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**“It Pleases Me  
That You Should Teach  
Sacred Theology”  
Franciscans Doing Theology<sup>1</sup>**

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Since the promulgation of the Code of Canon Law in 1983, Franciscans have been struggling to define and describe their life in the church with more appropriate categories than the Code allows. Franciscans realize that they are neither monastic nor apostolic and claim for themselves the description “evangelical.” The rediscovery and description of the evangelical form of life has emerged from a serious, systematic reflection on the experience of Franciscan living in the light of the early sources which give shape, meaning, and direction to the Franciscan movement. These early Franciscan texts, used as a point of reflection, include the writings and hagiographical texts of Francis and Clare, but also include the writings of the great theologians of the Order, especially Bonaventure and John Duns Scotus. In fact, one could argue that it is the explicitly theological resources of the tradition that provided the context for rediscovering the evangelical character of Franciscan life. This was the direction taken by Joseph Chinnici in his seminal paper “Evangelical and Apostolic Tensions.”<sup>2</sup>

However, there is a reluctance to engage the philosophical and theological resources of the tradition in discussing the charism in the contemporary situation. The contemporary focus on ministry tends to dissociate being and doing from thinking, and there is a reluctance to associate “doing” with “theology.” It seems that we have dichotomized (or we have inherited the dichotomy) what for Francis and Clare and the founding Franciscan generations was an integral experience of Christian living.

It is also interesting to note that the “thinking” about theology, or the *sacra pagina* as the monks put it, has been connected to the charism of monastic life, with its own emphasis on *lectio divina* and *contemplatio* as the way to God, while the “doing” of ministry and life has been connected to the charism of apostolic life. The renewal of Franciscan life has bounced back and forth between the realities of contemplation and ministry or fraternal life. There is a tendency to theorize about the reality of contemplation, ministry, and fraternal life in a manner that dichotomizes life as a result, almost by definition. We are just beginning to discover the real implications of our own life as evangelical, not as a hybrid of monastery and pulpit and classroom, but as the life of imitation, of following Christ’s footprints in the real world which show the way to the Kingdom of God. In other words, the evangelical life is an integrated life of contemplative action in the model of Francis and Clare, a life which is theological by definition.

<sup>1</sup>This paper was given at The National Franciscan Forum: *Franciscans Doing Theology*, June 10–15, 1997 in Colorado Spring, Co. and sponsored by The Franciscan Institute of St. Bonaventure University.

<sup>2</sup>Published in the Proceedings: *Our Franciscan Charism Today* (New Jersey: FAME, 1987).

The rediscovery of the evangelical life after many years of renewal and retrieval, has brought us to the threshold of the rediscovery of the Franciscan theological tradition. Chinnici aptly describes this threshold in the following way:

The evangelical religious life means witness—witness as a Roman Catholic to the good Gospel of Jesus Christ. It means taking seriously and publicly naming the fact that God, who encompasses all things, is the personal heart of the evangelical life and the goal of our desires. It means talking about this search for God, a community of three in one, whose Word became flesh in the womb of a woman, and giving it a social language which communicates to people WHO OUR GOD IS AND WHO WE ARE.<sup>3</sup>

This is what Franciscan Theology is—it is about the “search for God” with a social language that speaks to people in our world.

But it has taken Franciscans some time to articulate this self-understanding and perhaps the reason that the church had not included the category of evangelical life in the new code (even though it appeared in previous draft texts) was that over the centuries Franciscans had forgotten their own evangelical theology—had forgotten how to speak about their experience of God and the world. While the church might be blamed for not recognizing the evangelical character of Franciscan life, in fact, Franciscans have failed to recognize the theological tradition which has named their experience. Perhaps, if we had practiced a vibrant Franciscan evangelical theology, if our own theology had not remained simply a story from the past or simply a list of unrecognized names, we would not have had to demonstrate who we are to ourselves or to the church. At least one aspect of the problem we have with our Franciscan identity, with our Franciscan role in the church, with our Franciscan structures of government, etc., flows from the fact that while we might be able “to think” theologically, and “to do” fraternally and ministerially, we are resistant to “doing theology” as an integral aspect of Franciscan life—integral to life in brotherhood and sisterhood and the life of following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, and responding to the needs of men and women in the world.

What I would like to do in this paper is to reflect on how the Franciscan doing of theology is integral to Franciscan life. First, I will reflect on the origins and nature of Franciscan Evangelical theology. Second, I would like to glance at a significant moment in history and the corresponding Franciscan theological response. Finally, there follows some reflections on the present historical moment in North America and the challenges this presents for our doing theology as Franciscans.

## I THE ORIGINS AND NATURE OF FRANCISCAN EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

While the attitude of Francis toward learning is multivalent, and while the early sources contain a variety of situations in which Francis is pictured as speaking his mind on the issue, I would like to begin with the figure of St. Anthony of Padua, the first “lector” of theology within the Franciscan Order. We have listed among the authentic writings of Francis a letter

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<sup>3</sup>Joseph Chinnici, “The Prophetic Heart: The Evangelical Form of Religious Life in the United States,” *The Cord* (November 1994): 297-298.

to Anthony which expresses Francis' support for Anthony's ministry of teaching theology to the brothers, with the provision that it too, like all other ministry or work of the brothers, be subject to the prescription of the Rule X:8-9, that it "not extinguish the Spirit of prayer and devotion."<sup>4</sup> It is significant that by the year 1232, the year of the publication of the *Legenda assidua*, celebrating the life of the recently canonized Anthony, that there is no mention of this famous letter of Francis to Anthony, nor is there any mention of the appearance of Francis at the chapter meeting at Arles while Anthony was preaching on the theme of the cross.<sup>5</sup> The *Assidua* presents an interesting portrait of Anthony, not the miracle worker of popular devotion (in fact, no miracles are recorded during Anthony's own life), but Anthony the preacher and teacher, the effective remedy to heretical inroads into orthodoxy and orthopraxis, Anthony the "Ark of Covenant," the name given him by Gregory IX in response to a sermon preached to the Papal Curia. The basic assumption of the *Legenda assidua* is that Anthony was simply doing what every Friar Minor was doing, albeit in a unique and outstanding manner. For the author of this text, Franciscan life was understood as the public, official, effective, learned, and exemplary proclamation of the Gospel in a manner adapted to the specific audience gathered, the time, the place, and the occasion. Thus, Francis' permission to do what Anthony was doing as contained in that letter was not germane to Anthony's story, as the figure and the practice of Anthony presented in the text was simultaneously defining the life of the Friar Minor. And, if you look at the sermon collections which Anthony authored, we are far from the style of preaching which we tend to associate with Francis and the early companions. Anthony is an important figure for understanding the origins and nature of Franciscan life—he is a first generation Franciscan, and represents another model of Franciscan life.

Zachary Hayes demonstrated how the Franciscan theological tradition has developed the spiritual insights of Francis and Clare.<sup>6</sup> He has suggested that the Franciscan tradition is based on both the religious experience of Francis and Clare, and the reflection on that religious experience by the theologians of the order. In other words, the basic religious intuitions of Francis and Clare provide the "thread" or "backbone" for Franciscan theology. One could say that the Franciscan form of evangelical life is ultimately concerned with "doing theology." The Franciscan Evangelical form of life implies more than simply an activity of imitating an example, as powerful as that itself might be in the founder and foundress, but of doing what Francis and Clare did not only with their heart and hands, but also with their heads.

If we look closely and carefully at the origins of the tradition, you will notice that Anthony was not an innovator in this regard. A few years prior to the *Assidua* another text appeared which is germane to this discussion, and it speaks to the issue of the nature of the Franciscan theological tradition. The author of this text, the first "published" Franciscan theologian to do theology explicitly in this Franciscan manner, was Thomas of Celano and the text is his *Vita prima*, appearing towards 1230. Celano's First Life of Francis is a

<sup>4</sup>The questions which this letter has raised historically are not critical to our discussion, however, the manuscript tradition for the letter begins only in 1342, and the text is transmitted only among the collections which deal with Anthony, not Francis.

<sup>5</sup>The *Vita prima* of Celano records the fact of Francis' appearance at Arles, during the chapter of the friars at the point where Anthony preached on the cross. The author of the *Legenda assidua* knew the text of Celano, so the *Assidua's* silence on this event is significant.

<sup>6</sup>See among other articles of Zachary Hayes, "Christ, Word of God and Exemplar of Humanity," *The Cord* 46 (1996): 3-17.

theological masterpiece in the genre of hagiography. Commissioned by Gregory IX to write Francis' story as the means of promulgating Francis' cult throughout the church, Celano approached his task as a theologian. A learned, well-educated cleric, Celano inserted Francis in the history of salvation via hagiographical convention (he pictured Francis as a saint like Benedict, Antony of Egypt, Augustine, etc.), while at the same time preserving the fundamental intuitions of Francis which described the particularities of the Franciscan worldview. Celano accomplished this in a number of different ways, but here I will focus on what I consider to be Celano's two basic insights into the Franciscan charism. First, Celano suggests that the Franciscan worldview is composed of three basic intuitions having to do with a) the Christian's relationship to the world, b) the meaning of the human Christ, and c) the nature of the human person. The second fundamental theological insight of Celano has to do with the implications of this Franciscan worldview for the Franciscan Evangelical form of life.

### The Franciscan Worldview

Subsequent to Francis' renunciation of his patrimony, Celano portrays Francis as the "Herald of the Great King," beat up by brigands, thrown into a ditch, but happy nonetheless. After the initial enthusiasm of conversion, Francis suddenly realizes that he has to decide what comes next—he has no plan yet. So he goes to a monastery where he works in the kitchen, but ultimately he is forced to leave the monastery because "He could not even get an old garment," so, the text continues, "He left the place, not moved by anger, but forced by necessity." In other words, the monastery did not provide for his most basic needs, so "he went to the city of Gubbio, where he obtained a small tunic from a certain man who once had been his friend" (1 Celano 16). Is Celano recording history here? Perhaps he articulates a vague memory of the *iter* of Francis' conversion which took him to Gubbio. For Celano, Francis' insight here was that while the monastery, an institution of the church, did not supply his needs, his basic human needs were supplied by an old friend, an institution of the world, if you will. This fundamental intuition that the world is good, and that the world does provide for authentic human needs, will provide the basis for experiencing poverty as abundance as the young brotherhood returning from Rome to Assisi after the approval of their rule comes to acknowledge (the desert in Orte and the provision of bread by a man; 1 Celano 34). In a sense, Celano here provides a theological commentary on a teaching of St. Francis in Admonition XVI:

"Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God" (Mt 5:8). The truly pure of heart are those who look down upon the things of earth and seek the things of heaven, and who never cease to adore and behold the Lord God living and true with a pure heart and soul.<sup>7</sup>

First, notice the lack of dichotomy between God and the world expressed here by Francis—a recurring theme in Celano—the world is good! Using the categories of David Tracy, one might describe this Franciscan insight in terms of a theology of manifestation—creation shows forth the abundance of the good God.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup>This is a modified translation of that of Regis Armstrong in *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist, 1982), 32, who translated *despicere* more literally as "despise."

<sup>8</sup>Consult David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (NY: Crossroad, 1981): 376-385.

This experience leads to a second Franciscan insight into the meaning of the human Christ. Celano develops Francis' relation to the good world of creation in terms of his manner of "reading" Christ in creation—creation manifests Christ—culminating at the end of Book I with the celebration of Greccio, revealing that what Francis had seen all along as he "looked down on the things of the earth," was "the image of him who made himself poor for us in the world" (1 Celano 76). Flowers, lambs, worms, and poor men and women, and lepers and people who suffer, are all recognized in Christ at Greccio, where Francis wanted to do something that "would recall to memory the little Child who was born in Bethlehem and set before our bodily eyes in some way the inconveniences of his infant needs, how he lay in a manger, how, with an ox and an ass standing by, he lay upon the hay where he had been placed" (1 Celano 84). Celano's description of the event—how the human Christ "lays upon the hay where he has been placed"—is not simply a pious and devotional reflection on the incarnation. Placed here by Celano at the end of Book I, it is a significant theological statement about the meaning of the incarnation—Christ's place is the world; to look at Christ is to affirm the goodness of the world and to see ourselves in Christ's place, that is, in the world. In a very inchoate manner, the dynamic direction of thought in Celano's text moves to the suggestion that the meaning of the world, and hence of the human person, is revealed and is made manifest in Christ.

A third intuition appears in the mystery of the Stigmata described in Book II, where Celano attempts to suggest that in Francis' vision of the crucified seraph something important about the meaning of the human person is revealed. Less self-consciously Christological than subsequent descriptions of the event, Celano talks about "a man standing above him, like a seraph with six wings, his hands extended and his feet joined together and fixed to a cross" (1 Celano 94). Celano comments about the "kind and gracious look with which he saw himself regarded" while at the same time "the sharpness of his suffering filled Francis with fear" because the seraph was fixed to a cross. The paradox of the gracious look of the suffering man expresses a profound insight into his own human experience that Francis becomes aware of at that moment. The last years of Francis' life were filled with suffering, physical, psychological, and spiritual—Celano remarks that at the end of his life "the doctors were amazed, the brothers astonished, that his soul could live in flesh so dead" (1 Celano 107). Celano attempts to express here an insight into the mystery of the human person as that becomes available to him in Francis' experience—the human person is fragile flesh that carries within the body the dying of Jesus. Authentic humanness is revealed in Jesus Christ and thus, the human person, like Jesus Christ, is fragile, limited, and vulnerable. These three intuitions concerning the world, Jesus Christ, and the human person—these are the axes around which Celano tells his story of Francis, and with which he presents a synthesis of Franciscan evangelical theology.

### Implications for the Franciscan Form of Evangelical Life

What is the significance of these intuitions for Celano's story? This lies in the theology which is given shape in the life patterns of Francis and his brothers. This is the second important insight of Celano: theological intuitions give shape to life. The implications of these theological intuitions are thus described by Celano in terms of the development of the praxis of Francis' life. If you follow the development of Books I and II of the *Vita prima*, you

can recognize a dynamic progress within the life of Francis: Francis' conversion (#1-22, culminating in Francis' hearing the Word), leads him to action and presence in the world (#23-70), which serves as the location for his life of contemplation (#71-87, where Francis sees Christ in creation, culminating in Greccio), and which leads ultimately to Francis' transformation in the Stigmata (#88-118), through which the dynamic begins again.<sup>9</sup> What Celano has done here is to describe the Franciscan *forma vitae*—one moves from conversion into action and contemplation through which one is transformed. The integration of these dynamics is centered in the human person in the world and focused on the human person of Jesus Christ.

It is important to underline and emphasize here the shift in the patterning of the spiritual life which results from the theological intuitions of Celano. The traditional understanding of progress in the spiritual life had been described in the typical monastic pattern of reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. Guigo II, the Carthusian summarized this in his text *The Ladder of Monks*, which aptly synthesized the predominant Western Christian notion of the path of perfection. Climbing the ladder of Guigo, one must by definition climb up the ladder and be separated from the world—in fact, Guigo considered the world a distraction to Christian monastic progress.

In the twelfth and thirteenth century, this monastic ladder began to lose its meaning, given the changes in mentality and outlook in Western Europe, the fruit of the “renaissance” of the twelfth century which heralded the birth of a new worldview with its advances in learning: new social configurations began to emerge with the commune; there is a movement from static feudal structures to more mobile urban social organizations; this contributed in turn to the breakdown of aristocratic dynastic power centers which gave way to the emerging democracy of the cities; the new money based economy fosters travel and trade, etc. One can go on and cite the host of innovations in Western Europe.<sup>10</sup> All of these developments impacted on Christian experience. The evangelical reawakening, the name given to all these developments by M.-D. Chenu, trickled down to ordinary men and women, the non-specialist but sincere Christians eager for a greater participation in the promises of the gospel.<sup>11</sup> Francis and Clare arrive on the scene at the cusp of this dynamic century of development. Since the monastic pattern does not fit well, the life experience of Francis and Clare led to a new understanding of the Christian life, and a corresponding evangelical pattern of perfection which did not presume separation from the world as did the monastic model, but rather insertion into a world as mediator of God's presence and goodness.

The point to insist on here is that Celano's description of the Franciscan Evangelical Form of Life as practiced by Francis and Clare is understood by Celano to be the embodiment of a Franciscan Evangelical Theology. It is Celano's theology which serves the

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<sup>9</sup>At his death, Celano reports that Francis exhorted the brothers with these words: “Let us begin, brothers, to serve the Lord God, for up to now we have made little or no progress.” He did not consider that he had laid hold of his goal as yet, and persevering untiringly in his purpose of attaining holy *newness of life*, he hoped always to make a beginning. He wished to go back again to serve the lepers, to be held in contempt, as he once had been” (1 Celano 103).

<sup>10</sup>These developments in the twelfth century are chronicled and discussed in the essays contained in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, Robert L. Benson, Giles Constable, eds. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

<sup>11</sup>See the classic essays by M. D. Chenu, “Monks, Canons and Laymen in Search of the Apostolic Life,” and “The Evangelical Awakening,” in *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century*, selected, edited, and translated by Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968): 202-269.



understanding of the foundational intuitions and vision of Francis and Clare, and it is this theological “system” which provides a basis for the Franciscan *forma vitae*. Celano is doing theology as he tells the story of Francis.

Similar theological insights into the evangelical life of Francis emerge in the stories associated with the companions of Francis, especially in the *Assisi Compilation*.<sup>12</sup> A significant theological statement is made by the companions of Francis who attribute the following words to Francis on the night of his death:

We who were with St. Francis and have written these things about him bear witness that many times we have heard him say: ‘If I speak with the emperor I will implore him for the love of God and the intervention of my prayer to make a constitution and decree that no man should trap sister larks or do them any harm whatever; likewise that all podestas of cities and lords of towns and villages should be bound each year on Christmas day to compel men to scatter corn and other grain on the roads outside cities and town for the birds to have something to eat, especially sister larks, and other birds, on the day of such a festival. Out of reverence for the Son of God whom the blessed Virgin his mother laid that night in a manger between ox and asses, every man ought also that night to give a good meal to our bothers the oxen and asses. Similarly on Christmas day all the poor ought to be sated by the rich.’ For St. Francis had a greater regard for Christmas than for any other festival of the Lord, since although the Lord may work our salvation in his other festivals, yet, because He was born for us, as St. Francis used to say, it was His concern to save us. Therefore he wished that on that day every Christian should exult in the Lord for Love of Him who gave himself for us. Every man should with gladness be bountiful not only to the poor but also to animals and birds.<sup>13</sup>

If there were one text able to capture the heart and soul of Franciscan evangelical theology, it seems that this text comes closest to doing just that. To unpack this text is to do Franciscan Theology—Francis expresses his intuition concerning the Incarnation in a very concrete manner, connecting the mystery of incarnation with creation and salvation.

Given these suggestions concerning the development of the Franciscan theological tradition, one could approach the work of Bonaventure as the development of these Franciscan intuitions from the evangelical perspective of the good, while Scotus might be understood as developing this text theologically in terms of his approach to the incarnation as first in God’s intention, and the motive for creation. But here I would like to simply suggest what Bonaventure and Scotus do each in his own manner.

One of the insights of the companions expressed in this text cited above, has to do with their perception of Francis’ urging Christians to “exult in the Lord for love of Him who gave himself for us.” Francis’ writings are replete with praise and acknowledgement of God’s goodness—for Francis, God is simply “good.” No more needs to be said, but at the same time no more can be said about the nature of God. Bonaventure, in reflecting on the meaning of Francis in his own life as well as for the life of the Order, creates a *summa* of Franciscan theology with *The Soul’s Journey into God*. Throughout this entire journey to God,

<sup>12</sup>This text is referred to in a number of different ways and has been edited by numerous scholars. The most recent Latin edition of the sources gives it the title, *Compilatio Assisiensis*. Ed. Enrico Menestò & Stefano Brufani. *Fontes Franciscani* (Assisi: Edizioni Porziuncola, 1995): 1449ff. Even more complicated is the history of its interpretation, and the interpretation of its origins. I would hold that the text represents a primitive version of that body of material which was produced in response to Crescentius of Jesi’s request for information about Francis from his companions in the Genoa chapter of 1244. Celano’s *Vita secunda* used these texts as a source.

<sup>13</sup>*Assisi Compilation*, 110; Brooke, 283.

Bonaventure is keenly interested in how we are able to experience God. The journey begins outside the human person in creation, returns to the human person, and mounts above in an attempt to speak about the nature of God, whose most perfect name is that of "Good." Bonaventure connects the sixth wing of the Seraph, or the sixth level of the journey focused on God as the good, with the gospel revelation of God as good. He states:

The first method fixes the gaze primarily and principally on Being itself, saying that God's primary name is He who is. The second method fixes the gaze on the Good itself, saying that this is God's primary name. The first looks chiefly to the Old Testament, which proclaims most of all the unity of the divine essence. Hence Moses was told: I am who am (Exodus 3:14). The second method looks to the New Testament which determines the plurality of Persons by baptizing in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19). Therefore, Christ our Teacher, wishing to raise to evangelical perfection the youth who had observed the Law, attributed to God principally and exclusively the name of goodness. For he says: No one is good but God alone (Mk 10:18; Lk 18:19). Damascene, therefore, following Moses, says that He who is is God's primary name; Dionysius, following Christ, says that the Good is God's primary name.<sup>14</sup>

The Evangelical name for God is Good. This naming of God as Good is attributed to Jesus himself in the context of the story of the rich young man—a gospel text which was important to Francis and used by him to articulate the meaning of Franciscan life.<sup>15</sup> Bonaventure's reflection on God as Good based on this gospel intuition will lead him to an approach to the Trinitarian processions and relations as expressive of self-diffusive goodness in an immanent way within God-self, and reaching outside of God and toward creation in terms of the union of "God and man in the unity of the Person of Christ" (*Itinerarium* VI:4; Cousins 106). In a litany of opposites, Bonaventure celebrates the goodness of God incarnate in Jesus:

Wonder that in him there is joined the First Principle with the last, God with man, who was formed on the sixth day; the eternal is joined with temporal man, born of the Virgin in the fullness of time, the most simple with the most composite, the most actual with the one who suffered supremely and died, the most powerful and immense with the lowly, the supreme and all-inclusive one with a composite individual distinct from others, that is, the man Jesus Christ.<sup>16</sup>

This text can be read as Bonaventure's articulation of the implications of the statement about Christmas attributed to Francis by his companions in the *Assisi Compilation*, "Because he was born, we knew we would be saved." Evangelical theology attempts to articulate an experience of God who is good, the first becoming the last, and in the experience of suffering and lowliness assumed in the flesh of the incarnate Jesus Christ, reveals the goodness of God and the world and human life. What a powerful theological image of God—kenotic goodness, enfleshed in humanness, God, the first principal becomes the last, humanity created on the sixth day. God bends down to creation, so that creation might know its own goodness as the goodness of God!

And it is not extremely difficult to move from this theology of Bonaventure to the Incarnational theology of John Duns Scotus. Scotus carries even further the reflections of

<sup>14</sup>*Itinerarium* V:2; Cousins 94-95.

<sup>15</sup>Note Francis' use of Luke's version of the story of the rich young man (Lk 18:18ff.) in the Early Rule I:2,5.

<sup>16</sup>*Itinerarium* VI:5; Cousins 107.

Bonventure. Beginning with the love of God, Scotus suggests that anything less than love is an inadequate means to explain God's action—human sin could never be the motive for God's acting. Thus, God creates so that Christ might become incarnate, as the embodiment of God's love in the created order. And thus, creation exists for the sake of the incarnation. And thus, the approach to ethics from the vantage point of the natural affection for justice, or the "harmony of goodness" in the words of Mary Beth Ingham.<sup>17</sup> And thus, the centrality of mutuality, reflecting the love of God, the principle for ordering the relation between the individual and the community. And, "thisness," or *haecceitas*, the uniqueness of an individual that cannot be comprehended or intuited apart from the common nature or community.

Scotus provides an even more penetrating reflection on the Franciscan charism—his theological insights lead us to a new appreciation of the intuitions of Francis and Clare, and thus lead us to a better understanding of the meaning of Franciscan Life. And because meaning is expressed in values, and values are revealed in behavior, there exists a direct connection and mutual relationship between Franciscan theology and the evangelical form of Franciscan life. The example of Francis and Clare is not sufficient in itself for living as Franciscans in our world today! Franciscan theology is essential to the Franciscan *forma vitae*.

## II

### THE FRANCISCAN THEOLOGICAL TRADITION THROUGH HISTORY

George Marcil, in his essay "The Franciscan School Through the Centuries," gives a schematic overview of the theologians of the Order from the time of Anthony of Padua up to today.<sup>18</sup> The writings of these friars creates a huge body of literature which would be impossible for any one person to master today. In fact, much of the writing of the theologians of the Order prior to the printing press still remains unedited and in manuscripts. When you consider that the works of such an important Franciscan like John Duns Scotus are still in the process of being edited—some of this work is going on now at the Franciscan Institute with the research staff publication of the philosophical works of Scotus—you can begin to imagine how vast a task yet remains simply to edit and make available even a small part of what exists but has not yet been studied.

A second important point needs to be made here. As Margaret Carney argued in her article, "Franciscan Women and the Theological Enterprise," women have been historically excluded from the theological enterprise. While this fact cannot be disputed, categories used to distinguish "theology" and "spirituality" sometimes distort more than they clarify. Spiritual writers, especially mystics from the tradition, are theologians. Today, there is a concerted effort taking place in the schools to recognize spiritual texts as theological texts, which can be used to retrieve the theology of the authors.<sup>19</sup> Lezlie Knox has suggested an interesting approach to the question of medieval women and the intellectual life by

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<sup>17</sup>*The Harmony of Goodness: Mutuality and Moral Living According to John Duns Scotus* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1996).

<sup>18</sup>Kenan Osborne, ed., *The History of Franciscan Theology* (Franciscan Institute, 1994), 311-330.

<sup>19</sup>See the article by J. Matthew Ashley, "The Turn to Spirituality? The Relationship between Theology and Spirituality," *Christian Spirituality Bulletin* 3:2 (1995): 13-18. A recent demonstration of a methodology which uses spirituality as a resource for theology can be found in Elizabeth A. Dreyer, "Spirituality as a Resource for Theology: The Holy Spirit in Augustine," *Christian Theology Bulletin* 4:2 (1996): 1-12, and the response by John C. Cavadini, "The Holy Spirit and Culture: A Response to Elizabeth Dreyer," *Christian Theology Bulletin* 4:2 (1996): 13-15.

commenting that “*Scientia* gave way to *sapientia* in communities of Franciscan women.”<sup>20</sup> While not school women, Franciscan women nonetheless did Franciscan theology. As I have tried to argue, there can be no Franciscan life without Franciscan theology. An important task which still remains before us in this area is to begin to study Clare of Assisi, Angela of Foligno, Catherine of Bologna, and other women as theologians.

A third point. While St. Anthony taught theology to the friars at Bologna, the Franciscan tradition of theology developed in a significant way at two European Universities. The Franciscan school at Paris was founded by Alexander of Hales (+1245) with his immediate collaborators John of La Rochelle (+1245), Odo Rigaldi (+1275), and William of Melitona (+1257/1260). It is this group of friars who are responsible for the *Summa Alexandri*. Eventually succeeding them as the head of the Paris school would be Bonaventure (+1274) and his disciples; Richard Rufus of Cornwall (+1260); Gilbert of Tournai (+1284); William de la Mare (+1298); Matthew of Aquasparta (+1302); John of Wales (+1302); and Richard of Middleton (+1308 c.). The Bonaventuran school of theology is strongly characterized by its Augustinian underpinnings, qualified of course by the spirit of St. Francis.

The English, or Oxford tradition of Franciscan theology can be said to be founded by Robert Grosseteste (+1253), not a Franciscan himself, but the first teacher of the Franciscans at Oxford. He was succeeded by Adam Marsh (+1259) and Thomas of York (+1260/70), the author of perhaps the first *Summa* of Aristotelian Metaphysics in the thirteenth century. Roger Bacon (+1292) represents the experimental, scientific thrust of this English school, strongly influenced from its inception by the works of Aristotle. William of Ware (+1300c.) and Roger Marston (+1303) continued this approach. In this English tradition arises the Aristotelian-Augustinian Franciscan philosophy and theology of John Duns Scotus (1266-1308).

The Scotistic school of Franciscan theology is formed from the reciprocal relationship between these two major doctors, Bonaventure and Scotus. Its first exponents were Peter Aureoli (+1322), William of Alnwick (+1333), and Francis of Meyrone (+1323). To be included in this school would be Nicholas of Lyre (+1349), an important Franciscan biblical scholar.

A third Franciscan school, the Ockhamist school, was introduced at Paris between 1325-1335. William of Ockham (+1347), considered to be the last principal thinker of Scholasticism (not always as a compliment), is characterized by logic and nominalism, exalts the divine omnipotence, human freedom, the empirical knowledge of all things and science above any ontologism. His most important followers were Richard Brinkley (+1370) and the diocesan priest Gabriel Biel (+1495). Thus, one can distinguish three schools of Franciscan theology: the Bonaventuran, the Scotist, and the Ockhamist.<sup>21</sup>

With the collapse of the scholastic synthesis in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, came the crisis of Western thought and the decline of human institutions—secular and sacred—which presaged the Reformation. Contributing to this breakdown on all levels were the Black Death (1348ff); papal schism (1378-1417); the ecclesiological discussions of the Council of Constance (1414-1418) and the Council of Basel (1431-33,

<sup>20</sup>Lezlie S. Knox, “Clare of Assisi and Learning: A Foundation for the Intellectual Life within the Franciscan Second Order,” *The Cord* 46:4 (1996): 171-179, here page 175.

<sup>21</sup>See the comments of Lorenzo DiFonzo, “La scuola Francescana e il P. Veuthey,” in *Scuola Francescana: Filosofia, Teologia, Spiritualità*, a cura di Lorenzo di Fonzo (Rome: *Miscellanea Francescana*, 1996): xx-xxiv.

1437-49). Also, within our own tradition, the struggle between contrasting experiences of Franciscan life, conventual and observant, led to a further fragmenting of Franciscanism, with repercussions upon the theological project.

It is interesting to note that the Alexandrine Constitutions of the Conventuals (1500-1501) prescribed the study of the "books of Sentences with the questions of the Subtle Doctor and others, namely, Scotus, Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure, Francis Meyronne or Richard of Middleton."<sup>22</sup> The Scotistic school was especially strong during the counter-Reformation, and experienced a re-birth in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

While very schematic, this sketch is enough to suggest the fact that the Franciscan theological school is not monochromatic, the variety within the Franciscan school is significant. The Franciscan Schools of Bonaventure, Scotus, and Ockham all emerge from the tradition of Francis, but each develops or accents a specific focus within the tradition: Bonaventure tends to be more mystical-cosmic-Christological; Scotus tends to be more scientific-cosmic-metaphysical; Ockham tends to be more logical-ecclesiological-philosophical. These characterizations serve as descriptions rather than definitions in the restrictive sense. As diverse as each theological vein of thought described here is, each can be connected to the religious experience of Francis and Clare either directly or indirectly.

Without going into great detail, the Capuchin Reform of the Franciscan Order can serve to demonstrate that Capuchin Franciscan life cannot be adequately understood simply by citing the role of Francis' *Testament*, which was explicitly taken up in Capuchin legislation concerning the observance of the Rule, in order to explain the success of their reform. Certainly the simplicity of lifestyle and the contemplative retrieval of Franciscan life with its emphasis on interiority characterize Capuchin observance. But, hand in hand with this retrieval of the primitive form of Franciscan life went the corresponding choice of Bonaventure as theologian of the Capuchin reform.

The Capuchin reform responded not only to internal issues which fragmented the Franciscan brotherhood—these neuralgic issues were there, questions on the interpretation of the Rule, the observance of the Testament; questions about the limits of poverty; the tension between life in reclusion and pastoral ministry in the church; and questions of the location of Franciscans within society. But, in addition to these issues, the Capuchin reform was situated in the church and world of its day, and both the world and church of the sixteenth century were in chaos—politically, Italy was struggling with rival powers and the resulting violence; Francis I of France was in conflict with Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor; Rome was sacked in April, 1527 as a result. All of this violence and unrest suggested apocalyptic foreboding of the end times; wandering prophets called for repentance and conversion, and they blamed the luxurious lifestyle and sinfulness of both clergy and laity as the reason for God's punishment in the form of the sack of Rome. The news of the "heretic" Martin Luther was received as a sign of the end of the times. Only prayer, fasting and penance could appease God's wrath. Because of the demise of institutions both sacred and secular, there was a reaction of interiority—returning to the life within, and an emphasis on interiority and the development of an ascetical/mystical relationship with God. Individual

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<sup>22</sup>Lorenzo di Fonzo, "La Scholastic Minoritica-Conventuale," in: *Scuola Franciscana: Filosofia, Teologia, Spiritualita: Leone Veuthey, OFMConv (1896-1974)* (Rome: *Miscellanea Franciscana*, 1996): xxvi.

experience became the privileged locus for encounter with God.<sup>23</sup> The nature of this interior experience was strongly characterized by its affective focus on Christ crucified. People searched within, within their interior life, for a solution to the crisis of Christianity which was experienced as the degradation of pastoral ministry, a Christianity focused more and more on exteriority and devotional practices in order to accumulate the merit needed to secure one's salvation.

Capuchin spirituality and life is characterized by this turn toward interiority in practice and devotion. But in retrieving the primitive observance of the Franciscan life as expressed through the *Testament* of Francis, the Capuchins were at the same time committing themselves to the kind of preaching which characterized Francis and the early friars. In other words, the focus on interiority and affective union with Christ crucified were linked to the ministry of preaching. In this, the Capuchins were responding to the call for the reform of preaching issued by the Council of Trent, whose second decree of the fifth session held on 17 June 1546 was the "Decree on Instruction and Preaching."<sup>24</sup> Echoing the Lateran IV and its call for "worthy and fit" men to assist the bishops in the task of preaching, Trent called on bishops to "appoint men who were capable of carrying out effectively this duty of preaching" (Session V, Decree 2:10; Tanner, 669). The decree goes on to echo the Rule of Francis where the councils calls for "proclaiming briefly and with ease of expression the vices they must avoid and the virtues they must cultivate so as to escape eternal punishment and gain the glory of heaven" (Ibid., 2:11). The Council of Trent mandated the study of Sacred Scripture as the most effective means of preparation for the ministry of preaching.

In order to accomplish this task of effective preaching, the Capuchins fostered the study of Bonaventure who had a permanent value as interpreter of the Word of God, and whose study formed not only persons of knowledge, but also and above all persons filled the spirit of God and capable of carrying God's message to the Christian people. This was a conscious choice on the part of the Capuchins. As Francis insisted on the use of a text, the *Testament*, as the principle of interpretation of the rule, it seems that the early Capuchins use the text of Bonaventure to interpret the text of Franciscan life in the sixteenth century. The Capuchin general chapter of 1569 mandated the reprinting of Bonaventure's *Commentary on the Sentences*, and exhorted the friars to follow this doctor of theology in the chapters of 1578 and 1581. This was subsequent to the decision of the general chapter of 1567 which decided on the creation of a general study center at Rome, and the decision to make the students study Bonaventure.<sup>25</sup>

What is important to note here is that the Capuchin Constitutions of 1529 prescribed the simple preaching of the Gospel to the friars. Reacting to the abuses and defects of an exaggerated emphasis on technique by Renaissance preachers and preaching theory, these early constitutions prescribed that the first preaching of the friars must be that of their exemplary life, that they teach not the subtle speculations of fables, but announce purely

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<sup>23</sup>For a rich description of this context, consult Giovanni Miccoli, "Problemi e aspetti della vita religiosa nell'Italia del primo cinquecento e le origini dei Cappuccini," in *Ludovico da Fossombrone e l'ordine dei Cappuccini*, ed. Vincenzo Crescuola (Rome: Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 1994), 8-48.

<sup>24</sup>Consult Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, Volume II: (Trent-Vatican II)*, (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 665-670.

<sup>25</sup>Consult Camille Bérubé, "Les Capuchins à l'école de saint Bonaventure," in his *De la Philosophie à la Sagesse: Chez Saint Bonaventure et Roger Bacon* (Rome: Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 1976), 283-337. These decisions for the study of Bonaventure turned around the prescriptions of the Constitutions of 1529 which prohibited study to Capuchins.

and simply the gospel of the Lord. Thus, the choice of Bonaventure in response to the Tridentine reform indicated the Capuchin's retrieval of the theology of Bonaventure as a theology oriented toward the preaching of the Gospel and not towards abstract theological understanding.

While one might argue that the Capuchins could have survived even without explicitly prescribing and adopting the study of Bonaventure's theology for its members, they would not have been able to respond so successfully to the reform intentions of the Council of Trent without the support of Bonaventure. Thus, the rebuilding of God's house received as a mandate from the cross of San Damiano by Francis early in his conversion, as a constitutive element of Franciscan life, can be seen to be accompanied through history by a Franciscan style of theology which supports and articulates the meaning of this Franciscan form of evangelical life.

### III THE PRESENT HISTORICAL MOMENT AS OPPORTUNITY

As we approach the third millenium, the world looks forward with hope to a time when the aspirations and desires of the human heart might be realized, not in some selfish and individualistic way, but in a manner which would announce what Christians speak of as the "Kingdom of God." There is discussion of a "new world order" on the global level; there is the more localized talk of a "new Europe," or "new Africa." Political rhetoric here in the USA speaks of a society that can live in harmony, without violence, and poverty, and systemic corruption. As we listen to the spoken dreams of humanity across the globe, one can not help but be pulled back down to reality by looking around at the way things are—violence, wars, crime, abuse, impoverishment, ecological disaster, international realignments, religious wars and discrimination, the dissolution of the family, the hopelessness of drugs, and on and on. It is difficult to see through all this unpleasant reality in order to glimpse the hoped for fulfillment of the dreams and vision of humanity at this moment.

All of these problems seem to suggest the failure of human ingenuity and institutions to achieve its well thought out purpose and goals. This failure of human reason and instrumentality to achieve its end is one way of understanding our present reality as "postmodern." The modern human project born of the enlightenment believed in and practiced the superiority of human reason as the ultimate reality which gave meaning and purpose to all that exists. As David Tracy commented in a paper given at the annual meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America in 1995,

Modern Western culture believed that we not only could but should separate thought from feeling, content from form, theory from practice. Despite the many great accomplishments of modernity...modernity has also proved impoverishing in its inability to face evil and suffering squarely: not only personal sufferings but especially the suffering modernity's own historical success often caused—the suffering of whole peoples, cultures, and groups both outside and within modern Western culture.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>David Tracy, "Evil, Suffering, Hope: The Search for New Forms of Contemporary Theodicy," *Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings* 50 (1995): 19.

This separation of thought from feeling, of content from form, of theory from practice led to the dissolution of what Tracy described as the “felt synthesis” of most ancient and medieval thinkers. As Tracy puts it, the main consequence of modernity “was the breakup of both the ancient and medieval sense of a synthesis of God, self, and cosmos” (Tracy, 20). As a result of modernity, the cosmos was reduced to nature, and science adopted a dominating attitude towards it. In addition, God withdrew and disappeared into a greater hiddenness and otherness. And finally, the self became more autonomous and individualistic, becoming isolated by choice from participation in the cosmos and with the divine and with the other.

The kind of postmodern theology needed to respond to the reality of the present moment Tracy calls a “back to the future of theology.” He states that “the hope of Christians is to resist evil and transform suffering. That hope is grounded in the central Christian metaphor of 1 John 4:16: God is love” (Tracy 31). Finally, Tracy proposes that,

We need to continue to reflect further on the classical resources which our tradition had bequeathed us in order that we may truly understand love and God together: the reflections on *agape* transforming *eros* to become the great form of Catholic *caritas*; the use of the mutually informing insights of intelligence and love to understand God rightly in Augustine and Aquinas; the transformation of ancient neo-Platonic emanation theory into a Christian emanationist *bonum diffusivum sui* form as the understanding of all reality in Bonaventure and so much of the Franciscan love intoxicated tradition (Tracy 33).

Both implicitly and explicitly, Tracy has been naming our Franciscan theological tradition as a resource for postmodern thought and life. Studying our theological tradition, it becomes apparent that the Franciscan tradition resists separating thought from feeling and proposes an affective rationality as the measure of truth; the Franciscan tradition refuses to separate content from form and proposes that the world is not made up simply of things, but rather that everything in its particularity and unique shape and size and color and appearance manifests the truth that God is good; and, the Franciscan tradition refuses to separate theory from practice, affirming that life is the place where God is to be recognized, experienced, named, and loved.

Our Franciscan theological tradition can provide resources for responding to the significant questions of our day. Here I would name three questions posed by our modern culture as the context within which we are challenged to retrieve our Franciscan form of theology today.

1) What does it mean to be human?

Science has led us to the point where human cloning is not beyond the reach of human reason and instrumentality. Medical science has increased human longevity and at the same time offers the means to terminate life before birth as well as at any moment one might feel that life has become too difficult to bear. Our culture projects an image of human perfection in terms of possessions, beauty, pleasure, short term relationships, individualistic satisfaction, and economic security. As Chinnici has suggested, our North American culture is anti-incarnational.

So, what does it mean to be human? What do the resources of our Franciscan theological tradition offer in response to this modern, North American vision of the human person? Is human suffering, limitation, vulnerability, and weakness a tragic



mistake, something to be avoided at all costs? Can you end your life by choice when the suffering becomes too difficult or impossible to bear? Can we afford to separate reason and feeling in our response to this question?

2) What is the value and role of social institutions?

We have lost faith in our institutions, not only our secular institutions, but also our religious institutions. Where does personal responsibility leave off and when do social institutions take over? How effective can participative democracy be when less than forty percent of eligible voters turn out for elections? Is public office and service an unrealistic option for everyone except the wealthy? Is the reform of social institutions such as welfare, and the medicare system, and our schools an impossibility?

Are social institutions important and essential for human life? What do the resources of our Franciscan theological tradition provide in terms of a possible response? What is the relation of the individual to the community? What is the proper hierarchy of individual and community rights? Might Scotus have something to say to this issue in terms of mutuality, harmony, and "thisness"?

3) How are we to deal with difference, with otherness?

Modernity in North America seems to fear otherness and difference, and to name it as strange and something to be eliminated. From this flow all the "ism's" we can name. Is real global consciousness possible? Who should be included and who should be excluded? The violence in our cities seems to suggest that difference cannot be tolerated but must be excluded.

So, can we think and act globally? What do the resources of our Franciscan theological tradition have to suggest in this regard? How are we to respond to the systemic exclusion of any category of human being? Is it even possible for us to conceive of self apart from others, the cosmos, or God?<sup>27</sup>

#### IV CONCLUSION

These three questions of postmodernity cannot be answered apart from each other. The issues are connected and intertwined—the way we think about the human person impacts on the way we view social institutions and of how we conceive of our global situation. While these questions might be characteristic of our present historical moment, they are not absolutely new questions or problems. Every age was faced with these issues in one form or another.

The challenge placed before us Franciscans today is to respond meaningfully by using the heritage that is ours—the great treasure of the Franciscan worldview and charism. To try and understand or retrieve or refound the charism of Franciscan life apart from these contemporary questions is to live in the past—we might be able to live as Francis and Clare

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<sup>27</sup>These and other questions were used as a starting point for reflection on Franciscan Pastoral Leadership by a group of scholars, meeting annually in Denver for three years and funded by the Holy Name Province of Friars Minor. See *Franciscan Leadership: Foundations in History, Theology, and Spirituality*, Spirit and Life Series, Vol. 7 (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1997).

did in 1209 or 1212, but we would not be Franciscan. We would simply be an anachronism of history—we might attract some attention, but ultimately we would be ignored by the world.

To be Franciscan one needs the help of theology to mediate the meaning of Francis and Clare to us and for us and our world. We really cannot understand the full truth about Francis and Clare unless we read, and study, and come to know Bonaventure, Scotus, Ockham, Angela of Foligno, Leonardo Boff, and the others that have gone before us. To try and understand the Franciscan charism independently from the theology of the charism is to diminish radically the gift of the Spirit in Francis and Clare.

It is easy to read the stories and tradition of the first Franciscan century and decide to do something like Francis and Clare did. It is much more difficult to do Franciscan theology. Doing Franciscan theology with Bonaventure, Scotus, and Peter John Olivi and others is demanding work. Their texts are difficult. Retrieving the Franciscan Evangelical life demands doing Franciscan theology—an exercise that will enrich the quality of life of the Franciscan body, help provide a foundation for more effective witness to the good God who has given such wonderful forbearers, and who can continue to show a way in our world and our day, to taste the goodness of this God. So, I conclude with the words of Bonaventure, who invites and tells us how us to begin doing our theology:

First, therefore, I invite the reader to the groans of prayer through Christ crucified, through whose blood we are cleansed from the filth of vice—so that he not believe that reading is sufficient without unction, speculation without devotion, investigation without wonder, observation without joy, work without piety, knowledge without love, understanding without humility, endeavor without divine grace, reflection as a mirror without divinely inspired wisdom.<sup>28</sup> (*Itinerarium*, Prologue 4; *Cousins* 55-56).

Bonaventure begins the journey to God with this prayer. It describes the task of Franciscan life and suggests that the key to the journey is to be had in doing theology with Francis and Clare.

## The Heresy of the Franciscan Spirituals

Peter J. Colosi

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This paper will investigate some key points in the history and thought of the Franciscan Spirituals, those groups of Friars Minor who chose to live according to the Rule of Saint Francis in its primitive severity and, because of this, broke away from the main body of the Friars Minor, many of them eventually drifting into heresy.<sup>1</sup>

The picture we get from many of the early histories of these brothers is that of a protesting minority rather than a revolting faction. They had not yet thought of a separate order, but only of a purified order. They had not developed a theology, for their whole creed was obedience to the ideal of poverty as pursued by Francis. They endured persecution, not because they boldly advanced new heresies, but because they refused to drift with the tide of prosperity and accept a standard of life prescribed for them by the pope and his advisors,<sup>2</sup> a life judged by them to be at odds with the lifestyle Francis mandated.

It would therefore be an error to hold that the Spirituals were, in essence, heretics from the beginning. Rather, one must see their sincere beginnings and attempt to understand exactly which points led to certain radical, even heretical positions.

### The Historical Development of the Franciscan Spirituals

It is a well-known fact that from the very beginning of the Franciscan Order there existed two divergent tendencies among the Friars Minor.

One was the determination to make the Order a potent influence on the age and a world factor in history by securing its close connection with the papacy, acquiring numerous convents, increasing membership as rapidly as possible, building fine churches, securing privileges and exemptions from the pope—in a word, by entering into competition with the established monastic orders. The other tendency was the equally strong determination to preserve the Order from the corrupting influences of wealth and privilege, to keep the members true “Brothers Minor,” imitators, not only admirers, of St. Francis.<sup>3</sup>

One could say that in the early years of the Order, Elias of Cortona represented the first of these positions, while Leo and the so-called “zealots” represented the second.<sup>4</sup> As Minister General (1232-1235), Elias, by force of his personality, combined with his executive abilities, greatly increased the material development of the Order, its missionary activity, its numbers, and its influence in Christendom. Convents were enlarged and moved to better and more populated areas, and the study of theology among the brothers grew at his encouragement.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile the Spirituals retreated to the hermitages.

It was not until the middle of the thirteenth century that the Spirituals actually consolidated into an organized party of their own. Muzzy suggests three reasons as the driving force behind this consolidation. First, John of Parma, a friar sympathetic to the

Spirituals, was elected Minister General (1248-1257). Second, the Spirituals took the heretical writings of Joachim of Fiore to themselves and employed them in their hopes for the dawning apocalypse. And third, John's successor, Bonaventure (1257-1274), immediately made it clear that there would be no hostility to the See of Rome or tolerance of an esoteric authority of Francis's companions.<sup>6</sup>

Between 1274 and 1316, the Spirituals developed into three distinct branches. The first was the group in the March of Ancona, led by Peter of Macerata (also known as Liberato) and Angelo Clareno. The second was in Tuscany, represented by Ubertino of Casale. The third was made up of the French Spirituals of Provence, whose inspiration was derived from Hugh of Digne and Peter John Olivi. All held to these three tenets:

1. The desire to observe to the letter the Rule and the Testament of Francis. The words of Francis in his Testament provided the basis for this belief:

And through obedience I strictly command all my brothers, cleric and lay, not to place glosses on the Rule or on these words, saying: They are to be understood in this way. . . . The Lord has granted me to speak and to write the Rule and these words simply and purely, so shall you understand them simply and without gloss, and observe them with [their] holy manner of working until the end (Test 34).<sup>7</sup>

2. A very high estimation of the Rule, such that they considered it to be on the same level as the Gospel. One justification for this belief they found in chapter 1 of the Rule itself where Francis says: "The Rule and Life of the Friars Minor is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ . . ." (RegB 1). On these grounds the Spirituals refused Papal interpretations of the Rule: "The pope cannot dispense from the Gospel, and thus he cannot dispense from or even explain the Rule in any other than a literal sense."<sup>8</sup>

3. The belief that the writings of Joachim of Fiore were true prophecies and that his words applied quite directly to themselves.

### The Three Groups

A brief history of these three groups of Spirituals might be useful. The Spirituals of the March of Ancona were led by Peter of Macerata until his death in 1307, when Angelo of Clareno became the leader. At the Council of Lyons (1274), among the topics under discussion was the Franciscan Spirituals. A false rumor began to circulate that the mendicant orders would be told that they must begin to hold property in common.<sup>9</sup> There was already discontent in the Order, and this rumor acted as a catalyst for those friars who did not want to turn from the Franciscan ideal of renunciation of individual and corporate property.<sup>10</sup> The Provincial Chapter ordered the leaders of the group—Peter of Macerata, Angelo of Clareno, Thomas of Tolentino, and Traymundus—to recant their protestations. They refused and eventually ended up in prison on charges of heresy and of being destroyers of the Order.<sup>11</sup> When they were released from prison, they defended the doctrine of *usus pauper* and acclaimed Peter John Olivi as their master.<sup>12</sup> The group was excommunicated on Dec. 30, 1317, by Pope John XXII in the Bull *Sancta Romana*. After this they continued to exist as *Fratricelli*.<sup>13</sup>

The Spirituals of Provence were inspired by Hugh of Digne and Peter John Olivi. Although Hugh of Digne was concerned about the materialism infiltrating the Church, he was more deeply concerned about his own Order and struggled to defend a life lived strictly according to the Rule. He died around 1257 and, because of his writings and teaching, has been referred to as the father of the Spirituals.<sup>14</sup>

Peter John Olivi (1248-1298), successor to Hugh of Digne, was born in Serignan in Languedoc and joined the Order at the age of twelve in Beziers. A later part of this paper is devoted to his apocalyptic thought.

By 1289, because of the controversy surrounding his writings, there was already a group rallying around Olivi. They seem to have consolidated as a group of Spirituals in Provence around 1309 when Arnold of Villanova, a lay theologian and physician of Charles II of Sicily, appealed to the King to write to the Minister General demanding that the persecutions of the Spirituals in Provence cease. In this same year the citizens of Provence also gave vocal support to the Spirituals there. As a result of this commotion, Pope Clement V summoned the leaders of the Spirituals and appointed a tribunal of three cardinals to hear their case. He also issued the Bull *Dudum ad apostolatus* protecting the Spirituals from the harassment and jurisdiction of the Order during the time of these proceedings.<sup>15</sup>

The result of this meeting was, generally speaking, twofold: the Spirituals did not receive their desired goal of a formal separation from the Order such that they could go somewhere to live the Rule literally and in peace. Yet, at the same time the pope enjoined a stricter observance of the Rule upon the Order, and, while he exhorted the Spirituals to return to their convents, he also deposed some of the superiors who had treated them unfairly. To these ends the pope issued the Bulls *Fidei catholicae fundamento* and *Exivi de paradiso*. One of the means by which the Community (the larger group in the Order against whom the Spirituals were in disagreement) attempted to keep the Spirituals from separating and forming their own order was to discredit as much as possible the teachings of their inspirer, Peter John Olivi. The Bulls, therefore, also contained condemnations of many of Olivi's errors which had been brought to light during the discussions of 1310-1312.

In 1314, Pope Clement V and Minister General Alexander of Alexandria both died and the harsh superiors were restored to office. The Spirituals of Provence responded by forcibly taking the convents at Beziers and Narbonne and ejecting the members of the Community. The Custos of Narbonne, William of Astre, excommunicated the Spirituals, whereupon, in 1316, they made an appeal to the General Council of Narbonne. In 1317 they were brought before Pope John XXII to be examined. The leaders were imprisoned and the others detained in convents. John XXII demanded obedience from them, insisting that they give up all peculiarities and submit to the mandates of the Minister General. Twenty-five of the Provence Spirituals refused to do so and were put before the Inquisition whereupon twenty-one converted. The other four were handed over to the civil power and burned as heretics at Marseilles on May 17, 1318.

The third group of Spirituals, led by Ubertino of Casale, are referred to as the Tuscan Spirituals. Ubertino of Casale joined the Order in 1273, and by 1284 was fighting full force for the spiritual cause, having met and been deeply impressed by John of Parma, Angela of Foligno, and Peter the combmaker of Siena.<sup>16</sup> According to Ubertino of Casale the Community friars in Tuscany were the most blatant of all of those who betrayed the ideals of St. Francis: "They had full cellars and granaries. They had amassed wealth and put it out

at usury. They had even added dishonesty to avarice."<sup>17</sup> Because of this and also because of the violent sort of persecution which the Community in Tuscany directed against them, the Tuscan Spirituals elected their own general according to the Rule of Francis (which action ruined their reputation) and fled to Sicily.<sup>18</sup> After this the Popes, Clement V, and later John XXII, easily accepted the terrible reports about the Spirituals and, along with many cardinals and the Inquisition, sought their suppression. In the Bull *Gloriosam ecclesiam*, issued by Pope John XXII on January 23, 1318, the Spirituals were formally condemned.<sup>19</sup>

Three other points about the Tuscan Spirituals are worth noting. The first is that they staged an uprising before their departure to Sicily in which they attempted to remove forcibly the brothers of the Community from the convents of Carmignano, Arezzo, and Asciano; but they were overcome by arms and fled.<sup>20</sup> Second, they made attempts to send messages to both Clement V and John XXII that they would obey them; however, the brothers of the Community captured and imprisoned the messengers so that they never reached the pope.<sup>21</sup> And finally, although they constituted a small group whose influence did not last, this whole episode was ". . . significant chiefly for the rapidity with which the breach with the Order was consummated. It gives us a singularly clear picture of the irreconcilable status and claims of the Community on the one hand and the Spirituals on the other."<sup>22</sup>

In summary, the struggle between the two factions of the Order existed almost from the beginning. The Community group supported papal interpretations of the Rule and desired to be of service to the Church in light of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215; yet many of them tended to stray from the Rule in ways which the popes did not intend. The Spiritual group sought to live the Rule unadorned and in its purity, yet tended to treat the directives of the popes and general chapters with disdain.

### The Influence of Joachimism

More fundamental to the Spiritual movement than the teachings on poverty and the Rule of Francis, and a key source of the struggle between the Spirituals and the larger Church, was Joachimism, a popular medieval theological schema of salvation history that was eventually condemned as heretical. Every dispute which the Church raised against the Spirituals, whether it was concerning poverty within the Order, the Rule of Francis, or the Life of Christ and the Apostles, was seen by the Spirituals as part of the struggle involved in the transition from one stage of salvation history (and also church history) to the next. A contemporary of Francis, Joachim of Fiore (1132-1202), taught that, according to the Apocalypse commentators, the world would go through three stages: a carnal stage, a stage which is partially carnal and partially spiritual, and a stage which is completely spiritual.

The Franciscan Spirituals, following Joachim, saw themselves at the dawn of the stage of totally spiritual people. They also saw themselves as precisely that new order of which Joachim spoke, whose purpose it would be to usher in the third and final stage. With this understanding the Spirituals began to perceive each of the teachings of the Church which opposed their own to be carnal elements from the previous stages, refusing to let go and allow the third age of spiritual enlightenment to happen.

From this concept of stages there developed still another teaching of the Spirituals, namely, the distinction between a carnal church and a spiritual church. Ernst Benz,<sup>23</sup> traces

the stages of the development in the thought of the Franciscan Spirituals which led them to a most radical view of the Roman Church—namely, that it is identical with Satan's church. It would seem odd, to say the least, that a group of holy Catholic hermits could come to make such violent and ultimate claims about their own church; yet the progression which Benz lays out gives a good explanation of how this occurred.

Benz asserts that the Spirituals were not coming from the position of arrogant heretics. Rather they were experiencing terrible suffering and inner torture resulting from severe persecution, including the burning at the stake of some of their members. Benz claims that their radical position—that the Roman Church is the Antichrist and the whore of Babylon—was not a well-thought-out theological presupposition of their mission, but rather a reaction to severe persecution, which developed over time.<sup>24</sup>

### The Position of Peter John Olivi

Peter John Olivi, the inspiration of the Provence Spirituals, had developed the distinction between the spiritual and the carnal church in his commentary on the Apocalypse.<sup>25</sup> Building on the theories of Joachim, Olivi thought the Church had to go through a seven-stage history. He recognized the legitimacy of the Church; he saw its preparation in the synagogue in the time of the Old Testament; he saw it as founded by Christ and as the institution of God for the salvation of the world in history;<sup>26</sup> he recognized the universality and totality of the Church. But Olivi also held that throughout the history of the Church the great holy persons and orders, which were held together with an inner historical unity, constituted the real spiritual Church. It is this concept which led to the heresy of the Franciscan Spirituals.<sup>27</sup>

The Spirituals did not see the bureaucratization of the Church as the beginning of its downfall. Rather, they saw it as the intervention of God, for a time, to set the harsh call of the Gospel aside in order to reach a larger number of people.<sup>28</sup> Thus, Olivi also held that the institutional Church, the old Church, was legitimate even during its period of moral decay.

However, for the Spirituals and Olivi the Church of the new time was not just the perfect Church which would exist beside the institutional Church or outside of it, but rather, it was the true Church of holy people which had existed from the beginning. And they saw the mission of this true and spiritual Church to be the regeneration of the whole Church—indeed of the whole world—morally and spiritually. It had to fulfill this task even in the face of resistance from the old Church. Indeed, they held that the old Church must be dissolved into the spiritual one.

In order to understand the justification which the Spirituals felt they had for this belief, we must recall that for Joachim of Fiore the history of salvation occurs in three stages or ages—the age of the Father, the age of the Son, and the age of the Holy Spirit.<sup>29</sup> In the third age there would be two new spiritual orders of priests who would usher in a new and spiritual way of life. According to Joachim the spiritual Church would have its inception in the fortieth generation, which meant after the year 1200. Francis's conversion was in 1206, and the Spirituals conceived of this as the beginning of the third age spoken of by Joachim. Joachim also held that this third age would complete its inception by the forty-second generation, which means after the year 1260.<sup>30</sup>

Olivi, developing the thought of Joachim, gave examples of the persecution which would be leveled against the evangelical perfection of the spiritual Church during the forty-second generation—the fight over poverty, the University of Paris controversy, and the great error of those who held that the position of the mendicants is lower than that of the secular priests.<sup>31</sup> For Olivi, these events happened in a period which, when completed, would mark the beginning of the final period of peace. And it is this period which corresponded to Joachim's third age now dawning.

Thus, for Olivi and for the Spirituals, the fight over poverty, was just the tip of the iceberg. Lurking below it was a world view which presupposed that resistance from any group indicated a remnant from a former age which must pass away. Thus, Olivi and the Spirituals came to see themselves as the true followers of Christ and the Roman Church as the Antichrist.

The Roman Church, for Olivi, had been the true Church during the first five periods of its history. And during some of that time it even existed as the true Church while not striving for Gospel perfection; namely, during the period when it grew in numbers and power at the expense of Gospel living. The end of that period coincided roughly with the end of the second age in Joachim's schema, a brief transition period between the time of the carnal age and the fully spiritual age.

A good student of Joachim would subject himself to the Roman Church because he knew that his lifetime existed during the second age when the Roman Church was still the true Church.<sup>32</sup> Joachim openly taught, however, that in the third age the Church would exist without an official hierarchy and without a Roman Pope or Primate of Peter.<sup>33</sup> This is another point, taken over by Olivi and the Spirituals, which led them into heresy.

The new Church, they thought, would take the best traditions of the Church which had existed since the beginning and carry these on to the highest form of moral and religious life.<sup>34</sup> Thus, in the understanding of the Franciscan Spirituals, the universal Church as such could not be the whore of Babylon or the carnal church. It could not be such because the true Church, according to them, is that Church which has existed through the first two ages of world history, the age of the Father and the age of the Son. In the third age, the spiritual orders (presumably the mendicant Franciscans and Dominicans) were in place and active, and some of the members of the old true Church had become corrupt and struggled against the fulfillment of the new Church. This group of members who fell away became the *ecclesia reprobarum* or the *ecclesia carnalis*. These members were spread throughout the Church of Christ and included the pope. They became the church of Satan. But the true Church became the spiritual Church of the third age about which Joachim prophesied.<sup>35</sup>

This Church, which had always existed within the Church and had now emerged as the spiritual Church of the third age, had a concrete outline in history. It began with the Apostles, continued with the martyrs, proceeded to the Greek hermits and monks and then to the Benedictine monks and on to the Cistercians, Cluniacs, and finally to the Franciscans.<sup>36</sup> This Church within the Church was united throughout history in that it lived and carried on the true apostolic life of poverty, humility, and renunciation.

The spiritual Church was not understood by Olivi to be an official or institutional church. Olivi understood its inner structure to be radically different from the inner structure of the Roman Church. The inner structure of the spiritual Church was such that all its members were filled with an inner illumination driving them towards the realization



of the Apostolic life. An official hierarchy or monarchical person was not present in this Church; rather, a spiritual democracy guided it.<sup>37</sup>

Olivi developed two further ideas in this regard—first, that the spiritual Church would have a primate, though not a pope; second, that there was and always had been a relationship existing between the two Churches. The primate of the new Church would be the Spirit itself which was to fill all of the members. The relationship between the two Churches, the spiritual, apostolic, and evangelical Church, and the universal, hierarchical, official Church was that they had always existed side by side, in a sense looking into each other. Indeed, Olivi held that the authority of the Papal Church was grounded in the uninterrupted history of the spiritual Church. The spiritual primate was to have its full authority and realization only in the time of the uncompromised living of the Gospel life during the final period.<sup>38</sup>

Benz, in summary, names five sources of the schism which resulted between the Roman Church and the Spirituals. The first was the very strong belief of the Spirituals that these were surely the end times. This impression caused them to make the most stringent demands on the Roman Church. They also made three unorthodox claims for themselves: that their spiritual power was the only true and valid one; that their way of life was not only the highest form of life but also universally binding; that their time was the final time and the time of fulfillment. Finally, they demanded that the universal Church be completely absorbed into the perfect spiritual Church.<sup>39</sup> They claimed that the Church of Rome had become the false and carnal church, taking as evidence of this the simony, power, financial politics, worldly dealings, and vices of its members. They also saw a great error in what they called the feudal structure of the papal church.<sup>40</sup>

The Spirituals took these flaws as signs that the Roman Church was the Antichrist. They believed that this Roman Church was directing much of its energies specifically against them. In the Church's softening and explaining of the evangelical rule, and in its rejection of the Franciscan ideal of poverty, the Franciscan Spirituals saw the Roman Church as denying the fulfillment of its own true destiny to be perfect.<sup>41</sup>

In 1319 the Catalan Commission submitted its condemnation of many of the tenets held by Olivi. Among them were his view of Francis as an apocalyptic figure heralding the new age and his identification of the Franciscan Rule as synonymous with the life observed by Christ and imposed on the disciples.<sup>42</sup> His idea that the Roman Church had become the carnal church was also condemned. Another serious tenet of Olivi that was recognized as error was his use of the poverty issue as a criterion for determining where one stood in the great apocalyptic struggle and in predicting that those in positions of authority would be on the wrong side.<sup>43</sup>

## Conclusion

The divisions and factions during this period in the Franciscan Order were both positive and negative. The Community was attempting to serve the Church in light of the Fourth Lateran Council. They attempted to maintain a balance between the ideals of being a religious order within the Church and the ideals of St. Francis. On the negative side many members of the Community took the privileges given to the Order by the Church as an exemption from the task of pursuing the ideals of Francis and became lax in their way of life.

The positive contribution of the Spiritual movement in the Order was its strict adherence to the Rule and way of life which Francis had given to the friars by word and deed. The negative side was its rejection of the words of counsel from the Church.

The struggle between these two groups within the Order not only characterized a tumultuous period, but had a deeply tragic result—tragic for the Spirituals in the suffering they had to endure, tragic for the Order because of the break up of its unity, tragic for the Church in that energy with potential for good was turned towards division.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup>Cf. "Spirituals," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1912.  
<sup>2</sup>David Saville Muzzy, *The Spiritual Franciscans* (New York: American Historical Association, 1905), 14.  
<sup>3</sup>Muzzy, 53.  
<sup>4</sup>Rosalind Brooke, *Early Franciscan Government* (Cambridge: University Press, 1959), 137-57.  
<sup>5</sup>Brooke, 145-147.  
<sup>6</sup>Muzzy, 53-54.  
<sup>7</sup>All references to the writings of Francis are from *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, ed. Regis Armstrong and Ignatius Brady (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).  
<sup>8</sup>"Spirituals," *Catholic Encyclopedia*.  
<sup>9</sup>John R. H. Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order: From its Origins to the Year 1517* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1988), 188.  
<sup>10</sup>M. D. Lambert, *Franciscan Poverty* (London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1961), 160 and Moorman, 188.  
<sup>11</sup>Moorman, 188-189.  
<sup>12</sup>Lambert, 160.  
<sup>13</sup>The word "Fratricelli" was a term of endearment meaning "the Little Brothers," but its meaning became changed throughout these developments such that when the pope used it in the Bull *Sancta Romana* (1317) it signified rebellious heretics. Cf. Muzzy, 45-46.  
<sup>14</sup>Moorman, 189.  
<sup>15</sup>Muzzy, 32.  
<sup>16</sup>Moorman, 190-91.  
<sup>17</sup>Muzzy, 40.  
<sup>18</sup>Muzzy, 39.  
<sup>19</sup>Muzzy, 40-41.  
<sup>20</sup>Muzzy, 40-41.  
<sup>21</sup>Muzzy, 40-41.  
<sup>22</sup>Muzzy, 41.  
<sup>23</sup>Ernst Benz, *Ecclesia Spiritualis: Kirchenidee und Geschichtstheologie der Franziskanischen Reformation* (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, 1934), XII.  
<sup>24</sup>Benz, 307.  
<sup>25</sup>Peter John Olivi, *Lectura Super Apocalypsum*.  
<sup>26</sup>Benz, 308.  
<sup>27</sup>Benz, 308.  
<sup>28</sup>Benz, 309.  
<sup>29</sup>Morton W. Bloomfield, "Joachim of Flora," *Traditio* 13 (1957): 249-311.  
<sup>30</sup>Benz, 314.  
<sup>31</sup>Benz, 314.  
<sup>32</sup>Benz, 309.  
<sup>33</sup>Benz, 309.  
<sup>34</sup>Benz, 309.  
<sup>35</sup>Benz, 309-10.  
<sup>36</sup>Benz, 310.  
<sup>37</sup>Benz, 309-10.  
<sup>38</sup>Benz, 311.  
<sup>39</sup>Benz, 312.  
<sup>40</sup>Benz, 312.  
<sup>41</sup>Benz, 313.  
<sup>42</sup>David Burr, *Olivi's Peaceable Kingdom: A Reading of the Apocalypse Commentary* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 242.  
<sup>43</sup>Burr, 242.

## Saint Francis and Theology

Eric Doyle, O.F.M.

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In these reflections I want to steer clear of the hoary question about Saint Francis's attitude to study. On this score let two remarks suffice. First, we can recall that he was quite happy for Saint Anthony to teach theology to the friars with the proviso that in doing so "he should not extinguish the spirit of prayer and devotion, as is contained in the Rule"; and that in the Rule of 1223 he warns the friars not to let manual work extinguish the spirit of holy prayer and devotion (c. 5). There are snares lying in wait for those who do manual work, just as there are for those given to study. Secondly, Saint Francis explicitly stipulates that we are to honor and reverence all theologians and those who impart God's holy words to us because they administer spirit and life (Test W). We should note that these words in the Testament follow references to the Eucharist, the holy names of God, and the Scriptures. There is here, I believe, an embryonic theology of theologians!

It is a fascinating characteristic of the Franciscan Movement that it produced a Franciscan theology at all. Yet it is a fact of our history that there emerged quite quickly out of the primordial Franciscan experience a way of looking at God, humanity, and the world which medievalists have insisted on calling the Franciscan School. It says something of significance that in the academe the Dominicans have been identified as members of the Thomistic School, whereas we have been labeled followers of the Franciscan School. With us the founder predominated over the learned doctors; in the Dominican Order the learned doctor predominated over the founder.

The Franciscan School embraces a wide spectrum of thinkers. Though not technically in the School, Saint Anthony cannot be left out. He received some superb training in mystical theology which shows itself in his exposition of Scripture. No matter how far he traveled from the literal sense, Vigouroux still included him in the *Dictionnaire de la Bible*. There are the famous and not so famous names of friars to whom Paris, Oxford, and Cambridge will always owe a debt of gratitude: Haymo of Faversham, Simon of Sandwich (two places not too far down the road from us here in Canterbury), Alexander of Hales, John de la Rochelle, Saint Bonaventure, John Duns Scotus, Adam Marsh, Roger Bacon, John Pecham (buried in Canterbury Cathedral), Vincent of Coventry, William of Poitou, Eustace of Normanville, William of Ockham.

The fact of the matter is that Saint Francis has magnetic attraction for the human intellect, especially *fide illustrata*, the intellect suffused with the light of faith. And had it been otherwise, it would not only have been sad, but very disturbing. The intellect is also part of human nature, as much as the heart, the will, and the imagination. The life and writings of Saint Francis are far too rich to be ignored by the intellect. Anyone with the tiniest glimmer of theological acumen cannot fail to be impressed and inspired by the theological significance of his life and the theological content of his writings. The unity of orthodoxy and orthopraxy in his life is remarkable. Consider for a moment the effect Saint Francis's literal imitation of Christ had on Saint Bonaventure's theology. He saw that this was no mere moral or behavioristic patterning of his life on the model of Christ's, but an

ontological conforming of his very existence to Jesus Christ whereby the divine activity becomes effective in the world.

His writings show he had a profound grasp of the meaning and import of all the great saving truths of revelation: the Trinity, Incarnation, creation, grace, the virtues, and eschatology. And having grasped them, he communicated them in drama, poetry, and above all by imitating Jesus Christ. He was a superb exegete. He observed the gospel literally—there was no sacrificing of the literal sense for him. Then penetrating further, he drew from it the message it has for faith, the directions it gives for life, and the hope it holds out for eternal life.

He lived the four senses of Scripture that formed the framework of medieval exegesis: the literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical. It would, therefore, have been a truncated development if his inspiration had been restricted to artists and poets. As it is, he inspired a theology whose best representatives became artists and poets in their theology, and of none is that truer than Saint Bonaventure.

Pervading his writings as an atmosphere pervades a room is the sublime theology of the centrality of Christ, which is the distinguishing feature of Saint Bonaventure's theology. In the most surprising contexts one finds the seeds of the great themes of Franciscan theology: the primacy of Christ, the meaning and value of creation, the primacy of charity, the unique dignity of every individual. Let us take one example. He writes in the Admonitions: "Consider with what great dignity the Lord. God has endowed you. He created and fashioned your body in the image of his beloved Son and your soul in his own likeness" (V.1). Is this not a seminal expression of the doctrine of: Christ's absolute primacy? His words recall a beautiful text in Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*:

Imagine God wholly employed and absorbed in it—in his hand, his eye, his labor, his purpose, his wisdom, his providence, and above all, in his love, which was dictating the lineaments of this creation, Adam. For whatever was the form and expression which was then given to the clay, Christ was in his thoughts as one day to become man, because the Word, too, was to be both clay and flesh, even as the earth was then.... And God made man ... after the image of God, in other words, of Christ, did he make him [c. 6].

Obviously, I am not maintaining that Duns Scotus's teaching was somehow in the mind of Saint Francis. But it seems reasonably certain that creation without Christ was inconceivable for Francis. If it is the self-same love that redeems and heals, as perfects, fulfills, and sanctifies. To say Redeemer is a way of saying Divine Lover.

Saint Bonaventure had a unique understanding of the theological significance of Saint Francis. There is no doctor of the Church on whom the founder of an Order had greater influence. Bonaventure himself drew attention to the parallel between the early development of the Franciscan Order and the history of the ancient Church in his Letter to an unnamed master, 13 (*Opera Omnia* VIII, 336). And it is indeed striking that the Apologists presented the Crucified One of Calvary as the very wisdom the Greeks had sought for centuries. Saint Francis was a *locus theologicus* for Saint Bonaventure. It seems beyond question that Saint Francis was a source of Bonaventure's Christian philosophy wherein reason takes its honorable place under the guidance of faith from the outset. This places natural theology and all philosophical theology in the context of the actual knowledge

of the Living God revealed in Jesus Christ. These therefore become a moment in the movement of the mind, illumined by divine light, towards contemplative union with God. It was through the gift of faith and the insights that accompany it, that Saint Francis penetrated the mystery of existence and the meaning of all creatures.

So far from being against study, I fancy Saint Francis is whispering to us in the midst of our celebrations of the eighth centenary of his birth, that we should immerse ourselves in our theological tradition and enter into fresh dialogue with it, until it becomes part of the very air we breathe and forms the structures of our vision of God, humanity, and the world. This tradition has never had more importance than at present.

In an article in *The Tablet* recently on a debate about freedom and authority the author, C. J. Hamson, one-time Professor of Comparative Law at Cambridge, makes a noteworthy comment. I intend no offense to Saint Thomas in quoting Professor Hamson's words. My purpose is to stress the obligation incumbent on us to do all in our power to appropriate and share the rich treasures of the tradition to which we are so often neglectful heirs. Professor Hamson writes:

It is a pity that St. Thomas Aquinas, whom I greatly admire, was so powerful a mind and so destructive a theologian: the world we inhabit today would have been, I think, less ferocious if more of St. Bonaventure had managed to survive Aquinas—if some of the music of the spheres had survived Galileo and Newton [17 Oct. 1981, 1014].



## Peter Olivi on Prayer

Translated by David Flood, O.F.M.

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The seventh centenary of Peter Olivi's death (March 14, 1298) has not only led scholars to accord him a little extra attention. It has invited them to take stock of the growing interest in his story and his writings.

Peter Olivi promoted Franciscan living theoretically and pastorally in southern France and northern Italy in the late thirteenth century. Because the Spirituals of the early fourteenth century drew on his teachings, their political ineptitude was laid at his door; he was made responsible for events which transpired after his death.

In his commentary on the Acts of the Apostles, after an introduction, Peter Olivi begins reading closely the first chapter. He gets to the line: "They were as one deep in prayer" (1:14). He pauses to reflect on prayer, in the passage translated below.

In his explanations, Olivi often uses the words *habitus* and *virtus*—habit and virtue. *Habitus* has to do with the steady direction one has given one's life, whereas *virtus* covers a pattern of positive action which one readily brings into play within that general direction. In what Peter Olivi says about prayer, then, we have to do with an emergent style of life.

I have not tried to match the abstract diction in English. I have tried rather to translate the reflection.

David Flood, O.F.M., Translator

### I.

They gave themselves to prayer. Did they ask for God's grace and his spiritual gifts or for temporal gifts as well? It seems that prayer, in its immediate sense, usually means this.

We recall that the verb "to pray" seems to come from the practice of public speakers. They end their discourse persuasively as they try to win the minds of judges and listeners to their way of thinking. In this sense, prayer to God means any act whereby we address God by trying to draw his mind to us in our favor. Since any act of this sort, as such, does draw attention, we take prayer as an appeal to God.

However, sometimes the mind at prayer does little more than wish for God's gifts without asking for them explicitly, and sometimes it engages in simple contemplation, tasting and enjoying in loving union God and things divine. These states and others like them we include under prayer.

There are several reasons for this. As long as we are in our present state, such prayer wins us merit, both when we implore and attract or when we move towards the final grace and glory we do not yet possess. Then, mixed into such actions is the intention to pray and to call on God. Furthermore, the whole process of divine worship in this life develops in longing, in prayer, and in the acquisition of grace, rather than as rest with the kingdom won. Consequently in the act of prayer we include all these things.

## II.

If we take prayer this way, does the action result from some special virtue, from several virtues, or from all of them? It seems from several and from all because all the inner ways of virtue come into play here. When we pray, we long for and ask God for all virtues. In meditation and contemplation, we taste and examine them, and so they gain in clarity, take fire, and grow strong. Furthermore the very act of prayer should be humble, pure, chaste, faithful, confident, hopeful, and so on.

On the other hand, prayer seems to spring from charity alone. Basically it expresses a love which desires or enjoys or calls on and implores God and the things of God. All of this comes immediately from charity and leads to God. . . .

On this point some say that prayer brings all virtues into play, for they all flow together in holy love of God. Others say that prayer expresses the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. A third group says that, although prayer seeks a response, it arises immediately from the virtue called religion. Religion engages in worship of God.

A fourth group proposes that we can take the origin of prayer as virtue and habit in two ways: insofar as the power to pray is there and insofar as, beyond this, the power to pray regularly occurs in the right way. Furthermore we can take these two ways in a double sense. First, if we examine what the act of praying generally implies, we see that, through prayer, the mind is led to offer God reverence and to bind itself to him. Second, we can look on prayer insofar as it branches out in holy desires and petitions and in holy enjoyment and affection in God.

If then we consider the act of prayer and its origins, we see that we can pray to God and that sometimes we do engage in prayer and pray easily and enjoyably without any special virtue moving the will. That means that it happens from love of God or from our attachment to God. And although charity does not pray without faith guiding it and without hope encouraging it, that does not mean that faith and hope call prayer forth, just as they do not call forth love of God and things divine, although they guide and encourage charity to engage in prayer.

If we consider prayer as it unfolds and branches out into various expressions of other virtues and if we look at prayer's origins within us in our readiness to pray, we can say that more than a deeply-rooted love for God is required. We need a firmness of purpose which regularly orders and applies the mind to prayer and to a particular kind or intensity of prayer. We can call that customary prayer. This belongs to the practice of religion, as one species of a genus or a part of the whole. Here we take religion to mean the general ability and intention of a mind committed to interior and exterior acts of worship of God.

It might be that someone takes charity to cover not only its primary source but also the way it branches out in many offshoots of love of God and things divine. Then charity as routine and as word includes all virtues which have any connection or implication with the love of God. Under this supposition we can say that the simple act of praying comes from charity, if the act is pure grace. That is not the case with every act of prayer. Nor is this surprising, for not every such act is virtuous. For example, someone can wish a thing and, out of pure avarice or pride, ask for it from God; or someone can ask for it presumptuously or hypocritically or insincerely.



### Answer to the Arguments

The first argument concluded that prayer involved many virtues or all of them. To this we can say that the grace of charity includes its extension into virtues necessary for salvation. Therefore the steady intention of prayer, whence comes the perfect practice of praying, includes the usual dispositions of those virtues which the intention of prayer calls into play and exercises in prayer. This does not mean that such virtues as these, taken in themselves, give rise to prayer, but only insofar as they are brought into play and lead to prayer, given the steady intention of praying. Not every inner act of chastity or sobriety or liberality is an act of prayer, but only when engaged in principally out of an intention to pray to God in words or in contemplation. Then these virtues relate to prayer as cords of a lute or a viol relate to the melody of lute music. There the movement of the hand and the plectrum by which the chords are strummed and vibrated is the first and principal movement.

We may mention as well that prayer often consists in many acts of prayer, with one prayer prior and deeper and more encompassing, the cause and motor of the other prayers. Such a prayer has more amplitude and involvement in prayer. This does not happen with those other virtues, which it activates and uses as its means in particular and secondary acts of prayer.

From what has been said, we can see that, with regard to the other arguments, we can concede some points, others we clear up by making distinctions. Our discussion also shows that the fourth opinion agrees with the other three. For the first three can be explained in a way which agrees with the fourth.

And this is enough for now.



## Identity and Freedom: Bonaventure's Position and Method<sup>1</sup>

Alexander Gerken, O.F.M.

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"Identität und Freiheit:  
Ansatz und Methode im Denken des heiligen Bonaventura"  
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Translated by Myles Parsons, O.F.M. Cap.

### 1. Starting Point: Unity of the Powers of the Soul

The unique position of a thinker of Bonaventure's stature is often best illustrated by considering a contrary position. One way in which we might clarify his position is to re-state it in a different way, short only of contradicting him. Such an approach may serve our purpose in this essay. We shall begin by comparing Bonaventure's position to that of St. Thomas. The comparison will serve as a starting point of our treatment of Bonaventure's thought.

Medieval theology raised the question as to whether or not the powers of the soul, especially intellect and will, are identical with the soul itself and with one another. The question serves our purpose well, because it is a significant part of the background of Augustine's thought. He saw in the soul and its powers an image of the unity and trinity of God. The Middle Ages by and large accepted this Augustinian view. However, the relationship of the soul to its powers, intellect and will, was given varying interpretations by different theologians of the thirteenth century.

Neither Thomas nor Bonaventure answered the question with a categorical yes or no. Thomas was strongly inclined toward the position of an essential difference between the soul and its powers. That is, he leaned more to the distinct properties of the soul's powers than to their unity with the soul. In fact, he placed the distinction between the spiritual soul and its powers on a par with the difference between substance and accident.<sup>2</sup>

This view of Thomas appeared to Bonaventure to neglect the unity of the soul with its powers. We quote: "The powers of the soul are not so identical with the soul as to constitute the soul's inmost essential principle. But they are not so different from the soul as to belong to another category of being, such as is the case with accidents. They are closer to the category of substance when reduced to their first principle."<sup>3</sup>

For the same reason he argues for the greatest possible unity of the soul's powers among themselves: "Therefore, one may say that the powers of the soul are one entity, because

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<sup>1</sup>This article is based on a lecture delivered to the Catholic theological faculty of the University of Regensburg on May 15, 1974. The occasion was a *Dies academicus*. The five lectures of this academic celebration were published in book form in *Aktualität der Scholastik*, Pustet (Regensburg, 1975), 37-52.

<sup>2</sup>I, q. 77, a. 1-2.

<sup>3</sup>Sent., d. 24, p. 1, a. 2, q. 1, concl., *Opera Omnia*, vol. 2, p. 560.