

CUSTODIANS of the Tradition

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General Editor: Kathleen Moffatt OSF, *Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia*, Aston, PA, skmoffatt@aol.com

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Those like ourselves who are immediate heirs of the tradition inspired by the spirituality of Francis [and Clare] might better see ourselves as responsible stewards of a treasure that has much to offer for the healing of humanity and of the world at large.

Zachary Hayes OFM
Bonaventure Fest, 2003, Aston, PA



Christ, Word of God and Exemplar of Humanity:

The Roots of Franciscan Christocentrism and Its Implications for Today

By Zachary Hayes OFM

Overview of St. Francis' Spiritual Vision

There are three crucial insights to be discovered in the spirituality of St. Francis, and these were developed into distinctive theological perspectives by the authors of the Franciscan Order:

- Francis' focus on the figure of Christ;
- Francis' sense of God as a loving Father;
- Francis' sense of creation as a mirror and image of God.

Regardless of the chronological sequence of events in the life of Francis, there is a sort of logic that connects these perspectives. Although Francis was not a professional academic theologian, his spirituality evidenced in these events was such that it led with an inner logic to a style of Christology that became distinctive of the Franciscan tradition. This Christology, in turn, is cast against the background of a distinctive style of Trinitarian theology. And all of this finds expression in a rich theological understanding of creation.

The Humanity of Christ

During his life's journey, the focus of Francis' experience is on the humanity of Christ: from the scene before the crucified Christ in the Church of San Damiano all the way through to his mystical experience on La Verna. These experiences of Incarnation — of cross and crib and Eucharist — both inspire and impel Francis to live his life in imitation of this Christ: the poor and suffering one who, in his human condition, could be recognized as neighbor and brother.

God as a Loving, Generous Father

In the logic that connects these elements, if Christ is seen as brother, then it follows that God, who is Father of the eternal Son, may be seen in an analogous sense as Francis' Father as well. In the early days of his conversion, when Francis renounces his earthly father and claims God as his Father, he seems to express this new-found sense of filial relation to God. The awareness that he is son of this heavenly Father inspires and impels Francis to live in imitation of his brother, Jesus Christ — the one who is pre-eminently Son.

Familial Understanding of the World of Creation

As this logical development proceeds, if it is true that Francis is son to a loving, heavenly Father, then this is equally true of all other people and things: all are related to and come from the same loving God. All should be seen, then, in terms of this familial relationship. The seeds of this sense of family, planted early on in the conversion process of Francis, became more intense as his life progressed. Near the end of his life, it culminated in the most sublime expression of the relationship that ought to exist between humanity and all other creatures: the Canticle of the Creatures. This familial understanding inspires and impels Francis to respect and reverence with a grateful heart all that is created as his sister and his brother.

Development of This Vision in the Doctors of the Order: St. Bonaventure and Blessed John Duns Scotus

Although the crucified Christ played a foundational role throughout the life of Francis, the Franciscan theological tradition did not limit the discussion of the meaning of Christ to the reality of the cross. Rather, its authors moved from the story of Jesus and the cross/resurrection to the widest possible horizon of this story's impact and developed what today is called cosmic Christology. In its simplest terms, cosmic Christology captures the Franciscan conviction that a world without Christ is an incomplete world because the values involved in the life of Christ provide — for those who believe — a life-giving, fulfilling way of relating to all of reality.

Scriptural and Traditional Roots for Cosmic Christology

From its inception, the Christian experience intuited that the significance of the person of Jesus was far more than the meaning restricted only to one human being's life. From a post-resurrection perspective, the earliest disciples began to view Jesus' life against a broader landscape, that is, as the paradigm for all authentic human living.

Beyond this perception, the writings of John and Paul, as well as the Letter to the Hebrews, indicate that the meaning of Jesus is embedded even from the very beginning as creation emerges from the mind and will of God. When John speaks of the "Word" in his Gospel Prologue, it is a way of naming a mystery which contains a divine clue as to the structure and meaning of the universe itself. This clue reveals that the mystery of creation and the mystery of incarnation are intrinsically connected. What happens in and through Jesus comes to be seen as the representative piece of a humanity and of the entire cosmic reality that has come home to God. In the incarnation, the divine aim for creation has been realized.

Especially among Western presentations of Christology, the Franciscan tradition has remained uniquely faithful to this understanding. What follows from this is the conviction that Jesus is about more than helping us to get rid of sin. While redemption is about the overcoming of sin, salvation is about more than this. It is about the completion of what God initiates in creating. So, the issue of overcoming sin is a matter of overcoming all obstacles that stand in the way of accomplishing God's creative aim: the fullest possible sharing of life and love between God and creation. Both of these are what we discover in the mystery of Christ.

Christ as the Point of Departure

Primarily, Francis' experience of Christ serves to reveal to him a God who is Father. This role of Christ as revealer of God is developed extensively by Bonaventure. According to Bonaventure, in our meeting with one who is believed to be Son, we discover the meaning of God in a distinctively Christian sense. The function

Principal Themes

Four interrelated ways of viewing reality derive from this theological understanding:

1. **Christ as the point of departure;**
2. **God as triune love is Creator;**
3. **World as a gift of a loving Creator;**
4. **Humans as sisters and brothers in a cosmic family.**



of Christ, then, is to stand at the center of all reality and reveal its meaning even from the very beginning of the divine plan.

Using a spatial metaphor, Bonaventure argues that because this Son who is "Word" dwells at the very center of the Godhead, the same Word is the invisible principle of unity and meaning through which God reaches out to create the world. But this same Word becomes the visible center of the cosmos and its history in the form of the incarnate Word. Thus it is the shape of Jesus' history and ministry that embodies the divine clue as to the structure of all reality. It is essential, then, for us to pattern our own lives on the values of Jesus for, in this way, we are centered in the mystery of the Word that lies at the heart of the Trinity.

God as Triune Love Is Creator

The primal insight of Francis into the mystery of God was his experience of God as a loving Creator. For Franciscan theologians, then, reflection on the mystery of the Trinity would become a matter of seeking deeper insight into the mystery of divine love. For Bonaventure, the creative and sustaining principle of all created reality is a mystery of orderly love, not of arbitrariness or domination or control.

Such an understanding views power as the ability to call forth through love the good in the other. If this is so, we are invited to shape our relationships with all of created reality in a familial way, grounded as we are together in the mystery of God's creative love. For Scotus, however, such familial relationships always reverence and respect the inviolable uniqueness of each individual creature coming as gift from the hand of this loving Creator, a metaphysical notion which he identifies using the Latin term *haecceitas*.

World as a Gift of a Loving Creator

Francis' vision reached from the loving Creator to the richness and beauty of the gift which pours forth in the work of creation. The Franciscan understanding of the meaning of poverty is rooted here. For Bonaventure, in fact, the meaning of poverty lies basically in recognizing that all things in the created universe, myself included, come as a pure gift from the loving, creative power of God. Our first response to such giftedness is awe and gratitude, not a search for possession and control. And our ongoing challenge is to discover how one most appropriately receives and lives with and in such giftedness.

Because for both Bonaventure and Scotus God is the mystery of a self-diffusive kind of overflowing love that is beyond measure, it is not surprising to them that there should be such a rich variety of created "words" through which the eternal mystery of Love finds expression in creation. By analogy, then, creation is like the Creator in terms of divine simplicity and boundless fertility. Although the elements of the created order are few and simple, they come together to produce a staggering richness of both non-living and living forms.

According to Bonaventure, the deepest truth about the created world is that it has within itself the potential to become, through God's grace, something of what has already come to be in the mystery of Christ: like Christ, creation can receive and respond to the self-communication of the mystery of divine love. Moreover, what has happened between God and the world in Christ points to the future of the cosmos, a future that involves the radical transformation of created reality through the unitive power of God's creative love.

Humans as Sisters and Brothers in a Cosmic Family

Such an understanding of the common destiny shared by all that is created grounds Francis' sense of the familial relations that should exist between all creatures since they come from a common Creator. Because all share sisterhood and brotherhood in Christ, we relate to one another shaped by his values. If we live from this Christ-centered approach, Bonaventure assures us of a life that will be ultimately fulfilling because it opens us in a most radical sense to the mystery of the divine.

Such a radical response empowers us to embrace the world in its truest reality, discovering in Christ the bond that unites the mystery of our own origin and end. This is the core of our spiritual journey in and with the world into the mystery of God. Because Christ embodies the whole of creation in his individual human nature, all of the material universe is transformed in the living presence of God. It is significant to realize that, in this vision, the world will not be destroyed but will be brought to the conclusion which God intends for it from the beginning. And that beginning is anticipated in the mystery of the incarnate Word and the glorified Christ.

The Absolute Primacy of Christ: An Explanation of This Doctrine

According to Scotus' doctrine of the absolute primacy of Christ, God creates so that Christ may come into existence. So that Christ may exist, there must be a human race. But a human race needs a place in which to live and this place is the created cosmos. So it is that, for both Bonaventure and Scotus, though for each in a distinctive way, a cosmos without Christ is like an arch without its keystone: its simply does not hold together. But with Christ, all comes together in unity and coherence and is finally brought to its destiny in God.

This understanding does not negate the cross. Rather, it insists that the tragic outcome of the history of Jesus was not the motive for the incarnation. If one can speak at all of a motive for incarnation, it must lie in the pure and uncoerced love of God and not in anything outside of God. This conviction makes it clear that, even if

Adam had not sinned, Christ would have come, possibly in the mode of glory.

However, given the reality of sin, the incarnation serves not only its primary function as the completion of creation, but a secondary function necessitated by the need to overcome any obstacles on the way to that completion. This incarnation in suffering, which culminates on the cross, is redemptive in a way that brings God's creative action in the world to completion and is, therefore, salvific in the most comprehensive sense of that term.

Implications of This Christology

From this style of Christology, we draw out five major implications:

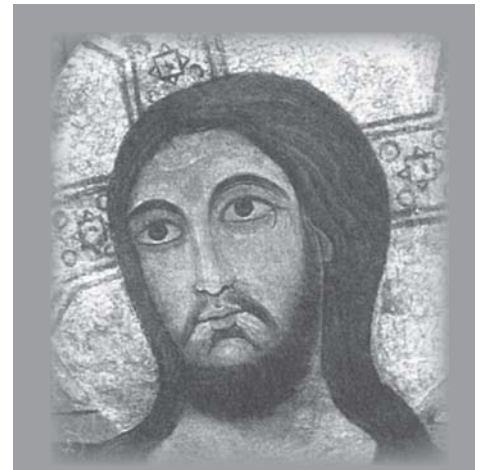
- The understanding of human identity;
- The nature of our world;
- The message of the kingdom of God;
- The theory of redemptive completion;
- The approach to interreligious dialogue.

The Understanding of Human Identity

We are challenged by this Christology to become our own unique expression of the image of Christ in our world by appropriating the values of Christ in the depths of our own life and by allowing these values to shape our self-understanding as well as our relationships with others. Because the mystery of the incarnate Word is so rich, the varieties of gifts with which the Spirit endows individuals become appropriate forms of expressing the wealth of the Christ-mystery. We are not to become carbon-copies of the historical Jesus; rather, we are to embody something of the Word in the "word" of ourselves in a distinctive and personal way.

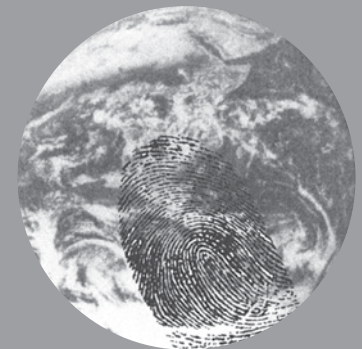
The Nature of Our World

We are challenged by this vision to see the cosmos as the body of the eternal Word. If the Word is the internal self-expression of God, then the cosmos is what comes into being when the divine Word is expressed in something that is external to God. The cosmos, then, is to be read as the primal book of divine self-revelation. And the meaning of the cosmos is concentrated in humanity and radicalized in the person of Jesus Christ.



This is what we proclaim to you: what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked upon and our hands have touched — We speak of the word of life. This life became visible, we have seen and bear witness to it. And we proclaim to you the eternal life that was present to the Father and became visible to us. What we have seen and heard, we proclaim in turn to you, so that you may share life with us. This kinship of ours is with the Father and with the Son, Jesus Christ.

1 John 1:1–3



Such an understanding dispels any sense of cosmic terror because the whole universe created in Christ is in the process of coming home to God. The gifts of the earth, then, are not ours to exploit or to use simply for our own pragmatic ends. Rather, they are to be revered by human beings whose responsibility it is to return them to God as their final destiny.

The Message of the Kingdom

We are challenged by the doctrine of the primacy of Christ to become involved in overcoming the obstacles to the coming of the kingdom by faithfully communicating a message about the eternal significance of creation and of human efforts to create a better world. In light of this truth, we are committed to loving our world and calling to expression its inherent goodness.

The Theory of Redemptive Completion

We are challenged by this understanding to integrate a creational theology and a redemptive theology. Completion refers to the process of bringing creation to its God-intended end which is anticipated in the destiny of Christ. Redemption refers to the necessary process of dealing with all the obstacles that stand in the way of that completion. Such a perspective creates a larger framework for spirituality and theology more resonant with contemporary cultural images.

The Approach to Interreligious Dialogue

Finally, we are challenged by the universalist implications of this Christological

vision to enter into conversation with other religious traditions with a strong sense of Christian identity but without any self-righteous sense of an absolute possession of Absolute Truth. Each tradition may reveal something of significance. Pluralism and conversation do not have to mean total relativism. Such a genuine openness to the truth of the other is critical for those serving in the ministry of evangelization.

Conclusion

The insights foundational to Franciscan spirituality and theology need to be retrieved and brought into conversation with the questions and needs of contemporary people and the problems of a greatly troubled world. This treasure that is our tradition has much to offer for the healing of humanity and of the world at large.

Christ, Word of God and Exemplar of Humanity

Zachary Hayes OFM

"A magisterial synthesis of the Franciscan worldview" — Michael Blastic OFM

Given at Anaheim CA, 1995 and Neumann University, Aston, PA 2003 • Synthesis by Clare D'Auria OSF

Zachary Hayes OFM, Friar of O.F.M. Province of Sacred Heart, St. Louis, MO and professor of historical and systematic theology, was a vital force in the mission of Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, IL since its founding in 1968. An internationally acclaimed Bonaventurian scholar, Zachary has a special interest in the critical interaction between science and theology. Publishing over 18 books, Zachary is tireless in elaborating the uniqueness of the Franciscan approach to education.

Selected Readings

The Hidden Center: Spirituality and Speculative Christology in St. Bonaventure. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1996

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This full presentation is in *The Cord*, 46.1 (1996) 3-17.

Clare D'Auria, Sister of St. Francis of Philadelphia, Aston, PA ministers at the Spiritual Center of her congregation, Aston, PA. Her M.A. thesis from Washington Theological Union, Washington, D.C. was on a Franciscan process of discernment framed on Francis' "Prayer before the Crucifix." Clare has given innumerable Retreats and presentations on Franciscan themes throughout the U.S. and was the Franciscan Federation's keynote speaker in 2006. She is a member of the Franciscan Pilgrimage Program, Milwaukee, WI.



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Zachary Hayes OFM
Bonaventure Fest, 2003, Aston, PA



It Pleases Me That You Should Teach Sacred Theology Franciscans Doing Theology¹

Michael Blastic OFM

A Letter to Brother Anthony of Padua

Brother Francis sends greetings to Brother Anthony, my Bishop.

I am pleased that you teach sacred theology to the brothers providing that, as is contained in the Rule, you “do not extinguish the Spirit of prayer and devotion” during study of this kind.

Introduction

Franciscans realize that they are neither monastic nor apostolic and claim for themselves the description “evangelical.” The rediscovery of the evangelical form of life has emerged from a systematic reflection on the experience of Franciscan living in the light of the early sources, which include not only the writings and hagiographical texts of Francis and Clare but also the writings of great theologians of the Order. Because of the contemporary focus on ministry, there is reluctance to associate “doing” with “theology.” Thus, we dichotomize what was an integral experience of Christian living.

Franciscan Evangelical Theology

Francis wrote a letter to Anthony that expressed his support for Anthony’s ministry of teaching theology to the brothers, with the provision that it be subject to the prescription of the Rule—that it “not extinguish the Spirit of prayer and devotion” (LR, V:2). It is significant that, by the time the *Legenda assidua* was published in 1232 celebrating the life of the recently canonized Anthony, there is no mention of this letter of Francis. The *Assidua* presents Anthony as a preacher and teacher, the effective remedy to heretical inroads into orthodoxy and orthopraxis. Anthony was simply doing what every Friar Minor was doing, albeit in a unique and outstanding manner. 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, to the time, the place, and the occasion. Thus, Francis’s granting permission for Anthony to do what he was doing was not germane to the Anthony presented in the *Assidua*, who was simply defining the life of the Friar Minor. Yet, the sermon collections that he authored are far from the style of preaching we associate with Francis and the early companions. Anthony represents another model of Franciscan life, and thus he is important for our understanding the origins and nature of that life.

Zachary Hayes demonstrates that the Franciscan theological tradition is based on reflection, by theologians of the Order, on the religious experience of Francis and Clare.² *The Franciscan form of evangelical life, then, is ultimately concerned with “doing” theology. It implies that Franciscans do what Francis and Clare did, not only with their heart and hands, but also with their heads.*

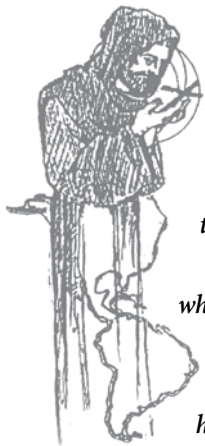
Anthony was not an innovator in this regard. *Thomas of Celano, in his Vita prima (c. 1229), was the first “published” Franciscan theologian to do theology explicitly in this Franciscan manner.* His work, a theological and hagiographical masterpiece, was a means of promulgating Francis’s cult. *Celano approached his task as a theologian, inserting the saint into the history of salvation while at the same time preserving Francis’s three basic intuitions relative to a) the Christian’s relationship to the world, b) the meaning of the human Christ, and c) the nature of the human person.*

¹ 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.

² See among other articles of Zachary Hayes, “Christ, Word of God and Exemplar of Humanity,” *The Cord* 46:1 (Jan./Feb.1996): 3-17.

The Franciscan Worldview

According to Celano, Francis, after the initial enthusiasm of his conversion, worked in a monastery kitchen, but ultimately was forced to leave because it did not provide for his 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” (1C 16). While the monastery (a Church institution) did not supply his needs, an old friend (a secular-social institution) did. His intuition that the world is good and provides for authentic human needs is a basis for experiencing poverty as abundance. Thus, Celano makes a theological commentary on a teaching of Francis:



*“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 (Adm XVI).³*

Note the lack of dichotomy between God and the world. ♦ **This insight is a theology of manifestation—creation shows forth the abundance of the good God.**⁴

This leads to a ♦ **second Franciscan intuition—the meaning of the human Christ.** Celano develops Francis’s relationship to creation in terms of his “reading” Christ in creation, culminating with the celebration at Greccio. What Francis saw as he “looked down on the things of the earth” was “the image of him who made himself poor for us in the world” (1C 76). Flowers, lambs, worms, poor men and women, lepers and people who suffer—all are recognized in Christ at Greccio. Francis wanted to do something that “would recall to

memory the little Child who was born in Bethlehem and [to] 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” (1C 84). This is a significant theological statement about the meaning of the incarnation—

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. The meaning of the world, and hence of the human person, is revealed in Christ.

Thirdly, Celano suggests that in Francis’s vision of the crucified seraph something important about the human person is revealed. Celano depicts “a man standing above him, like a seraph with six wings, his hands extended and his feet joined together and fixed to a cross” (1C 94). Celano comments about the “kind and gracious look with which he [Francis] saw himself regarded” while, at the same time, “the sharpness of [the man’s] suffering filled Francis with fear.” The paradox of the gracious look of the suffering man expresses a profound insight into Francis’s own experience. The last years of his life were filled with suffering—physical, psychological, and spiritual. ♦ **Human flesh carries within it the dying of Jesus, who reveals authentic humanness—fragile, limited, and vulnerable.**

Implications for the Franciscan Form of Evangelical Life

These three intuitions concerning the world, Jesus Christ, and the human person constitute an axis around which Celano tells the story of Francis and with which he presents a synthesis of Franciscan evangelical theology, describing the implications for the praxis of Francis’s life. In the *Vita prima*, we

recognize a dynamic progress: Francis’s conversion culminates in his hearing the Word (1-22) and leads him to action and presence in the world (23-70). This, in turn, serves as the location for his life of contemplation where he sees Christ in creation, culminating in Greccio (71-87), and leads ultimately to his transformation in receiving the stigmata (88-118), through which the dynamic begins again. Celano thus describes the Franciscan form of life—one moves from conversion to 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 humanity of Jesus Christ.

Here the pattern of the spiritual life shifts as a result of Celano’s theological intuitions. The traditional understanding of progress in the spiritual life had been described in a monastic pattern of reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. One had to “climb up a ladder” and be separated from the distractions of the world. However, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, this ladder began to lose its meaning. Advances in learning heralded the birth of a new worldview. New social configurations began to emerge with the commune. Static feudal structures surrendered to more mobile urban social organizations. Aristocratic dynastic power centers gave way to the democracy of the city. A money-based economy fostered travel and trade. These developments impacted Christian experience, and an evangelical reawakening trickled down to ordinary, *sincere Christians eager for a greater participation in the promises of the Gospel.* Francis and Clare arrived on the scene at the cusp of this development. Their life experiences led to a new understanding of the Christian life and to a corresponding evangelical pattern of perfection that did not presume separation from the world, *but rather insertion into it as mediators of God’s presence and goodness.*

³ 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.”

⁴ Cf. David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (NY: Crossroad, 1981): 376-385.

Celano presents Francis and Clare's form of life as the embodiment of a Franciscan evangelical theology. This theology serves the understanding of the foundational intuitions and vision of Francis and Clare and provides a basis for the Franciscan form of life. Celano is "doing" theology as he tells the story.

Theological Contributions of Bonaventure and Scotus

The theological work of *Bonaventure* develops the intuitions of Celano from the *evangelical perspective of the good*. Scotus, for his part, develops them theologically in terms of the incarnation as first in God's intention and the motive for creation.

Francis's writings are replete with praise and acknowledgement of God's goodness. God is simply "good." No more can be said about the nature of God. Bonaventure, reflecting on the meaning of Francis's life, creates a *summa* of Franciscan theology (*The Soul's Journey into God*), 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 "Good." Bonaventure connects the sixth wing of the Seraph with the gospel revelation of God as good.⁵ 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 important to Francis and used by him to articulate the meaning of Franciscan life (ER I:4).

Bonaventure's reflection led him to understand the Trinitarian processions and relations as expressive of self-diffusive goodness in an immanent way within God-self and reaching outside of God toward creation in terms of the union of "God and man in the unity of the Person of Christ."⁶ Thus Bonaventure articulates the implications of the statement about Christmas attributed to Francis in the Assisi. Compilation: "Because he was born, we knew we would



St. Francis appears at the Chapter of Arles while Anthony is preaching.
Artist: Giotto. Basilica of St. Francis, Upper Church, Assisi.

be saved" (AC 14). In the suffering and lowliness assumed in the flesh of the incarnate Jesus Christ, the goodness of God and the world and human life is revealed. This is kenotic goodness, enfleshed in humanness. 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!

John Duns Scotus begins with the love of God, suggesting that anything less than love is inadequate to explain God's action. Human sin could never be a motive for God's acting. God creates so that Christ might become incarnate, the embodiment of God's love in the created order. Creation then exists for the sake of the incarnation and thus requires an approach to ethics from the vantage point of the natural affection for justice or the "harmony of goodness."⁷ Mutuality is central. Reflecting the love of God, it is the principle for ordering the relation between the individual and

the community—and thus *haecceitas* (thisness or the uniqueness of the individual) cannot be comprehended or intuited apart from the community. *Scotus's theological insights lead us to a new appreciation of the intuitions of Francis and Clare*. 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. Franciscan theology is essential to the Franciscan *forma vitae*.

Over time, there has been a significant variety within the Franciscan theological tradition. The various schools all emerge from the tradition of Francis, but each develops a specific focus. Bonaventure is more mystical-cosmic-Christological; Scotus is more scientific-cosmic-metaphysical. Later we have William of Ockham, who is more logical-ecclesiological-philosophical. However, as diverse as each vein of thought is, each

⁵ Cf. *Soul's Journey into God*, V:2 in *Bonaventure*, trans. Ewert Cousins (New York: Paulist Press 1978) 94-95.

⁶ *Soul's Journey into God*, VI:4; Cousins 106.

⁷ Cf. Mary Beth Ingham, *The Harmony of Goodness: Mutuality and Moral Living according to John Duns Scotus* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1996).

can be connected directly or indirectly to the religious experience of Francis and Clare.

The Present Historical Moment as Opportunity

Today, the world looks forward with hope to a time when the aspirations of the human heart might be realized in a manner that would announce what Christians speak of as the “Kingdom of God.” We cannot help but be dismayed, however, by the way things really are—violence, wars, crime, abuse, impoverishment, ecological disaster, international realignments, religious discrimination, the dissolution of the family, the hopelessness of drugs. These suggest the failure of human ingenuity and institutions to achieve well-thought-out purposes and goals. The modern human project, born of the enlightenment, asserted the superiority of human reason, believing that it gave meaning and purpose to everything. Unfortunately, the separation of thought from feeling, of content from form, of theory from practice led to the dissolution of the “felt synthesis” of most ancient and medieval thinkers. The cosmos was

reduced to nature, and science adopted a dominating attitude. God disappeared into a greater hiddenness and otherness. The self became more autonomous and individualistic, isolated by choice from the cosmos, the divine, and the other.

David Tracy 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.”⁸ *Implicitly and explicitly, Tracy names our Franciscan theological tradition*, which resists separating thought from feeling and proposes an affective rationality as the measure of truth. It refuses to separate content from form and proposes that the world is not made up simply of things, but that everything, in its particularity and unique shape, size, color, and appearance, manifests the truth that God is good.

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 responds then to three significant questions posed by our times:

1. What does it mean to be human?
2. What are the values and roles of social institutions?
3. How are we to deal with differences, with otherness?

Conclusion

The challenge placed before Franciscans today is how to respond to these significant questions meaningfully using the great treasure of our Franciscan worldview and charism. We need the help of theology to mediate the meaning of Francis and Clare for us and for our contemporary world, and so we must come to know our Franciscan theologians. *Retrieving Franciscan evangelical life demands “doing” Franciscan theology* — an exercise that will enrich the quality of life of the Franciscan body and provide a foundation for more effective witness to the good God. We have wonderful forbears who continue to show us a way in our world and for our day.

⁸ David Tracy, “Evil, Suffering, Hope: The Search for New Forms of Contemporary Theodicy,” *Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings* 50 (1995): 31.

It Pleases Me That You Should Teach Sacred Theology Franciscans Doing Theology

Michael Blastic OFM

Source: *Franciscan Studies*, 55 (1998): 1-25. The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, NY.
(Condensed by Elise Saggau OSF)



Michael W. Blastic OFM is a Friar Minor of the Holy Name of Jesus Province, New York, NY. He is presently Professor and the Chair of Franciscan Theology and Spirituality Studies at the Washington Theological Union, Washington DC. He received his Ph.D. in Historical Theology from St. Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri. His research and publications focus on the Writings of Francis and Clare of Assisi, the Franciscan Hagiographical Tradition, and the early Franciscan tradition of theology and spirituality.

Elise Saggau OSF is a Franciscan Sister of Little Falls, Minnesota. She served as Assistant Director of Publications at the Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, for eight years and was editor of *The Cord* from 1995-2001. She is now engaged in free-lance publication work and on-going Franciscan education/formation. She lives in St. Paul, Minnesota.

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General Editor: Kathleen Moffatt OSF, *Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia*, Aston, PA, skmoffatt@aol.com

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Custodians of the Tradition

*Reclaiming the Franciscan
Intellectual Tradition*



Those like ourselves who are immediate heirs of the tradition inspired by the spirituality of Francis [and Clare] might better see ourselves as responsible stewards of a treasure that has much to offer for the healing of humanity and of the world at large.

Zachary Hayes OFM
Bonaventure Fest, 2003, Aston, PA



Francis as Vernacular Theologian:

A link to the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition?

Dominic Monti OFM

Development of Theology

- Theologian is one who is a “professional practitioner of theology which is the scientific study of God and God’s relationship with the world.”
- Three Modes of the Development of Western Religious Thought:
 1. Scholasticism as a theology was developed approximately one hundred years before the time of Francis. This form of theology was comprised of three techniques:
 - Methodical commentary on an authoritative text
 - Systematic analysis and solution of dogmatic and moral issues
 - Synthetic drawing together of a coherent and comprehensive presentation of doctrine for the purpose of instruction
 2. Monastic Theology came about in the 1950’s developed by Jean Leclercq in which he studied mystical thinkers and writings of individuals who were not academicians and who expressed insights into the nature of God and God’s relationship with the world.
 3. Bernard McGinn, a leading expert on medieval thought, coined the term Vernacular Theology. This form of theology focused on an audience of ordinary women and men who sought to find God in their daily experiences instead of the educated elite or the monks and nuns in the enclosure.

Francis of Assisi as Vernacular Theologian

Bernard McGinn suggests that “Francis may well be thought of as one of the first major Vernacular Theologians.”

- Francis as a Theologian
 1. In the *Letter to the Entire Order* (1225-1226) Francis refers to himself as “ignorant, uneducated person” (v. 39) indicating that he was not formally trained.
 2. In various histories of the Order Francis is not listed among those recognized as theologians together with Anthony of Padua, Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, John Duns Scotus or William of Ockham. The Franciscan School of Theology in Paris began after the death of Francis in the 1230’s. Philotheus Boehner in his classic *History of the Franciscan School* states that Francis “enters the story as the person who sparked the birth of the Franciscan movement by his desire to realize the Gospel ideal in a radical way.”
 3. In early biographies of Francis, the *Assisi Compilation* and Thomas of Celano’s *Second Life of Francis* recount how Francis’ interpretation of a passage from Ezekiel edified a member of the Order of Preachers. “Although this blessed man [Francis] was not learned in scholarly disciplines, still he learned from God wisdom from above and enlightened by the splendors of eternal light, he understood the Scriptures deeply.”(p. 314)



Humility of God

Every day God humbles himself just as he did when he came from his heavenly throne into the Virgin's womb; every day God comes to us and lets us see him in abjection, when God descends from the bosom of the Father into the hands of the priest at the altar.

Admonition One



You are Most High. You are humility.

Praises of God

Look, brothers, at the humility of God, and pour out your hearts to him.

Letter to Whole Order



"Francis as Vernacular Theologian"

Francis as "vernacular theologian" [*one whose writing and life demonstrates that all persons can experience God in the midst of the world, and communicate this for the ordinary person*] was "not simply a religious genius who sparked an evangelical renewal movement that would come to include great thinkers, but also as one who himself forged new understandings of God and of God's relation to the world."

... *To discover this profound theology, we must turn to his own writings, an effort that has begun only over the last twenty-five years.* Francis left some thirty works — mainly prayers and letters . . . Even though most of these are in Latin, they may be classified as examples of vernacular theology. . . . It is evident that he thought in Italian and then attempted to express his ideas in Latin. But despite this simple language and the occasional nature of his writings, scholars agree that they manifest a *remarkably coherent vision of God and creation.*

Thaddée Matura OFM has presented the most thorough analysis of this vision, and suggests two texts that may be taken as a key to unlocking it. These are the *Later Admonition and Exhortation* (formerly known as the *Second Letter to All the Faithful*) and chapter 23 of the *Earlier Rule of 1221*. [Thaddée Matura, *Francis of Assisi: The Message in His Writings*, 33.]

Francis came to view everything in his life as fashioned in love by an all-good God. . . . For Francis, everything was the gift of an utterly transcendent, unfathomable, but loving source.

Matura emphasizes several points in this connection that indeed link Francis with the subsequent *Franciscan theological tradition.*

- ❖ He emphasizes "the Father" as having a certain primacy within the Trinity. The overflowing goodness of God is evident first in God's inner life. . . . Francis does not associate this title primarily with reference to us, but as "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." . . . If we are God's "sons" and "daughters," it is because we are incorporated *into a relationship that already exists at the very heart of God.* [N.B. The Office of the Passion]

Continues on bottom of page 3

■ Theological Vision of Francis

A careful reading and studying of the writings of Francis of Assisi assist in an understanding of Francis as a vernacular theologian. Thaddée Matura suggests a review of the *Later Admonition and Exhortation* and Chapter 23 of the *Early Rule*.

1. Language: The language that Francis uses to describe God is derived from Biblical and Liturgical Sources. To illustrate this point Chapter 23 of the *Early Rule* is helpful. “*With our whole heart, our whole soul, our whole mind, with our whole strength and fortitude, with our whole understanding . . . let us all love the Lord God, who has given and gives to each one of us our whole body, our whole soul, and our whole life, who has created, redeemed, and will save us by His mercy alone, who did and does everything good for us.*”(ER 23:8) Francis utilizes in his prayer the plural pronouns and not the singular

“I”. Another point to be highlighted in this selection from the *Early Rule* is that Francis in his prayer addresses God as Trinity — the three persons of God. This is different from attributing various works to the persons of the Trinity.

2. Trinitarian Vision:

- The Father has primacy in the Trinity. Francis refers to God as Father, not in reference to us, rather as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, Christ is the beloved Son.
- In the *Later Exhortation* Francis writes: “We are spouses when the faithful soul is united by the Holy Spirit to our Lord Jesus Christ. We are brothers, moreover, when we do the will of the Father Who is in heaven; mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body through love and a pure and sincere conscience . . .” (v. 49) If God is triune, we too have a three fold relationship with God.

- All is fashioned in love by an all good God. Therefore, everything reveals the goodness of God. In Chapter 23 of the *Early Rule* gratitude is expressed to God. Francis refers to God as being “all powerful, most holy, almighty, and supreme God . . .” (v. 1) For Francis all is created in love by God. Francis saw all as gift.
- The *Canticle of Creation* is truly vernacular since it expresses a distinctive experience of God for everyone. Francis calls on every creature to praise God because of what God has created. Therefore, each creature is praiseworthy.
 - Each creature is beautiful in that it reflects God’s own nature.
 - Each creature is a brother and sister harmonizing the theophany in all of creation.
 - Each creature is an expression of God’s presence.

Continued from page 2

- ❖ Every created thing reveals the goodness of this loving God [i.e. 1221:23, 1, 5]. Francis best captures this insight in the *Canticle of the Creatures*, which Bernard McGinn considers his *most strikingly creative contribution as a vernacular theologian*. . . . The fact that Francis wanted this poem to remain in Italian and composed music for it demonstrated his intention to communicate a *distinctive experience of God to everyone*.
- ❖ The mystery of God as Trinity . . . For Francis Christ is always the Son, the Word and self-expression of the Father. . . . Taking our human nature, he makes his own flesh and blood the *language through which the Father’s total love for his brothers and sisters is expressed* [Early Rule 22.41].
- ❖ “Brother” — Francis’s experience of Christ as one equally like us and as one in compassion and solidarity as a member of the same family. “As the first-born of many brothers and sisters,” Christ has blazed the trail of faithful discipleship by his self-emptying love. In doing so he *“has left us an example that we might follow in his footsteps”* [2LrF 10-13].
- ❖ *Image of the Holy Spirit as Spouse. One of the most profoundly original contributions of Francis as a vernacular theologian.* Used by Francis to describe Our Lady, Clare, her sisters and every committed Christian: Spouse of the Holy Spirit! [See Dominic Monti, “The Experience of the Spirit in Our Franciscan Tradition,” *The CORD*, 49.3 (1999): 114-129.]

From St. Bonaventure on St. Francis: *Blessed Francis said that he wanted his brothers to study, but first to practice what they preached. After all, what is the use of knowing a lot, but tasting nothing?* (The Conferences on the Six Days of Creation)



- Traditionally Franciscan Theology is seen as Christocentric, however, in Francis' writings Christ is placed in the context of the Trinity. Christ is always the Son, Word and self-expression of the Father.
 - Francis views Christ by his two natures:
 - Christ humbles himself to dwell among us and sheds his blood for us
 - Christ fulfills destiny to be like God
3. *Letter to the Entire Order*: The Prayer at the end of the letter provides the image of the Holy Spirit as our spouse. "Inwardly cleansed, interiorly enlightened and inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit, may we be able to follow in the footprints of Your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 51) Francis in his writings makes a number of references of being spouse.
- In the Office of the Passion the Antiphon to the Blessed Virgin Mary Francis prays: "... Father in heaven, Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, Spouse of the Holy Spirit ..." Reference is not made to being the Spouse of Christ but rather of the Holy Spirit. Thereby emphasizing that all Christians are called to the same relationship will bring all to a heightened level of fulfilling the will of God.
 - To be a spouse of the Holy Spirit is basic to our relationship to God.
 - The Spirit is the bond of love. Therefore, in being open to the power of the Holy Spirit we will be transformed to what God desires and what we desire, to become one movement of love.
4. *Early Rule* Chapter 23: The image of spouse helps one to understand the doxology found in Chapter 23 of

the *Early Rule*. "[God] has created, redeemed and will save us by his mercy alone. Francis believed that redemption and salvation were not the same. Redemption took place by Christ. Salvation involves not only a continuing gift of God's love but also a personal response from us. Salvation is still unfolding and the fullness of God's love is yet to be revealed."

Conclusion

The selected writings of Francis reveal the depth of his understanding of God and God's relationship with creation. We are reminded in a careful reading of the writings of Francis of Assisi that it was not only a knowing but also a choosing God. Therefore, what is known by the head must also permeate the heart. Franciscan theologians always considered theology a practical science.



Francis as Vernacular Theologian: A link to the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition?

Dominic Monti OFM

Synthesis provided by: Suzanne Kush CSSF

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Dominic Monti OFM, Vicar Provincial of Holy Name Province of the O.F.M., New York, NY, is a preeminent scholar of Franciscan History as well as the teachings of St. Bonaventure. His courses at the Washington Theological Union, Washington, D.C. since 1979 and most of the Summer Sessions of the Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, N.Y. have enriched and deepened understanding of the whole Franciscan Movement. Dominic is the author of Bonaventure's *Writings Concerning the Franciscan Order* as well as a new translation of the *Breviloquium*. He made significant contributions to *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, Vol. 1, 2, 3, 1999-2001*.

Suzanne M. Kush CSSF, a Felician Sister, serves as the Director of the Franciscan Center for Social Concern at St. Bonaventure University and adjunct faculty member. She also is a staff member of the Franciscan Pilgrimage Program. Previously Suzanne served as a Formator for her Congregation. Suzanne collaborated with Margaret Carney OSF and Jean Francois Godet-Calogeras on *The History of the Third Order Rule: A Source Book*.

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General Editor: Kathleen Moffatt OSF, *Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia*, Aston, PA, skmoffatt@aol.com

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Zachary Hayes OFM
Bonaventure Fest, 2003, Aston, PA



The One Thing Necessary

Seeing Chapter IX of the *Third Order Regular Rule* through the Lens of the Teachings of John Duns Scotus

Mary Beth Ingham CSJ

The First and Greatest Commandment

We all know that the first and greatest commandment — the one thing necessary — is to “*Love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and all your strength.*”

The truth of it is written on our hearts. No one needs to teach this truth to us. The words of the commandment are natural to us. As Augustine would say, it is closer to our identity than we are to ourselves. At the same time, this command does not merely rest in our hearts but shows itself as active in our lives by bringing harmony, peace, and therefore beauty to the world around us. Harmony and peace bring beauty to what we subjectively feel inside ourselves and to what we objectively observe outside ourselves. We come equipped for everything we need for the spiritual journey. Of course, God’s delight is to be with us as the beautiful line from Proverbs says — “My delight is to be with the children of men.” The Franciscan tradition has taught us this very well.

This scriptural passage is a command and obligation about relationship. As a result, we are surrounded by the commandment, we are impregnated with it, we are like fish in water and the commandment is like the water that surrounds us. The commandment internally and externally, subjectively and objectively manifests itself. The fruit of the commandment is beauty, harmony, gentleness and peace. *We have the natural ability to live this commandment of relationship.* In fact, the reason this commandment exists is that it is natural for us to follow it and live our vocation in right relationship.

The Rule Itself

Regarding the Third Order Regular Rule, specifically Chapter IX. The first paragraph in the Chapter speaks about the necessary commandment — love of God — as the source for the apostolic life. The manner of the apostolic life is peacemaking. This means that, in being a presence one is offering a transformative presence to the world. Finally, the goal of the apostolic life is to give praise and glory to God. All of one’s deepest desires and the desires of the human heart converge around this inspiration that is the heart of this Rule. **Chapter IX is all about the heart: centered on the heart, written on the heart, flowing from the heart.**

This is not to talk about the heart in the sense of the physical organ or seat of emotion. It is to use the biblical sense of the heart; that is, my deepest self, my inner center, the place where my deep, unique self (*haec*, in Scotist terms) expresses itself. This unique self is expressed in but not limited to my emotions and passions.

Affection for Happiness and Affection for Justice

As Scotus noted, the heart has two desires or affections:

1. to love justice through right action and
2. to have what I need for myself to be happy.

The **first** desire is the desire *to love* and *act rightly*, to act as God acts, to see as God sees, to be just. The **second** type of *affection for happiness* or self is a healthy one because it focuses on what I need for a healthy, normal life. Only a misguided act would ask me to not have this desire. This healthy desire for self is part of what makes me a unique individual.



Generous Creativity

These two desires or affections exist in us because they exist in God. God's self love is necessary for all because this is love of the Supreme Being. My rightly ordered self love is necessary only for myself because I am not supreme — not the center of the universe. *My two affections, in right order, allow me to respond with generous creativity to each situation in my life and to transform them.* The *affection for happiness* is a natural disposition, while the *affection for justice* is what allows us to choose freely. These two affections working together and complementing each other are what makes us rational in our choices.

Which are the elements involved in choice? *First, consider how God sees it; how God loves it.* This affords me objectivity because I am looking at things with another's vision. God reveals divine values to us through scripture: concern for the poor, the innocent, the voiceless, etc. We can be transformed into people who see the world from God's point of view by developing harmony between the two affections.

As we see in Scotus, our affection for justice is not lost as a result of Original Sin (some theological traditions claim that it is) and this affection is even shared with the non-baptized. Still, it is important to note that using both affections leads to a state of freedom. Sometimes people choose one affection or the other. For example, battered women may choose to stay in violent relationships in order to sacrifice themselves for the sake of their children. This would be an extreme of other-centered generosity that causes damage to the necessary affection for self happiness.

The fact that our affection for justice is not lost by Original Sin is what opens the

door for the positive view of humanity characteristic of Scotus.

God did not come into history to fix what was broken but rather to be with what God values — humans and all of creation.

This makes a *huge difference to the reason* for apostolic ministry: *we are to be present with, not to be fixing.* Choosing to get our two affections into harmony releases our creative energy and demonstrates the perfection of our reasoning ability. This is true freedom.

We have to make choices about how to act. Sometimes it happens that I can stand in the moment before deciding too quickly what to do. I can get my two affections into harmony and then act creatively with the movement of the Spirit. It's as if I hold myself in readiness and then the Spirit rushes in.

Affection for Justice

Now, let us identify places in the Third Order Regular Rule where the affections for justice and happiness are joined. We can consider the *affection for justice*. Chapter IX, paragraphs 29-30 refer to healing the wounded and the erring.

These are external actions, moving us toward others. But, being willing to take risks to do these types of ministries, to expose one's self to those possibly hostile to such actions reveals a love of justice for its own sake. One can choose to love the good of justice in spite of possible personal repercussions. This requires the ability to recognize the right moment and choose to take a step forward.

The brothers and sisters are to love God with their whole heart, their whole soul and mind and with all their strength, and to love their neighbor as themselves. Let them glorify God in all they do. Sent into the world, they should give Witness by word and work to God's voice and make known to all that only God is all powerful. (cf. Mk 12:30, Mt 22:30)

As they announce peace with their lips, let them be careful to have it even more within their own hearts. No one should be roused to wrath or insult on their account; rather, all should be moved to peace, goodwill and mercy because of their gentleness. The sisters and brothers are called to heal the wounded, to bind up those who are bruised, and to reclaim the erring . . . (29-30)

Affection for Happiness

And, what of the necessary affection for happiness? In paragraphs 30-31 I find places where it reveals itself: *gentleness of heart, striving toward humility and giving thanks with the joy that is part of the Franciscan vocation.* These are acts of the affection for happiness because these acts come from the deepest wellsprings of our selves. The work of a lifetime is involved in having the two affections in balance: taking risks in healing the wounded or erring from the stance of joyful humility.

The Balance

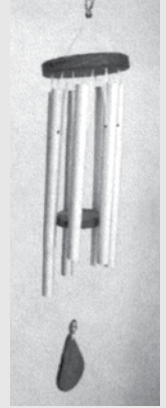
Small acts often reveal that the balance has been realized. An example includes the film "The Lives of Others." Set in 1984, in East Berlin, a member of the secret police had a playwright and his wife under surveillance for suspected but unfounded disloyalty to the State. During this time the policeman is transformed and chooses not to report something. He even chooses to advocate for the two people. The man did an intentional act which opened the door in his life for a different way of being. The affection for justice was revealed by this man who took a risk to promote the good of others. This man did not know where this choice would lead but the results became a part of his life.

The result of the balance of the affection for happiness and the affection for justice is a balance of presence to myself and others, helping us be ready for the next decision. This moment of balance is one full of good possibilities. Scotus uses the example of an artist, such as a musician, who is at the inner "*still point*" of readiness just before he or she begins to play an instrument. The present moment of balance is the moment of the Spirit, from which the creative good will blossom into reality.

Another example includes the experience of attending an Annotation 19 Retreat by Wilkei Au who used the idea of "*the audible*." The audible is the play that the Quarterback can call if he sees something in the field that nobody else sees. Every player has to be alert to the possibility of "the audible." As we move through our daily lives, we also have to be alert to the possibility of "the audible."

Balance and Harmony: The Wind Chime

from *The Harmony of Goodness* by Mary Beth Ingham CSJ



In the introduction, I suggested an image for Scotist moral discussion: the wind chime. I chose this image because it combines elements of balance and harmony with dimensions of visual and musical beauty. I maintain that in Scotus we find an intricate presentation of moral goodness which is dynamic and which requires the development of artistic character which is capable of a discerning judgment about what ought to be done. While each chapter has focused on an aspect of the chime, it is important to reprise all aspects in a final discussion.

As we have seen the chime is composed of several individual pieces which, while separate from one another, must hang in an appropriate relationship to each other in order for the chime to sound. This images the foundational insight of Scotus that each person is an individual in relationship. Haecceitas is not an independent reality, if by independent one means totally separated from all others. The Trinity exemplifies this person-in-relationship and functions as personal goal for all human living. It is communion, not autonomy, which lies at the end of the moral journey. The chime must exhibit balance of all elements. This balance does not require a one to one correlation, however. Two smaller pieces may very well balance a larger piece. The point is that the entire configuration be balanced.

Every chime requires a center disk which is sufficiently weighed to hang appropriately yet sufficiently light to be moved by the wind. The will is such a central element, weighted by its two affections for justice and for possession, yet free enough to move toward the surrounding pieces. Of course, here the wind chime imagery falls short, for in Scotus the will is a rational self-mover and not moved by anything else in a strong sense of determinism. Yet the disk is at the center of other pieces, just as the will functions within a given context. A discussion of the freedom of the will in the absence of any choice makes no more sense than a discussion of a wind chime composed only of a disk hanging from a string with no other pieces to strike.

Surrounding the will are aspects which “decorate” the morally good act, just as the pieces of the chime surround the disk. These aspects are those significant to any moral judgment: time, place, manner, rational will. Like the chime, the morally good act exhibits both a visual and musical beauty. It is pleasing to the eye and ear. This aesthetic perspective informs all other aspects of the moral discussion. It offers the whole against which each piece is to be judged. The virtues, as natural inclinations, surround the will and enhance the beauty of the will’s internal freedom.

The movement of the chime and the beautiful sound fulfill the purpose for which the chime was made. The intellectual virtue of prudence and the theological virtue of charity both belong to the nature of the will. The activity of proper moral decision-making is made possible by the balance already within the will and present in the order which surrounds it. Prudence is the practical wisdom which perceives and creates moral goodness as a work of art. Charity completes the practical dynamic by informing all with love. Together, prudence and charity fulfill the rational and affective dimensions of the will and await the divine response of acceptatio.

Together, the human goods of balance and harmony constitute that inner peace which gives rise to joy within the heart of the formed moral agent. Like the artist, she has an internal center of balance. Like the chime, his movements are graceful and grace-filled. The chime is sensitive to the slightest wind. So, too, the moral expert acts quickly in light of what circumstances demand. The greatest danger to moral living is the non velle, the capacity of the will to refrain from doing what is right. Moral inertia is difficult to overcome, just as physical inertia is an obstacle to movement. The dancer who has not continued to rehearse experiences stiffness in her limbs. The moral agent who delays acting finds it more difficult to respond at all.

The internal balance and external harmony of the chime correspond to the subjective and objective dimensions of moral living. Within the will, the two affections are held in a balance appropriate to the object of loving. This balance is necessary so that the affection for justice can succeed in directing the affection for possession. The harmony of goodness produced in moral activity is judged in light of rational principles and in light of the divine will. These offer appropriate means by which the will develops its ability to exercise rational deliberation in particular instances.

Ingham CSJ, Mary Beth. *The Harmony of Goodness: Mutuality and Moral Living According to John Duns Scotus*. Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1996.

I had this happen to me a couple of weeks ago. I was supposed to have a very difficult discussion with someone and I wanted to have it, move on, and be happy. But something said to wait. Another day she came into my office to talk and something inside me said, “Now.” I had the grace to say it as a question which didn’t come to me naturally. So, the Spirit’s “audible” is a moment, and the key for me is to hold and wait for the

right moment rather than “let’s clean up this one-horse town with a John Wayne attitude.” When the grace of the Spirit’s audible happens, I find that a genuine, gentle self pours forth. So, awareness in the present moment is key to our ability to be a transforming agent.

For Scotus, it’s about working toward this. It’s all about working to balance the affection for happiness and the affection for justice at the given moment

as I choose to act. *This places me as an instrument for God’s grace to open the door a crack and let the abundance of God’s love come through.* In the balance of the two affections we move from inner harmony to outer beauty. Just as the musician can move in this way, so the fully formed moral person can act as an artist of beauty.

Where in your life can you identify moments of this kind of artistic ministry?

Some are small and not recognized and we make the mistake of thinking the big events are the most important. I may be surprised that something I thought was minor actually was a major event for someone else. The smallest actions may very well have the largest consequences.

Incarnational Dynamic

In the Franciscan tradition, the incarnational dynamic moves from the image of God to the image of Christ. Following Francis, we are channels of divine abundance with transforming and transformative presence. Acts of peace are sacramental, opening doors to transforming ourselves and the world. In the film mentioned earlier, the man's action transformed him and had an impact in the world around him. Divine, dynamic epiphanies are part of the incarnational dynamic that is still going on in the world. We may not even be aware all the time that we are part of the action and power of this love becoming real in history, this incarnational dynamic, but it is becoming obvious to

In that love which is God (1Jn 4:16) all the brothers and sisters, whether they are praying or serving or working, should strive to be humble in everything. They should not, because of a good work or word God does or speaks in or through them, seek glory or rejoice or exult interiorly. Rather, in every place and circumstance, let them acknowledge that all good belongs to the most high God, Ruler of all things. Let them always give thanks to the one from Whom all good proceeds. (31)

others. It is an epiphany in which we have a role because we are instruments in the hands of the divine musician.

Chapter IX concludes by telling us to acknowledge that all good belongs to God, to whom we give thanks because all good comes from God.

We are present in this dynamic flow of abundant divine goodness. So, the "one thing necessary" is to restore each person to the state of dignity intended by God. It is to let our hidden self grow strong so that the world knows an original blessing.

It is to recreate a transformed self and world according to the intention of God.

In this Rule the call of God's heart is the call of our hearts, calling us to the goal for which we were made. May we enter more fully into that pleroma, that abundance of divine love that brims over and makes all things new. With love as the watchword and gratitude your goal, may you be filled with joy that is your birthright as Franciscans. May you know during this Jubilee time the blessing that you are for the People of God.

The One Thing Necessary

Seeing Chapter IX of the *Third Order Regular Rule* through the Lens of the Teachings of John Duns Scotus

Mary Beth Ingham, CSJ

This synthesis is from a special presentation given by Mary Beth Ingham CSJ to the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, Aston, PA for the celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the approval of the Third Order Regular Rule, 1982-2007.

Synthesis provided by: Joe Schwab OFM

Mary Beth Ingham CSJ, presently in Leadership for her Congregation, Orange, CA, and part-time professor at Franciscan School of Theology, Berkeley CA, is a renowned scholar of the Teachings of John Duns Scotus. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Fribourg, Switzerland and has been on the faculty of Loyola Marymount University for twenty four years. Mary Beth is the author of the popular *Scotus for Dunces: An Introduction to the Subtle Doctor*, as well as the CFIT Heritage Series, *Rejoicing in the Works of the Lord: Beauty in the Franciscan Tradition*. As a master teacher she easily engages students, encouraging all to delight in Scotus' vision of what it means to be human.

Joseph Schwab OFM MTS serves as the Director of the Franciscan Renewal Center (Casa) community in Scottsdale, Arizona. He has a Master's Degree in Theology from the Franciscan School of Theology and a recent certification from the Franciscan International Study Centre of Canterbury, as well as a certification in Contemporary Spirituality from the Kino Institute. He is an experienced pilgrimage director and teacher with a particular interest in history and Franciscan spirituality.

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Those like ourselves who are immediate heirs of the tradition inspired by the spirituality of Francis [and Clare] might better see ourselves as responsible stewards of a treasure that has much to offer for the healing of humanity and of the world at large.

Zachary Hayes OFM
Bonaventure Fest, 2003, Aston, PA



Selected Writings

by Zachary Hayes OFM

Christ through the Eyes of Francis and Clare

Franciscan spirituality and theology has long taken an approach that finds its creative insights from the spirituality of St. Francis and St. Clare. Their spirituality led the great theologians of the Franciscan movement to develop a style that has a number of distinctive traits. This is particularly true in the area of Christology. Many of us are accustomed to think of Christ only in terms of his relation to sin and redemption. Our focus, then, is on the cross, and on the idea that the death of Christ is a sacrifice of infinite value for the salvation of humanity. It is commonly argued that, had there been no sin on the part of Adam and other humans, there would have been no incarnation. The point of the Franciscan tradition is not to deny the significance of the crucifixion, but to place it in a larger context.

The early Franciscan theologians were convinced that, however we view the crucifixion, the entire mystery of the incarnation, which includes the crucifixion, could not have been an after-thought on the part of God. They were convinced that the mystery of Christ was what God first intended in creating the world.

And the process of creation from the beginning has always been moving to the goal which we see in the person of Christ. We wish to discuss this by seeing it in relation to the spirituality of St. Francis and St. Clare, and *by reflecting on the implications* that the theologians of later history were to draw out of this.

There can be no doubt that the life of St. Francis, from the time of his experience before the cross at San Damiano, became more and more centered around the mystery of the person of Christ. Francis' journey to God, which reached a high point on the hill of Mount Alverna, is by way of Christ. This was a spirituality in which the humanity of Christ took on a special significance. Because the Son of God became a human being, Francis easily thought of himself as a brother of Christ. Similarly, Clare could easily use familial language in speaking of her relation to Christ. This form of spirituality is sometimes called an "imitation of Christ" spirituality. It is known also as a Christo-centric spirituality; and it is basic to both Francis and Clare.

The theology developed early in the Franciscan movement was deeply inspired by this spirituality. We might put the basic conviction of this development in the following way. If spirituality is a way of ordering our life and putting ourselves into a life-giving relation with reality, including God, then we must ask: What must reality look like if the spirituality lived by Francis and Clare is capable of doing that? Or to put this in another way, if their spiritual journey is Christ-centered, does this mean that the whole of reality is centered around Christ as well?

St. Bonaventure was convinced that this was, indeed, the case. His theology is influenced by his reading of the *prologue to the Gospel of John* as well as by the spirituality of Francis. The Word, of which John's Gospel speaks, is the second person of the Trinity. *In Bonaventure's theology, the second Person is the perfect expression of all that God is within*

the divine life, and all that can be called into being in creation. He is simply the Word of God. Thus, the entire plan of creation is contained in the mystery of the Word. He is the original, in the mind of God, after which all creatures are formed.

This means, first, that all of creation is an external language system the purpose of which is to give expression to the internal Word of God. Creation, then, may be compared to a book. The basic content of that book was written first in the inner Word of God. As we learn to read the book of creation, we are learning something of that divine Word. And it is that same divine Word that became enfleshed in Jesus. This means that *in learning to read and meditate on his life and to shape our own lives in that light, we are discovering the depths of meaning of humanity and of the cosmos within which we exist.*

This means that the person of Christ encapsulates something of all creation in

himself. All the glories of nature — the glorious heavenly galaxies, the cataracts of mountain springs, the tender flowers of spring-time, the soaring eagle against the blue vault of heaven — all catch a gleam of Christ's beauty. *The single beauty of the divine life embodied in Christ is refracted in countless ways in the glories of the created order.*

The spiritual life, then, is a journey to the center of reality. But the center of reality is the mystery of the eternal Word through whom the world is created, and who became flesh in Jesus to show us by his life where the center of reality is to be found, and how we might most effectively travel that spiritual journey to our home in God. It is through that journey that creation will be brought back to its point of departure in the mystery of God's loving, creative power. But it will not look as it did when it emerged. It will be radically transfigured in the power of the Spirit, as was the humanity of Christ.

What happens in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ is the anticipation of what God holds open to all of creation.

This is a tradition that is convinced:

1. that the cosmos is basically incomplete without Christ;
2. that the Word became flesh out of sheer divine love, because God wished to share the mystery of the divine life and love and beauty as fully as possible with a creature; and
3. that in Christ we see the most emphatic instance of life. All this comes together in the question: *Would the Word have become flesh if Adam had not sinned? The Franciscan answer to that is: Yes. For that union of the divine and the created that takes place in Christ is what God intends from the beginning.*

Creation and the Humility of God

Francis rejoiced in all *the works of the Lord's* hand
and from these joy-producing manifestations
he rose to their life-giving
principle and cause.
In beautiful things
he saw Beauty itself
and through his vestiges imprinted on creation
he followed his Beloved everywhere,
making from all things a ladder
by which he could climb up
and embrace him *who is utterly desirable*.
With a feeling of unprecedented devotion
he savored
in each and every creature —
as in so many rivulets —
that Goodness
which is their fountain-source.
And he perceived a heavenly harmony
in the consonance
of powers and activities
God has given them,
and like the prophet David
sweetly exhorted them to praise the Lord.

Legenda Maior, IX, 1, translated by Ewert Cousins



Moving from the experience of Francis and Clare, the Franciscan tradition has developed a rich form of *cosmic Christology*. It is a vision of reality that alerts us to the deeply religious significance of the material world, since the humanity of Jesus which played such a central role in their *spirituality is rooted in chemistry of the cosmos*. *This is a tradition that raises important questions* about the values with which we relate to the world around us. This is particularly significant in the context of **environmental issues** which have become such an important dimension of our current experience of the world. This sacred character of creation might be heightened by seeing it in its strong sacramental significance. By sacramental we mean that the mystery of God's self-communication is mediated to us in a tangible form. This does not mean that we identify the created world with God. But it means that we learn to see it as a means of manifesting and communicating the divine to the human. This sense of the sacramental quality of the cosmos is radicalized in the Christian perception of Christ. *The human reality of Jesus is the most focused statement of what God is about with the world more generally.*

This tradition has important insights to bring to the common Christian task of allowing the Christian vision of God, of humanity, and of the world to become an effective participant in the broader human search for wisdom as we struggle with the many crucial problems that tear at the heart of humanity in this third millennium of history after the birth of Jesus.

Lecture given by Zachary Hayes OFM
at Alverno College, Milwaukee, WI
July 22, 2001

The Formulation of The Doctrine of The Unconditional Primacy of Christ

as presented by John Duns Scotus

from "Christ and The Cosmos" in *The Gift of Being*
by Zachary Hayes OFM

The core of this tradition can be expressed in the following way.

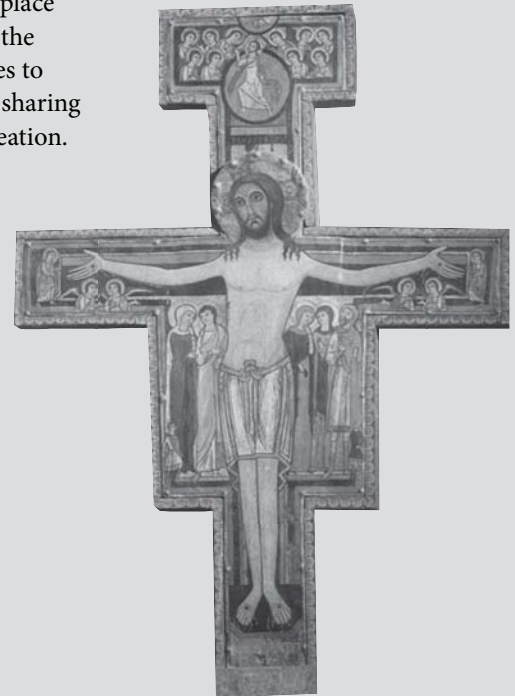
The cosmos without Christ would somehow be incomplete. Therefore one speaks of the unconditional predestination of Christ. This relates to the conviction that the Word became flesh not because humans had sinned, but rather because God wished to share the mystery of the divine life and love and beauty as fully as possible with a creature. And that is the primary meaning of the mystery of Christ.

In this sense, God's aim in creating is so that Christ may come to be.

The conclusion, then, is that with or without sin, the incarnation is God's initial aim in creating and would have taken place even if sin had never entered the picture.

But when sin does become a factor, the modality of the incarnation changes. Because of sin, we see the actual incarnation taking place in the mode of a suffering, crucified, and glorified Christ.

That is, the incarnation takes place in such a way as to overcome the humanly constructed obstacles to achieving God's first aim: the sharing of divine life and love with creation.



The Gift of Being.
Collegeville, MN:
The Liturgical Press, 2001.
Page 105. www.litpress.org

The Hidden Center

Humanity comes forth from God stamped with an ineradicable image of its Creator, and marked by an unquenchable desire for truth and happiness which will find its fulfillment only in union with God who is both the origin and the goal of this desire. In making the journey *we need a center of orientation*: but because of the historical reality of sin, the center of the world, which must become our personal center, has become lost and hidden from our view. . . . But the center has been located for us again *in the incarnation of the Word who is the center of God* and the center through whom God communicates being and grace to the world.

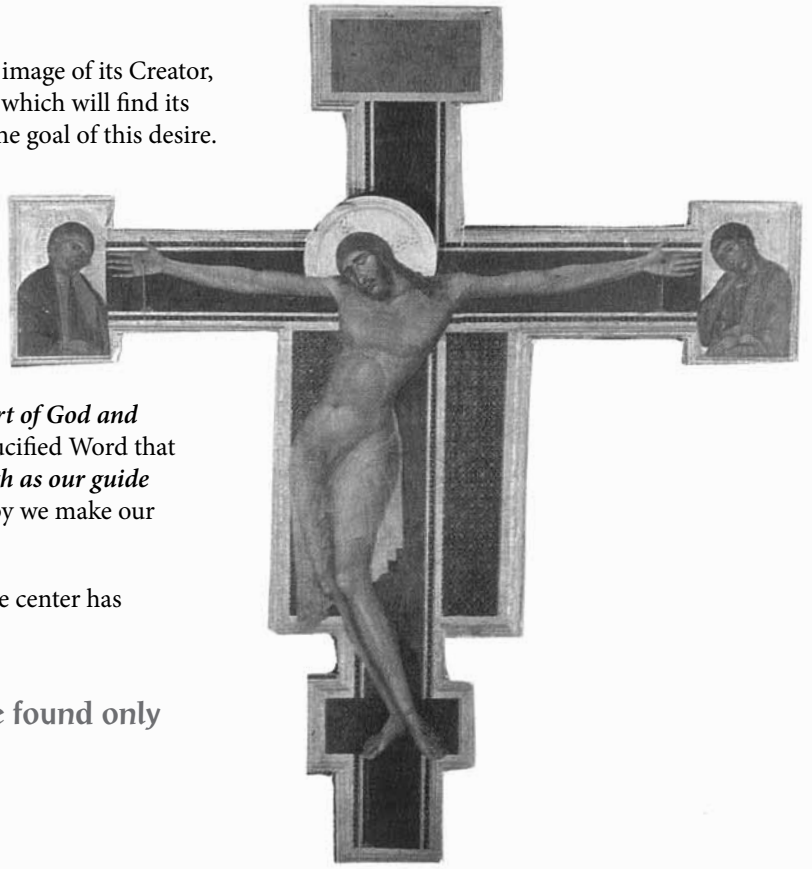
Above all, in the cross of the incarnate Word is revealed the heart of God and the center of reality. It is in our relation to this incarnate and crucified Word that our lives will become focused on the center of reality. *With truth as our guide and love as the animating spirit of our lives*, the journey whereby we make our way back to God will be successful.

Employing a geometrical analogy, Bonaventure explains how the center has been re-located for us in the humility of the cross:

For, when the center is lost in the circle, it can be found only by two lines that intersect at a right angle.

Hexaameron. 1, 24 (V, 333)

Zachary Hayes OFM, *The Hidden Center*. Pages 23-24; 200.



Selected Writings by Zachary Hayes OFM

Zachary Hayes OFM, Friar of OFM Province of Sacred Heart, St. Louis, MO and professor of historical and systematic theology, has been a vital force in the mission of Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, IL since its founding in 1968. An internationally acclaimed Bonaventurian scholar, Zachary has a special interest in the critical interaction between science and theology. Publishing over 18 books, Zachary is tireless in elaborating the uniqueness of the Franciscan approach to education.

Selected Readings

The Hidden Center: Spirituality and Speculative Christology in St. Bonaventure. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1996

The Gift of Being: A Theology of Creation. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001

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General Editor: Kathleen Moffatt OSF, *Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia*, Aston, PA, skmoffatt@aol.com

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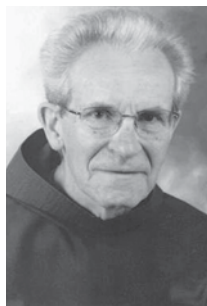
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Zachary Hayes OFM
Bonaventure Fest, 2003, Aston, PA



Francis of Assisi “Theologian?”

Thaddée Matura OFM

*“The theology of this man, held aloft by
purity and contemplation, is a soaring eagle” — 2 Cel LXIX*

A theologian is the one who contemplates and scrutinizes visible and invisible reality, using the Word of God as a starting point — then Francis is both. What he allows us to glimpse in his writings authorizes us to say that he proposes an authentic general outline of a theology whose center is the Trinitarian God in love with the human person.

Francis of Assisi “Theologian?”

Is Francis a theologian and if so, why? Does he have a theological vision of the real? Has he examined it in a discourse or in his writings? To respond to these questions we have only two means of access to his person and his message: the witness of his hagiographers and the writings which he has left us.

The main biographers, Thomas of Celano and Bonaventure, do provide important allusions to Francis’s vision and spiritual intelligence, but they emphasize rather the grandeur of his figure and his deeds. Marked by the stigmata — which make of him a unique Christological personality, an apostle sent by God to awaken and stir up “a world gone cold,” his actions and his words are interpreted and often used to address the problems of the Order and the Church. For the biographers and other witnesses, Francis seemed too unlearned, without a scholastic formation, to dream of presenting him as a theologian. Yet one of the narratives reports the words of a Dominican master who was astonished and observed that “*the theology of this man, held aloft by purity and contemplation, is a soaring eagle*” (2 Cel LXIX). It is then rather to Francis’s writings that one must turn in order to determine if they are truly vectors of theological perspectives which would allow us to apply the label “theologian” to Francis. But here we find ourselves faced with a paradox. Francis is not a cleric in the meaning given to this term in the Middle Ages — someone who has “done studies.”

Francis’s Answer

Three times in his writings he refers to himself as *idiota*, one without formation and uneducated. He knows, nonetheless, how to read and write, in Latin obviously, and is not shy of doing so, insisting quite to the contrary some eight times that his writings be received, preserved, written, meditated upon, and handed on to others. He has authored some thirty texts, if one can use this expression. They are all occasional texts, diverse in length, style, language (Latin and Italian) and all are considered today as authentic by the most rigorous scholarship. The entire corpus is, nonetheless, on the slim side covering some 120 pages in the critical edition. It is in this modest collection that one must look for an answer to the question that we have raised.

What becomes immediately evident to everyone who reads these writings is their religious nature. About a third of their content is in the form of prayers: twenty are addressed to God. The remainder — while touching diverse aspects of life — nonetheless make constant reference to God and his Word. Even if occasionally there are allusions to some situations of the time or to the person of Francis, these are much too meager to draw out unwonted historical teachings or to paint a psychological portrait or spiritual biography of their author. Francis himself, in one of his longest and most structured texts — the *Second Letter to the Faithful*, speaking of his writings, characterizes them as “words of my Lord.”

Francis’s Use of Scripture

The theological dimension of Francis’s writings is further manifested, in a general way, by the scope he gives to the Old and New Testaments. One finds, as a matter of fact, over 400 explicit quotations: 156 from the Old Testament and 280 from the New Testament. Some texts are composed explicitly from biblical quotations: the fifteen psalms; the *Praises for All the Hours*; and the *Exhortation to Praise God*. In practically all his writings there are a great number of biblical quotations, especially in the Earlier Rule, the *Letters to the Faithful*, the letter to the Order and half of the Admonitions. It



Chapter 23 of Francis' Rule of 1221

A proclamation in the form of a thanksgiving centered on God and on the human person

All-powerful, most holy,
Almighty and supreme God,
Holy and just Father,
Lord King of heaven and earth
We thank You for Yourself
for through Your holy will
and through Your only Son
with the Holy Spirit
You have created everything spiritual and corporal
And, after making us in Your own image and likeness,
You placed us in paradise.

Through our own fault we fell.

We thank You
For as through Your Son You created us,
So through Your holy love
With which You loved us
You brought about His birth
As true God and true man
by the glorious, ever-virgin, most blessed, holy Mary
and You willed to redeem us captives
through His cross and blood and death. (1-3)

*With our whole heart,
our whole soul,
our whole mind,
with our whole strength and fortitude
with our whole understanding
with all our powers
with every effort,
every affection,
every feeling,
every desire and wish
let us all love the Lord God
Who has given and gives to each one of us
our whole body, our whole soul and our entire life,
Who has created, redeemed and will us by His mercy alone,
Who did and does everything good for us.
(1221:23.8)*

Continued on page 3

is, as a matter of fact, when Francis intends to propose the life according to the Gospel to his brothers or to lay persons that the quotations abound. Thus, in the twenty-four chapters of the *Earlier Rule*, nineteen of them have quotations. And even when these are missing, many passages are shot through with biblical allusions. In chapters 3, 10 and 11 of the *Later Rule* the expressions: let them not “quarrel or argue or judge others, but let them be meek, peaceful, modest, gentle, and humble, speaking courteously to everyone” are all taken from the New Testament.

But Francis does not use biblical texts as simply an ornament for his discourse. He seeks, by means of them, either to express his vision of God, the human person, and the journey that goes from one to the other, or to support and confirm actions that he proposes in the name of the Gospel. As such he shows himself as a “theologian,” in the initial and basic meaning of the word, even if he is not ranked among the “professional” theologians of the past, such as Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, John of the Cross, or the present ones. *In his manner of thinking and expressing himself, he is closer to the feminine “theological” figures already mentioned: Angela of Foligno, Teresa of Avila, and, above all, Therese of Lisieux. Not so primarily by the content of his theology, which has its own originality, but because, like them, he is one of the rare theological figures (if not the only masculine figure), without a theological formation who, nonetheless, proposes a full and coherent vision of God and the human person in writing.* As a matter of fact, other than some of the Fathers of the desert from whom the sayings, *apothegmata*, are reported, and the majority of whom had no theological culture, there is no masculine figure who is also a writer of this type in the Christian tradition.

The Main Lines of Francis's “Theology”

One finds theological perspectives scattered throughout Francis's writings. Once these have been regrouped and put in order, *they offer a global vision of the mystery of God and the human person.* One text, however, stands out — chapter 23 of the *Earlier Rule* — where the main lines of such a vision are laid out in fullness, balance, and, which is characteristic of Francis, literary beauty. *It is a proclamation in the form of a thanksgiving centered on God and on the human person.* It opens up at once both theological and anthropological perspectives. *It is in taking account of the structure of this doxological credo that one can attempt a summary presentation of Francis's theology.*

It is forthrightly *Trinitarian*. The central place — the primacy — is reserved for God the Father, a constant referent of the Son, mainspring of every initiative, the primary object of praise and prayer, and, in a word, the origin and final outcome of everything. The Christology insists on the divine dimension of the Word which allows, as a consequence, for the emphasis on the humility and the poverty of the Incarnation, the life and the Eucharist of Jesus Christ. The Spirit appears almost always alongside the Father and the Son as a discreet, dynamic presence, everywhere present and introducing a dimension of spiritual experience to everything. This Triune God is at once transcendent: Lord Most High, unnamable, incomprehensible and yet near: humble, tender, delectable, and desirable above all else.

Inseparable from God, *the human person* is a being of contrast, endowed at once with unique grandeur and profound misery. “Loved by the holy love,” created in the incomparable dignity of the image of God, made for freedom and happiness, the human person is “the most worthy of all creatures.”¹ It is because of the fall into sin that the human person has become a miserable being. If Francis mercilessly emphasizes the evil of the human person, the

¹ Clare of Assisi, “The Third Letter to Agnes of Prague,” *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents The Lady*, ed. Regis Armstrong (New York: New City Press, 2006), 2.

egotism of “the flesh,” sin, it is to make more evident the unconditional love of God totally in love with those who are miserable, ungrateful and evil. God does nothing but good for them. But when the human person acknowledges the two contradictory faces of his reality — the good that is in him and the negativity that threatens and affects him — then he can render to God the benefits received without appropriating them and take responsibility for the evil which marks him. This is what true Franciscan poverty consists of: acknowledging that all comes from God and to render everything back in thanksgiving, to consider as one’s own only sickness and sin and to present these to the heavenly doctor who alone heals and justifies sinners. Thus accepted and acknowledged by God, one can know how to behave among men and women as “minors,” brothers and servants of all.

One can find, elsewhere, a more ample and detailed presentation, but already these main lines of the theology in Francis’s writings allow us to conclude that it is rich and original. Not that, to be sure, it developed something unknown until then, or presented a new synthesis, but because it coincides globally — and not without an emphasis proper to Francis — with the totality and equilibrium of the biblical vision. Coming from a man without a scholarly theological culture, it is astonishing in its breadth and correctness expressed in so few pages. And, furthermore, it is expressed in occasional writings!

Francis’s Theology and the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition

Did the early voices of the Franciscan intellectual tradition know and honor Francis’s theology? The Franciscan intellectual tradition is a reality that is difficult to circumscribe and present in a few lines. In the thirteenth and fourteenth century—the scholastic period—it is linked to a few great names: Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, Peter John Olivi, Raymund

Lull, Roger Bacon, John Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham. The later periods present less significant figures. Even though some intellectual Franciscans are always present, it would be difficult to name some in the contemporary era. The medieval thinkers just indicated were, more or less, influenced by the figure of Francis as presented by the first biographies, and something Franciscan always made its way into their theology and philosophy. But nothing allows us to affirm that apart from two or three texts—the Rules, the *Testament*, one Admonition or other—they knew and read Francis’s written message which, moreover, had not yet been

fully compiled nor assembled into an anthology. These texts, it is true, were gradually assembled, recopied and printed during the succeeding centuries, but one has had to wait until about the 1950s to become aware of not only their historical, but also their theological and spiritual importance. While the research and the debate around the person of Francis continued, these last fifty years have seen the appearance of multiple editions and scholarly books and articles on his writings: their authenticity; the analysis of one or the other of them; studies of themes that could be drawn from them and even some attempts at providing a general and anthropological view of his written message.

Why this longstanding silence — this ignorance — surrounding Francis’s texts? A kind of enigma resides in the fact of the respectful and pious conservation and transmission of the writings throughout the centuries and

Chapter 23 of Francis’ Rule of 1221

Continued from page 2

Therefore,
let us desire nothing else ...
except our Creator, Redeemer and Savior...
Who is the fullness of good,
all good, every good, the true and supreme good,
Who alone is good.
(1223:21.9)

Let all of us truly and humbly believe,
Hold in our heart and love,
honor, adore, serve,
praise and bless,
glorify and exalt,
magnify and give thanks
to the Most High and Supreme Eternal God
Trinity and Unity,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
Creator of all,
Savior of all

Who believe and hope in Him,
and love Him, Who,
without beginning and end,
is unchangeable, invisible,
indescribable, ineffable,
incomprehensible, unfathomable,
blessed, praiseworthy,
glorious, exalted,
sublime, most high,
gentle, lovable, delightful,
and totally desirable above all else
for ever.
Amen.

(1221:23.11)



at the same time their non-utilization, in fact, the disregard for them. As an explanation one can put forward diverse factors. Firstly, all the attention and interest have been devoted to the magnified image of the saint: the unfolding of his life, his virtues, his miracles, above all his stigmata, and the meaning that all this had for the life of the Church and the destiny of his Order. As we have just said, the only thing that was read and commented upon was the Rule and the *Testament*, and this according to a juridical reading. But no doubt the main reason for this disregard, never explicitly expressed, was the fact that Francis was “simple and unlearned” and his writings, fragmentary and diverse, were so far removed from scholarly expression. “Pious and edifying” no doubt did not carry any weight in comparison with the *Summas* of the masters, even if, friars minor that they were, they admired and loved their founder. In the story of perfect joy, doesn’t the brother who slams the door in Francis’s face tell him: “you are simple and stupid. There are many of us here like you—we don’t need you!” Once dead and glorified, what was needed was the renown of his virtues and miracles, the glory of the first

one to be stigmatized in order to solidly establish the Order and contribute to its influence. The simplicity of the radical gospel message and the lack of elegance in style by which he transmitted them were less attractive.

Concluding Thoughts

Today this shift of interest is received in different ways. We are accustomed to the current image of Francis, one with many facets, but always fascinating. When one leaves behind the narratives of the ancient or contemporary biographies and brochures austere and theoretical texts, writings which do not tell a story, we have the impression of losing something living and then penetrating into arid and dry terrain. All the more so because these texts put us into contact not with an immediate human experience, but one which demands a faith decision.

Francis’s aim is rather to transmit the Gospel of Jesus Christ, first of all to all his brothers and, ultimately, to all men and women of all time. Much as one does not read St. Augustine’s *City of God* in order to study his psychology or his spiritual experience but to discover a certain vision

of history, so too one should not read Chapter 23 of the *Earlier Rule* — which celebrates the love of God on behalf of men and women— primarily to know Francis’s personality better. This would totally miss the message of the text. With all due proportion, this principle is applicable to the totality of his writings. They are not, primarily, material to make up the story of a person—his life, his psychology, his work—they are above all spiritual writings, rather than systematic theology in the sense indicated at the beginning of this essay.

While recognized as one of the great figures of Christian holiness, Francis is never considered a mystic, nor a theologian. However, if these two words are understood according to their original meanings used in the patristic period — a mystic is someone who spiritually experiences the mystery of God and his work and *a theologian is the one who contemplates and scrutinizes visible and invisible reality, using the Word of God as a starting point — then Francis is both. What he allows us to glimpse in his writings authorizes us to say that he proposes an authentic general outline of a theology whose center is the Trinitarian God in love with the human person.*

Francis of Assisi “Theologian?”

Thaddée Matura OFM

Synthesis provided by: Roberta A. McKelvie OSF

Thaddée Matura OFM is a Friar from Province, France; preeminent expert on Franciscan spirituality; a scripture scholar world-renowned for Franciscan spirituality. Thaddée has enriched learning in all his teachings on St. Francis with his consistent emphasis on the writings of Francis himself, the very marrow of the Gospel. His books have been translated into English, Spanish, German, Polish, and Portuguese. Among those published in English are *The Gospel Life of Francis of Assisi, A Dwelling Place for the Most High, Francis of Assisi: Writer and Spiritual Master*, and *Birth of a Movement (Part three)*.

Roberta A. McKelvie OSF, a Bernardine Franciscan Sister, Reading, PA, ministers at Alvernia University as Special Assistant to the President for Mission Integration. Previously Roberta served in congregational leadership; as managing editor of Franciscan Institute Publications and editor of *The Cord*. Her seminal work on Angelina of Montegiove, the prototype of Third Order Regular women’s beguine/community life, as well as other writings, have been significant contributions to the Franciscan Family.

Original Source: *Francis of Assisi: Heritage and Heirs Eight Centuries Later*. Thaddée Matura OFM, translated by Paul LaChance OFM. St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2010.



Custodians of the Tradition

*Reclaiming the Franciscan
Intellectual Tradition*



Those like ourselves who are immediate heirs of the tradition inspired by the spirituality of Francis [and Clare] might better see ourselves as responsible stewards of a treasure that has much to offer for the healing of humanity and of the world at large.

Zachary Hayes OFM
Bonaventure Fest, 2003, Aston, PA



A Franciscan Language for the 21st Century

William Short OFM

We are heirs to an intellectual patrimony that spans eight centuries, with a worldview that can offer fresh responses to questions posed in our society and church today. We have resources to share, and a responsibility to share them with those who are searching for “good news” in our day.

“What is the Franciscan tradition?” and “How can we translate that tradition today?” A brief historical sketch may help to set the stage for our discussion.

During Francis’s lifetime, in the 1220s, some of his followers arrived in Paris, or rather just outside its walls. As their numbers grew, they moved into the neighborhood that was growing rapidly with the influx of students attracted to the new University being established there. Soon some of those students joined the Franciscan Order, and with them came a tenured University professor named *Alexander of Hales*, rightly considered one of the founders of *Franciscan theology*. His student, Bonaventure, a classmate of Thomas Aquinas, brought the figure of Francis himself, with all his complexity, into the lively theological debates of the day, creating a new intellectual synthesis based on a Franciscan spirituality that was Trinitarian, incarnational, and mystical all at once.

Presented here are a few basic components of the Franciscan intellectual tradition, with a set of questions regarding their impact on our educational endeavors. These basic premises of Franciscan thought, with much variation and development, can be considered recurring themes over the long arc of history, as our intellectual tradition has developed in varied cultures in vastly different times and places.

Human Person as Divine Image

“Consider, O human being, in what great excellence the Lord placed you, for He created and formed you to the image of his beloved Son according to the body and to His likeness according to the spirit.” (Armstrong, 2000, p. 131)

This saying, chosen from the “Admonitions” of Francis, reveals some of the reasons for his reverent treatment of every person he met. The “iconic” character of the person, as image of the “beloved Son,” created as God’s likeness, is rooted in the Franciscan tradition from its very beginnings. *Our humanity does not separate us from God, but connects us to God who chose to become human in Jesus because of generous love.*

I would suggest that this fundamental belief in the value of the human person finds expression in our institutions in a variety of ways. The quality of our communication with each other, the attention we give to student services, the concern to involve the “whole person” in our educational programs: all of these can be grounded and shaped by attention to the personal dimension of the Franciscan tradition.

What “word” can such a view of the person speak today within the world of the human sciences? Can anthropology be religiously significant? Does psychology present us with basic material for the work of theology? Does sociology then have a deeply spiritual significance?

How would these disciplines become dialogue partners in translating the Franciscan tradition into a language that is understandable today?



All Creation in the Incarnate Word

“Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with colored flowers and herbs.” (Armstrong, 2000, p. 114)

Reverence for the person within our tradition is only part of a greater vision of equality: we consider others our brothers and sisters. But these “others,” our “kin,” include a vast family. In his “Canticle of Creatures,” quoted above, Francis speaks of every creature, from heavenly bodies to earthly elements, as brother or sister to him.

Beginning with that profound, poetic intuition of Francis, Franciscan scholars like Bonaventure at the University of Paris began to spell out its implications: everything was made through the Word; all was created for the Word, all was created in the Word. And in Christ that Word took on flesh, that is, the creative divine Word took on the form of physical matter, embodied, “incarnate.”

Only in recent years are we beginning to understand its implications for the world of the sciences. *Whether in the field of physics or astronomy, biology or chemistry, attention to the physical world has a profoundly spiritual meaning in our tradition.* Older dichotomies of “science versus religion” cannot hold up within such a holistic view of the universe. Attention to the environment goes hand-in-hand with reverence for human beings; both global warming and global impoverishment affect our “brothers and sisters.” To use a phrase I like, within the Franciscan intellectual tradition, “Matter matters.”

Community Is Divine

*“You are three and one, the Lord God of gods;
You are the good, all good, the highest good,
Lord God living and true.”* (Armstrong, 2000, p. 109)

American religious experience has been profoundly shaped by a view of God and the human person that is deeply monistic: a God who is considered only as “the One,” and the “rugged individual” as the image of that God. What is most “godly” is isolation, self-sufficiency, absolute independence.

The Franciscan tradition describes an inter-relational communion of divine persons, a Trinitarian God, in a constant, dynamic interchange of love and life — that “goodness” so well expressed in Francis’s “Praises of God” quoted above. Sharing a fundamental unity does not require the suppression of personal identity, but enhances it. Diversity of persons is enriching; goodness is self-diffusive; the living dialogue of love is essential to being; distinctiveness is divine.

Rooted in this vision of God, our intellectual tradition, particularly in theology, can offer rich resources for thinking about community and society. *Far from exalting the isolated individual, a Trinitarian view of reality always looks to the individual-in-relationship, to the bonds of interdependence as images of the divine.* Though this reflection has found expression in the past primarily in theological disciplines, its implications can become much broader. How could such a religious view help to shape economic policies that reflect communion in the sharing of resources? What elements could it offer to the field of political science and the analysis of governmental institutions? How could it shape an understanding of international relations and foreign policy?

Christ at the Heart of Reality

*“We thank You for as through Your Son
You created us, so through Your holy love . . .
You brought about His birth.”*

(Armstrong, 2000, p. 82)

At every hour of the day Christian preachers on radio and television send a constant message into thousands of American cars, living rooms, and workplaces: “It’s all about sin!” God sent Jesus Christ into the world because we sinned; he had to suffer because we sinned; the world is a passing theater scene on which the drama of human sin is played out. At the end, the sinners will be punished. It would seem that sin is the center of the universe; and both evangelical Protestant and Catholic preachers repeat that message. Does the Franciscan tradition say anything different?

The Franciscan view, rather than focusing on sin, emphasizes the love of God, enfleshed in Christ, as the center of reality. In the 14th century John Duns Scotus was asked, “Would Christ have come if Adam had not sinned?” Contradicting the predominant thinking of his age (and ours), he answered: “Yes.” Christ came because the divine Trinitarian communion of persons wished to express divine life and goodness. For that reason the whole universe was made in the image of the divine Word, and that Word came to participate in the life of the universe as a created being, a creature, to show in a concrete, material way the form and model of all creation, made in the divine image. *The Incarnation, the fact of Jesus, not the fact of sin, is at the heart of reality.* The circumstances of that Incarnation included suffering and death, caused by human sin, and Jesus’s generous giving of life for others reversed the effects of sin. *But salvation from sin is a consequence of the Incarnation, not its motivating cause.*

How might this view express itself in practice? It demands the difficult belief that goodness, not evil, lies at the heart of human experience, and that religious institutions have a role in expressing that belief. It would require of us an “alternative evangelism,” one which, in word and action, portrays a God in solidarity with human suffering out of love, rather than a God who demands the sacrifice of victims. *The focus is not on “fighting sin” but on “giving life.”* Such an approach could find eloquent expression in campus ministry programs; in the way Catholic doctrine is presented, in the public expressions of religious faith organized on a campus, whether for students or the wider community.



*The Incarnation,
the fact of Jesus,
not the fact of sin,
is at the heart of reality*

Generosity, the Poverty of God

*“Let us refer all good to the Lord God Almighty
and Most High, acknowledge that every good is
His and thank Him, from Whom all good comes,
for everything.”* (Armstrong, 2000, p. 76)

Francis considers every good thing a gift he has received from a generous God, whose “poverty” consists in this constant giving to others in order to enrich their lives. We are “godly” when we enrich others with our generous giving, whether of talent, learning, work, wisdom or wealth. All really belongs to God—and we thank God by distributing generously to others the gifts we have received. In this way

we act out who we really are: images of a generous God. This awareness that everything is a gift lies at the heart of a “Franciscan economics,” in which all things are gifts, to be used to enrich the life of others, not as possessions to be guarded jealously from the needs of others.

The Franciscan tradition was born in the early days of the Western European profit economy of the 1200s. *From its inception, our tradition has not shied away from the world of business and commerce, but has tried to engage it in policy reform and promotion of ethical practices.*

Franciscans were among the first to propose notions of a “just profit” in commerce, as a response to demands for unreasonable profits among medieval merchants. To offset the crippling effects of exorbitant interest rates on loans, they helped in the establishment of those early Italian “credit unions” called the *monti di pietà*. A Franciscan of Venice, Luca Pacioli, a teacher of Leonardo da Vinci, is even credited by some with the invention of double-entry bookkeeping.

In our present-day economic environment, with its competition among a few for the control of resources used by many, how can we translate this notion of an economy of gifts? With the globalization of the world economy, what “word” can we speak from our intellectual tradition? How can we engage seriously in discussions on the right to private property, welfare reform, and the forgiveness of international debts? *How do we form our institutional investment policies to reflect our beliefs?*

These examples from the Franciscan tradition could be multiplied to examine other topics: the roles of the Church and civil government; the interrelationships of men and women; the exercise of leadership and governance.

These few indications serve here only to indicate that the Franciscan tradition has a distinctive approach to questions, one that is not well known or commonly viewed as typical of religious discourse in our day.

Steps Toward Retrieving a Tradition

In 2001 the Commission for the Retrieval of the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition (CFIT) began its work. This group of scholars, organized by the superiors of Franciscan Friars (the English-Speaking Conference of the Order of Friars Minor), was charged to make available to the English-speaking world the riches of the Franciscan intellectual tradition in an accessible form. This was to occur on several levels:

- On the research and academic level, the Commission sponsors annual academic presentations at the WTU symposium, and The Franciscan Institute of St. Bonaventure University publishes the results. The first publications of this series are: *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition* (2001) and *Franciscans and Post-Modernism* (2002). Further volumes were projected on Creation, Church, and Biblical Foundations for the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition.
- On a more popular level (college students, parishioners), the Commission publishes a series of booklets (approximately 40 pages each) on basic themes of the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition. The first two booklets (published by The Franciscan Institute of St. Bonaventure University in 2003), are *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition* (Kenan Osborne, OFM); and *The Franciscan View of Creation* (Ilia Delio, OSF). Other volumes are scheduled to appear that treat *Johannine Themes in Franciscan Theology*:

An Examination of the San Damiano Crucifix (Michael Guinan, OFM); and *The Franciscan View of the Human Person: Some Central Elements* (Dawn Nothwehr OSF). While these first booklets include philosophical and theological components of the tradition, the series is planned to touch a wide range of topics, including the natural sciences and the arts.

The Task Ahead of Us

From even this brief review of current projects on the Franciscan tradition in the English-speaking world, we are right to believe that this tradition is experiencing a revival. The figure of Francis continues to fascinate a modern audience, whether in television specials, like “The Reluctant Saint” by Donald Spoto (on the Hallmark Channel, Palm Sunday 2003); or in a steady stream of new English biographies of the “Little Poor Man” of Assisi. As members of Franciscan institutions of higher learning, how can we make our own contribution to this revival?

We are heirs to an intellectual patrimony that spans eight centuries, with a worldview that can offer fresh responses to questions posed in our society and Church today. We have resources to share, and a responsibility to share them with those who are searching for “good news” in our day.

The Franciscan Language for the 21st Century

William Short OFM

Synthesis provided by: Roberta A. McKelvie OSF

William Short OFM is a Professor of Spirituality, Christian History and the Franciscan tradition at the Franciscan School of Theology, Berkeley, CA. Bill researches, writes and lectures internationally in four languages. He is co-author of the three-volume *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, and author of *Poverty and Joy: The Franciscan Tradition*. Bill’s ease of scholarship, range of experience and delight in all things Franciscan brings a welcome everywhere.

Roberta A. McKelvie OSF, a Bernardine Franciscan Sister, Reading, PA, ministers at Alvernia University as Special Assistant to the President for Mission Integration. Previously Roberta served in congregational leadership; as managing editor of Franciscan Institute Publications and editor of *The Cord*. Her seminal work on Angelina of Montegiove, the prototype of Third Order Regular women’s beguine/ community life, as well as other writings, have made significant contributions to the Franciscan Family.

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General Editor: Kathleen Moffatt OSF, *Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia*, Aston, PA, skmoffatt@aol.com

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Zachary Hayes OFM
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John Duns Scotus: Retrieving a Medieval Thinker for Contemporary Theology

Mary Beth Ingham CSJ

The God of Scotus is the God of Francis, a God so generous he throws everything away out of love. This may be the very God our world so needs today.

The value of Thomas Aquinas, the thirteenth-century Dominican theologian, may perhaps lay not so much in the answers he offered for certain questions, but rather in the questions he raised and the way in which he raised them. I would like to make something of the same argument for John Duns Scotus. I suggest that we look at Scotus not so much for original and new answers to contemporary questions (although there are certainly original insights in Scotus, as I will note later), but rather for the manner in which Scotus viewed all that exists.

As the third millennium opens before us, it is important to recognize the way in which contemporary reflection recognizes its limits and searches for another model or paradigm. The cold war is over. Modern thought has been superseded by the so-called post-modern. Models of scientific objectivity and rationality no longer appear to help us deal with contemporary issues. Spiritual yearnings express themselves in New Age religion. In addition, the post-renaissance notion of science has done violence to creation. Technology dominates our societies, threatening human dignity and values. The world's goods are not shared equally; indeed the gap between rich and poor widens. In short, we are at a global turning point. We cast about for other ways of seeing our reality, hoping to find a way to integrate a world that has become too complex, too fragmented for us to bear.

Medieval thinkers hold a key for us today. I do not mean that we must return to a time in history that is long gone. Rather, I think that by taking a closer look at their intellectual legacy we might discover principles to help us integrate the scientific with the religious, the intellectual with the spiritual. We do not need to return to a triumphalist notion of religion to take advantage of the legacy of medieval thinkers. They can help us precisely insofar as they were religious and spiritual thinkers who saw the world in which they lived as a coherent whole. Therefore, the value of a person like Scotus today stems from his Franciscan vision of reality, as he articulates his intellectual insights to form a coherent whole where scientific, intellectual, and spiritual values are all present. In other words, the coherence of Scotus's intellectual insights stem from his spiritual vision, precisely insofar as he is a Franciscan.

If the insights of Francis of Assisi are relevant today and the Franciscan life has a witness for our world, then the intellectual formulation of those insights can be a powerful influence at a time in history when we need new intellectual models, new conceptual paradigms to understand our place in the world, our relationship to God and to one another, and ways that we might promote the reign of God in our own day.

In my own case, Scotus offered a series of interesting philosophical insights until I recognized the spiritual point behind it all. I had struggled for years to make sense of it and then, one day, it all fell into place. That was the day I realized the *centrality of beauty* for him as a Franciscan, along with the role of love and creativity. Creativity, love, and beauty are the foundation of his intellectual vision because of the particular spiritual tradition to which he belongs. This vision is grounded:

- in the power of ordered loving as central to a correct understanding of human nature as rational
- on the Trinity as model both for reality and for human relationships
- on an aesthetic perspective that is the basis for his discussion of moral goodness.



The God of Scotus is the God of John 3:16, who so loved the world he gave his only Son. He is the God of Paul's letter to the Ephesians 1: 4-6, who predestines all to glory. He is the God of Matthew 20, the Master who rewards workers far beyond what they deserve and wonders why some grumble because he is generous. Here is a notion of divine justice interpreted in terms of divine mercy and liberality, not in terms of a strict understanding of giving what is due. *The God of Scotus is the God of Francis, a God so generous he throws everything away out of love. This may be the very God our world so needs today.*

Scotus offers a renewed and more integrated way to understand the human person as both scientist and artist, philosopher and poet, a person of rational faith. In this he escapes the pitfall of Thomism, which more consciously embraces the scientific and philosophical. For Scotus, the aesthetic is more basic than the scientific and intellect is integrated within a broader context, defined not by knowing but by loving.

Generosity and love constitute the basis for Scotus's discussion of the Incarnation. With him, we enter a Christocentric vision of salvation, considered independently of human sinfulness. *Our understandings of how we are saved change from issues of justice to those of generosity.* More importantly, we are led *to focus on the divine desire to be present with us.* Divine delight becomes a category within which we consider creation and the value of each being as pleasing to God. Within this category of divine delight, we understand the motivation behind the covenant, both with the People of Israel and in the

Incarnation. From this category, finally, we anticipate the glory that awaits us and how we might participate in divine life by imitating divine creativity.

It is against the *larger framework of divine delight* that I consider more carefully, in what follows, three aspects of Scotist thought in order to bring out how each integrates the intellectual with the spiritual in *a vision framed by love.* The most basic insight that Scotus presents about God is that the Trinity delights in itself, in the created order that reveals such beauty, and in the human heart that seeks to realize beauty in each of its choices. A vision of aesthetic delight—this is what Scotus offers us today. We can organize his insights spiritually around the importance of creation, the centrality of the covenant, and the goal of communion with one another and with God in love.

The Value of the Created Order

The created order is not a transparent medium through which divine light shines, but is itself endowed with an inner light that shines forth from within.

No aspect appears more central to Franciscan spirituality than that expressed by Francis in the *Canticle to the Sun.* In affirming the value of creation and our relationship to it, we affirm the value of the contingent, the ephemeral. Affirming this value, we recognize the beauty of the present moment as it expresses the perfection of the eternal. In other words, the recognition of the value of

the contingent — the realm that does not have to exist or that could be other than it is — involves the affirmation of the value of divine desire and creative choice. God's choice to create this world, the one that surrounds us, is understood as a single choice that involved many (possibly an infinite number of) options. And yet, our world was chosen and created. One does not have to conclude that we are “the best world possible,” but one would be foolish not to see in this the enormous love and delight of the Creator for the created. Since God is not only the source for creation, but also the Sustainer of all that is, the actual and present existence of what exists gives testimony of the ever-present and sustaining love of God for what has been made. God did not have to create in order to be God. Nothing about the divine essence required such generosity. The only thing required by the divine essence was that, if God did choose to create, God must remain God.

A second aspect revealed by the importance of the contingency of the created order is seen in the better-known Scotist affirmation of the primacy of each individual. Here is that *haecceitas*, the “thisness” so dear to the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins. As created by God, each being is a “this,” a *haec*, incapable of cloning or repetition, the ultimate reality of being, known fully to God alone. No human person is reducible to physical characteristics, genetic makeup, or DNA. The sacredness of each person, indeed of each being is philosophically expressed in this term *haecceitas*. *The created order is not a transparent medium through which divine light shines, but is itself endowed with an inner light that shines forth from within.*

The Lamp

Haecceitas points to the ineffable within each being. The sacredness of each person, indeed of each being is philosophically expressed in this Latin term. According to Scotus, the created order is not best understood as a transparent medium through which divine light shines (as Aquinas taught), but is itself endowed with an inner light that shines forth from within.

The difference between these two great scholars can be compared to the difference between a window (Aquinas) and a lamp (Scotus).

Both give light, but the source of light for Scotus has already been given to the being by the creator. Each being within the created order already possesses an immanent dignity; it is already gifted by the loving Creator with sanctity beyond our ability to understand.

Mary Beth Ingham CSJ. Scotus for Dunces. Pages 54-55.



Finally, the dignity of the human person is expressed by Scotus in the natural powers of cognition and human rationality. We are not created independently of the natural order. Our powers of cognition and rationality are perfectly adjusted to the way the world is, because both the faculties of human reason and the ordered whole of creation are the result of the divine creative act. Unlike Aquinas, who speaks of only mediated access to the world around us, Scotus balances in his theory of knowledge both mediated and immediate access. His understanding of the requirements for the beatific vision necessitates a cognitional theory that already equips human reason with all that it needs to see God face to face. Thus Scotus believes that human reason possesses an intuitive cognition of the world that allows an immediate existential grasp of any existing reality.

As Scotus works out his explanation for this more immediate ability, he offers two reasons, both based on the dignity of the human. In the first place, it was part of Christ's rational grasp of the world around him and of the presence of his Father. In his humanity, Jesus mirrors our own human potential. In the second place, such a capacity is absolutely necessary for our experience of the beatific vision. In other words, if we are able to see God face to face, then our rational constitution must have what it takes and by nature. Scotus sees no need for the "light of glory" that Aquinas provides in order for the beatific vision to take place. *It belongs to human dignity, as currently created by God, to enjoy the relationship of communion that awaits us at the end of this life.*

The Centrality of the Covenant

As we move into a new millennium, we are in need of a renewed anthropology — a renewed vision of what it means to be human.

Scotist thought offers a beautiful integration of biblical and doctrinal insights. At the foundation of his reflection upon God's relationship to the world and to us is the notion of the covenant initiated by God and fulfilled through the Incarnation. Salvation history is the large lens through which Scotus looks at what it means to be human: the call of Abraham, the revelation

to Moses, the Exodus, the centrality of Christ, and predestination of all to glory.

Perhaps the most original aspect of Scotist thought arises when he considers the reason behind the incarnation. Scotus affirms quite clearly that God would have become human *even if Adam and Eve had not sinned.*

Thus, the Incarnation is not a divine response to human sin as proposed by Anselm in the 11th century and widely held thereafter. Sin is not the center of our consideration of the covenant. If it were, he states, then we would rejoice at the misfortune of another. Rather, the Incarnation expresses the fullest communion of God-with-us. It is not sin, but Christ who is the center of our attention. This is not to deny sin or human weakness, but it is an important change of focus for Christian understanding. As we move into a new millennium, we are in need of a renewed anthropology — a renewed vision of what it means to be human. Scotus may offer the most fruitful medieval path in this reflection, for he consciously rejects an explanation of salvation that is founded upon a negative anthropology.

If the Incarnation took place as an event in history, not because of human sinfulness nor out of a need for divine retribution but as *the manifestation of divine desire to be with us*, then what might salvation really mean? Perhaps salvation involves neither justification nor retribution, but is the simple act of presence. If this is the case, then the celebration of Eucharist takes on a renewed meaning as a salvific act.

The notion of covenant grounds Scotus's understanding of moral living as relational living. In the revelation of the law to Moses we find both the articulation of the demands of the covenant and the basis for any social fabric. The moral foundation represented by the Decalogue reveals *the primacy of relational living* for Scotus. His is not primarily a divine command theory. The ten commandments reveal God's desire for us and point to the best way we can show our love for Him. Our relationship with God and with one another is strengthened by our choice to follow out of

love what God asks of us. But the law is not the final word and Scotus is not a legalistic thinker. *For him, love for God is the only unconditionally binding commandment.*

Moral living is also relational living within the human heart, where the two natural affections (for justice and for happiness) come together in the desire to love God above all things. Thus, moral goodness involves both a social dimension and an internal, spiritual experience of harmony and integration.

The joy and delight experienced by the good person reveals that the deepest human longing is fulfilled by right and ordered loving. This perfects our nature as rational beings made in God's image.

The Insight about Communion

In human moral development, we strive to unite the two moral affections (for happiness and for justice), and bring love for the self (happiness) into harmony with love for the good (justice). When we do this, we imitate divine goodness and simplicity. When we do not, we are simply not ourselves. This is what it means to sin.

Finally, the relationship realized in the covenant contains a revelation about God as Triune relationship and as ground for the entire moral order. This is Scotus's way of expressing the key insight that "God is love." This truth expresses both the nature of God and grounds all choice. As Scotus states: "God is to be loved" is the foundational principle for all action, human as well as divine. His focus on the human will is really a focus on the power of love, the perfection of which reveals the fullest understanding of the human person as rational and as created in the image of God.

Here is, for me, the most important aspect of an accurate retrieval of Scotist thought. Today, rationality means the ability to think, to solve problems, to get the right answers, to get the result we desire. Rationality is tied to calculation, such that one wonders if computers are human since they can reason as we do and indeed even faster than we can!

The question of artificial intelligence as rational would amuse someone like Scotus, because his notion of rationality is much broader than the ability to analyze. He ties it to love and the human ability to choose to love the highest good, to be capable of self-control. Rationality has nothing to do with the human intellect, since this is merely a tool that serves in deliberation. Scotus's approach to the question of rationality begins with the will, that is, the human affective desire for union with God. *If the fullest development of the rational person involves love and communion, then the ability to think rightly is only a small part of a much larger picture of what it means to be human.*

Scotus states quite clearly that the intellect is only rational when it works with the will, that is, when it is informed by and serves the *activity of ordered loving*. It is so easy, he explains, to confuse the intellect with rationality, since at the first turn to introspection, we are distracted by the activity of intellectual reflection. This is what happened to Aristotle, and (he might add) to most philosophers. But one must reflect more deeply on one's experience to discover that it is not the intellect at all, but the will (seat of love) that holds the key to rational perfection. The will's natural

internal constitution defines rationality. There are within the will two distinct orientations: the first, directed toward its own preservation and wellbeing; the second, directed toward the highest good. Both orientations come together in God in a two-fold manner. First, in God alone do we find that being for whom love for the highest good is, in fact, identical to love for the self. Thus, every act of God reveals the unity of the divine essence and holds out the goal of rational perfection. In human moral development, we strive to unite the two moral affections (as he calls them) and bring love for the self into harmony with love for the good. When we do this, we imitate divine goodness and simplicity. When we do not, we are simply not ourselves. This is what it means to sin.

Finally, an aspect that comes out of a closer focus on love is the *role of beauty* as moral category and as a way of integrating the human moral journey into the spiritual journey. A moral aesthetic is, I think, quite Franciscan and could prove to be extremely timely for contemporary reflection. The focus on beauty in Scotist thought brings together divine and human orders of love. *In human moral choices, we seek to love the good. Scotus describes the morally good*

act as a beautiful whole, a work of art in which all dimensions are in harmony. This act and the morally good person are made even more beautiful by the presence of charity. Here Scotus moves from the order of moral goodness to the order of merit—a move from nature to grace. In the order of merit, the divine ear delights in the music of human goodness informed by love. The good act informed by charity stands at the boundary between the realm of human freedom and love and the realm of divine freedom and generosity. This is the entrance to deeper relationship made possible when God chooses freely to reward human actions far beyond what they deserve according to a strict justice.

Challenge

As a non-Franciscan and, indeed, a non-theologian, I hope my reflections have helped to shed some light on a serious consideration of the rightful place of Franciscans in the scholarly community, and on the enormous intellectual legacy persons like Duns Scotus have left behind. They exalt the dignity of the human person centrality of Christ and the Incarnation enormous generosity of a God who has richly provided for all, Franciscans enjoy an aesthetic tradition. The world needs to hear this.

John Duns Scotus:

Retrieving a Medieval Thinker for Contemporary Theology

Mary Beth Ingham CSJ

Synthesis provided by: Carole Whittaker, PhD

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Mary Beth Ingham CSJ, presently in Leadership for her Congregation, Orange CA, and part-time professor at Franciscan School of Theology, Berkeley CA, is a renowned scholar of the Teachings of John Duns Scotus. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Fribourg, Switzerland and has been on the faculty of Loyola Marymount University for twenty-four years. Mary Beth is the author of the popular *Scotus for Dunces: An Introduction to the Subtle Doctor*, as well as the CFIT Heritage Series, *Rejoicing in the Works of the Lord: Beauty in the Franciscan Tradition*. As a master teacher she easily engages students, encouraging all to delight in Scotus' vision of what it means to be human.

Carole Whittaker holds a PhD in chemistry from UCLA. Following careers in teaching, adult education and agriculture she has been an active member of the Franciscan Renewal Center (Casa) community in Scottsdale, Arizona since 1994. In addition to teaching classes and leading retreats at the Casa, she has served as the interim Director of the Franciscan Way (2001), a member of the Board of Directors (2008-) and a catechist for the RCIA (1996-2012).

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General Editor: Kathleen Moffatt OSF, *Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia*, Aston, PA, skmoffatt@aol.com

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Custodians of the Tradition

*Reclaiming the Franciscan
Intellectual Tradition*



Those like ourselves who are immediate heirs of the tradition inspired by the spirituality of Francis [and Clare] might better see ourselves as responsible stewards of a treasure that has much to offer for the healing of humanity and of the world at large.

Zachary Hayes OFM
Bonaventure Fest, 2003, Aston, PA



The Cosmos, a Symbol of the Divine

by Zachary Hayes OFM

To know nature more deeply is to sense its mystery, its depth, and its value. It is to know as an image of the sacred: a sacrament of the divine. The cosmos truly speaks to us of God.

Scientific knowledge about the cosmos is not the whole picture for us. Even the best positive knowledge and explanation of things does not necessarily tell the whole story. Knowing is not all there is; explanation does not account for everything. Reality is multi-dimensional, and the human reaction to reality is similarly multi-dimensional. Before we engage in scientific knowledge, we relate to the cosmos in other ways. One of these ways is through the human imagination.

In reflecting on this, we shall begin by reaching back to the thirteenth century when the role of the human imagination was of basic importance in the human perception of the universe. I shall draw out a number of the principal images and metaphors used by the Franciscan St. Bonaventure di Fidanza which appeal largely to the imagination. It is through these that Bonaventure describes the universe and its relation to the divine – remarkably concrete images which are related to his understanding of reality and the ways in which it can be known or understood. These metaphors help Bonaventure to interpret the meaning of the universe.

Recognizing the immense changes in the human perception of the physical cosmos that have entered into the Western understanding of reality since the days of Bonaventure, I will attempt to look at the kinds of insights suggested by several of the metaphors used by Bonaventure and to ask whether anything similar to his reading of the cosmos is possible for us today in the face of the radical changes in our understanding of the physics of created reality.

Imaginations, Metaphors, Cosmic Revelation in the Thought of Bonaventure

Each creature and the whole of creation is in its truest reality an expressive sign of the glory, truth, and beauty of God. Only when creation is seen in terms of the self-diffusive love that is its source and its final end is it seen for what it truly is. We shall look at several examples from the work of Bonaventure that give expression to this vision at the level of metaphor and symbol.

- **Circle/River** The image of the circle appears in a variety of ways in Bonaventure. At one level, it is a symbol of the divine trinity which describes God as an intelligible circle, whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere. Elsewhere, *the circle may be seen as a symbol of the origin of all things in the creative fecundity of God and the return of creation to the same mystery of divine love as their final end.* The symbol of the circle can be seen in yet another way if the circle is thought of as a river which returns to its point of origin. It envisions the river flowing from the immensity of the sea and eventually returning to the fullness of its point of origin. The divine trinity, then, can be seen as the *fountain-fullness* from which the river of reality flows both within the mystery of God in the form of the triune life of love, and outside the divinity in the form of creation.
- **Water** The Trinitarian God of productive, creative love can be compared to a living fountain of water. Flowing from that fountain as something known, loved, and willed into being by the creative love of God is the immense river of creation. The world of nature in its vastness is the expression of a loving, intelligent creator. Like water, the cosmos has many dimensions and diverse qualities. *Thinking of water in the form of the oceans, it suggests the overwhelming fullness of creation as it flows from the depths of God.* Like an ocean, the cosmos is deep and contains many levels of meaning. Thinking of water in the form of a river, we can see how it reflects the movement and fluidity of the cosmos.



Thus, for Bonaventure the metaphors of the *circle, the river, and water* elicit a sense of the immense diversity, fertility, and fluidity of creation. No one form of created being is an adequate expression of the immensely fertile source that resides in the divine, creative love. Therefore the diversity of beings which in fact exist in creation is a more appropriate form of divine self-expression. And, as the river eventually closes back on its point of origin, so creation is a dynamic reality, directed in its inner core to a fulfillment and a completion with God.

■ **Song** Bonaventure reaches back to one of the metaphors of Augustine to compare the universe with a beautifully composed song. He recognizes that it is necessary to grasp the whole of the melody if one is to appreciate the song fully. It is also clear to him that a well-crafted melody relates notes to one another in terms of pitch and rhythm in such a way that the true

significance of the individual note can be discerned only through the network or relations which constitute the melody. Bonaventure also recognizes that, in the depths of the human spirit, there is a desire for a certain numerical proportion which must be present in the structure of the melody if it is to work effectively. *This metaphor suggests the need for a sense of wholeness, a sense of the dynamic inter-relatedness of all the elements that make up the melody of the cosmos, and the hope that there is, in the context of the wild diversity of creatures, some principle of unity and order.*

■ **Book** When speaking of the relation of the cosmos to God, Bonaventure speaks of a book “written and without.” The content of the book is first written in the consciousness of God in the form of the divine Word. That Word contains all that the divine is in

itself, and all that God can call into being outside God. When that Word is expressed externally, what comes into being is the created cosmos, the form in which the Work of God’s consciousness becomes visible and audible as the book “written without.”

■ **Window.** While teaching in Paris, 1273, Bonaventure watched the completion of the cathedral of Notre Dame. Just a short distance from the cathedral was the remarkable building known as Sainte-Chapelle built while Bonaventure was still a student at Paris. Knowing the medieval fascination with the physics, metaphysics and mysticism of light, it is easy to appreciate Bonaventure’s insights on the sun’s shining on stained glass:

In every creature there is a shining forth of the divine exemplar, but mixed with darkness: hence there is a sort of darkness mixed with light. Also, there is in every creature a pathway leading to the exemplar. As you notice that a ray of light coming in through a window is colored according to the shades of the different panes, so that divine ray shines differently in each creature and in the various properties of the creature. [Collationes in Hexaemeron 12,14 (V, 386)]

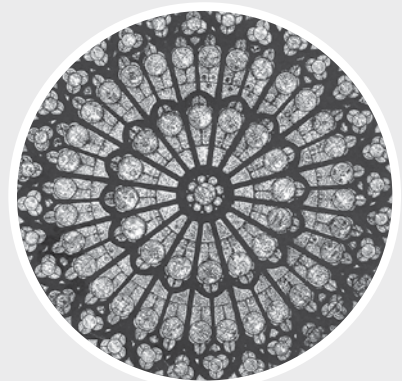
The Cosmos is, as it were, a window opening to the divine.

■ **Microcosm/macrocosm** In humanity we discover that in a representative way, something of all of the elements of creation are present in the human being. In some sense, all creation is present in the microcosm that con-

The Stained Glass Window

Bonaventure described the created universe as the fountain-fullness of God’s expressed being. As God expresses God’s self in creation, creation, in turn, expresses the Creator. We can compare the manifold variety of things in creation to the stain-glassed windows of a great cathedral. Just as light strikes the various panes of glass and diffracts into an array of colors, so too the divine light emanates through the Word and diffracts in the universe, producing a myriad of “colors” expressed in a myriad of things, all reflecting the divine light in some way.

Ilia Delio OSF, *Simply Bonaventure*, Page 60;
Bonaventure, *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, XIII, 14.





stitutes the human being. And when Christ, in his created human nature is transfigured in the mystery of the resurrection, Bonaventure can see here the beginning of the transfiguration of the cosmos.

■ **Cross** The cross provides a symbol by which Bonaventure relates the whole of cosmic reality and its history to the revelation of the Scriptures which deal with “the high and the low, the first and the last, and all things in between. The entire universe is an intelligible cross in which the entire structure of the universe is described and made to be seen in the light of the mind.” [*Breviloquium*, Prologue, #6 (V, 208)]

In summary, for Bonaventure, the relation between creation and God may be expressed in terms of manifestation and participation. *All things in the cosmos exist so as to manifest something of the mystery of God.* And all things exist by virtue of some degree of participation in the mystery of being that flows from the absolute mystery of the creative love of God. An appropriate reading of the book of the cosmos gives us some sense of the divine goodness and fecundity; of the divine wisdom and beauty; of the divine intelligence and freedom; and of the relational character of the divine mystery of the trinity in which all of creation is grounded.

Contemporary Cosmology as Revelation

The question for us is whether the cosmos as we see it today can be read as a revelation of the mysterious richness of divine being. It is my view that the real issue is not proving the existence of God through the use of reason and/or sense experience.

Of greater importance is to show to what extent a religious faith or experience may be seen as a responsible vision of the meaning of reality and of human life, and then to search out the possible coherence between the insights of science and those of theology.

It may well be that science, precisely as science and by virtue of scientific methodology, knows nothing about God. This is not a problem as long as we do not claim that science alone defines the range of meaningful discourse. There are clearly other dimensions involved in the human relation to the cosmos. *It is my conviction that the entire range of human experiences and questions ought to be brought to bear on our attempts to understand who we are and what sort of world we live in.*

What is of interest to a reflective religious believer at the present time is the question as to whether we may see a certain sort of coherence between the concerns of religion and the insights of science. How can the cosmos viewed in the light of the best empirical knowledge available to us through the sciences, *be said to manifest the mystery of God* to those who believe in God and who believe that the physical universe which is described by the sciences is the universe which God is creating?

A contemporary view of the cosmos evokes a profound sense of its seemingly impenetrable mystery. Apparently boundless in space and time, it is a dynamic, unfolding, organically interrelated cosmos, marked by some degree of unpredictability together with forms of order which are at times unexpected and yet remarkable in their beauty.

It was Bonaventure's conviction that if one learns to read the book of the cosmos correctly, one will discover something of God's wisdom, beauty, power, and love.

Following are some perspectives from which we might see the cosmos as a revelation of God, to see the various forms and rhythms of nature as at least distant reflections of divine qualities.

1. The *incalculable immensity of the cosmos* in both in space and in time inspires wonderment in the face of what seems to be so radically dependent and apparently not necessary. It has led people of all ages to see the cosmos as grounded in some form of mysterious necessity; to see the relative as grounded in some mysterious Absolute.
2. The cosmos reveals a baffling number of diverse forms of created things. Faith and theology see this diversity as *an expression of the divine fecundity* of being poured out in such richness that it would not be appropriately expressed in a single form or even in a few forms of created being.
3. Scientists see a universe of things intimately intertwined at all levels. This points to the possibility that the cosmos is really “systems within systems” throughout; i.e., it appears to be relational through and through. It is the core insight of the traditional trinitarian concept of God that the divine reality is intrinsically relational in character. *Christian believers today can see the cosmos as grounded in and as reflecting the relational character of the trinity.*
4. Science assumes that the cosmos is intelligible but limited in its predictability. A person of faith expects some form in intelligibility because of the divine intelligence but *one would not be surprised if things are not totally predictable, because of the divine freedom.*
5. Contemporary science sees humanity to be deeply imbedded in the cosmic material process out of which life emerges, eventually conscious life with intelligence and freedom. Just as pre-modern man saw humanity as a microcosm, contemporary science realizes that the human being contains within its own development from conception onward the mineral, vegetative, animal, and finally

rational dimensions of the cosmos. A person of faith may see that *humanity is integrated to the material world through the body* but also see that *humanity is integrated in the world of created spirit*. Such a person experiences humanity as being at the point of integration of these two dimensions of matter and spirit.

6. Nature displays a remarkable ambiguity, marked by unmitigated beauty as well as the struggle for life. *The pervasive movement to more and fuller life moves through pain, struggle, and death. This reality might well be represented in the symbol of the cosmic cross put forth by Bonaventure*. Christ as the embodiment of the cosmic-word also gives us the figure of the man on a cross, an image which may well reflect the ambiguity observed in nature.

In all this, nature can still be seen as a revelation of God. It is through nature that God brings us into being and sustains us.

To know nature more deeply is to sense its mystery, its depth, and its value. It is to know nature as an image of the sacred, a sacrament of the divine. The cosmos truly speaks to us of God.

When we look at the cosmos from a Christological perspective, we can say that God loves and cherishes the world and all in it. God desires that the cosmic order be brought to fulfilling completion which is anticipated in the personal destiny of Jesus as the risen Christ. Thus we are in a position to be serious about the sacred character of the world of nature without

turning it into God. And when we look from a cosmic perspective, we can say that, in the final analysis, the cosmos is not cold and indifferent, but finally beneficent and life-giving. In Christian terms, we can say that the creative power that generates and sustains cosmic reality including humanity and draws out its ever new forms of being is a power that is loving, personal, forgiving, and fulfilling. *In Christ we discover that the true nature of creative power is enacted as "humble love."* We find that for human beings, the appropriate way of interrelating with each other and with the world around them is through the *ethics of self-giving love*, even though the world operates on the basis of other principles in other dimensions. And in Christ we find the hopeful vision for a successful outcome for the entire cosmic process, even though the future seems quite dark and unpredictable when we view it simply in terms of the empirical science.

The Cosmos, a Symbol of the Divine

Zachary Hayes OFM

Synthesis provided by: Carole Whittaker, PhD

Zachary Hayes OFM, Friar of OFM Province of Sacred Heart, St. Louis, MO and professor of historical and systematic theology, has been a vital force in the mission of Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, IL since its founding in 1968. An internationally acclaimed Bonaventurian scholar, Zachary has a special interest in the critical interaction between science and theology. Publishing over 18 books, Zachary is tireless in elaborating the uniqueness of the Franciscan approach to education.

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Carole Whittaker, holds a PhD in chemistry from UCLA. Following careers in teaching, adult education and agriculture she has been an active member of the Franciscan Renewal Center (Casa) community in Scottsdale, Arizona since 1994. In addition to teaching classes and leading retreats at the Casa, she has served as the interim Director of the Franciscan Way (2001), a member of the Board of Directors (2008–) and a catechist for the RCIA (1996–2012).

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