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## ***Editorial***

### **MINORITIC POWERLESSNESS**

We were hoping that the end of the Covid-19 pandemic, which seems to be in sight, might usher in a new era of peace and prosperity. It has not. New events have literally exploded that do not offer any tangible hope of a revival. Russia, or rather its autocratic leader, has embarked upon a senseless invasion of Ukraine and created a war that is bound to drag on for ages. A situation exacerbated by the arms industry that has found a golden opportunity for sales of lethal weapons of war. Although condemnation of the war has been rampant, not one single nation has offered a sensible way out. The only solution was that of strengthening Ukraine with NATO weapons and convincing the Russian people that the sacrifices of Russian soldiers killed on the front are a boost for national pride.

This crisis will bring with it more problems on the international economy. People will starve because of lack of grain imports. Millions have already been displaced, increasing the already fragile situation of immigration around the globe. It seems that the only voices that are heard are those of the powerful and mighty who challenge one another with sanctions and threats of annihilation, whereas the voices of millions of powerless persons are hushed over with promises that one part or the other will ultimately be the winner.

Entire ethnic groups continue to suffer the tyranny of occupation. There are entire regions which have been occupied by the mighty and powerful for decades on end, with no possible solution in sight in favour of self-determination of minorities. Religion is exploited for political gains,

fuelling fundamentalism and evil in the name of God. Wars and ethnic cleansing are often justified by religious motives, and those who should be luminaries of peace in their role as religious leaders continue to fuel hatred and injustice in flagrant contradiction to their calling. This is the unforgivable scandal of elderly religious leaders who preach a just war and bless armaments and young men who are sent to die on the battlefield. They are worthy of God's vengeance on the wicked and they are ripe for God's judgment.

These words might sound like an apocalypse now. Unfortunately, they are a true picture of the world in which we are living. It seems that the world has shut its ears to the voices of those who can give a witness of powerless minority.

These voices have made history. Francis of Assisi, Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi, John XXIII, Mother Theresa, Desmond Tutu, to mention just a few. Yes, these persons have made history. All tyrants that have come and gone are still recorded, with shame, on history books. But they were not the artisans of history, but its evil destroyers. True peace cannot come from selfish nationalist interests, from greed for power and wealth, from controlling people's minds and hearts through social media. True peace is the result of powerless efforts and of a spirit of minority that loathes the cruelty of armaments of war because it sees in them the power of the devil.

The cry of the poor and downtrodden, of the helpless immigrants escaping death and destruction, is the cry of the powerless servants of the God of peace. The Franciscan charism of peace is rooted in this vision of God. It is not a question of supporting diplomatic moves towards peace, or of advocating a new world order based upon a revolution that topples tyrants in order to create a new tyranny of minds and hearts.

Franciscan peace-making is all about Jesus Christ and His Gospel. It promotes a humanity based upon sound values, but

preaches these values by a life of radical powerlessness and minority based upon the scandal of a crucified God.

We need to begin by a process of conversion within our own fold. Whenever we lobby for power, prestige or popularity, whenever money and wealth become the be-all and end-all of our existence, we are not powerless minors in search of peace. Whenever we quote the Gospel and St. Francis in order to suit our ideals and aspirations, under the mask of a false and pretentious holiness, we are tyrants just like the politicians who create war.

To be powerless and to be minors implies courage to back away from false promises and aspirations. It means to be able to do penance in the right direction, by destroying in ourselves the armaments we deploy in order to defend our reputation and influence upon those who are weak. It means being aware of our ability to be abusers of the freedom of the children of God in our brothers. It implies knowing how to die for love of the brothers in order to generate in them the yearning for peace and true brotherhood, in a spirit of humble service. It also implies denouncing falsity within our ranks, not with a spirit of vengeance upon those who cause trouble, but with a spirit of courageous truth that has nothing to hide.

War is not only in Ukraine. It lies deep within our hearts. It is there that we must dig in order to discover the truth about ourselves and about the world in which we live. That is the way in which we can denounce, like Francis did, the tyrannical evil of the devil with the armaments of powerlessness and minority, or rather with minoritic powerlessness.

Noel Muscat ofm

# SAINT FRANCIS IN THE APOCALYPTIC VISIONS OF THE ANGEL OF THE SIXTH SEAL AND OF THE ANGEL WITH THE SCROLL

Noel Muscat OFM

The Book of Apocalypse or Revelation is the last one in the series of New Testament books. A strong and ancient tradition insists that this book is the fruit of visions experienced by the Apostle and Evangelist Saint John, and that it was written around the year 95 AD when the same Apostle was exiled by Emperor Domitian. As the same Apostle testifies, while he was living in the Christian community of Ephesus he suffered exile in an island called Patmos, one of the Greek islands of the Dodecanese group in the Aegean Sea, some kilometres away from the coast of Turkey and somewhat southwest of the same latitude of the town of Ephesus (Selçuk). This island has been linked with the the Apostle Saint John and especially with the Book of Apocalypse, and on it one can visit a cave-church that marks the place where John received the revelations he wrote down in the Apocalypse.

## **Patmos and the Book of Apocalypse**

It is John himself who gives witness to his presence on the island of Patmos, when he writes: “I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that our ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. On the Lord’s Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: ‘Write on a scroll what

you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea’” (Rev 1:9-11).

The island which is mentioned is precisely that of Patmos. This island (in Greek Πάτμος) is located on the northern section of the group of islands of the Dodecanese. It is roughly 34 square kilometres and is characterised by three mountains which are joined by narrow strips of land, and has a good number of natural bays and inlets. The highest point is called Profitis Ilias (Prophet Elias), and rises to 269 metres above sea-level. The hilly island is covered by typical Mediterranean vegetation, especially the Mediterranean pine, and one gets the impression that the island looks larger than it actually is. The island is also characterised by many cliffs, rocks and natural caves. The fact that it is rather isolated from other groups of islands further inland was certainly a contributing factor to its use as a place of exile, and during the early Christian era, as an island ideal for hermitage and contemplation. On this island John was exiled from Ephesus, on account “of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus,” words which indicate that he suffered as a Christian for having rendered witness to his faith in the community in which he was considered as a leader (πρεσβύτερος). In fact the list of towns that are mentioned in the Biblical text, and to which John is invited to send his

prophecies and visions, were all towns that were close to the metropolis of Ephesus and which fell within the evangelising mission of the Apostle: Ephesus (Selçuk) itself, Smyrna (Ismir), Pergamum (Bergama), Thyatira (Akhisar), Sardis (Sart), Philadelphia (Alaşehir) and Laodicea (Laodikeia/Guncali).

From the sea the island of Patmos appears to have two principal centres. The port of the island, which is nowadays a hub for tourists, is called Skala. It is the port that provides communication with the other Greek islands of the Aegean Sea. On the mountain at the centre of the island there is the village of Chora, which is the principal village of Patmos. The village is dominated by the Monastery of Saint John the Theologian (Μοναστήρι του Αγίου Ιωάννη του Θεολόγου), which appears like a large fortress on the white terraced houses underneath, and further down on its side there are three ancient wind-mills. Half-way up the mountain slope, in the midst of many pine trees, there is the Cave-Church of the Apocalypse, which is linked to the monastery by means of a steep stairway, and which marks the sacred place where John received the visions that he documented in the Apocalypse.

The Greek word *Apokálypsi* (Αποκάλυψη) comes from the verb *apokalyptō* (ἀποκάλυπτω), meaning “to uncover by taking off a veil.” We find a splendid example of this meaning of the Apocalypse in the liturgy, in the sign of the “unveiling” of the chalice and paten before the Offertory, when the priest takes off the chalice veil. This action means that the “mystery” hidden up to that moment is now “unveiled” (revealed) during the moment of consecration of the Eucharistic species in the paten and chalice. Therefore Apocalypse means a mystery that is unveiled or, better still, revealed (revelation).

The literary genre of the Apocalypse takes different forms. The most important are the visions (the man of God “sees” mysterious realities), symbolism

(metaphors, numbers, objects implying a totally different reality), urgency (reference to the end of times that have already begun), perseverance (in the fact of persecution), anti-dating (a message in the present which is described by referring to ancient prophecies), pseudonymy (a message referred to a famous personage who is not necessarily its author), and above all a theological interpretation of the world and of history.

This last element is fundamental in order to understand the Apocalypse. The apocalyptic literary genre does not have the aim of announcing the end of a particular moment of history of the world. This interpretation has often been applied and it was always a source of problems, as it was, for example, in the case of the millenarist interpretation based on Rev 20:1-6. The Apocalypse is a theological interpretation of history. It shows that, at all times, we are living in the end of times, where the struggle between God and Satan is always present, and where the disciples of Jesus (the Church) have to pass through persecutions in order to give witness to their faith unto martyrdom, and until they arrive at the peace of the heavenly Jerusalem which comes down from heaven. Thus, the persecution of the time of Domitian, to which John probably refers in the Apocalypse, becomes an emblem of all persecutions that see the people of God living in the end of times and having to face the Antichrist. Every interpretation that has been made regarding the Apocalypse, especially during the Middle Ages, was always partial, but has to be applied to all times.

### **The Cave-Church of the Apocalypse**

The tradition that John wrote the Apocalypse after the visions he experienced when he was exiled on Patmos, and was in contemplation in a cave is strong

and constant.<sup>1</sup> In a small Gospel book found in the famous library of the Monastery of Saint John the Theologian in Patmos, dated 1334/35, there is a miniature at the beginning of the illuminated manuscript of the Gospel of John, where the Evangelist appears standing up and dictating words to Prochoros, who was his disciple and scribe. Prochoros appears sitting down on a rock and writing the opening words of the Gospel of John 1:1: “In the beginning was the Word.” Behind these two personages there is a rocky mountain.

Orthodox Tradition holds that Prochoros was one of the seven deacons chosen by the Apostles in order to take care of the poor members of the mother Church of Jerusalem (Acts 6:5). He is considered to be the nephew of Saint Stephen, the first martyr, and also one of the seven deacons. He accompanied Saint Peter who ordained him bishop of Nicomedia. He was also a disciple of Saint John, and in iconography always appears to be the scribe of John. Sometimes he was considered to be the author of the apocryphal *Acts of John*, dated towards the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. He is also said to have been bishop of Antioch, where he died as a martyr.

A story in the *Acta Joannis* states that Prochoros accompanied Saint John on the island of Patmos: “John took me with him, and we went out of the town towards a quiet place. This place was called Katastasis; in this place there is a small mountain. We went up and remained for three days on the mountain. John spent the time without eating, praying to God to give him a good news for the brethren. On the third day John spoke to me and said: ‘Prochoros, my son, go down to the town and bring me ink and paper (χάρτας), but do not tell anyone of the brethren that we are here.’ I went to the town and brought ink and paper and returned to John, and he said to me: ‘Leave the ink and paper here and go back to the town, and then come back here in two days’

time.’ I went to the town. After two days I went up back to him and I found him standing up and praying, and he told me: ‘Take the ink and paper, and sit down on my right hand side.’ And I did so. At that very moment claps of lightning and thunder fell down so strongly that the mountain trembled, and I fell down on my face to the ground as if I were dead. But John took me by my arm and raised me up and said: ‘Sit down on the floor on my right hand side.’ And I did so. He prayed, and after praying told me: ‘Prochoros, my son, now write the words you hear coming out from my mouth.’ And John opened his mouth, and standing up and looking towards heaven, he said: ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.’ [...] And then he went on, while he remained standing up and I was sitting down and writing. We remained two days and six hours on that spot. He was speaking and I was writing. When the divine words were written down, John took me with him to the town and we went to live in the house of Sosipatros and his mother Proklianē.”

The witness of Prochoros became so popular that even the fourth Gospel began to be associated with Patmos rather than with Ephesus, and the island became the place where the Apocalypse was said to have been composed. Among the witnesses of this fact, from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards, we find Teodoros Studita, Arethas of Caesarea, Niketas of Paphlagon and Symeon Metaphrastes. In 1106/07 the Russian Abbot Daniel visited Ephesus and he mentions Patmos as the place where John dictated the Gospel to Prochoros, although Daniel himself never went personally to Patmos. This tradition then prompted Christódoulos in 1088 to found the Monastery of Saint John the Theologian on the island. Christódoulos states that he was attracted to Patmos because it was the place in which the beloved Apostle of Jesus lived, the virgin Evangelist, who heard the

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy Patterson ŠEVČENKO, *The Cave of the Apocalypse*, in [academia.edu](http://academia.edu) published as a book in 1989.

voice of God as thunder and wrote down what he saw in his divine visions. From that moment Patmos began to be compared to Mount Sinai, because if on Sinai God gave the tablets of the Law to Moses, on Patmos He transmitted the Words of life of the Spirit which wins over the letter of the Law. Towards the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century the cave that is found half-way up the mountain between Skala and Chorio, where the Monastery is found, began to be indicated as the Cave-Church in which John received the divine revelations which he wrote in the Apocalypse. We can conclude that, if in the very beginning, the entire island of Patmos was considered to be a sacred island because John had lived there in exile and wrote his Gospel and the Apocalypse, as time went on, after the foundation of the Monastery, this particular Cave began to be indicated as the holy Cave of the revelations and it became a place of worship and pilgrimage.

### **Franciscan apocalyptic vision**

During the 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries the Book of Apocalypse became a stable source of reflection upon the theology of history. This trend began especially with the writings of Joachim of Fiore, and continued especially in the Franciscan Order, particularly in the writings of the Spiritual Franciscans of the late 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Among them the most famous is Peter John Olivi, author of the *Commentary on the Apocalypse*.<sup>2</sup> However, the same trend can also be found in the writings of St. Bonaventure, particularly in the *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the theological reading of history in apocalyptic terms was part and parcel of the

Franciscan milieu of the first generations of friars, and the figure of St. Francis himself was portrayed in an apocalyptic light. If the Apocalypse is the book of revelation for all generations and describes the definite conclusion of God's plan of salvation as seen in a meta-historical dimension, it is certainly the book of revelation of the history of the Franciscan Order in a moment when it was reviewing its vocation within the Church according to the prophetic style that it interpreted in the living memory of Francis of Assisi.

The geographical memory of the Apocalypse on the island of Patmos can be considered as a kind of link with the medieval geographical memory of Francis in the remote hermitages of the Italian Apennines, as continued in the living experience of the Spiritual brothers who inhabited them. In these mountain hermitages the brothers were experiencing the same feeling of exile that John experienced on Patmos, and they were confident that their remoteness from the sinful world and carnal Church would be a prophecy heralding a new age of a purified humanity and of a spiritual Church that would triumph over evil. This ideal was sought in an intricate system of interpretative symbology rooted in the Book of the Apocalypse and applied to the particular historical period in which this theology of history was born and developed.<sup>4</sup>

### **Francis in Bonaventure's interpretation of the angel of the sixth seal**

The figure of the angel of the sixth seal in Apocalypse 7:2 is abundantly used by Bonaventure to indicate the prophetic

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<sup>2</sup> PETER OF JOHN OLIVI, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*. Translation, Notes and Introduction by W. LEWIS, Franciscan Institute Publications, St. Bonaventure University, NY 2017.

<sup>3</sup> *Works of St. Bonaventure. Collations on the Hexaëmeron. Conferences on the Six Days of Creation. The Illuminations of the Church*. Translation, Introduction and Notes Jay M.

HAMMOND, Franciscan Institute Publications, St. Bonaventure University, NY 2008 (Bonaventure Texts in Translation, Volume XVIII).

<sup>4</sup> David BURR, *The Spiritual Franciscans. From Protest to Persecution in the Century After Saint Francis*, The Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, Pennsylvania 2001.

mission of St. Francis. The most widely known text is that in the Prologue of the *Legenda Maior*: “And so in the true prophecy of that other *friend of the Bridegroom* (Jn 3:29), John the Apostle and Evangelist, he is considered not without reason to be like the angel ascending from the rising of the sun bearing the seal of the living God. For *at the opening of the sixth seal* (Rev 6:12), John says in the Apocalypse, *I saw another Angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the sign of the living God* (Rev 7:2).”<sup>5</sup>

The Prologue of the *Legenda Maior* has the specific aim of providing a kind of unifying vision of Francis that would be acceptable to all the brothers. Although Bonaventure was certainly inclined to support the development of the Order as an institution within the Church, he knew that many brothers still cherished the memory of the prophetic charism of Francis, particularly in their love for evangelical poverty and simplicity. Although the Order was still standing aloof from the tensions within its fold and with the Church, as a result of the Spiritual movement, by the time Bonaventure had become minister general, this tendency of a prophetic vision tending towards an apocalyptic presentation of Francis had become very evident, particularly in the university of Paris during the conflict with the secular masters. Bonaventure tried to pacify and calm down the brothers, by insisting upon a more orthodox way of interpreting the vision of history within a theological setting based upon notions taken from the Apocalypse and applied to Francis.

When he concludes the episode of the stigmatisation of St. Francis, Bonaventure recalls the various moments in which Francis appeared to be a likeness to Christ crucified during his life, and states: “Now, finally, near the end, you were shown at the

same time the sublime similitude of the Seraph and the humble likeness of the Crucified, inwardly inflaming you and outwardly signing you as *the other Angel ascending from the rising of the sun that you might have in you the sign of the living God* (Rev 7:2).”<sup>6</sup>

The *Legenda Maior* is certainly an important document that portrays the apocalyptic nature of Francis’ mission. Bonaventure develops further this vision in the concluding treatise of his life, namely the *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*, which is the most developed theological reflection of history of the Seraphic Doctor.<sup>7</sup>

The treatise mentions St. Francis as the apocalyptic angel of the sixth seal, particularly in the episode of his stigmatisation.

In conference 16 Bonaventure speaks about understanding inspired by Scripture, and lists the sevenfold nature of history before and after Christ within the symbol of the seven days. Regarding the New Testament he states: “In the New Testament there are similarly seven [gracious] times [of the fruit]: the time of grace conferred, of baptism in blood, of universal (*catholicae*) norms, of the law of justice, of the high throne, of clear teaching (*doctrinae*), and of the final peace [...] The [sixth] day [in original time] of the human form [is the seedbed of the figurative] time of the prophetic voice [which is the tree bearing the fruit in the gracious] time of clear teaching (*doctrinae*), in which there would be the prophetic life. And it was necessary that in this time one order would come, namely, a prophetic state (*habitus*), similar to the order of Jesus Christ, whose head would be an *angel ascending from the rising sun having the sign of the living God* (Rev 7:2), and conformed to Christ. And

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<sup>5</sup> BONAVENTURE, *Legenda Maior*, Prol. (FAED II, 527).

<sup>6</sup> BONAVENTURE, *Legenda Maior*, 13,9 (FAED II, 638).

<sup>7</sup> The most complete study on the theology of history according to the Bonaventurian vision remains that of Joseph RATZINGER, *The Theology of History in Saint Bonaventure*. Translated by Zachary HAYES, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago 1971.

[Bonaventure] said that [the order] had already come.”<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, in the interpretation of Bonaventure, the age of prophecy and apocalyptic vision was not just a question of the end of times in the linear historical sense, but it was already present in the historical unfolding of the Church, and was made evident in a particular way by the way of life established by Francis of Assisi as founder of an Order of prophetic brothers. In this way, the figure of the angel of the sixth seal who heralds the salvation of the chosen ones at the end of times, is heralded by Francis himself who bears the seal of the living God in his crucified body similar to that of Christ.

In conference 22 Bonaventure speaks about the hierarchies of angels and contemplation. Among these different hierarchies Bonaventure presents the various religious orders as belonging to one or the other of the angelic hierarchies. Thus, the contemplative orders are symbolised by Thrones, the speculative orders (like the Order of Preachers) by the Cherubim, and the Franciscan Order by the Seraphim. It is in this prophetic light that Francis and his Order are presented as heralds of the end of times, of the apocalyptic age:

“The third order is [of those who] spend time (*vacantium*) with God according to the way of elevation (*sursumactivum*), namely the ecstatic or excessive [way]. And [Bonaventure] said: indeed what is this [order]? It is the Seraphic order. [...] The [third] order will not flourish unless Christ appears and suffers in his mystical body. And [Bonaventure] said that the appearance of the Seraph to blessed Francis, which was expressed and impressed, showed that [the Seraphic] order ought to apply to [Francis], but he would still come to this [seraphic order] by way of tribulations. And in this appearance were great mysteries.”<sup>9</sup>

Bonaventure mentions tribulations and great mysteries. Indeed, these two aspects

are typical of apocalyptic literature. It was during times of persecution that the Apocalypse was written, and it also makes use of symbolism in order to explain the mysterious unfolding of the end of times as an ever-present reality and opportunity of salvation. No wonder that the Franciscan writers of the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, particularly those coming from the Spiritual family, saw their life as a witness of martyrdom in the midst of tribulation, and were convinced that the Church was nearing the eleventh-hour in which the Anti-Christ would appear.

The figure of St. Francis in the *Collationes in Hexaëmeron* is evident in many direct and indirect references. We have just chosen a couple of them, which are linked to the figure of the angel of the sixth seal, in order to underline the importance of this biblical image in the theological framework of Bonaventure. The figure is an eschatological representation of the heavenly Jerusalem, since the angel rises from the east, where the sun appears, and bears the seal of the living God, namely the stigmata of the passion of Christ, which was consumed in the earthly Jerusalem. The figure of Jerusalem as an earthly and heavenly city in which the eschatological salvation occurs is very evident in these texts, and would also merit a special study in order to underline the link between the historical and the eschatological Francis, the historical and the eschatological Order of friars Minor, seen within the history of the tribulations that the just members of the Church have to endure during the eleventh hour, or during the sixth age, heralding the onset of the sabbath or seventh day of peace and contemplative union.

We now turn to examine an apocalyptic text by one of the outstanding exponents of the Spiritualist ideals of the Order, namely Peter of John Olivi.

<sup>8</sup> *Collations on the Hexaemeron*, Coll. XVI, 14.16, pp. 284-285.

<sup>9</sup> *Collations on the Hexaemeron*, Coll. XXII, 22-23, pp. 388-389.

### **Francis in Olivi's interpretation of the angel with the scroll**

The fate of the Spiritual family of the Order was a tragic one, but at the same time it was a sincere effort to come to terms with the foundational experience of Francis of Assisi, albeit with Joachist tendencies that were more of an occasion for self-justification of the Spiritualist doctrines on poverty than a true representation of what Francis might have actually wanted his brothers to live in matters of poverty. In other words, politics played a major role in the Spiritual controversy. Yet, among the various exponents of this tendency we find many holy and contemplative men. They were convinced that the present tribulations they were going through had been foretold in the prophecies, and especially in the Book of Revelation. They were convinced that they were living in an apocalyptic age, and that Francis of Assisi had heralded this age with his radical choice of evangelical poverty.

Among these Spiritual brothers, Peter John Olivi stands out in a particular way, especially in his *Commentary on the Apocalypse*. Here we shall choose just one text that can throw light on the apocalyptic expectations of the Spirituals, as these were interpreted in the light of the life of St. Francis. This time, the underlying motif is not the angel of the sixth seal of chapter 7 of the Apocalypse, but rather the angel bearing the scroll in chapter 10.

Peter John Olivi explains the relationship between the angel of the sixth seal and the angel with the scroll: "Likewise, in the sixth stage, certain ones will preach more against vices by showing the destruction of Babylon now as imminent as the next event, and then as if it had already taken place; and certain others will emphasize more the contemplative wisdom and illumination of the contemplative disciples as appointed to the

special guidance of the church and as sent to preach to the infidels. The first, moreover, are designated by the angel of the sixth trumpet (Rev 7:2); the second, by this angel *with a face like the sun* (Rev 10:1). A third is designated by John who receives the *open scroll* from the angel, who is to preach to the people and the nations, and who is to measure the temple (Rev 10:8-11:3)."<sup>10</sup>

Peter John Olivi speaks about this vision as a sign of the contemplative Church at the end of times. This contemplative dimension is expressed in a special way by the Franciscan Order, since it is chosen by God during the sixth age of the history of salvation. Indeed, the mission of the friars Minor is that of heralding this new age by being faithful to the charism of their founder Francis. Peter John Olivi describes Francis' mission in the light of the invitation to take the scroll from the angel, by establishing the evangelical form of life contained in the Rule. Here we quote a rather lengthy section of Olivi's commentary in order to illustrate this point:

"It is also to be understood that just as our most holy father Francis, after Christ and under Christ, is the prime and principal founder and initiator and exemplar of the sixth age and of its evangelical rule, so is he, after Christ, designated first by this angel. So then, as a sign of this, he also appeared in a fiery chariot, transfigured into the sun, so that he may be shown to have come in the spirit and image of Elijah and, together with this, to produce a perfect image of the true sun, namely of Christ. He was also uniquely strong in every virtue and work of God; and by means of his supreme humility and recognition of the first source of all nature and grace, he was ever *descending from heaven* (Rev 10:1) and through airy and subtle or spiritual lightness, released from every weight of heavenly things.

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<sup>10</sup> PETER OF JOHN OLIVI, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 325-326.

“And he was *wrapped in a cloud* (Rev 10:1), that is, in the highest poverty, and full of heavenly waters, that is, with the supreme possession and filling up of celestial riches. He was *wrapped in a cloud* (Rev 10:1), also, that is, with the darkness of ecstatic contemplation, which, according to Dionysius in the book *On Mystical Theology*, designated the darkness of the cloud in which God appeared and spoke with Moses.

“And he had *a rainbow on his head* (Rev 10:1), that is, the arching refulgence of the sun, because the deep-seated love of Christ, extended openly over and overarching our base miseries, was constantly and intimately impressed in the mind of Francis.

“And his *face was like the sun* (Rev 10:1) because in the singular contemplation of Christ and his evangelical life, Francis’ appearance was neither defective like the moon nor weak like a star or a light at night, but his was the appearance of the sun and the light of day, aflame and illuminated, illuminating and inflaming.

“And he had straight and solid feet and as a fiery *as a column of fire* (Rev 10:1) because he was highest not only in contemplation but also in every perfect action, as is abundantly clear from the history of his life.

“And he *had in hand* (Rev 10:2), that is, in full operation and in full possession and power, *a little, open scroll* of the gospel of Christ, as is clear from the *Rule* which he observed and wrote, and from the evangelical state that he instituted.

“And he *placed his right foot on the sea* (Rev 10:2) because with the most intense effort and fervour he laboured three times to go to the Saracens with the purpose of converting them and receiving martyrdom from them, even as is written in his *Life*, chapter nine. This happened in the sixth year following his conversion, even as the angel of the sixth seal, and as a sign that the

Saracens are to be converted to Christ through Francis’ Order during the sixth age of the Church. And it happened again a third time in the thirteenth year of his conversion, in sign that beginning in the thirteenth century since the passion and resurrection of Christ, the Saracens and other infidels are - with the making of many martyrs - to be converted through Francis’ Order. This is why Francis in his *Rule* outstandingly instituted the method of going to preach among the Saracens and other infidels. And just as on the thirteenth day after the nativity, Christ appeared to the kings from the East; on a similar day he was baptized; and he changed water to wine; and in his thirteenth year, being absent from his mother, he was found in the Temple, so also in the thirteenth century after the dawning of Christ, Francis and his evangelical Order appeared. But in the thirteenth century after the death and ascension of Christ, Francis will be exalted on the cross, and his glory will ascend over all the earth, even as is piously gathered from the scriptures and especially from those which are touched upon below in the fourth vision of this *Apocalypse* (Rev 12-14).”<sup>11</sup>

This text explains in a very clear way the hermeneutics of the medieval Spiritual Franciscans regarding the role of St. Francis and his Order in the unfolding of the theology of history, particularly in the apocalyptic scenes that it portrays. Although certain images might look strange and maybe also far-fetched in their interpretation, one has to understand this procedure within the historical environment in which it developed, particularly within the historical unfolding of the Order during the early decades of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The Spirituals were convinced that St. Francis was the prophet sent by God during the sixth age in order to prepare the way for peace of the seventh day through his evangelical poverty and the way of life

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<sup>11</sup> PETER OF JOHN OLIVI, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 327-329.

he proposed through his Order of friars Minor. The Spirituals were going through a period of persecution and tribulation both within the Order itself and also in their relationship with the Church, particularly during the pontificate of John XXII (1316-1334). That is why, they needed the support of an apocalyptic reading of history and of their founder.

Indeed, this trend, as we have seen, was not only limited to the Spiritual family of the brothers. It was part and parcel of the vision of the Order. Bonaventure himself embraced it in such a way that he accepted the apocalyptic implications of the mission of St. Francis, without necessarily reading them in a fundamentalist way as was happening in the case of other sympathisers of the doctrines of Joachim of Fiore carried to their extreme consequences.

Peter John Olivi, in fact, quotes St. Bonaventure's view more than once in the text we have just presented, and he is aware of the importance of the figure of the angel of the sixth seal in the interpretation of the mission of Francis. He adds, however, the other image of the angel bearing the scroll, in order to underline the importance of the Word of God as a revelation of what is about to happen. Indeed, the Apocalypse is always understood as a book that portrays the history of salvation as a history of tribulation between Christ and his enemies (the Anti-Christ), as a history of martyrdom and suffering of the just who give witness to the Gospel, but also as a history of peace and contemplation of the heavenly Jerusalem that comes down from heaven. It is, in a certain way, the point of arrival of human history as it is read within a theological perspective.

Francis, therefore, appears as a prophet heralding the end of times. He is an angel, a messenger of God, who is marked by the seal of the wounds of Christ stamped on his body through the stigmata. He is also the angel carrying the scroll that has to be "eaten" in order to express the "sweetness" of God's Word and the "bitterness" of the testimony of the faithful of Jesus, the

martyrs. In the view of the Spirituals the Order was called to give this witness of martyrdom, and thus be conformed to Christ and to his servant Francis. In the missionary vocation embracing also the Saracens, the Order would find the true meaning of its place in salvation history. One can state that, during this period of history, the Order was fully aware of its identity and role, maybe more than it was during the subsequent centuries and more than it is today. This does not mean that there were no exaggerations in the interpretation given to the prophetic and apocalyptic role of Francis. However, one cannot fail to admire the intuitive nature of these men who wrote volumes in order to come to terms with the meaning of the world-order as seen in the eyes of God, as seen in a theological perspective.

In this way, the apocalyptic angel of the sixth seal and the angel bearing the scroll in the Book of Revelation can be a way of interpreting the mission of Francis and the significance of the Gospel way of life as contained in the *Rule* of the friars Minor.

The silence of the Grotto of the Apocalypse on the island of Patmos, nestled as it is in the rocks surrounded by lush Mediterranean pines, and overlooked by the monastery-fortress of St. John the Theologian, can become the silence of reflection and prophecy in which the writings of Franciscan mystics, such as Bonaventure and Peter John Olivi, were born. There is a kind of link between these two worlds, which is not just a fruit of fantasy, and which needs to be studied further. No wonder that the profound meditations of these great men, although written in the convent and university fortresses where they lived, whether in Assisi or in Paris, were conceived in far-away hermitages, like La Verna. It is in the harsh rocky caves of these hermitages that Franciscan apocalyptic literature flourished and gave birth to reform and to a yearning to go through tribulation and martyrdom in search for peace of the heavenly Jerusalem.

# EXPERIENCING TRANSFIGURATION

Anthony M. Carrozzo OFM

In recent years we have become more attuned to St. Francis's *Rule for Hermitages*. Francis wrote the Rule for those who wished to live apart for a while. Each word is important: the Rule does not require that each Franciscan have an eremitical experience but the Rule permits those who desire it to do so. But even then, an eremitical experience is only temporary. The Rule is often adapted to the needs and desires of those seeking solitude in a fraternal setting. St. Bonaventure was among the first who offered some adaptations. In his reflection on the Transfiguration in Luke 9:32-36, Bonaventure gives us a *Rule for Hermits* which provides us with an interesting change of perspective because the Rule offered by Francis is concerned about place, roles and the Liturgy of the Hours, while Bonaventure is concerned about the hermits themselves.

As often happens in Bonaventure's *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, he not only comments on the Gospel pericope, but also upon its application to Franciscan life. Bonaventure proposes four stages in the eremitical experience: (1) the need for rest, (2) an awakening by grace, (3) the significance of watchfulness, and (4) contemplation. These are not arbitrary selections made by Bonaventure. Rather they are based upon the behaviour of those whom Jesus chose to bring up to the mountain with Him, that is, the behaviour of Peter, James and John. So, we must begin by reflecting upon their behaviour and what they witnessed.

The apostles had the ability to fall asleep at the most inappropriate times. It was no different for Peter, James and John on the mountaintop with Jesus. Luke observes "Now Peter and his companions were

heavy with sleep." Bonaventure, reflecting on these words of Luke, concludes from this that one who is entering into an eremitical experience must assess his or her need for rest and, if necessary, begin the experience by resting. Resting is a luxury we have often lost in our too busy lives.

To rest is to prepare to be "awakened by grace." This awakening is first the discovery of the relationship of Jesus to His Father and then to be in the presence of the companions of Jesus. There are no Marthas and Marys here. They are replaced by Moses who represents the law and Elijah who represents the prophets with Jesus who is the Word.

In this awakening experience, the Franciscan hermit reflects upon the law and its role in his or her life until the realization that the law of love of God and neighbour moves from the contemplation of God to an activity borne out of that contemplation that returns to our neighbours to be with them and to share our lives with them.

Then Elijah, the prophet, takes centre stage. A prophet is not a fortune teller but is one who speaks for God often challenging the way we conduct our daily lives. Who are our prophets as we enter into solitude? How do they speak of God to me? Am I listening?

Bonaventure tells us that, "Watchfulness is exceedingly necessary for contemplation," to encounter the Word Himself. Jesus speaks to us in our solitude so we silence the thousands of words and sounds that invade our daily lives to be able to genuinely listen in the silence for Jesus to speak. The silence of the hermitage may initially be frightening because it is so foreign to our daily living which is filled with continuous news, music blaring from our phones, and distractions that very often

serve to make us forget what we were even thinking.

Feeling like Peter we say with him “Lord, it is good that we are here.” We want to stay too. Bonaventure comments: “Peter was wrong in the first place because he wanted to remain in a state from which one had to move...but Peter wanted to remain there...Some are indeed reprehensible. They want to ascend to the height of contemplation, want to rest there and refuse to descend to the labor of action.” Imitating Peter we want to erect tents to stay put. The Lord will have none of it. They must leave the mountain to continue their ministry of preaching and healing.

Descending the mountain, Jesus tells these disciples that they should tell no one what they witnessed. This was no Pentecost experience where the disciples rushed into the streets, speaking in tongues so they appeared to be drunk yet everyone understood them. They were focused on preaching Jesus. The Transfiguration like the eremitical experience, must be held quietly in the heart. The grace of the experience emerges slowly in the ways in which we treat our neighbours.

Jesus more than once in Luke 9 reminds the disciples of His upcoming suffering and death. John listened, Peter did not, When the time came, though, it was John who stood at the foot of the cross, no doubt recalling the Transfiguration, realizing that this suffering was not the end of the story. However, Peter was denying Jesus and rushing to hide.

How will we act when life becomes unbearable? John remembering? Peter forgetting? Bonaventure gives us a third option: James. Bonaventure proposes him as the disciple of hope. When daily life becomes overwhelming, we need the faith

of Peter and the love of John but hope is what is most helpful. Not hope only as a feeling but also as a virtue, the strength to carry on. So, the Franciscan hermit who returns to daily life must be alert when occasions to remember present themselves. Bonaventure went to La Verna shortly after he was elected minister general of the rather unfocused Franciscan Movement. He spent time in a cave as Francis had done. He was alone with God. In that stillness, he wrote his masterpiece *the Soul's Journey into God* which is filled with brilliance, that is, shining with enlightenment. At one point he observes “In this passing over (*Transitus*), all intellectual activities must be left behind and the height of our affection must be totally transferred and transformed into God. This is mystical and most secret which no one knows except him who receives it. No one receives it except him who desires it and no one desires except him who is inflamed in his very marrow by the fire of the Holy Spirit.” He was transfigured by this *Transitus* which is what we hope happens to us when we enter a hermitage. His thoughts can easily become our own as we begin any eremitical experience.

Franciscan men and women who have sought the eremitical experience often needed to adapt the regulations that were prescribed by Francis and Bonaventure to their personal needs and ministerial demands. Rules are not meant to be slavishly observed. They need to be adapted to persons and places, times and situations with concern for the purpose of the regulations. The purpose of a Franciscan eremitical experience is to enter the hermitage acknowledging that we have been disfigured by forgetfulness in our daily busy-ness so we can be transfigured by our encounter with the Divine.

# ELUSIVE BEAUTY: BONAVENTURE AND KANT

Kevin Tortorelli OFM

In the last verses to his *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, Keats wrote:

“Beauty is truth, truth beauty – that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to  
know.”

This sententious couplet exudes a power of insight in its concise formulation. Beauty and truth adhere. They belong together. But how? Clearly war in Ukraine is true but not beautiful and in ordinary language, a sunset is beautiful but is not called true. The couplet stands in need of a helpful context, a recourse to a philosophical framework with which to speak of the beautiful.

Plato points the long direction. In the *Philebus* he writes that the good resides in the beautiful and that the good is grasped in the beautiful. The beautiful manifests itself in the search for the good and is the image of the good. And as manifestation or radiance or image, the essential element in the beautiful is disclosure or truth.<sup>1</sup> The Christian era continues and emphasizes quite strongly that the discussion of the beautiful is always conducted with reference to the true and the good. The beautiful belongs to the order of the transcendentals. The transcendentals name a property that belongs to every being. Together with the one, the true and the good, the beautiful is considered from the aspect of being as delighting an intellectual nature.<sup>2</sup> As a transcendental, beauty adds to goodness a relation to knowledge. The

good means that which simply pleases the appetite as something we all desire while the beautiful is something pleasant to apprehend or know. In the experience of the beautiful the mind achieves real knowledge by understanding the form it perceives and by judging that, that form exists in the mode of the beautiful.<sup>3</sup>

## **Bonaventure on the Beautiful**

Bonaventure is very much a part of this tradition of reflection that by his time understands and experiences created being as an epiphany of God’s glory. He brings to that tradition some notable developments.

A first development has to do with the senses. Bonaventure notes that God may be seen in the sensible world to the extent that God is in the world by His essence, power and presence.<sup>4</sup> To these three qualities, Bonaventure correlates the five human senses. Through these senses the likenesses (*similitudines*) of external things enter the soul and are known as pleasurable or delightful and are judged to be so due to their proportion or harmony. Very significantly, the laws or criteria or the reasons that guides our judgment exist eternally in the Eternal Art. The Eternal Art is the Eternal Word and Son in whom the Father has expressed (*expressit*) everything. The Son is the Father’s artistic medium<sup>5</sup> By virtue of this Eternal Art, by means of it and according to it, all that is beautiful is

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<sup>1</sup> Hans-Georg GADAMER, *Truth and Method*, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), 434-447. And see Seth BERNARDETE, *The Being of the Beautiful. Plato’s Theaetetus, Sophist, and Statesman*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984).

<sup>2</sup> ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *De Veritate* 1,1.

<sup>3</sup> ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, ST I-II,27,1, ad 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, 2.1, Ewert COUSINS, New York, Ramsey, Toronto, 1978). And see Regis ARMSTRONG, OFM Cap. (Washington, D.C. The Catholic University of America Press, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> *In Hexaëmeron* 1,13. Jay HAMMOND, *Collations on the Hexaëmeron* (St Bonaventure University: Franciscan institute Publications, 2018).

formed and judged by us to be beautiful. The whole world enters into the human soul through the doors of the senses by means of apprehension, delight and judgment.

In a second development, Bonaventure stops short of placing the senses and the sensible world in a framework of 'ascent' to God so favoured, eg., by Plotinus and Augustine. Bonaventure stops short of embracing the beauty of the finite and sensible world on the analogy of a ladder that one climbs only to abandon. Instead Bonaventure sees in Francis' grasp of the *minoritas Christi* the goal of our sensible appreciation of beauty. It led Francis to see things differently. Every creature, no matter how insignificant,<sup>6</sup> he greeted as his brother or sister. This perception seems to be the exemplary form of the spiritual senses. These are the same five human senses made over in grace and supplied with new powers of perception and experience.<sup>7</sup> Bonaventure is consciously reflecting on the Stigmata of St. Francis. In the *Itinerarium*, he contemplates the wounds of Christ become the wounds of Francis – *See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself* (Lk 24:39). With the spiritual senses, Bonaventure contemplates the Stigmata as an event of enormous particularity of person, place and time. It is precisely in the beauty of the Stigmata that one sees the truth of divine love. The marks of the crucified, the stigmata, constitute the proper logic for Bonaventure. What do we know with this logic? In the sensible, bodily impress of the stigmata we see the expression of divine love and glory. The stigmata are the focus of Franciscan thought and spirituality because the beauty of Christ's love is seen. This beauty mediates and discloses the truth of Christ's

love.<sup>8</sup>

In a final development, there is a movement from the *minoritas Christi* to what I shall call the *Christus pulcher, the Beautiful Christ*. What Francis received enabled Francis to give. The beauty of Christ's love is giving and receiving. Thus, the two become one – *But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him* (1Cor 6:17). What is done to the least is done to Christ. In the spirit of the Book of Revelation, Bonaventure concludes:

*Then Christ will be clothed with all the beauty of the elect as if with a many-colored tunic in which {Christ} will shine forth richly adorned as if covered with all manner of precious stones.*<sup>9</sup>

The *minoritas Christi* leads to *Christus Pulcher*. Not a Greek, tragic *agonistes* bestriding the earth but the One who once was dead but now lives forever and ever (Rev 1:18). More like poor Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham than Homer's Achilles *Christus pulcher* remains the man of sorrows, without form or beauty (Is 53:2-3) because beauty expresses redemptive love.

### **Immanuel Kant on the Beautiful**

A critical rupture opens up between Bonaventure and Kant, between the tradition that saw finite beauty as the epiphany of God's glory and the tradition of modern aesthetics whose founder is Kant,<sup>10</sup> between the man who contemplated the Stigmata and the man who thrilled to a starry sky and to the moral law within him. What happened?

For Kant, the aesthetic judgment has no interest in the objective existence of the object but relates to it in a purely meditative way.<sup>11</sup> Thing-in-itself (noumenon) is

<sup>6</sup> *Creaturas quantumlibet parvas, Legenda Maior*, 8,6.

<sup>7</sup> *Itinerarium*, 4.3

<sup>8</sup> Kevin TORTORELLI, OFM, *A Note on Bonaventure's Appropriation of Augustine*, in *The Cord*, 42,6 (June, 1992), 174-180.

<sup>9</sup> *Arbor Vitae*, 44. I am indebted to Anthony CARROZZO, OFM, for this reference.

<sup>10</sup> Rene WELLEK, *Kant's Aesthetics and Criticism*,

*Discriminations: Further Concepts of Criticism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 145. Goethe, for one, will, I think, stand apart.

<sup>11</sup> I have taken this section on Kant largely from Hans Urs VON BALTHASAR, *The Glory of the Lord. A Theological Aesthetics, V. The Realm of Metaphysics in the Modern Age* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 504-513.

simply unknowable. Thing-for-us is the phenomenon that contains the primary (mathematical) and secondary (sensible) qualities (phenomena). The experience of the beautiful differs from the true which is interest in the existence of the object and from the good which is interest in the rightness of an action. Freedom from a specific concept is the basic precondition for the beautiful which has the bearing of an 'idea' but not the representation of a knowable content. All beauty is only the example of a general rule which cannot be stated. Regularity and symmetry can be the necessary condition for the beautiful but they can never be its essence. The true centre of the soul's powers lies in the creative play of the imagination that remains apart from a concept. In these ways Kant dealt with the question of the relation between knowing subject and known object.

Kant takes beauty in the direction of the sublime. They are polarities. While the beautiful is pleasurable, the sublime can embrace pain and the delight that is its resolution. The sublime is rooted in us particularly as moral persons and in God before whose sublimity our response is awe. The good must be judged as both beautiful and sublime in order to effect respect for the good which is critical for justice and the moral good.<sup>12</sup>

For him, the ground or basis of beauty cannot be in the object. It resides rather in the subject who experiences beauty in the feeling of pleasure or pain. The imagination and the understanding as receptors are found in everyone and constitute the basis for universal aesthetic judgments. But this aesthetic judgment does not express objective knowledge of the beautiful. It is rather a reflexive consciousness which grasps how it is

affected by the object. In other words, beauty is not an attribute of the real world but an attribute we impose upon the real world in an aesthetic experience.

## **Conclusion**

For a long time, we have lived with the rift set out here regarding beauty. Kant resoundingly locates beauty in the human subject. This is a profound departure from the tradition represented here by Bonaventure. Beauty is no longer the free and joyful radiance of the true and good shining through finite being. With Kant, reason does not grasp the expression of beauty in a form. Instead reason impresses a priori forms on sensible matter. His analysis leads Kant to an assessment of beauty apart from its connection with the true and the good. This development represents a departure from the basic insights regarding the unity of the transcendentals as found both in antiquity and in Christian thought. One effect of this development is that the nature of beauty has been rendered ambiguous and elusive.

To know means to know being and to know being includes knowing objects and subjects. Being is grasped not by Kantian intuition but by intelligent grasp of the data and its reasonable affirmation in a judgment that is constitutive of knowledge.<sup>13</sup> Apart from this fact, beauty will remain elusive and, as elusive, beauty will remain unable to mediate the openness of being as light and mystery and unable to identify freedom as the self-gift of human interiority. In the spirit of Keats' *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, with which we began, here perhaps is a modest expression of this kind of aesthetic consciousness:

*Therefore, we thank Thee for our little light, that is dappled with shadow.*<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> For a helpful discussion of Kant's noble ethics see Michael J. SANDEL, *Justice: What is the Right Thing to Do?* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009), pp. 103-139. On the idea of Genius see Immanuel KANT, *The Critique of Judgment*, J.H. Bernard trans., (London: Macmillan 1931), 188-193.

<sup>13</sup> For Bernard Lonergan on Kant see Jeremy D. WILKINS, *Before Truth: Lonergan, Aquinas, and the Problem of Wisdom* (Washington D.C., 2018), 169-173.

<sup>14</sup> T.S. ELIOT, *Choruses From 'The Rock' 1934, Collected Poems 1909-1962* (New York 1963), 171.

# THE CHRONICLE OF NICHOLAS GLASSBERGER

Noel Muscat OFM

This is a continuation of a partial translation of texts taken from the Chronicle of Nicholas Glassberger, with some explanatory notes, which can be found in the critical Latin edition: *Chronica Fratris Nicolai Glassberger Ordinis Minorum Observantium*, in *Analecta Franciscana sive Chronica aliaque varia documenta ad Historiam Fratrum Minorum spectantia*, edita a Patribus Collegii S. Bonaventuræ, Tomus II, Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi) prope Florentiam, ex typographia Collegii S. Bonaventuræ 1887.

*Page numbers are indicated in square brackets.*

## **Brother Albert of Pisa elected as third Minister General after St. Francis. Elected in Rome in the year of the Lord 1239**

[61] During the same chapter in Rome brother John of Pian del Carpine, Minister of Saxony, was relieved [of his ministry]. He was substituted by brother Conrad of Worms, who did not want to accept the office. When sister Agnes of Prague heard this, she wrote to the lord Pope, and he personally confirmed the decision of brother Conrad. In fact the Province of Bohemia was at the time under the leadership of the Minister of Saxony.

When all matters pertaining to the general chapter had been concluded in front of the Supreme Pontiff, and the brothers had joyfully returned to their Provinces,

brother Elias began to show the attitude of great penance and humility. His face seemed to have changed, he left his beard and hair to grow, and he assumed the airs of a despicable man. He resigned from his position as the one recommended for the building of the place and of the sumptuous convent and basilica that he had begun during the time of brother John, who had been Minister General before him. He said that he wanted to do penance according to the will of blessed Francis, together with the brothers, who wanted to follow him. The lord Pope and the brothers were ignorant of his simulation, and they truly believed that he had converted, and therefore they willingly let him and the brothers who adhered to him to go to live in penance wherever they wanted. He chose for himself the place of Cortona<sup>26</sup> and there he tried to give the impression that he was living in great holiness, in such a way that the lord Pope, when he heard of his holiness, turned again to his favour, [62] and was sad that he had deposed him, and conceded to him many graces and favours. [...]

Brother Albert, General Minister, remained in his office for eight months and a few days. In the year of the Lord 1240, on the tenth day of the calends of February,<sup>27</sup> he died in the Lord. In another place one reads that brother Albert only lived for three months in his office [of Minister General], and that he died on the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary. In other chronicle it is written that he died within

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<sup>26</sup> Elias retreated to the hermitage of Celle di Cortona.

<sup>27</sup> Albert of Pisa died on 23 January 1240.

five months of assuming office. But Brother Jordan states that he remained for eight months.

In the year of the Lord 1240, since the office of General Minister was vacant after the death of brother Albert, Pope Gregory IX, who did not want the Order to remain without a General Minister, convened a general chapter in Rome on the feast of All Saints, and he personally was present and assisted during its celebration, and he also asked the brothers to let him conduct the elections.

**Brother Haymo, fourth General Minister after blessed Francis**

Since the supporters of brother Elias wanted to elect him once again to the office of General, it pleased God to order the brothers to elect a man of great reverence and learning, namely brother [63] Haymo the Englishman, who had been elected Minister of England after Albert of Pisa. He was a man of total integrity and a great theologian, and he was elected Minister General and was confirmed by the same Pontiff.

[During the same chapter] a new division of the Order into Provinces was made, since their number was limited, in front of the same lord Pope who was present and so willed.

The same Minister General wanted that both his own authority as well as that of the the Provincial Ministers and Custodes should be limited in the general chapter. The Custodes lost their power to appoint and remove the Guardians of the local houses.

Under this General blessed Bonaventure of Bagnoregio entered our Order.<sup>28</sup>

This General, in another chapter of definitors that was held in Bologna, published that rubric in the Mass which begins with the words: *The priest, after wearing the chasuble* etc. He also made diligent corrections to the divine office and

other rubrics which were declared by the will of the lord Innocent IV.

On the command of this General, the following masters of theology, who were most famous for their science and religiosity, namely brother Alexander of Hales and brother John de la Rochelle, who were shining in this world like two great luminaries, had a meeting with brothers Godfrey, Custodian of Paris, Robert of Bastia and Rigaud, together with many other discreet and learned brothers, and they edited a useful commentary upon the rule, which we call the declaration of the four Masters, and transmitted their document to the General and to the Definitors gathered in the chapter.

In the year of the Lord 1241 brother Haymo, General Minister, visited the Provinces of Germany. He came to the Province of Saxony, and held the chapter in Altenberg on the feast of Saint Michael. In this chapter he relieved brother Marquard, Minister of Saxony, from his office and elected brother Jordan as Vicar and brother Gottfried as Minister.

In that same year, on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the calends of September,<sup>29</sup> the lord Pope Gregory died happily in Rome, on the fifteenth year of his pontificate. He was buried in front of the sacristy of Saint Peter in the Vatican, alongside the body of blessed Gregory Pope. At this time the emperor Frederick was still under the sentence of excommunication.

[64] After the Pope died, the Roman college of Cardinals met in the house where it is customary for them to elect the Roman Pontiff. They shut themselves inside and remained for 11 weeks deliberating on the election, and they did not arrive at an agreement. One of them, namely the lord Robert of Somercote, because of the stormy and cold weather that was hitting the City, became ill and died. Therefore, in that same year, on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of the calends of

<sup>28</sup> Bonaventure entered the Order in Paris in 1243.

<sup>29</sup> Pope Gregory IX died on 22 August 1241.

November,<sup>30</sup> the Cardinals agreed to elect the lord Godfrey, Cardinal Bishop of Sabina, and they called him Celestine IV. However, he was immediately a victim of an illness, which struck him in just three days, and without having received the pallium, on the 17<sup>th</sup> day, namely the fourth day of the ides of November, he died. In this way the Cardinals who had left the City feared to come back and shut themselves in [for a conclave]. Thus the See remained vacant for twenty-two months and 14 days.

When the Pope died and the Church was with a vacant See, as Seneca states, no one can bear to be a false person for a long time. Brother Elias, since he was tired of living any longer in his false humility, came forth from the hermitage of Cortona, and many brothers joined him, and he strongly demanded a privilege, namely, that those brothers who supported him could follow him. Since he knew about the disagreement between the Church and the emperor Frederick, when he was called to the council of the same emperor he became very familiar to him and he was so gracious in his manners that the same emperor began to consult him and the brothers for advice in everything. The same emperor sent brother Elias as his ambassador to Constantinople in order to make a peace treaty between the two emperors,<sup>31</sup> and Elias received many gifts and relics from the emperor of the Greeks. In this way he became an incurable wound in the Order. Now, because of the favour that he had with the emperor, Elias began to find support from many brothers in the Order. Some of the brothers were saying that he had not been absolved in a just and canonical way from the office of general. Others were affirming the opposite, and there was such a division in the Order, that what Saint Francis had foretold regarding the division of the Order in three parts, was seen to become a reality during the time of Elias.

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<sup>30</sup> 27 October 1241. But this is a mistake. According to Wadding he was elected on 23 September.

<sup>31</sup> Between Latin emperor Baldwin II and the Byzantine emperor John III Doukas Vatatzes.

Indeed, nearly two parties were following Elias, and especially those who loved the world and temporal things. Therefore the brothers who wanted to return to their vomit, to possess money and receive it through third persons, all followed brother Elias.

[65] In the year of the Lord 1242 brother Gottfried entered the Province of Saxony and became its fourth minister. He was most temperate in eating and drinking, and he loved community life and was a persecutor of those who wanted privileges for themselves. He was very kind and good to the brothers and was austere with those who did evil. He continued along the way which his predecessor, brother Marquard, had began, and he governed the Province in a praiseworthy manner for three years and some months.

In that same year brother Stephen, who had once been Abbot of the Order of Saint Benedict, and was then appointed inquisitor against heresy by the lord Pope, on the night of the Ascension of the Lord, together with his companion brother Raymond, who was also a member of the Order of Preachers and an inquisitor against heretics in the region of Toulouse, was crowned with martyrdom and was venerably buried in the friary of Toulouse.

### **The lord Pope Innocent IV**

In the year of the Lord 1243, during a great time of division, the lord Cardinals met in the city of Anagni, and on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the calends of June they elected Sinibald, Cardinal from the town of Genoa, as Pope, and he chose the name of Innocent IV.<sup>32</sup> From Anagni, where he was elected, he came to Rome, and he was warmly welcomed, and as soon as he was consecrated and crowned as Pontiff according to custom, he began to look for ways to make peace with Frederick. This

<sup>32</sup> Sinibaldo Fieschi was elected Pope on 24 June 1243.

Pope tried to ask for advice from brother Elias in order to arrive at an agreement with the emperor. But since this agreement was broken, the lord Pope wanted to hurry to France in order to celebrate a council. When he arrived in Genoa, and heard about the great division in the Order, he ordered a general chapter to gather in Genoa.

In the year of the Lord 1244 the general chapter was celebrated in Genoa. To this chapter the lord Pope called brother Elias and all his accomplices and followers. Elias believed that he would gain pardon and this because of the honour with which he could make treaties for the Church with the emperor. So he came over with a multitude of brothers, and this brought about much confusion among the brothers. After mature deliberation, the lord Pope realised the fraudulent motives of brother Elias, and he immediately deprived him of all grace and privilege and ordered him to live privately and that no brother was allowed to follow him.

Brother Haymo, who governed the Order for three years and one half, died in the friary of Anagni where he was buried. On his tomb this epitaph was placed:

Here lies a famous man from England,  
and a doctor of the Minors, Haymo/  
He lived as a brother and governed as a  
father,  
He was a famous lector, a General and a  
Rector of the Order.

#### [66] **Brother Crescentius of Jesi, fifth General**

He was succeeded by brother Crescentius of Jesi, who was a venerable old man, a just man and full of zeal for discipline. He called good brothers from each Province to come to the friary in Rome, so that when the brothers would come to the Curia they would find other brothers from their nations in order to ask them for advice. But since the Curia was moved to Lyons and remained there for a long time, the brothers who had been called were sent back to their Provinces.

[...] Now brother Elias who felt confused and could not bear up with so much humility, went back to the emperor and became a rebel to the Church, escaping from the face of the Supreme Pontiff. He was welcomed by the emperor, and all his friends and faithful brothers he protected by imperial letters [67], and he was called and promoted by the Emperor as a rebel of the Church, and adhered to him. When the Pope heard this, he sent to Elias the sentence of excommunication and bound him with the anathema. Nevertheless, since he continued to live for a time with the aforementioned emperor, after the same emperor was condemned by the Church with all his council and all those who were in his service, brother Elias became a rebel of the holy mother Church and an apostate from the Order, and the Pope deprived him of the habit of the Order.

After some time, he became sick in Cortona and was on the point of dying. So, his natural brother,<sup>33</sup> a lay brother of the

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<sup>33</sup> This lay brother was called Giambonino, but he was a companion of Elias, not his natural brother. For the study of the episode regarding the death of Brother Elias, see Michele PELLEGRINI, *La Chiesa che perdonò Elia. Clero secolare, società, monaci e frati a Cortona nella prima metà del XIII secolo*, in *Elia di Cortona tra realtà e mito*. Atti dell'Incontro di Studio (Cortona, 12-13 luglio 2013), Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, Spoleto 2014, 181-212. The author mentions the persons who were involved in the absolution of Brother Elias: "l'arciprete Bencio, primo responsabile e

attore principale dell'assoluzione dell'ex ministro generale dalle censure; il sacerdote e frate minore Deotifece, che aveva assistito e comunicato Elia, dopo la sua assoluzione; il priore Bono della chiesa monastica di Cegliolo, che aveva frequentato Elia nell'infermità, confortandolo e invitandolo alla penitenza, e aveva avuto parte alla sua assoluzione e alla somministrazione degli ultimi sacramenti; il frate laico Gianbonino, che lo aveva accudito fino alla morte, il prete di San Cristoforo, Ugo, che aveva assistito alla sua assoluzione." [pp. 207-208]

Order who lived a holy way of life, when he heard of his illness, came to see him and, among other things he told him: "My most dear brother, I am very sad that you are excommunicated and are living without your habit and outside the Order, especially now that you are in such serious illness. If you can find a way with which I can start the process to free you from all these dangers, I willingly commit myself to the work." Brother Elias, with his face full of tears, answered him: "Most dear brother, I cannot see any other way than this, namely, that you go to the lord Pope and in my name humbly and with many tears plead that, out of love of God and of blessed Francis, whose counsels I followed when I left the world and entered into this holy Order, and of whom I was Vicar, [the Pope] will absolve me from the excommunication, and give me back the habit of the Order and forgive my offences."

That brother therefore hurried to the Supreme Pontiff, who under such an oath - since he was very devout of blessed Francis - forgave him his fault, and absolved him from the sentence of excommunication and commanded that he receive once more the habit. This brother hurried back with these orders to return to brother Elias, and when he found him still alive but at the point of death, he communicated to him the papal absolution and vested him once again with the habit of the Order. When [Elias] had received them, he died in peace. It is said that brother Elias expiated for this crime with many tears, and with the merits and prayers of blessed Francis, in whom he had great trust, he prayed for this grace in life and after death. He had given such a great scandal to the Order, that what the Saint had prophesied regarding the coming tribulation, was seen to have become a reality during that time. This brother Elias was a man of wisdom, and even on the human level he was famous, and in Italy few others could be found at his level.

When brother Giles heard about the case of brother Elias, he prostrated himself with all his body on the ground, and held on to it

with all his might, and kissed it. When he was asked why he had done so, he answered: "I want to descend into the earth as much as I can, since he has gone down from his lofty place in such a miserable state; although he is very wise and is a General Minister, he has fallen into such danger."

From what he said it is clear that not even one word fell from what the mouth of Saint Francis had foretold that would happen. When it was revealed to him that brother Elias [68] would be damned and would die outside the Order, the Saint was so terrified of this that he was not able to see him or even to speak to him. When brother Elias noticed this, he humbly asked for the reason [for this attitude]. When Saint Francis revealed to him that he would end up outside the Order, [Elias] was astonished, and with many tears begged blessed Francis not to abandon his flock, but to be like the good shepherd who searches [for his sheep] and frees them from the fangs of eternal damnation. [Elias said]: "Only God knows how to revoke the sentence, if the sinner changes from his crime. I have such a great devotion in you, that even if I will be in hell and you will pray for me, I believe that I can bear up lightly with my pains. Therefore, now pray for me, and I will not doubt that God will change my sentence." And since Saint Francis prayed fervently for him, he received an answer from the Lord that [Elias] would not be damned, but that he would die outside the Order. This, in fact, is what happened, since [Elias] died in Cortona outside the fraternity of the brothers, although he was vested with the habit once more, as we have said.

Brother Crescentius, therefore, as General Minister, ordered all the brothers to send him in writing whatever they could truly remember regarding the life and miracles of Saint Francis, and he ordered them to be collected in a work which was edited under the form of a dialogue, and

which begins with the words: *The venerable acts of the fathers* etc.<sup>34</sup>

Brother Leo, confessor of blessed Francis, brother Angelo and brother Rufino, who were companions of the holy Father, were likewise induced by this command to write in the form of a Legend<sup>35</sup> and to send to the General many things they had witnessed about the same holy Father, and which they also heard from other trustworthy brothers, namely Philip Longo, Illuminato and Maseo da Marignano, and from brother John, companion of the holy father Giles. Many others gathered what they knew, together with many miracles which the Saint had worked in many parts of the world, and these were published. After this, under the command of the same General Minister and of the general chapter, brother Thomas of Celano compiled the first treatise [69] or Legend of Saint Francis, regarding his life, words and intentions, and regarding all those things which pertained to the rule; this was known as the *Ancient Legend*, and it was destined to the same General and to the chapter, and its prologue begins with the words: *The holy gathering of the last chapter and you most holy father* etc.<sup>36</sup> Later on brother Bernard of Besse summarised this Legend in a shorter form, and it begins with the words: *Full of virtues* etc., and finally Saint

Bonaventure gave it a more brief and elegant form.<sup>37</sup>

This General had entered the Order when he was an old man. He was an expert in canon law and in medicine. After some time, he was made Minister of the Marches, and he found in the Order a sect of the brothers who were not walking according to the truth of the Gospel. They were not respectful of the institutions of the Order, and they considered themselves to be better than the others. They lived according to their own choices and attributed to all that is spiritual, while they wore short cloaks which came down to their buttocks.<sup>38</sup> This same Minister strongly uprooted and destroyed them.

He governed the Order for three years, and was absolved from office during the chapter of Lyons, and was then elected Bishop of Assisi; but the lord Pope Innocent IV gave this bishopric to brother Nicholas of the same Order, since he was his confessor and companion, and brother Crescentius kept quiet in his humility.

**Explanatory note:**

This was hardly the case of Crescentius. According to Rosalind B. BROOKE, *Early Franciscan Government. Elias to Bonaventure*, Cambridge University Press 1959, 255: “[Crescentius] omitted to summon the General Chapter, which was one of his statutory duties, and Innocent IV, impatient with

<sup>34</sup> The Quaracchi editors note that this refers to the cod. ms. of Turin and to the *Speculum vitae*, in the *Chronica XXIV Generalium* f. 80, v. c. II.

<sup>35</sup> This refers to the Legend known as the *Legend of the Three Companions*.

<sup>36</sup> These are the words of the prologue of *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul* by Thomas of Celano (1246).

<sup>37</sup> Bernard of Besse wrote his *Liber de laudibus* after Bonaventure had composed the *Legenda Maior* and the *Legenda minor* of St. Francis.

<sup>38</sup> Here Glassberger is quoting Peregrinus of Bologna, *Chronicon abbreviatum de successione ministrorum*, published as Appendix of Eccleston's *De Adventu Fratrum Minorum in Angliam*, Librairie Fischbacher, Paris 1909, 142-143. According to David BURR, *The Spiritual Franciscans. From Protest to Persecution in the Century After Saint Francis*, The Pennsylvania State University 2001, 22 states: “Angelo Clareno tells us that the relaxations encouraged by Crescentius of Iesi, who

was provincial minister in the March of Ancona and the minister general of the order from 1244 to 1247, so offended some friars that they sent a delegation to Rome. Their goal was to protest ‘the changes in location and building projects in the cities and towns, with scandal to the clergy and people’; ‘the abandoning of solitary poor places and construction of sumptuous buildings’; the struggle for legacies and burial rights, undercutting the rightful claims of the secular clergy, the neglect of prayer and preference for ‘curious and sterile knowledge of Aristotle’ over divine wisdom; and the multiplication of schools devoted to worldly knowledge. Crescentius’ intelligence services were efficient. He got wind of the plan and sent his own delegation, which spoke to the pope first. Once the pope was on his side, he ambushed the other delegation on its way and punished the brothers severely. They were then sent to remote provinces of the order with letters describing them as troublemakers.”

his deficiencies and lack of co-operation, convoked one at Lyons for July 1247. Once again Crescentius chose to stay away and was released from office, on account, says Peregrinus, of his lack of eloquence and general uselessness. His behaviour is curious. Though seemingly too old to travel to Lyons in 1245 he had not been too old to take on the government of the Order the year before: perhaps he had an antipathy to Innocent IV; or to Lyons. His public life was by no means over. No sooner had the Franciscans deposed him than the cathedral Chapter of Assisi elected him their bishop. Did they imagine he was in his dotage? Innocent IV refused to confirm the election and gave the see to another Friar Minor, brother Nicholas, his confessor. The clergy and people of Assisi would not at first accept his nominee and clamoured for Crescentius, but were forced to comply. Crescentius however had not retired. In 1252 he became bishop of Jesi and he governed and quarrelled with his diocese until his death ten years later.”

### **Brother John of Parma, sixth General Minister after St. Francis**

In the year of the Lord 1245 [1247] the lord Pope Innocent IV, on the feast of Saint John the Baptist, celebrated the general council in Lyons, and in that same place the general chapter was celebrated, in which brother Crescentius was absolved from office, and with him brother Haymo who had preceded him seven years earlier, and brother John of Parma was chosen instead. He was a man of knowledge and shone with a religious life. Above all he was a friend of poverty and humility. He was chosen for the ministry [of General Minister] from the *studium* of Paris, where he lectured on the Sentences.

## **Latin Abbreviations**

### *Writings of St. Francis*

Adm	Admonitiones
CantAudPov	Canticum Audite Poverelle
CantSol	Canticum fratris Solis
LaudDei	Laudes Dei Altissimi
BenLeo	Benedictio fratri Leoni data
EpAnt	Epistola ad S. Antonium
EpClerI	Epistola ad Clericos
EpCust	Epistola ad Custodes
EpFid	Epistola ad Fideles
EpLeo	Epistola ad fratrem Leonem
EpMin	Epistola ad Ministrum
EpOrd	Epistola toti Ordini missa
EpRect	Epistola ad rectores
ExhLD	Exhortatio ad Laudem Dei
ExpPat	Expositio in Pater noster
FormViv	Forma vivendi S. Claræ
Fragm	Fragmenta alterius Regulæ
LaudHor	Laudes ad omnes horas
OffPass	Officium Passionis Domini
OrCruc	Oratio ante Crucifixum
RegB	Regula bullata
RegNB	Regula non bullata
RegEr	Regula pro eremotoriis
SalBVM	Salutatio Beatæ Mariæ Virg
SalVirt	Salutatio Virtutum
Test	Testamentum
UltVol	Ultima voluntas S. Claræ

### *Sources for the Life of St. Francis*

FAED I	<i>Francis of Assisi. Early Documents. Saint</i>
FAED II	<i>Francis of Assisi. Early Documents. Founder</i>
FAED III	<i>Francis of Assisi. Early Documents. Prophet</i>
1C	Celano, <i>Vita beati Francisci</i>
LCh	Celano, <i>Legenda ad usum chori</i>
VB	Celano, <i>Vita brevior S. Francisci</i>
2C	Celano, <i>Memoriale in desiderio animæ</i>
3C	Celano, <i>Tractatus miraculorum</i>
LJS	Julian of Speyer, <i>Vita S. Francisci</i>
OR	<i>Officium Rhythmicum</i>
AP	<i>Anonymus Perusinus (De Inceptione)</i>
L3C	<i>Legenda trium sociorum</i>
CA	<i>Compilatio Assisiensis</i>
LMj	S. Bonaventura, <i>Legenda Maior</i>
LMn	S. Bonaventura, <i>Legenda Minor</i>
SPMaj	<i>Speculum Perfectionis (Sabatier)</i>
SPMin	<i>Speculum Perfectionis (Lemmens)</i>
ABF	<i>Actus beati Francisci et sociorum eius</i>
Fior	<i>Fioretti di San Francesco</i>



**Cover page:** *The original Crucifix of San Damiano (Basilica of St. Clare, Assisi)*