologna to make the *Rule*—because the one he had written at Christ's instruction, was lost—a great many ministers gathered around Brother Elias, who was the vicar of Saint Francis, and said: 'We heard that Brother Francis is making a new rule, and we fear that he will make it so harsh that we will not be able to observe it. We want you to go to him and tell him that we refuse to be bound to that *Rule*. Let him make it for himself and not for us.'

"Brother Elias replied to them that he did not want to go because he feared the rebuke of Brother Francis. When they insisted that he go, he said that he refused to go without them; so they all went.

"When Brother Elias, with those ministers, was near the place where blessed Francis was staying, he called him. Blessed Francis responded and, seeing those ministers, he said: 'What do these brothers want?' 'These are ministers,' Brother Elias answered, 'who heard that you are making a new rule. They fear that you are making it very harsh, and they say, and say publicly, that they refuse to be bound by it. Make it for yourself and not for them.'

"Then blessed Francis turned his face to heaven and spoke to Christ: 'Lord! Didn't I tell you they wouldn't believe me?' The voice of Christ was then heard in the air, saying 'Francis, nothing of yours is in the *Rule*: whatever is there is all mine. And I want the *Rule* observed in this way: to the letter, to the letter, to the letter, and without a gloss.' And he added: 'I know how much human weakness is capable of, and how much I want to help them. Those who refuse to observe it should leave the Order.' Then blessed Francis turned to the brothers and said to them: 'Did you hear? Did you hear? Do you want me to have you told again?' Then the ministers, confused and blaming themselves, departed."

This is one of the most complicated texts, but at the same time one of the most characteristic in the Leonine writings. It must be broken down if all its details are to be understood. First of all, it is interesting how the making of the *Rule* is presented. Francis, "like another Moses,"⁵⁰ is on a mountain in the company of two brothers. One is Brother Leo, who speaks of himself here in the third person, indirectly stressing his role as a witness present at the event described. Francis is there to rewrite a previous rule that had been lost.

In the *Major Legend* IV, 11, Saint Bonaventure also reports that, before the approved *Rule*, there was another that was later lost. In fact he blames Brother Elias for this. But Bonaventure says very little about the first rule and the circumstances that made its rewriting necessary:

Since he...wanted the *Rule*...to be confirmed, he went up to a certain mountain led by the Holy Spirit, with two of his companions, to condense it into a shorter form as the vision had dictated. There he fasted, content with only bread and water, and dictated the rule as the Holy Spirit suggested to him while he was praying. When he came down from the mountain, he gave the rule to his vicar to keep. After a few days had elapsed, the vicar claimed that it had been lost through carelessness. The holy man went off again to the place of solitude and rewrote it just as before, as if he were taking the words from the mouth of God.

Thus the place and circumstances of the *Rule*'s writing are specified: on a mountain, with two witnesses, fasting. Next, the fact that it is an inspired text: Francis prayed and the Holy Spirit suggested it to him. Then, the circumstances of its loss: given to the vicar (Brother Elias), his carelessness, its loss within a few days. Finally, its rewriting: return to the same place, no longer mere inspiration, the text is actually dictated by God. It is a concise statement, without one word more than absolutely necessary. Brother Leo does not speak about all this. Since his purpose is to describe the making of the *Rule*, he is content to emphasize that it is an inspired text, which is implicit in the words attributed to Christ: "...nothing of yours is in the *Rule*: whatever is there is all mine." His main point is the conflict between Francis and the ministers, which is completely missing in the *Major Legend*.

It is very interesting how the ministers are described in the text. They do not speak directly to Francis but use Brother Elias as their intermediary. A series of sentiments is attributed to them: fear that the *Rule* will be so harsh that it will be impossible to observe, refusal to be bound by

⁵⁰This is a recurring image in Angelo Clareno's writings; in the context of this Leonine text, we find it in the *Historia*, 59.

it, confusion at the intervention of Christ. We should see, in the words Brother Leo puts in their mouth, a very serious criticism. They are willing to have, within the community, two ways of life: one, stricter, for Francis, and the other, less rigorous, for themselves. Here we have a situation that is extremely relevant at a time of disagreement between community and Spirituals, which appears in all its seriousness in these Leonine writings. But the possibility of two ways of life for the Lesser Brothers is rejected in the text. The words spoken by Christ leave no room for compromise. The only way of life is the strict way, desired by Francis, although mitigated with a new promise by Christ, who guarantees his help to make its observance easier.

We note the curious presentation of the figure of Brother Elias in the text. He is not mentioned as the one who lost the rule, but neither is he said to take part in the attempted rebellion by the provincials, even though he certainly does not always behave consistently.

In the conversation between Christ and Francis, we find one change with respect to the previous text. No longer is Brother Leo describing it, but it is a true dialogue in the presence of various persons. "The voice of Christ was then heard in the air," says Brother Leo, and Francis asks the ministers: "Did you hear? Did you hear? Do you want me to have you told again?" What we have is certainly a narrative form that grips the audience. Ubertino da Casale, who cites this text in his *Tree of Life*, is influenced by it. He writes:

It is the holy brother Leo who testifies to this; he was there for it all and heard the Lord Jesus Christ speaking. So, is there anyone left who is still unconvinced? If not, then let us no longer harden our hearts to the *Rule's* observance. Through those he spoke to from heaven Jesus was speaking to all, and bearing witness to a *Rule* that is holy and apostolic.⁵¹

We can see here exactly how Ubertino uses this conversation between Christ and Francis to strengthen and reinforce obedience to the *Rule*, not as a normative and binding text, but as an expression of Christ's will. It is also very interesting how Ubertino appeals again to the authority of Brother Leo. As an ear-witness, he had heard Christ speak, and so no one can doubt the truth of his account. But this also shows that Ubertino was writing, not just for himself; he was thinking of his readers, of those who through him would make use of the Leonine writings.

On the other hand, the fact that Brother Leo heard Christ's words gives him, in a certain sense, a share in the charisma of Francis, which

⁵¹*Arbor vitae*, 445; FA:ED III, 201.

increases the value of his testimony even more. But it should be noted that, at least in the sources from our period, none of the brothers, except Francis and Brother Leo, possesses charisma. No doubt Brother Leo's charisma derives, not from his own merits, but from the fact that he was closely associated with Francis and preserves and transmits his memory and words.⁵²

Ubertino da Casale, in the *Tree of Life*, gives us a more elaborate version of the episode, a sign that already in 1305 there was a tradition different from the one later received by Clareno.⁵³ The role of Elias is more complicated:

He said [to the ministers] that he did not dare to go to [Francis], because he was afraid of being stricken with a severe curse by the saint, all the more because he had never done anything with so much spirit as he now exhibited in getting the *Rule* written down.... But because he was always timid about blame from the saint, by God's providence he would not go up the mountain with those brothers....

The language here is very distinctive, different from that in the other Leonine texts. The effect of Christ's words on the hearers is also greater in Ubertino's account: "A trembling came upon the brothers, who beat their breasts and with bowed heads asked for pardon; and when they had received a blessing they went back to their own places." It is the rather colorful portrayal of a scene, extraordinary enough in itself (the ministers hear Christ speak!), which, by giving a different tone to the Leonine account, seems to reflect a more developed stage of an oral tradition. Evidently used for different reasons, it was gradually embellished through the devotion of the one using it and the purposes it was serving.

Clareno, in his *History*, also cites a much-altered version of this text, in which the role that in the *Major Legend* was played by Brother Elias, who had lost the *Rule*, is played by Brother Leo.⁵⁴ The account is cast in the form

⁵²On the charisma of Brother Leo, see also below.

⁵³*Arbor vitae*, 445; FA:ED, 199-200. The episode here also begins differently: "This account, however, is the one the holy brother Leo gave and the one he wrote, when he was fasting with the blessed Francis on the mountain they had gone to for the writing of the *Rule*. The spirit of the devil, who from the outset raised obstacles against this most holy *Rule*, prompted a crowd of ministers and others who had the name of being men of discernment, to convene at Rieti, for reasons of human timidity."

⁵⁴*Historia*, 58-61; FA:ED III, 415-16. It is one of the passages that is used without reference to the authorship of Brother Leo. — For the *Major Legend* I am using the edition S. Bonaventura, *doctor seraphicus, Legenda Maior S. Francisci Assisiensis et eiusdem Legenda Minor*, ed. a PP. Collegii S. Bonaventurae (editio minor) Ad Claras

of a dialogue, which no doubt contributes to its drama, and Clarenó uses this technique several times in his work. Here Francis is invited by the Lord to withdraw for forty days to a desert place, to put together into a rule the words dictated by Christ himself: "You will set your rule in order according to my word, which I will speak to you." The secluded place is identified as the hermitage of Fonte Colombo: "There he wrote down the *Rule* as Christ revealed it to him. He put in it nothing of his own but wrote only what Christ Jesus revealed to him from heaven." During this retreat, while Francis entrusted the *Rule* to Brother Leo, one of his two companions, Elias and his followers and some ministers were in an uproar. But they did not dare to oppose Francis openly, so they stole the *Rule* from Brother Leo and hid it, thinking thus to prevent its approval by the Pope. But Francis learned of the wrongdoing and, withdrawing a second time for forty days, prepared a new draft. At this point Clarenó goes beyond our text, reporting what happened next: the ministers of different provinces are uneasy, they appeal to Brother Elias, Francis learns why the brother are shouting, he prays to Christ, a voice is heard saying that Christ the author of the *Rule*, the ministers are humiliated and leave.

In his *Apologia pro vita sua* Clarenó summarizes the entire passage in a single sentence: "With Brother Leo as witness, Christ appeared from heaven at the prayers of Saint Francis to Brother Elias and five ministers, testifying that literal observance of the *Rule* was spiritual and perfect."⁵⁵ It should be noted that this very brief summary, although focused on a single aspect of the question, contains some new elements, such as the number of provincial ministers and the explanation regarding observance of the *Rule*.

From these various reports there arises a question that I think it is well to underscore. No doubt there was a widespread tradition among Franciscans in the thirteenth century that a first rule prepared by Francis had given rise to criticisms that led to its being withdrawn. The theft and subsequent confusion can be considered—if we wish—as symbolic or fictionalized accounts, but their interpretation is, and remains, unambiguous. As mentioned, Saint Bonaventure already talks about it in one of those parts of the *Major Legend* that has no parallel in Thomas of Celano's *Lives* or in the *Legend of the Three Companions*.⁵⁶ The question that arises,

Aquas, Florence 1941.

⁵⁵See *Expositio* 111.

⁵⁶On the other hand, the compiler of the *Mirror of Perfection* takes up the question, offering a preamble to our texts (on this correspondence, see below); see IMP 1: "Blessed Francis made three rules, namely the one which Pope Innocent confirmed for him orally; afterwards he made another shorter one, and this was lost; after that he made the one that Pope Honorius confirmed by bull. Many things were

then, is whether the Leonine text was originally longer. In other words, did it also include the account of the preparation and theft of the first *Rule*, or was Bonaventure's source not a Leonine text? In the latter case, Ubertino and Clareno could have used the Leonine passage as a supplement to the *Legend*; otherwise this would be one of the few times Bonaventure makes use of the Leonine tradition. In any case, Bonaventure's remark, made almost in passing, about a vicar who through carelessness loses the *Rule* of the Order entrusted to him, speaks eloquently of the climate in which the events surrounding the preparation of the *Rule* were experienced in the second half of the thirteenth century. It is certainly easier to explain when placed in the context of a widespread desire to have it disappear, hoping in this way that it would be rewritten in modified form. But Bonaventure does not speak about this. On the other hand, the detailed account and the search for a reason why the first *Rule* had to be rewritten make it impossible to doubt that this was something that really happened. It is an element of major importance for the interpretation of our sources.

IV – Franciscanism: Innovation and Continuity

This text expresses and manifests the disagreement between Francis and the provincial ministers, the implicit idea being that they really understood very little of the saint's religious ideal. It is the account of the General Chapter of Mats, where the ministers ask Cardinal Hugolino to try to convince Francis to abandon the life he had chosen and adopt for the brothers one of the already-existing rules.⁵⁷ Hugolino accedes to their

removed from this rule by the ministers, contrary to the will of blessed Francis." This preamble is not found in the corresponding chapter of the *Legend of Perugia* (LP 17), while Lemmens makes it a kind of introductory rubric to the *Intentio regulae*. The passage is not contained in *Ms. Isidoriano*. *Ms. Little* 81 repeats it, following IMP 1; see A.G. Little, "Description of a Franciscan Manuscript, formerly in the Phillips Library, now in the possession of A.G. Little," *Collectanea Franciscana* (British Society of Franciscan Studies, 5), Aberdeen 1914 (hereafter *Ms. Little*).

⁵⁷*Expositio* 128-29:

"When blessed Francis was at Saint Mary of the Portiuncula for the general chapter known as the Chapter of Mats, there were five thousand brothers present. Many wise and learned brothers went to the Lord Cardinal, who later became Pope Gregory, who was present at the chapter, and told him that he should persuade blessed Francis to follow the advice of those same wise brothers and allow himself to be guided by them for the time being. They cited the *Rule* of blessed Benedict, of blessed Augustine, and of blessed Bernard, which teach how to live in such order in such a way.

"Then blessed Francis, on hearing the cardinal's advice about this, took him by the hand and led him to the brothers assembled in chapter, and spoke to the brothers in this way: 'My brothers! My brothers! God has called me by the

request, but Francis strongly rejects the suggestion, since it had been the Lord who guided him in his choice. Once again, the character of the religion as inseparable from the divine will is reaffirmed. The text ends with the choice between the "way of simplicity," which is willed by God, and that of "knowledge and wisdom," which is represented in the Order by the learned brothers. Francis intends to follow the first way, because the second creates confusion: "God will confound you by your knowledge and wisdom."

Clareno cites this passage twice in his *Exposition*.⁵⁸ He adds a comment about the confusion foreseen by Francis for the learned, historicizing its prophetic force:

When Brother Crescentius, the general minister, condemned most unjustly those holy brothers who were zealous for pure observance of the *Rule*, and study of the secular sciences was introduced in the religion...corruption of the best ecclesiastical state claimed the place of honor and dignity, and there began to be fulfilled in it, in the sight of all, the things foretold by the founder.⁵⁹

It is the time of what was to be the third tribulation. The text is also found in the *History*, considerably expanded and with no reference to Brother Leo's authorship.⁶⁰

The text is already present in the *Tree of Life*, where Ubertino also finds an opportunity to dwell on the behavior of the cardinal, who at first allows himself to be influenced by the ministers, but then is won over by Francis's response: "When the cardinal heard these things, he was shocked and said to the brothers: 'Be still, brothers, and follow your father, for in him you have a safe guide.'"⁶¹

way of simplicity and showed me the way of simplicity. I do not want you to mention to me any *Rule*, whether of Saint Augustine, or of Saint Bernard, or of Saint Benedict. And the Lord told me what he wanted: he wanted me to be a new fool in the world. The Lord did not wish to lead us by any way other than this knowledge, but God will confound you by your knowledge and wisdom. But I trust in the Lord's police that through them he will punish you, and you will return to your state, to your blame, like it or not."

⁵⁸See *Expositio*, loc.cit., and 209-10. Here we find a more condensed version, yet one that shows great respect for Francis's words, which it cites almost in full.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 210.

⁶⁰*Historia*, 39-41.

⁶¹*Arbor vitae*, 450. I have analyzed this Leonine text with particular regard for the part played in the episode by Cardinal Hugolino in my "San Francesco e il cardinale Ugolino," 234-35.

V – The Rejection of Papal Privileges

This text deals with a question that occupies a central place in the activity of the Franciscans: involvement in the care of souls. It contains a rich series of details, divided into the need for episcopal authorization to preach, the importance of personal example in relations with the secular clergy, and the possible ways of engaging in pastoral ministry.⁶² The questions are viewed from the angle of Francis's refusal to ask the Pope for privileges, a highly emotional subject at the end of the thirteenth century. We need only recall that in 1304 Benedict XI granted the brothers the privilege of preaching without prior authorization from the bishops. He wanted to put an end to the constant tensions between the clergy and the brothers, even though in doing so he created new ones.⁶³

Our text shows considerable variety in Brother Leo's way of expressing himself. From figurative language (the image of Christ speaking) he moves to the portrayal of concrete realities such as the care of souls, that is, the brothers' participation in the pastoral ministry of the secular clergy and their relations with the ecclesiastical world.

⁶²*Expositio*, 129-30:

"Some of the brothers told blessed Francis: 'Father, don't you see that sometimes bishops do not permit us to preach, making us remain idle in an area for many days before we can preach to the people? It would be better if you arranged for the brothers to get a privilege from the Pope to preach freely: it would be the salvation of souls.'

"He answered them with a stern rebuke, telling them: 'You, Lesser Brothers, you do not know the will of God, and will not allow me to convert and edify the whole world as God wills. For the will of God is what I want: through humility and patience and good works and reverence to edify the people and convert the prelates. Then, when they see our holy life and humility and subjection and reverence for them, they will ask you to preach and convert the people. These will attract the people to preaching far better than the privileges you want, which would lead you to pride. And if you are free of all avarice, and lead the people to give the churches their due, and reverence and honor prelates and clerics, they will ask you to hear the confessions of their people. Although you should not be concerned about this, for if they are converted, they will easily find confessors.

"For my part, I want only this privilege from the Lord: never to have any privilege from any human being, except to be subject to all and to show reverence to all, and, by the observance and obedience of the holy *Rule*, to convert everyone more by good example than by word."

⁶³The bull is *Super cathedram*, *Bullarium Franciscanum* V, 19; see J. Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order from its Origins to the Year 1517*, Oxford 1968, 339-40.

He begins by describing once again a difference of opinion between Francis and the brothers. It arose from a practical consideration: the long wait that sometimes preceded permission from the bishops to preach. Dealing with a question that concerns "the salvation of souls," the brothers urge Francis to provide once and for all by requesting a privilege from the Pope in this matter. Thus the discussion was not about the theoretical question of whether or not it was right to make use of papal privileges, but the concrete case of when recourse to a privilege would be useful for something as important as the salvation of souls. This text could certainly be described as a temptation on the part of Francis to break a rule he himself had made.

But the saint repeats his refusal, at the same time clearly showing the spiritual inferiority of the brothers who were urging him to ask for privileges and his own profound Christian vision. Many brothers, he says, do not understand that difficulties in local situations should not be solved and settled with the aid of legal formulas. Rather, they call for a humble and respectful attitude toward "prelates"; the latter, in turn, should be convinced and won over by the "holy life" of the brothers, so that they will beg them to preach and convert the people.

In the second part of the text, the discussion becomes broader and mentions the question, much debated in the second half of the thirteenth century, of the priesthood of the brothers.⁶⁴ Here Francis distinguishes two ways of engaging in pastoral ministry: preaching and administration of the sacrament of penance. Preaching, as conceived by Francis, was supposed to take place on a popular level: by words and, above all, by the example of a holy life. Its purpose was to convert and edify the people, and thus it was one of the brothers' duties. But hearing confessions was a clerical activity, since it meant the administration of a sacrament, and so it was not among the brothers' duties. Francis even says in the text: "You should not be concerned about this." In fact, if we read our text carefully, there is a clear distinction between preachers, whose importance for the task of converting the people is emphasized, and confessors, who do not seem to be in short supply. It is as if to stress that, although the ecclesiastical structures are functioning, at least with regard to the hearing of confessions, there is a need to get people to approach these structures, a job the text assigns to the brothers, although not exclusively. Seen thus, I would say that what we have is a very precise definition of the place of the Lesser Brothers in pastoral ministry, which is

⁶⁴See R. Manselli, "I Frati Minori nella storia religiosa del secolo XIII," *Quaderni catanesi* 1 (1979) 7-24.

seen in all its complexity and not just accepted as a vague function, with no distinction of the various roles within it.

The terminology Brother Leo attributes to Francis in this passage raises some questions, especially the term "convert" (*convertire*). The saint hardly ever uses it in his writings, and not in the sense of the activity of the brothers.⁶⁵ Here it is attributed to him either to designate his intention ("you...will not allow me to convert and edify the whole world" and "I want...to convert everyone"), or else as a duty toward both prelates and people. We will find it later, in our Text VII, as the expression "convert to penance," which represents still another point in the evolution of this idea.⁶⁶ But the authenticity of the basic concept expressed in the text cannot be questioned, namely, that the right to preach needs to be earned by one's own personal dedication and not from a papal privilege. This is a genuinely Franciscan concept that echoes, among other things, the *Testament* 25-26. On the other hand, Francis seems never to have raised the question of the brothers as confessors. This topic is part of the climate of the thirteenth century, when by that time the clericalization of the Order is well along.

The portrait of the Franciscan priest painted in the text, although sketchily, is interesting. He must not be avaricious or proud, he must lead the people to restore to the churches what is their due (for parish churches, this meant the use of the fees owed them for the administration of the sacraments, for funerals, and as tithes), and he must respect and honor the bishops and clergy. It is a discussion that comes up in concrete situations of differences between secular clergy and regular clergy concerning the rights of the former and the avarice of the latter, which the thirteenth-century sources mention several times.

And so, two concrete statements are found in the text. The first is a criticism of the brothers' essential inability to understand the will of God, which makes it hard for the Order to fulfill its purpose of converting and edifying everyone. The second is an explanation of how Francis sees this fulfillment: through observance of the *Rule* and through exemplary behavior.

One last important piece of information: this Leonine writing is reported to Clement V by Ubertino in his petition, the *Responsio* of 1310.⁶⁷ It is also present in Clareno's *Apologia*.⁶⁸

⁶⁵Some examples: in the *Blessing for Brother Leo*: "May the Lord...show [*convertat*] his face to you;" in the *Testament* 3: "What had seemed bitter to me was turned [*conversum fuit*] into sweetness of soul and body."

⁶⁶See n. 73 below.

⁶⁷*ALKG* III, 53-54.

⁶⁸*Apologia*, 125. The first part of the text is abbreviated and changed,

Now let us move on to the Leonine passages transcribed by Ubertino da Casale in Chapter 3 of Book V of the *Tree of Life*.

VI – Books: Their Possession, the *Rule* and Poverty

This text takes us back to the dispute, which we have already touched upon several times, between Francis and the provincial ministers. In the text about the preparation of the *Rule* (Text III) there is a rather general reference to its harshness, and it is criticized and rejected by the ministers. But here the real reason for the dispute is described in all its gravity. It is the norm concerning *usus pauper*.⁶⁹

although the variants are minor. For example:

Expositio

“...they will ask you to hear the confessions of their people. Although you should not be concerned about this, for if they are converted, they will easily find confessors.”

Apologia

“... they will ask you to hear their confessions. You should not love to hear confessions but that you might convert people by word and the example of a holy life, for if they are converted, they will find many confessors.”

⁶⁹*Arbor vitae*, 428; FA:ED III, 167-68:

“One time a certain minister was asking blessed Francis his understanding of the chapter on poverty. Blessed Francis answered him: ‘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 the minister said to him: ‘What shall I do, for I have so many books worth more than fifty pounds?’ He said this because he wanted to hold on to them with a clear conscience, most especially because he had a qualm of conscience about keeping so many books when he knew blessed Francis strictly interpreted the chapter on poverty.

“‘Brother,’ blessed Francis said to him, ‘I cannot and must not go against my own conscience and the perfection of the holy Gospel which we have professed.’ Hearing this, the minister became sad. Seeing how disturbed he was, blessed Francis said to him with intensity of spirit, intending this for all the brothers: ‘You, Lesser Brothers, want to be seen as and called observers of the holy Gospel, but in your deeds you want to have money bags.’

“Although the ministers knew that, according to the *Rule* of the brothers they were bound to observe the holy Gospel, they nevertheless had that chapter of the *Rule* removed where it says ‘Take nothing for your journey, etc.’ believing, despite it, that they were not obliged to observance of the perfection of the holy Gospel.

“Knowing this through the light of the Holy Spirit, blessed Francis said in the presence of some brothers: ‘The brother ministers think they can deceive God and me.’ Then he said: ‘Indeed, that all the brothers may know that they are bound to observe the perfection of the holy Gospel, I want it written at the beginning and at the end of the *Rule* that the brothers are bound to observe

The text is constructed as follows: in the first part, a minister asks Francis "his understanding of the chapter on poverty," to which the saint replies that the only thing allowed the brothers is a habit with a cord and underwear, and shoes in case of necessity. Brother Leo has Francis say that this is in the *Rule*. Actually it is the *Earlier Rule* II, 13 (although with different words), which is repeated in the *Testament* 16 and the *Later Rule* II, 16. The latter is cited word for word. The minister then presents his case. He has many books, and he even says how much they are worth, asking what he should do about them. At this point, Brother Leo takes over the narration of the episode and accuses the minister of equivocation. Aware that the possession of books was against the spirit with which Francis had imbued the *Rule*, he asked only so that he could continue to keep his books without qualms of conscience. But Francis answered him very firmly—the contrast between the two characters is clear in the account—with an explanation that goes beyond the concrete case and does not enter directly into its merits: "Brother, I cannot and must not go against my own conscience and the perfection of the holy Gospel which we have professed." For the saint, there is a much higher value than the value of the books: fidelity to the Gospel. But when he sees the minister sad and disturbed—the story is developed with great psychological insight—he rebukes him "with intensity of spirit," but also with a tone somewhere between admonition and the ironic resignation of one who knows and foresees the future of his religion. He addresses the minister and all his brothers: "You, Lesser Brothers, want to be seen as and called observers of the holy Gospel, but in your deeds you want to have money bags."

In the second part of the text, what at first had been the account of an event—a question raised by a minister—becomes a more general discourse on the obligation of the brothers to observe the Gospel. Here we see once again the equivocation of the ministers, indeed their bad faith, for they thought that by having a passage from Luke removed from the *Rule* they could eliminate its obligation to observe the perfection of the Gospel. Francis, in the presence of the brothers, exposes the deceit and says again that the *Rule* was placed in his mouth by God, word for word, for the welfare and usefulness of his soul and the souls of his brothers. Thus they

the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. And that the brothers may always be without an excuse before God, I want to show with these deeds and always observe, with God's help, what God has placed in my mouth for the welfare and usefulness of my soul and those of my brothers. Because of this I have announced and do announce this to them and I want to show this to them by my deeds and, with the Lord's help, to observe this *in perpetuum*.⁷ Therefore, he observed the holy Gospel to the letter from the day he began until the day of his death."

will not be able to find excuses in the eyes of God if they do not observe it. To remind them of this obligation, it was stated at the beginning and end of the *Rule* that the brothers are bound to observe the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The last sentence of the text stands out from all the others. Brother Leo has Francis say that he has announced to the brothers what God revealed to him, and that he wanted to show it to them by his deeds, and God willing, observe it *in perpetuum*. Then he adds that the saint observed the Gospel to the letter, from the beginning, when he began to have brothers, until his death. There is a consistency, emphasized by Brother Leo who lived close to Francis, that arouses admiration.

What we have, then, is a text focused on the identity between *Rule* and Gospel, with a polemic point against the ministers and against the inordinate desire to possess books. It ends in a magnificent reaffirmation of Francis's evangelical example.

This passage is also found in the *History of the Seven Tribulations*, where it pinpoints what is actually only one of its elements, but which for Clareno is obviously the most important: the removal from the *Rule* by the ministers of the passage from Luke.⁷⁰ In the *Exposition on the Rule* both parts are transcribed, but separated from each other. The first contains no reference to Brother Leo, while the second explains: "Brother Leo, in the things he wrote about Saint Francis, says...."⁷¹

The substance of this episode is already present in 2 *Celano* 62, which make us think that this is one of those Leonine writings that was sent in response to the circular letter of Crescentius of Iesi. Thomas reduces the passage to a few lines, as he is also accustomed to do with the episodes from the "We." Removing all observations of a psychological nature, he preserves its essence as a confrontation between the minister, who wants to keep his books, and Francis, who is faithful to a single book, the "Book of the Gospel that I promised."⁷² But with his arbitrary cutting, Thomas changes the character of Francis completely, as if to make it appear that there existed in the Order, with his permission, two ways of life, one more accommodating and the other stricter. But the latter was professed only by the saint: "Do as you please, but don't use my permission for a trap." Francis, however, was not one to give permissions like this, as we have already seen in Text IV, and

⁷⁰*Historia*, 44-45.

⁷¹*Expositio*, 32-33 (first part of the text) and 8 (second part).

⁷²"And so when a minister asked him for permission to keep some elegant and very expensive books, he got this reply: "I refuse to lose the Book of the Gospel that I promised for these books of yours! Do as you please, but don't use my permission for a trap."

as we shall see later in Text IX. What we have is an alteration by Thomas, foreign to the Leonine text and to the spirit of Francis.

VII – Preaching or Withdrawal and Prayer?

This text focuses on the topic of study, with a tone that is polemic right from the start.⁷³ Francis does not want the brothers to be “desirous of learning and books,” but he wants and exhorts them to live in pure and holy simplicity, in prayer and poverty, as did the first holy brothers. This, he believes, is the more secure path for the salvation of souls. Brother Leo breaks in immediately to explain that he does not mean contempt for holy knowledge. Francis revered those who were learned—the authority on this is the *Testament* 13, which is transcribed in full in the passage—but with great caution. Francis foresaw the future and knew that many brothers, under the

⁷³ *Arbor vitae*, 428; FA:ED III, 168-69:

“Blessed Francis did not want his brothers to be desirous of learning and books, but wanted and preached to the brothers to be eager to have and imitate pure and holy simplicity, holy prayer, and Lady Poverty, on which the holy and first brothers had built. And he believed this to be the more secure path for the soul’s well-being.

“Not that he despised and disdained holy knowledge. On the contrary, he revered with great feeling all those who were wise in the religion, and all the wise, as he himself says in his *Testament*: ‘We must honor holy theologians and those who minister the divine words and respect them as those who minister to us spirit and life.’

“But, foreseeing the future, he knew through the Holy Spirit and even repeated it many times to the brothers that ‘Many brothers, under the pretext of edifying others, would abandon their vocation, that is, pure and holy simplicity, holy prayer, and our Lady Poverty. And it will happen that, because they will afterwards believe themselves to be imbued with devotion and enflamed with the love of God because of an understanding of the Scriptures, they will occasionally remain inwardly cold and almost empty. And so they will be unable to return to their first vocation, especially since they have wasted the time for living according to their calling.

“For there are many who, day and night, place all their energy and care in knowledge, losing their holy vocation and devout prayer. And when they have preached to others or to the people, and see and learn that some have been edified or converted to penance, they become puffed up or congratulate themselves for someone else’s gain. For those whom they think they have edified or converted to penance by their words, the Lord edified and converted by the prayers of holy brothers, although they are ignorant of it. This is the will of God so that they do not take notice of it and become proud.

“These are my brothers of the round table, who hide in deserted and remote places, to devote themselves more diligently to prayer and meditation, weeping over their sins and those of others, whose holiness is known to God, and is sometimes ignored by the brothers and people.”

pretext of edifying others, would abandon their true vocation. Believing they could be enflamed with greater devotion and love of God through an "understanding of the Scriptures," they would instead remain cold, listless and almost empty within. They would be unable to return to their first vocation because they would have wasted too much time, living differently.

Many think, continues the text, that they will be more useful if they deepen their own knowledge. But in fact they do not realize that the people are converted, not by their words, but by the prayers of those brothers who are living a holy life according to their vocation. The latter, withdrawn in remote and deserted places to devote themselves more diligently to prayer and meditation, to beg God to pardon their sins and those of others, are called by Francis "my brothers of the round table." Theirs is a holiness known only to God and ignored by the brothers and by people.

As we can see, one of the chief problems of late-thirteenth-century Franciscanism is touched on here: the choice between an active life and withdrawal in prayer. The latter way of life was especially dear to the Franciscan Spirituals in Italy. That this was an important question at the time is proven by the fact that it is also dealt with in the *Major Legend*, with an unusual chronological anticipation and a solution just the opposite of that proposed by Brother Leo.⁷⁴

Saint Bonaventure says that when Francis and his followers, on their way back from Rome after their meeting with Innocent III, arrived in the Spoleto Valley, "they began to discuss whether they should live among the people or go off to solitary places." To resolve the problem, Francis turns to Christ and realizes by divine enlightenment "that he was sent by the Lord to win for Christ the souls which the devil was trying to snatch away." So we see that, unlike Brother Leo, Bonaventure posits a first choice between withdrawal in solitude or life among the people, in other words, between contemplation and the active life. He decides in favor of the second because of pastoral needs. But the problem, as seen in our passage, is part of the very work of saving souls. The question is whether this can be done more effectively through the knowledge of the brothers or through their prayers. Thus, withdrawal in solitude is seen by Brother Leo, not as an opportunity to forget about pastoral functions, but to participate in them fully, with an emphasis on prayer as a way of saving souls. If we read very carefully, we can even detect a slight polemic against a view of holiness that was evidently widespread at the time: that it was more a function of preaching than of withdrawal in solitude.

⁷⁴LMj IV, 2; E. Pásztor, "San Bonaventura: biografo," 101.

The ideas expressed in this text echo thoughts already found in 2 *Celano* 164 and 195, but placed in a different context. In both passages, Thomas underscores the emptiness of preachers "who often sell what they do for the price of some empty praise," and the practice of seeking learning while neglecting virtue. Brother Leo, on the other hand, is not trying to paint a picture of a good preacher, but is reminding the brothers of their true vocation, which he says is holy and devout prayer. As we shall see in a moment, there is a tradition that unites these two currents of thought, by also attributing to Brother Leo the ideas developed by Thomas and found in Saint Bonaventure. But in the passage cited by Ubertino in 1305 as Leonine, this interpretation, based on 1Sam 2:5, is missing.⁷⁵ On the other hand, it is obvious from our Text VIII that Brother Leo meant to warn the brothers who were immersed in the work of preaching and not attending to the other obligations of their Franciscan vocation.

Angelo Clareno repeats this text in his *Exposition on the Rule*, dividing it into two parts. The first part, which is the vision of the future and the abandonment by the brothers of their original vocation, is expressly attributed to Leo. The second part, which in his commentary precedes the first, does not mention Brother Leo but attributes the words of the text directly to Francis, stressing the greater value of holiness as compared to knowledge: "...so that when the times of tribulation arrive they may have the Lord with them in their distress. For a tribulation is approaching, when books, useful for nothing, shall be thrown into cupboards and into closets."⁷⁶ The text is also transcribed in the *History*, once again without mention of Brother Leo, but attributing it directly to Francis.⁷⁷

VIII – The Obligations of the Brothers

In this very short text, Brother Leo reports that Francis "instructed all the brothers, the ministers as well as preachers, about work," explaining to them that neither the office of ministry nor zeal for the salvation of others excused the brothers from the obligations of Lesser Brothers: prayer, begging and manual labor. All this was for good example and for the benefit of their souls and those of others. Then Brother Leo says that Francis himself did all this as long as his health permitted.⁷⁸

⁷⁵It is the explanation of how sterility can become fruitful; see n. 97 below.

⁷⁶*Expositio*, 209 (first part) and 195 (second part).

⁷⁷*Historia*, 48-49.

⁷⁸*Arbor vitae*, 428; FA:ED III, 169:

"He instructed all the brothers, the ministers as well as preachers, about work, telling them because of the office of ministry or of their zeal for

What we have is a writing in which we are told, in detail, how the insertion of the Order into the life of the Church and society, in the second half of the thirteenth century, actually had a negative effect. It caused a gradual relaxation of those forms of life that distinguished Franciscanism, specifically begging and manual labor. Perhaps in none of the nine texts is the admonition, the cry of alarm, so perceptible as in this one. Once again, adhering completely to the true Franciscan spirit, it wants to get the brothers to mend their ways, placing before them the example of Francis himself. The division into periods is different here than in Text VI. There Francis's fidelity to the Gospel is said to begin at the moment of the formation of the fraternity and continue until his death. Here Francis's imitation of Christ is restricted to the time "while he was in good health," with the precious detail that Francis himself fulfilled everything he taught his brothers.

Angelo Clareno cites the text in his *Exposition on the Rule*, without referring to Brother Leo's authorship. He has an interesting conclusion, in which he stresses the pedagogical value of respect for the obligations of the brothers on the part of the hierarchy of the Order: "The brothers who are subjects will be very edified when their ministers and preachers devote themselves freely to prayer, bow down, humble themselves and co-operate in the enterprises and labors of the other brothers, as he says in his Testament," and he adds the *Testament* 20-21.⁷⁹

IX – The Case of the Novice

Contrary to his usual practice, Ubertino explicitly says at the beginning of this text that he is not reporting exactly, but summarizing a longer account: "After these words the saintly Brother Leo said that twice, in two places with wonderful differences that I omit, he did not give permission to a novice possessing a psalter...."⁸⁰ What emerges from all this

preaching, that they should not abandon holy prayer, go for alms, and work with hands like the other brothers, for good example, and for the benefit of their souls as well as others. Therefore, that faithful zealot of Christ, while he was in good health, fulfilled what he taught his brothers."

⁷⁹*Expositio*, 111. This text has an important variant in IMP 7; see below.

⁸⁰*Arbor vitae*, 428-29; FA:ED III, 169-70. The text continues:

"...even though he told him that the general minister wanted to grant it. But that devoted one did not want to have it unless with the permission of the saint who had already ceased the responsibility of governing the Order because of the relaxation that had begun to arise.

"On the second occasion, he said to that novice: 'I was likewise tempted to have books. But, in order to know God's will about this, I took the book,

is that the novice had obtained the general minister's permission, but he also wanted to have Francis's permission, even though he had already given up leadership of the Order "because of the relaxation that had begun to arise." So, once again we are in the midst of the conflicts going on in the Order, with one precious detail: those who were becoming Franciscans felt the need to obtain permission not only from the general minister, but also from Francis.

Ubertino begins transcribing the text of the narrative with the second refusal. Francis says to the novice that he, too, was tempted to have books, but that he first wanted to know God's will in this regard. So, he took the book of the Gospels and prayed to God to deign to show him his will "at the first opening of the book." He opened the book to Luke 8:10: "To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to the others all things are treated in parables." Francis continues the discourse without interpreting the passage: "They are many who willingly climb to the heights of knowledge; that person be blessed who renounces it for the love of God."

In fact, when Ubertino was transcribing this passage from Brother Leo, Peter John Olivi had already been using it for some time, also offering an interpretation of the verse from Luke, in these terms:

This, I think, is the meaning. To you, totally removed from the world and totally united to me, it is given to learn the plain truth of the virtues and

where the Lord's Gospels are written, and prayed to deign to show it to me at the first opening of the book. After my prayer was ended, on the first opening of the holy Gospel this verse of the holy Gospel came to me: *To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to the others all things are treated in parables.* They are many who willingly climb to the heights of knowledge; that person be blessed who renounces it for the love of God.'

"Many months later, when blessed Francis was at the church of Saint Mary of the Portiuncula, at a cell behind the house on the road, that brother spoke to him again about the psalter. And blessed Francis said: 'Go then, and do as your minister tells you.' When he heard this, that brother began to go back by the same road he had come.

"Blessed Francis remained on the road, and began to think over what he had said to that brother. Suddenly he yelled after him: 'Wait for me, brother, wait!' He went up to him and said: 'Come back with me and show me the place where I told you to do with the psalter what your minister tells you.' When they returned to the spot where he had said this, blessed Francis bent over in front of the brother and, kneeling, said to him: '*Mea culpa*, brother, *mea culpa*. Whoever wishes to be a lesser brother must have nothing but the tunics, a cord, and short trousers the *Rule* allows him; and for those forced by necessity or illness, shoes.' Whenever brothers came to him to ask advice about such things, he would give them the same answer."

eternal goods, and to understand through a loving and real experience of them in themselves. Why marvel if God teaches his spiritual wisdom to those who have been removed from the world's milk and snatched from the breasts of worldly knowledge? Certainly, I do not think that without this ray and fire of divine enlightenment, one can penetrate the marrow of the letters of Sacred Scripture as perfectly or powerfully, without a certain vanity and with cold insipidness.⁸¹

The fact that recourse to the *sortes apostolorum* was superstitious did not escape Olivi, a highly educated man, and so he eliminates it from the text, saying only that Francis turned to God in prayer, asking his guidance, and then "he was told by Christ."

The novice, after many months, asks again for a psalter, to which Francis replies that he should do what his minister tells him. By giving this advice, Francis wanted to reinforce obedience to one's superior, advice in full accord with the *Rule*. But, by acting in this way, the novice would be neglecting another norm, that of poverty. We can see at once how, beyond the narration of one episode, very serious problems are arising in the life of the religion. At this point the text is transformed into a powerfully effective description. Francis runs after the novice and asks him to show him the exact place where he told him to follow the advice of his minister, in other words, where he essentially told him to obey his lawful superior. When he reached the spot, he knelt down before the novice and said to him, "*Mea culpa*," because whoever wishes to be a lesser brother must have nothing except the clothing allowed by the *Rule*, with short trousers and, in case of necessity, shoes. What we have is a solemn reaffirmation of Franciscan *usus pauper*, even beyond obedience, with a dramatic moment that must have had an effect on the readers of the episode. On the other hand, it answered one of the most persistent accusations by the community against the Spirituals, namely, that they ignored the obligation of unconditional obedience to one's superiors. In the *Tree of Life*, the text ends with the observation that in the future anyone who came to Francis with this question would receive this answer, in other words, he would be prohibited from violating strictest poverty.

The substance of this Leonine text is found in 2 *Celano* 195, which means that it was already in circulation before 1246-47. It probably reached Thomas in the material sent to Crescentius of Iesi. But he gives a quick and concise summary, with some significant variants: "A lay brother who wanted to have a psalter asked him for permission: he offered him ashes instead of a psalter."

⁸¹D. Flood, *Peter Olivi's Rule Commentary*, Wiesbaden 1972, 189.

We see immediately the loss in the abridgement of what is perhaps the most important element: the request for Francis's permission despite having already received permission from the general. Then the novice becomes a lay brother, a profoundly significant change, inasmuch as it makes Francis appear even stricter than the *Earlier Rule*, which said that "the lay brothers who know how to read the psalter may have one." Finally, we are struck by the reference to ashes, which is foreign to the Leonine passage. Thomas probably uses it in its symbolic meaning of penance.⁸²

* * *

These are the nine texts expressly mentioned by Peter John Olivi, Ubertino da Casale and Angelo Clareno as coming from Brother Leo. If we examine them more closely, they reveal similarities in their character and content, on which we must dwell for a moment. What we have in them, I believe, is not the narration of episodes but the transmission of *logia* of Francis. Granted, these are presented in an expository context, but it is usually very concise and restricted to the minimum necessary. Its sole function is to place the saint's words in a *Sitz im Leben* corresponding to things necessitated by circumstances in the Order in the second half of the thirteenth century. Often they are texts that were transmitted orally for several decades and constantly reflected upon. While this no doubt influenced their formation, it did not essentially change the genuine Franciscan spirit that permeates them. Brother Leo presents us the Francis he remembers, the one he knew and understood, who still has things to say to all his brothers, including those now living in a world and circumstances very different from those in which he had live. In this way Brother Leo tries to create a balance between what is constant and what can change, according to the perspectives of the times. Ubertino, in his use of the Leonine texts, clearly shows his intention to create a historical awareness in Franciscans. Angelo Clareno, let us not forget, even writes a *History* for them.

These nine passages are found transcribed in the two collections, already mentioned, contained in Ms. 1/73 of the library of St. Isidore Friary in Rome. They are divided into two groups, following the distinction I made above between passages cited in succession in Angelo Clareno's *Exposition on the Rule* (I-V) and in the *Tree of the Crucified Life of Jesus* of Ubertino da Casale (VI-IX).⁸³ Besides these, the Isidorian collection also contains other passages, which I will take up in a moment. In 1901, L. Lemmens made a

⁸²See R. Manselli, *Il gesto come predicazione per s. Francesco d'Assisi*.

⁸³My thanks to Father Thomas S. Flynn, O.P., and Father Donato, O.F.M., librarian of St. Isidore Friary in Rome, who made it possible for me to consult the codex.

partial edition of this manuscript, in which he has given both of them a title.⁸⁴ To facilitate understanding of the relationship between the nine texts, *Ms. Isidoriano* and the Lemmens edition, here is a list of the concordances in two tables:

<i>Leonine Texts</i>	<i>Ms. Isidoriano</i>	<i>Lemmens Edition</i> <i>Verba S.P. Francisci</i>
---	---	
I	[1]	1
II	[2]	2
---	[3]	3
III	[4]	4
IV	[5]	5
V	[6]	6
---	[7]	---
---	[8]	---
---	[9]	---

As we can see, between our second and third texts, *Ms. Isidoriano* inserts another, and the series continues with three texts that are missing in the Clarenio corpus and in the Lemmens edition. In *Ms. Isidoriano* the individual texts are not numbered. But the agreement in the order of the passages common to the *Exposition on the Rule* and *Ms. Isidoriano* should be noted:⁸⁵

<i>Leonine Texts</i>	<i>Ms. Isidoriano</i>	<i>Lemmens Edition</i> <i>Intentio regulae</i>
---	---	
---		1
---		2
---	[I]	3
---		4

⁸⁴See n. 16 above, and also L. Lemmens, "Die Schriften des Br. Leo von Assisi" (d. 1271) and F. Burkitt, "Scripta Leonis and Speculum Perfectionis," both in *Miscellanea Francesco Ebrle* III, Rome 1924, 25-48 and 1-24 respectively; F. M. Delorme, "La 'Legenda antiqua S. Francisci' du Ms. 1046 de la Bibliothèque de Pérouse," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 15 (1922) 23-70, 278-332: *passim*; idem, *La "Legenda antiqua S. Francisci." Texte du Ms 1046 (M. 69) de Pérouse*, Paris 1926, especially pp. XVIII-XIX; J.R.H. Moorman, *The Sources for the Life of Saint Francis of Assisi*, Manchester 1940, 133-34. The two titles - *Verba S.P. Francisci* and *Intentio regulae* - are absolutely incongruous, see E. Pásztor, "Gli scritti leonini," 2-3-04.

⁸⁵The Leonine texts I-V, which I cited above in the transcription by Angelo Clarenio, thus correspond, although with variants, to the *Verba*, 1-2, 4-6. Angelo Clarenio expressly stated that these five texts are from Brother Leo.

		5]
VI		6]
VII		7]
	[II]	8]
		9
VIII	[III]	10
IX	[IV]	11
	[V]	12
---		13
---		14
---	[VI]	15
---		16

So, in publishing *Ms. Isidoriano*, Lemmens gave a division that does not agree with the original; he distinguished 16 passages in the text, numbering them.⁸⁶ What makes this arbitrary intervention by Lemmens hard to understand is the fact that each of the six chapters of *Ms. Isidoriano* is marked by the compiler of the collection with a title, which Lemmens reprints, but without respecting the corresponding divisions.⁸⁷ These six titles are: "His true declaration, which Brother Leo his companion wrote"; "The example of a minister"; "The example of a novice"; "The same thing"; "The above-mentioned novice"; "The companion of blessed Francis."⁸⁸

Unlike the first collection, here the two parts missing in the Leonine texts with respect to *Ms. Isidoriano*—which I mentioned above—are not missing in the *Tree of Life*. I omitted them because they are two "We" episodes, and thus not among the texts whose authorship goes back to Brother Leo alone, and thus not part of this study.⁸⁹ But we should note

⁸⁶The Leonine texts VI-IX, which I cited above in the transcription by Ubertino da Casale in the *Tree of Life*, where they are expressly attributed to Brother Leo, correspond in the Lemmens edition to episodes 5-6 (VI), 7-8 (VII), 9 (VIII) and 10-12 (IX).

⁸⁷Moreover, as already mentioned above in note 56, Lemmens also adds a preamble to the *Intentio*, which is missing in *Ms. Isidoriano*: "His true declaration, which Brother Leo his companion wrote. Blessed Francis made three rules, namely the one which Pope Innocent confirmed for him orally; afterwards he made another shorter one, and this was lost; after that he made the one that Pope Honorius confirmed by bull. Many things were removed from this rule by the ministers, contrary to the will of blessed Francis, as contained below."

⁸⁸Corresponding to the first title are the first four passages in the Lemmens edition with the preamble; to the second, passages 5-9; to the third, passage 10; the fourth, passage 11; to the fifth, passage 12; to the sixth, passage 13-16.

⁸⁹For these, see n. 39 above.

once again the agreement between the *Tree of Life* and *Ms. Isidoriano* in the ordering of the texts, even though the groupings are not identical.

Besides these two collection, our Leonine texts are also found in other compilations, which, compared to Thomas of Celano's two *Lives* and the *Major Legend*, have a distinctive feature of their own. At their center is no longer the man Francis in the succession of events of his entire earthly life. What we have—if I may use the expression—is the “Franciscan” Francis, especially during the last part of his life. In these sources the chief moment in his life is no longer the conversion, but the life of the community, and in it, the encounter-clash with the reality in which his fraternity evolved, straying from its original evangelical-pauperist ways. A series of sociological studies, based on a very large sample, has now shown us how, in the evolution of religious orders, there is inevitably a critical period between the initial moment and the growth of the first community, its adaptation to the needs of the Church and society.⁹⁰ We also know that in the Franciscan Order there was more than one such crisis during the thirteenth century, calling into question the original structure of the religion itself. Here we are interested in one specific aspect of these very complex problems. How, in the great Franciscan identity crisis at the end of the thirteenth century, was a group of sources used that portrayed the situation at the time of the founder, showing that the crisis was really not new because it continued a theme dominant in the life of the Order while Francis was still alive. This explains why these sources—which were compiled after the *Major Legend*, and in fact expressly aim to supplement it—are no longer interested in Francis's youth or the circumstances of his conversion. Instead, what is emphasized most is how he faced the critical problems of the Order.⁹¹

As for these sources—the *Legend of Perugia*, the *Lemmings Mirror*, the *Mirror of Perfection* and *Ms. Little*—we do not yet know the date of their compilation, as anyone who deals with the Franciscan Question is well aware. The only thing certain is that they are composite texts, collections of

⁹⁰It will suffice here to cite just the two entries by Tufari, “Evoluzione degli Ordini Religiosi e Fondatore-Fondazione,” in *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione* III, 1354-69 and IV, 108-13, which summarize very well the problems that have emerged from more recent sociological studies.

⁹¹Without going into the Franciscan Question here, I would just like to say that, in my opinion, the thesis that the *Legend of Perugia* was the work that accompanied the letter of the companions in 1246 can no longer be defended. It is a compilation in which texts of differing origin are merged and which, as a whole, is later than the *Major Legend*. But for these questions, see R. Manselli, “*Nos*” cited in note 1 of this study.

episodes that go back to different periods.⁹² But we also find our Leonine texts incorporated in three of these sources—the *Legend of Perugia*, the *Mirror of Perfection* and *Ms. Little*—without attribution of their authorship to Brother Leo. This enables us to extend our comparisons and contribute, with some clarifications, to the mutual relationship of these sources.⁹³

Two of the three sources—the *Mirror of Perfection* and *Ms. Little*—contain all the passages transcribed in the two Isidorian collections, while the *Legend of Perugia* lacks *Ms. Isidoriano* [8] and [9]. It must also be said that none of these Leonine texts are included in the *Legend of the Three Companions* or the so-called *Anonymous of Perugia*, which again emphasizes the basic difference between these two sources and the group formed by the *Legend of Perugia*, the *Lemmings Mirror*, the *Mirror of Perfection* and *Ms. Little*.

But let us look at the concordance among the sources, listed in one table:

Leonine Texts	Legend of Perugia	Mirror of Perfection	Ms. Little
I	15	12	86
II	16	13	87
---	[46]	[76]	[121]
III	17	1	81
IV	18	68	114
V	20	50	105
---	21	52	107
---	---	79	124
---	---	85	127
VI	102	3	83
VII	103	72	150
VIII	103	73	150
IX	103 104 105	4	150 151 152

As for the *Lemmings Mirror*, it contains—and only partly, but with a precious addition—just one of our nine texts, Text VIII.⁹⁴

⁹²Here I am not interested in the *Legend of the Three Companions*, since it does not contain Leonine passages; for its place in the Franciscan Question, see R. Manselli, "Nos."

⁹³The absence of such a statement of Brother Leo's authorship for our texts makes the works of Ubertino da Casale and Angelo Clareno important, because these expressly state that they are his writings. Again, I repeat: the fact that attribution of these nine texts to Brother Leo was never disputed by the community, even though these passages contradicted some of the basic positions of official Franciscanism, makes it possible to accept his authorship of these texts.

⁹⁴For the bibliography on these sources, see nn. 36 and 56; for the *Lemmings Mirror* see L. Lemmens (ed.), *Documenta Antiqua Franciscana*, part II. *Speculum*

The first observation concerns the *Legend of Perugia* and its arrangement of the texts. It corresponds to the division into two groups that we have already found when comparing the *Exposition on the Rule* and the *Tree of Life*, and which is also present in *Ms. Isidoriano*.⁹⁵ Within the two groups, the compiler of the *Legend of Perugia* follows the order of the texts as we have given it and as it is also present in *Ms. Isidoriano*, although it groups the last ones differently.⁹⁶

Perfectionis, Ad Claras Aquas 1902 [English Translation FA:ED 3, 214-252] (hereafter 1MP).

⁹⁵In fact, the two groups of texts are located very far from each other, at the beginning and at the end of the Perugia manuscript. The exclusion of the so-called *Verba* from this source, as was done by R. Brooke and J. Cambell (*I Fiori dei tre compagni*, Milan 1967, 421-22), does not concern the Perugia manuscript, but the supposed work of the companions sent from Greccio in 1246, and is therefore of no interest here. My references are to the Perugia manuscript as published by M. Bigaroni, in which the so-called *Verba* make up Chapters 15-18 and 20-21. – With regard to the criteria used in the compilation of the *Legend of Perugia*—an investigation that is not part of the purpose of this study, but which I hope to return to elsewhere—the insertion between our Texts IV and V (as *Legend of Perugia* 19) of a text that is not Leonine becomes important. The text is 2 *Celano* 146: “The submission he wanted his brothers to show to clerics, and why.” The compiler acted based on of similarity of subject, choosing from the passages in Thomas’s *Second Life* one that deals with the same problem as Leonine Text V.

⁹⁶As can be seen from the preceding table, our Texts VI-VII-VIII are combined into a single chapter (the second) in *Ms. Isidoriano*, while in the *Legend of Perugia* our Text VI constitutes a single chapter, and the next chapter includes our Texts VII and VIII, with the beginning of IX. On the other hand, our Text IX is divided into three chapters in the *Legend of Perugia*. Let us look for a moment at the *Legend of Perugia* 102-103. Compared to our Text VI, the *Legend of Perugia* reverses the order of the two parts, placing the removal from the *Rule* of the passage from Luke before the question of the minister about the possession of his books. The *Legend of Perugia* 103 begins with our Text IX, giving in full the text about the novice, which Ubertino partly summarized, as we have seen. Within the account of the case of the novice are also found our Texts VII and VIII. The occasion for joining them is provided by the brothers’ desire to devote themselves to study more than to meditation. In the *Legend of Perugia* 103, we also find joined to our Text VII the reference to the fruitfulness of the sterile (see n. 75 above). Let us compare 2 *Celano* 164, the *Major Legend* VIII, 2 and the part from the *Legend of Perugia* regarding this interpretation of the *Earlier Rule* II, 5:

The compilers of the *Mirror of Perfection* and *Ms. Little* use the Leonine texts in the context of the structure they have imposed on their work. They no longer respect the existence of the two groups or the order of the passages within the groups, which serves to confirm that they are more recent than the *Legend of Perugia*. The complexity of *Ms. Little* also stands out; in the second group of passages it follows the division of the *Legend of Perugia*.

The *Lemmens Mirror* 7 contains, as we have already said, our Text VIII, with an addition placed between the first and second sentences:

Leonine Text VIII

"...and for the benefit of their souls as well as others. Therefore, that faithful zealot...."

Lemmens Mirror 7

"...and for the benefit of their souls as well as others. He said: 'The brothers who are subjects are very edified when their ministers and preachers devote themselves freely to prayer and the subjects are inclined to humility, when they see the prelates and the greater ones co-operating in their enterprises and labors.' Therefore...."

2 Celano 164

"And then he would explain the saying *while the barren one has given birth to many children* in this sense: 'the barren one is my poor little brother who does not have the duty of producing children in the Church. At the Judgment he will give birth to many children, for then the Judge will credit to his glory those he is converting now by his secret prayers.'"

Major Legend VIII, 2

"And so he would explain that passage *So that the barren has borne many* in this sense: 'The barren one,' he said, 'is the poor little brother who does not have the duty of producing children in the Church. At the judgment he will give birth to many children, for then the Judge will credit to his glory those he is converting now to Christ by his secret prayers.'"

Legend of Perugia 103

"Because of this, blessed Francis used to say about this passage: *The barren one has given birth to many children and the mother of many languishes*: the barren one is the good religious who edifies himself and others by his holy prayers and virtues."

The *Legend of Perugia* 103 also contains the *Lemmens Mirror* 7, again inserted into the case of the novice, which also continues in the *Legend of Perugia* 104 and 105. In other words, what we have is one of the most interesting chapters for the formation of *Legend of Perugia*, precisely because it shows the convergence of different traditions.

This, then, is an addition that contains words of Francis, which highlight what was said previously in an indirect statement, with the detail that respect by the ministers and preachers for the proper tasks of a Franciscan also has a pedagogical value for the other brothers. Once again there is stress on the importance of example, a genuinely Franciscan theme.

This passage from the *Lemmings Mirror* 7 is also contained in the *Legend of Perugia* 103, the *Mirror of Perfection* 73, and *Ms. Little* 150, but with a variant. In these sources there is no stress on the example of the ministers and preachers as an occasion for the subjects to be inclined to humility, but—and this is an important change—it is the ministers and preachers who “bow down, humble themselves and co-operate in the enterprises and labors of the other brothers,” as we read in *Ms. Little* and also in Clareno’s *Exposition*.⁹⁷

Now let us examine the four passages that are missing in the works of Ubertino and Angelo Clareno and are not attributed to Brother Leo. The first is *Verba* 3 in the Lemmens edition. It is a very short text, a sentence attributed to Francis. Actually this text is simply an excerpt from the 2 *Celano* 208 and is part of the names Francis used to give to the *Rule*:

Ms. Isidoriano

“Again he said to the brothers: ‘Know, brothers, that the Rule is the Book of Life, the hope of salvation, the marrow of the Gospel, the way of perfection, the key of Paradise, the pact of an eternal covenant.’”

2 Celano 208

“He burned with great zeal for the common profession and Rule, and endowed those who were zealots about it with a special blessing. He called it the Book of Life, the hope of salvation, the marrow of the Gospel, the way of perfection, the key of Paradise, the pact of an eternal covenant.”

Thus this passage comes from a text that was already in circulation before 1246, but which the sources do not tell us comes from Brother Leo. It should be noted that Angelo Clareno, in his *History of the Seven*

⁹⁷See *Expositio*, 111; see also LP 103: “He said: ‘The brothers who are subjects will be very edified when their ministers and preachers devote themselves freely to prayer, bow down, and humble themselves,’” and 2MP 73: “He said: ‘The brothers who are subjects will be very edified when their ministers and preachers devote themselves freely to prayer, and give themselves to humble and lowly tasks. Otherwise they cannot admonish the other brothers about these things without confusion, prejudice, and blame. For we must, after Christ’s example, first act and then teach, or act and teach simultaneously.’”

Tribulations, cites a fuller version of the text, but without attributing it to Brother Leo:

Blessed Francis called this *Rule* the tree of life, the fruit of wisdom, the fountain of paradise, the ark of salvation, the ladder ascending into heaven, the pact of the eternal covenant, the Gospel of the kingdom, and the brief word which the Lord made on earth with his disciples. He taught the brothers that through the *Rule* they would find true rest for their souls and bodies, and experience the blessed sweetness of the easy and light burden and yoke of Christ, the weight that bears them up to heaven.⁹⁸

The *Legend of Perugia*, the *Mirror of Perfection* and *Ms. Little* contain the entire text of 2 *Celano* 208, not just the Isidorian excerpt, and so they provide no witness to its independent existence. If we examine the context of the passage, we can see that it is a eulogistic text very different from the other Leonine texts; for one thing, it is the only one entirely devoid of any polemic point. It should be noted that it is not part of the group of passages that reached the hands of the compiler of the *Legend of Perugia*, nor of the group transcribed by Angelo Clareno. Keeping in mind all these points, we can hypothesize that its presence in the Isidorian collection goes back to the compiler of the collection; for one thing, it is a text that is a perfect introduction to the text that follows, which is devoted to the *Rule*.⁹⁹

On the other hand, the situation is very different with regard to the last three chapters of the first Isidorian collection. Until now we did not know that they belong to the so-called *Verba*, seeing that they are missing in the Lemmens edition.

Ms. Isidoriano [7] is a dialogue between Christ and Brother Leo, and so does not concern Francis directly. It attests to a more developed stage of that charisma of Brother Leo we have already mentioned. While in our texts Brother Leo has only reached the stage of being a hearer of Christ's words,

⁹⁸*Historia*, 33; FA:ED III, 398.

⁹⁹I intend to return to this subject elsewhere, and also to an analytic comparison of the nine Leonine texts and the corresponding chapters in the *Legend of Perugia*, the *Mirror of Perfection* and *Ms. Little*. For the series of texts attributed to Brother Leo, but unrelated to our group, I mention here one in advance, transcribed by Angelo Clareno in his *History*. In connection with the sixth tribulation, Clareno alludes to the "conclusion...of the prophetic tale of the peasant and Saint Martin, which Saint Francis, as Brother Leo testifies, used to recite frequently and with much fervor, desiring that the ungrateful peasant be understood as the Order, and Saint Martin as the Supreme Pontiffs: in the end the Order would have to be humbled and brought back to acknowledging and considering the sources of its humility" (Ibid., 186).

here he is actually addressed by Christ himself, who complains to him about the brothers who, instead of being grateful to him for his benefits, are lazy and quarrelsome.

Ms. Isidoriano [8] includes a promise by Christ to Francis, which he tells us. It concerns four privileges: the Franciscan Order will survive until the day of judgment; no one who persecutes the Order will have a long life; no one who wishes to live a bad life in the Order will be able to remain in it; anyone who loves the Order, even a sinner, will receive mercy from God.

Ms. Isidoriano [9] paints a picture of the true Lesser Brother. As Francis said, he possesses the faith of Brother Bernard, the simplicity and purity of Brother Leo, the courtly bearing of Brother Angelo, the eloquence of Brother Masseo, the contemplation of Brother Giles, the constant prayer of Brother Rufino, the patience of Brother Juniper, the bodily and spiritual strength of Brother John of Lauds, the charity of Brother Roger, and the solicitude of Brother Lucidus.

Only one of these three texts, *Ms. Isidoriano* [8], is explicitly attributed to Brother Leo, thanks to Thomas of Eccleston, who accepts it on the basis of an oral transmission. Brother Leo supposedly told Brother Guarino of Sedenefeld that Francis had told Brother Rufino about his encounter with the angel and the four promises it made to him. This complicated transmission and the fact that these three texts were never used in the course of the debate between Ubertino and the community should make us wary of considering them on the same level as the other nine we examined above, and from which they are also distinguished by their character and content.

And so I think it is legitimate to hypothesize that Leonine texts of different origins have converged in *Ms. Isidoriano*. Only some of them fall into the group we have been interested in here, that is, those that were transcribed for the specific purpose of using the testimony of Brother Leo with regard to Francis's intention as expressed in the *Rule*. If this hypothesis is correct, it serves to confirm even more the fact that the two collections Lemmens published—partially and with alterations—can in no way be considered the original Leonine writings. They are only a compilation in which were transcribed, besides the two episodes with the testimonial seal of the "We," numerous texts attributed to Brother Leo by various traditions. But these two collections are not for certain the source from which the compiler of the *Legend of Perugia* drew his material. On this subject, I would like to say that it would be well to consider, among the various problems still to be resolved by study of the Franciscan Question, a systematic census of the texts that figure as Leonine in the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Franciscan sources. From all this material, it would be possible to come to a

more certain knowledge of their cultural setting and the importance of their presence in the sources, as testimonies that transmit Francis's words and information about him.

I believe it is extremely significant and important that Brother Leo is used by people who were very different, yet who wanted to recover what for them was their supreme ambition: to see the founder in his living and passionate human reality. By the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth, the *Rule* had become a modified, transformed and glossed text in which—as Francis himself had clearly foreseen—accumulated layers of interpretation were killing the spontaneous following of Christ, which the saint had wished to spread in the Church as leaven to reawaken the Christian spirit of the faithful, in a renewed adherence to the Gospel. Recourse to Brother Leo, witness to Saint Francis, was meant to guarantee recovery of this intention.