



No. 142: OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2022



Journal of Franciscan Culture
Issued by the Franciscan Friars (OFM) Malta



Quarterly journal of
Franciscan culture published
since April 1986.

Founders:
John Abela ofm
Raymond Camilleri ofm

Available at:
<http://www.franciscanstudies.com>
<http://www.franciscanstudy.org>

All original material is
Copyright © TAU Franciscan
Communications 2022

Contents

- Editorial
- Identity of the Friars Minor and the *Regula Bullata* of 1223
- Liturgical Texts of the First Vespers of the *Officium Rhythmicum Sancti Francisci*
- Saint Francis and Nietzsche's Superman

142

Editorial

CELEBRATING FRANCIS

The Franciscan family is entering a period of continued celebrations starting from 2023 and extending to 2026 and maybe beyond, even to 2030. These celebrations include (1) the confirmation of the *Regula Bullata* (1223), (2) the Christmas celebration in Greccio (1223), (3) the Stigmatisation (1224), (4) the Canticle of Creatures (1225), and the *Transitus* of St. Francis (1226). If we extend our gaze further we can include the canonisation of St. Francis (1228) and the translation of the relics to the Basilica with the first papal interpretation of the Rule (1230).

Celebrating Francis in these significant events of his life implies a commitment to incarnate these moments in our present and project them to our future. What will become of the Franciscan family in the coming years? Will we still be expressing our multi-faceted ways of Franciscan life, or shall we move on to a more unified image of our Franciscan family?

We need to make these provocative questions in order to understand how celebrating Francis' memory will lead us to express Francis' prophecy in our post-modern world. One thing is certain. We cannot fossilise history. Change will come and inevitably so. It will all depend upon how prepared we are to adapt to change, which in our world is fast, if not sudden. It is all about celebrating the future Francis as we portray him in our life story.

A blessed feast of St. Francis to all.

Noel Muscat ofm

IDENTITY OF THE FRIARS MINOR AND THE *REGULA BULLATA* OF 1223

Noel Muscat OFM

The commemoration of various “Franciscan centenaries” in 2023-2026 will start with the celebration of the 800th anniversary of the confirmation of the *Regula Bullata* (*RegB*) of the friars Minor by Pope Honorius III (29th November 1223). During the course of the centenary celebration we are bound to witness the publication of various new studies on the genesis and confirmation of the *RegB*. A moment of preparation will be the celebration of the 50th Congress of the Società Internazionale di Studi Francescani in Assisi, on 13th to 15th October 2022, with the theme: *Identity and Self-Consciousness of the Friars Minor (XIIIth-XIVth Centuries)*. The genesis of the *RegB*, departing from the first approval of the *Propositum vitae* by Innocent III in 1209, through the subsequent development of Franciscan legislation during the general chapters, particularly after the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), on to the *Regula non Bullata* of 1221 and the *Fragmenta alterius redactionis Regulae non Bullatae*, leading to the final draft of the *Regula Bullata* in 1223, has already been the object of study by many scholars,¹ particularly in its relationship to the theme of identity and self-consciousness of the friars Minor both when Francis was still alive, and especially during the years after his death, when the brothers repeatedly asked for a papal

interpretation of the *intentio fundatoris* as expressed in these legislative texts.

Historical development of early Franciscan legislation

In order to arrive at a thorough understanding of the contents of the *RegB* it is necessary to trace the whole journey of its genesis and development in the preceding years against the backdrop of events in the life of Saint Francis. The Franciscan Sources do provide many clues which help us to draw up a time-frame that departs from 1209, the year of the approval of the primitive form of life, and continues up to 1223, the year of the confirmation of the *RegB*.

The autobiographical notes that we find in the *Testament* of Saint Francis shed light on these events. Francis writes: “And after the Lord gave me some brothers, no one showed me what I had to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel. And I had this written down simply and in a few words and the Lord Pope confirmed it for me.”²

In 1226, during the last weeks before his *transitus*, Francis recalls his experience of the Gospel life in his last wish, which marks a unique autobiographical document that sheds light on the faith journey of the

¹ *La Regola dei Frati Minori*. Atti del XXXVII Convegno internazionale della Società Internazionale di Studi Francescani. Centro Interuniversitario di Studi Francescani (Assisi, 8-10 ottobre 2009), Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo, Spoleto 2010. See especially J.F. GODET-CALOGERAS, *De la Forma vitae à la Regula bullata et le Testament de Frère François*, pp. 31-60.

² *Test* 14-15 (FAED I, 125). Latin text in *Fontes Francescani*, edited by E. MENESTÒ et alii, Edizioni Porziuncola, Assisi 1995, 227-228: Et postquam Dominus dedit mihi fratribus, nemo ostendebat mihi, quid deberem facere, sed ipse Altissimus revelavit mihi, quod deberem vivere secundum formam sancti Evangelii. Et ego paucis verbis et simpliciter feci scribe et dominus Papa confirmavit mihi.

Poverello of Assisi. After speaking about his early experience of penance upon meeting the leper and serving lepers in their colonies, as well as about his meeting Christ in the poor abandoned churches which he restored, Francis goes on to speak about the gift of the brothers who Christ sent to accompany him. During the course of the 8th centenary of the oral approval of the *Propositum vitae* (1209-2009) and recently during that of the *Regula non Bullata* (1221-2021), we have seen the various episodes in the life of Francis as recounted by the early biographers, which speak about the origins of the way of life of the Gospel, discovered particularly in the consultation of the Missal of the church of San Niccolò in Assisi and in that of the Gospel text at the Portiuncula.³

The oral approval of the *Propositum* by Innocent III marks the beginning of a slow progress in the drafting of the Rule, or way of life, of the friars Minor. The period 1209 – 1221 marks the time-frame during which the Order was growing and hence was in need of having a more thorough legislation. From the original nucleus of the Gospel texts presented to Innocent III in 1209, the general chapters of the Order celebrated at the Portiuncula, especially in the aftermath of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, were occasions for the drafting of many new elements in the legislation that converged in the writing of the *Regula non Bullata* and its approval by the chapter of 1221. During all this time the brothers were trying to come to terms with their identity as a religious Order that needed the protection of the papal curia in order to be able to carry

out its evangelising mission without undue hindrance.⁴

By 1221, the year in which the *Regula non bullata* was presented to the general chapter of Pentecost and approved, Francis had retreated from the direct government of the Order. Many things had changed ever since the humble beginnings. The Order could not function simply as a spontaneous brotherhood of itinerant men. The sheer number of brothers called for a specific organisation and for clear legislation in order that it could fit within the ecclesiastical framework in which it had grown through missionary expeditions in Europe and beyond. As Grado Giovanni Merlo aptly sums it up: “The charisma of brother Francis [...] was no longer sufficient to regulate the life of an Order which had experienced vast growth and was very different from the little group of the beginnings.”⁵

Although many have attempted at reconstructing the various moments of formation of the *Regula non bullata* and have certainly provided some useful insights regarding specific topics that were the result of decisions taken during the general chapters of Pentecost in order to respond to practical needs in the Order, it is very difficult to have an exact sequence of the events as they unfolded from 1209 to 1221, passing especially through the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 and the general chapters of 1217, 1219 and 1221. Jacques de Vitry’s testimony of the primitive Franciscan fraternity in 1216 is certainly helpful, as is Hugh of Digne’s *Expositio Regulae*, which mentions a *Regula ante bullam*, which could refer to the *Regula non*

³ IC 21-22 (FAED I, 201-202) for the episode of the Gospel text in the Portiuncola. AP 10-11 (FAED II, 37-38) and L3C 28-29 (FAED II, 85-86) for the episode of the consultation of the Missal at San Niccolò.

⁴ R. RUSCONI, *La formulazione delle regole minoritiche nel primo quarto del secolo XIII*, in «*Regulae, Consuetudines, Statuta*». *Studi sulle fonti normative degli ordini religiosi nei secoli centrali del Medioevo*, a cura di C. ANDENNA – G. MELVILLE, Münster 2005 (*Vita regularis*,

Abhandlungen, 25), 461-481. English translation in *Spirit+Life* 135 (January-March 2021), 15-26.

⁵ G.G. MERLO, *In the Name of Saint Francis. History of the Friars Minor and Franciscanism until the early Sixteenth Century*, Translated from the original Italian, *Nel Nome di San Francesco*, by R. BONANNO, Franciscan Institute Publications, The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, NY 2009, 57.

bullata, but in a later stage of development.⁶

It was Kajetan Esser who coined the term *Fragmenta alterius Regulae non bullatae*,⁷ when referring to Fragments of another version of the Rule of 1221, known as *excerpta* in Latin, and which he analysed in three sources, namely the Codex of the Library of Worcester Cathedral (ms. Q 27, 14th century), the *Expositio super regulam Fratrum Minorum* by Hugo of Digne (c. 1252), and other Fragments conserved in the *Memoriale in desiderio animae* by Thomas of Celano. It seems that a careful examination of these texts led Esser to consider them as having been derived from another draft of the *Regula non bullata*, which can be dated in the period between 1221 and 1223, that is, between the approval of the Rule of 1221 and the formation of the *RegB* in 1223.⁸

The variants in these *excerpta* suggest a personal intervention on the part of Francis, who sometimes speaks in the first person singular, but most of the time they are an indication of a collective decision taken probably by the general chapter of 1222, of

which we know very little, but which might mark a kind of threshold between the Rule approved in 1221 and the need to write a new Rule, as indeed happened in 1223.⁹ The same scholar is of the view that we do not have much information to ascertain why the friars Minor decided to revise the Rule of 1221, just one year after its approval by the general chapter.

What is interesting in all this is that it goes to show that the legislative development of the Order was very much alive even after the approval of the *Regula non bullata*, and that the majority of the brothers do not seem to have been happy with the text as it was approved. Indeed, there was no effort to present the text for confirmation on the part of the Holy See, and just two years after, in 1223, Francis had to go through the process of composing a new Rule, which has little in common with the *Regula non bullata*, both regarding its length and style.

⁶ B. VOLLOT, *La Règle des Frères Mineurs de 1216*, in *Franciscana. Bollettino della Società Internazionale di Studi Francescani*, 2 (2000), Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, Spoleto 2000, 137-138: "Nous ne savons rien de bien précis sur la toute première règle, ébauchée en 1209, sinon qu'elle était très sommaire. En revanche, on s'est demandé s'il n'avait pas existé un autre texte entre 1209 et 1221. C'est plus que probable maintenant. Vers 1242, un méridional, Hugues de Digne avait déjà écrit une exposition de la *Regula bullata*. Pour appuyer ses dires, il utilise ce qu'il appelle la «règle ante bullam», la «règle originale», la «première règle» etc. Mais il est clair maintenant qu'il ne s'agit pas de la règle de 1221. C'est un texte plus court, plus simple, plus dépouillé, dépouvé totalement de précisions juridiques, exactement ce que nous attendions du pauvre François, sans culture, au style plat et répétitif, comme les gens du peuple. Il s'agit très certainement de la règle de 1216, approuvée oralement par Innocent III. Le concile de Latran IV exigeait pour toute expérience religieuse l'adoption d'une règle préexistante. François refusait absolument cet alignement sur les règles antérieures. Innocent III tourne la difficulté en se limitant à une

approbation orale, dans les mois qui précèdent sa mort (17 juillet 1216). Notons au passage que, dans l'hypothèse où celle de 1221 n'aurait pas été adoptée par les frères et les ministres, cette version antérieure aurait été observée de 1216 à 1223." Cfr. R. RUSCONI, *La Formulazione delle Regole minoritiche nel primo quarto del secolo XIII*, in www.academia.edu (retrieved 21/09/2022).

⁷ K. ESSER, *Textkritische Untersuchungen zur Regula non bullata der Minderbrüder*, Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas, Grottaferrata (Romae) 1974.

⁸ FRANCESCO D'ASSISI, *Scritti*. Edizione critica a cura di C. PAOLAZZI, Frati Editori di Quaracchi, Fondazione Collegio S. Bonaventura, Grottaferrata 2009, 290.

⁹ FRANCESCO D'ASSISI, *Scritti*. Ed. C. PAOLAZZI, 292: Quanto alle cause della revisione redazionale [...] forse non è del tutto azzardato ipotizzare che il testo del 1221 sia stato leggermente ritoccato (in uno dei capitoli generali del biennio seguente?) ai fini di una approvazione pontificia ufficiale, visto e constatato che Francesco, nel congedare il testo della Regola del 1221, sembra assai lontano dal pensiero di doverne redigere in tempi brevi una nuova.

The *Regula Bullata* and the question of identity of the friars Minor

The formation of the *RegB* was not just a question of drafting a legislative text. Many have stated that the true author of the *RegB* was Cardinal Ugo di Ostia, and maybe also Brother Bonizo of Bologna, who was an expert in canon and civil law, and who supposedly accompanied Francis to the hermitage of Fonte Colombo in 1223, the place where the *RegB* is traditionally considered to have been written.¹⁰ It is certainly clear that Francis was in no position to compose a legislative text on his own, and he needed expert help. The fact that the general chapter of 1222 had opted for a revision of the Rule of 1221, and maybe also called for a re-writing of the text in a more legal form, might have prompted Francis to make recourse to learned brothers like Bonizo and also to approach Cardinal Ugo, who he himself had requested to become Protector of the Order in 1220, upon returning from the east.

Another important factor to keep in mind is that, by 1223, Francis was no longer the legal superior of the Order. Francis had handed over the leadership of the Order to Pietro Cattani during the chapter of St. Michael on 29th September 1220, appointing him as Vicar. After the premature death of Cattani at the Portiuncula on 10th March 1221, during the Pentecost chapter held on 30th May (Chapter of Mats?), Elias was chosen by Francis to assume the role of Vicar, a role he retained until the chapter of 1227. This is an interesting note to take into consideration when seeing the role that Francis played in the drafting of the *RegB*.

¹⁰ SPMaj (Sabatier Edition) 1 (FAED III, 253): “After the second rule which blessed Francis wrote had been lost, he went up a mountain with Brother Leo of Assisi and Brother Bonizo of Bologna to make another rule, which had had written at Christ’s instruction.” According to the Assisi historian Arnaldo Fortini, Bonizio was a lawyer who studied in Bologna, but we do not possess any historical documentation to prove this assertion.

From the account of the *Mirror of Perfection* (Sabatier edition), which we have just quoted above, we come to know that it was Elias who accompanied the ministers to the hermitage of Fonte Colombo, to protest that Francis had no right to impose a “rigid” rule upon the brothers. Although we have to consider the text as part of the later literature coming from the pen of the Spirituals who wanted to portray Elias in a bad light, we cannot ignore the fact that, if the ministers offered some kind of resistance to Francis in 1223, they were not legally incorrect in doing so, since the legitimate superior of the Order was, in fact, Brother Elias. Having said this, however, we cannot forget the moral authority that Francis exerted on the Order, and which is very evident in the strong wording of the *Testament*. If we fail to do so it would be impossible to come to terms with the issue of identity and faithfulness to the charism as envisaged by Francis who, for all intents and purposes, remains the founder of the Order of friars Minor.

Maybe we can find a middle way in our interpretation by looking at the unique role of Cardinal Ugo, who in 1227 became Pope Gregory IX, and who on 28th September 1230 issued the first papal declaration (interpretation) on the *RegB*, upon the request of the leading body of the Order. In the Bulla *Quo elongati*, Gregory IX has no qualms about his role in the drafting of the *RegB*: “For as a result of the long-standing friendship between the holy confessor and ourselves, we know his mind more fully. Furthermore, while we held a lesser rank, we stood by him both as he composed the aforesaid Rule and obtained the confirmation from the Apostolic See.”¹¹ The Pope states that he “knew the mind” of

¹¹ POPE GREGORY IX, Bulla *Quo elongati* (FAED I, 571). Latin text in H. GRUNDMANN, *Die Bulle Quo elongati Papst Gregors IX*, in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 54 (1961) 20-21: Et cum ex longa familiaritate, quam idem Confessor nobiscum habuit, plenius noverimus intentionem ipsius et in condendo predictam Regulam et obtinendo confirmationem ipsius per sedem

Francis, in the sense that he knew his “intention” (*plenius noverimus intentionem*). In other words, we have to accept Gregory’s word that the end-result of the *RegB* corresponded to the original intentions of Francis and was not simply a legal document.

Felice Accrocca presented an authoritative study on the role of Cardinal Ugo di Ostia in the drafting of the *RegB* and also on his relationship with Francis in general.¹² He quotes the *De inceptione* (*Anonymous of Perugia*) 44, where the author, Brother Giovanni da Perugia, writes: “The brothers informed the Lord Cardinal of Ostia about these situations. Once he called blessed Francis to himself, he took him to the Lord Pope Honorius – because the Lord Innocent had already died, had another rule written for him, and had it confirmed and strengthened with the force of the papal seal.”¹³ Accrocca also quotes the *Legend of Three Companions* 62, which states: “When this had been made known to the Lord Cardinal, he called blessed Francis to him and took him to the Lord Pope Honorius, since the Lord Innocent was now dead. He had another rule – composed by blessed Francis as he was taught by Christ – confirmed by the same Lord Honorius with a seal solemnly affixed.”¹⁴ In this case, as is evident, Francis appears to be the true author of the contents of the *RegB*, whereas in the previous case Ugo commissioned another rule for Francis and the brothers.

According to Accrocca the account as given by *De inceptione* is doubtful, since we cannot confirm as being true the primary role attributed to the Cardinal in the process of the drafting and confirmation of the *RegB*. This eminent scholar and expert in Franciscan history, nowadays archbishop of Benevento, is inclined to defend the personal initiative of Francis in writing the *RegB*, and attributes to Cardinal Ugo the initiative to convince Francis of the need to revise the text of the Rule of 1221 in such a way as to make it more compatible with the style adopted by canon law, as well as of helping him gain the papal confirmation.¹⁵

Although agreeing in principle with this affirmation, one has to consider the fact that Francis would have acquiesced to the pressure exerted by Cardinal Ugo and the ministers and learned brothers of the Order, particularly after the difficulties that the brothers faced in various parts of Europe when they presented themselves in front of bishops to gain permission to preach. Francis knew that the catholicity of the friars Minor had to be confirmed not just by their witness of life, but also by a legal and valid document that would present them as a religious Order approved by the Church and having a Rule confirmed by the Holy See. So no wonder that he makes recourse to learned brothers such as Bonizo and to Cardinal Ugo, who as, after all, the Cardinal Protector of the Order. The inspiration of the Gospel life that lies at the foundation of the *RegB*, which is a kind of inclusion

apostolicam sibi astiterimus, dum adhuc essemus in minori officio constituti.

¹² F. ACCROCCA, *Francesco, il Cardinale Ugo di Ostia e la Conferma Papale della Regola*, in *Collectanea Franciscana* 86 (2016) 433-460.

¹³ AP 44 (FAED II, 56).

¹⁴ L3C 62 (FAED II, 105).

¹⁵ F. ACCROCCA, *Francesco, il Cardinale Ugo di Ostia e la Conferma Papale della Regola*, 440-441: “È credibile il racconto del *De inceptione*, che assegna a Ugo di Ostia la totale iniziativa di tutto il negotium relativo alla Regola? Credo si possa dubitarne, almeno nel senso che se corrisponde a verità il ruolo attribuito al cardinale nell’iter per

ottenere la conferma della Regola, tutto l’agire di Francesco e le tracce lasciate nei suoi scritti inclinano a ritenere che fu principalmente sua l’iniziativa di fissare il proprio proposito di vita in un testo scritto. Cosa vuol dire allora Giovanni da Perugia quando afferma che il cardinale *fecit scribi aliam Regulam*? Per quanto mi riguarda, ritengo si possa intendere che Ugo di Ostia contribuì autorevolmente a convincere Francesco della necessità che il testo della Regola non buvenisse sottoposto a revisione, fino ad assumere una forma idonea a quelle che erano le esigenze del diritto canonico.”

between two strong affirmations regarding the way of life of the Gospel, as we shall see, is certainly the work of Francis as are the insistence upon catholicity and obedience to the Pope, manual work, not possessing money, going to beg for alms. However, the legal aspects regarding such matters as acceptance of the novices, divine office and fasting, correction of the brothers, role of the minister general and of the general chapter, preaching, prohibition to enter monasteries of nuns and, to a certain extent, the role of the minister in sending brothers to the lands of the Saracens and other unbelievers, are the result of the reflection of learned brothers guided by the expert hands of canon lawyers. In this way we can speak about a kind of balance between the original intentions and inspirations of Francis and the concrete needs of a brotherhood that had developed from a *fraternitas* into an *ordo*, and would need to be officially recognised as such by the Papal Curia in order to be able to carry out its mission effectively.

One of the thorniest problems that Francis had to face was that of the decision taken by the Fourth Lateran Council in canon 13, *Ne nima religionum diversitas*, which prohibited the writing of new rules and obliged all the new Orders to choose as their way of life one of the approved rules, namely the Rule of St. Augustine, the Rule of St. Benedict, the Rule of St. Bernard (Cistercian Rule) or, in the case of oriental monastic Orders, the Rule of St. Basil. Cardinal Ugo was certainly aware of this difficulty, and might very well have warned Francis about this. At the same time, however, Ugo was an expert jurist, and he might easily have helped Francis to remain adamant in his resolve to have a new rule confirmed by the Pope. But there was another hurdle to overcome, namely, the *fratres sapientes et in scientia docti*, or the wise and learned brothers.

It was during a general chapter held at the Portiuncula, which scholars place in 1223 or, at the earliest in 1222, that Francis had to face these wise and learned brothers in the presence of Cardinal Ugo. The *Assisi Compilation* 18 narrates this episode and

states that the chapter in question was the Chapter of Mats. This detail opens the question regarding the date of the Chapter of Mats, which is traditionally held to have been 30th May 1221, the same chapter that approved the *Regula non Bullata*. It is not our intention to enter into this question at this point, but simply to point out that there is a possibility that the chapter to which the compilation is referring would have been that of 1221, not 1223. Accrocca and others also propose 1223, the last chapter just before the confirmation of the *RegB*. Whatever the case may be, we know that the reaction of Francis to the suggestions of the brothers was determined and strong:

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

Then blessed Francis, on hearing the cardinal’s advice about this, took him by the hand and led him to the brothers assembled in chapter and spoke to the brothers in this way: «My brothers! My brothers! God has called me by the way of simplicity and showed me the way of simplicity. I do not want you to mention to me any Rule, whether of Saint Augustine, or of Saint Bernard, or of Saint Benedict. And the Lord told me what He wanted: He wanted me to be a new fool in the world. God did not wish to lead us by any way other than this knowledge, but God will confound you by your knowledge and wisdom. But I trust in the Lord’s police (*castaldi*) that through them He will punish you, and you will return to your state, to your blame, like it or not.» The cardinal was shocked, and said nothing, and all the brothers were afraid.”¹⁶

¹⁶ AC 18 (FAED II, 132-133).

Which was the Rule that the wise and learned brothers were opposing? If we are dealing with the chapter of 1223 it might well have been the draft of the *RegB*, which Francis was preparing with the help of expert brothers and with the approval of Cardinal Ugo. That is why the *Mirror of Perfection* narrates the tension that was created when the ministers came over with Brother Elias to protest at Fonte Colombo and tell Francis that the Rule was too rigid to observe. Bonaventure also states, in the *Legenda Maior*, that Elias told Francis that the text of the Rule which he, as Vicar, had been entrusted with safekeeping, “had been lost through carelessness.” Francis had to return to Fonte Colombo where he re-wrote it “just as before, as if he were taking the words from the mouth of God.”¹⁷ Setting aside the obvious symbolic connotations of the episode, which compares Francis to a new Moses going up Mount Sinai to receive the tablets of the law for a second time, it is as clear as crystal that the writing of the *RegB* did not materialise without great tension among the brothers. Francis held on, convinced as he was that the identity of the friars Minor was at stake

The identity of the life of the friars Minor depended solely upon a logical link between the original inspiration of Francis and its concrete application in the life decisions of the brotherhood. We have already stated that, although by 1223 Francis was no longer the legal superior of the Order, his moral authority over the brothers had not waned. The proof to all this is the *Testament*, in which Francis continually uses expressions such as: “I strictly command all the brothers through obedience;” “And let all the brothers be bound to obey their guardians and to recite the Office according to the Rule;” “And let the general minister and all the other ministers and custodians be bound through obedience not to add or to take away from these words.”¹⁸

It was Gregory IX himself who tried to reassure the brothers regarding the obligatory nature of the *Testament* in 1230, when in *Quo elongati*, he specifies: “We certainly believe that in the *Testament* the confessor of Christ demonstrated a single-hearted purpose and that you therefore aspire to conform to his just longings and holy desires [...] And so, wishing to remove all anxiety from your hearts, we declare that you are not bound by the *Testament*. For without the consent of the brothers, and especially of the ministers, Francis could not make obligatory a matter that touches everyone. Nor could he in any way whatsoever bind his successor because an equal has no authority over his equal.”¹⁹

On the one hand, therefore, Francis wielded considerable moral authority over the brothers, and Pope Gregory himself exhorts them to “conform to his just longings and holy desires.” On the other hand, Francis was not legally the superior of the Order, and therefore the brothers were not obliged in conscience to follow his last wish expressed in the *Testament*. In the same way, one can state that, in their search for the *intentio fundatoris* marking their identity as an Order, the brothers could trace such intention in the long *iter* of the formation of their legislation, but without remaining anchored in the past and forgetting that the only valid interpretation of their charism had to come from the highest authority of the Church, since it had confirmed the *RegB*.

What are we to conclude from these reflections? Can we accept the well-known position of Paul Sabatier who wrote the famous words: “When the priest sees himself vanquished by the prophet he suddenly changes his method. He takes him under his protection, he introduces his harangues into the sacred canon, he throws over his shoulders the priestly chasuble?”²⁰ In other words, can we conclude that Cardinal Ugo manipulated Francis when he convinced him, under pressure from the wise and learned

¹⁷ LMj 4,11 (FAED II, 558).

¹⁸ *Test* 25.30.35 (FAED I, 126-127).

¹⁹ GREGORY IX, Bulla *Quo elongati* (FAED I, 570). The critical edition of the Bulla is that of H. GRUNDMANN, *Die Bulle 'Quo elongati' Papst Gregors IX*, in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*

54 (1961) 1-21, based upon the text in the *Bullarium Franciscanum*, Tomus I, ed. J.H. SBARALEA, Romae 1759, 68-70, n. 56.

²⁰ P. SABATIER, *Life of Saint Francis of Assisi*. Translated by L. SEYMOUR HOUGHTON, London 1908, xvi.

brothers, to compose a new Rule, in order to present a legally valid document to the Roman Curia and to Pope Honorius III for confirmation? Was Ugo an astute canon lawyer who silenced the prophetic intuition of Francis and his vision of the identity of the friars Minor?

An answer to these questions is provided once again by Felice Accrocca in the paper we have been quoting, where he states that Cardinal Ugo excogitated a unique plan in which he made use of a *fictio iuris* in order to have the *RegB* confirmed by Pope Honorius III, since he had to go round the obstacle presented by canon 13 of the Fourth Lateran Council. Here we will just mention one aspect underlined by Accrocca, namely that the Bulla *Solet annuere* by which Honorius III confirmed the *RegB* explicitly states: “We confirm with Our Apostolic Authority, and by these words ratify, the Rule of your Order, herein outlined and approved by Our predecessor, *Pope Innocent* of happy memory.”²¹ This goes to show that the Holy See considered the *RegB* as the end product of a long series of legislative texts going back to the original oral approval of the *Propositum* by Innocent III in 1209. In other words, Ugo succeeded in convincing the Papal Curia that there was nothing newly added to the Franciscan Rule after the Fourth Lateran Council, and that it was simply the expression of an identity that the Church had approved, albeit orally and without any binding document, before the publication of canon 13 of Lateran IV.

In this way the identity of the Order of friars Minor as the prototype of the *apostolica vivendi forma* was saved. Indeed, by accepting to confirm the *RegB* Pope Honorius III was not exactly confirming a document

that evaded the prohibition of the Fourth Lateran Council, but he was confirming a way of life which was, indeed, new in the Church and which, up till that moment, had not been ratified by any legal document. *Solet annuere* does not only confirm the Rule of the friars Minor, but in a true sense it confirms the way of life of all the Mendicant Orders of the 13th century, which were a novelty in legislation regarding religious life, after the eremitic, monastic and canonical forms of life that had been the norm during the preceding centuries.

Francis of Assisi might not have been the superior of the Order, but he got his way in the end. He succeeded in convincing Ugo that the way of life that Christ showed him was not open to discussion, even in the face of a canonical prohibition by a general Council. On the other hand he did not bend to the pressures of the wise and learned brothers, although he humbly requested their help and that of canon lawyers to draft the *RegB*, which is nothing else but an inclusion between two fundamental phrases at the beginning and end: “The Rule and Life of the friars Minor is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ” - “so that, being always submissive and subject at the feet of the same Holy Church and steadfast in the Catholic Faith, we may observe poverty, humility, and the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as we have firmly promised.”²²

For Francis only one thing mattered, namely, the observance of the Gospel which he had promised Christ. It was that same observance of the Gospel that lay at the basis of the supposedly lost *Propositum* of 1209, of the *Regula non bullata* of 1221, and of the *RegB* of 1223.

²¹ *RegB*, Bulla *Solet annuere*, in FRANCESCO D’ASSISI, *Scritti*. Ed. C. PAOLAZZI, 322: Eapropter, dilecti in Domino filii, vestris piis precibus inclinati, ordinis vestri regulam, a bone memorie *Innocentio* papa predecessore nostro approbatam, annotatam presentibus, auctoritate nobis apostolica confirmamus et presentis scripti patrocinio communimus. [The italics are mine, in order to underline the name of Innocent III and the difference between the approval of 1209 and the confirmation of 1223].

²² *RegB*, I,1 and XII,4, in FRANCESCO D’ASSISI, *Scritti*. Ed. C. PAOLAZZI, 322 and 332: Regula et vita Minorum Fratrum hec est, scilicet Domini nostri Jesu Christi *sanctum Evangelium observare* [...] ut semper subditi et subiecti pedibus eiusdem sancte Ecclesie, stabiles in fide catholica, paupertatem et humilitatem et *sanctum Evangelium Domini nostri Jesu Christi, quod firmiter promisimus, observemus*. [Italics are mine].

LITURGICAL TEXTS OF THE FIRST VESPERS OF THE *OFFICIUM RHYTHMICUM* *SANCTI FRANCISCI*

Noel Muscat OFM

For many centuries, until the liturgical reform brought about in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council, the Friars Minor chanted a special divine office for the feast of St. Francis. This office was composed by Brother Julian of Speyer, a *magister cantus* in Paris. Julian wrote many parts of what is known as the *Officium Rhythmicum Sancti Francisci*, the Rhymed Office of St. Francis,¹ dated c. 1235, for use in the university of Paris. Its use spread to the entire Franciscan Order, and was enriched by other compositions by eminent churchmen, such as Cardinals Thomas of Capua and Rainerio Capocci, as well as by Pope Gregory IX himself. This divine office is now a thing of the past, except for

some elements that have been conserved in the current liturgical texts, and it is truly a pity that it is not sung any longer in Franciscan houses for the feast of St. Francis. Its liturgical texts are a treasure of poetry and music, since they were also accompanied by Gregorian chant, and merit a closer attention in order to be able to appreciate them and value them for what they were intended to be, namely, a fitting and solemn repertoire for the conventual liturgical ceremonies for the feast of the Seraphic Father St. Francis.²

In this paper we intend to concentrate our attention solely upon the 5 antiphons of the first vespers for the feast of St. Francis, composed by Julian of Speyer, together

¹ The critical edition of the *Officium Rhythmicum S. Francisci* is that of *Analecta Franciscana sive Chronica aliaque varia documenta ad historiam Fratrum Minorum spectantia*, edita a Patribus Collegii S. Bonaventurae, Ad Claras Aquas, Florentiae 1926-1941, Tomus X: *Legendae S. Francisci Assisiensis saeculis XIII et XIV conscriptae*, 119-126. A newer Latin edition is found in *Fontes Franciscani*, edited by E. MENESTÒ, S. BRUFANI, et alii, Edizioni Porziuncola, S. Maria degli Angeli, Assisi 1995, 427-439. For an English translation see section *The Liturgical Texts (1230-1234)*, in FAED I, 319-360. For an Italian version see FRA GIULIANO DA SPIRA († 1250), *Vita e Ufficio Ritmico di San Francesco d'Assisi*. Traduzione e note a cura di E. MARIANI, LIEF – Vicenza 1980.

² Studies on the *Officium Rhythmicum* include: H. FEDLER, *Die Liturgischen Reimofficien auf die heiligen Franziskus und Antonius gedichtet und komponiert darch Fr. Julian von Speyer († 1250)*,

Freiburg 1901; E. BRUNING, *Giuliano da Spira e l'ufficio ritmico di S. Francesco*, in *Note d'archivio per la Storia Musicale* 4 (1927), 129-202; H. WORKMAN, *Liturgy and the Franciscan Order*, in *The Franciscan Educational Conference* 21 (1939) 11-15; W. A. S. VAN DIJK, *The Breviary of Saint Francis*, in *Franciscan Studies* 9 (1949) 13-40; A. S. VAN DIJK, *The Liturgical Legislation of the Franciscan Rules*, in *Franciscan Studies* 12 (1952) 176-195; 241-262; G. ABATE, *Il primitivo Breviario Franciscano (1224-1227)*, in *Miscellanea Franciscana* 60 (1960) I-II, 47-240; S. J. P. VAN DIJK – J. HAZELDEN WALKER, *The Origins of the Modern Liturgy*, Westminster, Maryland 1960; G. CREMASCOLI, *L'Officium Sancti Francisci di Giuliano da Spira*, in *Fontes Franciscani. Introduzioni critiche*, a cura di S. BRUFANI et alii, Edizioni Porziuncola, S. Maria degli Angeli 1997, 77-84,

with the antiphon of the *Magnificat*, also a composition of the *magister cantus*, and the hymn *Proles de caelo prodiit*, composed by Pope Gregory IX.

Julian of Speyer: a biographical note

Julian of Speyer is author of the *Vita Sancti Francisci* and a liturgical text, the *Officium Rhythmicum Sancti Francisci*. Julian came from Speyer, in the Rhine Palatinate of Germany. He was a *magister cantus* in the palace of the kings of France³ Philippe II (1180-1223), Louis VIII (1223-1226) and, for some time, St. Louis IX (1226-1270). He became a Franciscan before 1227, and after the General Chapter of Assisi (30th May 1227) he went to Germany, with brother Simon the Englishman, Minister Provincial in Normandy, who was appointed Minister in Germany.⁴ Julian received the teaching

³ BERNARD OF BESSE, *Liber de Laudibus beati Francisci*, in *Analecta Franciscana*, Tomus III, 666. English translation in FAED III, 31: In France, there was Brother Julian, famous for his learning and holiness, who also wrote a Life of Saint Francis. He also composed the words and music for the Night Office of Saint Francis, besides some hymns, some antiphons and responses which the Supreme Pontiff himself and some of his Cardinals published in praise of the saint. *Catalogus Sanctorum Fratrum Minorum* (c. 1335), ed. L. LEMMENS, Rome 1903, 31: Parisius (iacet) Fr. Iulianus Theutonicus, vir mirae sanctitatis, qui fecit historias beatorum Francisci et Antonii, quae cantantur in ecclesia. ARNALD DE SARRANT, *Chronica XXIV Ministrorum Generalium* (c. 1370), in *Analecta Franciscana* III, 381: et fuit corrector Parisius multis annis. BARTHOLOMEW OF PISA, *Liber de conformitate vitae S. Francisci ad vitam Domini Iesu*, in *Analecta Franciscana*, Tomus IV (1906), 308: In provincia Franciae, in Parisius iacet frater Iulianus Theutonicus, vir mirae sanctitatis; qui fecit historias beati Francisci et beati Antoni et quoad cantum et quoad antiphonas, versus et responsoria, quibusdam antiphonis ad *Magnificat* et responsorio «Carnis spicam» exceptis. Hic ante ordinis ingressus fuit magister cantus in aula regis Francorum. 544: In hoc loco iacet Frater Iulianus theutonicus, qui legendam beati Francisci composuit et responsoria nocturnalina, cantumque beati Francisci quoad hymnos et omnia ipse composuit; fuit etiam in cantu magister summus in aula regis Francorum et fuit in ordine sanctus frater et devotissimus. NICHOLAS

post of *lector* of theology. The *Analecta Bollandiana*⁵ dedicates a section to Julian of Speyer and speaks about his works as a composer of liturgical rhymed offices. It also offers an interesting note, stating that, besides composing the *Officium Rhythmicum* for the feasts of St. Francis and St. Anthony, Julian was also commissioned to compose one for the feast of St. Dominic, who had been canonised in 1234, but unfortunately this office never materialised because Julian died before he could compose it. In May 1230 Julian was back in Assisi for the translation of the relics of St. Francis to the new basilica, an event which he describes with detail in his *Vita Sancti Francisci*, indicating that he was an eye-witness. He then went to Paris and lectured at the General house of studies of the Order. There he wrote the liturgical offices for the feast of St. Francis and St. Anthony, as well as the *Life of St. Francis*.

GLASSBERGER († 1508), *Chronica*, in *Analecta Franciscana* II (1887), 46-47: Frater Simon [Anglicus], cum venisset ad Theutonium cum fratre Iuliano de Spira, qui postmodum historiam beati Francisci et beati Antonii nobili stilo et pulchra melodia, quas modo cantamus, et Legendam sancti Francisci, quae incipit: *Ad hoc quorundam* etc., urbana elegantia dictavit et composuit.

⁴ JORDAN OF GIANO, *Chronica*, 52-53, in *Analecta Franciscana*, Tomus I, 16, when speaking of Br. Simon the Englishman who became minister provincial of Germany, adds: “in Theutonium cum Fr. Iuliano, qui postmodum historiam B. Francisci et B. Antonii nobili stilo et pulchra melodia composuit.” English text in *XIIIth Century Chronicles*, Translated by P. HERMANN, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago 1961, 58-59.

⁵ ANONYMOUS OFM, *Julien de Spire. Biographie de S. François d’Assise*, in *Analecta Bollandiana*, Vol. XIX, Bruxelles 1900, 321-340. In pages 328-329: Alia autem omnia que ad dicti beati patris hystoriam pertinenti dictavit et cantavit et fecit frater Iulianus Alamannus, quondam conventualis in Spira, lector Parisiensis, qui ob vite sue merita inter famosos et precipue sanctitatis fratres et in registris Ordinis annotatus, sicut in cedula seu tabula, que in sacristiis sacri loci de Assisio pendet, cernitur contineri. Idem frater Iulianus fecit et contavit totam ystoriam beati Antonii quondam fratris nostri. Etiam responsoria et antiphonas quam plures de beato Dominico ad petitionem fratrum ordinis Predicatorum; sed preventus morte ystoriam de beato Dominico non complevit.

It seems that he died in 1250, according to what the editors of *Analecta Franciscana* state in their introduction to his works.⁶

The *Officium Rhythmicum Sancti Francisci*

According to the Quaracchi editors the *Officium Rhythmicum* was composed certainly before 5 October 1235. The reason was that, on the occasion of the feast of St. Francis in that year, Pope Gregory IX was personally present in the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi. According to the *De adventu fratrum Minorum in Angliam* of Thomas of Eccleston: “Brother Augustine, the blood brother of Brother William of Nottingham of blessed memory, at first belonged to the household of the lord pope Innocent IV; later he went to Syria with a nephew of the pope, the lord patriarch of Antioch, and later still was made bishop of Laodicea. He related publicly in the convent at London that he had been in Assisi for the feast of St. Francis and that Pope Gregory was there; when the pope went up to preach, the brothers chanted: *This one the saint chose as his father, when he ruled over a lesser church*, and the pope smiled.”⁷

Since the *Officium Rhythmicum* depends upon both the *Legenda ad usum chori* by Thomas of Celano (1230)⁸ and the *Vita Sancti Francisci* by the same Julian of Speyer (1232-1233), it must have been composed around 1234-1235, taking the visit of Gregory IX to the Basilica of St. Francis as the *terminus ad quem*.

The text of the *Rhymed Office* has been transmitted by a rich manuscript tradition.

The *Analecta Franciscana* edition states that 55 manuscripts have handed down to us the liturgical texts of Julian of Speyer, as well as 27 hymnals. Ten editions were printed and published, together with the musical notes which accompany the text. Although not all the liturgical texts of the *Rhymed Office* are the work of Julian, it is certain that he is the composer of the musical melody for all the texts, both his as well as those by Gregory IX, Thomas of Capua and Rainerio Capocci.

The melodies of the *Officium Rhythmicum* were also composed by Julian of Speyer. According to the Quaracchi editors, Julian succeeded in integrating the plain chant melody with newer forms of polyphony which were evolving at that time.⁹

The compositions that can certainly be attributed to the pen and genius of Julian of Speyer are the antiphons of Vespers and Lauds, the antiphons and responsories of the three nocturns of Matins, except for the 7th and 8th responsories (attributed respectively to Cardinal Thomas of Capua and Pope Gregory IX). The 9th responsory is particularly solemn. Julian also composed the short verses before the lessons of Matins. Other parts of the *Officium Rhythmicum* are attributed to other authors, namely the hymn for first Vespers, *Proles de caelo prodiit* and the antiphons *Sancte Francisce propere* and *Plange turba paupercola* (Pope Gregory IX); the hymn for Matins *In caelesti collegio*, the hymn for second Vespers *Deus morum, dux Minorum*, and the antiphon *Salve, sancte pater* (Thomas of Capua, Cardinal of Santa Sabina); and the

⁶ *Analecta Franciscana*, Tomus X, Praefatio, xlii-xliii.

⁷ THOMAS OF ECCLESTON, *De Adventu fratrum Minorum in Angliam*, c. 15, in *XIIIth Century Chronicles*, Translated by P. HERMANN, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago 1961, 177. Latin text in *Analecta Franciscana*, Tomus I, 251.

⁸ F. SEDDA, *La Legenda ad usum chori e il codice assisano 338*, in *Franciscana. Bollettino della Società internazionale di studi francescani*, XII (2010), 43-83. E. RAVA e F. SEDDA, *Sulle tracce*

dell'autore della Legenda ad usum chori beati Francisci. Analisi lessicografica e ipotesi di attribuzione, in *Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi*. Tome 69 (2011), 107-175. These authors attribute the work not to Thomas of Celano, but to Julian of Speyer.

⁹ J.E. WEIS, *Die Choräle Julians von Speier*, München 1901; *Officium ac Missa de festo S.P.N. Francisco, ad codicum fidem ac normam gregorianam restituit* E. BRUNING, Parisiis, Tournai, Romæ 1926.

hymn for Lauds *Plaude, turba paupercula* and the antiphon *Cælorum candor splenduit* (Cardinal Rainerio Capocci).

During the general chapter of 1260, presided by St. Bonaventure, it was decided to change verses 3 and 4 of the first nocturn of Matins. This antiphon used to read: *Hic vir in vanitatibus nutritus indecenter*, and was changed in *divinis charismatibus præventus est clementer* (*This man was brought up indecently in vices, changed in through divine graces he protected with clemency*), with the aim of softening the description of Francis' youth. In 1785 the *Breviarium Romanum-Seraphicum OFM* also made other changes in verses 1 and 2 of the first antiphon of the first nocturne of Matins, verses 2-4 of the second antiphon of the same nocturne, and the whole 3rd antiphon of the first nocturne.

Our aim in this paper is that of taking into consideration the texts of the antiphons of the First Vespers of the Feast of St. Francis, composed by Julian of Speyer, and seeing the historical significance of these lyric compositions against the background of the life of the Seraphic Father.

The antiphons of the First Vespers of St. Francis

The first Vespers for the Feast of St. Francis contain five antiphons and the antiphon at the *Magnificat*, composed by Julian of Speyer, plus the hymn *Proles de cælo prodiit*, composed by Pope Gregory IX. The divine office for Vespers during the 13th century contemplated five psalms with their respective antiphons, a short reading, the hymn, verse, antiphon and *Magnificat*, and final prayer.

Franciscus, vir catholicus

The first antiphon is maybe the most famous and well-known among the compositions of Julian of Speyer. The English text is the following:

*Francis, the valiant catholic / And perfectly apostolic,
Did instruct us to adhere / To the faith of the Roman Church,
And those who were her priests, he'd urge / We should most of all revere.*¹⁰

This antiphon was written with the aim of introducing the Psalm 109 *Dixit Dominus*, which speaks about the priesthood of the Messiah. It portrays Francis as a *vir catholicus et totus apostolicus* (a catholic and totally apostolic man). It aims at depicting the two characteristics of Francis' life, namely his adherence to the Roman Church and his *apostolica vivendi forma*. When Francis speaks about the divine office in his *Testament*, he states: "And let all the brothers be bound to obey their guardians and to recite the Office according to the Rule. And if some might have been found who are not reciting the Office according to the Rule and want to change it in some way, or who are not Catholics..."¹¹ Note how Francis links the form of prayer of the Roman Church to the catholicity of the brothers. In the *Regula non bullata*, Francis clearly states: "Let all the brothers be, live, and speak as Catholics."¹² It was in obedience to the Roman Church, and in his faithfulness to its faith, that Francis conceived the way of life of the apostles which he proposed to his brothers. He wanted the brothers to be "submissive and subject at the feet of the same Holy Church and steadfast in the Catholic faith."¹³

It was within the context of his Catholic faith and adherence to the Church of Rome that Francis discovered his calling to the

¹⁰ FAED I, 327-328. All subsequent antiphons are cited from these pages. Latin text in: IULIANUS DE SPIRA, *Officium S. Francisci. Ad I Vesperas*, in *Analecta Franciscana X [=AF X]*, 374: *Franciscus, vir catholicus / Et totus apostolicus, / Ecclesiæ teneri*

/ Fidem romanæ docuit / Presbyterosque monuit / Præ cunctis revereri.

¹¹ *Test* 30-31 (FAED I, 126).

¹² *RegNB* 19,1 (FAED I, 77).

¹³ *RegB* 12,4 (FAED I, 106)

apostolic way of life. He did so after humbly asking the help of the poor priests, the priest of San Damiano, after renouncing to his father's possessions in front of Bishop Guido I of Assisi, after recurring to the priest who celebrated Mass at the Portiuncula on St. Matthias' feast in 1208, and maybe also the priest who would help him to open for three times the Missal in the church of San Nicolò in Assisi, where he found the three Gospel texts that formed the nucleus of his original inspiration.¹⁴ The respect that Francis showed towards priests is evident in many episodes in the Sources. Here it is enough to quote what he says in the *Testament*: "Afterwards the Lord gave me, and gives me still, such faith in priests who live according to the rite of the holy Roman Church because of their orders that, were they to persecute me, I would still want to have recourse to them."¹⁵

This antiphon celebrates this fundamental attitude of Francis regarding his Catholic faith in such a way that his charism becomes inseparable from the Catholic faith and from obedient submissiveness to the Church of Rome. Francis may be a universal saint, he may appeal to all people of good will, of whatever creed, race and language, but he cannot be fully understood without considering the fact that he was a *vir catholicus et totus apostolicus* in the embrace of the faith of the Roman Church.

Cœpit sub Innocentio

The second antiphon is historical in nature, and dwells upon the relationship of Francis with the Popes he knew, namely Innocent III, Honorius III and Gregory IX (when he was still Cardinal Ugo di Ostia). *Innocent set him on the course / That in the reign of Honorius*

¹⁴ 1C 8-15 (FAED I, 188-194); 1C 21-22 (FAED I, 201-202); AP 10-11 (FAED II, 37-38).

¹⁵ *Test* 6 (FAED I, 125).

¹⁶ AF X, 374: Cœpit sub Innocentio, / Cursumque sub Honorio / Perfecit gloriosum; / Succedens his,

*Splendidly achieved its aim. / Succeeding these, Pope Gregory Heaped on him honours greater yet, / When miracles brought him fame.*¹⁶

The antiphon introduces Psalm 110, *Confitebor tibi, Domine*, and refers to the role that Innocent III played in the oral approval of the *Propositum vitæ* of Francis and the brothers, when they presented themselves before him in the Papal Curia in 1209. The historical beginnings of this way of life are thus linked to the official approval of the highest authority of the Church. With the mentioning of Honorius III Julian is showing how the way of life of the brothers developed through legislative texts and through experience, and was finally confirmed as the *Regula bullata* by Honorius III on 29th November 1223. The reference to Gregory IX takes us to the year 1228, when Francis had been dead for two years and was buried in the church of San Giorgio in Assisi. During this time, he became a famous wonderworker, and many miracles occurred on his tomb. This led to his canonisation on 16th July 1228, and to the subsequent commissioning of the new basilica built in his honour, where St. Francis' remains were translated on 25th May 1230. In this way Gregory IX, who Francis had known as Cardinal Ugo di Ostia, greatly exalted the *Poverello* and crowned his fame with the declaration of his sanctity to the universal Church.¹⁷

Hunc sanctus praelegerat

The antiphon introduces Psalm 111, *Beatus vir*, praising the man who fears the Lord. It is applied to Pope Gregory IX, who when he was still Cardinal Protector of the

Gregorius / Magnificavit amplius / Miraculis famosum.

¹⁷ The events of the canonisation and translation of the relics are narrated with vivid detail by JULIAN OF SPEYER, *Life of Saint Francis*, 73-76 (FAED I, 418-420).

Order, Francis had foretold him that he would be made Pope.¹⁸

*This man the saint had selected / As His father and protector,
While prelate of a lower see, / Endowed with prophetic spirit,
He foretold he would by merit / Apostolic Shepherd be.*¹⁹

The reference to Cardinal Ugo as Protector of the Order is well documented in the Sources. Here we choose the account given to us by the chronicler Jordan of Giano, who narrates how Francis, after his return from the East in 1220, in the company of Elias, Peter Cattani and Caesar of Speyer, went to Pope Honorius III regarding the trouble that the Order had been going through in his absence.²⁰

We have noted the circumstances of the singing of this antiphon in the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi in the presence of Pope Gregory IX, who smiled when he heard the brothers recall the historical prophecy of Francis who had foretold to him, when he was still Cardinal Ugo, that he would become Pope, as happened on 19th March

1227, when he was elected and took the name Gregory IX.²¹

Franciscus evangelicum

The fourth antiphon, preceding Psalm 112, *Laudate pueri*, celebrates Francis' faithfulness to the Gospel.

Francis, taking up the Gospel, / Not a single dot or morsel

Not a jot did he transgress / No sweeter yoke than Christ's he owned,

*No lighter load than His he found / That could this life's wheel possess.*²²

Francis is called "an evangelical man" who lives the spirit of the sermon on the mount, where Jesus states that he has not come in the world to abolish the Law and the Prophets, but to bring them to completion in the good news of salvation that he preached (cfr. Mt 5:15-17). At the same time the observance of the Gospel is seen in the light of Jesus' other words in Mt 11:30: "My yoke is easy and my burden is light."

According to the editors of *Francis of Assisi. Early Documents*, this antiphon

¹⁸ IC 100 (FAED I, 270): Blessed Francis was led by the Spirit of God with which he was filled. Therefore he saw long before what was later to appear in the sight of all. For whenever he wanted to write to him [to Cardinal Ugo], impelled by the needs of the Order they both served, or, more often, moved by the love of Christ which he felt so strongly toward him, he would never allow him to be called in his letters "Bishop of Ostia and Velletri" as others did in customary greetings. Instead, taking up the topic, he used to say; "To the Most Reverend Father, Lord Hugolino, Bishop of the Whole World."

¹⁹ AF X, 374: Hunc sanctus praelegerat / In patrem, quando praerat / Ecclesiae minori; / Hunc, spiritu prophetico / Provisum, apostolico / Praedixerat honori.

²⁰ JORDAN OF GIANO, *Chronica*, 14, in *XIIIth Century Chronicles*, 29: Brother Francis, taking with him Brother Elias, Brother Peter of Catania, and Brother Caesar, whom, as was said above, Brother Elias while minister of Syria had received into the Order, and some other brothers, returned to Italy. And there, after he had learned more fully the causes of the disturbances, he betook himself, not to the disturbers, but to the Lord Pope Honorius. Father Francis cast himself down before the door of

the lord Pope and did not dare to make a noise and knock at the room of so great a prince; but he waited expectantly until the Pope should come out of his own accord. When he did, Blessed Francis made the proper reverences and said to him: "Holy Father, may God give thee peace." And the Pope replied: "May God bless you, son." And Blessed Francis said: "My lord, since you are great and always oppressed with such great burdens, the poor cannot often gain access to you nor speak with you, when they have need to. You have given me many popes, but give me one to whom I may speak when I have need; one who will hear and decide my problems and those of my Order in your place." The Pope answered: "Whom do you wish me to give you, son?" And Francis said: "The Lord of Ostia." And he granted this.

²¹ THOMAS OF ECCLESTON, *De Adventu fratrum Minorum in Angliam*, c. 15, in *XIIIth Century Chronicles*, 177. Latin text in *Analecta Franciscana*, Tomus I, 251.

²² AF X, 374: Franciscus evangelicum / Nec apicem vel unicum / Transgreditur nec iota; / Nil iugo Christi suavius, / Hoc onere nel levius / In huius vitae rota.

would refer to what Thomas of Celano states in the *Vita beati Francisci*; “His highest aim, foremost desire, and greatest intention was to pay heed to the holy gospel in all things and through all things, to follow the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ.”²³ A closer look at the Latin text shows the use of the expression *sanctum Evangelium in omnibus et per omnia observare*, which is more than just paying heed to the holy Gospel, and refers to the same expression in the first words of the *RegB*.

Hic creaturis imperat

The fifth antiphon, introducing Psalm 116, *Laudate Dominum omnes gentes*, is a celebration of joy at the gift of God’s creation.

*Over creatures this man held sway, / Yet wholly did the will obey
Of the God who creatures made; / The delight found in every thing
He stored as an offering / To its Maker’s glory paid.*²⁴

The antiphon expresses the true nature of Francis’ love for creation, namely that Francis respected creatures because they obey God who made them, and in all creatures he found joy and goodness that he would give back to the Creator of all.

In many of the Sources we have references to the love that Francis showed towards creatures, with reference to God. Indeed, Francis loved creation not for its own sake. He is a genius of a theology of creation. Celano expresses this very well

when he writes: “Who could ever express the deep affection he bore for all things that belong to God? Or who would be able to tell of the sweet tenderness he enjoyed while contemplating in creatures the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator? From this reflection he often overflowed with amazing, unspeakable joy.”²⁵

The antiphon can also be seen as a fitting celebration of what Julian of Speyer writes in the *Vita Sancti Francisci*: “He diligently noted the virtue of these [creatures] and of all other creatures, and whatever he was able to judge as admirable, delightful or of value in any of them, he referred totally to the glory of the Maker of all things.”²⁶

The antiphon of the *Magnificat*: *O stupor et gaudium*

The antiphon *O stupor et gaudium* introduces the canticle of the Virgin Mary in a solemn way. The text in English is translated thus:

*O wonderment and joy combined! / Human arbiter of the mind: / You it is who to our trainband / Are chariot and its reinsman; / A fiery team once carried you, / Transfigured into presence new, / While gathered brothers stood amazed. / On you, wonders radiating, / Future things announcing, / Came to rest the spirit’s unction, / Prophecy in double portion. / Succour now your poor descendants, / Father Francis, and defend us, / For grief increases sign and groan / Among the sheep that are your own.*²⁷

²³ IC 84 (FAED I, 254). Latin text in *Fontes Franciscani*, 359: Summa eius intentio, præcipuum desiderium, superumque propositum eius erat sanctum Evangelium in omnibus et per omnia observare, ac perfecte omni vigilantia, omni studio, toto desiderio mentis, toto cordis fervore, Domini nostri Iesu Christi doctrinam sequi et vestigia imitari.

²⁴ AF X, 374: Hic creaturis imperat, / Qui nutui subiecerat / Se totum Creatoris; / Quidquid in rebus reperit / Delectamenti, regerit / In gloriam Factoris.

²⁵ IC 80 (FAED I, 250).

²⁶ LJS 44 (FAED I, 400). Latin text in *Analecta Franciscana* X, 356: Diligenter enim, non tam illarum [creaturarum], quam et aliarum creaturarum efficaciam attendebat, et quidquid admirationis, delectamenti seu cuiuscumque valoris in unaquaque perpendere poterat, id totum in omnium Factoris gloriam regerebat.

²⁷ FAED I, 330. Latin text in AF X, 377: O stupor et gaudium, / O iudex homo mentium / Tu nostræ militiæ / Currus et augura; / Ignea præsentibus / Transfiguratum fratribus / In solari specie / Vexit te quadriga; / In te signis radians, / In te ventura nuntians, / Requievit spiritus / Duplex prophetarum.

The biblical background to this antiphon is found in 2 Kings 2:11-14, the episode of the ascension into heaven of the prophet Elijah on a fiery chariot after having crossed the River Jordan with his disciple Elisha. The reason why Julian chooses this biblical image is that it is given importance in the *Vita beati Francisci* of Thomas of Celano, in which the hagiographer describes the prophetic grace given to Francis by God when the saint appeared to the brothers, who were sleeping during the night in the hut of Rivo Torto like a ball of light on a fiery chariot:

“One night the blessed Father was away from [the brothers] in body. About midnight, some of the brothers were sleeping and others were praying in silence with deep feeling, when a brilliant *fiery chariot* (2Kg 2:11-14) entered through the little door of the house, and moved here and there through the little house two or three times. On top of it sat a large ball that looked like the sun, and it made the night bright as day. Those who were awake were dumbfounded, while those sleeping woke up in a fright, for they sensed the brightness with their hearts as much as with their bodies. They gathered together and began to ask each other what all this meant. From the strength and grace of such great light, the conscience of each was revealed to the others. At last they understood, realising that the soul of the holy father radiant with great brilliance. Thus, thanks to the gift of his outstanding purity and his deep concern for his sons, he merited the blessing of such a gift from the Lord.”²⁸

Julian of Speyer describes this episode in similar words to this antiphon in his *Vita Sancti Francisci*. He writes: “They [the brothers] therefore understood that this was

the soul of the most holy father, which, because of its outstanding purity, was made worthy of being shown transfigured for the solace of the brothers. This holy man truly merited to be called *the chariot and charioteer* of the threefold army that was spoken of before, because, borne by a fiery chariot in the form of the sun, while still living, he has won in mortal flesh the privilege of a transfiguration.”²⁹

The prophetic role of Francis is further developed by Saint Bonaventure, in the Prologue to the *Legenda Maior*, where he writes: “Like a hierarchic man, lifted up on a *fiery chariot*, it may be reasonably accepted as true that he came *in the spirit and power of Elijah*.”³⁰ When he describes the same episode, Bonaventure adds: “Like a second Elijah, God had made him *a chariot and a charioteer* for spiritual men.”³¹

The hymn *Proles de cælo prodiit* by Pope Gregory IX

Although this hymn is not a composition of Julian of Speyer, it is a masterpiece of theological lyricism and is part and parcel of the first Vespers of the *Officium Rhythmicum*. It merits a special study on its own right. Here we will just produce the text and a short commentary on its contents, in order to complete our analysis of this section of the *Officium Rhythmicum*.

I. *A scion blest came from the skies / And worked for us new prodigy, / Uncovered bliss for blinded eyes; / Unhindered and dry shod, the sea,*

II. *With Egypt's spoils enriched, / Yet the true nature and the name / Of Poverello never lost; / Fruit-bearing to his poor he came.*

/ Tuis adsta posteris, / Pater Francisce, miseris, / Nam increscunt gemitus / Ovium tuarum.

²⁸ 1C 47-48 (FAED I, 224).

²⁹ LJS 29 (FAED I, 389). Latin text in AF X, 348-349: Intellexerunt igitur hanc animam esse patris sanctissimi, quam ob præcipuam sui puritatem in filiorum solatium ipse sic meruerat transfiguratum ostendi. Vere hic sanctus triplicis militiæ, de qua

supra dictum est, *currus et auriga* digne dic proueruit, qui in solari specie, quadriga vectus, ignea, adhuc vivens in carne mortali prærogativam transfigurationis obtinuit.”

³⁰ LMj, Prol. (FAED II, 526). The biblical citation is again 2Kg 2:11.

³¹ LM 4,5 (FAED II, 552).

III. *Like those Apostles, led to climb / The mountain of the bright new day, / In fields of poverty sublime / Francis spoke, and to Christ did say:*

IV. *“Three little dwellings let us make,” / Just as had Simon vowed, / Whose name he did not now forsake / But whose example he obeyed.*

V. *The Law, the Prophets and Grace / Were honoured by him graciously; / The Trinity’s office of praise / He celebrated on a solemn feast.*

VI. *That time he worthily restored / Three havens where as guest he stayed, / And the temple of those blessed / Spirits to Christ did consecrate.*

VII. *At house, at gate, at tomb, / Father Francis, visit us, come, / And to the sorry race of Eve / From mortal slumber bring reprieve. Amen.*³²

The first two stanzas of the hymn celebrate Francis as the spiritual father who worked wonders in favour of his sons, just as Moses had done with the Israelites when he led them out of the bondage of Egypt and made them cross the Sea of Reeds after they had despoiled the Egyptians. Francis leads his army across the waves. He leads his sons as a poor man. In fact, his fame and name are linked with his poverty and with the simple joy of being with the poor.

The third and fourth stanzas are composed against the biblical backdrop of the event of the ro of Christ as narrated in Matthew 17:1-9. Francis is described as going up to the luminous high mountain

with the apostles who accompany Jesus on Mount Tabor. It is up on the mountain that Francis encounters Jesus in his poverty, and is transformed in his likeness through the experience of transfiguration. Maybe Gregory IX is subtly referring to the event of the stigmatisation of Francis on La Verna. Francis is compared to Simon Peter, who tells Jesus: “Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah” (Mt 17:4). Gregory takes the name Simon Peter and develops its symbolism in a rather imaginative way, following Jerome, *On Hebrew names*, and Isidore, *Etymologies*.³³ What seems to be the meaning of this obscure expression is that Francis followed Peter in his attitude of intense contemplation and in his desire to please the Lord by sheltering Him, Moses and Elijah in three tents. A further imaginative interpretation could be found in the fact that it is Gregory IX as Pope who is writing this hymn, and therefore he sees his mission as being that of Peter, and looks at Francis as a bulwark and fortress in order to build the Church.

The fifth stanza mentions the Law, the Prophets and Grace. It is again a celebration of the Transfiguration where the Law (Moses), Prophets (Elijah) and Grace (Christ) appear in their glory, as well as being a reference to Holy Scripture and revelation, to which Francis humbly vows obedience and respect in his life. Thus his whole life becomes a prayer of praise, a

³² AF X, 376-377: I. Proles de cælo prodiit, / Novis utens prodigiis: / Cælum cæcis aperuit; / Siccis mare vestigiis,

II. Spoliatis Ægyptiis, / Transit dives; sed pauperis / Nec rem vel nomen perdidit, / Factus felix pro miseris.

III. Assumptus cum Apostolis / In montem novi luminis, / In paupertatis prædiis / Christo Franciscus intulit:

IV. «Fac tria tabernacula», / Votum secutus Simonis; / Quem huius non deseruit / Numen vel omen nominis.

V. Legi, Prophetæ, Gratia / Gratum gerens obsequium, / Trinitatis officium / Festo solemnī celebrat,

VI. Dum reparat virtutibus / Hospes triplex hospitium, / Et beatarum mentium / Cum templum Christo consecrat.

VII. Domum, portam et tumulum, / Pater Francisce, visita; / Et Evæ prolem miserans / A somno mortis excita. Amen.

³³ The editors of FAED I, 329, note a. write: “Gregory IX is playing with Peter’s name and is obviously accentuating Simon whose name, according to Jerome could be interpreted as *Pone moerorem*, literally ‘He builds walls.’” But the word *moeror* would mean grief, lamentation or mourning. It has nothing to do with walls. The word for walls in Latin is *moenia*.

divine office in honour of the Trinity. According to the Quaracchi editors this stanza has to be seen together with the sixth strophe, where the Pope refers to the fact that Francis repaired three churches or three hospices, the last of which is Saint Mary of the Portiuncula, which was consecrated as a special church in which Francis celebrated the cult of the Trinity, namely his holy life and that of the brothers. The three churches would also have been symbolised in the three tents mentioned above. Another interpretation is that they could also refer to the three Orders that Francis founded, as Julian aptly states in the *Vita Sancti Francisci*.³⁴ These three churches, hospices or orders, were the concrete sign of Francis who was a worshipper of the Holy Trinity both in his liturgical life as well as in his contemplative attitude.³⁵

The concluding stanza of the hymn is also rather enigmatic. Gregory IX mentions house, gate and tomb as the places where Francis will visit us, poor children of Eve, in order to lead us on to the resurrection. As a doxology of a hymn it is very strange, since normally liturgical hymns end with a doxology addressed to the Holy Trinity, and not to a particular saint. The Quaracchi editors interpret these three structures as referring, respectively, to: (1) *domum* = *house*: the *conventus* of Saint Francis built by Gregory IX in Assisi as a personal property in Assisi and a place where the brothers lived as custodians of the holy

relics of the Seraphic Father; (2) *portam* = *gate*: the city of Assisi, built as a fortified castle with gates; (3) *tumulum* = *tomb*: a clear reference to the tomb of Saint Francis in the basilica built in his honour by Gregory IX. Again, this is a rather imaginative interpretation, but can be plausible. Another imaginative interpretation of the three structures is based on Gospel accounts, namely, the raising of the daughter of Jairus in the house of Capernaum (Mk 5:21-24.35-43), the raising of the widow's son in the village gate at Naim (Lk 7:11-17), and the raising of Lazarus from the tomb at Bethany (Jn 11:1-43). They are all linked with the event of the resurrection of Jesus, in that they are signs of the wondrous power of life over death given to us, children of Eve, who Gregory IX describes as *Evæ proles misera*, with a probable echo of the famous expression *exsules fili Evæ* in the antiphon *Salve Regina*.

The *Officium Rhythmicum Sancti Francisci* is a rich tapestry of hagiographic details about Francis of Assisi, weaved with the art of poetry and music within the liturgical setting of the feast and octave of the saint. The theological significance of these texts is evident in various biblical themes that are presented, as is the importance of the historical events of the life of Francis as recounted in the mediæval sources used by Julian of Speyer.

³⁴ LSJ 23 (FAED I, 385). AF X, 346: Tres Ordines ordinavit; quorum primum ipse professione simul et habitu super omnes excellentissime tenuit, quem et Ordinem Fratrum Minorum, sicut in Regula scripserat, appellavit. Secundus etiam, qui supra memoratus est, pauperum Dominarum et virginum felix ab eo sumpsit exordium. Tertius quoque non

mediocris perfectionis Ordo Pœnitentium dicitur, qui clericis et laicis, virginibus, continentibus coniugatisque communis, sexum salubriter utrumque complectitur.

³⁵ W. LAMPEN, *S. Franciscus, cultor Trinitatis*, in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 21 (1928) 465-467.

SAINT FRANCIS AND NIETZSCHE'S SUPERMAN

Kevin Tortorelli OFM

In these pages I undertake a brief comparison of St. Francis of Assisi and Nietzsche's Superman, one a figure of history, the other a figure of thought, one securely dated in time and place, the other a man of an unknown future. They could not be more different though both spoke a resounding yes to life and indeed to death. The sheer amount of studies in both men requires me to limit my focus to points of comparison and contrast. Together and interacting, Francis and Nietzsche establish that focus. I am drawn to the boldness of Nietzsche's thought like short but penetrating explosions of light. He is eminently quotable in aphorisms brilliant as they are brief. He makes you think. In humility it is worth hearing him out, eg., in his portrayal of the unexcelled vigour of pre-Socratic thinking and in his stinging rebuke that early Christianity resented the achievements of classic antiquity and destroyed it. One of course feels uneasy with the unintended impact of his thought on Nazism that frankly distorted him. But, closer to home, his thought often makes me think of a speeding train in danger of coming off the tracks. In particular, his spectacular enthronement of power points ahead to our preoccupation with it that is quite unstoppable and pernicious. Who better to array before Nietzsche than St. Francis? What does the *Poverello* have to do with Superman? What does poverty have to do with power? What does fraternity have to do with the herd? What does the lightness of being have to do with eternal recurrence?

Nietzsche's Superman (*Urbmensch*)

Nietzsche summoned humanity to a new cultural ideal, the surpassing of human existence as we know it in the figure of Superman (*Urbmensch*). In *Zarathustra* we read that the Superman is the meaning of the earth. God is dead and those who cling to Him condemn the earth and poison life. By contrast Superman is the finest flower of our race, the aristocrat of culture, strong in mind and body who speaks a resounding 'Yes' to life as an expression of raw courage. But in 19th century Germany, what passes for culture is a collection of passive followers. The aristocratic culture of Superman requires the many to serve the few. In his sense of himself he believes that others must naturally be subject to him.

Perhaps the best historical example of such a great culture lies in ancient Greece of the 6th century BC. It is the period of the pre-Socratic philosophers whose thinking Nietzsche characterises as fresh, creative and seeking. After them comes a huge decline expressed in the later (Platonic) decadent teaching on absolute morality, the immortality of the soul, the distortion of real happiness. This feeble, anaemic and rationalistic culture is oriented to the Olympian gods whose poet is Homer. They displace the worship of the fallen heroes whose graves are local in favour of the Hellenic gods. The whole effect is to peddle a vision of beauty and illusion. And this is followed by the catastrophe of Christianity. The earlier Greeks celebrated Dionysian man who says Yes to the Will to Power and

to the idea of Eternal Recurrence.¹ Christianity by contrast said No to life and its vicious resentment of antiquity destroyed the ancient world and especially Rome. This resentment is embodied in St. Paul whom Nietzsche describes as decadent, violent, melancholic and possessed of ungovernable ambition.² Dionysius fills the great void as an alternative to Jesus. This portrayal of Superman requires a careful look at the Will to Power, Morality and Eternal Recurrence.

Will to Power

Life is Will to Power that surpasses the Will to Life and is completely expressed in the Superman who in the Will to Power expresses the greatest affirmation of life. Interestingly, Superman is not cruel but rather gives out of his abundant exuberance for life, yet he condemns compassion (pity) because compassion denies life. As deeply noble, Superman is disciplined. He does not indulge lust and self-indulgence, yet he embodies the destruction of culture as he finds it and celebrates negativity as expressing the creative spirit. The Will to Power replaces the value of self-giving Being and becomes the principle of a new set of values. In place of Being as self-giving, the Will to Power is the true expression of being. Superman is a figure of total power as opposed to the total powerlessness of Christ. For Nietzsche, Superman is the Antichrist as the man of the future, the conqueror of God and of Nothingness.³ For the idea of God originated in fear and is simply hostile to life.

Morality

Nietzsche wholly repudiates Christian morality. In its celebration of the person as the highest, the good, the kind and the

charitable, it expresses its morality of decadence. This esteem for goodness and kindness is a symptom of weakness that is incompatible with ascending and yes-affirming life. Christian morality is full of resentment and spite in its repudiation of worth, purpose and desirability.⁴ In its proposing false values Christian morality is nihilistic. By contrast, Superman offers himself as the norm for true morality. Its good lies beyond the good and evil of the herd who are entangled in prejudices.⁵ The noble class creates values. They thus make their own morality. Morality is therefore class morality. The good is what the noble and strong deem good. This is master-morality and is opposed by slave-morality (or herd morality or Judaeo-Christian morality) that emphasizes the good as those who suffer and who elicit sympathy and humility, the ideology of mediocrity.

Eternal Recurrence

Every event necessarily recurs. Time is infinite, so there are periodic cycles in which all that has ever been is repeated in a process that continues to infinity.⁶ In the opening pages of his novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Milan Kundera asks what this mad myth of Eternal Recurrence signifies? It suggests that everything is ephemeral, a shadow, slightly unreal. There is no sunset, no lightness of being. Eternal Recurrence is a choice between its heavy weight and the unique lightness of things. For lightness attaches to what will no longer exist tomorrow and is sometimes seen as a component of beauty. If things do not happen uniquely, if my present life is not unique, we might as well not have lived at all.⁷ Kundera returns to the point: "Human life occurs only once and the reason we cannot determine

¹ I am much indebted in this article to F. COPLESTON, *Friedrich Nietzsche, Philosopher of Culture*, Burns Oates & Washbourne, London 1942, 62.

² COPLESTON, 118, 132.

³ COPLESTON, 118. He compares Nietzsche very unfavourably with Bergson on the meaning and the value of life, 205-213.

⁴ COPLESTON, 102-104.

⁵ H.U. VON BALTHASAR, *Theodrama Theological Dramatic Theory I: Prologomena*. Trans. G. HARRISON, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1988, 237.

⁶ COPLESTON, 16.

⁷ M. KUNDERA, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Harper perennial, Modern Classics, New York and London 1984, 1-8. 223. I have applied the image of the title in a different context.

which of our decisions are good and which bad is that in a given situation we can make only one decision; we are not granted a second, third or fourth life in which to compare various decisions.”⁸

Eternal Recurrence looks very much like *amor fati*. There is no progress leading to fulfilment. Human freedom in the time of Superman is already rated as absolute. Reality is an infinite comedy of illusion.⁹ One wishes to make the point however that the real crisis of the future will be tragically decided to the extent the world prefers to hoard what is its own (power, mammon) rather than gather to Christ.¹⁰ Eternity is the eternal recurrence of the identical, the recurrence of the last detail. It is a depressing and wearying account of existence, heavy and weighed down. There seems no place for the anchor of hope that resists a notion of the future as the eternally repeated past. Quite the contrary, the future hold the hour of justice. And in contrast to Eternal Recurrence, in its intelligibility, world process is open as it brings forth what is new and sustains it. It is not an example of determinism.

Saint Francis of Assisi

For Nietzsche Christianity enervates the human being but Francis bursts on the scene with vigour and energy. He will follow Jesus in His humility, in the poverty of Him who was not ashamed to become poor and alien for our sake. In this way of life the Christian is launched into the world without bag, purse, bread, money or staff (*Rule of 1221*, 14). This Christian cannot resist the wicked but can only offer the left cheek. He cannot demand restoration if he is robbed. But in this way of life one receives everything as a gift of God, a gift of His free love. Franciscan life then is the praise of this divine love in union with all

existence as we see in the *Canticle of Creatures*. Francis’ praise and gratitude is exuberant, acknowledging the love of God that reaches to such great sinners (*Rule of 1221*, 17 and especially 23).¹¹ Unlike Superman, Francis’s Yes to God takes the form of Mary’s *fiat*. The poverty of Christ led Francis to embrace a role as a fool in this world as the path of God’s wisdom.¹² To this image of the Wise Fool Francis added the self-designation of the *jongleur de Dieu*, a figure of merriment and the gentleness that does not break the bruised reed nor quench the dimly burning wick (Is 42:3). The lightness of being shines through.

Conclusion

The Superman and Francis cannot have much in common. The Superman sees in himself the end of history, the fruit of a true, vital and creative culture whose roots can be found in Dionysius and in the tragic tradition as represented by Æschylus. His is a resounding yes to life and to all that life contains including the banality of death. The Superman and those who will join him are disciplined and noble in mind and body, kind to others as a matter of their exuberant grasp of life but their morality only blesses egoism, the idea that one should be unyielding, hard, firm and lacking pity or compassion. The whole is a panoramic view that comes down on the side of a heavy spirit rather than the unbearable lightness of being.

The Wise Fool and God’s *jongleur* by contrast embrace the unbearable lightness of being: “History is as light as individual life, unbearably light [...] light as whatever will no longer exist tomorrow.”¹³ The foolish *jongleur* dances in this unbearable lightness of being. It is not an easy dance but a trusting one. It ends in the embrace of Sister Death

⁸ KUNDERA, 222.

⁹ BALTHASAR, *Theodrama* I, 242.

¹⁰ H.U. VON BALTHASAR, *Theodrama Theological Dramatic Theory IV: The Action*, Trans. G. HARRISON, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1994, 157-158. See *The Glory of the Lord. A Theological Aesthetics V. The Realm of Metaphysics in the Modern Age*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1991, 415-416.

¹¹ *St. Francis of Assisi Omnibus of Sources*, ed. M. HABIG, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago 1973, 31-55.

¹² I have written elsewhere on this theme of Francis as the Wise Fool or Holy Fool. See *The Wise Fool*, in www.FranciscanConnections.com (8th October 2021).

¹³ KUNDERA, 223

who leads to Christ. The lightness of being is unbearable because life is tragic with war, famine, sickness and death. The unbearable lightness of being recognises that for many these tragic realities have no meaning. But oddly perhaps the light of being is rooted in this awful vulnerability – light “as whatever will no longer exist tomorrow.” Thus the lightness of being comes down on the side of gentleness, poverty and humility. To deny this link between vulnerability and the unbearable lightness of being distinguishes the Superman from Francis.

The one bestrides the earth, the other sings the praises of its Creator. The one is boldly aware that he is self-made, the other receives his own self as undeserved gift. The one is incomparably self-assured, the other has achieved self-possession through the ministrations of a leper. From these different starting points both shout yes to life, one to the heaviness of being, the other to its unbearable lightness. For one, his yes is to the upward thrust of life, the other’s yes is to the transcendence of life. Francis knows transcendence expresses the ability to ask questions of history, knowing that history is still a sketch and not a finished picture. Kundera’s title for his novel, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, suggests to me an insight into the encounter between Nietzsche’s Superman and St. Francis. One emphasises the unbearable, the other emphasises the lightness of being. They approach each other in their mutual desire for a future culture that brings forth the best in our humanity and in their confident yes to life. They are brought together but radically distinct in the unbearable lightness of being.

Latin Abbreviations

Writings of St. Francis

Adm	Admonitiones
CantAudPov	Canticle 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 eremitoriis
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 anime</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</i> (Sabatier)
SPMin	<i>Speculum Perfectionis</i> (Lemmens)
ABF	<i>Actus beati Francisci et sociorum eius</i>
Fior	<i>Fioretti di San Francesco</i>



Editor: Noel Muscat OFM

All correspondence should be addressed to
muscatnoel@yahoo.co.uk

Cover page: Colantonio (1445), *Consegna della Regola Francescana*. Museo Nazionale Capodimonte, Napoli

