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The Early *Spirit of Saint Francis* by Bernardine of Paris

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"Le premier Esprit de saint François de Bernardin de Paris, Capucin"

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In a series of research articles on Saint Francis and the Capuchins meant to combine historical rigor with a desire to return to the sources, there is naturally a place for the work of the Capuchin Bernardine of Paris: *The Spirit of Saint Francis Formed after That of Jesus Christ* or *The Children Are Taught the Ways They Must Follow in Order to Form the First Spirit of Their Holy Father and Preserve It in Its Purity*. This subtitle from the original 1662 edition, dropped by the 1880 editor because it was too long or of little interest to modern readers, will guide our study.

Our study will consist of three parts. The first, after a presentation of Bernardine and his work, will describe the picture of Saint Francis he paints in the first three parts of his book, and the importance he attaches to this first spirit of the Seraphic Father in the Preface and in the fourth part.

We could have ended our study there. Pious readers would perhaps have gotten something out of it, but historians, those interested in Capuchin history, would be left with a desire to understand the historical and doctrinal significance of a work we believe to be the last, most neglected, yet most original of that immense seventeenth-century Capuchin output. To what can it be likened, related to or compared? We thought that a work of this caliber, written by an author with nineteen works to his credit, deserves more. *The Spirit of Saint Francis* is easy to read since we have a good modern

edition, carefully and intelligently produced. Understanding is not a problem since the work shines with Cartesian clarity. The logic of its theses and proofs is seamless, even though we must keep in mind the critical standards of the time, which were less concerned about details than ours. But to situate the work in the line of spiritual writers from the Capuchin Golden Age in France, which produced such a galaxy, is perhaps an activity for specialists rather than for a professional historian of medieval Franciscan philosophy. There are many qualified writers, the range of ideas is to a large extent unlimited, the general studies are few and open to discussion, and Bernardine of Paris is practically unknown except for a few bibliographic references.

Since I must assume that most of my readers know little more about him than I did before I tackled this subject, there is only one solution. First I will cite what are generally considered to be the main works of the leaders of the different spiritual currents among the Capuchins. I will highlight the characteristic doctrines in order to compare them to the corresponding doctrines of Bernardine of Paris in his masterwork. That will be the object of my second part. We have kept four authors and four works that we believe are typical of the spirituality of the Paris Capuchins between 1575 and 1660: Matthias Bellintani of Salò, the first spiritual master in Paris, and his *Practice of Menatal Prayer*; the Englishman Benet Canfield, a convert to Catholicism and to the French Capuchins, author of the *Rule of Perfection*; the Frenchman Lawrence of Paris and his *Palace of Divine Love*; lastly Yves of Paris, the leading Christian humanism But by this time there is Jansenism, Quietism, Illuminism, Rationalism and Naturalism—precursors of the Revolution.

The third part is necessarily the hardest since it requires that we give a critique as well as a doctrinal and historical synthesis. We will try to follow the doctrinal development of a few points that our previous investigation will have shown to be important and that prompted us to choose *The Spirit of Saint Francis*.

We will present our views with the independence of mind that is proper to all research, begging pardon of the experts in Capuchin spirituality for treading on their turf, but trusting that these insights gained from our research into related areas of medieval Franciscan thought will be able to stimulate, if not facilitate, theirs.

I. Spirit of Saint Francis

1. Bernardine of Paris and his work

For me the book is an old friend I met long ago in the Capuchin library in Montreal. Since the title piqued my curiosity, I returned to it later as a precious source for initiating my young confreres to the spirit of Saint Francis as understood by the Capuchins during the Capuchin Golden Age in France. Had Bernardine of Paris finished his most famous work when my ancestors were leaving the banks of the Seine for those of the Saint Lawrence, when the Capuchins had already been the first missionaries in Acadia for more than thirty years?

The first date we know from Bernardine's life is his entrance into the Capuchin novitiate, at the house in Faubourg Saint-Jacques in Paris, March 24, 1622. His father was Henry IV, king of France, and his mother was a woman of humble background whose beauty had created quite a stir in the capital. After becoming a priest, he worked in the spiritual service of prisoners, then in the ministry of preaching, as popular there as he was among communities of religious, especially the Capuchinesses of Paris whose chaplain he was. Between 1640 and 1671 he was guardian in ten houses of the Capuchin Province of Paris, and novice master at the house in Faubourg Saint-Jacques for two years, 1656-57. He died in the same house on August 6, 1685.

His literary works number about twenty, most of which are pious *opuscula*. His masterwork is *The Spirit of Saint Francis*, published in 1662 and reprinted in 1880 by the Capuchin Apollinaire of Valence (1829-99). Another work equally known in novitiate libraries is *The Perfect Novice*, published in 1668.

Apollinaire of Valence does not hesitate to say that *The Spirit of Saint Francis* is "one of the most remarkable monuments left us by the piety of our seventeenth-century ancestors." Readers who know how to meditate on it "will enjoy, as they admire them, the author's clear views of all the mysteries of our holy religion, especially the economy and work of divine grace in the world of the saints, and more especially in the person of our Seraphic Father" (p. ix).

Our editor has also taken great pains to make the work truly readable and attractive to modern readers. The 1662 edition was hastily produced, starting with a text whose rough draft and proofs seem not to have been reread, since the carelessness in punctuation and style are shocking. The work's four parts were made up of many short chapters, a few

pages each, which Apollinaire reduced to a small number, divided into paragraphs and equipped with summaries that serve as tables of contents. The author's style and doctrine are very faithfully preserved. We will cite this 1880 edition, which is in two volumes.[1]

The work is dedicated to Saint Francis in the form of a "vow," a litany of titles of his hero that is more than three pages long. A preface presents the topic and his reason for treating it. It is first of all gratitude for the vocation that calls him to the gospel life and makes him a child of Saint Francis, and through him of Jesus Christ. But it is also the feeling that he can offer his brothers in Saint Francis "nothing more useful for their behavior or more suitable for their devotion than to speak to them of him whom they honor as their master, whom they love as their Father and whom they have chosen as their model.... I will trace here the traits of the spirit of our Father; I will try to paint his portrait" (pp. xxvi-xxvii).

With his intention Bernardine also reveals his method. He will follow the Holy Spirit's behavior in the sanctification of the saints, especially Saint Francis: "He clothed him so divinely in the new man that only Jesus Christ could be seen in him. Conforming myself to such heavenly behavior, the order I will follow throughout this work will be always to contemplate Jesus Christ in Francis, as a copy who expresses him, and to consider Francis in Jesus Christ, as his model. In one and the same view you will see two objects, the one divine, the other transcending the human" (p. xxviii). Thus the work takes a series of tableaux that illustrate some particular trait of the spirit of Christ in order to apply it to Francis, to the extent permitted by the divine transcendence of the model and the imperfection of every creature.

The language of our theologian is that of a born orator who maintains contact with his audience—a paternal contact, like that of the master with his novices. Despite the dryness of the subject, a constant lyricism runs through the work. After a while this could prove annoying to modern readers, who are used to a more impersonal and sober style in

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[1]L'esprit / De / S. François / Forme' Svr Celvy / de Iesus-Christ. Où ses Enfans sont instruits des voyes qu'ils doiuent tenir, / pour conceuoir le premier Esprit de leur S. Pere, / & le conseruer en sa pureté. / *Par le* P. Bernardin *de Paris, Predicateur Capucin, & Gardien du / Nouitiat des Capucins de S. Iacques.* / [Engraving] / A paris / Chex Denys Theirry, ruë saint Jacques, / à l'enseigne de la Ville de Paris. / [line] / M. DC. LXII. / *Auec Approbations & Priuilege.* / 22,3 x 17 cm., [XXVIII] + [16] pp. – *L'Esprit de saint François d'Assise* by Father Bernardine of Paris, Capuchin. Corrected and enlarged according to the author's instructions by Father Apollinaire of Valence, religious of the same Order. Tome I. – Tome II. Paris, Librairie Poussielgue Frères, rue Cassette, 15, 1880/1880. 16 cm., XXXII-447, [IV]-504 pp. – The number in parentheses refers to the page in this edition.

spiritual matters and to greater criticism of the medieval sources for the life of Saint Francis. On the other hand, this lyricism provokes an enthusiastic reaction in an Italian confrere who found this rare treasure in the libraries of Italy. He immediately ranks Bernardine among the distinguished theologians and ranks him alongside Saint Bonaventure, not only as an interpreter of the spirit of Saint Francis, but also for his lyrical style, even though Bonaventure is one of the best stylists of medieval Latin prose. The rhyme is missing, of course, but readers will not miss that. Instead let us quote this rather unusual opinion from a well-sharpened pen: "Its doctrine, its love, its unction, its color, its inspiration quickened by a soft light, its sonorous expression, its vivid ornamentation, its truly happy images, its harmonious structure and division, make this masterpiece a true Franciscan poem."[2]

Let us then scan this poem, gathering its essential doctrine and skipping the long proofs and applications of the model to the copy. We will keep the most savory phrases so that readers may experience its rich doctrine and colorful words, and taste the spiritual savor of this Franciscan theology. For it is not so much a speculative system as the outpouring of a religious soul full of admiration and love for its hero, sharing his feelings and the rhythm of his heart in order that the reader may share these also.

2. Portrait of Saint Francis

To sketch a portrait of Saint Francis is to describe the stages of his formation for his vocation to copy Christ. His vocation, like that of Christ, begins in God's eternal plan for Christ and for us. The stages in Francis's formation parallel those in the formation of Christ for his vocation as high priest, from his birth in a manger to his death on the cross.

Conversion to gospel poverty

Bernardine does not ask speculative questions about our divine nature and end. He begins with the biblical notion of God as holiness itself and describes Christ's predestination and our own as a sharing in the holiness of God, drawing his inspiration from Isaiah's vision of the heavenly choirs singing, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord, all the earth is full of his glory" (Is 6:3). God wishes to make saints by producing outside himself a shadow of his being, an expression of his eternal holiness (p. 4):

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[2]Imerio da Castellanza, "P. Bernardino da Parigi cappuccino," in *Italia Francescana* 7 (1932) 315-52 (cit. p. 318; author's translation); see *Collectanea Franciscana* 6 (1936) 136.

> From that moment before the ages, in his knowledge, which sees into the future, he foresaw them; in his sovereignty he chose them and separated them from the mass of others; in his love he loved them; in his charity he set them afire; in his mercy he prepared the graces; in his wisdom he ordained the means, and in his power he had to use them in the course of time. In his divine counsel God decreed to create on earth an entirely new composite, of whom the incarnate Word would be the head and we the members. Since we would never deserve to be united to so holy a head, in order to make us worthy, the Father marked us with his image, the Son prepared himself to redeem us by his blood, and the Holy Spirit to sanctify us by his grace (5-7).

Bernardine envisions the overall plan of the predestination of Christ and the saints by placing Christ first in God's mind: "After the incarnation of the Word, the holiness of the saints is the most precious work of divine love" (9). It is on this plane of salvation history that he immediately deals with the predestination of Francis of Assisi: "I will begin to speak of Francis, a man by nature, a criminal by reason of sin, but chosen by God to be numbered among the greatest saints of the Church.... The holiness of Francis is, by his own admission, one of the most illustrious effects of grace and one of the most wonderful works of divine mercy"(8).

God chose him in order to make him a living image of his holiness, like a natural portrait he exhibits to the world, and at the same time like one of those vessels of honor and mercy of which Saint Paul speaks (20). Just as the Father sends us his Son, who makes himself visible to us in order to lead us to his Father, so the the Son, after he has returned to heaven and become invisible again, uses the saints in his place to continue what he began. Francis is in the first rank of the saints because, through his pious example, "he has given an experience of the Divinity that is more pure, more certain, more extensive than all the rarities in the world..., he has detached countless hearts from the love of external things and exhorted them to love their author" (29).

After choosing Francis to be a faithful copy of himself, the Word gradually prepared him for this role. He introduced him to the cross, invited him to despise all he had previously loved and showed him the way he must follow in order to serve him. He detached him from external things, hid himself beneath the wounds of a leper, led him far from worldly attractions and taught him to pray. Then he detached him from his family and father's inheritance, from the esteem of his fellow citizens; he submitted him to humiliation and mockery and gave him the strength to say: Since I no longer have a father on earth, I can now truly say: *My Father in heaven* (141).

From that moment on, Francis was ready to wear the cross on his borrowed clothing as a public sign of his participation in the life and death of Christ. So the Father adopted him as his Son, began to love him with a completely new love, not only as his son by grace, but as one who had chosen him as Father. He loved Francis with a preferential, exceptional and preeminent love (170). The incarnate Word while on earth conducted a school of love in which he himself wished to be Master, and Francis proved himself worthy to be admitted to it. On the other hand, by his total divestiture, he acquired a supreme and official right to the Father's lights, in order to know him, and to the Father's throne, in order to love him. As a sign of this sublime exchange of his earthly father's inheritance for that of his heavenly Father, Francis adopts the poorest and most despised of Assisi's poor as his father. At the same moment poverty becomes his mother, and he regards himself as her son.

Filled with the spirit of the Gospel

Francis was ready for the second stage of his formation in the spirit of Christ. The Holy Spirit led him to Our Lady of the Angels to hear the gospel message of poverty announced by Christ to his apostles when he sent them through the world: *Take neither gold nor silver; carry neither money nor wallet nor sandals nor staff.* In a transport of joy and love Francis exclaimed: *This is what I seek.* And immediately he abandoned his shoes, staff and wallet; he girded himself with a piece of rope, adopted a habit the color of ashes, to signify the mortification of Christ, and square in shape, to represent the cross. Citing the opinion of the Franciscan annalist Luke Wadding, Bernardine notes that the Capuchins have the honor of resembling their father most closely by the form of their habit (201).

Once Francis discovered the habit, disciples came to join him, for the Order of Friars Minor had also been decreed in the plan of God. Jesus wished to choose a mother for himself, assign her a role in the formation of his body, and begin his Church in the very bosom of his mother. In the same way, God decreed that Francis should conceive the first gospel spirit and give birth to his Order in a place dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, honored by her presence, sanctified by her grace, where poverty was admirably united with the lily of virginity. By this birth, Mary became mother of the seraphic Poor Men; they are her children and she receives them in her bosom, admits them under her dominion, adopts and takes possession of them (207). Christ, just as he had done for Francis, associates the sons of Poverty with his work of redemption:

> He established them on the same foundation as the Church, which is poverty, and with the same wisdom he decided to use the same words he had addressed to Francis: *Possess neither gold nor silver*... Here the children of the poor Francis can receive the dignity of their state and the holiness of the profession to which God calls them (213).... Through the same privilege, the family of the gospel Poor Men is an excellent expression of Jesus Christ in his incarnation and in his Church. It shares in his grace; it is divine because in its institution it is totally poor, without any help from human nature or wisdom (214).

By Christ's will, confirmed by his vicar on earth, Francis was made teacher of gospel perfection through his deeds, words and example. Christ wished Francis to be head, father and teacher of his Order, titles he himself possessed as Son of God. Fortified by this authority, Francis wrote the Rule of the gospel Poor Men and had it confirmed by Pope Innocent III. This Rule contains the fullness of the Spirit of Christ that Jesus communicated to Francis (256). Bernardine takes this opportunity to specify the purpose of his work:

> The spirit of Saint Francis consists in utter privation of all that puffs up the spirit and delights the body; in perfect endurance of all that humbles the heart and afflicts the senses; privation and endurance whose source is a profound love of poverty and suffering.... It is a twofold love: a poor love that deprives itself of all, and a crucified love that suffers all. That is why this great saint is so closely linked with the birth and death of the Son of God. By his poverty, he represents the poverty of the former, and by his wounds, the suffering of the latter. So this man is an exact representation of the pure spirit of the Gospel; he is an express image of the interior and exterior life of Jesus Christ.

Our theologian develops this idea enthusiastically and is not afraid to say: "Among the heavenly gifts that distinguished Francis, that made him like the Son of God..., poverty is the one that stands out the most It is his beloved, the object of his tenderest affection. No miser has shown greater love for riches than Francis showed for poverty" (290).

Drawing inspiration from the *Book of Conformity*, he tells the story of poverty since the time of the patriarchs and under the Mosaic Law, and then under the new Law. Of all punishments, poverty was the one most feared. Therefore Jesus came down to earth, where he welcomed poverty. Returning to heaven, he entrusted her to his apostles, to the first Christians, to the martyrs. But to the extent that riches were accepted in the Church, she withdrew to the desert with the anchorites. But there, too, avarice gained entry into the sanctuary. No longer having a place on earth, poverty

returned to heaven. Francis, struck by her excellence, desired to have her as bride. And so poverty left heaven to marry Francis, and it was through her that he offered the most perfect holocaust.

Bernardine likes to show the wonders worked through the poverty (even to point of mendicancy) chosen by Christ as a chief means of his apostolate. In the same way, it is the specific characteristic of Saint Francis and the Friars Minor and communicates the fullness of the gospel Spirit to its followers. He proves each of these statements in a separate chapter, concluding: "Poverty was the grace and way of Saint Francis. His sanctification was linked to it by the Son of God, who wished it to be the source from which he drew all his virtues; poverty raised him to that eminent perfection which the whole Church admires" (399f).

Poverty united him to God. Is it not the first of the beatitudes? To be sure, there is an infinite distance between the terms "God" and "Francis," but poverty draws them together. Through love, God will lower himself to Francis and bring him that love, which in turn will raise Francis to God. It is that ladder of Jacob which touches heaven and earth and whose rungs are "separation from every creature, purity of heart, simplicity of thought, rising above all that is earthly, perfect love, union consummated in God" (400f).

Seraphic poverty

Readers unfamiliar with Franciscan spirituality are perhaps astonished at this exaltation of poverty and spontaneously think of the three progressive stages of renunciation or self-sacrifice—poverty, chastity and obedience—demanded by Christ of those who wish to follow him through observance of the counsels of evangelical perfection. But the comparison with Jacob's ladder will already lead them to suspect that Franciscan language is polarized by the two titles given to Francis of Assisi, "Poverello" and "Seraph," which express the two aspects of his spiritual life. On the one hand, he rids himself of all that separates him from God: attachment to temporal things, the pleasures of the flesh, and his own will. On the other hand, he is united to God through love, which is considered the soul or internal principle of all the virtues, both theological and moral. Poverty expresses all the ways of fleeing evil, and love expresses all the ways of union with God. It is a Franciscan appropriation of the formulas then in fashion in books on spirituality, under the name of self-emptying in order to make room for the action of God. This is found especially in the spiritual currents influenced by the so-called Nordic and Rhineland spirituality, which was represented among the French Capuchins of this periods by the school of Benet Canfield. Opposed to this Rhineland mysticism was the current known as "Christian humanism," whose chief representative was the

Capuchin Yves of Paris. We will speak of it again later in order to place Bernardine of Paris in his proper spiritual milieu.

What leads Bernardine to describe Christ's entire work of redemption as that of a High Priest who divests himself in a holocaust of love is his description of sin. The latter, in all its forms, is an appropriation by human beings, under the form of self-love, of values that are God's. God creates us and appropriates us to himself by a twofold love, that which he himself has for us and that which we have for God. But sin, for example Lucifer's "I will not serve," means to reject God's dominion and turn it into self-love, rejecting the primacy of God's love. Self-love is thus described in the manner of Saint Bernard, as the proud exaltation of human beings and the rejection of God. Since the two extremes are incompatible, self-love must be destroyed in order that God's love may be born and grow. We do not grow in love except at the price of self-divestiture, which is already the beginning of love thanks to God's kindness. According to the theology of Saint Paul, self-love is the old self that must die in order that the new self may be born and grow to the fullness of union with God.

Besides the traditional Franciscan influence, we should also add the influence of Berulle, in full flower at the time. Berulle describes the redemptive work of Christ as that of the High Priest who clothes himself in a human nature in order to be able to offer himself as a holocaust to the Father. For as God, the Son is equal to the Father and can neither humble himself nor suffer. Hence he cannot offer himself as a holocaust of expiation in order to gain for us God's favor and our status as adopted children. The incarnate Word strips himself of his prerogatives as God, which he renounces as God-Man, and empties himself before his divine Father. Human beings are reborn to God's love in union with Christ's emptyings. Let us listen to Bernardine once again:

> In heaven, where God is in his glory, he [the Son] speaks as befits his majesty. On earth, where he is in his humiliation, he speaks according to humility. The humiliation to which the eternal Word is subjected on earth is to be a God who emptied himself. "Adore and admire," says Saint Paul, "the great mystery accomplished in Jesus Christ" (Phil 2:7; 87).... By a similar wise and loving counsel, Jesus proposed to Francis the cross and the emptying of himself. He taught him this great secret of the Gospel, that in order to live for God, we must cease living for ourselves. Stripping ourselves of the remains of our old self, we put on a new self created in justice and truth. This self-denial was so precious to Francis that it was the source of his happiness. By practicing it, he ceased to be what he was, namely a sinner, and began to be a saint. He stripped away the corruption

> of the old Adam in order to put on the likeness of the new. The source of his vocation, self-denial, is the foundation of the entire Gospel (91).

A holocaust of suffering and love

Christ, present to his Father in the incarnation, will be perfect only through the supreme self-emptying of death on a cross. In the same way, the poverty of Francis will be total only in his crucifixion through the marks of Christ's passion. When all is consummated in self-emptying, all is consummated in love: "From high on the cross the Son of God, having been made the exemplary principle of the purest spirit of the Gospel, pours out on the saints his love which sets them on fire, his spirit which fills them with his attitudes, and his sufferings and his wounds which consume them with him" (II, 7). Since he had chosen Francis to be a copy of himself, even in the marks of his passion, "it was fitting that the miracle of the stigmata took place at a time the memory of the sufferings of Jesus Christ had grown dim, for which reason it was useful to renew the thought of them" (28).

Likewise, he wanted this divine ratification of Francis's vocation to be a copy of Christ to be confirmed by the popes, just as they had confirmed his gospel spirit in approving the Rule of the sons of Poverty.

The reception of the stigmata, decided in the councils of the Trinity and greatly desired by Francis, was prepared by Christ himself throughout Francis's life, by absolute poverty, outstanding holiness, singular purity and a loving desire for this cross. These attitudes totally resembled those with which Christ himself approached Calvary. "Through that impression, Francis became the angel of the Apocalypse, marked with the seal of the living God..., the term of the perfection of heaven and earth, of human beings and angels, of the just and the Seraphim" (115). It can be literally said with Saint Paul: *In my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ* (Col 1:24). The two years that Francis still lived on earth were like the three hours of Christ on the cross, a witness to the crucified love of Jesus. Christ's death was an act of love that joined humanity to his Father, his Church and his cross. In the same way, Francis's death made his children heirs of his spirit, sons of Poverty.

Bernardine of Paris devotes 330 pages to Francis's elevation to the fullness of love in the stigmata and his glorification in heaven. The author is careful not to forget that the incarnate Word, after his ascension into heaven, continues his presence on earth through his self-emptying in the Eucharist. Thus God decreed that Francis, instead of ascending to heaven with his risen body like that of Christ, was to continue his gospel preaching of poverty at his tomb under the altar of the basilica in Assisi. "Divine

Providence has done for the children of most high Poverty what he did in the Eucharist, leaving them the body of Francis on earth—in his tomb under the altar of the Basilica of the Sacro Convento in Assisi," says Bernardine, following a long tradition,[3] that they might constantly have his example before them, and to teach them about what they can hope for in the next life and what they must be in the present.

3. The first spirit of Saint Francis

According to the Capuchin Candide of Nant, *The Spirit of Saint Francis*, published in 1662, may well have been preceded by *The Pure Spirit of Christianity Renewed in Saint Francis*. The latter work, of which we find no trace in Bernard of Bologna's list, figures in a list of three works approved by the minister general in 1656. Would this be a first draft that Bernardine polished during his two years as novice master (1656-57) and during the next two years when he was chaplain to the Capuchinesses? One thing we do know is that it was not ready for printing until April 25, 1662, as we are told in a note that follows the *Approval of Doctors*, August 16, 1660, and the *Extract of the Privilege of the King*, September 13, 1660. The whole thing is inserted between the preface and the list of chapters. Thus Candide of Nant is mistaken when he mentions a first edition of *The Spirit of Saint Francis* in 1660, an error repeated by other historians.[4]

Be that as it may, the *Vow to Saint Francis of Assisi* and the *Preface* were certainly composed after the work and are its summary and justification—not only of the title but also of the subtitle. At the time when Bernardine found himself in charge of the formation of the novices in 1656, he seems to have had almost too many choices of spiritual ways to offer the new Capuchin recruits. Since the founding of the Province of Paris in 1575, the number of Capuchin writers had grown rapidly, and they had set out in what to historians today can only look like opposite directions, all the while moving constantly in a direction different from that of the venerable founder and novice master, Matthias Bellintani of Salò.

Yet Bernardine resolutely sets out on a path that was apparently forgotten, but which he rightly judges to be the only one necessary for the

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[3]Cfr. R. Manselli, "La resurrezione di san Francesco. Dalla teologia di Pietro di Giovanni Olivi ad una testimonianza di piteà populare," in *Collectanea Franciscana* 46 (1976) 309-20. See the graphic description of S. Gieben, "Philip Galle's original engravings of the Life of Saint Francis and the corrected edition of 1587," in *Collectanea Franciscana* 46 (1976) 277f.

[4]Candide of Nant, Bernardin de Paris, in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* I, Paris 1937, col. 1516-17.

formation of true children of Saint Francis. It is the path Christ himself followed in forming the spirit of Francis according to his own spirit (which is the spirit of the Gospel) for a special mission of the Holy Spirit, at a time when Christians had apparently forgotten the Savior's passion.

Bernardine feels a responsibility to revive this message among the Capuchins of his time, and he explains this at length in his *Preface*. The latter follows a *Vow to Saint Francis*, which is three pages long and recalls the famous prayers of Saint Anselm in his *Proslogion* and those of the Franciscan doctor John Duns Scotus in his *De Primo Principio*. A litany to Saint Francis replaces that to the greatness and the misery of man by Blaise Pascal—who became a Jansenist in 1656 and wrote his *Provincial Letters*—as well as those litanies to the nothingness and excellence of man by his contemporaries, Lawrence and Yves of Paris, and also by Matthias of Salò and Benet Canfield. Let us listen for a moment to this hymn of praise and thanksgiving that ends in homage to Francis to be presented to the Heart of Jesus:

> The humblest of saints, the poorest of human beings, spouse of the highest poverty, patriarch of the gospel poor, most favored of the just in suffering, victim of the cross, victim of Calvary, holocaust of love, crucified with Jesus..., the greatest miracle of love..., formed by the Holy Spirit in the furnace of his love. O great saint raised on high by your profound humility.... This little work issues from my heart to disappear at your feet in sentiments of filial thanks. Love conceived it for your honor, and love presents it to you to honor you.... Do not consider the gift and its littleness, but the hand that dedicates it to you, the heart that offers it to you, the love that consecrates it to you.... May your sacred hands, marked with the wounds of our salvation, lift it up and present it to Jesus Christ.... Place it with my heart in his wounds, to be consumed by the same fire along with yours... (pp. xii-xv).

The *Preface* is a lengthy justification of his work. To be sure, he is driven by a desire "to glorify Jesus Christ in Francis, as in his work, and to honor Francis in Jesus Christ, as in his source." But he feels a need to justify something else, almost to beg pardon for it. It is a duty of fraternal love:

> Grace has bound me to those who are the disciples and children of this great saint, and religious profession has made me their brother. I thought that my poverty could offer them nothing more useful for their behavior and more appealing for their devotion than to speak of him whom they honor as their Master, him whom they have chosen as their model. They will see in him what they must do and what they must imitate. But I beg them to believe that I am not undertaking this project in order to teach them as a master.... I am easily persuaded that you would regard this little

> work with the same attitude as children of noble birth contemplating the lists of their ancestors and reading in the history books the glorious deeds of their fathers.... No doubt, these children will enjoy reading with me the miracles of love in the flesh and heart of our common Father (pp. xxvi-xxvii).

He takes a certain delight—which some disgruntled individuals will perhaps find chauvinistic—in emphasizing Francis's love for France and the ability of the French to understand his spirit, and the obligation he feels to spread it:

> Divine Providence destined Saint Francis for Italy in his humanity; but grace destined him for France in his divinity. The Holy Spirit, who directs the actions of the saints, inspired his Church to give him the name Francis at baptism, a good omen for France. And he placed in his heart such a feeling of devotion for this kingdom that the saint chose it for his portion. He wanted to spend time there, to enlighten it with his light, teach it by his example, warm it with the fire that burned in him, and give the French a share of his spirit. Like one of these least children, I am finishing what he in his zeal wished to begin. Although Italy contains his body, his spirit, which is an outpouring of the spirit of Jesus Christ, is almost beyond measure; he spreads it everywhere. Although I cannot offer you his body, I offer you his spirit...and it is a spirit that we must follow as his disciples, a spirit with which we must be filled as his heavenly children (p. xxvii).

But why does Bernardine say in his *Preface* that the children of Saint Francis will find in his book "the ways they must follow in order to conceive the first spirit of their Father and keep it in its purity?" That is the subject of the fourth part of the work, entitled *Saint Francis and His Children*. Just as his general method is to contemplate in a single act the model and the copy, Christ and Francis, so he wishes to see Francis, and through him Christ, in each of Poverty's sons. As he explained in the *Preface*: "The Son of God, invisible by disposition of his mysteries, in some way makes himself visible once again in Saint Francis, as in a place that represents him" (p. xxix). In the same way, his children must continue this preaching of Christ's wounds by their lives and be themselves mirrors of Christ. They must form in themselves the spirit of Saint Francis, as he was formed by Christ. They can do this all the more easily since Francis sums up the essentials in the *Rule of the Friars Minor*. "They can resurrect the spirit of their Father and give it eternal life in their mind by thinking of it, in their heart through love, and in their actions by faithfully imitating it.... The demands of devotion cannot be satisfied by daily showing them dead pictures that represent him; love must inspire them to form a living image of him in their thoughts, to make him the most intimate member of their conversations" (342f).

The Rule must be imprinted on their hearts by the Holy Spirit with a finger of fire and in letters of love. Francis must live in them through imitation of his virtues, for in God's plan the Order of the Children of Poverty will last as long as the Church. By modeling themselves after the spirit of Saint Francis, they will always find the spirit of Christ, just as from a copy we recognize its model.

> Without this spirit, we are in danger of going where he [God] does not want us, of taking up a profession not ordained for us by his divine Providence (350). His love did not limit his plans to the person of Saint Francis; he extended them to those who follow us. They must see in our actions and in our words the spirit of Jesus Christ and Saint Francis, living, speaking and acting (359). Since Saint Francis is our Father and we have inherited his Rule and his Spirit, we must share in the heavenly joys of his Heart. That is the sweetest and most divine consolation a community can feel (367).

Among the means for preserving the primitive spirit of Saint Francis is union of hearts and minds. It is one of the chief things to which members of religious orders must apply themselves "if they wish to preserve the primitive spirit of their order in its vigor. They owe it out of respect and interest.... As members of the same body, they must have the same heart, the same spirit. If a mother loves and cares for her son according to the flesh, how much more reason is there to love our spiritual brothers, to whom we are joined by the blood of Jesus Christ, as our Seraphic Father says" (422).

Bernardine insists on this in order to show that it is the principal duty of the superiors, and that they cannot attain it if they are divided among themselves:

> How can they foster unity if they are divided? How can they produce an effect they do not have? How can they unite the hearts of their subjects while they break the bonds of unity among themselves?... The slightest division of these first Fathers of the Province is to be most highly feared. When the heart is unhealthy and prevented from freely pouring out its spirits, all the arteries, large and small, beat convulsively and listlessly. Since the head is sick, all the members are listless.... A religious congregation is a moral body with its parts. The major superiors take the place of the heart and the head. But this heart is wounded when it is divided; the wound is mortal if division extinguishes love, the principle of life. And since the head is sick, what can we expect in this body except irregular convulsions, listlessness and weakness. The Church has suffered much more from division among her prelates than from the cruelty of

> tyrants. Persecution has made martyrs for the faith; division has made deserters (426f)... Sweet and intimate consolation is the reward of those who foster union of minds.... So, the religious of a congregation, joined by love, led by the same spirit, forming one heart, afire with love, ascend to God to be consumed in him (429).

Among all the means of creating and preserving unity of minds and hearts, must we include unity of spiritual formation? Is Bernardine's insistence nothing more than the kind of obligatory rhetoric we find in all such works, especially those addressed to superiors? Is it nothing more than a certain need to restore peace, which had been disturbed by the diversity of spiritual currents in vogue? This, we know, is what happened at the beginning of several Franciscan reforms and many other reforms of religious orders. Were there at the time in the Capuchin Province of Paris differences over which spiritual ways to favor in preference to certain others that were more traditional and perhaps considered irrelevant and ineffective?

Indeed, around 1660, everyone in the Capuchin community in Paris knew that the spread of Nordic or Rhino-Flemish spirituality had caused serious problems for religious discipline and fraternal charity in the new Province of the Netherlands, founded by the Paris Capuchins in 1585. The provincial chapters and the general superiors of the Order had to intervene and take measures that today would be considered rather drastic but were regarded by contemporaries as necessary. With three centuries of hindsight, historians can explain the situation impartially. Father Hildebrand describes this pseudo-mystical movement among the first Belgian Capuchins as "a movement that heralded Quietism, quite important and quite extensive, since our province's manual of customs, which was never printed, had to devote a long chapter to it," describing the errors widespread in the province as "smelling of heresy," as "a way of idleness" and "a way of laziness."[5]

The remedy was quickly found. Except for certain experts who had received special permission from the major superiors or the chapter, all were forbidden to read or have the works regarded as the source of these errors. Such works, although pious and Catholic, contain very difficult and subtle things, hard enough to understand for sages and experts. What then of fools or simple souls? The books in question are those by Harphius, Tauler, Ruusbroec, Suso, and the *Theologia Germanica*. Since these first prohibitions were not enough, more radical provisions were added in 1595 and 1598, backed up by canonical penalties including automatic excommunication,

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[5]P. Hildebrand, "Un mouvement pseudo-mystique chez les premiers Capucins belges," *Collectanea Franciscana* 7 (1924) 257.

privation of office, and seizure of the texts in circulation. Hildebrand notes that "the damage done to the province lasted a long time, to the great spiritual harm of the religious and especially to the detriment of fraternal charity."[6]

But perhaps Bernardine did not have to look beyond Paris to see that spiritual persons are no more free from the spirit of parochialism than other mortals. It afflicts historians and philosophers alike, even though as scholars they are trained to be detached, at least when it comes to the ideas of others! But there is no need to seek exceptions among the spiritual Capuchins of Paris. Another recent historian, an expert in this area, is not afraid to say that the two spiritual movements whose leaders were Benet Canfield and Yves of Paris were by no means coexisting peacefully at the time. Not only that, "the sad thing was that these two groups were fighting, sometimes with a certain violence—a good lesson for us. Would that it might teach Christians today, in polite controversies, that they must at least respect each other, despite differences of opinion."[7] Let us take note of the lesson, all the more so since the history of spiritual theologies reflects the history of the interpretations of spiritual writers as much as their mystical experiences, either authentic or regarded as such. To describe their experiences and their personal reactions to the writings of others, it is easier to assign new meanings to common terms rather than create them from nothing. A created word has meaning only for its author, who uses terms that seem most like those already in use, sometimes giving them meanings that contradict or are at least foreign to the original and usual meanings. The history of Franciscan thought exhibits a wonderful diversity of persons and ideas. They remain such even after eminent historians show that this diversity is just so many ways of revealing the richness and possibilities of the spiritual experience of Saint Francis of Assisi. Spectators are sometimes dazzled, as at a fireworks display or magic show, but when the sparks have settled they find themselves in the presence of thinkers who have made progress by a sometimes radical criticism of the theories of their predecessors and attempts to update them.

This is true for the history of Franciscan thought in general, not only for its philosophical and theological aspects, but for its spiritual aspects as well. Looking at the spiritual history of the French Capuchins, which runs

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[6]Ibid. 263. For further information, amply documented, see Idem., "Les premiers Capucins belges et la mystique," in *Revue d'ascetiq et de Mystique*. 19 (1938) 245-94.

[7]Julien-Eymard d'Agners, *L'humanisme chrétien au XVII siècle: St. François de Sales et Yves de Paris*, The Hague 1970, 104. See *Collectanea Franciscana* 42 (1972) 201f.

from Matthias Bellintani to Bernardine of Paris by way of Lawrence of Paris and Yves of Paris, we seem to see a development from pseudo-Franciscan (and even pseudo-Scotist and pseudo-Bonaventurian) positions to positions typical of historical Scotism, ending with a return to the Saint Bonaventure of the *Major Legend* and *The Soul's Journey into God.*

This return is a rediscovery of the Francis of the *Book of Conformities*, the copy of Christ crucified, somewhat obscured by the abstract devotion of the Nordic or Rhino-Flemish school of Benet Canfield, corrected along Scotist lines by Lawrence and Yves of Paris—a rediscovery that is the characteristic trait of Bernardine of Paris.

This historical view of the evolution of the spirituality of the seventeenth-century French Capuchins is not in itself obvious. It could be criticized for introducing Duns Scotus into a history where no one, or almost no one, knows his name. In any case, I will not make anything up but simply add the statements of specialists in an area of Franciscan doctrine I have been familiar with for a long time and do not even expect to remember here. All I have to do is put the correct reference at the bottom of the texts cited by the specialists. This history is played in another musical scale, but one that is only more harmonious.

Thus, to think that Bernardine was welcomed enthusiastically, or even with indifference, by his confreres who were disciples of Canfield, Lawrence and Yves, would be unwarranted. But we can wonder why he was relieved of the office of novice master after only two years, whereas his predecessor remained there for twenty years and then became chaplain of the Capuchinesses of Paris. We can wonder why the 1662 edition of *The Spirit of Saint Francis* presents him as guardian of the novitiate house, as if to lend weight to his work. We can wonder why in 1668 he published a voluminous work, *The Perfect Novice*, which he did not address to their learned novice masters, of whom he says, "I would consider it a privilege to be their most humble disciple," but "only to the novices, who have become little out of love for him who made himself little for them." But he does admit that God, "having given me a singular affection for the novices, also inspired me to use whatever light he poured into my mind in their service. Human children do not need material light in order to walk, any more than novices, who are God's children, need instruction in order to go to him."[8] This novice master who was thanked for his services after two years and given to the Capuchinesses, who as guardian published the substance of his instructions to the novices, who wrote an imposing manual for novices that

[8]Bernardin de Paris, *Le parfait novice, instrvit des voies qvil doit tenir povr arriver a la perfection de son estat*, Paris 1668 (Foreword).

makes no mention of Saint Francis, does he not seem to say with Saint Paul, whose ministry to his blood brothers the Jews was rejected, that from now on he is going to turn to the Gentiles?

Did Bernardine's confreres perhaps think that his insistence on preaching a return to the primitive spirit of Saint Francis was a criticism of their Nordic, Rhenish and Dominican spiritual way, in which Christ crucified and Francis, his image, had too small a place? And Bernardine's insistence on the desire of Francis to communicate his spirit to the French—did it not seem indiscreet, chauvinistic and outmoded to the new learning that had come from the North?

We can only ask the questions; we cannot find an answer to them in the archives or other sources of information. Our only option is to compare Bernardine's spiritual way with that of the Capuchin spiritual leaders before the composition of *The Spirit of Saint Francis*, in order to judge their similarities or differences.

II. The Capuchin Spiritual Masters

If *The Spirit of Saint Francis* is one of the most remarkable seventeenth-century Capuchin monuments, should it not still attract attention? Apart from the entries in the encyclopedias, which repeat one another, two articles have been devoted to him. One, in French, compares the idea of Franciscan poverty according to Bernardine of Paris with the traditional concepts of the religious vows.[9] The other, in Italian, extols the extraordinary merits of the author and his masterpiece: "It is a rare gem among many lovely emeralds. It is a great book, one of those rare or very rare works that never grow old, on which time confers an intangible aura of glory as on true works of genius... It is a classic book on Saint Francis. In this golden book by the famous Capuchin, a book born from the divinely fruitful pages of the Gospel, souls that crave light can find everything they are looking for in vain in so many other books on the same subject."[10] This great name deserves to be cited with the other great Capuchin names of the seventeenth century, but, forgotten by specialists in Franciscan and Capuchin history, it is as unrecognized by others as it is hard to find in libraries. Ubald of Alençon pays him homage, but without citing him, in *L'âme franciscaine*: "Only in the seventeenth century do authors deal with the question for the first time in a clear and positive manner, in the manner of a

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[9]P. Apollinaire, "Le Père Bernardin de Paris, théologien de la pauvreté," in *Etud. Franc.* n.s. 15 (1963) 166-82; see *Bibliographia Franciscana* XII, n. 2417.

[10]Imerio da Castellanza, *P. Bernardino*, 318.

professor. In 1660, Bernardine wrote *The Spirit of Saint Francis*, which was reissued by Father Apollinaire in the twentieth century."[11]

As far as I know, the only one who describes the historical-doctrinal significance of Bernardine's literary works and *The Spirit of Saint Francis* is the Capuchin Optatus van Asseldonk. We quote this authoritative verdict after pointing out in the same article the most famous names and their place in this Capuchin spiritual constellation: *Matthias of Salò*, 1535-1611, very famous Italian Capuchin, commissary general of the Capuchins in France in 1575, and first novice master at the house in Faubourg Saint-Jacques in Paris until 1578. – *Benet Canfield*, 1562-1611, the most influential Capuchin mystical author in seventeenth-century France. – *Lawrence of Paris*, 1578-1631, the first great French spiritual Capuchin. – *Yves of Paris*, c.1590-1678, one of the seventeenth-century Capuchins who deserves the most attention. A precursor of Pascal, he holds a very important place. We could add that he was the leader of the Christian humanists and a contemporary of Bernardine of Paris.

> Bernardine of Paris (c.1600-1685), a man of very great pastoral experience. In the richness of the Franciscan and Berullian tradition, Bernardine represents the flowering and the sanctity of the love of God in union with the crucified and eucharistic Christ the High Priest and his Mother. Saint Francis is the perfect model of this. The doctrines of Benet Canfield and Lawrence of Paris are here applied to the priestly soul of the God-Man and his Mother. "Jesus-Mary" is the brief expression of this life of love. In *The Spirit of Saint Francis*, Bernardine is one of the first and best modern interpreters of the spirituality of the founder. He is worthy of study.[12]

The author adds four new works to the fifteen others already mentioned by Candide of Nant in his article, *Bernardin de Paris*.

We will return to this authoritative verdict. Here we give a quick introduction to these four representative Capuchins, pointing out those things that enable us to make a connection with Bernardine.

1. Matthias Bellintani of Salò

His work, *The Practice of Mental Prayer*, was enormously successful. Part I was published in 1573, Part II in 1584, Parts III and IV in 1600. It was translated into various languages and went through eighteen French editions

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[11]Ubald d'Alençon, *L'âme franciscaine*, Paris 1913, 10.

[12]See *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*. V: *Frères Mineurs* IV: *De 1517 à 1700 (âge d'or des capucins). Spiritualité franciscaine en France, Capucins* (col. 1367-1379); *Bernardin de Paris* (1378f).

between 1584 and 1621. The author is obviously an eclectic theologian. His modern editor recognizes this and thinks that "the most beautiful and inspired doctrine is the Scotist doctrine of the reason for the incarnation, reduced to a powerful synthesis."[13] But the introduction to the two questions on the greatness of God and the misery of man—with a view to the fundamental question of our primary end, which is the glory of God, and our secondary end, which is eternal happiness—adopts the point of view that the purpose of the Redemption is to restore to us the paradise we lost. To the question, "Why did the infinite majesty of God, with such self-abasement, unite with our sinful humanity?" Matthias answers with five reasons for the incarnation, each containing several subdivisions. We find here the reasons imagined for centuries by theologians, except for the doctrine peculiar to Duns Scotus. We will not insist on this here, for a better opportunity will present itself later.[14]

In any case, the reasons for the incarnation are important here only to arouse devotion, not for any precise theological reason. Matthias's basic viewpoint is determined by the notion of human nothingness and misery, in answer to the question that precedes every conversion: "Who are you, Lord, and who am I?" The conclusion drawn by our spiritual theologian is that all we are comes from God, belongs to God, and must serve God. The dialogue between us and God is that of master with servant, as in the *Exercises* of Saint Ignatius, which Umile of Genoa sees as one of the main sources, the first on the list, of *The Practice of Mental Prayer*.

2. Benet Canfield

An Englishman and a Protestant, he converted to Catholicism in 1585. He became a Capuchin novice in Paris in 1586-87, drawing attention to himself by mystical-like phenomena, and sharing with his confreres a simplified method of mental prayer. This he wrote down during his theological studies in Italy, between 1588 and 1592, under the name *The Rule of Perfection*. At first it circulated in manuscript form. The first two parts were eventually published in 1608. Part III was also published, in 1609, but was disavowed by the author as faulty. It contained a warning to readers, also found in the definitive edition of 1610, "by order of the superiors" and to put an end to objections resulting from the circulation "throughout France, Flanders and Lorraine" of a bad copy, "to the detriment of souls and the

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[13]Mattia da Salò, *Practica dell'orazione mentale*, Parte I. Introduzione ed edizione critica del P. Umile da Genova, Assisi 1932, p. xlv (our translation).

[14]Mattia da Salò, *Practica*, 93-137.

subject of the book."[15] A recent critical edition by Orcibal indicates the variants introduced into the definitive edition, and their interpretation with regard to the evolution of the text. These variants concern primarily those passages that deal with the essential vision and the role of meditation on the humanity and passion of Christ, especially in Chapters XVI-XX of Part III, where they appear for the first time. Orcibal feels that these are not in keeping with the basic orientation of Benet's thought as expressed in the later editions. In fact, these chapters have been regarded by some historians as interpolations introduced by order of the superiors. But Orcibal thinks that these chapters were written by Benet himself, following his experience of the spiritual life and criticisms of his method. The editor feels that a good part of Chapter XVI is too contrary to the basic orientation of Benet's thought to have by written by him. It would seem to be the hand of a Capuchin confrere correcting Benet's text according to the Franciscan Order's traditional ideas on meditation on the passion of Christ.

In 1916, Bremond presented Benet Canfield as "the master of the masters themselves..., his *Rule of Perfection* served as manual for two or three generations of mystics.... Of all the influences that shaped prayer in the seventeenth century, not one surpasses his."[16] This success can apparently be attributed to method's simplicity and radical nature. There is but one spiritual exercise throughout all the stages of the spiritual life, commonly called the purgative, illuminative and unitive, in which Benet sees three forms of God's will, according to how it manifests itself. This single exercise is union with the will of God by total renunciation of our own will. Part I deals with the exterior will, which is seen in the active life and presupposes knowledge of what is commanded, prohibited or indifferent. Part II deals with the contemplative life or interior will, which is a perfect, manifest and experiential knowledge of God's will. Part III deals with the essential will of God, a splendor that governs and perfects the soul in the "supereminent" life. This essential will is God himself, the divine essence itself. It is in this last stage that the renunciation of our own will and all activity on our part is called *active* annihilation, insofar as it takes place through the activity of the will, and *passive* annihilation, insofar as it takes place through the activity of God. Without this annihilation, union with the divine essence is impossible.

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[15]Jean Orcibal (ed.)., *Benoît de Canfield, La Règle de perfection. The Rule of Perfection*, Edition critique publiée et annotée par -- , Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982, 327.

[16]Henri Bremond, *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France* II, Paris 1916 and 1928, 155-58.

This theory of annihilation and essential union is the sensitive and most-debated point of Canfield's method, owing to the soul's identification with the divine essence in this super eminent union, as well as the danger of Quietism and Illuminism. Among Franciscans, especially, there is the question of the role of meditation on the mysteries of the humanity and passion of our Lord in Franciscan spirituality, according to the doctrine of Saint Bonaventure and the practice of Saint Francis. Later history shows that these dangers are real. They are not due exclusively to the malice of critics, but to the radical nature of the formulas and their lack of nuance. Some commentators, such as Optatus van Asseldonk, explain the ambiguity of certain formulas by an unconscious shift from the realm of psychology and experience to that of ontology, even while admitting that in the historical context these failures are inexcusable.[17] Others, such as Orcibal, think that Canfield really means what he says, and that the fault lies with his system. Placing *The Rule of Perfection* on the Index was not only an appropriate measure; it seems less and less surprising.[18] This is not the place to take sides in these controversies, but only to ask questions that Bernardine had to ask himself and answer in his own way.

3. Lawrence of Paris

His spiritual method is contained in *The Palace of Divine Love* published in 1602, 1603, and in 1614 greatly revised and to a large extent doubled. This tome of 1246 pages was followed by four others, only the fifth of which has come down to us: *The Tapestries of Divine Love*, which are meditations on the passion. Bremond made Lawrence a precursor of devout humanism, owing to his litany of natural human perfections, but he seems not to have noticed that this litany continues with the supernatural perfections and is counterbalanced by the misery or emptiness that results from nature and sin. Historians today classify him with Benet in the mystical current. But since he is older than Benet, having made profession in 1581 and published his work in 1602, Dubois-Quinard gives him priority over Benet and stresses the fact that Lawrence is much more Benet's critic than his disciple.[19] But some historians show that in his 1614 edition Lawrence seems to borrow a certain number of themes from Benet. Yet there is also a considerable difference between the personalities of the two mystical

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[17]Optatus [van Asseldonk] of Veghel, *Benoît Canfield (1562-1610), sa vie, sa doctrine et son influence*, Rome 1949, 348-57.

[18]J. Orcibal, *Benoît de Canfield*, 15, 39.

[19]M. Dubois-Quinard, *Laurent de Paris, une doctrine du pur amour in France au début du 17ème siècle*, Rome 1959, 1-8.

writers. Benet behaves like a theorist who thinks he has discovered a brilliant idea and systematically uses it. Lawrence is much more a psychologist and man of broad learning, who describes the spiritual life as a multifaceted struggle between self-love and divine love, after the manner of Saint Augustine and Saint Bernard.

Whereas Benet does not ask speculative questions about our relationship with God, Lawrence discusses current theories about the our end as human beings: glory of God, knowledge of God, service of God, love of God. He describes this end as a unitive and fruitive love willed by God when he decided to create us in his image and likeness. And he has Jesus Christ himself do a commentary, in terms that Bernardine of Paris seems to have before him in the first pages of *The Spirit of Saint Francis* when he describes the predestination of Saint Francis:

> ...that he might be holy, as I am holy, by imitating my perfection, by molding himself in my spirit; that he might become perfect in love, as I also am, according to the ability of a creature; finally, that he might be one in will, one in love in this present life, one in us, as I and my Father are but one in the Holy Spirit, who is the eternal love common to the two of us. As the devout Saint Bernard says, the blessed consciousness between them is, as it were, intermediate and veiled; it enjoys the blessed communication of the Spirit, who is the love of the two, namely the Father and the Word, and becomes one spirit with God, thus giving joy.
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> Who would dare deny that the end of every rational creature is not in this life. I speak of that union which is fruitive, transforming and deifying. The Apostle says that human souls are not consummated and brought to perfection except through the priesthood and divine sacrifice of the High Priest according to the likeness of Melchisedek, through his perfective, unitive, transforming and conforming sacrifice, through which we draw near to God in order to speak as he does.[20]

Our theologian goes over the plan of redemption by the incarnate Word in his office of High Priest. He makes no mention of a theory of the incarnation whose reason would be other than the Redemption, but would be either the crowning of creation or the first of the predestined, apart from any foreknowledge of sin. Human beings would be willed in order to be the mystical body of Christ, as Duns Scotus thinks and as we shall see later. For us, this is all the more interesting since Dubois-Quinard notes that the doctrine of pure love, fruitive and joy-giving, comes from Saint Bonaventure

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[20]Lawrence of Paris, *Le Palais de l'amour divin entre Jésus et l'âme chrestienne* I, c. 6, Paris 1614, 20.

before it is found, in developed form, among the Nordics, especially Harphius. The latter is already, around the year 1580, "one of the favorite masters of the French Capuchins in general" although he also notes "the transformation that the master's teaching undergoes at the hands of his disciple. When such reconstruction takes place, its seems that what we really have instead is a new construction."[21]

From God's will to communicate his love and happiness to us, Lawrence draws two conclusions for the entire spiritual life. The first is that God's fruitive love is our end. The second is that to act from pure love of God is the most perfect rule in all human activity. This gives him an opportunity to note that the practice of the will of God advocated by Benet Canfield is not the perfect rule of the spiritual life, because it is a means and not the end itself of human activity.[22]

To his explanation of the mystical doctrine of Lawrence of Paris, Dubois-Quinard has added, in a 1963 article, some very fine supplementary material on the theory of annihilation from the angle of Christian humanism.[23] But this study was ignored by Julien-Eymard d'Angers, who criticizes the contradiction he sees in Lawrence between his doctrine of annihilation and his humanist intentions. To avoid repeating the necessary explanations on the reason for this criticism and the clarification we think must be made, we will return to this point after we have presented the main features of the Christian humanism of Saint Francis de Sales and Yves of Paris, according to Julien-Eymard himself.

4. Yves of Paris

Between Lawrence and Bernardine there is a half century during which spiritual movements develop in different directions and merge. The Capuchins of this period represent the movement that Bremond enthusiastically hailed as "devout humanism." He devotes some beautiful pages to Yves of Paris, but recent historians consider them unsatisfactory and attempt to correct them, sometimes rather crudely, by adopting a new perspective, that of Christian humanism under the aegis of Saint Francis de Sales.

This kind of Christian humanism is characterized by a certain cult of the nobility of man on the natural level, which in turn calls for a transcendence that is clearly supernatural and Christian. The controversies

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[21]M. Dubois-Quinard, *Laurent de Paris*, 249 and 254.

[22]Ibid. 320-29.

[23]M. Dubois-Quinard, "L'humanisme mystique de Laurent de Paris: L'anéantissement mystique de l'âme," in *Études Franciscaine* n.s. 14 (1964) 31-57.

in the decades prior to Vatican II led Julien-Eymard d'Angers to do two studies of these questions related to Christian humanism. In 1959, he noted that the Capuchin humanists—Yves of Paris, Sebastian of Senlis and Leander of Dijon—linked the natural and supernatural aspects of every human impulse towards a hereafter. For them, all this took place as if it raised no questions about the gratuitous nature of the supernatural, "seeing that the time was not yet ripe for such a controversy, as it is today."[24] Returning to the question at greater length in 1970, he added that they all present this basic characteristic: human nature as such, by reason of its intellect and by reason of its will (which follows the intellect), is oriented toward the beatific vision. They all have the same lacuna, since not one of them questions the gratuity of grace. This judgment was suggested to the author by the theory of Henri de Lubac, who believes that the distinction between the natural order and the supernatural order was not very clear prior to the condemnation of Baius in 1566.

Here is how Julien-Eymard summarizes the situation among the advocates of Christian humanism in the seventeenth century. Francis de Sales, in his *Treatise on the Love of God*, "says that we have a natural inclination to love God above all things," so that human beings are naturally oriented toward mysticism. Yves of Paris, in his *Progress in Divine Love*, starts with the idea that "the human heart is naturally inclined to love God." Despite this natural inclination, both of them hold that "we do not naturally have the power to love God above all things, and thus true love of God is an effect of grace." They admit that "human nature is not entirely corrupt, for it preserves in itself a natural inclination toward God, but it is deeply wounded because of the influence of the passions, and for that reason (there are others) grace is absolutely necessary in order to be saved."[25] Both of them also present Christ as a model to imitate, since he is the head of the whole human race. Indeed, the incarnation of the Son of God is the mystery that dominates the relationship of the natural to the supernatural. Moreover, "many famous doctors hold that, even if Adam had not sinned, the Word of God would have united himself hypostatically to our nature, and that the remedy he provides for our infirmities is only a second effect that flows from the infinite communications of his goodness."[26] In any case, since Christ is the head of the human race and the source of a life that is ordained to a supernatural end (which we cannot attain by our own powers), the question

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[24]Julien-Eymard d'Angers, "Le désir naturel du surnaturel. Sébastien de Senlis, Yves de Paris, Léandre de Dijon (1637, 1645, 1661)," in *Études Franciscaine* n.s. 1 (1950) 211-24; see *Bibliographia Franciscaines* IX, n. 1065.

[25]Id., "L'humanisme chrétien," 52f.

[26]Ibid., 111.

of a natural morality in the manner of the ancient philosophers is superfluous. For us, the grace of Christ is necessary and gratuitous: necessary as a means, and gratuitous because it is due solely to divine generosity. Unlike Saint Francis de Sales, Yves of Paris sticks to this perspective and is not interested in distinguishing between what we can do by our natural powers and what we can do only with Christ's mediation. As Julien-Eymard says, he is unaware of "the problem that torments modern theologians."[27]

The author concludes by summarizing his comparison between the Christian humanism of Francis de Sales and that of Yves of Paris. For both of them, human perfection and Christian perfection are not opposed, but on the same line that leads to the fullness of the love of God. They both admit a twofold love of self, one bad, which is called self-love and is the direct enemy of the love of God, and the other, legitimate and obligatory, which causes us to love ourselves in God and according to God. "We see that the doctor of pure love rarely speaks of annihilation; he prefers the term divestiture, for natural love is by no means annihilated but is sublimated in an act of total renunciation.... Thus we might expect him [Yves] to rise to the summits revealed to us in the *Treatise* of Francis de Sales. He does not. The Capuchin stops along the way.... More than once we find in him a certain mistrust of this totally passive mysticism that carries disinterestedness to the hypothetical renunciation of heaven and the hypothetical acceptance of hell." The reason for this seems to be, according to Julien-Eymard, that Yves of Paris finds in humans what we call today a natural desire for the beatific vision, since we are made to see God face to face. Thus we can see that he does not follow Saint Francis de Sales to the end of his supreme ascent, to pure passivity. Yves of Paris remained below.[28]

To further highlight this theological explanation, Julien-Eymard draws a parallel between the happy outcome of the Christian humanism of Saint Francis de Sales and Yves of Paris, comparing it to the impasse reached by Canfield's disciples, Lawrence of Paris and Philip of Angoumois. Let us stick to Lawrence, to finish the explanation we began above. Julien-Eymard describes his doctrine as pessimism because of his doctrine of annihilation, "which is not only moral but mystical, involving the understanding, the will and the memory, so that nothing of that which is human attains to that all which is God." The contradiction is this: "On the one hand is a human being, living perfection, who wishes only to find fulfillment in God; on the other hand is a human being, intrinsic corruption,

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[27]Ibid., 126.

[28]Ibid., 140-42.

who must be annihilated in order to arrive at pure love of God.... The contradiction manifests itself finally when, having reached the summit of mysticism, the normal consequence of acting and thinking in a human way is said to be annihilation of the entire human being. Being unable to show in human nature a tendency toward the supernatural, as did Saint Francis de Sales, he ends in an impasse."[29]

It is easy enough to agree that Lawrence's annihilation is rather tiresome and hardly in accord with a humanistic vision. But if this annihilation means annihilation of the entire human being in the ontological sense of the term, it seems to me that Lawrence tried to leave some leeway in the 1614 edition of his treatise on the nothingness of man. He distinguishes moral and virtuous annihilation from mystical annihilation, which is both active and passive. Of the latter, there are two types: active-passive and the other, which is almost completely passive.

> The other is almost completely passive. In this case God is the principal worker, acting in advance, unexpectedly, lifting the soul up to himself, with no conscious predispositions on the soul's part, but with fatherly generosity and utmost courtesy...which the soul cannot resist. It can only say, were it permitted and allowed to frame words: "I live, now not I, but Jesus and his love live in me..." (552).
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> As for the use of the term "annihilation" in these present exercises or spiritual practices, we do not mean here the destruction of substance and accidents which constitute a thing in nature or in purely natural activity. We mean a cessation of human activity—accidental, moral or spiritual—in its exercise, but only with regard to good, not with regard to doing nothing at all. We do not mean a total cessation of human activity—accidental, moral or spiritual—since that is wrong (559).
>
> As for preceding and preceded acts of practical love, those things are said in a way to be no more.... Our intellectual faculties...yield to the flood of truth and love present then to our pure thought.... However...this activity must not be annihilation in the strictest sense, but loving transformation or deification. I strongly urge those who use terms carelessly to note this, for it is a change in the form, manner or state of activity, not the total cessation of activity in general. Otherwise the soul would have neither beatitude nor perfection, which consist in activity. It is true that activity is lifted up by the very special act of love's embrace, but to say that the soul does nothing at all is an error. It enjoys and embraces God, knows and loves God divinely, is embraced by him and filled with his blessed presence according to his most loving kindness. But if there is something in which you wish to admit

[29]Ibid., 138.

> annihilation, it is the evil of vice, sin and maliciousness that must be totally destroyed (561).

We could line up more pages of similar texts, since Lawrence devotes Chapter 438 of his *Chaste Love. Reply to an Objection*, to the subject. There he speaks of the "bright-darkness" or learned ignorance of a soul so lovingly condemned to divine ecstasy. Also, it is enough to see this text from the 1602 edition of *The Palace of Divine Love* and read, on page 8, why philosophers were wrong to limit the end of human beings to the active love of God: "They were wrong, since all activity, whether of body or soul, is ordained to rest. Thus they should have concluded that practical love was not yet the goal or final end of such a noble creature, since it was ordained to enjoyment and to the supremely desirable union with him who is the Alpha and the Omega, their first principle and their final end."

Nor does he confuse the natural and the supernatural, since he takes as proof the example of the incarnation, a sign of the rational soul's nobility: "God considers it [the soul] as important as himself, since he made another for himself in the incarnation." God's plan, explains Lawrence, was to unite himself closely to it "through transformation of its actual being by the divine activity, causing that soul to enjoy the immediate presence of divine love, by means of a close union with its human spirit, to conclude with Saint Augustine's *De diligendo Deo*, cited by Peter Lombard: 'God made rational creatures so that they might know the sovereign and communicable good, so that knowing it they might love it, loving it they might possess it, and possessing it they might enjoy it.' In short, that they might be holy as he is holy, that they might be perfect as he is perfect, according to their condition."[30]

This is the divine plan as Bernardine describes it in the first pages of *The Spirit of Saint Francis*, placing the incarnate Word in the forefront of the Trinity's plan. For Lawrence, as for Bernardine, this divine plan is clearly supernatural. They both avoid the ambiguity of an incarnation that would be for the perfection of human nature as such, an ambiguity denounced by Saint Bonaventure.

III. The Return to Saint Francis

From *The Practice of Mental Prayer* by Matthias of Salò to *The Spirit of Saint Francis* by Bernardine, we can see a development in spirituality. It moves from the common spiritualities, in which Saint Francis plays no special part and there is as yet nothing specifically Franciscan about the

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[30]Laurent de Paris, *Le Palais d'amour divine de Jésus et d l'âme*, Paris 1602, 8.

philosophical and theological doctrines, to positions where Saint Francis is the chief figure, a way of access to Christ of whom he is a copy and the mirror.

In fact, if we page through *The Practice of Mental Prayer*, we will not find a single reference to Saint Francis. At least we have not found any in the first two volumes of the critical edition, or in the introduction. On the other hand, we do find them, occasionally and in the form of commonplaces, in Benet Canfield, Lawrence of Paris and Yves of Paris. The reason is quite simple: these treatises were intended for pious seculars and not specifically for the sons of Saint Francis. An exception must be made for Chapters XVI-XX of Part III of *The Rule of Perfection*. There it says that these chapters are expressly addressed "to the Capuchins and other Friars Minor," that Saint Francis meditated only on the Lord's passion, and that it was precisely for this reason that Saint Bonaventure presented him, in *The Soul's Journey into God*, as the model of the contemplative life when he passed from the vision of the Seraph into God in a transport of ecstasy.[31]

Thus the question arises: Why the absence, in Bernardine of Paris, of the entire spirituality of Benet Canfield, and why this change of views in the edition of 1610, the very year of Benet's death? Depending on how we understand the internal logic of the primitive *Rule of Perfection* and its later additions, our opinion will differ as to whether Bernardine was or was not a disciple of Canfield.

Therefore we need to be able to determine whether the orientation of *The Rule of Perfection* is Franciscan or Eckhartian, and the exact meaning of the "Franciscanism" of this doctrine, in its original inspiration and as it is found in Benet. Fortunately, we can do this through two complementary inquires: that of the meaning and origin of the predestination of Christ in Harphius and his sources (Ruusbroec and Eckhart), and the development of Franciscan thought on the same point in Lawrence and Yves of Paris. Then it will be easy for us to determine the meaning of Bernardine of Paris's choices.

1. From Matthias to Benet by way of Harphius, Ruusbroec and Eckhart

When we began our brief history of the spiritual theology of the seventeenth-century Capuchins, we met Matthias of Salò. We noted that his theology of the reasons for the incarnation is the sum of the reasons traditionally alleged, minus the specifically Scotist doctrine. These reasons

[31]See the critical edition by J. Orcibal, *Benoît de Canfield*, 434-37.

are, in effect, the outpouring of the divine nature, since goodness is self-diffusive, gives itself, communicates itself, destroys sin, pardons, gives happiness. Then the same effect comes under the form of love in Christ, giving himself to his friends, becoming human, taking on our likeness. The reason for the incarnation is the honor of God, whose perfections it manifests, the honor of Christ whose nature is assumed by God and honored by God, the glory he communicates to the elect, the honor that comes to Christ from his dominion over the universe, and to the entire universe represented in the body of Christ. In the last analysis, the reason for the incarnation is its usefulness to human beings, who are reconciled with God, to whom heaven is opened and who are consoled in this life.[32]

Here we find everything except the pure love with which God loves himself and which he desires to share with a being who can love him as perfectly as a created being can. This is the essential reason for the predestination of Christ, according to Duns Scotus. We can say that this is the common doctrine; the reasons are found in Scripture and the Fathers, with ample room for Neoplatonic philosophy and the obvious doctrines of the incarnation for the sake of redemption. It lies in the realm of devotion, from which comes no guiding principle for the spiritual life.

And this helps us understand why Benet, already formed in Nordic spirituality before his conversion to Catholicism, was so popular with his novitiate confreres: he had reduced all asceticism, contemplation and mystical union, to the single exercise of union with the will of God. From the viewpoint of the history of philosophy, we can see a major step in the direction of what is called Franciscan voluntarism and a certain moving away from the intellectualism of Eckhart. But it is a somewhat simplistic conversion, for it stops at the means without reaching (unless indirectly) the end, which is the perfect act of the spiritual life: pure love of God, precisely because he is lovable, and not just because it is his will. This is the substance of Lawrence of Paris's criticism of Benet.

In any case, since it originated in an intellectualist context, the doctrine of union with God through the will retains the characteristics of union with God through the intellect as advocated by the Nordic way of abstraction. This way calls for the elimination of all human activity, both intellectual and volitional, in order to leave a void that God can fill—after first pushing that void to the absolute zero point of all created activity.

Thus, on the precise point of the reason for the incarnation, we should not be surprised to find that Benet remains silent. This silence

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[32]See the references above in notes 13-14.

extends to Christ in general, and a fortiori to Christ's humanity. Orcibal stresses this, in contrast to the case of Harphius, who is usually remembered as the Franciscan who was the inspiration for Benet's thought: "We notice in Harphius's commentary a constant reference to Christ, which is missing in Benet, for whom 'Spouse' is synonymous with God."[33]

Since Harphius constantly refers to Christ, it should be easy, even for a non-specialist, to see the place the reason for the incarnation occupies in his writings, since it has been amply examined by such specialists in Rhino-Flemish spirituality as Cognet and Verschueren. Like Harphius, we go back to Ruusbroec and Eckhart, starting from the theory of the incarnation for the perfection of human nature and the universe described by Saint Bonaventure, though not accepted by him. This will give us a starting point to evaluate the evolution of Lawrence and Yves of Paris as to the quality of their Franciscanism.

Louis Cognet says that Harphius (Henry Herp) is known as priest and rector of the Common Life at Delft in 1445. In 1450, during a pilgrimage to Rome, he became a Friar Minor at Ara Coeli, but he returned quite soon to his country where he held various positions. He died in 1477 at Malines. Although Harphius depends to a very great extent on Ruusbroec, "he is clearly more original for the way in which he integrates into his spirituality a theology of the incarnation, thus already heralding Bérulle, who surely owes much to him.... His concept of Christology definitely bears the marks of Scotus and Bonaventure. This latter point is apparent in the way he conceive the reason for the incarnation." Cognet piques our curiosity even more by explaining that what we have is "a mystical Scotism, in this sense, that the theories of Duns Scotus are directed, not to a speculative concept of human nature, but toward mystical union regarded as a lived reality" (295).

This takes place in two stages: "First, Harphius considers the primary end of the incarnation as the lifting up of human nature, culminating in mystical union, and this end is so noble in itself that the Word became incarnate without sin" (ibid.). Harphius writes:

> That is what is maintained by one Catholic opinion held by true Catholics, and it seems in accord with the judgment of reason. It says that we can speak of the assumption of human flesh in two ways. First, with regard to the substance of the human nature that was to be assumed, in which case the principal reason for the Lord's incarnation was not the liberation of humankind, for Christ would have become incarnate even if Adam had not

[33]J. Orcibal, ibid. 222, note 3.

> sinned. The incarnation is related to the perfection of humankind itself and thus to the perfection of the entire universe according to nature, grace and glory. For in the incarnation, humankind, which was last in creation, is united to its principle by a union so great that there is no greater below God. In it is fulfilled every tendency of human nature when, through the incarnation, human nature's most noble capacity, by which it is capable of union with the divine nature, is fulfilled in one perfect act. That is why, even if Adam had not sinned, God would have become incarnate, for it was fitting that humankind attain perfection according to nature, grace and glory, in such a way that human nature achieved its greatest dignity (296).

Cognet continues, noting that sin changed everything. But for Harphius, "in accord with Scotist views (not as to the fact of the incarnation, which would have taken place without sin), only the Word becomes incarnate to suffer in a body subject to suffering and death .... We can imagine the body assumed by the Word in another way, according to its imperfection of being subject to suffering and death, in which case the principal reason for the Incarantion was the redemption of humankind. For if Adam had not sinned and had not needed to be rescued from his fall, Christ would not have assumed a body subject to suffering and death" (296).

But Cognet is certainly not responsible for this interpretation of Harphius. We find it already expressed, starting this time with the Latin text of Harphius rather than Jacques de Machault's translation. But here it is to defend Harphius from the accusation of anti-Franciscanism, "whereas he contributed powerfully to the spread of the Franciscan spirit and raised up many souls through love of the sacred humanity of Jesus to the embraces and enjoyment of the divine Word."[34]

We note only that the end does not justify the means and that others before Bonaventure and Scotus were advocating this doctrine. We need only refer to the Latin text cited by Verschueren or the French translation cited by Cognet to see there the opinion cited by Bonaventure and rejected by him. He himself noted that this opinion of the incarnation for the perfection of the universe is that of Scotus, and that both opinions are Catholic and held by Catholics (*uterque modus catholicus est et a viris catholicis sustinetur*). Harphius just inverts the two steps of Bonaventure's explanation and abridges the text slightly. He speaks of opinions held by *true* Catholics, whereas Bonaventure says only *viris catholicis*. But it is a fitting addition since, as we shall see, this opinion also goes back to Eckhart and was indirectly affected by the condemnations of Eckhart's doctrines.

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[34]Lucidius Verschueren, "Harphius et les Capucins français,"in *Études Franciscaines* 45 (1933) 316-29; translation and Latin text, 328f.

Bonaventure had already wisely condemned the pantheistic implications of these doctrines, which also implied the necessity of the incarnation for the perfection of God's work, as we will show later.[35]

In any case, Cognet shows how Harphius quickly transcends the ontological link between Christ's human nature and that of all people to move on to the theme of our mystical incorporation into Christ through grace. He acknowledges that this spirituality "is fulfilled in an eminently contemplative way of abnegation and introversion, in which Harphius remains essentially faithful to Ruusbroec's schema" (303). He notes, however, that Harphius "does not try to push his [Ruusbroec's] principles to their ultimate conclusions, since he does not follow the way of renunciation of all images, but of development of the affections, and he substitutes the active night of the spirit, appealing to the Franciscan primacy of affectivity. Nor does he relegate to the last stage of the mystical journey this 'super-essential' contemplative way, an expression that in 1586 the Roman censor would replace with the less suspect 'super-eminent' way" (309).

To what extent does this latter theory presuppose that we transcend the humanity of Christ? The answer, according to Cognet, is unclear (312). Moreover, the Roman censor was deeply concerned about another point regarding the vision of God in this world. Let us not dwell on it, but simply note with Cognet and many others that "Harphius is nothing but an impoverished Ruusbroec and lacks the creative genius of his great predecessors" (313). But he was more read than they were. He propagated Ruusbroec's doctrine but left his mark on it, especially by doing away with the journey through the world of archetypes, which, in the view of historians, is the most difficult problem in interpreting Ruusbroec and Eckhart in a way compatible with Christian theology.

But therein also lies the difficult question of the relationship between Ruusbroec and Eckhart. Cognet points out the "obvious connection" between a text of Ruusbroec and a sermon of Eckhart about the need to transcend the humanity of Christ and all created reality in order to enter into union with the divine. We also find there Eckhart's model of the soul's likeness attained through introversion pushed to its limit: "In this union, we do not cease to be human, but we are so united to God that we become truly deiform and deserve, in some way, to be called God," a union Ruusbroec seems to regard as "an anticipation of the beatific vision" (278).

Cognet maintains that "neither Meister Eckhart nor his Dominican emulators were quite so daring, and few after him were willing to take that

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[35]Text of Saint Bonaventure analyzed below.

risk" (281). But he tries to point out the principle of this movement of introversion that transports the soul to contemplation. It lies in the fact that the soul discovers in itself its own union with the world of archetypes in God (267). These are the natural foundations of contemplation, which grace sublimates and raises to the level of supernatural contemplation, To explain this, Ruusbroec resorts to two of Eckhart's most typical themes: the eternal archetype that exists at the center of the soul, and the eternal generation of the Word, which also takes place at the center of the soul. These two themes control the relationship between God and the world and are the central element of the system, which its author never succeeded in explaining satisfactorily and unambiguously, because he makes created being a middle term between God and nothingness. As Cognet says: "Meister Eckhart, through his influence, is certainly responsible for this theme of nothingness in creatures, a theme that will make its way through all of Western spirituality and often give it a very definite nihilist coloring" (74). While it leads to considerable development of the doctrine of the soul's nobility, its variable and ambiguous terminology "gives the impression that he tends to identify this deep part of the soul with its archetype in the divine Word and finally with the divine Word itself" (77). It is like a light in the soul, uncreated and uncreatable, which grasps God clearly and without intermediary, as he is in himself.

Cognet does not hesitate to say: "It is certain that, despite everything, Eckhart envisions for us, in this view, a true ontological sharing in the divine nature through this deep part, which creatures do not attain and which remains in eternal silence" (79). The soul shares so intimately in the divine life that it is, as it were, begotten by the Father with his Word and becomes itself the only-begotten Son, sharing with him all that is his. These are absolute statements and are so bold that they were the subject of various propositions condemned by the bull *In agro dominico*.[36]

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[36]Cfr. H. Denzinger – K. Rahner, *Enchiridion Symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, Freiburg i. Breisgau – Barcelona 1953, nn. 501-29: *Errores Ekardi (de Filio Dei etc.)* [Examined and condemned by the Constitution *In agro dominico*, March 27, 1329] : "All creatures are one pure nothing; I do not say that they are something ordinary or anything, but that they are one pure nothing. In addition there is an objection against the above, said Eckhart, because he preached two other articles under these words: (1) Something is in the soul which is uncreated and incapable of creation; if the entire soul were such, it would be uncreated and incapable of creation, and this is the intellect. (2) That God is not good nor better nor best; so I speak badly whenever I call God good, as if I should call white black. [Censure] ...We condemn and expressly disapprove the first fifteen articles and also the last two ones as 'heretical,' but the eleven others already mentioned as 'evil-sounding, rash, and suspected of heresy,' and no less any books or works of this

Here again Cognet returns to the question of the reasons for the incarnation, claiming that "Eckhart is often closer to the Franciscan school than to the Thomist." This is especially so in certain texts where he seems to envision no other reason for the incarnation than the elevation of human nature and the cosmic importance of the incarnation, "so that the divine emanation is the model for the incarnation, which in turn was the model for all inferior creatures" (88). The soul's journey to God is the result of this union of the ontology and theology of the incarnation. The mystical life will thus consist essentially in reuniting in itself its archetype. The soul must flee multiplicity, return to itself and rediscover its archetype through the way of introversion and abstraction, the negative way of Pseudo-Dionysius. By emptying itself of every creature, it finds in itself the All of God. This is the annihilation of self, which is not perfect unless completed by God himself. To stop at the humanity of Christ would prevent it from attaining the divine essence. It is one way and not the end of mystical union that Eckhart presents as mystical identification with the divine essence through the permanent loss of our own will, even if that be to choose consciously to do the will of God, and through the renunciation of all conceptual knowledge, even of God. Thus we must strip ourselves totally of self and lose ourselves in the great ocean of the All of God. In this way the soul divests itself of its essence as a creature and rediscovers itself in its uncreated and eternal archetype, which is the Word, and through him, union with the divine essence beyond the trinity of persons. It is not only united with God; it is one with him (103).

This mysticism of identification deeply disturbed theologians and was included in a long list of twenty-six condemned propositions. But these condemnations apparently did not halt the spread of Eckhardt's doctrines; it only forced his disciples to mitigate and conceal them.

Here again readers would like historians to justify, by means of suitable texts, this doctrine on the reasons for the incarnation they call Franciscan rather than Thomist. To be sure, we can see no advantage in these theories of Eckhart being Thomist rather than Franciscan. But by now readers suspect that historians consider this theory we analyzed above to be the opinion of those few theologians who hold that the incarnation was fitting, if not necessary, in order to confer on human nature the ontological dignity that is its due, a capacity for union with the divine essence, achieved in mystical contemplation and in the practice of union with God's will, which Benet Canfield calls essential and super-eminent, and which must fulfill these same demands for complete renunciation of all human

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Eckhart containing the above mentioned articles or any one of them."

intellectual or volitional activity, because where there is something created, God cannot exist. But let us not insist, since it is a doctrine that embarrasses the best and most astute interpreters of Eckhart and Benet Canfield alike. Like Lawrence of Paris, Benet makes this doctrine an essential element of his spirituality, but with differences as to details.

2. From the perfection of nature to the perfection of love

In the preceding pages we have frequently met doctrines described as Franciscan, Bonaventurian, or Scotist. If these last two terms mean that a doctrine is proper to Bonaveture or Scotus, either exclusively or as having begun with Bonaventure or Scotus, there is no ambiguity. But it is not the same for the term "Franciscan," which can have a purely general meaning, as applying to Saint Francis or to the Franciscans in general. On the one hand, since Franciscanism did not begin with Bonaventure or Scotus, nor did it end with them, the term is indefinite and can even be used in a restricted sense to exclude Bonaventure and Duns Scotus. On the other hand, since the doctrines themselves often began before the Friars Minor thought to invent them by simply adopting those from their world, it makes no sense to call them Franciscan until Franciscans became the only ones to hold them. Doctrines on the primacy of Christ, which are neither Bonaventurian nor Scotist, can be Franciscan in the sense that while we do find them before the Franciscans, it was the Franciscans who adopted and spread them. And so we find them described by Saint Bonaventure, not shared by him but criticized and refuted, yet propagated, with variations, by Franciscans between Bonaventure and Duns Scotus. After Scotus, the currents of ideas are linked either to Saint Bonaventure or to Duns Scotus, or the two are combined, as would be the case especially with the Capuchins.

Thus the text of Harphius, cited by Verschueren and Cognet, is a simple transcription, with slight variations, of Bonaventure's explanation of the opinion that the principal reason for the incarnation is the perfection of human nature, not the redemption. As a consequence, the incarnation would have taken place without the sin of Adam. But there is a saying: "Lend to the rich, not to the poor." Since half a century later, Scotus held a doctrine of the incarnation implying that it is unreasonable to think that God subordinated such a good to the accident of sin, historians label as Scotist a doctrine of the reason for the incarnation about which Scotus says nothing. What is more, since Saint Bonaventure has a remarkable explanation of the opinion that the principal reason for the incarnation is the perfection of the universe, Harphius, who cites Bonaventure without naming him, becomes the guarantee of the Franciscan character of this doctrine. Let us sum up this text of Saint Bonaventure, since it is of major historical significance as a

first reply to the question of the principal reason for the incarnation. This opinion distinguishes between the incarnation as to substance and the incarnation as to the flesh subject to suffering and death.

> Regarding the incarnation as to the flesh subject to suffering and death, some say that the principal cause is the redemption, and that without sin the incarnation would not have taken place. As to the incarnation meaning simply the assumption of a human nature, they say that the liberation of humankind is not the principal reason because, even if humankind had not sinned, Christ would have become incarnate. The principal reason is the multiple perfection that occurs through the incarnation. It contributes to the perfection of human nature, and consequently to that of the entire universe, insofar as it adds to and completes the perfection of humankind according to nature, grace and glory. Perfection according to nature, because the incarnation is the consummation of all the ways of leading humankind to being. According to grace, because in the incarnation Christ assumes a human nature, by virtue of which the head of the Church has being, its members are united by love and grace, and their merits become perfect through those of Christ. According to glory, because humankind finds its physical and spiritual nourishment, which would not have happened if God had not become incarnate. Finally, the appetite of every human nature is satisfied, because through the incarnation the most noble capacity in human nature, that of being united with God, is perfectly fulfilled. Because of this multiple perfection that happens to human nature through the incarnation, it was fitting that God became incarnate. And since this perfection concerns not only fallen nature, but even more, nature as properly constituted, God would have become incarnate even if Adam had not fallen, for it was fitting that humankind be perfect, and this would have been even more fitting had it not fallen, according to this opinion.[37]

This page is the most extraordinary exaltation of human nature according to nature, grace and glory, because this perfection was befitting to it as human nature. It was fitting that humanity be perfect even had it not fallen, and even more so in that case. This is the reversal of the "happy fault" of which Saint Augustine speaks and which, in his opinion, won for us so great a Savior.

To be sure, Bonaventure could have added many other reasons, beginning with God's goodness, the manifestation of his goodness, his love, the glory the Son of God receives in his incarnation, his glory before the Father and that which he communicates to others, the dominion he acquires over the entire universe. Matthias of Salò does this, and these reasons also

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[37]Saint Bonaventure, *III Sent.* d. 1, a. 2, q. 2, in *Opera omnia* III, Ad Claras Aquas 1887, 23f.

apply to an incarnation willed primarily for redemption, but they would not be considered sufficient in themselves. In fact, Matthias does not envision the situation of the incarnation willed for itself or solely for its advantages for the perfection of human nature. Thus he cannot be reduced to the opinion that Saint Bonaventure explains here but does not accept, even though he finds it more in accord with the judgment of reason. But he criticizes it for one serious drawback. In saying that the incarnation was fitting for the perfection of the universe, this opinion confines God to the perfection of the universe and implies that the incarnation was in some way necessary, because it is said that this perfection could be obtained in no other way.[38]

This opinion is inspired by what we would call today a humanist concept of human nature, both philosophical and theological. Bonaventure contrasts this opinion with the one that holds that the principal reason for the incarnation is the redemption of the human race, even though it is supported by many other reasons of fitness. From this he concludes that, without sin, the Word would not have become incarnate. He considers this opinion more in accord with the Fathers and Sacred Scripture, and more in harmony with the piety of faith. Human beings are more efficaciously led to love God and to devotion by the thought that God became incarnate to take away our sins, rather than to complete his work.[39]

This doctrine has a history that goes beyond the Bonaventurian context. According to historians, the first one to discuss the possibility of the incarnation without sin was Isaac of Nineveh, around the year 700. Next would be Rupert of Deutz, around 1100, who raised the question of whether saints are possible apart from the incarnation, assuming that their sanctification has to depend on the incarnation. Alexander of Hales says evasively that, even without sin, there would be reasons of fitness for the incarnation, but Eudes Rigaud objects that God is not bound to do the best thing possible. Albert the Great speaks of the fitness of the incarnation as being like the highest degree of a circle that goes from God to humanity and returns to God. But the most eloquent advocate of the fitness of the incarnation for the perfection of the universe is Robert Grosseteste, bishop of Lincoln, regarded as founder of the Franciscan school at Oxford.[40] He

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[38]Ibid. 25.

[39]Ibid. 24f.

[40]Robert North, "The Scotist Cosmic Christ," in *De doctrina Ioannis Duns Scoti. Studia Scholastico-Scotistica* III, Rome 1968, 168-217 (especially 192-95). In this same volume are found several articles devoted to the predestination and primacy of Christ, in various languages.

deals with the question from many philosophical and theological angles. Anyone who reads the long question Bonaventure devotes to the principal reason for the incarnation automatically thinks that the author has the text of Grosseteste before him.[41] Does that necessarily make it a Franciscan opinion? Perhaps, in the sense that some Franciscans supported it for various reasons and against the common opinions of Bonaventure and Thomas. But it cannot be a Scotist doctrine, because the Scotist reason for the incarnation does not yet appear, unless perhaps in a friend of the Franciscans, Ramon Llull, who is already suggesting the manifestation and love of God as a reason for the incarnation.

From the very outset Scotus will go beyond the Neoplatonic issue of the perfection of the universe and the human soul, in order to go back to the predestination of Christ for an end he considers more noble than the redemption of humanity: God wishes to be loved by a created being that can love him with all the perfection of which a created being is capable. Since this is the response given by Lawrence of Paris, Yves of Paris, and Bernardine of Paris—even though they do not claim to follow Scotus—it is appropriate to raise the question of Christian humanism, so as to grasp the importance of Bernardine's choice.

3. The perfection of love

Among the reasons in favor of the incarnation for the perfection of the universe, we have noted that of Albert the Great, whose influence endured in Rhineland circles. He assigns a role to the Neoplatonic theory of *exitus-reditus*, with the incarnate Word as intermediary on the ontological level, just as Eckhart would do to for the archetypes present in the highest part of the soul as the place where God and the soul are alike, where the eternal generation of the Word takes place. Bonaventure sensed the danger of these theories. He criticized the theory of the incarnation for the perfection of the universe because it included God in the universe and made the incarnation necessary for his perfection. Both reasons were contrary to the divine transcendance over creation. He likewise recognizes a considerable advantage in the theory of the incarnation for redemption, in that it is more in accord with the piety of faith. But we could also, in modern terms, appeal to the psychology of faith: humans are more efficaciously led to love God by the thought that he became incarnate out of merciful love,

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[41]Dominic J. Unger, "Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln (1235-1253), on the reasons for the Incarnation," in *Franciscan Studies* 16 (1956) 1-36: texts and doctrinal analysis; see *Bibliographia Franciscana* XI, n. 1513.

rather than to give the universe its ultimate degree of perfection.[42] By doing this, we would direct the reflection of theologians toward human psychology whose end is love, rather than the satisfaction of experiencing the ontological perfection of human nature and the universe. In his treatment of charity, Bonaventure takes another step in this direction when replying to the question: "Does God love humankind more than he loves Christ?" It is objected that, if Christ became incarnate to save humankind, and if he assumed an individual human nature in order to save human nature, he is ordained to humankind as the means to the end. Bonaventure replies: "With regard to Christ's incarnation and birth, humankind was not the *ratio finaliter movens*, but only *quodam modo inducens*. Christ was not ordained to us as end, but we are ordained to him as end, because the head does not exist for the members but the members for the head. The *ratio inducens* for the incarnation is to be the remedy for sin."[43]

This raised the question of the reason for the ordination of humankind to Christ as final cause. Was it the perfection of the universe in which human beings share, or the perfection or excellence of Christ in himself and in what he communicates to human beings? There are two questions: Why is Christ willed by God, and why are human beings willed? In seeking to answer these questions, Scotus finds the principal reason for the incarnation, our end as human beings and our relationship to Christ. It is the perfection of the love with which God loves himself and wishes to communicate to Christ and to human beings as members of his mystical body. By the same token, we see that God's love for Christ and human beings, through the mediation of Christ as principal and determining cause, is perfectly compatible with the (accidental and contingent, as it were) circumstance of the incarnation for the redemption of humankind. As Scotus will say, it is the secondary cause, or as Bonaventure said, the *ratio inducens*. The different conclusion these doctors draw regarding the consequences of this circumstance—sin and the need for redemption—depends on their view as to whether these two views can be harmonized. Bonaventure envisioned only the two opposing opinions, namely the perfection of the universe and the remedy for sin, not the Scotist view of the final cause, which is the excellence of God's love, either without or in spite of sin. For Scotus, such a great good cannot be *occasionatum*, that is, fortuitous or conditioned by a lesser good.[44]

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[42]See above, notes 37-39.

[43]Saint Bonaventure, loc. cit. d. 22, a. un. q. 5, ad 3 (706).

[44]John Duns Scotus, III *Sent.* d. 7, q. 3, in *Opera omnia* (ed. Vivès 1894) XIV, 348, 355.

Before going further in our analysis of the reason for the incarnation according to Duns Scotus, let us take note of these two approaches to the question. One, which is proper to theologians, starts quite naturally from the knowledge of God and human beings that comes from revelation; the other starts from an analysis of human experience and the pursuit of its end. This twofold approach is used by those theologians of whom Saint Bonaventure speaks, but without worrying about the different demands of the natural order, the order of grace, and the order of glory or the beatific vision. This explains Saint Bonaventure's reservations and criticisms. We see the same thing in our Capuchins Lawrence of Paris and Yves of Paris. And this explains the difficulties of Julien-Eymard d'Angers. Lawrence of Paris raises the question of the end of human beings on the level of Scripture, and explains God's initial and eternal plan through Christ, placing himself on the level of the redemption and our supernatural end. He is speaking to pious Christians and starts from Scripture. Yves of Paris firmly places himself on the level of experience and thinks he can see in human experience a natural tendency to love God above all and a natural desire to see God. As a theologian, he is bound to the current opinion that this natural love of God and this natural desire cannot be realized without supernatural help. Thus there is a gap, a lack of coherent connection between natural tendencies and purely supernatural realizations. Julien-Eymard appeals to Lawrence's Platonism and the unity of the work of the Creator, who makes the natural and supernatural analogous, passing smoothly from one to the other, so that the remedy occurs precisely where it is needed.[45]

Is this a bit too simple? Is it not an unwarranted leap, using a so-called natural desire for union with God and eternal beatitude in body and soul to prove the need for the incarnation as a means to satisfy this desire, thus provoking Saint Bonaventure's criticism? Is it not also to fall again into the ambiguities of Harphius, Ruusbroec, Eckhart and Benet Canfield? This leads us to wonder what is the origin and Franciscan character of these doctrines on the end of human beings, according to both philosophers and theologians: Lawrence of Paris, Yves of Paris, not to mention Saint Francis de Sales himself, whom at first reading we would spontaneously be inclined to interpret in a Scotist key, by which I mean as expressing the Scotist doctrine of the incarnation and the natural love of God, as historians like to do. Just because we find ourselves in the presence of a doctrine that concludes that Christ would have become incarnate even if humankind had no need of redemption, we cannot say that is it a vague memory of Scotus

[45]See Julien-Eymard's explanation above, notes 21-25.

widespread in the theology of the time. It could well be the influence of the older opinion described and opposed by Saint Bonaventure.

Thus, in his doctrine of pure love of God as our supernatural end, Lawrence of Paris never mentions Scotus's name, but there is an almost perfect identity with Scotus's doctrine. He expressly mentions Saint Augustine and Saint Bernard, but it seems he was never explicitly taught the theology of Duns Scotus. If he knew the Scotist doctrine, why would he have hidden the fact, seeing that the Scotist school enjoyed immense credibility in the rest of the Franciscan Order?[46] Or perhaps it was only a pseudo-Scotism that merged into one the doctrine of the incarnation for the perfection of human nature and Scotus's doctrine on the incarnation of Christ as the first of those predestined to the love of God, with humans as members of his mystical body, thus merging a Platonic doctrine with the Johannine doctrine of Duns Scotus.

The same question arises for the doctrines of the natural tendency to love God and the natural desire for the beatific vision. If these doctrines are of Scotist origin in Francis de Sales, Lawrence of Paris and Yves of Paris, how can they coexist with opinions of Augustinian origin on the consequences of original sin and natural desires for the beatific vision? The Subtle Doctor has specific teachings on all these points, and they correct those that were common at the time among Augustinian or Aristotelian theologians.

Whatever the case may be regarding these historical questions, we are surprised to read in the first pages of *The Spirit of Saint Francis* explicit statements by Bernardine of Paris on the eternal decrees of the Trinity to create on earth a new world, whose masterwork is the incarnate Word and whose saints are the members of his mystical body. And since this order includes the foreknowledge of sin and redemption, Francis is immediately included in it as the copy of the Word and Redeemer in all the stages of the formation of his spirit according to that of Christ. Bernardine does not draw from this the consequences regarding the possibility of an incarnation without sin, because that is of no interest for his description of the formation of Francis's spirit, on the level of salvation history. Like Bonaventure, he leaves it to the Word himself to know what could have been God's decree had he not foreseen the sin of Adam or the angels.

Obviously this is not the place to explain Scotus's doctrine of the reasons for the incarnation and the end of humankind for its own sake, but

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[46]See C. Bérubé, "Les Capucins à l'école de saint Bonaventure," in Id., *De la philosophie à la sagesse chez saint Bonaventure et Roger Bacon*, Rome: Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 1976, 282-337.

only insofar as it is important to show what I think is the radical difference between the moral and spiritual meaning of Scotus's Christocentrism and humanism, and that ontological-looking Christocentrism which is for the deification of human nature and the perfection of the universe. All the more so, since this is the point on which the champions of voluntarism and intellectualism—Duns Scotus and Eckhart—clash, historically and doctrinally, in Paris and in Cologne.[47]

We should note first that Scotus's doctrine on the predestination of Christ and humankind does not start from the philosophical notion of God as infinite being, but from the notion of God as being formally and essentially love, according to the well-known words of the apostle Saint John.[48] Starting from this notion, Scotus analyzes what he calls the moments or logical stages of God's decrees. As a being that is not only will and love, but also intellect, God proceeds in all in his wishes according to an order that Scotus describes as "most orderly" or "most rational." In other words, he sees in his infinite knowledge what he is in himself and what he can do outside himself, beginning with the end he wishes to attain, then the more immediate means ordained to attain this end, then the more remote means. In the face of these plans presented by the intellect as worthy of realization, the will chooses among ends and means and proceeds to carry them out. All this takes place in one and the same act, which is coeternal with God and the work of the three divine Persons, and in which the Trinity finds its eternal beatitude.

Scotus explains this divine process several times, first with regard to Christ, then his Mother, human beings, the universe. Depending on the question being considered, he brings out one or the other aspect. Specialists on the subject will even say that it is only in a particular text, among the many versions and *reportationes* of Scotus's works that have come down to us,

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[47]Scotus's stay in Cologne, where he died in 1308, is often explained by the concern of the Friars Minor to oppose the intellectualism of Eckhart, just as Louis Cognet, *Introduction aux mystiques rhéno-flamands*, Paris 1968, 11-49 (see *BF* XIII, n. 1251) explains Eckhart's return to Paris in 1311 to teach for a third time by the concern of the Friars Preacher to resist the influence of Scotus's voluntarism. No one knows for sure, and it is only more comical to want to see attributed to Duns Scotus a doctrine on the predestination of Christ clearly held by Eckhart and the exact opposite of Scotus's.

[48]For a serious study of the Scotist doctrine of the predestination of Christ, see, besides the articles mention above in note 40, the study by K.M. Bali, "Duns Skotus Lehre über Christi Prädestination im Lichte der neuesten Forschungen," in *Wissenschaft und Weisheit* 3 (1936) 19-35.

that we find his last word on the reasons for the incarnation.[49] For the sake of brevity, we cite only this famous text:

> First, God loves himself; in the second place, he loves himself in others, and this is pure love; in the third place, he wants to be loved by another who can love him to the highest degree, inasmuch as that is possible to a being outside himself; and fourthly, he foresees the union of that nature which ought to love him to the highest degree even if no one had fallen...and therefore, fifthly, God sees a mediator coming to suffer and redeem his people; and he would not have come as mediator to suffer and redeem if no one had first sinned, nor would the glorification of the flesh have been delayed if there were none to be redeemed, but the whole Christ would have been immediately glorified.[50]

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[49]For a profound study of the meaning of Scotus's doctrine for Franciscan spirituality, see C. Balić, "Duns Scot, Jean," in *Dictionnaire de Spirituatè* III, 1801-1818.

[50]Duns Scotus, *Opus Parisiense* III, d. 7, q. 4, according to the critical edition of C. Balić *Theologiae marianae elementa*, Sibenić 1933, 14f. – We should note that the Scotist theory of the predestination of Christ comes at the end of a long history. J.M. Bissen has shown its major stages. The best known is that of Robert Grosseteste, mentioned above. From the viewpoint of the precursors of a doctrine of God's love as source and object of this predestination, we note that Isaac of Nineveh, around the year 700, speaks of God's love for creation, "That the world might experience the love God had for creation," and Ramon Llull, around 1285, speaks again of the universe exalting: "That [the universe] might exalt in making human beings, for otherwise the universe could not have exalted" (J. Marie Bissen "La Tradition sur la Prédestination absolue de Jésus-Christ du VI[e] au IX[e] siècle," In *France Franciscaine* 22 [1939] 9-34). But no one succeeds in imagining that the first object of God's will is the love of Christ for God and the beatitude of Christ that results from it; an object that Duns Scotus calls, according to the formula that is proper to him, the "glory" of Christ. Because this "glory" is so great that it implies union with a divine person, God decrees the incarnation of the Word. We must be grateful to Father Deodat de Basly for strongly emphasizing this, and to Father L. Veuthey for reminding modern historians of it. It is possible, of course, to present the Scotist theory starting with the "glory of God" as the end of all God's works, and the "glory of Christ" as the means of ensuring the glory of God, using the *Summa Theologica* in a rather unexpected way and seeming to forget that, for Aquinas, this glorification of God consists essentially in the knowledge and worship of God. But to do this is to be vague about the most characteristic element of Scotus's thought, from the viewpoint of history, and the most important expression of the primacy of love, in God and in Franciscan spirituality. It is to lose sight of the cosmic orientation of the theories of the incarnation criticized by Saint Bonaventure, which led him to place in the forefront the manifestation of God's love for humankind in the Redemption, and not in the fulfillment of creation. According to Duns Scotus, the masterwork of all creation is the ability of Christ and humans to love God and find their perfection and happiness in that love. For further information, see, besides the

Following the same logic, Bernardine of Paris, after saying that God wills first the incarnate Word as the new masterwork, can add the predestination of the saints as members of his mystical body, and Francis of Assisi, as foreseen and willed when Christ foresaw that, in the thirteenth century, the image of his passion would be forgotten by Christians. Although Bernardine was not familiar with Scotus, he was a Scotist without knowing it, which is the best way to be one! And it is in the same orderly progression that Bernardine extends this predestination of Christ and Francis to the sons of Most High Poverty.

In another text, Duns Scotus, starting from the same contemplation of God as Love, does not speak explicitly of Christ but of those predestined to the love of God. These are human beings. Then the supernatural means are willed. These are grace in this life and glory, or a special gift of God, in the beatific vision. Last of all comes the material world, ordained to serve humankind that it might reach this end, which is the love of God and the eternal happiness that results from it.[51]

This text has an important advantage for our study in that it explains what pure love is: disinterested, benevolent, without egoism or envy. It is essentially communicative to every intellectual nature capable of loving God with pure love and not merely out of self-interest, because it is the recipient of the divine benevolence in creation, redemption and eternal glory. But the only reason for this is that God is infinitely lovable in himself and wants others, by sharing in this pure love, to find the same happiness that the Trinity finds in itself.[52]

Here it is obviously a question of that supernatural love which proceeds from grace and merits the vision of God because of God's promise to the one who agrees to love in this way. But we also find in these same texts on supernatural love a quite exceptional teaching on the natural inclination to love God with pure love, simply because he is infinitely lovable, on the natural capacity to love God solely with our natural powers; still more, on the obligation proclaimed by the intellect, with all the clarity

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work of L Veuthey, *Jean Duns Scot*, Paris 1967, our note, "*Eros* et *Agape* chez Duns Scot," in *Laurentianum* 9 (1968) 439-49. On the incarnation even if Adam had not sinned, see Raymond de Courcerault, "Le motif de l'incarnation: Duns Scot et l'Ecole scotiste," in *Études Franciscaine* 28 (1912) 186-201, 313-31.

[51]John Duns Scotus, III *Sent.* d. 32, q. un. (ed. Vivès) XV, 433, which goes back to a doctrine explained at greater length in d. 28, q. un.

[52]For a magisterial commentary on Duns Scotus's texts on the virtue of charity, see F. Guimet, "Conformité à la raison droite et possibilité surnaturelle de la charité," in *De doctrina Ioannis Duns Scoti* III, 539-97.

of the first principle of all human activity, to love God in this way and him alone.[53]

Here we have an authentically Scotist doctrine, because Scotus maintains it against the Augustinian theologians, like Saint Bonaventure, who hold that original sin so clouded the natural capacities of the intellect and the will that no one in this life can love God with a pure love, except by the supernatural virtue of charity; and against the Aristotelian theologians, like Saint Thomas Aquinas, who hold that no being can naturally love another being more than itself, and that the supernatural virtue of charity causes us to love God as giver of grace and eternal life. Scotus considers this to be an imperfect love.[54]

But for Scotus the excellence of the natural virtue of love of God in no way dims the splendor of the supernatural virtue of charity. Scotus teaches, here in agreement with all theologians, the need for the supernatural virtues of faith, hope and charity, which have the same object but with limits and degrees of perfection clarified in Scripture and the Fathers of the Church. These virtues greatly surpass the natural virtues because they reveal the inscrutable mysteries of God's power and infinite generosity. They are inaccessible to the intellect and to the very aspirations of every created nature.

We see then that Duns Scotus's theological optimism on the love of God in keeping with the natural powers of a human being, even a sinner, surpasses the timid overtures of the most determined Christian humanists such as Saint Francis de Sales and Yves of Paris. It overcomes the apparent contradiction of admitting a natural tendency to love God that would be naturally inefficacious. But we also suspect that he will be much more rigorous and careful in affirming natural desires for supernatural goods, especially the vision of God, which is the ultimate sharing in divine life in a manner that surpasses anything a finite mind can imagine.

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[53]John Duns Scotus, loc.cit., d. 27, q. un.: 367. We limit ourselves to this basic text: "Natural reason shows to the intellectual nature that there is something to be loved above all, because in all actions and objects essentially ordered, there is something supreme, and thus some highest love, and thus the highest object lovable; but natural reason does not show that there is anything that must be loved by infinite goodness...; therefore, it dictates only the highest infinite good is to be loved above all, and consequently, the will can do this with purely natural powers; for the intellect cannot rightly dictate anything, toward which what is dictated the natural will cannot naturally strive; otherwise the will would be by nature evil, or at least not free to strive for whatever it wishes, according to that aspect of good, according to what is shown to it by the intellect."

[54]Ibid. 354-66.

The *Prologue* to Scotus's *Commentary on the Sentences* is a veritable summary of his theology. We need only read the first words to see that, on the question of the supernatural need for a revealed science, for supernatural habits, for the very existence of the supernatural, Scotus has fully merited his title Subtle Doctor, in his dialogue with philosophers, on the one hand, and theologians on the other. From the first line, the natural capacity of the human intellect and will to come naturally to the vision of God is upheld by philosophers in the name of Avicenna's theory of being as the object of the intellect. Scotus here takes a very clear position, which can be expressed in the following propositions. On the one hand, natural reason cannot prove that the supernatural is necessary for human beings, nor that it is in fact given, nor that the vision of God is fitting for human nature, nor that the desires for it—which some claim to have—are anything but the work of the imagination. On the other hand, the followers of Avicenna who extend the receptive capacities of the human intellect to include the vision of God are theologians without knowing it, for Avicenna is speaking here as a Muslim theologian who admits by his faith that we are promised the vision of God, and concludes from this that it is possible for the intellect to receive it. Scotus also teaches a natural desire for the vision of God in order to express this receptive capacity in every intellectual nature. Inferior natures are incapable of it and philosophers do not have a deep enough knowledge of intellectual nature to understand it.[55]

In the same way, theologians should conclude from the fact of the hypostatic union that human nature is able to receive this union. They can therefore speculate that other modes of union with the divine Persons are possible through supernatural helps that we call graces, infused virtues, gifts of the Holy Spirit, etc. They cannot know naturally its possibility or nature. Starting from the union of the Word with human nature, Scotus always carefully explains that its subject is the soul of Christ and the human individual assumed in a personal union. It is not a union with human nature in general. Thus we cannot conclude from this that human nature as such—and thus all human beings, beings inferior to us, and the cosmos itself—receives through the incarnation an ontological perfection it would not have

[55]Since I have dealt with this subject on various occasions from different angles, here I refer readers who wish more information on this basic theme of all Christian humanism to these works: C. Bérubé, "Jean Duns Scot, critique de l'Avicennisme augustinisant," in *De doctrina Ioannis Duns Scotu* I, 207-43; Id., "De l'être à Dieu chez Jean Duns Scot," in *Regnum Hominis et regnum Dei. Acta Scholastico-Scotistica* VI, Rome 1978, 47-70. The articles and various others that appeared in different journals have been republished in a work entitled: *De l'homme à Dieu selon Duns Scot, Henri de Gand et Olivi*, following upon: *De la philosophie à la sagesse* (see note 46).

had without the incarnation. Nor is it legitimate to start from Saint Bonaventure's theology on illumination—which he expressly regards as an object of faith included in faith in the divine exemplarism appropriate to the Word—and argue from it to a theory of union with God that identifies the soul with the divine nature, as Eckhart does, nor to union with the divine essence through union with the will of God (because it is identical with his essence), as Benet of Canfield does in certain texts where he compares this very union with the hypostatic union itself.[56] In so doing, as Optatus van Asseldonk explains, he unconsciously passes from the realm of psychological experience to the realm of ontology. In the former case, the soul is so strongly influenced by God's activity in it that it seems to forget itself, just as in the presence of a work of art the mind is totally distracted from itself and "abstracted" from all that surrounds it, lost as it were in the object of its admiration.[57]

To be sure, Duns Scotus is well known for his methodical optimism concerning every noble nature, to the point that he attributes to it every perfection compatible with it, unless contrary to reason or Scripture. But he is also known for his voluntarism, that is, his conviction that it is in the acts of the will, and thus in love, that we human beings find our greatest perfection. He is consistent with himself in affirming that the first commandment of the natural law, as of the Christian life, is love of God. Love is the end of human beings, and it is in love that we find the total fulfillment of our entire being. Christian faith, with its teaching that God is love and that he finds his essential beatitude in love, suggested to Scotus that pure love of God, because he is by nature infinite goodness, is the origin of that which the Trinity wished to accomplish in the incarnation of the Word and in the creation of human beings as members of the mystical body of Christ. God did not will, through the incarnation, to bring the world to the

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[56]We cite only this typical text from the *Exercice composé par le R.P. Benoit capucin*, chapter II: "Thus the will that was only divine becomes, after its union with ours, divine and human, and just as that man could say, 'I am God," so this will of the man can say, 'I am the will of God.' Since God became man, man became God. Similarly, since the will of God is that of man, the will of man is also that of God...but as the humanity is illumined, exalted, magnified, glorified and deified by the divinity, so is man's will by that of God,...their spirit being no longer human, but glorified and magnified in God and made one and the same thing with him" (critical ed. J. Orcibal, *Benoît Canfield*, 51). Placed in the general context of the theory of the nothingness of creatures and the All of God as well as the theory of annihilation, such texts are ambiguous.

[57]See Optatus van Asseldonk of Veghel, *Benoit de Canfield*, 316 note 1, and 293. For the relationship with Eckhart, see J. Orcibal, ibid. 383 note 27, where the parallel is also drawn between Lawrence of Paris and Benet.

summit of its ontological perfection, but rather to communicate to other beings his moral perfection, of which love is the symbol. God's greatest act was not the creation of the physical world, the incarnate Word included, but his having desired the love of the incarnate Word and that of human beings: *Vult alios condiligentes se.*

Bernardine of Paris understood this profoundly when, at the beginning of *The Spirit of Saint Francis*, he wrote: "Although God does not need to emerge from his incomprehensible solitude, he wishes to produce outside himself a shadow of his being, an image of his life and, what is most excellent, an expression of his love and a manifestation of his holiness."[58] That is why the litany of the perfections of Francis that opens Bernardine's work reaches its peak in "the greatest miracle of love...formed from the Holy Spirit in the furnace of his love."[59] This furnace is the furnace of Calvary and that of LaVerna, where Francis becomes the copy of Christ crucified in order to renew his memory among Christians at a time when it seemed lost.

But Bernardine could just as well have found this idea emphatically expressed in *The Rule of Perfection* III, 16, precisely in that part which Orcibal finds too contrary to the basic orientation of *The Rule of Perfection* to have been written by Benet.[60] These texts that cause problems, but go back to Canfield, vigorously express the same thesis as *The Spirit of Saint Francis.* They follow some fifteen references to Franciscan works to prove that "our Seraphic Father Saint Francis seems in any case never to have contemplated anything but the cross and passion of our Lord."[61]

> These examples, as well as those of several other saints, ought to serve for all in general, but that of Saint Francis even more especially for us Capuchins and other Friars Minor, seeing that he is our father and patriarch, and the "the children of Abraham should do the works of Abraham" (Jn 8) and religious follow the spirit of their patron; seeing also that he was our captain, and that his soldiers ought to wear his unform and bear his arms; seeing also that he was given us as model and patron; and, finally, that God told him that these arms of the cross were not only for him, but also for those who follow him by profession. This was one of the six reasons why our Lord brought this religion into the world as he revealed to our Father; namely, so that through their deep contemplation, life, example, preaching and other virtues, his followers might become

[58]Bernardine of Paris, *The Spirit*, 4.

[59]Ibid. pp. xiii-xiv.

[60]J. Orcibal, *Benoît de Canfield*, 36-38 (introduction).

[61]Ibid. 434.

> mirrors, or better, portraits and epitaphs of the death and most bitter passion of our Savior Jesus Christ, which before the saint's conversion was almost forgotten.[62]

We are inclined to believe that such statements are foreign to the primary inspiration of *The Rule of Perfection*. This seems to be confirmed by the minor corrections introduced into the final revision of the other texts, to bring them into harmony with the original texts or at least minimize the differences. If this is true, then we have here a Bernardine of Paris opting for Chapters XVI-XX of *The Rule of Perfection* and rejecting the general method of the other parties, namely the Nordic, Rhino-Flemish, "abstract" spirituality in order to return to the "first spirit of Saint Francis" as the proper source of the spirituality of the "children of Saint Francis" and as a means to preserve and fulfill in the Church the function assigned them by Providence.

And this leads us to ask one last question: Who suggested to Bernardine this perspective which, compared to that of his predecessors, seems so original? We might well imagine that he found it quite simply by reading the *Major Legend* of Saint Bonaventure and the *Book of Conformities* of Bartholomew of Pisa. Both were highly recommended by the Capuchin Constitutions of 1536,[63] to which Bernardine refers from time to time. But we are inclined to think that he found the formal suggestion for this in two sources. The first is the Bull of Canonization of Saint Francis, *Miranda circa nos divinae pietatis dilectio*, which Bernardine cites in his *Preface* with the Prologue of Saint Bonaventure's *Major Legend*:

> Thus, at a time when iniquity was abounding and had reached its height; when love, as if dead, seemed completely extinguished in people's eyes, the power of his right hand raised up Francis, his servant, one after his own heart, and lifted him up over his Church like a shining sun, to lead the humble by the light of his example in the way of grace, to draw the wicked from the path of iniquity, and to confound the cowardly should they refuse to follow him.[64]

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[62]Ibid. 436.

[63]On the importance of the *Book of Conformities* for the first Capuchins see, O. Schmucki, "De loco sancti Francisci Assisiensis in Constitutionibus Ordinis Fratrum Capuccinorum anni 1536," in *Collectanea Franciscana* 48 (1978) 249-310, and F.A. Catalano – C. Cargnoni – G. Santarelli *Le prime Costituzioni dei Frati Minori Cappuccini, Roma – S. Eufemia 1536, in lingua moderna con note storiche ed edizione critica*, Rome 1982, passim.

[64]Bernardine of Paris, *L'Esprit*, pp. xx-xxi; cit. p. xxi.

But if we have here what we might we call, in the language of Saint Bonaventure, the *ratio finalis* that moves Bernardine to this radical choice, we still must search for the secondary *ratio inducens* that disposed him to that choice. We think we must agree with our Capuchin expert, Optatus van Asseldonk, who sees here the joint influence of the Franciscan tradition and the new Berullian spirituality. Let us read this authoritative testimony, the only one about Bernardine of Paris we know: "In the richness of the Franciscan and Berullian tradition, Bernardine represents the flowering and the sanctity of the love of God in union with the crucified and eucharistic Christ the High Priest and his Mother. Saint Francis is the perfect model of this... In *The Spirit of Saint Francis*, Bernardine is one of the first and best modern interpreters of the spirituality of the founder. He is worthy of study."[65]

We have begun this study and think it deserves to be continued, taking into account the suggestions we are making to place Bernardine back into the general context of Franciscan spirituality, beyond Benet Canfield and Lawrence of Paris, and emphasizing the importance of poverty as the school of renunciation and love.

[65]Cfr. *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, V, 1378f.