

NOEL MUSCAT OFM

THE LIFE OF SAINT FRANCIS  
IN THE LIGHT OF  
SAINT BONAVENTURE'S THEOLOGY  
ON THE  
"VERBUM CRUCIFIXUM"



Nihil obstat  
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N.M.  
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#### ABBREVIATIONS

##### Titles of Bonaventure's Works:

<i>Apol.</i>	Apologia Pauperum
<i>Brevil.</i>	Breviloquium
<i>Coll. Ioan.</i>	Collationes in Evangelium Ioannis
<i>Comm. Ioan.</i>	Commentarius in Evangelium Ioannis
<i>Comm. Luc.</i>	Commentarius in Evangelium Lucae
<i>De dec. praec.</i>	Collationes de Decem Praeceptis
<i>De don. Sp. S.</i>	Collationes de Donis Spiritus Sancti
<i>De perf. vit.</i>	De Perfectione Vitae ad Sorores
<i>De reduc.</i>	De Reductione Artium ad Theologiam
<i>De reg. an.</i>	De Regimine Animae
<i>Hex.</i>	Collationes in Hexaëmeron
<i>Itin.</i>	Itinerarium Mentis in Deum
<i>Leg. M.</i>	Legenda Maior Sancti Francisci
<i>Leg. m.</i>	Legenda Minor Sancti Francisci
<i>Lig. vit.</i>	Lignum Vitae
<i>Q. de sci. Christi</i>	Quaestiones Disputatae de Scientia Christi
<i>Q. de myst. Trin.</i>	Quaestiones Disputatae de Mysterio Trinitatis.
<i>Q. de perf. ev.</i>	Quaestiones Disputatae de Perfectione Evangelica.
<i>I-IV Sent.</i>	Commentaria in Quatuor Libros Sententiarum
<i>Solil.</i>	Soliloquium
<i>Tr. Via</i>	De Triplici Via

##### Abbreviations used in quoting Bonaventure's Works:

<i>a. u.</i>	articulus unicus
<i>c.</i>	capitulum
<i>concl.</i>	conclusio
<i>d.</i>	distinctio
<i>fund.</i>	fundamenta
<i>n.</i>	numerus

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p. pars  
 q. quaestio  
 resp. respondeo

*Abbreviations of General Reference Works:*

CCL *Corpus Christianorum Latinorum*, collectum a monachis O.S.B. abbatiae S. Petri in Steenbrugge, Turnhout 1953ff.  
 CSEL *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, Vienna 1866ff.  
 DACL *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, Paris 1924ff.  
 DHGE *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques*, Paris 1912ff.  
 DSAM *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité ascétique et mystique*, Paris 1937ff.  
 EC *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, Città del Vaticano, 1948–1954.  
 PG *Patrologia cursus completus*, Series graeca et orientalis, ed. J.P. MIGNE, Paris 1857–1866.  
 PL *Patrologia cursus completus*, Series latina, ed. J.P. MIGNE, Paris 1844–1864.  
 RAM *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, Paris 1920ff.

*Abbreviations associated with Franciscan literature:*

AF *Analecta Franciscana sive Chronica atiaque varia Documenta ad historiam Fratrum Minorum spectantia*, Quaracchi 1885ff.  
 AFH *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, Quaracchi 1908ff.  
 Ant *Antonianum*, Roma 1926ff.  
 CETEDOC II J.F. GODET, *Corpus des sources Franciscaines* Vol. 2, Sancti Bonaventurae Legendae Maior et Minor Sancti Francisci, CETEDOC Louvain 1975.

CF *Collectanea Franciscana*, Roma 1931ff.  
 DS *Doctor Seraphicus*, Bagnoregio 1954ff.  
 EF *Etudes Franciscaines*, Paris 1899ff.  
 FS *Franciscan Studies*, New York 1941ff.  
 FranzStud *Franziskanische Studien*, Werl 1914ff.  
 IB *Incontri Bonaventuriani*, Montecalvo-Irpino 1965ff.  
 LexBon *Lexique Saint Bonaventure*, edited by J.G. BOUGEROL, Paris 1969.  
 MF *Miscellanea Franciscana*, Roma 1886ff.  
 SF *Studi Franciscani*, Firenze 1914ff.  
 ThBon *Thesaurus Bonaventurianus*, edited by C. VERNIN and compiled by J. HAMESSE, CETEDOC Louvain 1972ff.  
 VM *Vita Minorum*, Padova 1929ff.  
 WW *Wissenschaft und Weisheit*, Düsseldorf 1934ff.

*Franciscan Sources prior to Leg.M.:*

1 Cel THOMAS DE CELANO, *Vita Prima S. Francisci*  
 2 Cel IDEM, *Vita Secunda S. Francisci*  
 3 Cel IDEM, *Tractatus de miraculis Beati Francisci*  
 Iul IULIANUS DE SPIRA, *Vita S. Francisci*

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*Collationes in Evangelium Ioannis* (VI, 535–632)

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*De Reductione Artium ad Theologiam* (V, 319–325)

*De Triplici Via* (VIII, 3–18)

*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* (V, 295–313)

*Lignum Vitae* (VIII, 68–86)

*Quaestiones Disputatae de Mysterio Trinitatis* (V, 45–115)

*Quaestiones Disputatae de Perfectione Evangelica* (V, 117–198)

*Quaestiones Disputatae de Scientia Christi* (V, 3–43)

*Sermo Christus Unus Omnium Magister* (V, 567–574)

*Sermo I de SPN Francisco* (IX, 573–575)

*Sermo II de SPN Francisco* (IX, 575–582)

*Sermo IV de SPN Francisco* (IX, 585–590)

*Sermo V de SPN Francisco* (IX, 590–597)

*Sermo de Translatione S. Francisci* (IX, 534–535)

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## INTRODUCTION

It is certainly not an easy task to define what the Franciscan charism is all about. One could choose the easy way out and define it simply as that way of life modelled upon the Gospel. Although it is definitely built upon the Gospel, the Franciscan charism cannot pretend to appropriate the Gospel and label itself as the exclusive way for living the Gospel. It seems that a faithful definition one could give to the Franciscan charism is that it is a life which proposes a particular image of the Gospel, namely, that of the good news of salvation preached to the poor by Him who was born poor, lived and died upon the Cross as a poor man. In a more synthetic expression, the Franciscan charism proposes the Gospel of Christ, the poor and Crucified Word of God.

Ever since Saint Francis of Assisi reposed the way of life of the Gospel, generations upon generations of Franciscans have striven hard to discover what it is all about. Their efforts have resulted in a particular approach to theology, which was not confined to the academic field, but which found its expression also in the day-to-day life of the friars, and hence became a spirituality. In order to defend this way of approach, and thus discover the authentic centre of the ideals of the Poverello, Franciscans have produced volumes of books in the universities of medieval Europe, they have quarrelled during General Chapters, they have retreated to remote hermitages or preached in the large churches and squares of the cities, they have pleaded with the Popes to give them official interpretations of the Rule and Testament of their simple and unlettered founder. Their history is full of tensions and divergent ways of life. One element, however, remains as the unifying force of their efforts, namely, the sincere wish to go right to the heart of the Franciscan calling.

Saint Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, known as the *Doctor Seraphicus*, or even as the *Doctor Devotus*, is one of the most worthy sons of Francis, whose life is characterized by an intense love of the Gospel ideal proposed in the Rule of Friars Minor. Bonaventure had the ability to discover the hidden wisdom of the



Poverello, and to build upon it an intricate theological synthesis which is not purely speculative, but which is grounded upon a spiritual experience.

Although he is heir to the centuries old tradition of the Fathers, especially in his knowledge of the Augustinian tradition, as well as of the mystical theology of the Greek Fathers, Bonaventure's theological synthesis is, in many ways, original. The years spent as a student in the University of Paris acquainted him with the main trends of the scholastic revival of classical philosophy, as well as with the Victorine school of theology, Saint Anselm and Saint Bernard of Clairvaux<sup>1</sup>. However, he drew his inspiration mainly from his holy founder and, with the help of his Franciscan masters, especially Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure built what can correctly be defined as a Franciscan theology.

Holy Scripture forms the bulwark of his theological formation. This fact helps us to grasp Bonaventure's typical frame of mind not only as a speculative theologian, but above all, as a mystic. Bonaventure is faithful to the Franciscan charism in seeing Holy Scripture not as a means to prove theological truths, but rather as the constant point of reference to delve into the Christ-mystery.

The Christology of the Seraphic Doctor progresses from an early, rather speculative stage, to a more mature and predominantly mystical one. As a worthy son of the Poverello, Bonaventure regards the mystery of Christ particularly under its incarnational dimension. True wisdom became incarnate in the Person of Jesus Christ, the reason of the expression and revelation of the Father's love for humankind. In the poverty of His Incarnation Christ reveals God. Moreover He opens the way for mankind's return into God through His Passion and Death on the Cross. Christ is the Crucified Word of the Father, drawing all creation back into harmony through grace, which flows from the Cross. This Bonaventurian approach to Christology leads us to conclude that the Seraphic Doctor is not merely concerned with a *theologia crucis*, but rather with an affective theology based upon an *experientia crucis*. This experience of the Paschal Mystery of Christ, which becomes the language of the Father's love in the Person of the

<sup>1</sup> Cfr. J.G. BOUGEROL, *Introduction a l'étude de S. Bonaventure*, Paris-Tournai 1961, 58-91.

Incarnate and Crucified Word, is a very important hermeneutical principle which helps us to interpret Bonaventure's theology, and especially his mystical theology. Bonaventure is the man of the Cross, because he is the faithful servant of Francis, the poor man signed with the Cross. Francis becomes the inspiration for Bonaventure's outlook upon the mystery of Christ and, indeed, upon the equally complex mystery of human life<sup>2</sup>.

Bonaventure sees Francis as the faithful icon of Christ Crucified. The Poverello becomes the model leading his attention to Christ as He is presented in the Gospels. With Francis' help, Bonaventure sees Christ who is born a poor man, who lives as a beggar, announcing His Gospel to the poor, who suffers and dies upon the Cross in order to be glorified in the Resurrection. Bonaventure also discovers those foundational attitudes which Christ embraced; His humility, poverty, obedience to the Father's will, charity leading Him to die upon the Cross. Through these categories Bonaventure projects a typical image of Christ, upon whom he models the figure of Francis and his ideal.

As Minister General of the Franciscan Order, Bonaventure is preoccupied with presenting a correct image of Francis to the friars. He was aware that he was leading an Order in need of defining its charism, of proceeding along the way traced by its founder, of living in faithfulness to its original inspirations, without risking to become anachronistic by not adapting its mission to the ever-changing needs of the Church and society. For these reasons Bonaventure strove hard to defend the Franciscan ideal, and moreover gave the friars what he considered to be a faithful account of the Poverello's life in his *Legenda Maior Sancti Francisci*.

The Life of Saint Francis which Bonaventure was commissioned to write by the Chapter of Narbonne in 1260, marks the peak of Bonaventure's awareness of the contents of the Franciscan life and mission. In it, the Seraphic Doctor projects

<sup>2</sup> A. MATANIC, *L'esperienza della croce in Francesco d'Assisi, com'è attestata dal santo protagonista e com'è presentata dal suo biografo Bonaventura*, in *La Sapienza della Croce oggi*, Vol. 2, *La Sapienza della Croce nella Spiritualità*. Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Roma, 13-18 ottobre 1975, Torino 1976, 44: "Chi legge le vite bonaventuriane di San Francesco sotto l'angolo visuale di *experientia crucis* ammetterà facilmente che quella esperienza pervade tutta la vita di Francesco, diventandone chiave di volta".

Saint Francis in the light of Christ Crucified. Through various experiences of the Cross Francis arrives at his mystical encounter with Christ upon La Verna in 1224.

The aim of our dissertation is that of underlining this Bonaventurian approach to the life of Saint Francis of Assisi. However, one would risk losing sight of the real contents and message of the *Legenda Maior* were he to stop only upon the devotional aspect of Francis' relation with Christ Crucified. Bonaventure goes beyond this typically medieval approach to hagiography. He views Francis' life and mission in the light of Christ Crucified under the category of revelation. Francis is marked with the seal of the Cross so that he becomes an eschatological witness of the good news of salvation preached to the poor. His life is a mystical journey of encounter with Christ, who reveals the Father upon the Cross. That is why we prefer to see Francis' life in the light of Bonaventure's theology on the *Verbum Crucifixum*.

Indeed, this notion comes rather late in Bonaventure's theological synthesis. Bonaventure speaks about the Crucified Word particularly in two of his last works, namely, the *Collationes de Donis Spiritus Sancti* and the *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*. However, it is quite clear that he had it at the back of his mind much earlier. Most probably, it was the experience of Francis himself which played a major role in Bonaventure's elaboration of the notion of *Verbum Crucifixum*, seen as an integral part of his theology on the *Verbum Incarnatum*.

That is why it is necessary to integrate the approach of the *Legenda Maior* regarding Francis and the Crucified Word with the earlier and later developments of Bonaventure's theology regarding this Christological aspect. We cannot understand why Bonaventure proposed Francis under this particular light in the *Legenda Maior* if we do not get acquainted with his theological and mystical treatises at large. Francis' experience of the Crucified Word definitely exercised a major influence upon Bonaventure's theology<sup>3</sup>. Our task is that of underlining the various aspects of this

<sup>3</sup> A. MATANIC, *op. cit.*, 49: "Ricordiamo inoltre che alcuni punti della nostra esposizione dovrebbero essere più approfonditi ed integrati; in particolare nella parte concernente san Bonaventura: per esempio, potremmo chiederci ulteriormente quanto l'esperienza della croce in san Francesco influì realmente sulla dottrina bonaventuriana circa

influence, which can be gathered from the exegetical, doctrinal, ascetico-mystical, apologetic and homiletic works of the Seraphic Doctor.

For this reason we have divided our work into two parts, one dealing with the development of the Bonaventurian theology regarding the *Verbum Crucifixum*, the other regarding the spiritual experience of Francis in the light of the *Verbum Crucifixum* as it is proposed in the *Legenda Maior*.

Part one is divided into three chapters. Chapter one departs from the notion of *Verbum Crucifixum*, as it is found in the *Collationes de Donis Spiritus Sancti*, in order to see it in its relation with grace, which becomes instrumental in the spiritual journey of Francis along the hierarchical acts and moral virtues. We also examine the revelatory dimension of the *Verbum Crucifixum*. This analysis is then referred to the doctrinal texts of the Seraphic Doctor, which come at the very beginning of his formation as a theologian. The soteriological texts of Bonaventure's *Commentarius in Tertium Librum Sententiarum*, as well as those of the *Breviloquium*, serve as an initial development of his *theologia crucis*, especially in its intimate link with the mystery of the Incarnation.

Chapter two deals with an important aspect of Bonaventure's theology upon the *Verbum Crucifixum*. From this point onwards we move on to the other dimension linked with an *experientia crucis* under the category of discipleship. This theme is central to Bonaventure's exegetical and apologetic works. The *Commentarius in Evangelium Lucae* underlines the notions of *imitatio* and *sequela Christi* with regards to discipleship in bearing His Cross. The *Quaestiones Disputatae de Perfectione Evangelica* are concerned with the foundational values which Christ embraced, particularly upon the Cross: humility, poverty and obedience. These values become the means by which the disciple follows Christ in the experience of the Cross. Finally, the *Apologia Pauperum* underlines the full validity of the life of the mendicants, since it reposes the Gospel by its faithful following of the poor and naked Christ unto

la passione di Cristo, come viene esposta in *III Sententiarum* ed in alcuni opuscoli mistici; oppure circa il concetto integrale bonaventuriano dell'imitazione di Cristo, compreso il Cristo risorto; oppure, ed è un tema che dovrebbe essere fatto, la questione del linguaggio di Bonaventura".

the martyrdom of the Cross, which is the greatest proof of the theological virtue of charity.

Chapter three regards the theme of the *Verbum Crucifixum* as it is presented by Bonaventure in his mystical treatises, and particularly in the *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* and *De Triplici Via*. A second section regards the cosmic and eschatological dimensions of the *Verbum Crucifixum* expressed by the Seraphic Doctor in the *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*, with particular reference to the category of spiritual vision in mystical experience, which has to pass through the Crucified Word. In this chapter the experiential dimension of the mystery of the Cross is self-evident, and it provides a direct link with the experience of Francis of Assisi, who comes to the forefront as the model of the soul in search of God in the *Itinerarium*. One could also add that Bonaventure's own experience of the Cross comes to the forefront in these works, since the Seraphic Doctor shows himself to be an expert mystic in their elaboration.

The second part of our dissertation is also divided into three chapters, which are roughly developed along parallel lines with the preceding ones. Chapter four regards the revelation of Francis' spiritual journey in the light of the *Verbum Crucifixum*. In it we analyse the theology of the prologue of the *Legenda Maior*, as well as the six visions of the Cross listed by Bonaventure as a fitting preparation for Francis' vision of the Crucified Seraph upon La Verna. The revelatory dimension of Francis' mission is presented under the category of the eschatological salvation heralded by the mystery of Christ Crucified. Francis is signed with the eschatological sign of the Cross like the apocalyptic angel of the seal of the living God, so that his person is seen as the heralding of the saving power of the Crucified Word.

Chapter five analyses the spiritual journey which Francis undertook in the light of the *Verbum Crucifixum*. Bonaventure presents this journey according to the three hierarchical acts of purification, illumination and perfection. To each stage correspond various groups of moral virtues, which are the sign of grace working upon Francis and changing his spiritual outlook upon creation, upon himself and upon God. These virtues are all presented in the light of the Crucified Word, thus marking the various stages of the

discipleship of Christ through *imitatio* and *sequela* centred upon the mystery of the Cross.

Chapter six delves into the mystical dimension of Francis' life, by presenting the *Verbum Crucifixum* as the goal of his spiritual journey into God, who reveals Himself to the Poverello upon La Verna and imprints upon his flesh the stigmata of the Passion. The sacred stigmata are interpreted as the eschatological seal of Christ upon Francis, as well as the proof of his mission as a herald of salvation. They mark Francis' entry into the Paschal Mystery of Christ, as well as his arrival at the summit of perfect charity through martyrdom of the spirit. Linked with the episode of the stigmatization is that of Francis' *transitus* and glorification, which provides a fitting epilogue to Bonaventure's *Legenda*. Francis' death signs his definitive encounter with Christ Crucified and Glorified, in its presentation as a sacramental celebration of the Paschal Mystery. Moreover, Bonaventure closes the circle of his theological outlook by returning to his point of departure. It is grace flowing from the *Verbum Crucifixum* which reformed Francis, purified, enlightened and perfected him. In his passing over Francis realises this grace to the point of becoming himself a means of the grace which Christ confers upon those who come into contact with the Poverello's crucified flesh, and are led to open their spiritual vision and believe in order to be saved.

In the elaboration of our dissertation we have tried to give primary importance to the relevant texts of the Seraphic Doctor. For methodological purposes, as well as for a clear definition of the parameters of our work, we quote only those works which are unanimously accepted as being authentic by modern scholars<sup>4</sup>. For this reason we have left out those texts which are of dubious authenticity. The works of the Seraphic Doctor are not grouped according to a chronological order, but according to a thematic one<sup>5</sup>. Nevertheless, we do not intend to ignore the relevance of

<sup>4</sup> For the authenticity of Bonaventure's works, cfr. I. BRADY, *The Edition of the "Opera Omnia" of St. Bonaventure*, in AFH 70 (1977) 352-376; B. DISTELBRINK, *Bonaventurae Scripta authentica dubia vel spuria critica recensita*, Roma 1975.

<sup>5</sup> The question of the chronology of Bonaventure's life and works has been the object of various studies, among which the following are the most important: G. ABATE, *Per la storia e la cronologia di San Bonaventura O.Min.* (c. 1217-1274), in MF 49 (1949) 534-568, 50

chronology in the development of Bonaventure's theological framework.

Bonaventure's works are quoted according to the Quaracchi edition of the *Opera Omnia*, except for the *Legenda Maior*, which we quote from the text edited in the tenth volume of *Analecta Franciscana*<sup>6</sup>.

Bonaventure's theology of the Cross, with special reference to his later works, has been the object of a study by Werner Hülsbusch. This author speaks about Francis' spiritual experience in the light of the Cross as an excursus at the very end of his study<sup>7</sup>, but he is more concerned with the doctrinal implications of Bonaventure's theology. Our dissertation has the aim of studying Francis' experience as underlined by Bonaventure, and is therefore more concerned with spirituality. Nevertheless we recognize the need to ground every spiritual experience upon solid doctrinal foundations. For this reason Hülsbusch's study can prove to be very illuminating.

We are also indebted to the approach traced by Regis J. Armstrong in his dissertation regarding the Spiritual Theology of the *Legenda Maior* which has been very helpful in providing us with

(1950) 97-130; J.G. BOUGEROL, *Introduction*, 239-245; I. BRADY, *Bonaventure, Saint*, in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, New York 1967, 658-664; Th. CROWLEY, *St. Bonaventure Chronology Reappraisal*, in *FranzStud* 56 (1974) 310-322; L. DI FONZO, *Bonaventura da Bagnoregio, santo*, in *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, Vol. 3, Roma 1963, 239-251; P. CLORIEUX, *Essai sur la chronologie de saint Bonaventure 1257-1274*, in *AFH* 19 (1926) 145-168; E. LONGPRÉ, *Bonaventure, Saint*, in *DHGE* 9 (1937) 741-788; IDEM, *Bonaventure, Saint*, in *DSAM* 1 (1937) 1768-1772; R. MANSELLI, *Bonaventura da Bagnoregio*, in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, Vol. 2, Roma 1969, 612-619; J.F. QUINN, *Chronology of St. Bonaventure (1217-1257)*, in *FS* 32 (1972) 168-186; K. RATHE, *Bonaventura, Santo*, in *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, Vol. 2, Vaticano 1949, 1937-1841; E. SMEETS, *Bonaventure, Saint*, in *DThC* 2 (1905) 962-966.

<sup>6</sup> DOCTORIS SERAPHICI S. BONAVENTURAE, *Opera Omnia*, edita studio et cura PP. Collegii a S. Bonaventura ad plurimos codices mss. emendata, anecdotis aucta, prolegomenis scholis notisque illustrata, Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi) 1882-1902, 10 volumes; DOCTORIS SERAPHICI S. BONAVENTURAE, *Legendae Maior et Minor Sancti Francisci*, in *AF*, Vol. 10, Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi) 1941, 555-678. We shall quote the texts from the *Opera Omnia* by giving the volume number in Roman numerals and the page reference in Arabic numerals in parenthesis.

<sup>7</sup> W. HÜLSBUSCH, *Elemente einer Kreuzestheologie in den Spätschriften Bonaventuras*, Düsseldorf 1968, especially 225-232.

an elaboration of the mechanism of Francis' spiritual journey as traced by Bonaventure<sup>8</sup>.

We are confident that our theme remains central to the Franciscan calling in today's world. Saint Bonaventure is an expert teacher in helping us to discover the authentic centre of our charism, and to translate it in our prophetic witness to a world in need of salvation.

<sup>8</sup> R.J. ARMSTRONG, *The Spiritual Theology of the "Legenda Maior" of Saint Bonaventure*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Fordham University, New York 1978.

PART ONE  
THE THEOLOGY OF THE  
"VERBUM CRUCIFIXUM"  
ACCORDING TO SAINT BONAVENTURE

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THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF  
THE "VERBUM CRUCIFIXUM"

Franciscan theology at large has developed an awareness of the importance which the humanity of Christ assumes not only in popular piety, but indeed in a systematic presentation of theology. Heir of Augustinian voluntarism and of a spirituality like that of Cîteaux with its insistence upon remembrance and imitation of Christ, the theology of the Franciscan masters and mystics of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries can be defined as a *theologia affectiva*, centred upon the mystery of Christ in His Incarnation, Passion and Death on the Cross. Bonaventure's theology follows this pattern very closely<sup>1</sup>.

We have chosen to begin our analysis by looking at a notion which comes rather late in Bonaventure's formation as a theologian, namely, that of the *Verbum Crucifixum*. In fact, it appears for the first time in the *Collationes de Donis Spiritus Sancti*, dated 1268<sup>2</sup>. However, the central position which it occupies in Bonaventure's theology becomes evident when one underlines its intimate link with the theme of the Incarnate Word. The Incarnation and Redemption are two dimensions of the one and same mystery of Christ which Bonaventure meditates upon in all his works. That is why we deemed it fit to begin with an analysis of the notion of the Crucified Word in order to see its varying shades of meaning in the speculative, exegetical and mystical works of the Seraphic Doctor.

<sup>1</sup> J. MOLTSMANN, *Il Dio Crocifisso. La Croce di Cristo, fondamento e critica della teologia cristiana*, Italian translation by D. Pezzetta, Brescia 1982, 76: "Dal filone agostiniano e francescano, Bonaventura ricavò un carattere volontaristico e affettivo, che traspose nella stessa teologia. Il riflettere teologico non è semplicemente una teoria, ma una sintesi di teoria e saggezza pratica, quindi una *theologia affectiva*, una unità di riflessione intellettuale e di esperienza spirituale". For the theology of Augustine, cfr. L. BOUYER, *A History of Christian Spirituality*, Vol. 1, *The Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers*, Kent 1982, 467-490. For the school of Cîteaux, cfr. J. LECLERCQ, in *A History of Christian Spirituality*, Vol. 2, *The Spirituality of the Middle Ages*, Kent 1982, 187-220.

<sup>2</sup> *De don. Sp. S.* (V, 457-501).

This chapter intends to look particularly at the *Commentarius in Tertium Librum Sententiarum* and the *Breviloquium*. The first is totally dedicated to Christology under the categories of Incarnation and Redemption<sup>3</sup>. The second deals with the topic of the Incarnation of the Word in part four<sup>4</sup>.

The theology of Redemption in these works will be examined under the aspects of its relation with sin and fallen mankind, and the usefulness of reparation through Christ's sacrifice of satisfaction on the Cross, as well as with the human suffering of Christ who reveals God's love during His Passion and Death.

Since the aim of this chapter is to provide a general theological outline for Bonaventure's experience of Saint Francis with regards to the mystery of the Crucified Word, it will not attempt to undertake a purely systematic approach. It is rather concerned with applying theology to spirituality, and with considering the Cross not as a static reality and an object of analysis for the scholar, but rather as the living event of the Crucified Christ, who becomes the object of a spiritual and mystical experience for all those who follow Him.

#### I. "VERBUM CRUCIFIXUM"

Bonaventure introduces his *Collationes de Donis Spiritus Sancti* with a section concerning the origin, use and fruits of divine grace<sup>5</sup>. These conferences come rather late in his life, having been delivered to the Paris clergy in the period 25 February to 7 April 1268<sup>6</sup>. Consequently the theology developed therein is fruit of

<sup>3</sup> *III Sent.*, Proemium (III, 1b–2a): "In tertio (libro) agitur de persona Reparatoris, utpote de Christo, Deo et homine... Et sic patet, quomodo iste totalis liber versatur circa nostrae reparationis mysterium explicandum". The title of the third book is: *De incarnatione Verbi et humani generis reparatione*. A recent English translation of the prologue is that of R.J. ARMSTRONG, *Prologue to the Third Book of Sentences*, in *The Card* 35 (1985) 131–134.

<sup>4</sup> *Brevil.*, p. 4 (V, 241a–252b).

<sup>5</sup> *De don. Sp. S.*, 1 (V, 457a–461b): "Praemittitur tractatio de gratia secundum eius ortum, usum et fructum".

<sup>6</sup> Cfr. J.G. BOUGEROL, *Introduction*, 181–185; B. DISTELBRINK, *Bonaventurae Scripta*, 55; P. GLORIEUX, *Le date des "Collationes" de S. Bonaventure*, in *AFH* 22 (1929) 257–272.

Bonaventure's spiritual and scientific maturity. However, it is necessary to take them into consideration immediately, for the simple reason that they offer the basic concept which throws light upon what is to follow in our analysis.

#### (a) Grace through the Crucified Word

According to the Seraphic Doctor's view, grace flows from God the Father to humankind in a triple process:

"Gratia descendit super mentes rationales per Verbum incarnatum, per Verbum crucifixum et per Verbum inspiratum".

One immediately notes the change from Bonaventure's classic triad concerning the Uncreated, Incarnate and Inspired Word, which is already present in the *Breviloquium*<sup>7</sup>. This threefold Word concerns Christ as the eternal Exemplar of creation, as the One who assumes the reality of fallen mankind in order to redeem it from sin, and as the supreme revelation of God's power, wisdom and goodness. In the *Collationes de Donis Spiritus Sancti*, Bonaventure considers the Uncreated Word as the One creating mankind capable of receiving the gifts of grace<sup>8</sup>. After the fall, Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, restores mankind's lost dignity in the revelation of His mystery as a Crucified Word. However, the Uncreated Word is the point from which one has to depart in order to consider the humanity of the Incarnate Word<sup>9</sup>.

Sin had excluded mankind from grace, so that God's descension remedied this human condition through the Incarnate and Crucified Word. Bonaventure refers to these dimensions not as

<sup>7</sup> *De don. Sp. S.*, 1,5 (V, 458a).

<sup>8</sup> *Brevil.*, 4,1 (V, 242a): "Congruentissima fuit nostrae reparationi incarnatio Verbi, ut sicut genus humanum in esse exierat per Verbum increatum et in culpam ceciderat deserendo Verbum inspiratum, sic a culpa resurgeret per Verbum incarnatum". The theology of the threefold Word is further developed in *Itin.*, 4 (V, 306a–308b); *Hex.*, 3,1–32 (V, 342a–348b); 9,1–7 (V, 372a–373b). Cfr. Z. HAYES, *The Hidden Center. Spirituality and Speculative Christology in Saint Bonaventure*, Ramsey, New Jersey 1981, 205–208.

<sup>9</sup> *De don. Sp. S.*, 1,5 (V, 458a): "Originale principium, quod est Deus, quando creavit hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem suam in statu innocentiae, ita proproinquum creavit illum sibi, ut per Verbum increatum informabilis est homo ad gratiam".

<sup>10</sup> *Epiph. Dom. Sermo III* (IX, 157b): "Fulgor Verbi increati duxit ad cognitionem humanitatis. Impossibile enim est, quod aliquis cognoscat hoc: Verbum caro factum est (Ioan 1,14), nisi prius cognoscat: In principio erat Verbum (Ioan 1,1)".





in the harmony of the unique medium who is Christ, the Crucified Word:

"Est quoque in hoc verbo *caro factum defectio* excellentiae naturae se humilantis, *evacuans* (verba) quod ex parte est (1 Cor 13,10), (hoc) oportet intelligi scilicet quoad apparentiam et reputationem humanam"<sup>18</sup>.

Although Bonaventure does not use the expression *Verbum Crucifixum* in his earlier works, it is evident that he intends the mystery of Christ under this particular dimension. For Bonaventure the reality of the Incarnation is essentially a redemptive reality, so much so that the Incarnate Word expresses this most profound hiddenness of the humility of God which Christ reveals fully when He becomes also a Crucified Word<sup>19</sup>.

In the reality of the Cross one enters into the very heart of the mystery of Christ. However, it is exactly in this dire reality of profound self-abjection that Christ reveals the face of God for humankind. Therefore the Crucified Word becomes the point of the encounter of mankind with God, and an occasion for judgement. In other words, in front of the Crucified Word, one can either accept God unconditionally, or else reject Him totally:

"Qui vult invenire Dominum invenit eum in cruce; et ideo, qui derelinquit crucem, et Dominum (derelinquit); et qui desiderio fervet ad crucem et ad Dominum invenit ibi eum; nec invenit vacuum, sed cum fluentis gratiarum, de quibus dictum est"<sup>20</sup>.

patrem, *verbum* vero dicit comparationem ad dicentem, dicit comparationem ad id quod per verbum dicitur, dicit comparationem ad vocem, quam induit, dicit etiam comparationem ad doctrinam, quae mediante verbo in altero efficitur; et cum Dei Filius debeat hic describi non tantum in comparatione ad Patrem, a quo procedit, sed etiam ad creaturas, quas fecit, et ad carnem, quam induit, et ad documenta, quae praebuit: nobilissime et decentissime sub nomine verbi describi debuit, quia nomen illud ad omnia respicit, nec posset in mundo nomen convenientius inveniri". Cfr. *I Sent.*, d. 27, p. 2, a. u., q. 2, resp. (I, 485b); *Q. de mys. Trin.*, q. 4, a. 2, resp. ad 8 (V, 87a); *Nat. Dmni. Sermo II* (IX, 106b – 110b). For the various connotations of *Verbum*, cfr. *LexBon*, 131 – 132.

<sup>18</sup> *Nat. Dmni. Sermo II* (IX, 109b).  
<sup>19</sup> *Brevil.*, 6,1 (V, 265a): "Principium reparativum, quod est Christus crucifixus, Verbum scilicet incarnatum"; *Brevil.*, 6,6 (V, 268a): "Principium reparativum nostrum est Christus crucifixus, Verbum scilicet incarnatum". Cfr. A. GERKEN, *Theologie des Wortes. Das Verhältnis von Schöpfung und Inkarnation bei Bonaventura*, Düsseldorf 1963, 320.

<sup>20</sup> *De S. Andrea Ap. Sermo I* (IX, 465b). The preaching of the Cross is always a scandal: *Brevil.*, 6,8 (V, 273b): "Non enim potest crucis gloria libere praedicari, si crucis poena et ignominia formidetur".

(b) "Crux intelligibilis"

Revelation, as contained in Sacred Scripture, unfolds in such a way as to express the centrality of the Cross, since it regards reality in its totality, in both its vertical and horizontal dimensions. Historically the Word which reveals the ultimate meaning of all created reality in its relationship with God is none other than that which is Crucified. Through the Crucified Word all the structures of the universe, and humankind in particular, have to pass in order to re-discover the hidden meaning and goal of their existence:

"(Sacra Scriptura) agit de toto universo quantum ad summum et imum, primum et ultimum, et quantum ad decursum intermedium, sub forma cuiusdam crucis intelligibilis, in qua describi habet et quodam modo videri lumine mentis tota machina universi; ad quam quidem intelligendam oportet nosse rerum *principium*, Deum, ipsarum rerum *creationem*, *lapsum*, *redemptionem* per sanguinem Iesu Christi, *reformationem* per gratiam, *curationem* per Sacramenta, et tandem *retributionem* per poenam et gloriam sempiternam"<sup>21</sup>.

In another text of the *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*, Bonaventure presents Sacred Scripture as the revelation of the most profound mystery of God's love. This mystery can only be uncovered through the Incarnate Word, and the mission of reparation which It carries out. In order to explain this reality Bonaventure makes use of a very significant text in the Apocalypse, which presents the image of the warrior on the white horse, whose name is Word of God, and whose cloak is soaked with blood<sup>22</sup>. The image shows how God entered the history of mankind when He, too, assumed human nature to the point of death on the Cross, with the aim of winning over the ancient enemy. His revelation becomes, therefore, the revelation of the Crucified Word of God.

Revelation as an object of faith does not only concern God's sublime majesty as a Trinity of Persons and Creator of the universe. It also concerns the most profound depths of God's love for mankind in the reality of the unity of the divine and the human

<sup>21</sup> *Brevil.*, Prolog. 6 (V, 208b).

<sup>22</sup> *Hex.*, 3,11 (V, 345a): "Tunc aperuit illis sensum (Luc 24,45), quando intellexerunt Scripturas, id est, per hanc clavem Verbi incarnati liber Scripturae habet intelligi, eo quod est principaliter de operibus reparationis. Nisi enim intelligas ordinem et originem reparationis, Scripturam intelligere non potes. Nomen autem reparatoris est *Verbum Dei*; in Apocalypsi: *Vestitus erat veste aspersa sanguine, et vocabatur nomen eius Verbum Dei* (Apoc 19,13)".

natures in the Incarnate Word. Indeed, it even arrives at becoming a faith in that specific Word which is the revelation of a Crucified God: *credere Deum crucifixum*<sup>23</sup>.

The Crucified Word is the object of faith inasmuch as it manifests the greatness of God in His lowliness<sup>24</sup>. This is the true fountain of wisdom which confounds all human reasoning<sup>25</sup>. The logic of the Incarnation is the only way by which God becomes *humanatus*, to use Bonaventure's own expression. In other words, the Incarnation becomes the visible manifestation of the human face of God. It is a logic which is carried along unto the ultimate consequences. If God becomes man, then He also accepts to undergo the final and most dire experience of every human person. In this way He chooses to become a Crucified God, not to be a slave of death, but to win over death in His act of loving self-sacrifice. This is the logic of Christian wisdom. It is the only way to accept Christ, as Bonaventure states in the first sermon of the Epiphany, which develops the theme of true wisdom manifested in the human flesh of the Son of God.

"Oportet Christum videre primo in humilitate, qui ipsum vult videre in sua sublimitate; primo in terra, postea in caelo. Debes esse particeps tribulationis Christi, si vis esse particeps regni"<sup>26</sup>.

The key for an understanding of Bonaventure's Christology is the revelation of God as a Crucified Word. Everything becomes manifest on the Cross<sup>27</sup>, especially the intimate mystery of God's self-diffusive love in the Incarnate Word, as well as the inner meaning of human life. In this way the Cross assumes a divine as well as a human dimension. It becomes a *crux intelligibilis*, because

<sup>23</sup> *Hex.*, 10,3 (V, 377b).

<sup>24</sup> *Hex.*, 8,5 (V, 370a): "Profunditas Dei humanati, scilicet humilitas, tanta est, quod ratio deficit".

<sup>25</sup> *De S. Andrea Ap. Sermo I, Collatio* (IX, 468b–469a): "Verbum increatum et incarnatum est Verbum sapientiae, et illud coniunctum cruce; ideo crux est fons sapientiae, quia continet in se Christum, fontem sapientiae, thesaurum sapientiae et scientiae, quia in Christo sunt omnes thesauri sapientiae et scientiae absconditi, secundum Apostolum (Col 2,3). Et ut hoc magis clareat, liceat nobis notificare sapientiam christianam sic. Sapientia est habitus nobilissimus mentis, quo sublevarur anima rationalis ad comprehendendum alta, ad speculandum arcana, ad degustandum suavia, ad complexandum aeterna".

<sup>26</sup> *Epiph. Dmni. Sermo I* (IX, 149a).

<sup>27</sup> *De Tri. Via*, 5 (VIII, 14a): "Omnia in cruce manifestantur".

it links heaven and earth in the Person of Jesus Christ, the Exemplar and Mediator, who alone can reunite mankind with God, since He partakes of both natures.

(c) "*Liber Scriptus Intus et Foris*"

One of the persistent notions in Bonaventure's theology is that concerning the position of mankind halfway between God and the created universe<sup>28</sup>. The aim of every person's life is that of returning back to the fountain-source of goodness who is God Himself. We accomplish this task of *reductio*<sup>29</sup> by looking into creation as a visible vestige or open book which can help us to find the Creator, and thus come to the knowledge of another book, that of Scripture.

The *Breviloquium*, speaking about the creation of mankind as a meeting-point between God and created reality<sup>30</sup>, explains this mysterious book in the following way:

"Primum principium fecit mundum istum sensibilem ad declarandum se ipsum, videlicet ad hoc, quod per illum tanquam per speculum et vestigium reduceretur homo in Deum artificem, amandum et laudandum. Et secundum hoc duplex est *liber*, unus scilicet scriptus *intus*, qui est aeterna Dei ars et sapientia; et alius scriptus *foris*, mundus scilicet sensibilis. Cum igitur esset una creatura, quae sensum habebat *intus* ad cognitionem libri *interioris*, ut Angelus; et alia, quae totum sensum habebat *foris*, ut quodlibet animal brutum: ad perfectionem universitatis debuit fieri creatura, quae hoc sensu duplici esset praedita ad cognitionem libri scripti *intus et foris*, id est Sapientia et sui operis. Et quia in Christo simul concurrunt aeterna Sapientia et eius opus in una persona; ideo dicitur *liber scriptus intus et foris* (Ezech 2,9; Apoc 5,1) ad reparationem mundi"<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. A. SCHAEFER, *The position and function of man in the created world according to Saint Bonaventure*, in FS 20 (1960) 261–316; 21 (1961) 233–382. For our topic, especially FS 20 (1960) 313–314.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. A. GERKEN, *Theologie des Wortes*, 139–151; Z. HAYES, *The Hidden Center*, 17–19.

<sup>30</sup> *Brevil.*, 2,11 (V, 229a): "De productione hominis quantum ad totum coniunctum".

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, The pertinent Scripture texts are the following: Ezech 2,9: "Et vidi, et ecce manus missa ad me in qua erat involutus liber; et expandit illum coram me, qui erat scriptus intus et foris, et scriptae erant in eo lamentationes et carmen et vae"; Apoc 5,1: "Et vidi in dextera sedentis supra thronum librum scriptum intus et foris, signatum sigillis septem". Quotations from Scripture will be taken from the *Biblia Sacra Vulgatae editionis Sixti V Pont. Max. iussu recognita et Clementis VIII auctoritate edita*. Editio emendatissima apparatus critico instructa, Romae 1959.

Bonaventure sees creation as a book which expresses the Trinity according to three grades, namely, through the vestige, the image and the similitude. The first is proper to all creatures, the second is proper to rational creatures, while the third is proper only to deform creatures<sup>32</sup>.

In the state of innocence, mankind was able to arrive at the knowledge of God by reading the book of creation. However, sin impeded mankind's knowledge and distorted created reality in such a way that it became undecipherable. That is why God provided another book to enlighten every human person to know, love and praise Him. This was the book of Scripture<sup>33</sup>.

In a significant text of the *Quaestiones Disputatae de Mysterio Trinitatis*<sup>34</sup>, Bonaventure provides a threefold testimony in order to prove the truth that God is a Trinity of Persons. This threefold testimony is presented as a threefold book revealing God. Bonaventure speaks about the book of creation, the book of Scripture and the book of life.

The book of creation offers a witness referring to our external senses as well as to our status as intelligent creatures formed to the image of God. The human person is created to God's image in its faculties of memory, intelligence and will. From these faculties, Bonaventure arrives at the conclusion that God is a Trinity of Persons, in the sense that God is the intellect generating the Word, and from both proceeds love.

The result of the sin of humankind was that of obscuring the book of creation, so that God provided the remedy with the book of

<sup>32</sup> *Brevil.*, 2,12 (V, 230a): "Creatura mundi est quasi quidam liber, in quo reluget, representatur et legitur Trinitas fabricatrix secundum triplicem gradum expressionis, scilicet per modum vestigii, imaginis et similitudinis; ita quod ratio vestigii reperitur in omnibus creaturis, ratio imaginis in solis intellectualibus seu spiritibus rationalibus, ratio similitudinis in solis deiformibus". Cfr. *LexBon.*, 84–86, 119, 134.

<sup>33</sup> *Hex.*, 13,12 (V, 390a): "Certum est, quod homo stans habebat cognitionem rerum creaturarum et per illarum representationem ferebatur in Deum ad ipsum laudandum, venerandum, amandum; et ad hoc sunt creaturae et sic reducuntur in Deum. Cadente autem homine, cum amisisset cognitionem, non erat qui reduceret eas in Deum. Unde iste liber, scilicet mundus, quasi emortuus et deletus erat; necessarius autem fuit alius liber, per quem iste illuminaretur, ut acciperet metaphoras rerum. Hic autem liber est Scripturae, qui ponit similitudines, proprietates et metaphoras rerum in libro mundi scripturam. Liber ergo Scripturae reparativus est totius mundi ad Deum cognoscendum, laudandum, amandum".

<sup>34</sup> *Q. de myst. Trin.*, q. 1, a. 2, resp. (V, 54b–56a).

Scripture, which reveals God as a Trinity of Persons in an implicit way in the Old Testament and in an explicit way in the New.

The book of life is aimed at being an external testimony to the Trinity. Although this last book will be fully revealed only in the state of beatific vision, God allows its light to shine upon every human person in order to enlighten the eyes of faith with an innate light and a light infused by God from above. With the help of the book of life, we believe that God is the highest and most perfect Being, that he is Creator, and that He is also supremely compassionate, unto the point of becoming Incarnate and suffering for our Redemption, thus preparing His final judgement<sup>35</sup>.

In another text of the *Hexaëmeron*, Bonaventure speaks about Scripture as being sacramental<sup>36</sup>. Together with sensible creation and spiritual creation, sacramental Scripture reveals the Exemplar. Sensible creation is the book written from without, and is the way which leads to the Exemplar in its property as a vestige<sup>37</sup>. Spiritual creation is the light, mirror and image of the Exemplar. It is the book written from within<sup>38</sup>. Finally, sacramental Scripture is the totality of this book, because it expresses God Himself, while delving deep into His "heart", that is, into His inner life as a mouth of God (Father), a tongue of God (Son) and a pen of God (Holy Spirit). It is the book written within and without, which reveals God's innermost mystery<sup>39</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> *Q. de myst. Trin.*, q. 1, a. 2, resp. (V, 56a): "Quia vero piissimus, decet eius dignitatem respicere humilia (Ps 137,6) et relevare prolapsa. Et hinc est, quod credimus eum incarnatum et passum pro summa pietate, iudicaturum tandem orbem terrarum pro summa altitudine et aequitate".

<sup>36</sup> *Hex.*, 12,14 (V, 386b): "Triplex est adiutorium ad surgendum ad exemplares rationes, creaturae scilicet sensibilis, creaturae spiritualis, Scripturae sacramentalis, quae continet mysteria".

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*: "Totus mundus est umbra, via, vestigium et est liber scriptus forinsecus... Item, est via duccens in exemplar... Item, est vestigium sapientiae Dei. Unde creatura non est nisi sicut quoddam simulacrum sapientiae Dei et quoddam sculptile. — Et ex his omnibus est quidam liber scriptus foris"; *Itin.*, 2,12 (V, 303a): "Omnis enim creatura ex natura est illius aeternae sapientiae quaedam effigies et similitudo, sed specialiter illa quae in libro Scripturae per spiritum prophetiae assumpta est ad spiritualium praefigurationem".

<sup>38</sup> *Hex.*, 12,16 (V, 386b): "Aliud adiutorium est spiritualis creaturae, quae est ut lumen, ut speculum, ut imago, ut liber scriptus intus".

<sup>39</sup> *Hex.*, 12,17 (V, 387ab): "Sed tertium adiutorium est Scripturae sacramentalis. Est autem omnis Scriptura cor Dei, os Dei, lingua Dei, calamus Dei, liber scriptus foris et intus... Pater enim loquitur per Verbum seu linguam; sed qui complet et memoriae commendat

The Christological implications of this notion are the topic of our analysis. Bonaventure shows how the real book written within and without becomes legible in the living Person of Jesus Christ, whose mediate position in creation's relationship with God is the key to unfold the mystery of the undecipherable contents written in the book of creation and of Scripture.

A fundamental text to be taken into consideration is that contained in the famous sermon *Christus Unus Omnium Magister*<sup>40</sup>. According to Distelbrink, Bonaventure delivered this sermon in Paris, at the friars' *domus studiorum* round about 1250<sup>41</sup>. Quinn, however, dates the sermon in 1254, the year in which Bonaventure became doctor of theology and regent master of the Franciscan school. He is of the opinion that this sermon constituted the *principium*, or part of the inaugural reading of Bonaventure on the occasion of his installation as master, together with the public debate upon his *Quaestiones Disputatae de Scientia Christi*<sup>42</sup>. Brady sees strong resemblances between this sermon and that delivered on the twenty second Sunday after Pentecost<sup>43</sup>. Bougerol dates it as late as 1257, stating that it was composed when Bonaventure was finally officially recognized as the *magister cathedratus* by the secular masters of the Paris University, after the personal intervention of Pope Alexander IV<sup>44</sup>. The text which is of interest to us runs as follows:

est calamus scribae. — Scriptura ergo est os Dei . . . Item, est calamus Dei, et hoc est Spiritus Sanctus<sup>45</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> *Sermo IV de rebus theologicis: Christus Unus Omnium Magister* (V, 567–574).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. B. DISTELBRINK, *Bonaventurae Scripta*, 79–80.

<sup>42</sup> *Q. de sci. Christi* (V, 3–43). Cf. J.F. QUINN, *Chronology*, in FS 32 (1972) 180–181, 186. In footnote 27, the author indicates the opinions of other scholars.

<sup>43</sup> *Dom. 22 post Pent. Sermo I* (IX, 441a–444a). Cf. I. BRADY, *The authenticity of two sermons of St. Bonaventure*, in FS 28 (1968) 4; Z. HAYES, *What Manner of Man? Sermons on Christ by St. Bonaventure*, Chicago 1974, 14–15. For the sermon quoted above, cf. *Sancti Bonaventurae Sermones Dominicales* (Bibliotheca Franciscana Scholastica Mediae Aevi, 27), edited by J.G. BOUGEROL, Grottaferrata (Romae) 1977, *Sermo 49*, 465–473. Since the sermons contained in this volume are also found in the Quaracchi edition, we shall quote the sermons according to both editions, indicating simply “and BOUGEROL”, followed by the number of the Sermon, after the reference to the *Opera Omnia*.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. J.G. BOUGEROL, *Introduction*, 173–175.

“Hic autem ingressus ad Divinitatem et egressus ad humanitatem nihil aliud est quam *ascensus ad caelum et descensus ad terram*, qui fit per Christum tanquam per scalam, de qua Genesis vigesimo octavo: *Vidit Iacob in somnis scalam stantem super terram, et cacumen eius tangens caelum, Angelos quoque ascendentes et descendentes per eam* (Gen 28,12). Per scalam intelligitur Christus, per *ascensum et descensum Angelorum* illuminatio virorum contemplativorum ascendendum et descendendum — Hic etiam duplex modus contemplationis intelligitur per *lectionem interiorem et exteriorem libri scripti intus et foris*, de qua Apocalypsis quinto: *Vidi in dextera sedentis in throno librum scriptum intus et foris, signatum sigillis septem*; et subditur ibi, *quod nemo poterat neque in caelo neque in terra neque sub terra aperire librum et neque respicere illum*; et subditur ibi, *quod leo de tribu Iuda vicit, qui dignus est aperire librum et solvere septem signacula eius* (Apoc 5,1.3.5). — Si ergo ille proprie dicendus est doctor, qui librum aperit et eius signacula solvit; et talis est Christus, qui fuit *leo surgens et agnus occisus*; apparet ergo, quod *magister noster unus est, Christus*, in omni cogitationis differentia, secundum quod est *via, veritas et vita*”<sup>45</sup>.

The book written within and without is therefore Jesus Christ. But it is important to go further and state that the apocalyptic text shows how the seven seals of the mysterious book could only be opened by the lamb that was slain. Thus Bonaventure, who quotes this text, implies that the book written within and without is Christ Crucified. He becomes the Revelation of Scripture, and He restores fallen mankind to its former dignity when He expresses the mystery hidden from all eternity as a spoken Word on the Cross. In the Crucified Word mankind is able to decipher the book of creation and the book of Revelation, since the Cross expresses harmony and order after the havoc and disorder which sin operated<sup>46</sup>. Christ Crucified is the book written within and without for the reparation of the world. He is the true similitude of the Father who leads fallen mankind back to the knowledge, love and praise of God and to a new friendship sealed in His blood. In Him Crucified every human person finds a new meaning to existence and recovers that splendid image which sin had distorted, thus rendering itself united with the supreme Image. Although we would anticipate the analysis of the

<sup>45</sup> *Sermo Christus Unus Omnium Magister*, 14 (V, 571a).

<sup>46</sup> *Feria VI Parasceve: Sermo II* (IX, 263b): “Si volumus spiritualia contemplari, oportet tollere crucem ut librum, quo erudiamur . . . Liber sapientiae est Christus, qui scriptus est intus apud Patrem, cum sit ars omnipotentis Dei; et foris, quando carnem assumpsit. Iste liber non est apertus nisi in cruce; istum librum debemus tollere, ut intelligamus arcana sapientiae Dei”.

theology of the *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* at this point, it is opportune to crown our efforts with Bonaventure's own words in this mystical treatise:

"Si enim *imago* est similitudo expressiva, dum mens nostra contemplatur in Christo Filio Dei, qui est *imago Dei* invisibilis per naturam, humanitatem nostram tam mirabiliter exaltatam, tam ineffabiliter unitam, videndo simul in unum primum et ultimum, summum et imum, circumferentiam et centrum, *alpha et omega* (Apoc 1,8), causatum et causam, Creatorem et creaturam, *librum* scilicet *scriptum intus et extra* (Apoc 5,1); iam pervenit ad quandam rem perfectam"<sup>47</sup>.

The Crucified Word stands at the heart of Franciscan theology at large, and of Bonaventure's in particular. Its divine dimension reveals Its mission as an outward manifestation of God's mystery of love. This leads us to see Its human dimension as well, which consists in the historical revelation of the Christ mystery in the Passion and Death on the Cross, in order to redeem mankind from sin.

## II. REDEMPTION THROUGH THE CRUCIFIED WORD

The analysis of the significance of the Crucified Word in Bonaventure's works leads us to probe into the soteriological texts of the Seraphic Doctor, where he develops a theology of Redemption centred upon the disorder brought about by sin for fallen mankind, and the remedy applied to restore mankind's lost dignity in the process of the Incarnation<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> *Itin.*, 6,7 (V, 312a).

<sup>48</sup> Cfr. Z. HAYES, *The Hidden Center*, 152–191. In this chapter, entitled "Soteriology: Cosmic and Redemptive Dimensions of the Christ Mystery", the author presents an excellent synthesis of Bonaventure's theology of Redemption, and discusses the various theories proposed by modern scholars in this field. It is beyond the aim of our study to enter into the details of this discussion, and so we shall limit ourselves to the structural analysis of the relevant texts of the Seraphic Doctor. For a thorough treatment of the satisfaction theory, the physical-mystical theory and the personalist theory, cfr. R. SILIC, *Systembildende Elemente In Der Theologie Bonaventuras*, Leiden 1964, 40–50. Another possibility of looking at Bonaventure's theology of Redemption is provided by A. GERKEN, *Theologie des Wortes*, 225–298, who proposes two theories, which he entitles "theory of reparation" and "theory of completion". Hayes tries to solve the question by proposing one theory which unifies the entire Bonaventurian synthesis regarding soteriology, and which he entitles "theory of redemptive completion".

In this section we shall be dealing mainly with Bonaventure's speculative works, and particularly with the soteriological texts present in the *Commentarius in Tertium Librum Sententiarum* and in part four of the *Breviloquium*<sup>49</sup>.

The aim is to provide the doctrinal foundations for the study of those texts which speak about the significance of Christ's sufferings during His Passion and Death on the Cross, and consequently about the anthropological dimensions of the mystery of love which leads mankind into the very heart of God through a direct participation in the physical and spiritual sufferings of Christ.

It is important to note that the *Commentarius in Tertium Librum Sententiarum* is not the third in chronological order, but was composed after the first, second and fourth volumes, which deal with the Trinity, the theology of the Word, creation, anthropology, sin and grace. Thus the third volume, which is concerned basically with Christology, can be described as a mature synthesis of Bonaventure's formation as a theologian<sup>50</sup>.

### (a) Incarnation and Redemption

In order to understand the logic of Redemption as Bonaventure presents it, one has to enter into the logic of the Incarnation. Bonaventure states that it was most convenient that the Son become incarnate for two reasons. First of all, because He is Image, Word and Son. As Image of the Father He could assume human nature which was created as an image of the Son. As a Word of the Father, He is the manifestation *ad extra* of the Father's will, according to which everything was spoken, that is, created. That is why it is important that the Word assume human nature. Finally, He is the Son of the Father, generated from all eternity. Therefore it is most fitting that He become human and be born in time<sup>51</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 18–20 (III, 379a–434b); *Brevil.*, p. 4 (V, 241a–252b).

<sup>50</sup> Cfr. B. DISTELBRINK, *De ordine chronologico IV Librorum "Commentarii in Sententias" S. Bonaventurae*, in CF 41 (1971) 288–314.

<sup>51</sup> *III Sent.*, 1, a. 2, q. 3, resp. (III, 296): "Si enim loquamur de ipsa incarnatione in se, magis congruum fuit, personam Filii incarnari, et in quantum est *Imago*, et in quantum est *Verbum*, et in quantum est *Filius*. In quantum est *Imago*, quia homo assumptibilis erat ratione dignitatis imaginis; et quia Filius est *Imago Patris*, ideo magis conveniens erat, Filii personam assumere creaturam. — *Rursus*, quia Filius Dei *Verbum* est Patris, sic procedit ab

The second reason for the Incarnation is the Redemption of humanity. Since the sin of mankind brought about a fallen world, which pertains to the Son alone<sup>52</sup>, the Son restored humanity's dignity in His Incarnation. Even the mode of reparation is proper to the Son, because only the Son can be a Mediator by His obedience to the Father's will, as well as by His interceding prayer. Finally, the fruits of reparation concern the Son, since they regard the regaining of our lost dignity as God's sons, a dignity which only the Son could restore because of His filial submission to the Father.

(b) *Soteriological Texts: III Sent., d. 18–20*

In his speculative works, Bonaventure develops his theology of Redemption mainly according to the categories of merit, satisfaction and reparation. In the *Commentarius in Tertium Librum Sententiarum* he gives particular importance to these theological categories and explains them in the light of his Christology<sup>53</sup>.

Christ's self-offering for truth and justice in His Passion was meritorious, since Christ sustained His Passion with an excellent act of His will. He therefore merited for us the grace of Redemption<sup>54</sup>. Christ is our Mediator, and so He partakes of God's divinity and

ipso, ut Pater se manifestat per ipsum; et ideo, sicut ad intentionis manifestationem verbum intelligibile copulatur voci sensibili, sic ad divinitatis revelationem Verbum Patris congruum fuit uniri carni. — *Postermo*, quia *Filius* est semel genitus ab aeterno, et sic congruebat, Deum carnem assumere, ut esset de genere hominum, et ita hominis filium; et ideo decebat ipsum magis incarnari quam Patrem vel Spiritum sanctum"; Cfr. *I Sent.*, d. 31, p. 2, a. 1, q. 3, resp. (I, 542b).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*: "Si consideramus hominis lapsum, videmus, quod lapsus fuit appetendo falsam Dei similitudinem et aequalitatem; et quia Filio primo attribuitur aequalitas, hinc est, quod quasi ex ipso sumpsit homo lapsus occasionem; et ideo inde sumere debuit reparationem peccati". In *Brevil.*, 3, 11 (V, 240a), Bonaventure speaks of sin as a "deformatio imaginis Trinitatis". Cfr. Z. HAYES, *The Hidden Center*, 169–172.

<sup>53</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 18 (III, 379a–396b): "De usu voluntatis Christi, qui consistit in exercitio merendi"; d. 19 (III, 399a–414b): "De redemptione nostra, facta per passionem Christi, quoad efficaciam et utilitatem"; d. 20 (III, 416a–434b): "De Christi passionis congruentia".

<sup>54</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, resp. (III, 386a): "Quoniam igitur Christus passionem passio eius fuit meritoria".

our humanity as a *comprehensor et viator*. According to His human condition Christ becomes part and parcel of our state of wayfarers, which Bonaventure links with the *status miseriae*<sup>55</sup>.

The specific object of Christ's merit was the safeguarding of God's truth and justice, which were insulted by humanity's sin, and which resulted in our exclusion from the kingdom where we could see God face to face. That is why, by His Passion, Christ merited for us the re-opening of paradise, thus making it again possible for us to see God, in other words, to have the *aperta visio*<sup>56</sup>. It is significant that the vision of God's glory passes through Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, which merited for us the grace of beatific vision.

Genuine human suffering on Christ's part merited for us the remission of our guilt, while his deep charity guaranteed our entry into eternal life<sup>57</sup>.

Bonaventure then moves on to discuss the usefulness and efficacy of Redemption through Christ's Passion. He introduces the theme of justification, and applies it to Redemption according to the four causes of being<sup>58</sup>. The Passion is the material cause of our

<sup>55</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 18, a. 2, q. 2, resp. (III, 390a): "Christus, Dei et hominum mediator, simul debuit esse *comprehensor et viator*: *comprehensor* propter suam dignitatem, et *viator* propter nostram necessitatem; et ideo partim debuit esse in *statu gloriae*, partim in *statu miseriae*".

<sup>56</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 18, a. 2, q. 3, resp. (III, 392b): "Ad praedictorum intelligentiam est notandum, quod est *paradisus terrestris*, et est *paradisus caelestis*, et Adam peccante, utriusque ianua clausa fuit. Clausio autem ianuae paradisi *terrestris* signum fuit clausiois ianuae paradisi *caelestis*. Est autem *paradisus caelestis* aperta visio Dei, clausio autem huius ianuae fuit impossibilitas videndi Deum *facie ad faciem*, quae impossibilitas consurgebat ex merito peccati Adae et ex decreto divinae sapientiae, quo scilicet Deus decreverat neminem ad sui aspectum admittere, nisi facta esset sibi emenda et satisfactio pro illo peccato. Et quoniam emenda est satisfactio facta est ei per Christum, sicut melius infra manifestabitur; hinc est, quod per meritum Christi patuit nobis ingressus in caelum". In *De Reduc.*, 12 (V, 323a) Bonaventure unites the grace of contemplative vision to the Incarnation: "Et quoniam per peccatum rationalis creatura oculus contemplationis obnubilatum habuit; decentissimum fuit, ut aeternum et invisibile fieret visibile et assumeret carnem, ut nos ad Patrem reduceret".

<sup>57</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 18, a. 2, q. 3, resp. ad 3 (III, 393a): "Meritum *vitae aeternae* consistit in radice caritatis, meritum autem *remissionis poenae* non tantum consistit in caritate, sed etiam in passionis acerbitate".

<sup>58</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 19, a. 1, q. 1 (III, 399a–402b). Cfr. J.L. GONZALES, *The Work of Christ in Saint Bonaventure's Systematic Works*, in *S. Bonaventura 1274–1974*, Vol. 4, 371–385.

justification, while the Resurrection is the final cause leading to the *terminus quietantis*, or state of peace. The efficient and formal causes are attributed to both Passion and Resurrection. In the Passion we are moved to love God, and this is defined as an *exemplum provocans* by Bonaventure. The Passion also teaches us to die to our sinful life, and Bonaventure calls this the *exemplum regulans*. The same process happens in the Resurrection, because it moves us to justice in order to acquire glory, and it directs us to live in newness of life. In this way Bonaventure explains how every human person is called to participate in the redemptive mystery of Christ. It is true that the Seraphic Doctor makes use mostly of moral categories in these texts, but these are applied to deeper levels of mystical experience in his later works.

Referring to Paul's theology of Redemption in Colossians 2, 13–14<sup>59</sup>, Bonaventure underlines the efficacy of the Passion in the remission of our guilt with regards to the dishonour and offence of our sin<sup>60</sup>. Christ annulled our death warrant, by accepting to die on the Cross. In this way He won over sin and death by becoming Himself part and parcel of our sinful condition, though He was innocent, and by temporarily yielding to death, though He was the fountain of life.

Christ's Passion and Death on the Cross also freed us from the power of the devil. Bonaventure is very much a son of his times when he indicates the memory of Christ's Passion and the figure of the Cross as efficacious remedies against the devil's slavery<sup>61</sup>. Apart from its deep biblical and theological implications, this reference to the battle waged between Christ Crucified and the devil had great impact on hagiographical literature in the Middle Ages. The *Legenda Maior*, for example, is no exception.

Finally, the Passion was efficacious because it freed us from temporal and eternal punishment. Bonaventure, however, inserts another punishment due to our sin, which he calls *poena media*

<sup>59</sup> Col 2,13–14: "Et vos cum mortui essetis in delictis et praeputio carnis vestrae, convivificavit cum illo donans vobis omnia delicta, delens quod adversus nos erat chirographum decreti, quod erat contrarium nobis, et ipsum tulit de medio adfigens illud cruci".

<sup>60</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 19, a. 1, q. 2, resp. (III, 404a).

<sup>61</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 19, a. 1, q. 3, resp. (III, 406b): "Diabolus super omnia abhorret memoriam passionis et figuram crucis, per quam sumus a potestate eius liberati".

between temporal and eternal punishment<sup>62</sup>. This would consist of the fact that sin rendered us incapable of spiritual vision, which is already possible in faith according to our state of wayfarers, had Christ not intervened to restore this grace through His Passion.

Christ is also Redeemer, not only because He is the author of our Redemption, but moreover, because He carries it out by offering His own Person. However, Bonaventure notes that the authority of Redemption pertains to Christ in His divine nature, and so it also pertains to the Father and the Holy Spirit. It is only in His human nature that the Redemption of humanity pertains to the Son alone<sup>63</sup>.

Since He is the Redeemer, Christ also becomes the moral Mediator<sup>64</sup>. Bonaventure is very careful to make a subtle distinction between two latin terms, namely, *medium* and *mediator*:

"Differt dicere esse *medium* et esse *mediatorem*. *Medium* namque dicitur communicantiam cum extremis. *Mediator* autem non tantum dicitur communicantiam, sed etiam dicitur *officium* reconciliationis"<sup>65</sup>.

One notes a progress of thought in Bonaventure's theological synthesis from the moral mediator of the early soteriological texts to the cosmic medium of the *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*<sup>66</sup>. The fact that Christ assumed human nature placed Him in a position to communicate with two extremes, holding an intermediate position within the Trinity as well as with regards to anything created. In this way He becomes the medium since He communicates with human beings in His mortality and with God in His beatitude. Bonaventure would speak of a *medium colligantiae* in the case of the Incarnation

<sup>62</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 19, a. 1, q. 4 (III, 407a–408b).

<sup>63</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 19, a. 2, q. 1, resp. (III, 409ab): "Dicendum, quod redemptionis opus dupliciter potest alicui attribui, aut sicut *principali auctori*, aut sicut *exsequenti*. Et utroque modo competit Christo: Christo, inquam, *Deo* competit sicut *auctori*, Christo vero *homini* competit sicut *exsequenti*".

<sup>64</sup> For Christ's office as Mediator, cfr. A. GERKEN, *Theologie des Wortes*, 136–139, 164–172, 238–245, 254–256, 299–307.

<sup>65</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 19, a. 2, q. 2, resp. (III, 410b). Another definition of *mediator* is found in *Brevil.*, 4,2 (V, 243a): "Mediatoris namque est esse *medium* inter hominem et Deum ad reduendum hominem ad divinam *cognitionem*, ad divinam *conformitatem* et ad divinam *filiationem*".

<sup>66</sup> For the cosmic medium, cfr. *Hex.*, 1,10–39 (V, 330b–335b).

of the Word<sup>67</sup>. This mediate position of Christ in the Trinity, in the cosmos and in God's salvific plan is fundamental when one deals with the anthropology of the Seraphic Doctor, seen in the background of his Christology.

Christ's mystery of mediator places Him as a reconciliator between God and fallen mankind<sup>68</sup>. In His innocent death Christ draws together the two estranged parties in order to reconcile them in His blood. Since He partakes of man's mortality and God's beatitude, Christ is able to express God's condescension towards fallen humanity and to draw every human person back into God's friendship<sup>69</sup>.

Bonaventure expresses this concept of reconciliation in one of his sermons, in which he succeeds in showing how sin worked havoc not only in man but in the entire cosmos, so that it was necessary for Christ to remedy this state of affairs by assuming the office of reconciliator in His Passion and Death upon the Cross:

"Discordia fuit inter *Creatorem et creaturam* propter peccatum, et ideo angelica natura contraria fuit *humanae*. Item, discordia erat inter *voluntatem et conscientiam*, quia voluntas inclinatur ad unum, conscientia ad aliud. Item, discordia est inter *rationem et sensualitatem*, quia ratio dicitur unum, sed sensualitas movet ad aliud . . . Item, discordia facta est inter *hominem et proximum*; deberet unus alium diligere; vix unus diligit reliquum (sic), immo frater odit fratrem suum. Item, discordia fuit inter *hominem et universum orbem*. — Quis posset ista reconciliare, pacificare et in unum recolligere? Per quem fiet illud? Dico, quod fiet istud per illum qui universalem habet potestatem

<sup>67</sup> Dom. III. Adv. Sermo I (IX, 57b) and BOUGEROL, Sermo 4, 158: "Christus est medium congruum mirabilis colligantiae in incarnatione, quia in ipso mirabiliter duo coniunguntur extrema videlicet primum Divinitatis et ultimum humanitatis".

<sup>68</sup> III Sent., d. 19, a. 2, q. 2, resp. (III, 410b–411a): "Si vero quaeritur, qualiter et secundum quam naturam Christus sit mediator, cum mediator dicat officium reconciliationis, et mediator debeat differre ab illis quos reconciliat, et Christus secundum *divinam* naturam sit ille cui fit reconciliatio, dicendum, quod non potest esse mediator secundum *divinam* naturam, sed secundum *humanam*, in qua potest reconciliare secundum *diversas proprietates*, in quibus communicat cum Deo et cum homine. Habebat enim *iustitiam* et *innocentiam*, in qua communicat cum Deo, et *mortalitatem*, in qua communicat cum homine; et dum mors coniungitur iustitiae, in eodem confodatur homo peccator et mortalis Deo iusto et immortalis. *Reconciliati enim sumus Deo per mortem hominis innocentis* (Rom 5,10)".

<sup>69</sup> De Reduc., 23 (V, 325a): "Sicut ergo res exierunt a Deo per Verbum Dei, sic ad completum reditum necesse est, Mediatorem Dei et hominum (1 Tim 2,5) non tantum Deum esse, sed etiam hominem, ut homines reducat ad Deum".

tatem super omnem creaturam, qui Pontifex magnus est, qui penetravit caelos (Hebr 4,14). Ille est, qui est verus Deus et verus homo. Dissipati eramus, non coniuncti, sed ipse nos coniunxit in sua passione"<sup>70</sup>.

Bonaventure devotes distinction twenty to the theory of reparation through vicarious satisfaction<sup>71</sup>. He begins by stating that it was most fitting that the human race be saved by reparation on God's part, because God thus wanted to show His power, wisdom and mercy. But even mankind itself offers valid motives for the usefulness of reparation. The dignity of every human person is so important that the whole universe has been created for mankind by God. So it befits God to restore mankind's lost dignity. The way in which humanity sinned calls for reparation. Since it was deceived by the devil, humanity had to be helped by God to find its way back to Him, literally, to stand upright. The miserable state of sinful humanity pleads for God's mercy and justice<sup>72</sup>.

Regarding the mode of reparation, Bonaventure opts for satisfaction<sup>73</sup>. On God's part it was fitting to save mankind through satisfaction, because in this way He would safeguard His mercy towards fallen humanity, but also His justice, which called for a reparation of the evil which sin had brought into the world. On our part, it was necessary to return from sin to justice by sustaining the punishment for our inordinate affections. In this way we could merit eternal life, but only through some form of satisfaction<sup>74</sup>.

Since no creature could pay for humanity's guilt, it was necessary that the act of satisfaction be completed by a Person who is divine and human at the same time<sup>75</sup>. In this way the Son became incarnate in order to satisfy for mankind's sin in His own Person. In

<sup>70</sup> Dom. III Adv. Sermo II (IX, 61b).

<sup>71</sup> Cfr. B. KOROSAK, *La soddisfazione di Cristo Redentore nell'insegnamento teologico di S. Bonaventura*, in IB 3 (1967) 63–70.

<sup>72</sup> III Sent., d. 20, a.u., q. 1 (III, 416a–418b).

<sup>73</sup> Bonaventure takes the theology of satisfaction mostly from St. Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo?*, in PL 158, 359–432. For Anselm, mankind's sin could be forgiven only through satisfaction: "Tene igitur certissime quia sine satisfactione, id est, sine debiti solutione spontanea, nec Deus potest peccatum impunitum dimittere, nec peccator ad beatitudinem vel talem, qualem habebat antequam peccaret, pervenire" (PL 158, 391).

<sup>74</sup> III Sent., d. 20, a.u., q. 2 (III, 419a–422b).

<sup>75</sup> III Sent., d. 20, a.u., q. 3, resp. (III, 423a): "Cum pura creatura non posset pro toto genere humano satisfacere, nec alterius generis creaturam deceret ad hoc assumi; oportuit, ut persona satisfaciens esset Deus et homo".



other words, Christ assumed the ministry of vicarious satisfaction for humanity who was unable to heal itself of its own ills. Moreover nobody can receive grace without the merit of Christ's satisfaction<sup>76</sup>.

Satisfaction was important because it appeased God's just wrath at mankind's ingratitude, it was most efficacious to heal mankind's deadly illness and also to attract every human person to the love of God, and lastly it was the most prudent means to win over the devil. The means used to carry out this plan of universal reparation was the Passion and Death of Christ Crucified<sup>77</sup>.

God could have decreed otherwise for the reparation of humanity, since His freedom and power know no bounds. But since the way in which he chose to redeem mankind passes through Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, there is no other way in which one can be saved except in having faith in Christ<sup>78</sup>. Regarding other ways of redeeming mankind on God's part, Bonaventure prefers not to probe imprudently, since nobody can limit God's freedom of action. One thing is certain, however; in redeeming mankind through Christ's death on the Cross, God showed His overflowing mercy beyond the strict parameters of justice<sup>79</sup>.

### (c) *The Brevisloquium*

In the *Breviloquium* Bonaventure takes up roughly the same arguments which he developed in the *Commentarius in Tertium Librum Sententiarum*. He discusses the theology of Redemption within the context of the Incarnation of the Word, after following a logical sequence of themes which precede part four, and which deal with the Trinity, creation and sin.

In the actual state of an incomplete and fallen world, God decreed that mankind be saved through the act of reparation of the Incarnate Word. Bonaventure does not rule out other possibilities which God would have realized in order to redeem mankind, but he

<sup>76</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 20, a.u., q. 4, resp. ad 4 (III, 426b): "Nulli peccatori datur gratia nisi merito satisfactionis et passionis Christi".

<sup>77</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 20, a.u., q. 5, resp. (III, 428a): "Nullo alio modo . . . Deus hominem magis potuit attrahere ad amorem suum, quam sustinendo pro eo crucis patibulum".

<sup>78</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 20, a.u., q. 6 (III, 430a - 432b).

<sup>79</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 20, a.u., q. 6, resp. ad 4 (III, 431b - 432a). Cf. Z. HAYES, *The Hidden Center*, 174.

insists that the Redemption carried out by Christ was the most fitting<sup>80</sup>. God created everything according to His Uncreated Word, and so it was fitting that He should heal the cosmos through His Incarnate Word, in order to manifest His essential attributes of power, wisdom and goodness which, in the Bonaventurian synthesis, denote the specific qualities of the three divine Persons<sup>81</sup>.

God's benevolence in redeeming mankind through His Incarnate Word is best seen in the extreme humiliation of the Son who assumes human flesh and who accepts to become a slave in order to free those who are slaves of sin<sup>82</sup>. In this way Christ assumes the office of mediator, with the aim of becoming a minister of reconciliation through His humility and suffering<sup>83</sup>.

Since sin brought evil in the world, it was fitting that humanity be healed through an efficacious remedy. Bonaventure proposes the axiom of *contraria contrariis curentur*. The curing of man's fallen nature is affected by the acceptance of the most profound abjection on Christ's part<sup>84</sup>.

<sup>80</sup> *Brevil.*, 4,1 (V, 241a): "Per Verbum incarnatum facta est salus et reparatio generis humani, non quia aliter Deus non potuerit humanum genus salvare vel liberare, sed quia nullus alius modus erat ita congruus et conveniens ipsi reparatori et reparabili et reparationi".

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*: "Quoniam ergo Deus omnia fecit potenter, sapienter et optime seu benevolentiter; deicit, ut sic repararet, quod suam potentiam, sapientiam et benevolentiam ostenderet".

<sup>82</sup> *Brevil.*, 4,1 (V, 241a): "Quid benevolentius, quam quod Dominus propter servi salutem accipiat formam servi (Phil 2,7)?"

<sup>83</sup> *Brevil.*, 4,8 (V, 248b - 249a): "Cum principium reparativum in reconciliando necessario habeat mediatoris officium; ideo necesse est, quod habeat convenientiam cum utroque extremorum non solum quantum ad naturam, verum etiam quantum ad ea quae sunt circa naturam. Quoniam ergo Deus est iustus et beatus, impassibilis et immortalis; homo vero lapsus est peccator et miser, passibilis et mortalis; necesse fuit, mediatorem Dei et hominum (1 Tim 2,5), ut hominem posset reducere ad Deum, cum Deo communicare in iustitia et beatitudine, cum homine vero in passibilitate et mortalitate; ut sic, habendo mortalitatem transeuntem et beatitudinem permanentem, hominem reduceret de praesenti miseria ad vitam beatam . . . Quoniam ergo Christus mediator debuit habere innocentiam et beatitudinem fructus cum mortalitate et passibilitate; hinc est, quod simul debuit esse viator et comprehensor".

<sup>84</sup> *Brevil.*, 4,9 (V, 250a): "Convenientissimum autem est, ut contraria contrariis curentur. Quia ergo homo, volens esse sapiens ut Deus, peccavit, in ligno vitio volens delectari, ita quod inclinatus est ad libidinem, erectus in praesumptionem; ac per hoc totum genus humanum infectum est et perdidit immortalitatem et incurrit debitam mortem: hinc est, quod ad hoc, quod homo repararetur convenienter, pati passione generalissima, humiliari et in ligno pati; et contra universalem infectionem pati passione generalissima, contra libidinem passione acerbissima, contra praesumptionem passione ignominiosissima, contra mortem debitam et invitam pati voluit mortem non meritam, sed voluntariam".

Bonaventure's theology of Redemption is not tied up with hypothetical possibilities, but with a *de facto* analysis of God's plan of saving fallen mankind. Summing up the contents of the soteriological texts just proposed, we can state that Bonaventure's aim is that of presenting a faithful picture of the reality of sin in a fallen mankind which needs to be healed. The medicine is provided by the Incarnation of the Son, who as Exemplar of creation and spoken Word of the Father becomes the Image in whose image everything was formed, and who becomes man in order to restore this same image which had been sullied as an effect of sin. This whole process finds its centre on the Cross, because it is there that Christ becomes the victim of satisfaction and merits the Redemption of every human person. On the Cross Christ is the *medium reducens* who leads such fallen mankind into the Father's friendship through His office of Mediator in reconciling heaven and earth. He is the Crucified Word, the fountain of grace, of pardon and of future glory<sup>85</sup>.

Our next step now will be that of seeing how Christ actually redeemed mankind on the Cross, through genuine human suffering in all its dimensions. In this way it will become apparent how Bonaventure is not interested in an abstract theology of the Cross, but rather in a *theologia affectiva*, and therefore in the experiential dimension of the Crucified Word.

### III. SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST'S HUMAN SUFFERING

It would be a mistake to view Bonaventure's speculative works in the light of a purely intellectual analysis of Redemption under the categories of sin, merit and satisfaction. There is much more besides this. In the *Commentarius in Tertium Librum Sententiarum* we can find traces of what we might term a *theologia affectiva*, which has the specific aim of probing into the true human sufferings which Christ endured throughout His life, and particularly on the Cross.

<sup>85</sup> Pent. Sermo VIII (IX, 340ab): "Huius autem fluminis aquae vivae (Ioan 7,38) origo est Christus Dominus, secundum quod est fons gratiae et veniae et gloriae. — Est enim fons gratiae in quantum incarnatus... Est etiam fons veniae secundum quod crucifixus... Fons iste, in quo peccata lavantur, sanguis est Christi crucifixi... Est tertio fons gloriae secundum quod exaltatus".

In this way Bonaventure underlines the importance which the humanity of Christ assumes not only in the actual event of mankind's Redemption, but moreover in the personal encounter between Christ and every single human person along the spiritual journey of return into God, during which the reality of the Cross becomes central<sup>86</sup>.

In this section we intend to take into consideration distinctions fifteen and sixteen of the *Commentarius in Tertium Librum Sententiarum*, plus the relevant parallel texts of the *Breviloquium*<sup>87</sup>.

#### (a) Human weakness assumed by Christ

Bonaventure begins with the weakness and sufferings which Christ assumed as a man. It is only in a second moment that he speaks about Christ's sufferings during His Passion. Christ assumed human weakness and suffering for three reasons. First of all He had to pay the price of our salvation by shedding His blood on the Cross. But this was possible only if Christ first accepted to take upon Himself the weakness of humankind in general. Secondly, Christ has to become an example of virtue, and particularly of humility, patience and piety. By assuming our human nature and bearing patiently with tribulation, Christ rendered it possible for us to imitate Him through a virtuous life. Finally, Christ accepted human weakness in order to sustain our own fragility, so that we would exercise the theological virtues with His help. Thus we would have faith because Christ really became like us in human weakness and suffering, we would grow in hope when we see His great mercy for us, and we would arrive at loving Him after experiencing His benevolence towards our fallen human nature<sup>88</sup>.

The next step is that of defining what specific weakness and suffering was proper to Christ. Bonaventure rules out all those weaknesses associated with sin, because Christ has to be a minister

<sup>86</sup> Cfr. Z. HAYES, *The Hidden Center*, 123–127.

<sup>87</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 15 (III, 329a–342b): "De passibilitate et defectibus a Christo assumptis in generali"; d. 16 (III, 345a–361b): "De passione Christi quantum ad statum patientis"; 4,9 (V, *Brevil.*, 4,8 (V, 248b–249b): "De passione Christi quantum ad modum patienti"; 249b–250b): "De passione Christi quantum ad modum patienti".

<sup>88</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 15, a. 1, q. 1, resp. (III, 330b–331a).

of justice, totally alien to the sinful condition of mankind. Christ assumed other weaknesses which are the result of the human condition. Bonaventure calls these natural weaknesses and defines them as those weaknesses which pertain to human nature in general. However, the Seraphic Doctor does not accept that Christ was also subject to personal weaknesses, that is, those which are proper to individual persons, because this would have been irrelevant for our Redemption, for which it was enough for Christ's to accept all those weakness associated with the human condition<sup>89</sup>. In the *Breviloquium* Bonaventure is more explicit regarding this theme of human weakness in Christ<sup>90</sup>.

Another important factor concerning the human weaknesses of Christ is that regarding the freedom of will with which Christ accepted them. In our human condition, weakness and suffering are part and parcel of our existence. In Christ's case, however, Bonaventure does not accept the necessity of weakness and suffering inherent in the human condition. He solves the problem by stating that Christ freely accepted human weakness and suffering through the divine will which precedes but which does not impose itself upon His actions, and also through the concomitant created will which Christ had in His human condition<sup>91</sup>.

(b) *Human suffering during the Passion*

Genuine human suffering is expressed in an eminent way during Christ's Passion. Bonaventure strongly defends the reality of human suffering in Christ. The treatment of this question is fundamental in the Bonaventurian synthesis, because it throws light upon his entire theological system, in which the humanity of Christ is the point where all reality converges.

Christ was not only prone to suffering in His flesh, but His

<sup>89</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 15, a. 1, q. 2, resp. (III, 333ab).

<sup>90</sup> *Brevil.*, 4, 8 (V, 248b): "De statu patientis haec tenenda sunt, scilicet quod Christus assumpsit non tantum humanam naturam, sed etiam defectus circa naturam. Assumpsit enim poenalitates corporales, ut famem, sitim et lassitudinem; assumpsit etiam spirituales, ut tristitiam, gemitum et timorem; nec tamen omnes corporales assumpsit, sicut sunt defectus ad spiritum".

<sup>91</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 15, a. 1, q. 3 (III, 334a-335b).

spirit was highly sensible and suffered along with His body. The truthfulness of Christ's sufferings is the *conditio sine qua non* of the efficacy of His act of Redemption through satisfaction<sup>92</sup>.

Bonaventure also insists upon the fact that Christ's sufferings on the Cross were most painful for three reasons. Christ suffered because He knew the cause of His Passion. He was innocent. Yet He chose to suffer for His own enemies and for those who were ungrateful. If we consider the way in which He suffered, we conclude that He went through an intense pain in all the members of His body. This is also true when one thinks about the condition of the suffering Christ, since He was so sensible to His humanity and therefore was fully conscious of the reality of suffering which He experienced<sup>93</sup>.

One could speak of the necessity of suffering in Christ, but only if it is considered in its final cause, namely, in its redemptive dimension. Human suffering in Christ always stands in relation to the human nature which he assumed, and not to His Person<sup>94</sup>. This

<sup>92</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 16, a. 1, q. 1, resp. (III, 346b): "Dicendum, quod absque dubio, sicut Evangelium dicit, et fides catholica sentit, vera doloris passio fuit in Christo. In ipso enim fuit caro passibilis et perforabilis, fuit etiam virtus sentiendi, secundum quam anima compatitur corpori laeso. Quoniam ergo haec duo verum dolorem faciunt, scilicet vera laesio et verus laestoris sensus, et haec duo vere fuerunt in Christo; indubitanter tenendum est, quod in Christo fuit vera doloris passio... Dum enim dicit, ipsum non fuisse veraciter passum; dicit ipsum non satisfacisse, ac per hoc non genus humanum esse redemptum".

<sup>93</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 16, a. 1, q. 2, resp. (III, 349ab): "Dicendum, quod dolor passionis Christi inter ceteros dolores et passiones fuit acerbissimus et acutissimus. Et hoc patet, si illa considerentur, quae doloris passionem acerbiores reddunt. Haec autem sunt tria, videlicet causa passionis et modus patiendi, et conditio patientis. Si consideretur causa, ob quam Christus passus est, fuit in eo doloris afflictio magna. Non enim patiebatur pro culpa propria, immo pro aliena; non pro amicis tantum, sed etiam pro inimicis... Si autem consideretur modus patiendi, fuit in eo passio doloris acerbior, tum propter generalitatem, quia in omnibus membris affligebatur, tum etiam propter continuitatem... Si autem consideretur aequalitas sive conditio patientis, maxima erat afflictio propter maximam aequalitatem et propter sensus vivacitatem. Unde quia nullus potuit ei aequari nec in aequalitate complexionis nec in vivacitate sensus, dolor illius omnium dolorum fuit acutissimus".

<sup>94</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 16, a. 1, q. 3, resp. (III, 350b-351b): "Cum quadrupliciter dicatur necessitas, solo quarto modo (secundum causam finalem) necessitas patiendi fuit in Christo, videlicet propter nostram redemptionem... In Christo autem necessitas erat ad patientium non per comparationem ad personam, quia nulla poterat astringi necessitate, quia omnia erant ei subiecta (1 Cor 15,27), sed per comparationem ad naturam assumptam".

typical medieval view of Christ's sufferings on the Cross might be unacceptable to contemporary theological trends, which consider the reality of suffering as the deep conviction on Christ's part of the dire fact that God had abandoned Him into the profound abyss of death<sup>95</sup>. However, it would be unfair to Bonaventure to judge his theology of the Cross by our standards, since, as we shall see, he is very much aware of the fact of suffering within Christ's rational will, under the category of *compassio*.

Bonaventure, in fact, does not consider Christ's sufferings only with regards to corporal pain. He underlines the significance of spiritual suffering in the soul as well, which is part and parcel of genuine human suffering. That is why he states that Christ suffered in His soul according to His rational will, because it moved Christ to have compassion and to suffer for our sins. Christ's soul was also naturally inclined to His body. Therefore it was natural for it to suffer when the body was suffering<sup>96</sup>.

Not only did Christ suffer in the inferior part of His rational faculties, or human sensibility, but also in the superior part of reason. This was fitting because only in this way could Christ entirely heal mankind's sinfulness. The consciousness of suffering in Christ's soul was also accompanied by an inner joy in the same act of suffering. Bonaventure explains how joy and sorrow are not contradictory in true human suffering, and certainly they could not be contradictory in Christ's Passion<sup>97</sup>.

<sup>95</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 21, a. 1, q. 1, resp. ad 4 (III, 438b): "Cum ergo dicitur, quod delectatio Deitatis remota fuit in morte ab anima Christi, hoc non intelligitur ea ratione, quod mens eius desineret frui Divinitate, sed quod dispensative subtracta fuit redundantia in partem sensibilem et exposita fuit passioni acerbissima. Propter quod clamavit in passione: *Deus meus, Deus meus! Ut quid dereliquisti me?* (Matth 27,46), quod non intelligitur, quia dereliquit vinculum unionis, sed exponendo ad supplicium passionis". Cf. H.U. VON BALTHASAR, *Mysterium Paschale*, in *Mysterium Salutis* Vol. 6, Brescia 1973, 204–235; J. MOLTMANN, *Il Dio Crocifisso*, 172–182, 231–327. In page 210, footnote 9 of his study, Balthasar states: "Non rimane che da compiangere il fatto che la teologia scolastica abbia meditato con tanto poco senso sulla croce e si sia perduta nelle inutili questioni se e come Cristo sia rimasto durante la sua morte uomo?". This statement could perhaps find an exception in Bonaventure's case. Although the Seraphic Doctor certainly follows the typical categories of his times in philosophy and theology, he is certainly concerned with the profound sense of the Cross not only in the human experience of Christ, but also in His profound relationship with the Father.

<sup>96</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 16, a. 2, q. 1, resp. (III, 354a).

<sup>97</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 16, a. 2, q. 2, resp. (III, 356b): "Non tantum huiusmodi dolor et gaudium non sunt contraria, sed unum est materiale respectu alterius; et ideo simul eadem

When he inquires whether Christ's sufferings were greater in His rational faculties than in His sensible ones, Bonaventure makes an important distinction between *passio* and *compassio*, as two dimensions of Christ's sufferings. The former has to do with His corporal sufferings, while the latter is linked with His intense spiritual sufferings in the rational faculties. The cause of compassion is the sinful condition of mankind, which prompts Christ to suffer with suffering humanity<sup>98</sup>.

Bonaventure concludes that the suffering of compassion was more intense in Christ than that linked with corporal suffering in the Passion. The reason is clear. Christ suffered intensely in His body, but He suffered still more intensely in His soul because of mankind's ingratitude and separation from God. The moving force behind Christ's compassion is His deep, heartfelt love for every human person in need of being rescued from the miserable slavery of sin<sup>99</sup>.

It is clear that this view of the Seraphic Doctor characterizes his overall view of Christology. It is not enough to present the doctrinal implications of sin and Redemption. Bonaventure probes deep into the human dimension of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. In doing so he succeeds in showing that theology is not pure abstraction of

inesse poterant, sicut in viro poenitente videmus, quod simul dolet et de dolore gaudet. Sic et anima Christi secundum naturam corpori patienti compatiebatur, tamen de illa passione et compassione laetabatur".

<sup>98</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 16, a. 2, q. 3, resp. (III, 358ab): "In Christo duplex dolor fuit, secundum quod dicunt Sancti, videlicet dolor passionis et dolor compassionis, et uterque dolor intensus fuit et acerbus. Multum enim in se doluit, et multum nobis condoluit; et uterque istorum dolorum et in sensualitate fuit et in ratione, sed ordine permutato. Nam dolor passionis et carnis primo attingebat animam secundum sensualitatem, et deinde secundum alias vires. Dolor vero compassionis primo erat in ratione, et ex ratione redundabat in sensualitatem". *Brevil.*, 4,9 (V, 250b): "Christus et acerbissima passione passus est in carne et amarissima compassus est in anima. Et quia in carne erat maxima aequalitas complexionis et perfecta vivacitas sensuum, in anima vero sensissimus".

<sup>99</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 16, a. 2, q. 3, resp. (III, 358b–359a): "Si quis autem ulterius quaerat, cum ratio et sensualitas secundum duo genera doloris mutuo se excedant, quis eorum fuerit intensior in Christo, utrum videlicet dolor passionis, vel compassionis; responderi potest, quod dolor compassionis fuit intensior". This theology is illustrated by H.U. VON BALTHASAR, *Mysterium Paschale*, 250–251: "Bonaventura porta una spiegazione più profonda. Dopo aver mostrato che la visione beata di Dio non costituisce un ostacolo alla sofferenza anche della parte spirituale dell'anima di Cristo, giacché tutta l'anima peccatrice deve essere salvata, introduce una distinzione tra patire e compatire, dove però questo viene inteso rettamente solo se viene compreso come un patire-con".

principles, but becomes appealing to every person's sensibility. It becomes a *theologia affectiva* which concentrates its attention upon the reality of the Crucified, and especially upon the significance of His sufferings for every human person. That is why the Cross becomes a challenge to be accepted or refused categorically. In this way it awaits an attitude of loving response on mankind's part, which takes the form of a *compassio*, of a suffering-with Christ, expressed in an affection which delves deep into His mystery<sup>100</sup>.

Christology occupies the central place in Bonaventure's theology. The originality of Bonaventure, however, lies in the specific image of Christ which he portrays. The Seraphic Doctor is faithful to the spirit of Saint Francis in presenting the human dimension of the Christ mystery in the forefront. Humanity reaches its most poignant expression in the presentation of Christ Crucified.

We have seen how the Seraphic Doctor develops a spiritual theology centred upon the experience of the Cross. In the Crucified Word Bonaventure centres his trinitarian theology. As a *Verbum Increatum* the Son is Exemplar of creation and perfect Image of the Father. As a *Verbum Incarnatum* He restores the fallen dignity of mankind, particularly in the revelation of Himself as a *Verbum Crucifixum*, from whom all grace descends. As a *Verbum Inspiratum* Christ becomes the one who reveals God through His Word in Scripture, which again converges in the reality of the Cross.

According to Bonaventure's view, the fundamental question of the ultimate meaning of created reality can only be answered with the help of the Crucified Word. Mankind's relation to creation and to God has to pass through this Word. The Cross becomes a *crux intelligibilis*, where the spiritual and material realities, God and man, heaven and earth, intersect. In the Crucified Word every human person rediscovers the goal of its existence, in a personal experience of life which becomes crucified.

The Crucified Word is the key to read the book of creation and the book of Scripture, the *liber scriptus intus et foris*. Mankind's intermediate position between purely spiritual and purely material reality is the secret in order to understand both dimensions. With

<sup>100</sup> *Hex.*, 2,32 (V, 342a): "*Affectus vadit usque ad profundum Christi*"; *Pent. Sermo IX* (IX, 341a): "*In Christum autem crucifixum credere debemus cum compassione*".

the advent of sin in the world, however, it became necessary to decipher this book again with the help of the Crucified Word, in whom lies the synthesis of creation and Scripture.

The mystery of the Crucified Word calls for an examination of its historical manifestation in the event of the Incarnation. Bonaventure discusses the significance of the Incarnation in a world that is fallen and corrupt. He develops a theology of Redemption centred upon the person of Jesus Christ, who becomes an instrument of reparation.

In his speculative works Bonaventure proves how Christ merited our Redemption by His spontaneous self-offering on the Cross. His sacrifice was one of satisfaction. Since fallen mankind could not satisfy for its own guilt, Christ took the task upon Himself, by offering Himself as a victim of satisfaction in order to help man return back into God's friendship. In His ministry of reconciliation, Christ becomes the Mediator, who communicates with God in beatitude and with mankind in suffering.

Bonaventure's Christology assumes the contours of an *experientia crucis* particularly when he speaks about Christ's true weaknesses and sufferings. Christ's sufferings during the Passion are described under the categories of *passio* and *compassio*. The significance of the Cross for every human person calls for the attitude of compassion under the dimension of a suffering-with Christ.

The human dimension of the Cross provides the link with our next step, which is precisely that of seeing how the Crucified Word becomes an experience of life. The Cross does not lend itself only to a theological interpretation. It is, above all, an anthropological experience. Every man is called to participate, as Christ did, in the Cross. That is why the object of chapter two is that of analysing Bonaventure's works dealing with the themes of imitation and following of Christ Crucified, especially with the help of the foundational virtues which He embraced. In this way imitation and following of the Crucified are the trade-marks of discipleship.

The ideal which Bonaventure proposes to all finds its living expression in the experience of Francis of Assisi. In him Bonaventure sees the true disciple of the Crucified, the one for whom the Cross is an experience of life, an anthropological experience.

CHAPTER TWO  
DISCIPLESHIP OF  
THE "VERBUM CRUCIFIXUM"

Spirituality must be regarded vis-à-vis theological speculation, and vice-versa. This principle is valid in a particular way in the case of Christology. Every speculation upon the mystery of Christ must depart from His concrete life and teachings, since Christ revealed the mystery of the Trinity when He became a man and lived among fellow human beings.

Bonaventure is aware of the intimate link between systematic theology and spirituality. The life of Christ is for him the concrete source for all theological speculation. When he regards the living experience of Christ, Bonaventure underlines the anthropological dimension of the Christ mystery<sup>1</sup>. Christ's life is characterized by a decisive option of those values which the Son of God cherished most – humility, poverty, obedience and charity. These virtues are most evident on the Cross, and hence they could be the best means for all Christians to participate in the mystery of Christ.

In this way, the Crucified Word of God becomes a model for everybody's instruction and an example for imitation. It assumes anthropological characteristics in its openness to the human condition. Discipleship is the slogan for all those who want to probe the unfathomable riches of the mystery of Christ.

Bonaventure has a very precise idea of discipleship. It is the idea of the Gospel accounts of the vocation of the first disciples, but it is filtered through a concrete experience which Bonaventure knew and loved – the Franciscan experience. If Christ is to be an object for imitation and following, there is a way which is highly successful, and it is the Franciscan way. Certainly, it is not the only way, but it represents the Gospel ideals most faithfully. It is the imitation and

<sup>1</sup> Cf. F.C. BLANCO, *Teoría buenaventuriana de la redención. Sus presupuestos antropológicos*, in *Estudios Franciscanos* 86 (1985) 515–575.

following of a humble, poor and mendicant Christ, who is obedient unto a death of total spiritual and material nakedness on the Cross<sup>2</sup>.

This is the Christ-image which Bonaventure portrays in the Gospel commentaries and in those writings which he composed in defence of the mendicant life of the brothers. It is an attempt at presenting a Christology which assumes the contours of an experience, a spirituality, or a paradigm capable of being reposed over and again by the humble disciples of the Crucified, as it was faithfully and freshly proposed by Francis of Assisi.

#### I. THE GOSPEL COMMENTARIES

In this section we shall be dealing mainly with Bonaventure's exegetical works, particularly the *Commentarius in Evangelium Lucae*, the *Commentarius in Evangelium Ioannis*, and the *Collationes in Evangelium Ioannis*<sup>3</sup>.

The *Commentarius in Evangelium Lucae* is the first among Bonaventure's biblical commentaries. It was originally composed in 1248, the year in which Bonaventure became *baccalarius biblicus*, but its final and definitive draft most probably comes later on, round about 1254<sup>4</sup>.

The *Commentarius in Evangelium Ioannis* is dated 1254, the year in which Bonaventure became *magister regens* of the Franciscan school. The *Collationes in Evangelium Ioannis* seem to be of an uncertain date, but they reflect very much the theology contained in the *Commentarius in Evangelium Ioannis*<sup>5</sup>.

The *Commentarius in Evangelium Lucae* could be described as a manual for the formation of preachers. Indeed, it is witness to a typical medieval methodology in the exposition of the sacred

<sup>2</sup> *Dom. IV p. Peni. Sermo I* (IX, 373a) and BOUGEROL, *Sermo 31*, 350: "Nam a principio suae natiuitatis paupertatem in suo corpore consecravit, in mundo cum pauperrimis hominibus pauperrime conversatus et associatus, in fine vero nudus in cruce positus fuit et post resurrectionem in specie peregrini apparuit. Qui ergo debet esse Christi legatus debet, sicut ipse ambulavit, et ipse ambulare (1 Ioan 2,6)".

<sup>3</sup> *Comm. Luc.* (VII, 3–604); *Comm. Ioan.* (VI, 240–530); *Coll. Ioan.* (VI, 535–632).

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. J.G. BOUGEROL, *Introduction*, 142–143; B. DISTELBRINK, *Bonaventurae Scripta*, 15–16; J.F. QUINN, *Chronology*, in FS 32 (1972) 186.

<sup>5</sup> Cfr. B. DISTELBRINK, *Bonaventurae Scripta*, 14–15, 56–57.

text<sup>6</sup>. It is divided into four parts, regarding the Incarnation (chapters 1–3), Christ's ministry of preaching (chapters 4–21), the Passion narrative (chapters 22–23) and the Resurrection (chapter 24)<sup>7</sup>.

The *Commentarius in Evangelium Ioannis* is divided into two main sections. It is concerned with the theology of the Word considered in Itself (chapter 1,1–6) and with the theology of the Incarnate Word, revealed in the actual Incarnation (chapters 1,6–11,46), Passion (chapters 11,47–19,42) and Resurrection (chapters 20 and 21)<sup>8</sup>.

The Quaracchi editors explain that the *Collationes in Evangelium Ioannis* are, most probably, *schemata* of sermons of the Seraphic Doctor<sup>9</sup>.

A very important factor concerning medieval commentaries on Scripture is their methodology. Medieval commentators, heirs of a tradition which can be traced back to the Fathers, explained the Scripture text according to four senses, namely, a literal sense, and a spiritual sense divided into the allegorical, tropological and anagogical senses<sup>10</sup>. Bonaventure makes abundant use of his methodology, and explains it in many of his works<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Cfr. J.G. BOUGEROL, *San Bonaventura Predicatore*, in IB 9 (1973) 103–115; A. DRAGO, *L'Esegesi di San Bonaventura nei suoi Commentari*, in IB 7 (1972) 121–145.

<sup>7</sup> *Comm. Luc. Prooemium* (VII, 5b): "Evangelica historia tota circa Christum versatur, vel in quantum mediator est, vel in quantum praedicator, vel in quantum reparator, vel in quantum triumphator. Mediator respicit incarnationis mysterium, praedicator, eruditionis magisterium, reparator, passionis remedium; triumphator, resurrectionis tropaeum".

<sup>8</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 1, n. 1 (VI, 246a): "Iste liber, qui est de Verbo incarnato, in quo duplex consideratur natura, divina scilicet et humana, dividitur primo in duas partes. In prima agit de Verbo in se; in secunda vero, in quantum est carni unitum"; *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 1, n. 17 (VI, 250b): "Egit supra de Verbo secundum excellentiam Divinitatis; in hac parte agit secundum assumptionem humanitatis. Et quia assumptio haec facta est propter nostram salutem, quae facta est per passionem et consummata per resurrectionem; ideo habet haec pars tres partes".

<sup>9</sup> *Coll. In.*, footnote 1 (VI, 535ab).

<sup>10</sup> For Bonaventure's use of the four senses of Scripture, cfr. H. DE LUBAC, *Esegesi Medievale. I Quattro Sensi della Scrittura*, Italian translation by P. Stăcul, Roma 1972, 1435–1452.

<sup>11</sup> *Brevil.*, Prol. 4 (V, 205b): "Habet postremo ipsa Scriptura profunditatem, quae consistit in multiplicitate mysticarum intelligentiarum. Nam praeter litteralem sensum habet in diversis locis exponi tripliciter, scilicet allegorice, moraliter et anagogice. Est autem allegoria, quando per unum factum indicatur aliud factum, secundum quod credendum est. Tropologia sive moralitas est, quando per id quod factum est, datur intelligi aliud, quod

Having this brief introduction as background knowledge, we can now proceed to examine the theology of Bonaventure's exegetical works regarding the significance of the Cross as a direct participation in the saving mystery of Christ, through imitation and following of the Master's footsteps along the difficult road of the foundational virtues. Indeed, as Bonaventure affirms:

"Nullus est qui possit pervenire ad intelligentiam Scripturarum nisi per crucem"<sup>12</sup>.

(a) *Imitatio Christi and Sequela Christi*

The category of *imitatio* recurs frequently in Bonaventure's works. It should be linked with his theology upon Christ the Exemplar of creation, who therefore becomes the perfect model upon whom we must gaze and according to whose Image we must be conformed<sup>13</sup>. Christ becomes the model for our imitation.

At this point the spontaneous question poses itself: in what way are we to imitate Christ? It is here that Bonaventure comes up with a classic axiom: all the actions of Christ are meant for our instruction, but not all are meant for our imitation<sup>14</sup>. And in the *Commen-*

faciendum est. *Anagogia*, qui sursum ductio, est, quando datur intelligi illud quod desiderandum, est, scilicet aeterna felicitas Beatorum"; *De Reduc.*, 5 (V, 321b); *Itin.*, 4, 6 (V, 307b); *De don. Sp. S.*, 7, 9–10 (V, 490b–491a); *Tr. Via.*, Prol. 1 (VIII, 3ab); *Hex.*, 2, 13–17 (V, 338b–339a); 13, 9–33 (V, 389a–392b); 20, 15 (V, 428a); *Epiph. Sermo II* (IX, 151b); *Pent. Sermo X* (IX, 345a–346b); *De Purif. Sermo IV* (IX, 649b–653b); *De Annunt. Sermo IV* (IX, 671b–677b).

<sup>12</sup> *Feria VI Parasce. Sermo II* (IX, 265b).

<sup>13</sup> Cfr. Z. HAYES, *The Hidden Center*, 13–15.

<sup>14</sup> *IV Sent.*, d. 3, p. 2, a. 3, q. 1, resp. ad 3 (IV, 84b); "Christus omnibus operibus suis nos erudit; sed tamen non omnia fecit ad imitationem, sicut opera miraculosa, et alia plura". This theme is also present in a number of sermons of the Seraphic Doctor: *Dom. II Adv. Sermo I* (IX, 47a) and BOUGEROL, *Sermo 3*, 153; *Dom. infra Oct. Nativ. Sermo I* (IX, 131b) and BOUGEROL, *Sermo 6*, 175; *Dom. III p. Epiph. Sermo I* (IX, 183b) and BOUGEROL, *Sermo 9*, 193; *Dom. I Quad. Sermo I* (IX, 205a) and BOUGEROL, *Sermo 15*, 235; *Dom. XVI p. Pent. Sermo I* (IX, 416a) and BOUGEROL, *Sermo 43*, 428; *Dom. XXII Dominicales* quoted above is contemporaneous to Bonaventure's status as a *baccalarius* *Cristo secundo S. Bonaventura*, in IB 3 (1967) 100. J.G. BOUGEROL, *Introduction, Sermones Dominicales*, 13–17. If Brady's opinion is the more probable, then these sermons are nearly contemporary to the final draft of the *Comm. Luc.* and hence reflect its theology very closely.

*tarius in Tertium Librum Sententiarum* Bonaventure solves the problem by stating that Christ's humanity is the guiding rule of our imitation of His actions<sup>15</sup>, so that His divine wisdom and miraculous actions are automatically cut off from every possibility of being imitated. At the most, such actions can be an object of admiration and adoration, not of imitation<sup>16</sup>.

Together with the category of imitation, Bonaventure also develops that of the following of Christ. The Scriptural axiom: *Magna gloria est sequi Dominum* (Ecclesiasticus 23,38) is often present in those texts which speak about the following of Christ, and which we will have the opportunity of examining.

The imitation and following of Christ are closely linked with the reality of the Cross. The *Commentarius in Evangelium Lucae* is very much concerned with discipleship in the imitation and following of Christ during His Passion<sup>17</sup>. The way of the disciple is twofold. The disciple is called to come to know Christ through faith, and consequently to imitate Him by accepting the Cross<sup>18</sup>.

The invitation to self-denial, to take up the Cross daily and

<sup>15</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 35, a.u., q. 2, resp. (III, 776b): "Et ideo ad ipsam scientiam non solummodo pertinet dirigere in agendis; sed etiam ex consequenti pertinet nosse ea quae sunt fidei tanquam fundamentum suae directionis; et ulterius nosse humanitatem Christi tanquam exemplar sui regiminis; ita quod hic triplex actus convenit ei secundum triplicem respectum: unus videlicet respectu obiecti motivi, alter vero respectu sui fundamenti, et tertius est exemplaris excitativi".

<sup>16</sup> *Dom. IV Quad. Sermo I* (IX, 232a) and BOUGEROL, *Sermo 18*, 260–261: "Praecedat dominus meus ante servum suum, et ego sequar vestigia eius (Gen 33,14) ... Praecedat Dominus meus, per voluntariam abiectionem profundae humilitatis, et ego, servus tuus, sequar, cum timore filialis reverentiae tuae; vestigia, inquam, non sublimitatis potentiae, quia praesumptuosum est, eo quod sunt adoranda, non imitanda; non profunditatis sapientiae, quia curiosum est, quoniam non scrutanda sunt et imitanda, sed admiranda; sed vestigia profundae humilitatis, quia gloriosum est, eo quod in talibus gloria magna est sequi Dominum (Eccli 23,38)". Cfr. I. BRADY, *La Teologia della Imitazione*, in IB 3 (1967) 96–101.

<sup>17</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 5, n. 8 (VIII, 115a): "Debet etiam sequi imitatione passionis; prima Petri secundo: 'Pro nobis passus est, vobis relinquit exemplum, ut sequamini vestigia eius' (1 Petr 2,21). Talibus promittitur gloria".

<sup>18</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 9, n. 29 (VII, 225a): "Via autem ad patriam potissime in duobus consistit, scilicet in perfecta cognitione Christi per fidem et perfecta imitatione per crucem. Ideo primo insinuat nobis, qualiter Christus per fidem est cognoscendus; secundo vero, qualiter per crucem est imitandus".



follow Christ (Luke 9,23) is a key-text in understanding Bonaventure's theology of the imitation of Christ. The call to follow Christ's footsteps is equivalent to the imitation of His actions. It leads to a radical self-denial, expressed in the virtue of humility, which Bonaventure defines with Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 10,5<sup>19</sup>.

Grounded in humility, the disciple is then able to accept the Cross. Bonaventure introduces another virtue which this action manifests and which can be an instrument of imitation, namely, austerity<sup>20</sup>. Noting the typical detail to be found exclusively in Luke's Gospel, namely, the adverb *quotidie*, Bonaventure explains how the Cross has the power to recreate, to give new life to the disciple. It is significant that Bonaventure presents a concrete example of a disciple who accepts the Cross in order to follow Christ and, hence, becomes a new man. He is Francis of Assisi. Indeed, we could conclude that Francis is the model of the perfect disciple which Bonaventure has at the back of his mind in the *Commentarius in Evangelium Lucae*<sup>21</sup>.

The next step after accepting the Cross is to begin following Christ. It is clear that it is not enough to imitate Christ's actions through the inner attitude of humility and austerity. Now the virtue of most high poverty is the sure sign of a dynamic following of the Crucified, because it liberates the disciple from all earthly burdens and preoccupations which render it difficult to walk with joy and

<sup>19</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 9, n. 37 (VII, 228a): "Primo igitur invitatur *consideratione sui exempli*, cum dicit: *Dicebat autem ad omnes: Si quis vult post me venire*, id est, me imitari, ad quod non cogit, sed invito... Ideo dicit: *Si quis vult exemplum meum sequi*. — *Abneget semetipsum*, per omnimodam humilitatem, captivando sensum, affectum et intellectum in Christi obsequium" (cfr. 2 Cor 10,5)."

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*: "Sed hoc non sufficit; ideo addit: *Et tollat crucem suam quotidie*, per continuam austeritatem, ut possit dicere illud Pauli ad Galatas secundo: 'Christo confixus sum cruci' (Gal 2,19); et secundae ad Corinthios quarto: 'Semper mortificationem Iesu sum cruci' (2 Cor 4,10). Et ideo dicitur ad Galatas quinto: 'Christi in corpore nostro circumferentes' (2 Cor 4,10). Et ideo dicitur ad Galatas quinto: 'Qui autem sunt Christi carnem suam crucifixerunt cum vitis et concupiscentiis' (Gal 5,24)."

<sup>21</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 9, n. 38 (VII, 228ab): "Nota quod dicit: *Quotidie*, quia quotidie poenitentia crucis debet esse nova et recens, ut dicat semper: 'Dixi: Nunc coepi' (Ps 76,11), sicut beatus Franciscus, qui in morte dicebat, quod tunc incipiebat bene facere: 'Fratres, sicut incipiamus et proficiamus, quia nunc usque parum proficimus' (Cfr. *Leg.M.*, c. 14, n. 1, in *Analecta Franciscana*, Vol. 10, 621). Crux namque Christi renovativam habet naturam; unde secundae ad Corinthios quarto: 'Licet is qui foris est noster homo corrumpatur, tamen is qui intus est, renovatur de diem in diem' (2 Cor 4,16)."

willingly follow the Master<sup>22</sup>. The following of the Crucified becomes a free act of the will<sup>23</sup>.

Bonaventure aptly describes the religious life as the most clear example of the realization of Christ's invitation. The three virtues associated with the three steps just mentioned become the religious vows of obedience, chastity and poverty<sup>24</sup>.

A sermon which echoes this theology of the *Commentarius in Evangelium Lucae* is that which Bonaventure delivered on the fourth Sunday after Pentecost<sup>25</sup>. The theme is drawn from Luke 5,11: *Relictis omnibus secuti sunt eum*, within the context of the calling of the first disciples. The first action in the following of Christ is the renunciation of all personal possessions. Bonaventure lays down the condition for following Christ: absolute fidelity to His radical choice of poverty<sup>26</sup>. When the disciples leave everything for the sake of Christ, it becomes possible for them to follow Him. Freed of all earthly burdens, they will be able to fight against evil and hence to pursue true goodness, which consists in crucifying the flesh in order to become rich before God's eyes through voluntary poverty.

The actual following of Christ is developed in the second part of the sermon. There is a threefold goodness in following Christ, namely, the rejection of pride through humility, the gift of benevolence and charity in offering one's life for the brothers, thus following Christ's footsteps unto the Cross, and the perseverance

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*: "Ad perfectam autem Christi imitationem non sufficit humilitas et austeritas, sed etiam necessaria est *paupertas*. Ideo addit: *Et sequatur me*, scilicet per altissimam *paupertatem*, quia nihil omnino volebat portare in via, ut recte et expedite perveniret ad patriam".

<sup>23</sup> *Dom. XVIII p. Pent. Sermo I* (IX, 424b) and BOUGEROL, *Sermo 45*, 445: "Si quis vult post me venire, abneget semetipsum et tollat crucem suam et sequatur me (Luc 9,23). — Si quis vult venire post me, ecce, postpositio et subiectio voluntatis; et dicit, *vult*, ut libere et sine coactione hoc faciat; *abneget semetipsum*, ecce, captivando libertatem, ut non secundum se ipsum, se secundum Deum vivat; *et tollat crucem suam*, ecce, assumptio poenitentiae, et hoc per patientiam; *et sequatur me*, ecce, directio exemplaritatis, qui tamdiu clypeum patientiae portavit, donec vitam finivit".

<sup>24</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 9, n. 38 (VII, 228b): "Ex hoc autem verbo elicitur triplex consilium et votum religiosorum, scilicet *obedientiae* in abnegatione, *castitatis* in cruce et *paupertatis* in subsecutione".

<sup>25</sup> *Dom. IV p. Pent. Sermo I* (IX, 372a–375a) and BOUGEROL, *Sermo 31*, 349–354.  
<sup>26</sup> *Dom. IV p. Pent. Sermo I* (IX, 373a) and BOUGEROL, *Sermo 31*, 350. See text in footnote 2.

and constancy in accepting patient suffering which is the way to perfection<sup>27</sup>.

As one would expect, Bonaventure develops the theme of the following of Christ especially when dealing with the texts related to the calling of the apostles and of the mission entrusted to them by the calling of the apostles and of the mission entrusted to them by Christ. Examples include the call of Levi, or Matthew, in which Bonaventure notes the force of illumination<sup>28</sup> helping the tax-collector to follow Christ in absolute poverty<sup>29</sup>, as well as that of Philip in John's Gospel, where the following of Christ is described in the Pauline image of being "captured" by Him<sup>30</sup>.

To follow Christ implies a perfect conformity to His Person. When speaking about the calling of the rich young man of the Gospel, Bonaventure delineates the various stages of the invitation to follow Christ. The exposition of the Gospel text is an excellent example of how divine pedagogy respects the human dimension of the disciple. Jesus teaches the young man to follow Him through stages which correspond to the virtues of austerity, poverty and

humility<sup>31</sup>. Thus, to follow Christ does not mean to copy his actions in a static or passive way, but to undertake the gruelling journey of the Cross according to a free, conscious and responsible choice of the will. To follow Christ implies a radical change from one way of life to a totally new one. This is the case of the blind man of Jericho in Luke 18,35–43. Bonaventure adapts this episode to a splendid theological synthesis of how spiritual blindness is cured by the grace of vision, leading in turn to the virtue of obedience and the following of Christ<sup>32</sup>.

Even though the *Commentarius in Evangelium Iohannis* is not as directly concerned with the theme of imitation and following of Christ<sup>33</sup>, it nevertheless provides some interesting insights which become complementary and, at times, parallel texts to the ones we have already seen. For example, Bonaventure speaks of the following of Christ along the footsteps of His Passion<sup>34</sup>. The Lord's Passion becomes an object of imitation<sup>35</sup>.

The parable of the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep lends itself to the development of the theme of imitation and following of Christ. Both dimensions are present. The good

<sup>27</sup> Dom. IV p. Pont. Sermo I (IX, 374b–375a) and BOUGEROL, *Sermo* 31, 353–354.

<sup>28</sup> *Seculi sunt apostoli* tanquam finem et complementum omni boni tripliciter: primo humiliter sine superbia propter splendorem interne cogitationis, secundo concorditer sine invidia propter amorem supernae conversationis, tertio perseveranter cum constantia sine intolerantiam continue afflictionis... unde Lucae nono: *Qui vult venire post me...* propter tolerantiam continue afflictionis... et tollat crucem humilem et mortificationem, abneget semetipsum, per humilem subiectionem, et tollat crucem suam, continue macerationis, et sequatur me, perseveranter usque ad aeterni palatii ingressione... Et propter hoc, si volumus perfecte tollere crucem mortificationis, debemus esse humiles in corde et abstinentes in carne.

<sup>29</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 5, n. 69 (VII, 130a): *Qui haec omnia reliquit, ille est qui bene surgit; qui designatur per Paulum conversum, de quo Actuum nono: 'Surrexit autem Saulus de terra, aperisusque oculis, nihil videbat' (Act 9,8); quia homini ad Christum converso et luce eius illuminato nihil esse videtur terrenum; ad Ephesios quinto: 'Surge, qui dormis, et exsurge a mortuis, et illuminabit te Christus' (Eph 5,14). Et qui sic expeditus surgit potest per viam perfectionis sequi, ut possit dicere illud Iob vigesimo tertio: 'Vestigia eius secutus est pes meus' (Iob 23,11)'*

<sup>30</sup> Dom. IV Quad. Sermo I (IX, 232a) and BOUGEROL, *Sermo* 18, 260: *'De beato Matthaeo dicitur Matthaei nono: Vidi hominem sedentem in telonio, Matthaeum nomine. Et ait illi: Sequere me, et surgens, secutus est eum' (Math 9,9). — Beatus Matthaeus pro statu suo significare potest hominem avarum, qui sedet in telonio terrena cupiditatis, cui dicitur a Christo: Sequere me, per despectionem terrena cupiditatis; et surgens, a pulvere cupiditatis, secutus est eum, per amplexum sanctissimae paupertatis in affectu sive in effectu, secundum illud Psalmi: Divitiae si affluant, nolite cor apponere (Ps 61,11)'*

<sup>31</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 1, n. 90 (VI, 265b–266a): *'Et dicit ei: Sequere me, tanquam servus dominum, tanquam discipulum magistrum, ut possis consequi; ad Philippenses tertio: 'Sequitur autem, si quo modo comprehendam, in quo et comprehensus sum' (Phil 3,12)'*

<sup>32</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 18, n. 41 (VII, 462b–463a): *'Quarto quantum ad exhortationem, qua suadetur paupertatis iter perfectum, subditur: Quo audito, Iesus ait illi: Ah, duc unum tibi deest... Omnia, quaecumque habes, vende et da pauperibus... Et nec hoc grave videatur, adiungit: Et habebis thesaurum in caelo... — Et 'quia, ut dicit Glossa, non sufficit relinquere sua, nisi sequatur Domino imitando; ideo subdit: Et veni, sequere me (Luc 18,22) per summam vitae asperitatem; secundum illud primae Petri secundo: 'Christus passus est pro nobis, vobis relinquens exemplum' (1 Petr 2,21) per summam rerum mendacitatem. Nam discipulo volenti eum sequi ex cupiditate et dicenti: 'Magister, sequar te, quocumque ieris' respondet: 'Vulpes foveas habent, et volucres caeli nidus; Filius autem hominis non habet, ubi caput suum reclinet', Matthaei octavo (8,19–20). Per summam cordis humilitatem, Ecclesiastici vigesimo tertio: 'Gloria magna est sequi Dominum' (Eccl 23,38); et Iohannis octavo: 'Qui sequitur me non ambulat in tenebris' (Ioan 8,12)... Sequi igitur Christum est se perfecte illi configurari'*

<sup>33</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 18, n. 66 (VII, 472ab): *'Et sequatur illum, magnificans Deum, per subiectionem obedientiae. Glossa: 'Videt et sequitur qui bonum, quod intelligit, operatur et Iesum praeterentem imitatur'; Iohannis octavo: 'Ego sum lux mundi; qui sequitur me non ambulat in tenebris, sed habebit lumen vitae' (Ioan 8,12)'*

<sup>34</sup> Cfr. I. BRADY, *La Teologia della Imitazione*, in IB 3 (1967) 98.

<sup>35</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 12, n. 38 (VI, 418a): *'Si quis mihi ministrat, me sequatur (Ioan 12,26), sicut servus Dominum suum, alioquin non est verus servus; sequatur, scilicet per passionis vestigia; primae Petri secundo: 'Christus passus est pro nobis...'; ut sicut imitatur in poena, sic et in gloria'*

<sup>36</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 12, n. 36 (VI, 417b): *'Passio non habet effectum nisi in imitatoribus Christi'; Cfr. Comm. Ioan., c. 13, n. 53, q. 2 (VI, 434b).*

shepherd had the threefold ministry of calling his sheep, leading them and preceding them, thus inviting them to imitate Him by following in His footsteps<sup>36</sup>. The sheep follow the Master to the point of accepting His lot, namely, the reality of the Cross<sup>37</sup>.

Indeed, there can be no following of Christ without the Cross. The consummation of Christ's discipleship consists in a spiritual following of Christ who bears the Cross. In other words, the disciples assume those inner attitudes which conform them to Christ Crucified. These attitudes consist in the foundational values of discipleship, namely, humility, poverty and austerity<sup>38</sup>.

The following of Christ is founded upon the fact that He is our model and our teacher. Thus we could speak of two moments in the process of discipleship. The first is the difficult effort to follow Christ through the virtues outlined above in the acceptance of the Cross. The second moment is that of conformity with the model, and precisely with Christ who is humble, poor, chaste and Crucified. The following of Christ results in a universal discipleship of all

<sup>36</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 10, n. 5 (VI, 384a): "Hoc triplex boni pastoris officium magnum habet effectum in ovibus, qui scilicet est ovium directio per imitationem; propter quod dicit: Oves illum sequuntur, scilicet verum pastorem. Oves sunt simplices et humiles".

<sup>37</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 10, n. 38 (VI, 390b-391a): "Oves meae vocem meam audiunt (Ioan 10,27). Tangitur hic secundum, scilicet certi iudicii exhibitio, quae quidem est in hoc, quod auditur ab ovibus, et oves eum sequuntur, et ipse eas conservat; hoc est certe pastoris... Et sequuntur me, per imitationem; Matthaei decimo sexto: 'Qui vult venire post me abneget semetipsum et tollat crucem suam et sequatur me (Matth 16,24)'; *Coll. Ioan.*, 40,3 (VI, 584a): "Sequuntur ergo Dominum cum discipulis per montana consiliorum, et hoc tripliciter secundum triplex consilium per carnis mortificationem contra concupiscentiam carnis... Per temporalium dimissionem contra concupiscentiam oculorum... Per propriae voluntatis abiectionem contra superbiam vitae".

<sup>38</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 14, n. 54 (VII, 376a): "Quantum ad spiritualis comitatus complementum subiungit: Et qui non baiulat crucem suam, per perfectam carnis mortificationem; et venit post me, per rectam intentionem; non potest meus esse discipulus (Luc 14,27), per veram imitationem. - Et nota, quod hic est consummatio discipulatus Christi et comitatus, scilicet in baiulando crucem, quia ibi Christus consummavit, sicut dicitur Ioannis decimo nono: 'Et baiulans sibi crucem, exit in eum qui dicitur Calvariae locum' (Ioan 19,17). In hac cruce Christi est summa humilitas; ad Philippenses secundo: 'Humiliavit semetipsum, factus obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis' (Phil 2,8); summa paupertas, ita ut vere posset, dicere Christus illud Iob primo: 'Nudus egressus sum de utero matris meae, et nudus revertar illuc' (Iob 1,21). Unde Ioannis decimo nono dicitur, quod 'milles, cum crucifixissent eum, acceperunt vestimenta eius et fecerunt quatuor partes' (Ioan 19,23). Est etiam ibi summa austeritas, secundum illud Psalmi: 'Foderunt manus meas et pedes meos, dinumeraverunt omnia ossa mea' (Ps 21,17)".

those who are signed with the eschatological seal of the Cross, which is the proof of their faithfulness to Christ<sup>39</sup>.

It is precisely in this image of the Cross as a seal stamped upon the foreheads of the elect that we can find the highest expression of the consummation of Christ's discipleship. Bonaventure applies this eschatological image to Francis of Assisi, thus indicating him as the faithful follower of Christ.

We have already underlined the importance of some Scriptural quotations which Bonaventure applies to the theme of the imitation and following of Christ. The most important of them seems to be 1 Peter 2,21. In fact, Bonaventure has a whole sermon developed upon this verse<sup>40</sup>, and it is important to have a look at it in order to complete our analysis of the theme we are considering.

Bonaventure divides the sermon into three parts. The Passion of Christ is the price of our Redemption, the example which directs us, and the actual way along which we are to follow Christ. These three dimensions correspond to the three hierarchical acts of purgation, illumination and perfection<sup>41</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 14, n. 55 (VII, 376ab): "Crucem ergo baiulare est humilitatem in corde, austeritatem in carne et pauperitatem in passione assumere... Haec crux fuit Christi, quia Christus voluntarie eam suscepit; similiter qui vult Christum sequi, oportet, quod portet eam voluntarie, ut ferat eam sicut crucem suam ex voluntate propria, non in angaria sicut alienam, et ita non sit imitator Christi, sed potius Simonis, de quo Marci decimo quinto: 'Angariaverunt quendam Simonem Cyrenaeum, ut tolleret crucem eius' (Mc 15,21). Ad hanc crucem potissime nos invitat Christus, qui primus eam portavit sicut vexillum et signum regale; unde ad Hebraeos ultimo: 'Christus extra portam passus est. Exeamus ergo ad eum' (Hebr 13,12-13). Qui ergo sic non vult sequi non est Christi discipulus, quia non vult imitari eum, in quo se praebuit exemplar nobis et magistrum; unde ad Galatas quinto: 'Qui autem sumi Christi carnem suam crucifixerunt cum vitis et concupiscentiis' (Gal 5,24). Propter quod secundae ad Corinthios quarto: 'Semper crucis mortificationem in corpore nostro circumferentes, ut et vita Iesu in corporibus nostris manifestetur' (2 Cor 4,10)... Haec igitur baiulanda est tanquam signum Dei vivi, de quo Apocalypsis septimo: 'Vidi alterum Angelum ascendentem ab ortu solis, habentem signum Dei vivi; et clamavit voce magna quatuor Angelis, quibus datum est nocere terrae et mari, dicens: Nolite nocere terrae et mari neque arboribus, quoadusque signemus servos Dei in frontibus eorum' (Apoc 7,2-3), ut sciatur scilicet manifeste, quis sit Christi discipulus".

<sup>40</sup> *Dom. II p. Pasch. Sermo II* (IX, 296a-300b): "Christus passus est pro nobis, vobis relinquens exemplum, ut sequamini vestigia eius (1 Petr 2,21)".

<sup>41</sup> *Dom. II p. Pasch. Sermo II* (IX, 296b): "Passio namque Christi, in quantum est pretium redemptionis, purgat; in quantum exemplum directionis, illuminat; in quantum vestigium deductionis perficit et consummat".

The first stage is that of purgation. Christ suffered for us in order to purify us from our sins. Therefore, in order to imitate Christ the first step should be that of cleansing ourselves from sin and crucifying the flesh<sup>42</sup>.

Next comes illumination. Christ's example during the Passion enlightens us to arrive at eternal truth by means of the imitation of His charity, humility and poverty<sup>43</sup>. The virtue of humility is particularly important, since Christ became a man precisely to teach us how to humble ourselves<sup>44</sup>.

The last step is that of following the footsteps of the suffering Christ in order to reach the stage of perfection<sup>45</sup>. Bonaventure speaks of three footsteps of Christ, corresponding to the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. In this way the perfect following of Christ is had in the religious state, in which the disciple reaches the highest degree of imitation<sup>46</sup>.

After looking at these texts pertaining to the theme we are considering, we can conclude that Bonaventure speaks of both

<sup>42</sup> *Dom. II p. Pasch. Sermo II* (IX, 297b): "Qui ergo sunt imitatores Christi sanati sunt et purgati a sequela peccati, pro eo quod crucifixerunt carnem cum vitis et concupiscentiis (Gal 5,24)".

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*: "In passione etiam sua reliquit exemplum nobis illuminandis in omni veritate. Licet autem omnis virtutis exemplum ex passione sua nobis relinquat, principaliter tamen reliquit nobis exemplum triplicis virtutis, scilicet caritatis, humilitatis et longanimitatis".

<sup>44</sup> *Dom. II p. Pasch. Sermo II* (IX, 298b): "Ad hoc exemplum (humilitatis) maxime debemus attendere, quoniam propter istud praecipue Deus assumpsit infirmitatem humanae naturae, ut scilicet humilitatem posset docere".

<sup>45</sup> *Dom. II p. Pasch. Sermo II* (IX, 299a): "Si ergo purgati sumus per dominicae passionis pretium et illuminati per eius exemplum, nihil aliud restat, nisi ut sequamur vestigia eius, deducuntur ad perfectionem suam. Sed attendendum est, quod quaedam vestigia sequi est praesumptuosum, sicut vestigia sublimitatis potentiae; quaedam sequi est curiosum, sicut vestigia profunditatis sapientiae; quaedam est gloriosum, sicut vestigia infirmitatis assumptae. Unde non de omnibus habet praecedens sermo intelligi, sed de vestigiis passionis".

<sup>46</sup> *Dom. II p. Pasch. Sermo II* (IX, 299b-300b): "Sciendum igitur, quod vestigia passionis dominicae, quae Dominus impressit in via eundi ad patriam, sunt tria secundum triplicem consiliorum scientiam. Primum vestigium est abdicatio terrenitatis iuxta votum paupertatis voluntarie, a quo quisquis deviat non potest eum sequi perfecte. Secundum vestigium est mortificatio carnis iuxta votum continentiae, in quo necesse habemus Christum imitari, si volumus esse discipuli, secundum quod ipse dicitur Matthaei decimo: Qui non accipit crucem suam et sequitur me non est me dignus (Matth 10,38). Continentia enim et abstinentia est crux quaedam. Tertium vestigium est abnegatio voluntatis iuxta votum obedientiae, sine qua nemo potest Christum perfecte sequi, secundum quod dicitur Matthaei decimo sexto: Si quis vult post me venire, abneget semetipsum (Matth 16,24); id est propriam voluntatem. Nam ipse Christus fuit obediens Patri usque ad mortem (Phil 2,8)".

imitation and following of Christ. Imitation and following of Christ are the joyful celebration of Easter after the way of the Cross in the ecstatic experience of the Crucified. The disciple who follows Christ becomes His icon, His perfect image, and thus imitates Him.

#### (b) The Passion Narratives

The Gospel Commentaries dedicate significant space to the Passion narratives. The *Commentarius in Evangelium Lucae* distinguishes four preceding events and six concomitant events in the Passion<sup>47</sup>. The *Commentarius in Evangelium Ioannis* develops three preceding moments and four concomitant moments<sup>48</sup>, while the *Collationes in Evangelium Ioannis* dedicate four numbers to the Passion<sup>49</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 22-23 (VII, 540a-587b): "Pars III: De passionis medicamento agitur dupliciter: Primo de passione quoad quatuor antecedentia (Luc 22,1-46); secundo, de passione quoad sex concomitantia (Luc 22,47-23,56)".

The subdivisions comprise the following moments of the Passion:

##### 1. Preceding events:

- (a) The betrayal of Jesus (Luc 22,1-6)
- (b) The institution of the Eucharist (Luc 22,7-23)
- (c) The instructions to the disciples during the Last Supper (Luc 22,24-38)
- (d) The prayer of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemani (Luc 22,38-46)

##### 2. Concomitant events:

- (a) Jesus is captured (Luc 22,47-62)
- (b) Jesus is scorned (Luc 22,62-71)
- (c) Jesus is accused (Luc 23,1-12)
- (d) Jesus is condemned (Luc 23,13-31)
- (e) Jesus is crucified (Luc 23,32-43)
- (f) Jesus dies and is buried (Luc 23,44-56)

<sup>48</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 11, n. 46 - c. 19, n. 69 (VI, 406b-504b): "Tractatur de Verbi incarnati passione dupliciter: Primo agitur de illis quae ad passionem spectant ut praecambula, tripliciter (Ioan 11,47-17,26); secundo agitur de his quae passionem concomitantur, quadrupliciter (Ioan 18,1-19,42)".

The subdivisions comprise the following moments of the Passion:

##### 1. Preceding events:

- (a) The conspiracy against Jesus (Ioan 11,47-12,19)
- (b) Jesus predicts His Passion (Ioan 12,20-50)
- (c) Jesus confirms His disciples (Ioan 13-17)

##### 2. Concomitant events:

- (a) Jesus is captured (Ioan 18,1-12)
- (b) Jesus is condemned (Ioan 18,13-19,16)
- (c) Jesus is crucified (Ioan 19,17-37)
- (d) Jesus is buried (Ioan 19,37-42)

<sup>49</sup> *Coll. Ioan.*, 67-70 (VI, 615a-618b).

In these chapters Bonaventure presents some good examples of his use of the senses of Scripture, particularly in his use of allegory applied to the mystery of the Cross, and in his use of the moral sense, where he develops the theme of the virtues which Christ manifested during His Passion, and which thus become an example for our imitation.

Before proceeding to a rapid analysis of the narratives, one by one, it is important to note a text from the *Commentarius in Evangelium Lucae* which shows how Bonaventure sees in the Incarnate and Crucified Word the synthesis of all revelation contained in the Scriptures:

"Sicut enim arca in cubito consummata est (cfr. Gen 6,16), sic omnia verba Scripturae in hoc Verbo abbreviata, nato scilicet, passo, sepulto et resuscitato; propter quod Isaiae decimo: 'Consummationem et abbreviationem faciet Deus exercituum in medio omnis terrae' (Is 10,23)"<sup>50</sup>.

The expression which Bonaventure uses is *Verbum abbreviatum*. This expression was commonly used among medieval theologians. It could be translated by "shortened" or "concentrated Word", although no modern English term seems appropriate enough to translate it. The expression is an attempt to probe into the depths of the mystery of the Incarnation, where revelation reaches its apex or point of maximum concentration<sup>51</sup>. In Bonaventure's case it is fairly easy to see in it the equivalent of the Crucified Word, which has already been the object of our study<sup>52</sup>.

The Passion narrative in the *Commentarius in Evangelium Lucae* has to be read in the light of the texts we have already seen, regarding the theme of discipleship in the imitation and following of Christ. The triple prediction of Christ's Passion, plus the invitations to take up the Cross and follow Him, prepare the reader to meditate upon the actual sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. Luke shows how Christ faces death with courage and proceeds with determination

<sup>50</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 24, n. 33 (VII, 595b).

<sup>51</sup> Cfr. H. DE LUBAC, *Esqesi Medievale*, 325-354.

<sup>52</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 24, n. 58 (VII, 601b): "Haec autem profunda mysteria in Scriptura nullus intelligit nisi per Christum crucifixum, et suscitatum et genitum per Spiritum sanctum divulgatum"; *Comm. Luc.*, c. 18, n. 54 (VII, 468ab); c. 24, n. 59 (VII, 601b); *Brevil.*, Prol. 6 (V, 208a); see chapter 1, footnote 21, for latin text; *Hex.*, 3,11 (V, 345a); see chapter 1, footnote 22, for latin text.

towards Jerusalem<sup>53</sup>. The parable of the good shepherd is concerned with Christ's love for His sheep, even unto the point of accepting to die for them<sup>54</sup>. Christ's Passion is His baptism, His martyrdom for mankind's Redemption<sup>55</sup>. The Cross is a scandal, but it should be preached by Christ's disciples who must therefore accept the consequences of their decision to follow Christ's footsteps<sup>56</sup>.

Bonaventure notes the chronological background of Christ's Passion. The Jewish passover provides the opportune time for Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, since He becomes the realization of the *typus* contained in the immolated lamb<sup>57</sup>.

During the last supper Christ gives His disciples an excellent example of humility<sup>58</sup>. This theme is much more evident in the episode of the washing of the disciples' feet in the *Commentarius in Evangelium Ioannis*. What Bonaventure emphasizes here is the fact that Christ was exalted through the acceptance of the most profound humiliation. The disciples who are to follow Him must go through the same process if they are to participate in the eschatological banquet<sup>59</sup>. Christ's Passion, in fact, tears the veil of incredulity, and gives the grace of divine vision. Christ Crucified is the door leading to eternal glory<sup>60</sup>.

<sup>53</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 9, n. 95 (VII, 246b).

<sup>54</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 15, n. 11 (VII, 385a).

<sup>55</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 12, n. 71-72 (VII, 331ab).

<sup>56</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 21, n. 19 (VII, 527a): "Trahentes ad reges et praesides propter nomen meum (Luc 21,12), quasi iniquum sit praedicare Crucifixum".

<sup>57</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 22, n. 2 (VII, 504b): "Tempus enim paschale, in quo immolabatur agnus, erat opportunum ad occidendum Christum, cuius mors per illud pascha typicum designabatur".

<sup>58</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 22, n. 38 (VII, 551a): "Quantum ad exemplum humilitatem suadens adiungit: Nam quis maior est, qui recumbit, an qui ministrat? ... Ego autem in medio vestrum sum, sicut qui ministrat (Luc 22,27), ad dandum humilitatis exemplum; quod potissime fecit in coena illa ultima, in qua lavit pedes discipulorum ... Si ergo Christus, cum esset superior, humillime ministravit; multo fortius et omnes Christi discipuli".

<sup>59</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 22, n. 40 (VII, 551b): "Et quoniam qui particeps est in tribulatione debet esse particeps in honore, ideo addit: Et ego dispono vobis, sicut disposui mihi Pater meus regnum, ut edatis et bibatis super mensam meam in regno meo (Ioan 22,29) ... Patet dispositio: Filio, quod veniret ad exaltationem per humiliationem ... Sic et Filius disponit nobis sub eodem foro et quantum ad viam et quantum ad patriam"; Cfr. *Comm. Luc.*, c. 22, n. 82 (VII, 564b).

<sup>60</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 22, n. 24 (VII, 545b-546a).

The attitude of faith of the disciple in front of Christ who bears the Cross is one of compassion. The women of Jerusalem weep, but the true compassion consists in an inner weeping of affection at the reality of Christ's profound piety towards every human person, which is paid by ingratitude<sup>61</sup>. Christ is the "green wood" (Luke 23,31) which cannot be destroyed, because it is the tree of life, producing fruits of virtue<sup>62</sup>.

Allegory plays a significant role in Bonaventure's *Commentarius in Evangelium Lucae*. The two criminals who are crucified on both sides of Christ's Cross stand for the Jews and the gentiles who are reconciled and saved in Christ's blood<sup>63</sup>. Or else, they stand for our two enemies, namely, the flesh and the world. These must be crucified together with our spirit, so that we may have life in Christ<sup>64</sup>. The moral application to these images results in an interesting array of virtues which adorn the Cross<sup>65</sup>.

Numbers also have a symbolic significance in the Passion account. Jesus was crucified in the sixth hour, in the sixth age and in the sixth day. He was crucified for humanity, created on the sixth day<sup>66</sup>.

<sup>61</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 23, n. 32–33 (VII, 573b–574a).

<sup>62</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 23, n. 36 (VII, 574b); Cfr. *Hex.*, 18, *per totam* (V, 414a–419b).

<sup>63</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 23, n. 38 (VII, 575a).

<sup>64</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 23, n. 40 (VII, 576b): "Crucifigenda est caro sicut dexter latro... mundus ut latro sinister... Et tunc spiritus in medio crucifigitur cum Christo, ut dicat cum Apostolo ad Galatas secundo: 'Christo confixus sum cruci. Vivo autem, iam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus' (Gal 2,19)".

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*: "Est autem crux carnis rigor disciplinae, cuius quatuor sunt brachia, scilicet vigilia, abstinencia, asperitas vestium et disciplina verberum. — Crux autem, qua mundus crucifigitur, est paupertas spiritus, cuius quatuor sunt brachia, scilicet contemptus gloriae, pecuniae, patriae et parentiae. Crux spiritus est fervor devotionis, cuius etiam quatuor sunt brachia, scilicet spes et amor, timor et dolor spes sursum, timor deorsum, amor a dextris et dolor a sinistris". *Comm. Luc.*, c. 23, n. 45 (VII, 578b–579a): "(Christus) patientiam magis exhibet, humilitatem commendat, obedientiam implet, perficit caritatem. His nempe virtutum gemmis quatuor cornua crucis adornantur: est supereminens caritas, a dextris obedientia, patientia a sinistris, radix virtutum humilitas in profundo; his ditavit tropaeum crucis consummatio dominicae passionis"; *De S. Andrea Ap. Sermo I* (IX, 466a): "Quia igitur crux est arbor vivificantis iustitiae, habet quatuor virtutes... quae sunt: humilitas, paupertas, austeritas et benignitas. Profundissimam humilitatem habuit crux, quae (figuratur) in stipte; rigidissimam austeritatem, in transverso vel lato crucis, in quo fuit totaliter distentus, ut omnia ossa dinumerabilia (essent); altissimam paupertatem, quae in ligno erecto; et benignitatem misericordiae, ex omni parte".

<sup>66</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 23, n. 54 (VII, 581a): "In hac sexta hora et sexta aetate et sexta feria crucifixus est Iesus pro homine, qui fuit sexta die formatus".

On the Cross Christ becomes the model of our instruction. He prays for His enemies, and thus reveals His messianic ministry of Mediator who intercedes for the salvation of all<sup>67</sup>.

Christ's death on the Cross is a proof of His divinity. When Christ dies the entire creation suffers, and its harmony is disturbed by cataclysmic convulsions, in order to show that He was Lord of creation. Even the veil of the temple is torn right down the middle, to show Christ as the synthesis of the law and the prophets<sup>68</sup>.

Christ dies praying and crying out in a loud voice. This is a proof of His humanity, expressed in the terrible anguish of suffering and death. But it is also proof of His divinity, since He died with the Father's name on His lips<sup>69</sup>.

Finally, Christ's burial has deep symbolic significance. Christ was buried after the sixth day in order to enter into the repose of the seventh day, which is, at the same time, the point of arrival of eternal glory in the day which knows no end<sup>70</sup>.

The *Commentarius in Evangelium Ioannis* is more concerned with the allegorical nuances of the Cross. In fact, the theme of the Cross is present throughout John's Gospel. Bonaventure is aware of this, to the point of dedicating whole sections of his Commentary to the development of this theme. We have already noted the example of the parable of the good shepherd who lays down his life for his

<sup>67</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 23, n. 41 (VII, 576b–577a): "Quantum ad benignitatem Crucifixi subiungit: Iesus autem dicebat: Pater, dimitte eis, quia nesciunt, quid faciunt (Luc 23,34)... Oratio autem huiusmodi fuit in remedium, quia etiam suis crucifixoribus profuit passio per orationem suam... Unde etiam in hoc apparuit, quod fuit pontifex pius et misericors, offerendo se et interpellando pro populi salute".

<sup>68</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 23, n. 54–55 (VII, 581ab).

<sup>69</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 23, n. 56 (VII, 582a): "Et haec dicens expiravit (Luc 23,46). Ex quo apparet, quod expiravit simul clamando et orando, ut ostenderet, quod ipse est verus pontifex noster... Ideo autem simul clamans et lacrymas expiravit, ut in lacrymis intelligatur vera Christi passio et humanitas; in clamore vero Divinitas, quia, cum nullus possit clamare pro naturam, nisi qui habet sanguinem sufficientem in corde et spiritum ad respirationem, impossibile est, quod per naturam quis expiraret et clamet. Et ideo ostendit in clamore mortis se omnipotentem".

<sup>70</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 23, n. 66 (VII, 585a): "Quantum ad opportunitatem temporis dicit: Et dies erat parasceves, et Sabbatum illucescebat (Luc 23,54). Dies parasceves est dies veneris, qui ideo dicitur parasceve, quod interpretatur praeparatio, quia in ea praeparabantur quae necessaria erant ad Sabbatum; et ita erat sexta feria, in qua Dominus passus fuit in media die, sed sepultus fuit in sero, hoc est in vespera Sabbati, quia, sicut sextus dies conveniebat Christi morti et crucifixioni, sic septimus conveniebat sepulturae et Christi quieti".

sheep in John 10,1–18, within the context of the topic of imitation and following of Christ. Here we shall go through those texts which are directly concerned with the significance of the Cross. We shall deal first with those texts which precede the Passion narrative proper, in order to see the importance which the Cross assumes in Bonaventure's Johannine Commentary.

Three times John speaks about Jesus being glorified through the Cross<sup>71</sup>. Bonaventure underlines all three moments. In the figure of the bronze serpent on the standard of Numbers 21,9, Bonaventure is in perfect agreement with the tradition of the Fathers in seeing the symbol of the Crucified Christ who heals all those who look upon Him with faith<sup>72</sup>. Christ is lifted up on the Cross<sup>73</sup> in order to draw all mankind to Himself through faith and love<sup>74</sup>. God is glorified in the supreme humiliation of His Crucified Son<sup>75</sup>.

John the Baptist is witness to Christ's glory on the Cross by becoming a sign of absolute nothingness in front of Christ's greatness, and accepting martyrdom which heralds Christ's own martyrdom when He is lifted up<sup>76</sup>.

A typical Johannine theme is that of the hour of Jesus. The hour which is most important is that of Christ's Crucifixion, but

<sup>71</sup> Ioan 3,14–15; 8,28; 12,32.

<sup>72</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 3, n. 24–25 (VI, 282ab): "*Et sicut Moyses exaltavit serpentem in deserto* (Ioan 3,14). Tangitur quomodo Filius Dei saluat, quoniam per passionem ... Numerorum vigesimo primo: 'Fecit Moyses serpentem aeneum et posuit illum pro signo, quem percussi aspicientes sanabantur' (Num 21,9). *Ita exaltari oportet Filium hominis*, scilicet in crucis patibulo, ut omnes in eum aspicientes per fidem sanentur ... Optime describitur passionem in relatione ad figuram, ut fiat credibilior; et optime praecessit figura, quia, sicut ibi non sanabantur per serpentem nisi aspicientes, sic nec per Christum nisi in eum credentes".

<sup>73</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 8, n. 38 (VI, 361b).

<sup>74</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 12, n. 46 (VI, 420a): "*Et ego, si exaltatus fuero a terra, per passionem crucis; omnia traham ad me ipsum* (Ioan 12,32) per fidem et dilectionem"; Cfr. *Coll. Ioan.*, 28,5 (VI, 567b).

<sup>75</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 13, n. 45 (VI, 433ab): "*Et si Deus clarificatus est in illo* (Ioan 13,32), in passione per multam virtutis manifestationem; quia mors sua et passio valde fuit in gloriam Dei".

<sup>76</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 3, n. 53 (VI, 287b): "*Illum oportet crescere, me autem minui* (Ioan 3,30). Hoc optimum est signum, cum quis gaudet de alterius exaltatione cum sua depressione. *Illum oportet crescere*, in morte, quia exaltatus in cruce; *me autem minui*, in amputato capite".

Bonaventure lists a whole series of "hours" which precede and follow the Passion, namely, the Incarnation, Birth, Circumcision, Revelation to the gentiles, Offering in the temple, Baptism, Temptation, Passion, Descent into the underworld, Repose in the sepulchre, Resurrection and Ascension<sup>77</sup>.

The Cross has the power of judging the world and its prince, the devil. Christ realizes His victory exactly at the moment in which He seems to be at His weakest. In the extreme humiliation of the Cross, the devil is confused and loses all domain in the world<sup>78</sup>.

The last supper discourse forms part and parcel of the Passion narrative. Bonaventure considers it under three headings, namely, the confirmation of the disciples' faith through Christ's example of humility, the instructions and assuring words by which Christ prepares His disciples for the Passion, and the prayer of Christ to the Father which closes the last supper pericopes<sup>79</sup>.

The washing of the disciples' feet in John 13,1–20 is naturally an object of particular attention by Bonaventure<sup>80</sup>. As usual, the Seraphic Doctor sets the episode in its chronological background. Jesus begins His supreme act of love before the Jewish passover, in order to denote His departure from this world to the Father<sup>81</sup>.

Christ takes off His outer garment and, with a supreme act of humble service, washes the disciples' feet. The Lord of majesty assumes the office of a slave<sup>82</sup>. Jesus becomes a minor among the

<sup>77</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 4, n. 82 (VI, 301b–302b).

<sup>78</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 12, n. 45 (VI, 420a): "*Nunc iudicium est mundi*, scilicet in passione; *nunc princeps huius mundi elicitur foras* (Ioan 12,31), scilicet qui creditur esse princeps, quia a multis gentibus adorabatur; postus est daemon pessimus reputatus ... Et ipse (Christus) vicit mundum cum suo principe; unde infra decimo sexto: 'Confidite, ego vici mundum' (Ioan 16,33). Et modum eliciendi principem dicit esse per passionem"; Cfr. *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 16, n. 18 (VI, 458b–459a).

<sup>79</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 13, n. 1 (VI, 424a).

<sup>80</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 13, n. 1–27 (VI, 424a–429b).

<sup>81</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 13, n. 2 (VI, 425a): "*Temporis opportunitas ostenditur in hoc, quod iam tempus mortis instabat, propter quod specialia signa dilectionis ostendere debebat. Propterea dicit: Ante diem festum paschae* (Ioan 13,1), id est ... quando agnus immolabatur. *Sciens Jesus, quia venit hora eius, ut transeat ex hoc mundo ad Patrem*. Pascha transitus est; et ideo Dominus mori voluit in paschate, quia suum mori transire fuit. Iste transitus significatus est per transitum maris rubri".

<sup>82</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 13, n. 5–6 (VI, 425b): "*Et ponit vestimenta sua* (Ioan 13,4). Tangitur hic secundum, scilicet *Christi humilias*, quia deponit vestimenta, ut sit expeditus sicut minister ... Deinde misti aquam in pelvim et coepit lavare pedes discipulorum et

disciples, even though He was the Lord and Master. Minority is the distinctive mark of humility<sup>81</sup>.

Christ prepares His disciples for the Passion by giving them also an example of obedience. He manifested His love for the Father by accepting to die<sup>84</sup>. His love knew no bounds, because there is no greater act of charity than that of offering one's life for one's friends<sup>85</sup>.

The relationship of Father and Son is a recurrent theme in John's Gospel. In the Incarnation the Son "comes down" from the Father. Through the sacrifice of the Cross Christ leaves the world and returns to the Father. Bonaventure's theology is very much aware of this process of *egressus* and *reditus*. "The entire structure of Bonaventure's metaphysical vision is expressed in the movement of emanation, of exemplarity, and of consummation; and the mystery of Christ is intimately related to the whole"<sup>86</sup>. That is why Bonaventure explains Christ's words to the disciples in John 16,28 under the categories of emanation and reduction<sup>87</sup>.

Another problem regarding Christ's filial relationship with the Father is that of the role which the Father assumes during the Passion. Does the Father abandon Christ on the Cross? Bonaventure emphasizes the fact that Christ's anguish in death was

*extergere lineo, quo eras praecinctus* (Ioan 13,5). Hoc est officium ministri; tale officium Dominus maiestatis assumpsit<sup>81</sup>.

<sup>81</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 13, n. 19 (VI, 427b-428a): "Exemplum dedi vobis, ut quemadmodum ego feci vobis, ita et vos faciatis (Ioan 13,15); Matthaei undecimo: 'Discite a me, quia mitis sum et humilis corde' (Matth 11,29). Et quod in operibus humilitatis sit imitandus, ostendit tali ratione: quia non est servus maior domino suo: ergo si dominus non dedignatur humiliari, multo minus servus"; *Comm. Luc.*, c. 7, n. 53 (VII, 179b): "Minor in hoc regno dicitur humilior; hic autem est Christus".

<sup>84</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 14, n. 45 (VI, 445a): "Sed ut cognoscat mundus, quia diligo Patrem, ideo morior ad eius imperium; unde: Sicut mandatum dedit mihi Pater, sic facio (Ioan 14,31) ... Hoc mandatum dedit et Deus Pater, non quia meruisset ipse, sed pro nostra salute"; *Cfr. Comm. Ioan.*, c. 14, n. 49, q. 4 (VI, 446b).

<sup>85</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 15, n. 20 (VI, 450b): "Maiorem, inquit, hac dilectionem nemo habet, quam ut animam suam ponat quis pro amicis suis (Ioan 15,13); quasi dicat: nihil plus potest facere quam vitam dare, quae omnibus carior est ... Unde notandum, quod magna est dilectio, qua mater diligit filium; super hanc dilexit nos Christus ... - Maior, animae ad corpus; et super hanc dilexit nos".

<sup>86</sup> Z. HAYES, *The Hidden Center*, 12.

<sup>87</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 16, n. 42 (VI, 465a): "Exivi a Patre et veni in mundum (Ioan 16,28): exivi, per aeternam generationem, veni, per incarnationem ... Iterum relinquo mundum, per passionem, et vado ad Patrem, per gloriosam resurrectionem".

due to His humanity, and did not touch the immeasurable harmony of the unity with the Father in His divinity<sup>88</sup>.

The Crucifixion is described in allegorical language. Christ is crucified outside the city walls<sup>89</sup> between two criminals in order to show His messianic role as Mediator<sup>90</sup>. Christ's death is the maximum synthesis of revelation<sup>91</sup>.

The typical Johannine detail of the piercing of Jesus' side on the Cross lends itself to diverse symbolic connotations: from Jesus' side the Church is born as Eve was created of Adam's ribs, and the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist flow as water and blood trickle down from Jesus' wound. Bonaventure follows these symbolic interpretations in his Johannine Commentary<sup>92</sup>.

The last aspect of John's presentation of the Passion regards the invitation to follow and imitate the suffering Christ, directed to Peter in John 21,15-19<sup>93</sup>. Here again, the theme of discipleship

<sup>88</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 16, n. 46 (VI, 465b): "Haec solitudo non erat per defectum divini auxilii, sed humani; ideo dicit: Sed non sum solus, quia Pater mecum est (Ioan 8,29)". The same idea is already expressed in *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 8, n. 39 (VI, 362a): "Et qui misit me mecum est, propter essentiae unitatem, in qua non est divisio ... Et non reliquit me solum, per voluntatem discordantem; quia quae placita sunt ei facio semper (Ioan 8,29). Unde Filius non potest relinqui a Patre, quia non potest ei nec discordare nec displicere".

<sup>89</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 19, n. 28 (VI, 495b): "Susceperunt autem Iesum ... duxerunt, tanquam maleficum, scilicet extra castra; propter quod ad Hebraeos ultimo: 'Exeamus ad eum extra castra, improperium' crucis 'eius portantes' (Hebr 13,13)"; *Cfr. Comm. Luc.*, c. 13, n. 69 (VII, 355b); c. 23, n. 39 (VII, 576a).

<sup>90</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 19, n. 30 (VI, 496a): "Et cum eo alios duos, hinc et hinc, medium autem Iesum (Ioan 19,18). Notatur hic vilitas a societate, quia isti duo erant latrones ... Ideo autem in medietate, ut significetur, quoniam mediator, unde in nativitate in medio animalium ... et in passione in medio latronum".

<sup>91</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 19, n. 48 (VI, 500a): "Cum ergo accepisset Iesus acetum, dixit: Consummatum est (Ioan 19,30), scilicet quod scriptum erat de me ante spiritus emissionem ... Et inclinatum capite, tradidit spiritum. Posita consummatione in Scripturae testimonio, hic ponit consummationem in facto; et haec consummatio fuit in morte, quia finis passionum praesentium mors est".

<sup>92</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 19, n. 60, q. 5 (VI, 502a): "Nulla facta sunt circa eum, nisi quae Deus congrua ratione permisit. Huius autem redditur ratio allegorica et literalis: allegorica, quia, sicut de latere Adae dormientis formata est Eva, ita de latere Christi dormientis in cruce formata est Ecclesia ... - Literalis vero ratio est, quia Dominus Christus, etsi ostenderet humanitatem, tamen volebat simul Divinitatis ostendere veritatem. Unde hoc ostendit ante passionem in sui comprehensione, hoc in passione in tenebris, hoc post mortem ostendit in effluatione aquae et sanguinis".

<sup>93</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 21, n. 41 (VI, 526b): "Postquam facta est Petri in dilectione confirmatio, fit hic eius ad dilectionis consummationem invitatio. Consummatio autem



comes to the forefront. The disciple must imitate the Master by accepting a personal Passion out of a free act of the will<sup>94</sup>.

A last word about the significance of the Cross in the *Collationes in Evangelium Ioannis*: the allegorical sense predominates in this work. It will suffice to mention some examples. The Cross is the synthesis of joy and sorrow, because although compassion moves one's affection to sorrow, the joy of Redemption lifts up one's heart to love the Cross<sup>95</sup>. The parable of the mustard seed is not to be found in John's Gospel. However Bonaventure inserts Matthew's version in order to draw the allegorical connotations of John 3,30: "Illud oportet crescere, me autem minui". Christ was "small" during His Passion but He grew as a result of His goodness to become a large tree of life which gives shelter to all those who come under its protection, that is, under the arms of the Cross<sup>96</sup>. The attitude of the disciples in front of Christ's death on the Cross should be one of love, witness through preaching and imitation<sup>97</sup>.

The Passion narratives are objects of four *collationes*, having as their themes Jesus' betrayal, His derision, flagellation and Crucifixion. In the first three Bonaventure follows a fixed pattern. He considers each theme according to four stages, namely, as a mirror of contemplation, a remedy for liberation, an example for imitation and a document for our instruction.

Regarding the Crucifixion Bonaventure proposes a triple schema. The Crucifixion is an example for us to bear up patiently with suffering, to protect ourselves from concupiscence and to avoid

dilectionis est, ut homo ponat animam suam pro Christo; ideo fit hic ad passionem imitandam invitatio".

<sup>94</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 21, n. 43 (VI, 527a): "Quia passio bona non est, nisi sit voluntaria; ideo hortatur Petrum pati voluntarie; et propterea dicit: *Et cum hoc dixisset, dicit ei, id est Petro: Sequere me* (Ioan 21,19), ad passionem crucis voluntarie veni".

<sup>95</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, 9,5 (VI, 547b): "Placitum compassionis cum laetitia redemptionis ... inveniuntur in cruce Christi".

<sup>96</sup> *Coll. Ioan.*, 13,3 (VI, 553a): "Crevit in passione quantum ad ostensionem bonitatis ... 'Simile est regnum caelorum' id est Christus, 'grano sinapis, quod accipiens homo', scilicet Deus Pater, 'seminavit in agro suo', id est in mundo, 'quod minimum quidem est omnibus seminibus', reputatione; talis enim fuit Christus in passione; 'cum autem creverit' per ostensionem bonitatis suae, 'maius est omnibus oleribus', id est plantulis spiritualibus, 'et fit arbor, ita ut volucres caeli', id est animae spirituales, 'veniant et habitent in ramis eius', id est in brachiis crucis eius (cfr Math 13,31-32)".

<sup>97</sup> *Coll. Ioan.*, c. 44,4 (VI, 592a): "Mors Christi est a nobis amanda, praedicanda et imitanda".

sin<sup>98</sup>. This *collatio* closes with an interesting array of seven virtues which go against the seven capital sins<sup>99</sup>.

In his Gospel Commentaries on Luke and John, Bonaventure accentuates the anthropological significance of the *experientia crucis*. If Christ humbled Himself unto death on the Cross, He did so also for the sake of our imitation. The Cross is a reality which needs to be lived. It is the way which Christ traced for His followers. It is the distinctive mark of true discipleship.

Bonaventure portrays this particular image of Christ in perfect agreement with the Gospel. He deliberately wants to underline the anthropological dimension of the Christ-mystery, in order to propose the validity of the Gospel life, which lies at the very roots of the Franciscan experience. For this reason the Seraphic Doctor centres the religious life in the Cross, and particularly in those foundational virtues which Christ embraced upon the Cross.

The Passion narratives which we have just analysed are not just meditations or exegetical expositions of the sacred text. The originality with Bonaventure is that he presents them also as a programme of life for Christ's disciples. The Passion is not just the event of Redemption, but a revelation of a way of life which the Son of God embraced and which necessarily calls for a participation.

In his theological development of the theme of imitation and following of the suffering Christ during His Passion, Bonaventure is backed by a personal choice of life which he defends staunchly and with courage. It is the life of the followers of the poor beggar of Assisi, who lived in the embrace of the Crucified Lord.

In the remaining sections of this chapter we intend to analyse those texts which speak about the relevance of the Gospel life, noting not only Bonaventure's expertise in defending this way of life, but also his genuine love for what it stands for, rooted as it is in the loving example of Christ Crucified.

<sup>98</sup> *Coll. Ioan.*, 70 (VI, 617b-618b).

<sup>99</sup> *Coll. Ioan.*, 70,3 (VI, 618ab): "Nota ergo contra *superbiam* capitis inclinationem ... ecce, exemplum *humilitatis*. Contra *iram*, pro inimicis orationem ... ecce, exemplum *benignitatis*. Contra *invidiam*, lateris apertionem ... ecce, exemplum *caritatis*. Contra *avaritiam*, manuum perforationem ... ecce, exemplum *largitatis*. Contra *accidiam*, devotam spiritus oblationem ... ecce, exemplum *devotionis*. Contra *gulam* fellis potationem ... ecce, exemplum *ieiunii*. Contra *luxuriam*, sanguinis effusionem; ecce, exemplum *mortificationis carnis*".

II. THE "QUAESTIONES DISPUTATAE DE PERFECTIOE EVANGELICA"  
AND FOUNDATIONAL VIRTUES IN DISCIPLESHIP

The *Quaestiones Disputatae de Perfectioe Evangelica*<sup>100</sup> are the last in the three sets of disputed questions which Bonaventure composed in his academic years at the University of Paris. It is important to refer to their historical background if we are to have a clear idea of their contents, because their composition is conditioned by the turn of events at the Paris University in the years 1255–1256<sup>101</sup>.

The poverty issue in the mendicant life was being attacked by the secular masters of the University, on the pretext that it was contrary to the Gospel. One of the masters, William of St. Amour, had published a work entitled *Liber de Antichristo* in 1254 followed by the *Tractatus de periculis novissimorum temporum* in 1256. These works tried to undermine the very foundations of Gospel perfection, by stating that absolute poverty was an imperfection and went against the Gospel. The attack was particularly aimed at the mendicant life of the Franciscans and Dominicans. Bonaventure responded to these attacks in the same year 1256 with his set of disputed questions on poverty, which were later to be enriched by the addition of the questions on humility, chastity and obedience to form the *Quaestiones Disputatae de Perfectioe Evangelica*.

This work is therefore divided into four sections, concerning these basic virtues of the Gospel life. The second question aims at responding to William of St. Amour's attacks, by considering poverty as a renunciation of temporal goods, as a choice of a mendicant life, and as a freedom from manual work for the ministry of apostolic preaching. In these questions, as well as in those regarding the other foundational virtues, Bonaventure develops a theology of the religious life centred upon the supreme exemplar of Gospel perfection, who is Christ, humble, poor, chaste and obedient unto death on the Cross. Our aim in this section is that of bringing to the forefront the typical characteristics of these

<sup>100</sup> *Q. de perf. ev.* (V, 117–198).

<sup>101</sup> Cfr. J.G. BOUGEROL, *Introduction*, 169–173; I. BRADY, *La Teologia della Imitazione*, in IB 3 (1967) 101–102; B. DISTELBINK, *Bonaventurae Scripta*, 11–12; D.L. DOUIE, *St. Bonaventure's part in the conflict between Seculars and Mendicants at Paris*, in *S. Bonaventura 1274–1974*, Vol. 2, 585–600.

values of discipleship, seen against the background of the Cross which pervades the life of Christ's followers.

It is essential to underline the notion of foundational virtues. In other words, what Bonaventure is dealing with are the characteristic notes which make up the essential elements of discipleship. These are the moral virtues outlined in the *Quaestiones Disputatae de Perfectioe Evangelica*. They are the virtues which Christ embraced most dearly during His earthly life, as well as those which shine with greater clarity on the Cross.

Bonaventure sees virtue as the uprightness of reason leading towards an aim<sup>102</sup> or, with Saint Augustine, as a quality of goodness of the soul, leading to a righteous life<sup>103</sup>. Virtue is always concerned with true goodness<sup>104</sup>. It is the beginning of a process whereby the soul is rendered righteous, it is helped in its spiritual progress through the gifts of the Spirit, and arrives at the possession of eternal beatitude<sup>105</sup>.

In the significant image of the human person standing upright which Bonaventure gives in the prologue to the *Commentarius in Secundum Librum Sententiarum*, he explains how uprightness consists in the agreement of the intellect with eternal truth, of the will with the highest good, and of virtue with the highest power of operation who is God Himself<sup>106</sup>.

Virtues can be theological and cardinal<sup>107</sup>. Moral virtues are the

<sup>102</sup> *II Sent.*, d. 23, a. 2, q. 1, resp. (III, 488b): "Proprie namque dicitur virtus recta ratio perducens in finem; et hoc modo virtus est principium operis meritorii et dicitur solummodo de habitu gratia informato, sine quo non contingit pervenire ad finem gloriae".

<sup>103</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 26, a. 1, q. 1, resp. (III, 557a): "Habitus virtutum dirigunt animam in actibus, in quibus consistit rectitudo vitae, iuxta illud quod dicitur, quod virtus est bona qualitas mentis, qua recte vivitur". The quotation is from St. Augustine, *De Libero Arbitrio* II, c. 19, n. 50, in CCL 29 (1970) 271.

<sup>104</sup> *Q. de perf. ev.*, q. 1, resp. ad 10 (V, 124a): "Virtus consistit circa verum bonum".

<sup>105</sup> *Brevil.*, 5.4 (V, 256b): "Gratia gratum faciens ramificatur in habitus virtutum, quorum est animam rectificare; in habitus donorum, quorum est animam expedire; et in habitus beatitudinum, quorum est animam perficere".

<sup>106</sup> *II Sent.*, Prooemium (II, 4a): "Tunc enim homo rectus est, quando intelligentia adaequatur summae veritati in cognoscendo, voluntas conformatur summae bonitati in diligendo, et virtus continuatur summae potestati in operando. Hoc autem est, quando homo ad Deum convertitur ex se toto".

<sup>107</sup> Cfr. *LexBon*, 134–136.

ones which characterize the life of the disciple. However, they are essentially founded upon the cardinal virtues<sup>108</sup>.

(a) Humility

The initial question which Bonaventure poses regards the virtue of humility. It is interesting to note that Bonaventure places humility as the basis of perfection in practically all of his writings, especially the exegetical and ascetical-mystical works.

According to Brady, this question concerning humility shows striking parallels with the second part of the fifth sermon on Saint Francis<sup>109</sup>, which Bonaventure delivered at Paris in 1255, barely a year before the composed his *Quaestiones Disputatae de Perfectione Evangelica*<sup>110</sup>.

Humility is the virtue which Christ Crucified exercised to the maximum degree. In fact Christ Crucified is the exemplar of perfect virtue in His profound self-abjection<sup>111</sup>. Bonaventure builds his theology of the moral virtues of the disciples upon the basis of exemplarity. There is no virtue which is not to be found in the most perfect degree in Christ. Therefore, every effort to imitate Christ must look at this supreme exemplar of perfection.

In order to live the life of the Gospel perfection, one has to start from its foundation, namely, from humility. Bonaventure describes how humility is the door which opens the way to perfection<sup>112</sup>.

<sup>108</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 33, a.u., q. 4, resp. ad 4 (III, 721b).

<sup>109</sup> *Sermo V de SPN Francisco* (IX, 590b–597b). For the dating of this sermon, cfr. I. BRADY, *St. Bonaventure's Sermons on St. Francis*, in *FranzStud* 58 (1976) 129–141. The sermons on St. Francis have been translated by E. DOYLE, *The Disciple and the Master. St. Bonaventure's Sermons on St. Francis of Assisi*, Chicago 1983.

<sup>110</sup> Cfr. I. BRADY, *La Teologia della Imitazione*, in IB 3 (1967) 102; IDEM, in *S. Bonaventura Opera Theologica Selecta*, Editio minor, Tomus 5, *Tria Opuscula. Sermones Theologici*, Grottaferrata (Roma) 1964, 23–25.

<sup>111</sup> *Q. de perf. ev.*, q. 1, fund. 21 (V, 119a): "Quanto quis ad exemplar virtutum magis configuratur, tanto est perfectior; sed Christus in cruce exemplar est virtutis perfectae; ubi fuit in abiectione summa: ergo tanto quisque perfectior est, quanto magis ad illam accedit".

<sup>112</sup> *Q. de perf. ev.*, q. 1, resp. (V, 120b): "Summa totius christianae perfectionis in humilitate consistit, cuius actus est exterior et interior vilificatio sui. Totius enim christianae perfectionis summa versatur circa tria, scilicet circa gratiam, iustitiam et sapientiam, secundum quae tria dicitur Christus esse via, veritas et vita (Ioan 14,6). Nam donum gratiae viam praebet ad veritatem iustitiae, in qua consistit exercitium actionis; veritas iustitiae perducit ad gustum sapientiae, in qua consistit solatium contemplationis".

Grace is given to those who are truly humble, namely, to those who realize how unworthy they are in front of God's condescension which renders one pleasing to God through the transforming action of grace. Since humility is the dwelling place of grace in our hearts, it is only through humility that we can arrive at the heights of Gospel perfection<sup>113</sup>.

The virtue of humility is not only an interior attitude, but it should also be manifested outwardly by self-denial. There are three grades in which Christians can live in humility, either according to the law of divine precept, or according to divine complaisance, or according to divine counsel, which is the highest grade of perfection<sup>114</sup>.

God chose the highest form of humility in order to be an exemplar of the highest form of perfection. His most profound humility was the assumption of the form of a slave through the Incarnation, and was made especially manifest on the Cross<sup>115</sup>. It is the way of perfection that every disciple is called to follow.

(b) Poverty

With the virtue of poverty we enter into the heart of the *Quaestiones Disputatae de Perfectione Evangelica*. Bonaventure develops this problem in two articles, concerning poverty as a renunciation of all property, and as a mendicant way of life. A third section concerning manual work for religious is of limited interest to our topic, even though it was a theme of heated disputes during the poverty controversy.

As in the case of humility, Bonaventure presents Christ as the

<sup>113</sup> *Q. de perf. ev.*, q. 1, resp. (V, 121b): "Quia ergo humilitas est habitaculum gratiae, hinc est, quod in ipsa consistit summa totius perfectionis evangelicae".

<sup>114</sup> *Q. de perf. ev.*, q. 1, resp. (V, 122a): "Originaliter enim humiliatio exterior procedere debet ab humilitate interiori secundum dictamen et regulam muneris divini; et hoc potest fieri secundum legem divini praecepti, vel divini complaciti, vel divini consilii. Praeceptum universaliter omnes respicit; complacitum respicit eos quibus divina voluntas specialiter inspiratur; consilium vero eos qui ad culmen perfectionis ascendunt".

<sup>115</sup> *Q. de perf. ev.*, q. 1, resp. ad 11 et 12 (V, 124b): "Ut tamen homo propter defectum exemplaris non negligeret humiliari, placuit Deo assumere formam servi (Phil 2,7) et in illa humiliari, contemni et vilificari, ut ceteri ex tanto exemplari inflammarentur ad vilificationem sui perfectam".

exemplar of highest poverty. Quoting Paul's text in 2 Corinthians 8,9, as well as the famous text of 1 Peter 2,21, Bonaventure immediately touches upon the very core of the poverty issue. Christ was the first among the poor. He lacked everything by giving a radical example of poverty when He died naked on the Cross, in order to become a model for our imitation<sup>116</sup>. Also, the life of every human person is marked with the seal of poverty. We are born naked and die renouncing to all our earthly possessions. In these words it is not difficult to see Bonaventure's insistence upon extreme poverty in Christ's life, from His birth to His death on the Cross<sup>117</sup>. Fallen mankind is born naked and dies naked<sup>118</sup>. That is why Christ assumed voluntary poverty in order to heal mankind from greed, which is the root of evil.

Bonaventure shows how it is Christian perfection to renounce all personal possessions for Christ's sake. The Lord Himself chose this way of life in order to give us an example. Our own nature, Scripture and grace, are proofs of the high value of poverty against the evil of avarice and greed. That is why the voluntary choice of poverty is not valid but highly recommended in order to attain perfection in the imitation of the exemplar of poverty who is Christ Crucified<sup>119</sup>.

When treating of the question of mendicity, Bonaventure defends the basic motives for the legitimacy of this typical way of life introduced by the mendicant Orders. Begging could be the fruit

<sup>116</sup> *Q. de perf. ev.*, q. 2, a. 1, fund. 11 et 14 (V, 126a): "Scitis gratiam Domini nostri Iesu Christi, quoniam propter vos egenus factus est, cum esset dives, ut illius inopia vos divites essetis (2 Cor 8,9); ergo qui sic abrenuntiat, ut egeat, magis se Christo conformat... Christus maxime fuit imitabilis secundum statum, quem habuit in cruce, secundum illud primae Petri secundo: Christus passus est pro nobis, relinquens exemplum, ut sequamini vestigia eius (1 Petr 2,21); sed in cruce fuit omnino nudus".

<sup>117</sup> *Q. de perf. ev.*, q. 2, a. 1, fund. 32 (V, 128a): "Tanta via rector, quanto eius medium conformius est extremis: sed summa paupertas est tam in principio vitae quam in termino: ergo si in medio omnia abdicentur, via rectissima proceditur. Sed quanto via rector, tanto perfectior est: ergo via et vita pauperima est perfectissima".

<sup>118</sup> *Q. de perf. ev.*, q. 2, a. 1, resp. (V, 129a): "Homo vero lapsus nudus nascitur, nudus moritur".

<sup>119</sup> *Q. de perf. ev.*, q. 2, a. 1, resp. (V, 129b-130a): "Est igitur perfectionis christianae pro Christo nihil possidere in mundo, nec in communi nec in proprio. Ideo Dominus hoc expressissimi consulti; ideo exemplum in semetipso ostendit; ideo Spiritus sanctus in Sanctis hoc multipliciter persuasit. Nam huiusmodi arduissimam paupertatem, sicut ostensum est, persuadet natura, Scriptura et gratia; persuadet Christus Dominus instruendo, conversando, inspirando".

of necessity or even of laziness. But the begging of the mendicants is the result of the supererogation of justice due to the poor, in order to imitate Christ and to preach Christ. We should imitate Christ in His self-denial, in the love for the brethren and in His prayer to the Father<sup>120</sup>.

The imitation of Christ in the mendicant life is centred in the Cross, because those who are truly poor, become like Christ Crucified in their self-denial, in their disinterested love for the brothers, and in their way of life which becomes a sacrifice of homage due to God.

In a forceful statement Bonaventure defends the mendicant life calling upon the approbation given to it by the Church's authority, as well as upon the examples of the saints. But in a solemn tone, Bonaventure calls upon our Christian faith, which is witness to the fact that Christ was poor and a mendicant, and that He was reduced to the maximum depths of poverty when He died naked on the Cross<sup>121</sup>.

### (c) Obedience

The virtue of obedience is the topic of the fourth question. Bonaventure considers it according to three ways, corresponding to three articles. He first asks whether it pertains to human nature that a person should be obedient to another person. Next he analyzes the

<sup>120</sup> *Q. de perf. ev.*, q. 2, a. 2, resp. (V, 140b): "Tertius autem modus mendicandi est ex supererogatione iustitiae; et hic est, cum quis mendicat pro Christo imitando, vel pro Christo evangelizando, vel utroque modo. — Pro Christo, inquam, imitando quantum ad contemptum sui, affectum proximi et cultum Dei. Nam in his tribus piissime debemus Christum imitari. Quod quidem facit qui voluntarie mendicat pro nomine Christi, ut se ipsum vilificet et humiliet, ut proximum suum aedificet et provocet ad pietatem, et ut vacet Deo libera mente, deposita omni saeculi sollicitudine".

<sup>121</sup> *Q. de perf. ev.*, q. 2, a. 2, resp. (V, 141b-142a): "Nam si quis impugnet et improbare velit omnem mendicandi modum in servis Christi, impugnet videbitur non tantum ordinem pauperum, verum etiam ipsum summum Pontificem, qui approbavit hunc vivendi modum; nec etiam tantum ipsum, verum etiam hunc magnum coetum Sanctorum, qui mendicaverunt, videlicet Franciscum, Dominicum, Alexium, Benedicum et ipsum cuneum Apostolorum et Prophetarum; nec non et ipsum Dominum Iesum Christum, quem Scriptura non veretur dicere pauperem et mendicum; cum maiora de ipso dicat et sentiat fides nostra, scilicet quod pro nobis non tantum pauper et mendicus fuit propter nostrum exemplum, sed etiam nudatus et vilificatus usque ad abiectionis genus extremum, ut exemplum daret perfecte contemnendi mundum".

significance of the vow of obedience in the religious life. Lastly he dedicates an article to the theme of obedience towards the Pope, since the problem was at the core of the poverty controversy, in which the Pope often had to intervene in favour of the mendicants.

For our specific topic we are interested in the theological connotations of the virtue of obedience. Bonaventure immediately gives a Christological basis for the exercise of obedience in the religious life. Christ Himself was so meek as to be obedient to every human person<sup>122</sup>.

The depths of Christ's love for us are manifest in His Incarnation. When He assumed human nature Christ not only restored us to our former dignity, but even gave His own Person for the sake of our salvation by becoming obedient to all humankind<sup>123</sup>. It was the power of radical obedience that rendered Christ's sacrifice on the Cross pleasing to the Father and efficacious for our Redemption.

On Christ's part obedience was a free act of the will. The obedience of Christ's disciples should reflect this inner attitude of joyful freedom. It is through obedience and meekness that Christ's disciples can arrive at the heights of evangelical perfection, and be regarded not as servants, but as sons of God<sup>124</sup>.

For Bonaventure, therefore, moral virtues are not just pious means of personal sanctification, as they have often been misinterpreted. What the Seraphic Doctor is interested in is their Christological basis. Nobody can deny that Christ was humble, poor and obedient. His whole life is a paradigm of these virtues which are grounded upon charity. The Cross reveals Christ's foundational virtues in such a way that they can become means by which every disciple can enter into the process of imitation of the Master. Bonaventure defends this free, voluntary and deliberate

<sup>122</sup> *Q. de perf. ev.*, q. 4, a. 2, fund. 10 (V, 185a): "Conformitas ad Christum est consona perfectioni evangelicae; sed Christus mera liberalitate subiecit se homini, Lucae secundo; Et erat subditus illis (Luc 2,51): ergo se ipsum alteri subiicere facit Christo conformem. Sed hoc maxime fit per obedientiae votum".

<sup>123</sup> *Q. de perf. ev.*, q. 4, a. 2, resp. (V, 186a): "Quoniam ergo Christus Dominus non tantum dedit nos nobis, sed etiam se dedit nobis; et propter nos non tantum se hominem fecit, sed etiam hominibus subdidit".

<sup>124</sup> *Dom. VIII p. Peni. Sermo I* (IX, 386a) and BOUGEROL, *Sermo 35*, 376: "O amabilis virtus mansuetudo obedientiae, quae humiles ad tantam nominis excellentiam sustollit, ut potius Dei amici quam famuli denominentur!"

choice of life. He knows that it is the life of the Gospel, the way to perfection.

The great merit of the Seraphic Doctor is that "he brought the ideals of Saint Francis into the intellectual life and cultivated there the virtues of poverty, humility, obedience and love"<sup>125</sup>. Against the slanderous attacks upon the Gospel life, Bonaventure showed himself to be a prudent but staunch defender of the life of the poor, modelled upon that of their Master who died poor on a Cross.

### III. THE "APOLOGIA PAUPERUM"

The poverty controversy did not end with Bonaventure's sections concerning poverty in the *Quaestiones Disputatae de Perfectione Evangelica*. Although William of St. Amour's treatise, *De periculis novissimorum temporum*, was condemned in October 1256, another secular master, Gerard of Abbeville, after a lapse of more than ten years, in the summer of 1269, published a treatise by the name *Contra adversarium perfectionis christianae*<sup>126</sup>, in which he attacked the view of the Franciscan scholar, Thomas of York, to whom is attributed a treatise called *Manus quae contra Omnipotentem tenditur*<sup>127</sup>. Bonaventure, who at the time was Minister General of the Franciscan Order, promptly responded to the attacks by his *Apologia Pauperum contra calumniatorem*, written during the autumn months of 1269<sup>128</sup>.

The *Apologia Pauperum*<sup>129</sup> is an attempt to defend the way of life of the mendicants against the attacks of their opponents. Bonaventure is not exactly interested in a polemic treatise, even though he cannot avoid a confrontation. He is rather concerned with providing the theological motives for the legitimacy of a life of evangelical poverty, expressed in renunciation and mendicity. His

<sup>125</sup> E. DOYLE, *The Disciple and the Master*, 2.

<sup>126</sup> *Tractatus Gerardi de Abbatisvilla "Contra adversarium perfectionis christianae"*, edited by S. CLASEN, in AFH 31 (1938) 284-329; 32 (1939) 89-200.

<sup>127</sup> Cfr. D.L. DOUIE, *St. Bonaventure's part in the conflict between Seculars and Mendicants at Paris*, in S. Bonaventura 1274-1974, Vol. 2, 600-612.

<sup>128</sup> Cfr. J.G. BOUGEROL, *Introduction*, 244; I. BRADY, *La Teologia della Imitazione*, in IB 3 (1967) 104-114; B. DISTELBRINK, *Bonaventurae Scripta*, 31-32.

<sup>129</sup> *Apol.* (VIII, 233-330).

effort is a splendid success. Bonaventure refutes the arguments of his opponent, one by one, in twelve chapters, by building a theology of poverty centred upon the Person of Jesus Christ, humble, poor and Crucified. The *Apologia Pauperum* depicts the image of a humble God, whose condescension towards mankind takes the form of a humble love, expressed in Jesus' radical option of poverty and nakedness unto death on the Cross. By appealing to the authority of Christ's own example, Bonaventure provides the framework which builds the life of the mendicants: charity, rooted in the Cross and assuming the contours of a direct participation in Christ's sufferings through the martyrdom of the flesh and the spirit. Grounded in love and built upon the strong edifice of Lady Poverty, the Franciscan experience becomes a realization of Gospel perfection for those who wish to follow Christ along the way of suffering and of the Cross<sup>130</sup>.

When dealing with the *Apologia Pauperum*, we shall not consider the various nuances of the poverty controversy, which have already been treated in specialized studies<sup>131</sup>. What is of interest to our topic is to find out the basic Christological motives which underline the poverty theme, especially in its relation to the reality of the Cross and to the virtue of charity in martyrdom.

Bonaventure's theology in the *Apologia Pauperum* is built upon the notion of condescension. "Not only is God a mystery of love, but even more, He is a mystery of humble love. The movement of God's love is not only a descent, but a condescension; for He takes the reality of humankind so seriously that He assumes human reality with its pain and misery to Himself. The infinitely rich becomes poor for our sake"<sup>132</sup>.

<sup>130</sup> Cfr. Z. HAYES, *The Hidden Center*, 128–151.

<sup>131</sup> Cfr. J.G. BOUGEROL, *Saint Bonaventure et la défense de la vie évangélique de 1252 au Concile de Lyon de 1274*, in *S. Bonaventura Franciscano*. XIV Convegno del Centro di Studi sulla Spiritualità Medievale, Todi 1974, 109–126; S. CLASEN, *Der heiligen Bonaventura und das Mendikanentum. Ein Beitrag zur Ideengeschichte des Pariser Mendikantenstreiches (1252–1272)*, Werl in Westfalen 1940; Y. CONGAR, *Aspects ecclésiologiques de la querelle entre Mendicants et Séculiers dans la seconde moitié du XIIIe siècle et le début du XIVe*, in *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 28 (1961) 35–151; M.D. LAMBERT, *Franciscan Poverty. The doctrine of the absolute poverty of Christ and the Apostles in the Franciscan Order 1210–1323*, London 1961, 103–140; C. SCHMITT, *S. Bonaventura in difesa dei Mendicanti all'Università di Parigi*, in *IB* 10 (1974) 99–119.

<sup>132</sup> Z. HAYES, *The Hidden Center*, 136.

Bonaventure states that to imitate Christ in His weakness is an act of perfection, precisely because Christ stooped to our fragility in order to give us courage in tribulation<sup>133</sup>.

Condescension is founded upon exemplarity. Christ has a twofold principle of exemplarity according to Bonaventure. As the Uncreated Word He is the exemplar of the Father's overflowing goodness. Because of Him all creation comes into being as a perfect image of the archetype. But Christ is also the incarnate Word, who becomes the exemplar of our actions in his tender condescension towards the weak and defenceless. Indeed, it is in His condescension to our human fragility that Christ becomes the exemplar of virtue, the model for our instruction and imitation<sup>134</sup>.

Bonaventure lists six modes of exemplarity in Christ's actions. Christ showed the sublimity of His power, the radiance of His wisdom, the severity of His judgement, the dignity of His priestly office, the condescension towards human fragility, the revelation of the perfect life. It would be presumption to try to imitate Christ in the first four types of His actions. The last two are the ones specifically aimed at being imitated by Christ's followers<sup>135</sup>. This distinction

<sup>133</sup> *Apol.*, 1,6 (VIII, 237a): "Cum videret multos promptos et gaudentes ituros ad martyrium passionis, exsultaturos in ipsa passione, fortes, centenarios, maturos ad horreum, tamen quorundam infirmorum, quos videbat posse conturbari ventura passione, ne deficerent, sed potius voluntatem humanam voluntati Creatoris coniungerent, ipsorum personam voluit suscipere in passione Christus, dicens: *Tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem* (Matth 26,38)".

<sup>134</sup> *Apol.*, 2,12 (VIII, 242b–243a): "Cum Christus sit Verbum increatum et incarnatum, duplex est in eo ratio exemplaritatis, aeternae videlicet et temporalis: aeternae, inquam, secundum quod est *splendor paternae gloriae et figura substantiae Dei Patris* (Hebr 1,3) atque *candor lucis aeternae et speculum sine macula maiestatis Dei* (Sap 7,26). In quo quidem, speculo exemplariter cuncta relucent, quae a principio conditionis mundi usque in finem ad perfectionem totius universi tam spiritualiter quam sensibilibiter producuntur. Et secundum hoc est Christus ut Verbum increatum speculum intellectuale et exemplar aeternum totius machinae mundialis. – In quantum autem Verbum incarnatum in assumptae humanitatis conversatione exemplar est et speculum omnium gratiarum, virtutum et meritorum, ad cuius exemplaris imitationem erigendum est tabernaculum militantis Ecclesiae".

<sup>135</sup> *Apol.*, 2,13 (VIII, 243ab): "Refulgent autem a Christo tanquam a totius nostrae salutis exemplari et originali principio actus multiformes. Nam quidam actus in ipso respiciunt *sublimitatem potentiae*... quidam *sapientiae lucem*... quidam *severitatem iudicii*... quidam *officii dignitatem*... quidam *condescensionem miseriae*, ut latere in persecutione, trepidare et contristari in morte et pro calicis amotione Patrem orare; quidam *informationem vitae perfectae*, sicut paupertatem servare, virginitatem custodire, Deo et hominibus se ipsum subicere, noctes in oratione pervigiles ducere, pro crucifixoribus exorare

in Christ's actions is very important in understanding the exemplaristic framework of the Bonaventurian theological synthesis when it is applied to the category of imitation. In fact, the notion of condescension with its closely-linked themes of humility and mission, is instrumental in understanding the dynamics of religious life at large, and of the Franciscan life in particular.

This brief look at the notion of condescension in the *Apologia Pauperum* introduces us immediately to consider the two topics which are of particular interest to our analysis, namely the theme of spiritual nakedness and that of charity in martyrdom, both seen as means by which the disciple participates in the mystery of the Cross by building the spiritual edifice upon the one foundation who is Christ<sup>136</sup>.

(a) *Spiritual nakedness in following the Crucified*

The theme of spiritual nakedness linked with the image of the Crucified Christ was popular in patristic and medieval Christian literature<sup>137</sup>. Bonaventure often makes use of the notion of spiritual nakedness in order to explain his theology of poverty founded upon the living example of Christ who was poor unto death on a Cross. The *Apologia Pauperum* offers various nuances upon this theme.

The invitation to follow Christ unto death on the Cross calls for an extreme self-denial which takes the form of a self-emptying, a spiritual nakedness, in which the flesh is sacrificed in the embrace of the Cross<sup>138</sup>.

et morti se summa caritate etiam pro inimicis offerre. — Cum igitur sex sint huiusmodi actuum varietates, in ultimis his dumtaxat est ipsum imitari perfectum<sup>139</sup>.

<sup>136</sup> *Apol.*, 7,1 (VIII, 272a): "Christianae religionis fundamentum esse Christum Iesum, sapiens ille architectus Apostolus Paulus ad Corinthios asserit, docens, fundamentum aliud poni non posse praeter id quod positum est, quod est Christus Iesus (1 Cor 3,11)".

<sup>137</sup> Cfr. M. BERNARDS, *Nudus Nudum Christum Sequi*, in *WW* 14 (1951) 148–151; J. CHÂTILLON, "Nudum Christum Nudus Sequere". *Note sur les origines et la signification du thème la nudité spirituelle dans les écrits de Saint Bonaventure*, in *S. Bonaventura 1274–1974*, Vol. 4, 719–772. This excellent study includes an analysis of the patristic texts of St. Jerome pertinent to the theme of spiritual nakedness, which were known and cited by medieval theologians. In an appendix, the author gives the texts of St. Jerome, followed by their use in medieval writings, especially within the context of the poverty controversy. We shall give the patristic references presented by Châtillon in our quotations of the *Apol.*

<sup>138</sup> *Apol.*, 1,2 (VIII, 235b): "Ipse magister omnium Christus non ad solatia carnis, sed ad supplicia crucis discipulos suos semper invitet".

Speaking of the nobility and difficulty of the state of religious life, Bonaventure introduces the theme of spiritual nakedness by quoting Jerome, in order to present the following of the Crucified Christ as an act of spiritual nakedness on the part of the disciple<sup>139</sup>.

The theme of spiritual nakedness predominates in chapter seven of the *Apologia Pauperum*, which proves that radical and voluntary poverty is the foundation of evangelical perfection. Bonaventure insists upon the Christological foundations of poverty. Poverty, in fact, was the distinctive sign of Christ's life here on earth<sup>140</sup>. He was faithful to poverty unto the extreme consequence of hanging naked upon the Cross<sup>141</sup>. That is why perfect conformity to Christ implies the acceptance of the Cross, expressed in a radical choice of poverty which is not only an interior attitude of detachment, but an exterior action of renunciation of temporal goods as well<sup>142</sup>.

When he speaks about the topic of whether the life of Gospel perfection is a moral obligation to all or a counsel to a few, Bonaventure opts for the second, and presents various levels of living a commitment of poverty, using the category of spiritual nakedness. According to Bonaventure there is nakedness of the heart and nakedness of the heart and body<sup>143</sup>.

Regarding the second type of nakedness, that of the heart and body, Bonaventure gives three levels. The first one consists in renouncing all superfluous goods and possessions. Bonaventure

<sup>139</sup> *Apol.*, 3,15 (VIII, 248b): Unde Hieronymus ad Rusticum monachum: Si perfecta sequi desideras, exi cum Abraham de patria et de cognitione tua (Gen 12,1) et perge, quo necis. Si habes substantiam, vende et da pauperibus (Matth 19,21); si non habes, grandi onere liberatus es. Nudum Christum nudus sequere. Durum, grande et difficile, sed magna sunt praemia". Jerome's text in: *Epist. 125 ad Rusticum*, 20, in CSEL 56 (1918) 142.

<sup>140</sup> *Apol.*, 7,7 (VIII, 274a): "Christus pauper fuit in orru, pauper in vitae progressu, pauper in termino". Cfr. *De perf. vit.*, 3,2 (VIII, 113a).

<sup>141</sup> *Apol.*, 7,8 (VIII, 275a): "Christus... volens tamen summae paupertatis nuditate vitam concludere, nudus elegit in cruce pendere".

<sup>142</sup> *Apol.*, 7,13 (VIII, 276b): "Opus perfectionis (est) magisque securum et Christo crucifixo conforme in carentia rerum et pecuniarum vivere in extrema paupertate".

<sup>143</sup> *Apol.*, 7,21 (VIII, 279b): "Est enim multiplex gradus et differentia nuditatis, et alia quidem est cordis, alia cordis et corporis. Nuditas cordis est per expoliationem spiritus ab omni perverso affectu avaritiae et cupiditatis... Hoc quidem intelligitur generaliter dictum omnibus Christianis". The Seraphic Doctor quotes Gregory the Great, *Homil. in Evang.*, II, 32, 2, in PL 76, 1233, stating that it is important to struggle naked with the naked adversary. This was another favourite theme in medieval hagiographical literature.

assigns this kind of poverty to clerics, and quotes another text of Jerome<sup>144</sup>.

The second level of nakedness of heart and body is that proper to regulars and cenobites, who renounce private ownership<sup>145</sup>. The third level is the choice of radical poverty modelled upon the apostolic life and proper to the mendicant Orders<sup>146</sup>. This comes closest to perfect imitation of the poor and naked Christ of the Gospel<sup>147</sup>.

Spiritual nakedness is an instrument which paves the way for a thorough knowledge of Christ. Bonaventure depicts a moving image of the Son of God who not only condescended to human misery, but accepted poverty as the guiding rule of His life. He was born of a poor mother, lived as a beggar, hung naked on the Cross in order to strengthen us to have courage and win over evil through the same means which He embraced<sup>148</sup>. He not only taught us the

<sup>144</sup> *Apol.*, 7,22 (VIII, 279b): "Nuditas autem cordis et corporis triplicem habet gradum. Nam quaedam est magna, quae attenditur in abiectione omnis superfluitatis et proprietariae possessionis. Et haec, quamquam non sit de necessitate, est tamen de congruentia status et ordinis clericalis. Et de hac Hieronymus ad Nepotianum: Si autem ego pars Domini sum et funiculus hereditatis eius (Deut 32,9), nec accipio partem inter ceteras tribus (Num 18,20), sed quasi levita et sacerdos vivo de decimis, et altari deserviens, altaris oblatione sustentor, habens vicium et vestitum, his contentus ero et nudam crucem nudus sequar". Jerome's text in: *Epist. 52 ad Nepotianum*, 5, in CSEL 54 (1910) 422.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, "Est et alia nuditas maior, quae non solum consistit in his, verum etiam in abdicatione potestatis possidendi proprium et abnegatione propriae voluntatis; et haec competit regularibus et coenobitiis".

<sup>146</sup> *Apol.*, 7,22 (VIII, 280a): "Est et tertia nuditas, quae consistit in his quae praedicta sunt et insuper in abdicatione omnis transitoriae facultatis cum penuria et indigentia opportuna sustentationis, et haec competit Apostolis et apostolicis viris".

<sup>147</sup> *Apol.*, 7,23 (VIII, 280a): "Haec Hieronymus, qui ad hanc nuditatem tanquam summe perfectam hortatur Hedibiam, in epistola, quam ad eam scribens, ait: Vis esse perfecta et in primo stare fastigio dignitatis? Fac quod fecerunt Apostoli. *Vende omnia, quae habes, et da pauperibus et sequere* (Matth 19,21) Salvatore et nudam solamque crucem nuda sequaris et sola. — In his manifestus asserit, quod ea paupertas ad perfectionis attingit fastigium, qua quis expressus et conformis nuditatem crucis amplectitur et nudum Crucifixum imitatur". Jerome's text in: *Epist. 120 ad Hedibiam*, 1, in CSEL 55 (1912) 477–478; *Cfr. Q. de perf. ev.*, q. 2, a. 1, fund. 14 (V, 126a).

<sup>148</sup> *Apol.*, 7,40 (VIII, 285b–286b): "Sicut enim in Salvatore nostro crucifixo nil fuit, quod saeculares glorias aut delicias saperat; sic nil egit, nil docuit, per quod mundi divitias appetendas esse monstraret, quin potius, ut nos ad perfectae paupertatis amorem accenderet, in huius mundi campum hostem expugnaturus ingrediens, de pauperrima Matre pauperrimus prodiiit, sed et hostiam Deo Patri ut pontifex offensus, nudus in cruce pependit nec non, ut veritatis eius tanquam perfectissimae rectitudinis nequaquam discordaret medium ab

value of poverty through words. He experienced it as well, so that He could become the true high priest who saved us all in His blood<sup>149</sup>.

The last reference to Jerome's letters echoes the same theology of the ones already quoted. It is an invitation to follow the Crucified Christ within the framework of a total renunciation of temporal goods<sup>150</sup>.

From the texts just quoted, it is evident that spiritual nakedness forms part and parcel of the apostolic life. However, Bonaventure has a very radical idea of apostolic life, which is wholly faithful to the Franciscan ideal. He does not speak of apostolic life within the context of the life of the primitive Church in Acts 2,42–47 and 4,32–35. This type of life was practised by members of the contemplative Orders who accepted property in common. Bonaventure's concept is much more radical. As Châtillon states, the mendicants distinguished themselves from the Orders which preceded them particularly in their choice of radical poverty, expressed in total expropriation of all temporal goods. Spiritual nakedness consists in the faithfulness to this apostolic ideal, understood in its strictest sense<sup>151</sup>.

Bonaventure sees spiritual nakedness shining forth in a special way in Francis. For the Seraphic Doctor the poverty issue was not simply an academic controversy. It was concerned with the very life of the Franciscan Order. In a strong statement Bonaventure shows that whoever rejected the legitimacy of evangelical poverty as practised by the mendicants was insulting Francis and the Church, and blaspheming against Christ Himself, the author of Gospel perfection<sup>152</sup>. In a solemn tone Bonaventure calls upon the Church

extremis, tota ipsius vita caminus paupertatis fuit. Huius invictissimi ducis nuditate tanquam armatura circumdatus et in eo solo sperantes qui ait: *Confidite, ego vici mundum* (Ioan 16,33), in ipsius pauperis Crucifixi nomine hostiles excipiamus insultus".

<sup>149</sup> *Apol.*, 8,20 (VIII, 293a).

<sup>150</sup> *Apol.*, 9,17 (VIII, 299b): "Denique, et tu, audita sententia Salvatoris: *Si vis perfectus esse, vende et vende omnia, quae habes, et a pauperibus et veni, sequere me* (Matth 19,21), verba veris in opera et nudam crucem nudus sequens, expeditior et levior ascendis scalam Iacob". Jerome's text in: *Epist. 58 ad Paulinum*, 2, in CSEL 54 (1910) 529.

<sup>151</sup> *Cfr. J. CHÂTILLON, "Nudum Christum Nudus Sequere"*, 769.

<sup>152</sup> *Apol.*, 11,15 (VIII, 315a): "Qui igitur hunc Christi imitorem praecipuum, ipsius insignitum stigmatibus, ascriptum catalogo Sanctorum et ab universa Ecclesia in veneratione susceptum asserit errore deceptum fuisse, maxime in professione et observantia evangelicae



to defend the cause of the mendicants, since it was its own cause, firmly rooted in the apostolic tradition and significantly evident in Christ's life<sup>153</sup>.

(b) *The Virtue of Charity and the Desire for Martyrdom*

Bonaventure dedicates chapter four of the *Apologia Pauperum* to the theme of martyrdom. The problem hinges upon whether the desire for martyrdom is an act of perfection or not. In order to resolve the question, Bonaventure links martyrdom to the virtue of charity, which is the bond of perfection since it is the noblest of all virtues.

Perfect charity consists in an inner desire to die to the world and the flesh in order to be one with Christ. This strong desire is the driving force of martyrdom<sup>154</sup>. The desire to die does not indicate an egoistic will to renounce to one's responsibilities, but it springs from the most profound meaning of charity, which implies a need for transformation of being, a tension to openness towards the other. When this dynamism of love is lived in a Christological perspective, it necessarily becomes a force driving the human person to union with Christ through the experience of the Paschal Mystery which He realized as the noblest example of love for our instruction and imitation.

Bonaventure lists three qualities of charity. Quoting the Pseudo-Dionysius he states that charity is a unitive power<sup>155</sup>. This power reaches its maximum effect when the soul really desires to be united to God through love, expressed in a direct participation in Christ's sufferings through martyrdom of the flesh and of the spirit.

Charity is also a transforming power. Through a direct participation in a real imitation and following of His footsteps, the

vitalis, non solum ipsum impugnat, verum etiam universalem Ecclesiam, et quod plus est, Magistri veritatis et Apostolorum eius doctrinam blasphemam et vitam".

<sup>153</sup> *Apol.*, 11, 16 (VIII, 315b).

<sup>154</sup> *Apol.*, 4, 1 (VIII, 252ab): "Per quam patenter colligitur, quod perfectae caritatis actus est sui corporis dissolutionem et mortem appetere, exemplo ipsius Apostoli ad Philippenses dicentis: *Cupio dissolvi et esse cum Christo* (Phil 1, 23)".

<sup>155</sup> *Apol.*, 4, 2 (VIII, 252b): "Si enim amor, ut dicit Dionysius, *vis est unitiva*, et haec locutio est vera per se; necessario sequitur, quod perfectus Dei amor perfecte inclinamantem ad omne illud, per quod convenientius, intimius et celerius amato possit uniri". For the citation from the Areatopagie, cfr. *De Divinis Nominibus*, 4, 15, in PG 3, 713.

soul is transformed by suffering, so that it becomes inflamed by charity which has the power of leading it from death to life<sup>156</sup>.

Finally, charity is a generously diffusive power. True love must be a total and unconditional self-offering to the other. Where perfect charity is present, it is also most diffusive even unto death. The Christological basis of this love is revealed in the Cross, on which Christ died out of love for His friends, inviting them to follow His example by aspiring to sublime charity in martyrdom<sup>157</sup>.

For these motives the desire for martyrdom is an act of perfect charity<sup>158</sup>. Christ gave the example of perfect charity in His free choice of death on the Cross. And when He fled from death, or showed signs of fear, He was perfect just the same, because, as we have already seen, His actions were a condescension to our own fragility.

Bonaventure stresses the desire for martyrdom rather than the actual act of martyrdom<sup>159</sup>. This approach fits in perfectly with his theology of imitation and following of Christ in the religious life. In fact, the *Apologia Pauperum* regards the theme of charity and the desire for martyrdom under the category of imitation of Christ in the life of Gospel perfection. There is the other dimension of charity and martyrdom, which regards the intimate life of contemplative

<sup>156</sup> *Apol.*, 4, 2 (VIII, 252b-253a): "Ipse etiam amor, ut dicit Hugo, *vis est transformativa*. Qui igitur perfecte Christum amat praecipuo mentis affectu eidem configurari peroptat, in his potissimum, quae divina lex dicitur; sed configuratio ad Christum praecipue salvandis conveniens in statu praesentis miseriae at tenditur secundum assimilationem in passione et morte, Petro attestante, qui ait: *Christus pro nobis passus est, vobis relinquens exemplum, ut sequamini vestigia eius* (1 Petr 2, 21): hoc igitur est, ad quod inclinatione praecipua perfectae caritatis ardor inflammat, iuxta illud Cantico: *Fortis est ut mors dilectio, dura sicut infernus aemulatio, lampades eius lampades ignis atque flammularum* (Cant 8, 6)". For the citation from Hugh of St. Victor, cfr. *Soliloquium de Arrha Animae*, in PL 176, 954.

<sup>157</sup> *Apol.*, 4, 2 (VIII, 253a): "Idem nihilominus amor, ut dicit Richardus, *est vis liberaliter diffusiva*. Ubi igitur perfectus est amor, ibi et perfecta diffusio vel actu, si opportunitas adest, vel si non adest, saltem desiderio pleno. Cum igitur traditio sui in mortem pro alicuius amore sit diffusio permixta, necesse est, perfectum caritatis amorem ad id aspirare, iuxta quod dicitur in Joanne: *Maiorem hanc dilectionem nemo habet, ut animam suam ponat quis pro amicis suis* (Joan 15, 13)". For the citation from Richard of St. Victor, cfr. *De Trinitate*, III, c. 2, in PL 196, 916.

<sup>158</sup> *Apol.*, 4, 3 (VIII, 253a): "Mortem itaque pro Christo desiderare, morti se pro Christo exponere et in mortis agone gaudere actus est caritatis perfectae".

<sup>159</sup> Cfr. E. R. DANIEL, *The Desire for Martyrdom. A Leitmotiv of St. Bonaventure*, in FS 32 (1972) 74-87.

union with Christ through prayer. But this dimension will be developed in the next chapter, in connection with the Seraphic Doctor's mystical works, where it is presented as the way into loving union with God through the Crucified Christ. In this second dimension the figure of Francis of Assisi assumes great relevance in his presentation as a man inflamed with charity and desiring to be one with Christ by experiencing the Paschal Cross.

The revelation of God's overflowing love towards fallen humankind becomes a reality in the historical Person of Jesus Christ. He manifests God's extraordinary humility. In Christ God condescends to humanity's misery by accepting humiliation, radical poverty and an atrocious death on the Cross.

God's love is necessarily dialogical. One can speak of two dimensions of this dialogical characteristic of divine love. The first one regards Christ's filial obedience to the Father's will. This could be called the divine dimension. But God's love knows a human dimension as well, since it is a dialogue with humanity. Through His act of supreme love on the Cross, Christ invites every human person to enter into a loving union with Him through imitation and following, in other words, through discipleship.

Discipleship and its roots in the mystery of the Crucified Word are a typical dimension of Bonaventure's theology, seen against the background of Franciscan spirituality. The Gospel Commentaries, and especially that on Luke, have a special interest in underlining the categories of imitation and following in the discipleship of Christ. The way to imitation implies a concrete following of the Master along the way He traced in his deeply-imprinted footsteps under the weight of the Cross.

The following of the Crucified Word calls for a total acceptance of the values which Christ cherished most. These are four – humility, poverty, obedience and charity. They are also the foundational virtues which shine most brilliantly upon the Cross and during Christ's Passion in general. By accepting them with joy the disciple paves the way for a faithful following of Christ in order to reach the stage of imitation, that is, of becoming a representation of his Master.

In concrete terms, this way implies a life characterized by total

self-denial in humility, and by a voluntary choice of radical poverty, seen both as a renunciation of temporal goods and as mendicity. Bonaventure cannot help being a true Franciscan when he presents Christ as a beggar. This is the Christological model for our instruction and the exemplar for our imitation. True discipleship knows no other way but this.

Radical poverty means nakedness of heart and body. The image of the naked Christ hanging upon the Cross becomes the rule for the disciple. It is not enough to deny one's evil inclinations. Spiritual nakedness implies the letting-go of everything, even of one's own self. It arrives at heroic proportions in the exercise of the virtue of charity, leading even to martyrdom of the flesh and of the spirit. Discipleship arrives thus at its ultimate consequences. At this point it ceases to be just a following or even an imitation. It becomes a union, a mystical experience.

Mystical union with Christ implies a journey. It is focused upon the Cross, which connotes various shades of meaning. The Cross becomes the way and the goal of the soul's spiritual journey into mystical union. It also assumes cosmic proportions, since in it all reality converges as to a centre of attraction. It dominates history, so that all the successive stages of humanity's existence are understood to be modes of emanation from God and of a return into God, in a circular movement which passes through Christ Crucified. This mystical dimension of the Crucified Word will be the object of our next chapter. At this stage the experience of Francis of Assisi becomes central.

CHAPTER THREE

THE "VERBUM CRUCIFIXUM"  
IN THE MYSTICAL WORKS  
OF SAINT BONAVENTURE

The election of Saint Bonaventure to the generalate of the Franciscan Order in 1257 marks the beginning of the second period of his activity. The first period at the University of Paris was characterized by speculative and exegetical works. From this point onwards, Bonaventure comes to the forefront as a mystical theologian.

The period 1257 to 1274 is important for Bonaventure's mystical treatises and writings dealing with the life of the Franciscan Order. In this chapter we intend to analyze the most important of these works, namely the *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, as well as the well-known treatise *De Triplici Via*. Another important group of writings of this period is that of the *collationes* which Bonaventure delivered at the Paris University from 1267 to 1273, during the crisis brought about by Aristotelianism. The most important of these are the last group of conferences, the *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*, which mark the peak of Bonaventure's maturity as a scholar and mystic and which are the last work of the Seraphic Doctor.

The common element in these works is the mystical experience of the Crucified Word. Bonaventure shows how mystical experience is rooted in the love and imitation of Christ Crucified. The love of the Crucified is the comprehensive way to arrive at the contemplation of God. It is a way which necessarily passes through the humanity of the suffering Christ in order to arrive at the goal of peace in His glorification<sup>1</sup>.

In the first section we shall analyze the mystical theology of the *Itinerarium* in the light of the centrality of the Crucified Word. In

<sup>1</sup> Cfr. E. LONGPRÉ, *La Théologie Mystique de Saint Bonaventure*, in AFH 14 (1921) 68-72; IDEM, *Bonaventure, Saint*, in DSAM, Vol. 1 (1937) 1772-1842.

this treatise Bonaventure shows how the soul can accomplish its spiritual journey into God by passing through the Paschal Mystery of Christ's Cross, as the way leading to, and the goal of ecstatic peace.

During this journey the soul is also carried aloft or uplifted by means of the hierarchical acts of purification, illumination and perfection. These acts form the vehicle of spiritual progress according to the *De Triplici Via*, and are also rooted in the mystery of the Cross. We shall consider them within the context of the theology of the *Itinerarium* in order to have a more complete picture of the dynamics of spiritual growth according to the Seraphic Doctor. It is fundamental to note from the outset of this chapter that the figure of Francis is basic in these works. Francis is the perfect model of the soul in search for God through living union with Christ on the Cross.

The second section will deal with the *Collationes in Hexaëmeron* in which the Crucified Word is presented as a cosmic medium. In Christ Crucified the cosmos and history find their lost centre, and are led to a marvellous synthesis and harmony. These conferences show how all sciences and all knowledge must be led back to Christ, who is the true wisdom which confounds all that knowledge that pretends to do away with Scripture and theology.

After providing the systematic basis for a theology of the Cross centred upon an invitation to follow and imitate the poor and naked Christ, Bonaventure provides the key for a completely new experience of life for the disciple. It is the life of the mystic, who delves into the depths of God's love revealed in the Paschal Cross of His Son Jesus Christ. In concrete terms, it becomes the life of Francis of Assisi, which Bonaventure has at the back of his mind in a particular way during the period 1257 to 1274, and which finds its fullest expression in the *Legenda Maior*.

#### I. THE "ITINERARIUM MENTIS IN DEUM"

The *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*<sup>2</sup> is the result of a complexity of factors in the life of Saint Bonaventure. Considered as the mystical

<sup>2</sup> *Itin.* (V, 295–313).

masterpiece of the Seraphic Doctor and, indeed, as a milestone in Christian literature of all times, the *Itinerarium* was composed in the autumn months of 1259, after a unique experience of prayer and solitude which Bonaventure had on La Verna<sup>3</sup>.

This mystical treatise offers some interesting autobiographical insights which can be of help in locating it in its historical setting. The prologue is particularly rich in giving us valuable information regarding the circumstances which induced Bonaventure to go to La Verna for the retreat which was destined to give life to the *Itinerarium*. With the help of other sources and studies on this particular period of Bonaventure's life, we shall attempt to trace the real motives which lie behind this unique experience in the life of the Seraphic Doctor.

Bonaventure explains how he went up to La Verna two years after his election to the generalate of the Franciscan Order and thirty three years after Francis' death. His aim was simply that of a heartfelt desire for inner peace<sup>4</sup>. The Order was going through difficult times<sup>5</sup>. Bonaventure inherited the problems faced by his predecessor, John of Parma, who resigned from his office in favour of the relatively young master of the Paris University, who became the new Minister General on 2 February 1257<sup>6</sup>. Moreover, the

<sup>3</sup> Chr. J.G. BOUGEROL, *Introduction*, 175–178; *Bonaventure. The Soul's Journey into God. The Tree of Life. The Life of Saint Francis*, English translation and introduction by E. COUSINS, Ramsey, New Jersey 1978, 18–34, 53–116; B. DISTELBRINK, *Bonaventurae Scripta*, 24–25.

<sup>4</sup> *Itin.*, *Prolog.* 2 (V, 295ab): "Cum igitur exemplo beatissimi patris Francisci hanc pacem anhele spiritu quaererem, ego peccator, qui loco ipsius patris beatissimi post eius transitum septimus in generali fratrum ministerio per omnia indignus succedo; contigit, ut nutu divino circa Beati ipsius transitum, anno trigesimo tertio ad montem Alvernae tanquam ad locum quietum amore quaerendi pacem spiritus declinarem, ibique existens, dum mente tractarem aliquas mentales ascensiones in Deum, inter alia occurrit illud miraculum, quod in praedicto loco contigit ipsi beato Francisco, de visione scilicet Seraph alati ad instar Crucifixi. In cuius consideratione statim visum est mihi, quod visio illa praetenderet ipsius patris suspensionem in contemplando et viam, per quam pervenitur ad eam".

<sup>5</sup> In order to understand the concrete problems which Bonaventure had to face, it is enough to read the *Epistola ad omnes Ministros provinciales et Custodes Ordinis Fratrum Minorum* (VIII, 468a–469b) which Bonaventure wrote as a new Minister General on 23 April 1257.

<sup>6</sup> The historical account of what actually happened at the Aracoeli Chapter is found in: *Chronica XXIV Generalium Ordinis Minorum*, in *Analecta Franciscana*, Vol. 3 (1897) 286–287; SALIMBENE DE ADAM, *Cronica*, critical edition by G. Scalia, V. 1, Bari 1966, 450–451.

faction of the Spirituals in the Franciscan Order was suspected of nurturing sympathy for the doctrine of Joachim of Fiore (c.1130–1202), the Calabrian abbot who proposed a new theology of history centred upon the prophecy of a new age of the Spirit and of an *ecclesia spiritualis*. Not even John of Parma himself escaped from falling suspect to adhering to Joachist ideals, especially in the light of the condemnation, in October 1255 by the Anagni commission, of the *Liber Introductorius in Evangelium Aeternum* of the Franciscan Gerard of Borgo San Donnino. It was this treatise which provided ground for the secular masters' attacks against the Franciscans at the University of Paris<sup>7</sup>.

Assailed by problems within and outside the Order, Bonaventure retreated to La Verna. There he tried to acquire that peace and harmony to see things in their clear perspective. But, as he himself states, on La Verna he went through a radical transformation. Ratzinger explains this fact very well when he states that "the *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, which Bonaventure brought with him from these weeks of solitude, is a first sign of a new intellectual direction. From this book onward, the figure of Saint Francis enters ever more into the centre of his thought"<sup>8</sup>.

It is also a concrete and specific image of Francis that dominates Bonaventure's writings in the period 1257 to 1274, namely, that of a Francis who is a living icon of Christ Crucified.

The prologue of the *Itinerarium* is the official presentation of this Christ-like image of Francis. It starts with an invocation to the Father that he may enlighten the souls of those who search for the

<sup>7</sup> Cfr. *Dissertatio II de scriptis et Vitae S. Bonaventurae. Vita Seraphici Doctoris per modum annuum enarrata* (X, 48a–53a); R.B. BROOKE, *Early Franciscan Government. Elias to Bonaventure*, Cambridge 1959, 267–279; IDEM, *St. Bonaventure as Minister General*, in *San Bonaventura Francescano. Atti del XIV Convegno del Centro di Studi sulla Spiritualità Medievale*, Todi 1974, 77–105; E. GILSON, *La Philosophie de Saint Bonaventure*, 9–75; E. LONGPRÉ, *Bonaventure, Saini*, in DHGE, Vol. 9 (1937) 758; IDEM, *Bonaventure, Saini*, in DSAM, Vol. 1 (1937) 1769; J.R.H. MOORMAN, *A History of the Franciscan Order. From its origins to the year 1517*, Oxford 1968, 145–147. The critical edition of the *Liber Introductorius* is that edited by H. DENIFLE, *Erhaltene Reste des Introductorius in Evangelium aeternum im Protokoll der Commission zu Anagni*, in *Archiv für Literatur- und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters* 1 (1855) 99–142. The account of the trial of John of Parma in Città di Pieve in the summer of 1261 is found in *Die Historia septem tribulationum Ordinis Minorum des Fr. Angelus de Clarino* (Die dritte, vierte, und fünfte tribulatio), edited by F. EHRLE, in *ibid.* 2 (1886) 277, 283–287.

<sup>8</sup> J. RATZINGER, *The Theology of History*, 3.

way of peace as it was preached and lived by Francis, the man of peace and the citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem, in which Solomon's throne stands as the sign of peaceful domination<sup>9</sup>. These eschatological images are of the utmost importance within the framework of the entire treatise.

In a flash Bonaventure realized the hidden meaning of Francis' mystical experience upon La Verna. For him it became clear that the vision of the Crucified Seraph which imprinted the stigmata on Francis' body way back in 1224 indicated the way and the goal of mystical contemplation. From this marvellous discovery was born the name of the treatise, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, aptly translated by Cousins as *The Soul's Journey into God*<sup>10</sup>.

The Crucified Seraph provides the key for unfolding the successive stages of the soul's journey. It is not the only symbol in the *Itinerarium*, but it certainly is the most important since it goes right to the heart of Francis' mystical experience of God. Bonaventure sees in the six wings of the Seraph a representation of the six successive stages which make up the way leading to the goal of ecstatic rapture<sup>11</sup>.

Cousins interprets the Seraph as a mandala symbol<sup>12</sup>. It encompasses the totality of reality which converges in the centre of Christian wisdom who is Christ Crucified. The Seraph stands for ardent love as the highest degree of the angelic hierarchy. Is is the

<sup>9</sup> *Itin.*, Prolog. 1 (V, 295a).

<sup>10</sup> E. COUSINS, *Bonaventure*, 21: "The translation of the term *mentis* presents a problem. Etymologically the Latin *mens (mentis)* is related to our English 'mind' and has been translated in the past as such both in the title and the text of Bonaventure's treatise. However, for Bonaventure and medieval spiritual usage in general, as influenced by Augustine, the term *mens* was not limited to the intellectualistic connotations of the English term 'mind'. Among the medieval spiritual writers *mens* encompassed the soul of its three faculties of memory, intelligence and will, which constitute the soul as image of God. Although there is no single English term that captures this precise meaning, I have chosen 'soul' in preference to 'mind' or 'spirit'; Cfr. C.N. FOSHEE, *St. Bonaventure and the Augustinian concept of 'Mens'*, in FS 27 (1967) 163–175.

<sup>11</sup> *Itin.*, Prolog. 3 (V, 295b): "Nam per senas alas recte intelligi possunt sex illuminationum suspensiones, quibus anima quasi quibusdam gradibus vel itineribus disponitur, ut transeat ad pacem per ecstaticos excessus sapientiae christianae"; *Feria II p. Dom. Palm. Sermo* (IX, 246a): "Per senarium dierum intelligitur exercitium spirituale quoad sex illuminationes, quas facit in anima sol spiritualis, per praesentiam gratiae irradians".

<sup>12</sup> E. COUSINS, *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites*, Chicago 1978, 182–183: "The six-winged Seraph functions as a symbol of organized totality".

love which burns, consumes, transforms, and raises the soul to mystical heights. Francis lived this experience, as Paul had done before him. This same love transformed Francis not only spiritually but also corporally, so that the ardent charity of his soul appeared visibly in the flesh under the form of the stigmata of the Crucified<sup>13</sup>.

Francis thus stands as the typical example of the soul's journey into God through mystical contemplation. Bonaventure explains how this way has to pass through Christ's blood as through a door, so that the soul, purified in the blood of the paschal sacrifice, can find eternal pastures in the heavenly Jerusalem. The force which pushes the soul to undertake this journey is called ardent desire, expressed in prayer and speculation<sup>14</sup>. These are the dynamics of the journey, centred as it is on the Paschal Cross. We shall attempt to read the *Itinerarium* in the light of the mystery of the Cross, seeing it, as Bonaventure does, as the way and the goal of the soul's journey to ecstatic contemplation, and having Francis as our experienced guide.

Before proceeding in our analysis, however, it is wise to heed Bonaventure's admonition not to believe that this journey could be simply an object of scientific speculation. Again, abstract theology has to give way to a *theologia affectiva* rooted in the experience of the Crucified Word<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> *Itin.*, Prol. 3 (V, 295b): "Via autem non est nisi per ardentissimum amorem Crucifixi, qui adeo Paulum ad *terrium caelum raptum* (2 Cor 12,2) transformavit in Christum, ut diceret: *Christo confixus sum cruci, vivo autem, iam non ego; vivit vero in me Christus* (Gal 2,19); qui etiam adeo mentem Francisci absorbit, quod mens in carne patuit, dum sacratissima passionis stigmata in corpore suo ante mortem per biennium deportavit. Effigies igitur sex alarum seraphicarum insinuat sex illuminationes scalares, quae a creaturis incipiunt et perducunt usque ad Deum, ad quem nemo intrat recte nisi per Crucifixum".

<sup>14</sup> Bonaventure explains desire as an act of the will which is attracted or moved towards that which can be loved most. *Itin.*, 3,4 (V, 305a): "*Desiderium autem principaliter est illius quod maxime ipsum movet. Maxime autem movet quod maxime amatur; maxime autem amatur esse beatum; beatum autem esse non habetur nisi per optimum et finem ultimum: nihil igitur appetit humanum desiderium nisi quia summum bonum, vel quia est ad illud, vel quia habet aliquam effigiem illius*"; *Epiph. Sermo IV* (IX, 162b): "*Sexta dies reversionis est per sublimationem seu per suspensionem desiderii . . . Isto utique desiderio anima suspenditur; Iob: *Suspendium elegit anima mea* (Iob 7,15) . . . Sunt autem septem desideria, quibus debet suspendi et affici anima. Primum est desiderium *desiderandi*. . . secundum est desiderium *honorandi*. . . tertium, desiderium *imitandi* et obediendi; quartum desiderium *complacendi*, quintum, desiderium *gustandi*; sextum, desiderium *videndi*; septimum, desiderium *comprehendendi*; et in hoc consummatio".*

<sup>15</sup> *Itin.*, Prol. 4 (V, 296a): "Igitur ad gemitum orationis per Christum crucifixum, per cuius sanguinem purgamur a sordibus vitiorum, primum quidem lectorem invito, ne forte

(a) *The Crucified Word as the way*

The *Itinerarium* unfolds itself along six stages and arrives at the goal of contemplation in the seventh stage. In this process the centrality of Christ Crucified is instrumental. It could be seen as the hermeneutical principle which interprets the dynamics of the soul's journey. The *Itinerarium* has various Christological connotations which underline the incarnational dimension of the mystery of Christ present in the macrocosm of the created universe and in the microcosm of the human soul<sup>16</sup>.

The sub-heading of the *Itinerarium* is the key for unfolding the contents of the journey<sup>17</sup>. It is a speculation, namely, an intellectual contemplation of God's presence in creation, in the human soul and in His own divine attributes, aimed at an experience of wisdom in union with the divinity<sup>18</sup>. Speculation is a reflection. The latin term *speculum*, in fact, means a mirror. So it presupposes light, and its effect is that of a faithful representation of the image it reflects. By contemplating reality through itself and in itself we lay out the six successive stages of the spiritual journey which constitute the object of speculation<sup>19</sup>.

credat, quod sibi sufficiat lectio sine unctione, speculatio sine devotione, investigatio sine admiratione, circumspicatio sine exultatione, industria sine pietate, scientia sine caritate, intelligentia sine humilitate, studium absque divina gratia, speculum absque sapientia divinitus inspirata".

<sup>16</sup> Cfr. E. COUSINS, *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites*, 59–60.

<sup>17</sup> (V, 296): "Incipit speculatio pauperis in deserto".

<sup>18</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 35, a. u., q. 3, resp. ad 3 (III, 779a): "Ad illud quod obiicitur, quod donum intellectus aut est in simpliciter speculando, aut in speculando et afficiendo; dicendum, quod est cognitio *experientiae*, quae attenditur secundum gustum, et ista est doni *sapientiae acquisitae*; et est cognitio *speculationis extensae*, quae quodam modo *via* est ad gustum, sicut cognitio fidei ad delectationem caritatis"; *Brevil.*, 5,6 (V, 260a): "Quae quidem contemplatio in Prophetis fuit per *revelationem* quantum ad triplicem visionem, scilicet corporalem, imaginativam et intellectualem; in aliis vero iustus reperitur per *speculationem*, quae incipit a sensu et pervenit ad imaginationem et de imaginatione ad rationem, de ratione ad intellectum, de intellectu ad intelligentiam; de intelligentia vero ad sapientiam sive notitiam excessivam, quae hic in via incipit, sed consummatur in gloria sempiterna"; Cfr. *LexBon*, 120–121.

<sup>19</sup> *Itin.*, 1,5 (V, 297b). God can be seen *per speculum* or *in speculo*. Bonaventure had already spoken in these terms as early as in *I Sent.*, d. 3, a. u., q. 3, resp. (I, 74b): "Cognoscere Deum in creatura est cognoscere ipsius praesentiam et influentiam in creatura. . . Cognoscere autem Deum *per creaturam* est elevari a cognitione creaturae ad cognitionem Dei quasi *per scalam mediam*"; *III Sent.*, d. 31, a. 2, q. 1, resp. ad 5 (III, 682ab): "Differt dicere videre rem *in speculo* et *per speculum*. *Per speculum* enim dicitur videre Deum qui ascendit a cognitione

The subject of speculation is a poor person. Poverty is the precondition which Bonaventure poses for undertaking the *Itinerarium*. The journey, in fact, is an uplifting of oneself to the heights of beatitude. The process of uplifting, or *sursumactio*, is had when divine power comes to our aid. In other words, only the recognition of our real state in an attitude of profound humility can introduce us into the dynamics of the journey. It is this spiritual poverty which gives life to prayer, the origin and mother of the uplifting of the soul<sup>20</sup>.

The *Itinerarium* is accomplished in a desert. The desert is a very strong symbol, denoting solitude, lack of self-sufficiency, encounter with one's own self, and so on. Bonaventure makes use of the symbol giving it its obvious Scriptural significance, but insisting upon one fundamental aspect, namely, that of exodus. The

creaturae ad cognitionem Creatoris; in speculo vero videt qui Deum in ipsa creatura clare intuetur. Prima visio non erit in gloria, qui non erit ibi necessaria scala; secunda vero erit, quia Deus videbitur aperte in omnibus creaturis"; Cfr. *LexBon*, 121.

<sup>20</sup> *Itin.*, 1,1 (V, 297a): "Oratio igitur est mater et origo sursum-actionis". The prayer which Bonaventure uses is taken from Ps 85,11: "Deduc me, Domine, in via tua, et ingrediar in veritate tua; laetetur cor meum, ut timeat nomen tuum". This prayer expresses the three basic stages of the journey: laetetur cor meum, ut timeat nomen tuum. The soul enters into God's truth by the process of illumination. It contemplates God in joy, and in the gift of the fear of God it is perfected. These three steps correspond to the paschal journey of the soul, which sees God in and through His vestiges, in and through His Image, in and through Himself as the first principle. Thus the six stages of the journey are outlined. The *vestigium* is a property of being regarding the contemplation of God as its efficient, formal and final cause. All creatures are *vestigia* or *umbræ* of the divinity. The *imago* regards the fundamental element of Bonaventure's anthropology. The human person is created according to God's image in its faculties of memory, intelligence and will. *J. Sent.*, d. 3, p. 1, a.u., q. 2, resp. ad 4 (I, 73ab): "Et ideo intelligendum, quod cum creatura ducatur in cognitionem Dei per modum umbræ, per modum vestigii et per modum imaginis"; *Q. de sci. Christi*, q. 4, resp. (V, 24a): "Creatura enim comparatur ad Deum in ratione vestigii, imaginis et similitudinis. In quantum vestigium, comparatur ad Deum ut ad principium; in quantum imago, comparatur ad Deum ut ad obiectum; sed in quantum similitudo, comparatur ad Deum ut ad donum infusum. Et ideo omnis creatura est vestigium, quae est a Deo; omnis est imago, quae cognoscit Deum; omnis et sola est similitudo, in qua habitat Deus"; *Brevil.*, 2,12 (V, 230a): "Creatura mundi est quasi quidem liber, in quo relict, repraesentatur et legitur Trinitas fabricatrix secundum triplicem gradum expressionis, scilicet per modum vestigii, imaginis et similitudinis; ita quod ratio vestigii reperitur in omnibus creaturis, ratio imaginis in solis intellectualibus seu spiritibus rationalibus, ratio similitudinis in solis deiformibus; ex quibus quasi per quosdam scalares gradus intellectus humanus natus est gradatim ascendere in summum principium, quod est Deus"; Cfr. A. NEMETZ, *The "Itinerarium Mentis in Deum"*. *The Human Condition*, in S. Bonaventura 1274-1974, Vol. 2, 345-359.

wilderness provides the passage or journey of the Hebrews from slavery to the promised land. The journey across the wilderness is a paschal journey<sup>21</sup>. Thus Bonaventure provides us with the concrete characteristics of the *Itinerarium*. It is a paschal journey across the desert, accomplished by a poor person and having as its aim the speculation of God Himself in six successive stages, corresponding to the six wings of the Seraph.

Going a step further, the *Itinerarium* could be seen as the paschal journey in the spiritual and material solitude experienced by the typical person who embraced poverty, namely, Francis, in the constant speculation of the divinity made manifest in the ardent love of Christ Crucified, who stands at the centre of reality as a mirror through which and in which we must pass in order to find the peace we are looking for<sup>22</sup>.

Bonaventure calls Christ "our ladder" in the *Itinerarium*<sup>23</sup>. In other words, Christ is the only way to peace, since He is, in a certain way, the perfect synthesis of reality. He is divine, yet He is also human in His corporal substance and spiritual substance. Thus He encompasses everything. Being the *alpha and omega*, He paves the way for us by doubling the three substances, namely, the corporal, spiritual and divine, into the six distinct steps of the journey. The symbolism of the number six is fundamental in the *Itinerarium*<sup>24</sup>. In this work the number six, which is a cyclic number, has to do with creation. "As regards the work of creation, the number six has the meaning of a circle that is perfectly closed"<sup>25</sup>. By placing Christ at the centre of this cyclic process, Bonaventure discloses the central

<sup>21</sup> *Itin.*, 1,3 (V, 297a): "Haec est igitur via trium dierum in solitudine (Cfr. Exod 3,18)"; *Itin.*, 1,9 (V, 298ab): "Quoniam igitur est ascendere quam descendere in scala Iacob, primum gradum ascensionis collocemus in imo, ponendo totum istum mundum sensibilem nobis tanquam speculum, per quod transeamus ad Deum, opificem summum, ut simus veri Hebraei transeuntes de Aegypto ad terram Patris repositissimam, simul etiam Christiani cum Christo transeuntes ex hoc mundo ad Patrem (Ioan 13,1)".

<sup>22</sup> Z. HAYES, *The Hidden Center*, 50: "In the *Itinerarium* the experience of Francis is drawn into the theological structure to define the center most emphatically as the crucified Christ. The Christocentric spirituality of passage is seen clearly as a passage in the cross".

<sup>23</sup> *Itin.*, 1,3 (V, 297a): "(Christus) est scala nostra".

<sup>24</sup> *Itin.*, 1,4 (V, 297b): "In cuius rei figura sex gradibus ascendebatur ad thronum Salomonis (3 Reg 10,19); Seraphim, quae vidit Isaías, senas alas habebant (Is 6,2); post sex dies vocavit Dominus Moysen de medio caliginis (Exod 24,16); et Christus post sex dies, ut dicitur in Mattheo, duxit discipulos in montem et transfiguratus est ante eos (Matth 17,1)".

<sup>25</sup> J. RATZINGER, *The Theology of History*, 148.

position of the God-man not only in created reality as such, but also in the mystical journey which leads the human soul from visible creation, into itself and onto the divinity. It is the perfect representation of the six wings of the Seraph, against whose background appears the figure of a Crucified man.

Moreover, the centrality of Christ is not only evident in creation, but especially in the re-creation of the cosmos realized in His Person, and particularly on the Cross. That is why Bonaventure sees Christ as the Word of life, through whose divinity as the Uncreated Word life is created, and through whose humanity as the Incarnate and Crucified Word, life is re-created in grace.

Every human person is in dire need to retrace its lost centre. Bonaventure explains how, at the beginning, God created the human person capable of having spiritual vision. But since man turned away from the perfect rays of divine light, he became bent over himself in the darkness of ignorance and concupiscence, and ceased to stand erect and face the light. But God Himself provided the remedy in the Person of the perfect man, Jesus Christ, who became Incarnate in our human condition in order to reveal God's wisdom, justice, sanctification and Redemption upon the Cross<sup>26</sup>.

It is therefore clear that, if we want to rise from our miserable state and look erect at the pure rays of divine light, we have to make the journey back to where we started, having Christ Incarnate and Crucified as our guide. Christ becomes the grace which reforms our

<sup>26</sup> *Itin.*, 1,7 (V, 297b-298a): "Secundum enim primam naturae institutionem creatus fuit homo habilis ad contemplationis quietem, et ideo posuit eum Deus in paradiso delicarum (Gen 2,15). Sed advertens se a vero lumine ad commutabile bonum, incurvatus est ipse per culpam propriam, et totum genus suum per originale peccatum, quod dupliciter infecti humanam naturam, scilicet ignorantia mentem et concupiscentia carnem; ita quod excaecatus homo et incurvatus in tenebris sedet et caeli lumen non videt, nisi succurrat gratia cum iustitia contra concupiscentiam, et scientia cum sapientia contra ignorantiam. Quod totum fit per Iesum Christum, qui factus est nobis a Deo sapientia et iustitia et sanctificatio et redemptio (1 Cor 1,30)". The prologue to the *Commentarius in Secundum Librum Sententiarum* offers a beautiful description similar to the one just quoted. Bonaventure takes a verse from *Eccle* 7,30: "Solummodo hoc inventi, quod Deus fecit hominem rectum, et ipse se in infinitis immiscuit quaestionibus". At a certain point of the prologue Bonaventure makes an interesting play on words to show how God created man upright: *Il Sent.*, Prol. (II, 4b): "Quoniam divina virtus omnia operatur et propter Deum, hinc est, quod rectissima est in operando. Nihil autem continuatur recto nisi rectum; cum ergo virtus nostra summae potestati continuatur, absque dubio rectificatur: et ex hoc homo non solum rectus, sed etiam rector et rex efficitur".

fallen state, the justice which purifies us, the science which enlightens us, the wisdom which perfects us. He is the *Itinerarium*.

In the first step, Bonaventure considers how God's power, wisdom and goodness shine through creation<sup>27</sup>. Quoting Hebrews 11,13, the Seraphic Doctor shows how the Word of life stands at the centre of created reality as its origin, its lapse of existence and as its ultimate goal, corresponding to three set laws, namely, the laws of ultimate goal, corresponding to three set laws, namely, the laws of nature, Scripture and grace<sup>28</sup>. Bonaventure also lists seven properties of being which are witness to God's attributes, namely, the origin of creatures, their magnitude, multitude, beauty, fullness, activity and order<sup>29</sup>. In the speculation of created reality, the underlying power of these properties of being can be defined as the Word of life, and as the Word that gives life on the Cross. The book of creation, which is the synthesis of the properties outlined, points to perfect order as a result of God's power, wisdom and goodness, which shines even more perfectly in the book of Scripture<sup>30</sup>. This book written within and without becomes the book of life in the Crucified Word which encompasses creation as a cosmic

<sup>27</sup> *Itin.*, 1,10 (V, 298b): "Relucet autem Creatoris summa potentia et sapientia et benevolentia in rebus creatis".

<sup>28</sup> *Itin.*, 1,12 (V, 298b): "Secundo modo aspectus fidelis considerans hunc mundum, attendit originem, decursum et terminum. Nam fide credimus, aptata esse saecula Verbo vitae (Hebr 11,13); fide credimus, trium legum tempora, scilicet naturae, Scripturae et gratiae sibi succedere et ordinatissime decurrere".

<sup>29</sup> *Itin.*, 1,14 (V, 299ab).  
<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*: "Ordo autem secundum rationem durationis, situationis et influentiae, scilicet per prius et posterius, superius et inferius, nobilius et ignobilius, in libro creaturae insinuat manifeste primi principii primitiam, sublimitatem et dignitatem quantum ad infinitatem potentiae; ordo vero divinarum legum, praeceptorum et iudiciorum in libro Scripturae immensitatem sapientiae"; *Q. de Myst. Trin.*, q. 1, a. 2, resp. (V, 54b-55b): "Hoc autem triplex testimonium attenditur secundum triplicem librum qui est liber creaturae, liber Scripturae et liber vitae... Primus namque liber, qui est liber creaturae, quem ideo dico primum, quia primo sensibus nostris ostenditur, dat testimonium duplex, ut in ore duorum testium stet omne verbum (Deut 19,15). Omnis enim creatura vel est ad Dei vestigium tantum, sicut est natura corporalis, vel est ad Dei imaginem, sicut est creatura intellectualis... Divina providentia dispensative providit testimonium alterius libri, scilicet libri Scripturae, qui quidem editus est secundum divinam revelationem, quae nunquam defuit nec deest a principio mundi usque in finem... Sed quia non omnes obediunt Evangelio (Rom 10,16), et verum illud supra rationem est; ideo providit divina sapientia aeternum testimonium, quod quidem est liber vitae. Hic autem liber vitae per se et in se explicite et expresse testimonium dat irrefragabile Trinitati aeternae his qui revelata facie (2 Cor 3,18) in patria Deum vident, in via autem testimonium secundum influentiam lucis, cuius capax est anima in statu vitae; ut enim dicitur Ioannis primo: Vita erat lux hominum, quia liber iste vitae est lux vera, quae illuminat omnem hominem venientem in hunc mundum (Ioan 1,4,9). Illuminat autem dupliciter, scilicet per lumen inditum et per lumen infusum".



medium, and which is the principle of interpretation of the ultimate goal of life<sup>31</sup>.

The second step of the *Itinerarium* deals with the speculation of God in His vestiges present in the sense world. Bonaventure explains the intricate process of apprehension, by which the macrocosm, or created universe, enters the *minor mundus* that is, the human soul, by means of sense perception<sup>32</sup>. For the medieval mind, created reality was composed of four elements, fire, air, water and earth. Their interaction produced the composite bodies of creation. However, these elements of being are not subject to a haphazard process of interaction. There is a necessary connecting medium which guarantees order and harmony in creation<sup>33</sup>.

The medium which stands as the likeness of the species in the process of apprehension leads to the Trinity itself, since in the Trinity the Son is the expression of the Father's likeness. In the Incarnation Christ is the *medium reducens* who leads us to the fountain-source of life who is the Father. Emanating from the Father as Image, Word and Son, Christ returns to the Father through His Paschal Mystery on the Cross, and with Him leads back all creation. Christ becomes the archetype upon whom we should read the book of creation. The medium of apprehension in the senses is necessarily based upon the unique cosmic medium who partakes of the divinity as well as of creation in His human condition<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> C. DEL ZOTTO, *La Teologia dell'Immagine in San Bonaventura*, Vicenza 1977, 190: "La rivelazione della croce ci manifesta l'amore di Dio con estrema chiarezza. Nella croce si apre non solo il libro della natura, ma anche il libro della coscienza, affinché in esso si riveli il libro della vita, che è Cristo, libro scritto dentro e fuori".

<sup>32</sup> *Iin.*, 2,2-3 (V, 300a): "Notandum igitur, quod iste mundus, qui dicitur *macrocosmos*, intrat ad animam nostram, quae dicitur *minor mundus*, per portas quinque sensuum... Homo igitur, qui dicitur *minor mundus*, habet quinque sensus quasi quinque portas, per quas intrat cognitio omnium, quae sunt in mundo sensibilis, in animam ipsius".

<sup>33</sup> Cfr. A. SCHAEFER, *The Position and Function of Man in the Created World*, in *FS* 21 (1961) 238-245.

<sup>34</sup> *Iin.*, 2,7 (V, 301ab): "Haec autem omnia sunt vestigia, in quibus speculari possumus Deum nostrum. - Nam cum species *apprehensa* sit similitudo in medio genita et deinde ipsi organo impressa et per illam impressionem in suum principium, scilicet in obiectum cognoscendum, ducat; manifeste insinuat, quod illa lux aeterna generat ex se similitudinem seu splendorem coaequalem, consubstantialiorem et coaeternalem; et quod ille qui est *imago invisibilis Dei et splendor gloriae et figura substantiae eius* (Col 1,15 et Hebr 1,3) qui ubique est per primam sui generationem, sicut obiectum in toto medio suam generat similitudinem,

The sense world is also composed of numbers, or abstract elements of quantity. Bonaventure follows Augustine's sevenfold schema of numbers, but draws a synthesis when he points at the common denominator which unites all species of numbers, namely, proportion. Proportion consists in the fact that all beings are beautiful and pleasurable. In the speculation of the sense world through the seven species of numbers we arrive at wisdom itself<sup>35</sup>. The heptagesimal structure is closely linked with the sexagesimal according to the axiom: *septima aetas currit cum sexta*<sup>36</sup>. It is true that this principle should be applied particularly to Bonaventure's theology of history in the *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*, but in the light of the mathematical medium which we shall consider in this work, it becomes evident that Christ Crucified is the principle of proportion in cosmic reality, since He is the closed circle of perfection in the symbol of the number six, leading to the realm of perfect harmony and peace symbolized in the number seven.

Through creation and in the sense world, the human soul therefore arrives at the intuition of God Himself by perceiving creatures as signs pointing to their origin, exemplar and ultimate end<sup>37</sup>. Bonaventure draws a synthesis when he ranks creatures according to their degree of God-likeness:

per gratiam unionis unitur, sicut species corporali organo, individuo rationalis naturae, ut per illam unionem nos reduceret ad Patrem sicut ad fontale principium et obiectum. Si ergo omnia cognoscibilia habent sui speciem generare, manifeste proclamant, quod in illis tanquam in speculis videri potest aeterna generatio Verbi, Imaginis et Filii a Deo Patre aeternaliter emanantis".

<sup>35</sup> *Iin.*, 2,10 (V, 302b): "Cum igitur omnia sunt *pulchra* et quodam modo *delectabilia*; et *pulchritudo* et *delectatio* non sint absque *proportione*; et *proportio* primo sit in numeris: necesse est, omnia esse numerosa; ac per hoc 'numerus est praecipuum in animo Conditoris exemplar' (Boethius, *De institutione arithmetica* I, c. 2, in PL 63, 1983) et in rebus praecipuum vestigium duces in Sapientiam".

<sup>36</sup> Cfr. J. RATZINGER, *The Theology of History*, 15. Also, page 173, note 3, where the author gives the source of the axiom in Rupert of Deutz. For Bonaventure's interpretation of the number six, cfr. pages 234-235, note 39, where the author presents the various texts regarding this cyclic number, such as: *Comm. Luc.*, c. 9, n. 47 (VII, 231b); *Brevil.*, 6,12 (V, 278b); "Senarius est primus numerus perfectus"; *Apol.*, 3,8 (VIII, 246b); *Hex.*, 4,15-16 (V, 351b); *Hex.*, 15,17 (V, 400b): "Sexta die factus est homo princeps bestiarum, et respondet *senio*, quae aetas est matura et apta sapientiae; et respondet sextae aetati, quae est a Christo usque ad finem mundi; et in sexta aetate Christus natus est, sexta die crucifixus, septimo mense conceptus post conceptionem Ioannis. Sapientia ergo sexta aetate incarnata est".

<sup>37</sup> *Iin.*, 2,11-12 (V, 302b-303a).

"Omnis enim creatura ex natura est illius aeternae sapientiae quaedam effigies et similitudo, sed specialiter illa quae in libro Scripturae per spiritum prophetiae assumta est ad spiritualium praefigurationem; specialius autem illae creaturae, in quarum effigie Deus angelico ministerio voluit apparere; specialissime vero ea quam voluit ad significandum instituere, quae tenet non solum rationem signi secundum nomen commune, verum etiam Sacramenti."<sup>38</sup>

Within the framework outlined in these words, Christ appears to be the perfect Person raised to the rank of a sacrament in His Incarnation and Crucifixion, since His flesh is the outward sign of the divinity within. But it seems that Bonaventure also has another person at the back of his mind, who realized this synthesis of God-likeness in his own body, which was raised to become an effigy of the unique sacrament who is Christ. The *Itinerarium* leads to the figure of the stigmatized Francis, who is the perfect man created in the likeness of the eternal wisdom, elevated through the spirit of prophecy to delve into the profound meaning of the book of Scripture, enriched with the angelic ministry to be a herald of peace, and elevated to the highest degree of resemblance to God through his sacramental union with the Crucified Word.

The third step regards the speculation of God through His image stamped upon our natural powers. Bonaventure introduces another major symbol in the *Itinerarium* – the temple. From this step onwards, the soul enters into the structure of the temple. While in the preceding couple of stages it stood in the courtyard, that is, outside the temple, now it enters the building, but it stands before the inner sanctuary, where it penetrates only in the fifth step. Even the temple is a Christological symbol. According to Cousins, the temple is an internal symbol and connotes depth, just as the Seraph is an external symbol and connotes height<sup>39</sup>.

The human soul is therefore called to go a step further and enter into itself, so that it may see God through its natural powers

<sup>38</sup> *Itin.*, 2,12 (V, 303a).

<sup>39</sup> E. COUSINS, *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites*, 85–86: "Both symbols (seraph and temple) converge in Christ. For the seraph is in the form of the crucified, and at the innermost center of the temple we encounter Christ the mercysent. Thus through the symbols of the *Itinerarium* Bonaventure implies that Christ effects the coincidence of the external and the internal, the highest and the deepest".

of memory, intelligence and will<sup>40</sup>. In this step it is enlightened by truth and begins to reveal its proper role as an image of the Trinity, occupying a higher degree of God-likeness than the vestige.

The intellect is capable of knowing being in itself, but only with the help of divine light emanating from above. This light is the eternal Word which, coming into the world to assume human nature in the Incarnation, enlightens every person in search of truth with the same light it possesses at the beginning in its relationship of love within the Trinity<sup>41</sup>.

Indeed, all the three faculties of the human soul are an image of the Trinity, in which the Father is the *mens generans*, the Son is the *verbum* and the Holy Spirit is the bond of *amor*<sup>42</sup>. Even natural philosophy is a reflection upon this threefold image of the Trinity, so that metaphysics regards being in itself, and hence the Father, as first principle; mathematics regards numbers and figures, and therefore the Son as Image, particularly in His Crucifixion as *medium mathematicum*; physics regards power and diffusive activity, leading to the Spirit who is the gift of all holiness<sup>43</sup>.

The fourth step deals with the speculation of God and His image reformed by grace. In this chapter Christology plays a central role. "The entire chapter is focused on Christ's work of redemption, viewed not as satisfying for sin but as restoring the image of God. In this Bonaventure is echoing not the Anselmian satisfaction tradition, but the Greek Father's notion of the restoration of the image in man through Christ the Image of the Father"<sup>44</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> *Itin.*, 3,1 (V, 303b): "Intra igitur ad te et vide, quoniam mens tua amat ferventissima semetipsam; nec se posset amare, nisi se nosset; nec se nosset, nisi sui meminisset, quia nihil capimus per intelligentiam, quod non sit praesens apud nostram memoriam; et ex hoc advertis, animam tuam triplicem habere potentiam".

<sup>41</sup> *Itin.*, 3,3 (V, 304b): "Scit (mens nostra) igitur in illa luce, quae illuminat omnem hominem venientem in hunc mundum (Ioan 1,9), quae est lux vera et Verbum in principio apud Deum (Ioan 1,1)".

<sup>42</sup> *Itin.*, 3,5 (V, 305a): "Haec tria, scilicet mens generans, verbum et amor, sunt in anima quoad memoriam, intelligentiam et voluntatem, quae sunt consubstantiales, coaequales et coeavae, se invicem circumcendentes. Si igitur Deus perfectus est spiritus, habet memoriam, intelligentiam et voluntatem, habet et Verbum genitum et Amorem spiratum".

<sup>43</sup> *Itin.*, 3,6 (V, 305b).

<sup>44</sup> E. COUSINS, *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites*, 83.

In order to explain how the process of restoration of the image is realized, Bonaventure uses the symbol of the ladder. Through sin humankind had broken the first ladder leading to God. But eternal truth, lost as a result of sin, came to aid humankind by assuming human nature in Christ, who restored the broken ladder linking mankind with God in His Crucifixion<sup>45</sup>. Christ Crucified therefore becomes the door leading us back into the Father, since He is our Mediator. Through Him we pass as through a door, with the help of the theological virtues, to enter paradise, at the centre of which stands the tree of life<sup>46</sup>. In other words, through the Paschal experience of the Cross, we acquire the life which we lost as a result of sin, and we have full right to aspire for the peace of contemplation reserved for those who fix their gaze upon the Cross, the tree of life in the midst of paradise.

The image of Christ, who is the door leading to paradise, is central for a thorough understanding of the meaning of the Crucified Word in the *Itinerarium*, as well as to its significance in this stage of development of Bonaventure's thought. The door to life passes through the humanity of the Word of life, manifested especially in the Crucifixion. The final aim of Bonaventure is that of preparing his readers for the goal of the *Itinerarium*, which is characterized by a passing over, that is, by a Paschal experience. That is why he is hinting at the centrality of the experience of the Crucified all the

<sup>45</sup> *Itin.*, 4,2 (V, 306a): "Et quoniam, ubi quis ceciderit, necesse habet ibidem recumbere, nisi apponat quis et adiciat, ut resurgat (Is 24,20); non potuit anima nostra perfecte ab his sensibilibus relevari ad contumtum sui et aeternae Veritatis in se ipsa, nisi Veritas, assumpta forma humana in Christo, fieret sibi scala reparans priorem scalam, quae fracta fuerat in Adam".

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*: "Ideo, quantumcumque sit illuminatus quis lumine naturae et scientiae acquirat, non potest intrare in se, ut in se ipso deleatur in Domino (Ps 36,4), nisi mediante Christo, qui dicit: Ego sum ostium. Per me si quis introierit, salvabitur et ingredietur et egredietur et pasca inveniet (Ioan 10,9). Ad hoc autem ostium non appropinquamus, nisi in ipsum credamus, speremus et amemus. Necesse est igitur, si reintrare volumus ad fruitionem Veritatis tanquam ad paradysum, quod ingrediamur per fidem, spem et caritatem mediatoris Dei et hominum Iesu Christi, qui est tanquam lignum vitae in medio paradysi (Gen 2,9)". The image of the Cross as a tree of life is developed in the treatise *Lignum Vitae* (VIII, 68–86). In the prologue, Bonaventure sees the Crucified Word as the medicine which heals all those who believe: *Lig. VII.*, Prol., 3 (VIII, 69a): "Porro ex huius arboris stipte duodecim rami frondibus, floribus et fructibus adornati consurgunt, sicutque folium eius contra omne genus morbi medicamentum efficacissimum, tam praeservans quam reparans, pro eo quod verbum crucis virtus Dei est in salutem omnium credentium (Rom 1,16)".

time. Although some hints may seem too subtle to be grasped as referring explicitly to the Crucified Word, there is no doubt that Bonaventure proposes this journey, passing through Christ Crucified as through a door. Indeed, in front of this entry into the divine life of the Trinity through the suffering humanity of the Crucified Word of God, the *Itinerarium* can offer no other alternative way but this.

The instruments by which the soul undertakes the journey into itself are the theological virtues. These correspond to the three classical hierarchical stages of purification, illumination and perfection<sup>47</sup>. Bonaventure dedicates an *opusculum* by the name *De Triplici Via* to the three hierarchical acts. In our consideration of this work we shall see how these acts are fundamental in the soul's spiritual journey, especially when they are seen in the light of the mystery of the Crucified Word. In this chapter of the *Itinerarium* Bonaventure lays down the basic notion of hierarchy by referring to Christ as the Hierarch who purifies, enlightens and perfects the soul, the Uncreated, Incarnate and Inspired Word, who leads humankind to the heavenly Jerusalem as the way, the truth and the life<sup>48</sup>.

The effect of this triple process is the restoration of the spiritual senses of the soul, which becomes once more capable of entering into an experience of love with Christ<sup>49</sup>. Bonaventure emphasizes

<sup>47</sup> *Itin.*, 4,3 (V, 306b): "Supervenienda est igitur imago mentis nostrae tribus virtutibus theologicis, quibus anima purificatur, illuminatur et perfectitur". Bonaventure draws these notions mainly from the theology of the Pseudo-Dionysius, author of the following works; *De Caesari Hierarchia*, in PG 3, 119–370; *De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*, in PG 3, 369–584; *De Divinis Nominibus*, in PG 3, 585–996; *De Mystica Theologia* in PG 3, 997–1064.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*: "Anima igitur credens, sperans et amans Iesum Christum, qui est Verbum incarnatum, increatum et inspiratum, scilicet via, veritas et vita (Ioan 14,6)". In the *Brevil.*, Prol., 3 (V, 205a), Bonaventure explains how theology leads to Christ the Hierarch as a ladder uniting heaven and earth: "Unde ipsa (theologia) ... quasi scalam erigit, quae in sui infimo tangit terram, sed in suo cacumine tangit caelum; et hoc totum per illum unum hierarcham, Iesum Christum".

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*: "Dum per fidem (anima) credit in Christum tanquam in Verbum increatum, quod est Verbum et splendor Patris, recuperat spirituales auditum et visum, auditum ad suscipiendum Christi sermones, visum ad considerandum illius lucis splendor. Dum autem spes suscipit ad suscipiendum Verbum inspiratum, per desiderium et affectum recuperat spirituales olfactum. Dum caritate completitur Verbum incarnatum, ut suscipiens ab ipso delectationem et ut transiens in illud per ecstasium amorem, recuperat gustum et tactum".



logically close to the *Itinerarium*. It is important to consider its contents for two reasons. First of all, because *De Triplici Via* regards the hierarchical way of purification, illumination and perfection, which can be seen as a parallel journey to the one contemplated in the *Itinerarium*. Secondly, because it is highly probable that this treatise was written shortly before Bonaventure was commissioned to compose an official biography of Saint Francis by the Chapter of Narbonne. So this work could definitely have influenced the *Legenda Maior*.

*De Triplici Via* is made up of three chapters, dealing respectively with meditation, prayer and contemplation, each of which is characterized by the triple process of purification, leading to peace, illumination, leading to truth, and perfection, leading to charity<sup>62</sup>. What we shall attempt in this section is simply an analysis of the various stages, with the aim of individuating the relevance of the mystery of the Crucified Word in this process, and noting points of contact with the *Itinerarium*.

In the case of meditation, the first process towards spiritual progress is the purification of the conscience from sin. One of the motives which Bonaventure gives for purification in meditation is the remembrance of Christ's love for humankind when He shed His blood on the Cross. Christ's blood has the threefold power to wash away sin, to give life and to move the soul to yield fruit in its turn<sup>63</sup>.

Purification in meditation prepares for the uplifting of the soul. It is a painful process, but it leads to love and joy, since it becomes a responsible participation in the mystery of the Cross<sup>64</sup>.

When the soul is enlightened during meditation it turns to behold the pure rays of intelligence emanating from God. One of the elements which are of help in this process is the consideration of the Father's overflowing love for humankind when He gave over

<sup>62</sup> *Tr. Via*, Prol. (VIII, 3b): "Purgatio autem ad pacem ducit, illuminatio ad veritatem, perfectio ad caritatem".

<sup>63</sup> *Tr. Via*, 1,7 (VIII, 5ab): "Secundo acuiur, dum considerat homo sanguinem crucis effusum pro humano corde excitando, pro eodem abluendo, postremo pro ipso mollicando; vel effusum pro humana immunditia abluendo, morte vivificanda, ariditate fecundanda. Quis igitur tam hebes, ut permittat in se regnare culpam negligentiae vel concupiscentiae, vel nequitiae, qui cogitat se perfusum illo pretiosissimo sanguine?"

<sup>64</sup> *Tr. Via*, 1,9 (VIII, 6a): "Incipit ergo via ista a stimulo conscientiae et terminatur ad affectum spiritualis laetitiae, et exercetur in dolore, sed consumatur in amore".

His Son as a gift, friend and nourishment to every soul. Bonaventure binds closely together the Incarnation and Passion with their mystical representation in the Eucharistic sacrifice<sup>65</sup>.

Perfection in meditation is had when the soul acquires the flame of wisdom, when it rises above attachment to creatures, is inflamed with charity and arrives at the heights of meditation through desire for union with God. Bonaventure explains this last process through apophatic theology, as he does in the *Itinerarium*, especially in chapter seven, where he notes that mystical union leaves aside intellectual speculation to the guided by an affective desire for God<sup>66</sup>.

This triple process of meditation can be accomplished only with the help of Scripture, since Scripture deals with the mystery of reparation of our fallen human nature as a result of God's infinite love manifested in His Crucified Son<sup>67</sup>.

Prayer is the fruit of meditation. It also leads the soul to wisdom through the triple process of purification, illumination and perfection, corresponding to the deploration of the misery of sin, the imploring of God's mercy and the rendering of adoration (*exhibitio laetiae*).

<sup>65</sup> *Tr. Via*, 1,13 (VIII, 6b): "Secundo, dedit Filium suum et hoc in fratrem et amicum, dedit in pretium, dat quotidie in cibum: primum in incarnatione, secundum in passione, tertium in consecratione".

<sup>66</sup> *Tr. Via*, 1,17 (VIII, 7ab): "Tertio, sublevandus est, et hoc supra omne sensibile, imaginabile et intelligibile, hoc ordine, ut homo immediate de ipso, quem optat perfecte diligere, primo mediando dicat sibi, quod ille quem diligit, non est sensibilis, quia non est visibilis, audibilis, odorabilis, gustabilis, tangibilis, et ideo non est sensibilis, sed totus desiderabilis (Cant 5,16). Secundo, ut cogitet, quod non est imaginabilis, quia non est terminabilis, figurabilis, numerabilis, circumscriptibilis, cummutabilis, et ideo non est imaginabilis, sed totus desiderabilis. Tertio, ut cogitet, quod non est intelligibilis, quia non est demonstrabilis, definibilis, opinabilis, aestimabilis, investigabilis, et ideo non est intelligibilis, sed totus desiderabilis".

<sup>67</sup> *Tr. Via*, 1,18 (VIII, 7b): "Ex his igitur liquide patet, qualiter ad sapientiam sacrae Scripturae pervenitur mediando circa viam purgativam, illuminativam et perfectivam. Et non solum sacrae Scripturae continentia, immo etiam omnis meditatio nostra versari debet circa ista. Nam omnis meditatio sapientis aut est circa opera humana, cogitando scilicet, quid homo fecerit et quid debeat facere, et quae sit ratio movens; aut circa opera divina, cogitando scilicet, quanta Deus homini commiserit, quia omnia propter ipsum fecit, quanta dimiserit et quanta promiserit; et in hoc clauduntur opera conditionis, reparationis et glorificationis; aut circa utrorumque principia, quae sunt Deus et anima, qualiter sint invicem copulanda. Et hic stare debet omnis meditatio nostra, quia hic est finis omnis cogitationis et operationis, et est sapientia vera, in qua est cognitio per veram experientiam".

Bonaventure links mercy with Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. Christ Crucified intercedes for us as a minister of mercy. Commenting upon Hebrews 9,24<sup>68</sup>, Bonaventure states that, on the Cross, Christ manifested the face of God the Father in heaven, so that we would trust in His overflowing mercy. By undertaking the same arduous passage of the Cross, and by bearing patiently with tribulation, we would be able to acquire the vision of the Father through the divinity hidden within Christ's Crucified body<sup>69</sup>.

The adoration due to God alone implies reverence, benevolence, and a profound joy participated between God and the soul. Bonaventure bases this last element upon the dynamics of divine love manifested on the Cross. Quoting Richard of Saint Victor<sup>70</sup>, the Seraphic Doctor classifies love under three aspects, namely, a gratuitous love, a love which is due, and a love which is a mixture of both<sup>71</sup>.

Bonaventure applies this triple notion of love to Paul's theology in Galatians 6,14<sup>72</sup>. He states that, in the case of gratuitous love, the world is crucified for man. In the case of a love which is due, man is crucified for the world. In the love which is a mixture of both, man is crucified for the benefit of the world<sup>73</sup>.

The theological context in which this expression can be interpreted is that of a new creation. On one part Bonaventure presents a carnal world, closed in itself and separated from its Creator. On the other side stands man, who is called to tear away the net of egoism which keeps the human person enslaved in the carnal world. The result is an option for the Cross. In order to have life one should

<sup>68</sup> Hebr 9,24: "Non enim in manufacta sancta Iesus introivit exemplaria verorum, sed in ipsum caelum, ut apparet nunc vultui Dei pro nobis".

<sup>69</sup> Tr. Via, 2,3 (VII, 8b): "Secundum habemus (implorationem misericordiae cum fiducia spei) a Christo, qui pro nobis obtulit se in cruce in terra, apparet vultui Dei Patris in caelo in gloria (Hebr 9,24), offertur in Sacramento a matre Ecclesia".

<sup>70</sup> De Trinitate, V, c. 16, in PL 196, 961.

<sup>71</sup> Tr. Via, 2,8 (VIII, 9b): "Complacitiam vero debemus Deo triplici modo exolvere... In prima est amor gratuitus, in secunda amor debitus, in tertia amor ex utroque permixtus".

<sup>72</sup> Gal 6,14: "Mihi autem absit gloriari, nisi in cruce Domini nostri Iesu Christi, per quem mihi mundus crucifixus est et ego mundo".

<sup>73</sup> Tr. Via, 2,8 (VIII, 9b): "In prima crucifigitur mundus homini, in secunda homo mundo, in tertia crucifigitur homo pro mundo, ut pro omnibus velit mori, ut et ipsi placeant Deo".

consider the world of egoism as a crucified reality and crucify oneself for the world. This process implies a definite refusal of death and an openness to life, received as a grace in Christ's Cross which introduces humankind into a new creation. The true man, Jesus Christ, joins the world and all humankind in His Crucified Person.

A proof of this perfect charity is the desire to be united with Christ Crucified through the gift of martyrdom. Martyrdom expresses the love due to God as well as that gratuitously given to the brethren. Through martyrdom the soul is enlightened and perfected in such a way that it can now enter the stage of contemplation, where it beholds divinity itself<sup>74</sup>.

Bonaventure classifies charity according to six stages leading to perfect love of God. The first step is *suavitas* which can be described as an experience of the tenderness of God's love. Next comes *aviditas*, which corresponds perfectly to the notion of desire in the *Itinerarium*<sup>75</sup>. Third in the list is *saturitas*, or full satisfaction. The fourth quality of charity is *ebrietas*, or rapture, which Bonaventure describes as a thirsting after suffering. It could be described in terms of Paul's theology of the folly of the Cross<sup>76</sup>. The fifth step is *securitas*, a feeling of belongingness and a decision never to separate oneself from the loved object. The goal of the whole process is the sixth stage, which Bonaventure calls *tranquillitas* residing in

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*: "Et hic est status et gradus perfectae caritatis, ante cuius assecutionem nemo debet se aestimare perfectum. Tunc autem hanc perfectionem assequitur, quando cor semper invenit non solum voluntarium, sed etiam avidissimum ad moriendum pro salute proximorum, secundum quod Paulus dicebat: Ego libentissime impendam et superimpendam ipse pro animabus vestris (2 Cor 12,15). Ad hanc perfectam dilectionem proximi non pervenitur, nisi prius perveniat ad perfectam dilectionem Dei, propter quem diligitur proximus, qui non est amabilis nisi propter Deum".

<sup>75</sup> Tr. Via, 2,9 (VIII, 10a): "Secundus gradus est aviditas, quando scilicet anima assuefieri coeperit circa illam suavitatem, nascitur in ea tanta esuries, ut nihil possit eam reficere nisi eum quem amat, possideat perfecte; quod quia non potest in praesenti attingere, quia longe est, continue excedit et egreditur extra per amorem ecstaticum, clamans et dicens illud beati Iob: Suspendium elegit anima mea et mortem ossa mea (Iob 7,15), quoniam, sicut desiderat cervus ad fontes aquarum, ita desiderat anima mea ad te, Deus (Ps 41,2)".

<sup>76</sup> Tr. Via 2,10 (VIII, 10b): "Quartus gradus est ebrietas, quae oritur ex saturitate. Ebrietas autem in hoc consistit, quod quis tanto amore diligit Deum, ut iam non solum fastidia solatio, sed etiam delectetur et quaeratur tormentum pro solatio, et amore eius quem diligit, delectetur in poenis, opprobriis et flagellis, sicut Apostolus. Unde sicut ebrius se ipsum denudat sine pudore et sustinet plagas sine dolore, sic in isto intelligendum est".

Solomon's throne. The closeness of this symbolic image of the *Itinerarium* is evident<sup>77</sup>.

When he recapitulates the contents on the section on prayer, Bonaventure refers to Paul's salutations to Timothy, where the apostle speaks of grace, mercy and peace. The Seraphic Doctor shows how these three converge in the spiritual journey of the soul, so that grace is the initial force helping the soul to proceed along the journey which leads it to peace in contemplation. In between, God's mercy is made manifest in the spiritual progress of the soul<sup>78</sup>. It seems that, in these expressions, we can find a remote plan of the *Legenda Maior*. In fact, Bonaventure presents Francis as a man signed by God's grace, which appears in him, helped along in his spiritual journey by God's mercy, and rapt in an ecstatic experience in the peaceful contemplation of Christ Crucified.

Contemplation occupies the highest degree of the soul's spiritual progress. It leads to perfect wisdom. Bonaventure introduces this last section of *De Triplici Via* with the eschatological image of the heavenly Jerusalem, which is an image of the Church. In this state of glory, God gives a triple gift, namely the reaching of eternal peace, the vision of manifest truth and the fruition of full goodness and charity, corresponding respectively to the angelic hierarchies of Thrones, Cherubim and Seraphim<sup>79</sup>. Again, each one of these gifts is the fruit of the triple process of purification, illumination and perfection<sup>80</sup>.

<sup>77</sup> *Tr. Via*, 2,11 (VIII, 106): "In tali mente pax est et status ultimus et quies, et ibi requiescit verus Salomon, quoniam in pace factus est locus eius (Ps 75,3). - Et ideo valde convenienter isti gradus significantur per illos sex gradus, quibus ascendebatur ad thronum Salomonis".

<sup>78</sup> *Tr. Via*, 2,12 (VIII, 111): "Qui autem six exciterit se continue et intente, proficiet in caritate secundum sex gradus praedictos, quibus pervenitur ad perfectionem tranquillitatis, ubi est multitudo pacis et quasi quidam finis quietis, quam Dominus reliquit Apostolis (cfr. Ioan 14,27). Unde nota, quod Apostolus in qualibet salutatione (cfr. 1 Tim 1,12; 2 Tim 1,2) optabat gratiam et pacem: gratiam tanquam primordiale et pacem tanquam complementum; ad Timotheum autem interponit misericordiam quae est utriusque principium".

<sup>79</sup> *Tr. Via*, 3,1 (VIII, 11a - 12a): "Per contemplationem namque transit mens nostra in supernam Jerusalem, ad cuius instar est formata Ecclesia... In gloria autem triplex est dos, in qua consistit perfectio praemii, scilicet summae pacis aeternalis tentio, summae veritatis manifesta visio, summae bonitatis vel caritatis plena fruitio. Et secundum hoc distinguitur triplex ordo in suprema hierarchia caelesti, scilicet Thronorum, Cherubim et Seraphim".

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*: "Necessae est igitur, ad unumquodque trium praedictorum per tres gradus ascendere secundum triplicem viam, scilicet purgativam, quae consistit in expulsiōne peccati; illuminativam, quae consistit in imitatione Christi; unitivam, quae consistit in susceptione Sponsi".

Bonaventure explains each of these three gifts, namely, peace, truth and charity, according to a sevenfold process. He speaks of seven steps leading to the enjoyment of peace, to the splendour of truth and to the sweetness of charity. We shall individuate these steps which are connected in some way with the contemplation of Christ Crucified.

On the way to peace, and precisely in the sixth step, the soul desires martyrdom, so that purified it may be one with Christ. This leads it immediately into the peace of the seventh step, where it is "overshadowed" by Christ<sup>81</sup>.

The seven steps leading to the splendour of truth are intimately linked with the mystery of the Cross. Their object is the imitation of the suffering Christ. The soul contemplates first of all the Person who suffers. He is Christ, the Son of God, the beginning of all creation, the saviour of humanity, the one who retributes in judgement. Next, the soul contemplates the actual sufferings of Christ, to be united with Him through compassion<sup>82</sup>. Third, the soul considers the intense nature of Christ's sufferings to be led on to contemplate the cause of His sufferings, namely, its own Redemption, and hence to become inflamed with devotion<sup>83</sup>. The fifth step regards the manner in which Christ suffered, namely, in His obedience to the Father and in the example of profound humility. The sixth step is a feeling of intense desire to suffer with Christ, a mystical embracing of the Cross<sup>84</sup>. The seventh stage is an eschatological vision of the result of Christ's sufferings, presented in the apocalyptic image of the opening of the seven seals of the scroll by the immolated lamb<sup>85</sup>.

<sup>81</sup> *Tr. Via*, 3,2 (VIII, 12b): "Sexto ardor in appetitione martyrii... Septimo loco sequitur sapor in obumbratione Christi, ubi status est et requies, dum homo sentit, se protegi sub umbra alarum divinarum".

<sup>82</sup> *Tr. Via*, 3,3 (VIII, 12b): "Secundo qualis est qui patitur, et ei coniungere per compassionis affectum".

<sup>83</sup> *Tr. Via*, 3,3 (VIII, 13a): "Quarto, qua de causa patitur, et te ipsum obliviscere per devotionis excessum, quia scilicet patitur pro tua redemptione, illuminatione, sanctificatione, glorificatione".

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*: "Sexto attende, quanta sunt quae patitur, et crucem amplectere per passionis desiderium".

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*: "Septimo considera, quid ad hoc consequitur, quod patitur, et veritatis radium intueri per contemplationis oculum: quoniam ex hoc, quod Agnus passus est, septem signacula libri aperta sunt, Apocalypsis quinto. Liber iste est universalis rerum notitia, in qua septem erant clausa homini, quae quidem sunt per passionis Christi efficaciam reserata, scilicet Deus admirabilis, spiritus intelligibilis, mundus sensibilis, paradus desiderabilis,

The seven seals stand for the revelation of the mystery of the Cross. They reveal God's wisdom, justice and mercy, manifested upon the Cross, where the devil was tricked by wisdom, Redemption's price was given through justice, and mercy was shown through the offering of the Son as a sacrifice for our salvation<sup>86</sup>. Upon the Cross the angels participated in Christ's sacrifice, humankind was restored to its former dignity, and the devil, who suggested the Crucifixion as a punishment, was confused by its positive outcome. The sensible world is the third element revealed in the Cross, which gave light where darkness reigned, life in Christ where there was sterility, innocence where there was iniquity. In the Cross humankind regained its lost paradise, because Christ Crucified reformed His image which had been obscured through humankind's iniquity, misery and poverty in the negative sense of privation of grace. The Cross also revealed the terrible anguish of hell. The power of the Cross is manifested in the life which Christ Crucified gave to us when He opened heaven's doors for our restored humanity. Finally, the Cross is a medicine against the arrogance of the will, the avid desire for possessions and the lust of the flesh. In a solemn expression, Bonaventure synthesizes the revelatory dimension of the Cross:

"Ecce igitur, quomodo omnia in cruce manifestantur"<sup>87</sup>.

At the end of the *De Triplici Via* Bonaventure presents the double way of contemplation, namely, the positive and negative approaches. These correspond to Augustine's and the Pseudo-Dionysius' approaches respectively<sup>88</sup>. The first approach is based upon the contemplation of the Trinity as inaccessible light, as invariable intellect and as incomprehensible peace. It attributes to God three sets of qualities which are most manifest in the individual Persons of the Trinity, namely, unity, truth and goodness, power, wisdom and will, height, beauty and sweetness.

*infernus horribilis, virtus laudabilis, reatus culpabilis*"; *Feria VI Parasc. Sermo II* (IX, 264ab): "Septem sigilla sunt septem considerationes passionis Christi, quas circa dominicam passionem debet quilibet considerare".

<sup>86</sup> *Tr. Via*, 3,4 (VIII, 13ab): "Primo igitur *Deus admirabilis* per crucem manifestatus est esse summae et imperscrutabilis sapientiae, summae et irreprensibilis iustitiae, summae et inenarrabilis misericordiae. Summa enim sua sapientia decepti diabolum, summa iustitia quaesivit redemptionis pretium, summa misericordia pro nobis tradidit Filium".

<sup>87</sup> *Tr. Via*, 3,5 (VIII, 14a).

<sup>88</sup> *Tr. Via*, 3,11–14 (VIII, 16b–18b).

The negative approach is proper to the Greek Fathers. Bonaventure uses this apophatic terminology to describe ecstatic rapture in God, especially through the image of darkness in which the glory of the divinity is mystically present<sup>89</sup>. It is in this last category that Bonaventure describes the mysterious experience of Francis upon La Verna, which constitutes the goal of the soul's mystical journey to peace in the union with Christ Crucified.

(c) *The Crucified Word as the goal*

After having outlined the dynamics of the soul's spiritual journey according to *De Triplici Via*, we can now return to the *Itinerarium*, where Bonaventure describes the goal of the journey in chapter seven, centred upon mystical contemplation and ecstasy. The soul can now contemplate its paschal *transitus* by going beyond itself and into the mystery of God's hidden divinity. It has arrived at the seventh day of rest, or sabbath, after speculating upon the six steps of the journey<sup>90</sup>.

The attention is now drawn to the mercy-seat of propitiation, where the soul finds the centre of its innermost desire, namely, Christ Crucified, the way and the door to peace, the sacrament hidden from all eternity, but revealed in the fullness of time as a Crucified Word, the ultimate expression of the love of the *Deus absconditus*<sup>91</sup>.

<sup>89</sup> *Tr. Via*, 3,13 (VIII, 17b): "Deus non est quid sensibile, sed supersensibile, nec imaginabile nec intelligibile nec existens, sed super omnia haec. Et tunc veritatis aspectus fertur in mentis caliginem et altius elevatur et profundius ingreditur, pro eo quod excedit se omne creatum".

<sup>90</sup> For the symbolic connotations of the number seven: *Brevil.*, Prolog. 2 (V, 203b–204a): "Sexta (aetas) a Christo usque ad finem mundi, septima decurrit cum sexta, quae incipit a quiete Christi in sepulcro, usque ad resurrectionem universalem, quando incipit resurrectionis octava... Septima (aetas), quae est quietis animarum non habens finem, respondet septimae diei, in qua requievit *Deus ab omni opere, quod pararat*" (Gen 2,2); *Brevil.*, 2,2 (V, 220b): "Unde in illis septem diebus quasi seminaliter praecessi distinctio omnium temporum, quae explicantur per decursum septem aetatum. Et hinc est, quod sex diebus operum additur septimus quietis, qui dies non scribitur habere vesperam, non quia non habuerit dies illa noctem succedentem; sed ad praefigurandam animarum quietem, quae nunquam habebit finem"; *Hex.*, 15,18 (V, 400b): "Septima aetas currit cum sexta, scilicet requies animarum post Christi passionem"; *Feria II p. Dom. Palm. Sermo V* (IX, 247a): "Postea sequitur septima dies, scilicet paschalis, quae *sopor* potest nominari, quae est quietatio in Deo ex contemplatione et gustu divinae dulcedinis".

<sup>91</sup> *Itin.*, 7,1 (V, 312b): "In quo transitu Christus est *via et ostium* (Ioan 14,6 et 10,7), Christus est *scala et vehiculum* tanquam propitiatorium super arcam Dei collocatum (Exod

In order to describe mystical experience of the Crucified Word, Bonaventure makes use of the category of spiritual vision and clarifies his assertions with the example of Francis' mystical experience on La Verna. We shall attempt to individuate the basic elements of spiritual vision with the help of other texts of the Seraphic Doctor.

One of the best examples of Bonaventure's theology of spiritual vision can be found in the *Commentarius in Evangelium Lucae*, and precisely in the Transfiguration account<sup>92</sup>. Bonaventure regards the Transfiguration as an experience of Resurrection<sup>93</sup>. The mountain-top, which is the place where Jesus is transfigured before the eyes of the three disciples, who experience a mystical vision, becomes pregnant with symbolic connotations. First of all, the mountain is the privileged spot for contemplation<sup>94</sup>. The mountain is the place of revelation, of sacrifice, of divine presence through fire, of mysterious silence and peace, it gives a sense of height and lightness<sup>95</sup>.

The theme of vision enters the scene when the evangelist speaks about the cloud which overshadowed the disciples on the mountain. Bonaventure develops the mystical sense of the cloud which, in itself, denotes darkness, but which is mysteriously inflamed with light. Through this darkness the disciples could contemplate Christ's humanity visible in His flesh, but with the eyes of the spirit they knew that that humanity was hiding the splendour of the divinity within<sup>96</sup>. The contemplative soul is taught through spiritual

25,20) et sacramentum a saeculis absconditum (Eph 3,9)"; De S. Andrea Ap. Sermo I, Collatio (IX, 468b): "Verbum increatum et incarnatum est Verbum sapientiae, et illud coniunctum cruce; ideo crux est fons sapientiae, quia continet in se Christum, fontem sapientiae, thesaurum, sapientiae et scientiae, quia in Christo sunt omnes thesauri sapientiae et scientiae absconditi, secundum Apostolum (Col 2,3)".

<sup>92</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 9, n. 44–68 (VII, 230a–238b).

<sup>93</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 9, n. 44 (VII, 230b): "Sed quoniam perfecta et summa quies et contemplatio non est ante octavam, scilicet resurrectionem; ideo hic dicit: dies octo".

<sup>94</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 9, n. 46 (VII, 231a): "Mons enim est locus eminens et a terrenis ad caelestia porrectus, et ideo contemplationi et orationi idoneus".

<sup>95</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 9, n. 50 (VII, 232a–233a).

<sup>96</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 9, n. 64 (VII, 237b): "Secundum mysticum autem sensum per nubem intelligi potest caro Christi, primo, quia contemperat lumen Divinitatis oculis nostris, ut possimus intrueri".

vision to face the pure radiance of the divinity, but only by passing through the overshadowing power of the cloud of humanity<sup>97</sup>.

The process of vision of light through darkness corresponds to the passage to glory through the Passion. The Transfiguration account is definitely centred upon the mystical sense of Christ's Paschal experience. Bonaventure notes Luke's detail in the account, which shows Christ talking with Moses and Elijah regarding the consummation of His ministry in Jerusalem. In this expression, which in its latin term *excessus* literally means a going out from a situation, Bonaventure sees symbolic elements which refer to its English equivalent *excess*. Thus, Christ's Passion not only denotes a passage from a situation to a new mode of being, but it also manifests an excess of humility, poverty, sorrow and love, in other words, the consummation of our Redemption<sup>98</sup>.

In an important text of the *Commentarius in Secundum Librum Sententiarum*, Bonaventure places vision as the last stage in the process of the knowledge of God, together with faith, contemplation and apparition<sup>99</sup>.

There are some interesting insights regarding spiritual vision also in the *Commentarius in Evangelium Ioannis*. God can be known through clear vision, as the Son knows Him. But, in our

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*: "Ex hoc erudiuntur contemplativi, ut non tantum erigant oculos ad lucem Deitatis radiantem, sed etiam ad nubem humanitatis obumbrantem".

<sup>98</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 9, n. 54 (VII, 234a): "Et quoniam Lex et Prophetiae non tantum attestantur gloriae Christi, sed etiam passioni, quae est via in gloriam; ideo subditur: Et dicebant excessum eius, quem completurus erat in Ierusalem (Luc 9,31). Excessus recte nominat passionem, quia in ea fuit excessus humilitatis... Fuit etiam excessus paupertatis... Fuit excessus doloris... Fuit etiam excessus amoris... Istum excessum complevit in Ierusalem, ubi crucifixus est, in quo fuit consummatio nostrae redemptionis".

<sup>99</sup> *II Sent.*, d. 23, a. 2, q. 3, resp. (II, 545ab): "Nota quod quadruplex est modus cognoscendi Deum, videlicet per fidem, per contemplationem, per apparitionem et per apertam visionem... Aut igitur cognosco Deum per hoc quod est praesens mihi, aut per hoc quod est praesens alii. Si per hoc quod est praesens alii, sic est cognitio fidei... Si autem cognosco Deum per hoc quod est praesens mihi, hoc potest esse tripliciter: aut per hoc quod est praesens mihi in effectu proprio; et tunc est contemplatio... Aut est praesens mihi in signo proprio; et hunc est apparitio... Aut est praesens Deus in lumine suo et in se ipso; et sic est cognitio, qua videtur Deus in vultu suo, sive facie ad faciem, et sic est aperta visio, quae tota dicitur merces omnium meritum"; Cfr. E. LONGPRÉ, *La Théologie Mystique*, in AFH 14 (1921) 88–100.



present human condition, we can know God only in darkness, that is, through contemplative vision<sup>100</sup>.

Explaining John 10,9, which we have already noted in the preceding section regarding the *Itinerarium*, Bonaventure makes use of the category of vision. One enters through the door, who is Christ, when contemplating His divinity. To contemplate Christ's humanity means to go out of the door. Therefore, to find pasture, means to contemplate Christ's divinity through His humanity<sup>101</sup>.

The *Collationes in Evangelium Iohannis* have an entire number dedicated to the theme of spiritual vision<sup>102</sup>. In it Bonaventure develops this theme under a triple aspect, namely, corporal vision of Christ in His historical manifestation, spiritual vision in our present state as wayfarers, and beatific vision, in our future state in glory<sup>103</sup>.

When dealing with creation in the *Breviloquium*, Bonaventure shows how God endowed the human person with a triple vision. One is corporal vision, helping humankind to read the book of creation. The other is rational vision, helping every person to know the hidden meaning of its existence. The last one is contemplative vision, which is the aid to see God after the soul arrives at the intelligence of Scripture through the hierarchical acts<sup>104</sup>.

The theme of spiritual vision is further developed in the *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*. But we shall see this theme more closely in the next section, dedicated to this last work of Bonaventure. Here it suffices to note the importance which spiritual vision assumes in the *Itinerarium* with regards to the whole framework of

<sup>100</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 1, n. 43, q. 3 resp. (VI, 256a): "Alio modo cognoscitur Deus in se; et hoc dupliciter: aut clare, et hoc modo a solo Filio et a Beatis, alio modo in caligine, sicut dicit beatus Dionysius de Mystica Theologia; et sic vidit Moyses, et sublimiter contemplantis, in quorum aspectu nulla figurat imago creaturae".

<sup>101</sup> *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 10, n. 11 (VI, 385b): "Ingredietur ad contemplationem Divinitatis, egredietur ad aspectum humanitatis et pascua inveniet (Ioan 10,9), quia in omnibus reficitur, intellectus in contemplatione Divinitatis, et sensus in contemplatione humanitatis"; *Hex.*, 1,38 (V, 335b): "Agnus enim Dei deducet nos, ut, videntes corpus et animam et Divinitatem, pascua inveniamus sive ingrediendo sive egrediendo".

<sup>102</sup> *Coll. Ioan.*, 79 (VI, 628a-632b).

<sup>103</sup> *Coll. Ioan.*, 79,1 (VI, 628a): "Nota triplicem visionem Salvatoris, qui recte dicitur *salutare Dei*: unam, quoniam recolimus de praeterito, qua visus fuit corporaliter in carne; aliam, quam quaerimus in praesenti, qua videtur spiritualiter in mente, tertiam, quam exspectamus in futuro, qua videbitur feliciter in aeterna beatitudine".

<sup>104</sup> *Brevil.*, 2,12 (V, 230b).

the journey, and especially to its goal in mystical contemplation of the Crucified<sup>105</sup>.

The Paschal Mystery is the object and goal of spiritual vision. Bonaventure speaks of a living experience of intimate union with the Crucified Christ. The soul accomplishes its journey when it comes to rest with Christ in the sepulchre, awaiting the eighth day of Resurrection. The efficacious actualization of salvation on the Cross in the *hodie* of our state as wayfarers becomes the celebration of the passover in contemplative union with Christ<sup>106</sup>.

At this point the Seraphic Doctor presents the figure of Francis as the sublime example of a contemplative soul. The life of the Poverello is a paschal journey towards the mystical vision of the Crucified<sup>107</sup>.

"In the *Itinerarium*, the experience of Francis is drawn into the theological structure to define the center most emphatically as the crucified Christ. The christocentric spirituality of passage is seen clearly as a passage in the cross"<sup>108</sup>.

<sup>105</sup> In the *Itin.*, the category of vision is described through certain verbs, namely, *video* (46x), *respicio* (7x), *miror* (5x), *aspicio* (4x) and *contueor* (5x); Cfr. *ThBon.*, 1, 83-84, 18-19, 66, 11 and 48 respectively. Particular attention merits the verb *contueor*: *Itin.*, 2,11 (V, 302b); 4,2 (V, 306a); 6,1 (V, 310b); 6,2 (V, 311a); 7,1 (V, 312a). A good description of this typically Bonaventurian category is given by C.A. BERNARD, *Conoscenza e Amore nella Vita Mistica*, in *La Mistica. Fenomenologia e Riflessione Teologica*, a cura di E. Ancillotti e M. Paparozzi, Vol. 2, Roma 1984, 279-280: "È possibile trovare un'espressione che rende conto della presenza simultanea dell'elemento affettivo e dell'elemento conoscitivo nell'operazione complessa della coscienza mistica? Senza voler imporre una terminologia rigorosa, ci sembra che la nozione bonaventuriana di *contuitio* possa venire in aiuto per esprimere tale complessità; essa, infatti, non ha la rigidità dell'idea di intuizione e suggerisce piuttosto ciò che è dell'ordine dell'esperienza vissuta. Per sottolineare questo duplice carattere esperienziale e vitale, la si potrebbe tradurre con *co-percezione*: il soggetto, nell'atto stesso di conoscere, percepisce una presenza divina". E. LONGPRÉ, *La Théologie Mystique*, in *AFH* 14 (1921) 97, describes *contuitio* as "une connaissance indirecte par le moyen des vestiges et des similitudes que Dieu a laissés de son Etre dans l'âme et le monde".

<sup>106</sup> *Itin.*, 7,2 (V, 312b): "Ad quod propitiatorium qui aspiciet plena conversione vultus, aspiciendo eum in cruce suspensum per fidem, spem et caritatem, devotionem, admirationem, exultationem, appretiationem, laudem et iubilationem, *pascha*, hoc est transitum (Exod 12,11), cum eo facit, ut per virgam crucis transeat mare rubrum (Exod 16,15; Apoc 2,17), et cum Christo requiescat in tumultu quasi exterius mortuus, sentiens tamen, quantum possibile est secundum statum viae, quod in cruce dictum est latroni cohaerenti Christo: *Hodie mecum eris in paradiso* (Luc 23,43)". The theme of Christ resting in the sepulchre is developed in *Sabbato Sancto. Sermo I* (IX, 267a-270a), where Bonaventure describes the seventh day as a day of repose.

<sup>107</sup> *Itin.*, 7,3 (V, 312b).

<sup>108</sup> Z. HAYES, *The Hidden Center*, 50.

The Paschal Mystery is revealed in the experience of Francis on La Verna. The saint is presented as the example for all those who want to undertake the journey leading to the mystical contemplation of Christ Crucified. The apparition of the six-winged Seraph becomes the climax of an intimate and loving union with God, which Francis realized in its threefold orientation towards creation, towards the human person, seen as a living image of God, and towards God Himself in His self-diffusive goodness.

On La Verna Francis becomes the example of perfect union with the divinity. Bonaventure insists, however, that the ecstatic rapture which Francis experienced was not meant to be simply a personal gift given to him by God. Rather, through his experience of the heights of contemplation, Francis becomes a living model, so that all truly spiritual persons can participate with him in his *transitus* from death to life.

Bonaventure describes the experience of union with the Crucified Word as a mystical wisdom, in which the *apex affectus* of the soul is transferred into God Himself<sup>109</sup>. It is an experience shrouded in secrecy, and accessible only to those souls who desire it ardently, so that they may be inflamed with the fire of the Spirit. This symbolic language is common in describing mystical experience and becomes instrumental when Bonaventure meditates upon the stigmatization account in the *Legenda Maior*.

Mystical wisdom proceeds by way of negativity. Bonaventure quotes the theology of the Greek Fathers, in a particular way, that of the Areopagite. Apophatic theology advocates the vision of God through darkness. God becomes the Being who is the direct opposite of every imaginable attribute we can give to Him. The Seraphic Doctor borrows the prayer which opens the treatise of the Pseudo-Dionysius by the name *De Mystica Theologia*<sup>110</sup>. This prayer develops very clearly the apophatic approach to theology.

<sup>109</sup> *Itin.*, 7,4 (V, 312b). The notion of *apex mentis* or *synderesis scintilla* in *Itin.*, 1,6 (V, 297b) expresses the highest degree of contemplative activity. It is described as an *excessus mentales* in *Itin.*, 4,3 (V, 306b) or as *apex affectus*, as in our case. For a definition of the expression, cfr. T. GOFFI, *La Grazia e le Strutture dell'Anima*, in *La Mistica*, Vol. 2, 141; E. LONGPRÉ, *La Théologie Mystique*, in AFH 14 (1921) 100–102.

<sup>110</sup> *Itin.*, 7,5 (V, 313a). Bonaventure read the latin version of *De Mystica Theologia* by John Scotus Eriugena, which can be found in PL 122, 1171–1176.

The way of mystical ecstasy is therefore that traced by Francis. It implies a going into a mysterious darkness, or cloud of unknowing, where the divinity is felt to be present yet cannot be possessed or explained in any way. Bonaventure, again following the Areopagite, calls this experience *docta ignorantia*. He describes it as early as in his *Commentarius in Secundum Librum Sententiarum*<sup>111</sup>.

This "erudite ignorance" transcends all efforts to give it an adequate explanation. The Areopagite, in fact, says that when the soul is elevated to mystical heights, it sees reality converging as to a synthesis or centre, and words do not serve any more to describe this experience. In some way, the idea is linked with that of the *verbum abbreviatum* which we have already analyzed, referring it to the Crucified Word as to the centre in which all reality converges as to the ultimate meaning and revelation of its existence<sup>112</sup>.

Bonaventure concludes the *Itinerarium* with a splendid exhortation to the soul to undertake the paschal journey with Christ<sup>113</sup>. To do so means to experience the profound abyss of

<sup>111</sup> *II Sent.*, d. 23, a. 2, q. 3, resp. (II, 544b): "Dicit enim Dionysius in libro de Mystica Theologia, quod excellentissimus modus contemplandi est *ignote ascendere*, quia nec ipse Moyses Deum valuit videre, et ideo introductus dicitur fuisse in caliginem. Unde Dionysius vocat eos indoctos, qui dicunt, se nosse eum qui *possit tenebras latibulum suum* (Ps 17,12)"; *II Sent.*, d. 23, a. 2, q. 3, resp. ad 6 (II, 546a): "Concedo tamen nihilominus, quod oculi aspectus in Deum figi potest, ita quod ad nihil aliud *aspiciat*; attamen non *perspiciet* vel videbit ipsius lucis claritatem, immo potius *elevabitur in caliginem* et ad hanc cognitionem *elevabitur per omnium ablationem*, sicut Dionysius dicit in libro De Mystica Theologia, et vocat istam cognitionem *doctam ignorantiam*"; *Brevil.*, 5,6 (V, 260a): "Quo quidem desiderio ferventissimo ad modum ignis spiritus noster non solum efficitur agilis ad ascensum, verum etiam quadam *ignorantia docta* supra se ipsum rapitur in caliginem et excessum".

<sup>112</sup> PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS, *De Mystica Theologia* 3, in PG 3, 1034. Here we shall quote the version of Eriugena, which Bonaventure knew, found in PL 122, 1175: "Quoniam quidem quantum ad superiora respicimus, tantum verba contemplationibus invisibilium coartantur: sicut et nunc in ipsam super intellectum occidentes caliginem, non brevem sermonem, sed sermonis defectum et nominationis inveniemus. Et ibi quidem desursum ad novissima descendens sermo, juxta quantitatem ejus, quae est universaliter ad proportionalem multitudinem, inventus est. Nunc autem ab his, quae deorsum sunt, ab superpositum ascendens, secundum mensuram invni corripitur, et post omne invium totus sine voce erit, et totus adunabitur sono carenti".

<sup>113</sup> *Itin.*, 7,6 (V, 313b): "Si autem quaeras, quomodo haec fiant, interroga gratiam, non doctrinam; desiderium, non intellectum; gemitum orationis, non studium lectionis; spousum, non magistrum; Deum, non hominem; caliginem, non claritatem; non lucem, sed ignem totaliter inflammantem et in Deum excessivis unctionibus et ardentissimis affectionibus transferentem. Qui quidem *ignis* Deus est, et huius *caminus est in Ierusalem* (Is 31,9), et

death, leading to life. Bonaventure uses Job's expression and describes this feeling as a *suspensio*, a process of elevation into God through intense love which desires to die. It can be seen as the participation into the fire of Christ's own love on the Cross. The image of fire is perhaps the most suited to describe this mystical experience. Even the Seraph is, in effect, a fiery being. The entrance into this ardent fire of love, which is dark and burns with radiance at the same time, introduces the soul into the peace of the heavenly Jerusalem, for which it has toiled all during the journey. The original desire for peace of heart is now fully realized. The journey is complete and the circle is closed once and for all, revealing the hidden centre within, under the form of the Crucified.

In the *Itinerarium*, "Bonaventure evokes the entire Paschal mystery by seeing Christ as the one who dies and rises to draw us beyond sin, beyond the limits of the world, beyond ourselves into the mystical union with God. Our instrument for making the passage is the cross"<sup>114</sup>.

The consideration of the mystical theology of the *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* has the aim of leading us to the specific object of our analysis, namely, the life of Saint Francis seen in the context of Bonaventure's theology concerning the *Verbum Crucifixum*. In other words, we intend to see the life of the Poverello as the synthesis of an *experientia crucis* rooted in the humanity of the Incarnate and Crucified Word who is Christ.

The dynamics of the spiritual journey of the soul, as outlined in the *Itinerarium* and, to a certain extent, in the *De Triplici Via*, must be centred in the Cross in order to create a harmonious develop-

Christus hunc accendit in fervore suae ardentissimae passionis, quem solus ille vere percipit, qui dicit: *Suspensum elegi anima mea, et mortem ossa mea* (Iob 7,15). Quam mortem qui diligit videre potest Deum, quia indubitanter verum est: *Non videbit me homo et vivet* (Exod 33,20). — Moriamur igitur et ingrediamur in caliginem, imponamus silentium sollicitudinibus, concupiscentiis et phantasmatibus; transeamus cum Christo crucifixo *ex hoc mundo ad Patrem* (Ioan 13,1), ut, ostendo nobis Patre, dicamus cum Philippo: *Sufficit nobis* (Ioan 14,8)". The vision of the divinity is described in terms of a mystical death in *Hex.*, 2,31 (V, 341b): "Iste autem amor est *sequestrativus, soporativus, sursumactivus*. *Sequestrat* enim ab omni affectu alio propter sponsi affectum unicum; *soporat* et quietat omnes potentias et silentium imponit; *sursum agit*, quia ducit in Deum. Et sic est homo quasi mortuus; et ideo dicitur: *Fortis ut mors dilectio* (Cant 8,6), quia separat ab omnibus. Oportet enim, hominem mori per illum amorem, ut sursum agatur".

<sup>114</sup> E. COUSINS, *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites*, 92.

ment of thought. We have noted the centrality of the Crucified in the soul's spiritual journey. Christ Crucified is the door leading into communion with God. The soul has to undergo the experience of His suffering humanity in order to arrive at the contemplation of His divinity. This passage, or paschal *transitus*, is accomplished in the Cross.

Since the notion of *Verbum Crucifixum* underlines the revelatory dimension of the Cross, one has to search for this particular aspect in order to apply this theology to the *Itinerarium*. One could safely assert that this is possible with the help of the category of transfiguration. In the *Itinerarium*, as well as in the gradual growth of the soul along the hierarchal acts, we can trace an experience of transformation. The soul is transfigured into the image of Christ by undergoing the same experience of glory through suffering which He made. The process of transfiguration reveals the sacramental dimension of the journey, which is made through contemplative vision of the divinity hidden within Christ's humanity.

The *Itinerarium* proves Bonaventure's own experience of mystical contemplation through Christ Crucified, and paves the way for his consideration of the experience of Francis in the *Legenda Maior*. Francis provides what we might call the anthropological medium which helps us to realize that the *Itinerarium* is the journey of each and every one of us. In the experience of Christ Crucified, we are called to retrace our lost centre.

"In the Cross of the Incarnate Word is revealed the heart of God and the center of reality. It is in our relation to this Incarnate and Crucified Word, that our lives will become focused on the center of reality"<sup>115</sup>.

## II. THE "COLLATIONES IN HEXAEMERON"

This group of twenty-three conferences<sup>116</sup> is the last work of Bonaventure at his full maturity as a theologian. They were

<sup>115</sup> Z. HAYES, *The Hidden Center*, 24.

<sup>116</sup> There are two repertoires of the *Hex*. One is that contained in the *Opera Omnia* (V, 329–449). The other one is that edited by F. DELORME, *Collationes in Hexaemeron et bonaventuriana quaedam selecta* (*Bibliotheca Franciscana Scholastica Medii Aevi*, Vol. 8),

delivered at the Paris University in the period 9 April to 28 May 1273, when Bonaventure had to interrupt them after being promoted to the cardinalate by Gregory X in order to pave the way for the Council of Lyons<sup>117</sup>.

After the two sets of *Collationes*, the *Collationes de Decem Praeceptis* (1267) and the *Collationes de Donis Spiritus Sancti* (1268), Bonaventure delivered his lectures on the six days of creation in the midst of another great controversy at the University, namely, the great fervour which arose among the scholars for the philosophy of Aristotle as commented upon by Averroes, and propagated under the influence of Siger de Brabant. The great danger which these philosophical ideas posed for Christianity regarded their intrusion into the terrain of theology, especially in their defence of the eternity of the world and hence of the absolute lack of providence on God's part. Bonaventure refuted all knowledge which did not assume Scripture as its point of departure.

Naturally, in this section, we do not intend to enter into the complexity of the problems, nor to analyze the way in which the Seraphic Doctor combats these new philosophical tendencies. What we propose to do, however, remains central to the *Hexaemeron*.

The point of departure for all philosophical and theological speculation, according to Bonaventure, is Christ. He alone is the *medium omnium scientiarum*<sup>118</sup>. Christ is therefore the centre of medium of the cosmos and of history. This is the object of the first three *collationes*. Then, the Seraphic Doctor moves on to refute the errors of Aristotelianism and to propose the sound truth of philosophy based upon revelation (*collationes* 4–7). The next step is a reflection upon faith which is the elevation of our enlightened intellect (*collationes* 8–12). A further step regards erudite intelligence through the light of Scripture (*collationes* 13–19).

Ad Claras Aquas, Quaracchi 1934. We shall quote the text of the *Opera Omnia*, adding the page reference to the Delorme edition. A recent translation of the *Hex.*, in Italian, with a good introduction, is that published by V.C. BIGI, *San Bonaventura. La Sapienza Cristiana. Le "Collationes in Hexaemeron"*, Milano 1985.

<sup>117</sup> J.G. BOUGEROL, *Introduction*, 185–188; B. DISTELBRINK, *Bonaventurae Scripta*, 57–59.

<sup>118</sup> *Hex.*, 1,11 (V, 331a) and DELORME, 5: "Propositum igitur nostrum est ostendere, quod in Christo sunt omnes thesauri sapientiae et scientiae Dei absconditi (Col 2,3), et ipse est medium omnium scientiarum".

Finally, the Seraphic Doctor treats of hierarchy in contemplation (*collationes* 20–23). He interrupts his work here, which should have considered the last couple of steps, namely, ecstatic rapture and beatific vision. Omitting the first three *collationes*, which provide an excellent introduction to the whole, the rest of the work should have been divided into six visions, starting from natural intelligence onto the steps just indicated, and culminating in the goal of beatific vision.

The *Collationes in Hexaemeron* provide an eschatological view of the cosmos and of history, dominated by the figure of Christ Crucified, the cosmic medium and centre of reality in its historical unfolding.

As in the case of the *Itinerarium*, Christ is the unifying and identical element in which the *maior mundus* and the *minor mundus* converge<sup>119</sup>. Even the *Hexaemeron* is a journey into the peace of God's presence, which can be realized already in our present state of human beings marked by limitations<sup>120</sup>.

### (a) The Mathematical Medium in the Crucifixion

The first *collatio* provides us with a splendid introduction to the *Hexaemeron*<sup>121</sup>. In it we can see the Seraphic Doctor already developing the fundamental themes which he then treats of in greater detail in the successive conferences. The central idea is taken from Ecclesiasticus 15,5<sup>122</sup>. Bonaventure introduces the theme of revelation by means of the Word, which becomes the medium of egressus from and regressus into God. Christ is the only medium without whom reality and history become meaningless<sup>123</sup>. The only

<sup>119</sup> Cfr. V.C. BIGI, *Il Cristocentrismo nelle Conferenze sull'Hexaemeron di S. Bonaventura*, in IB 3 (1967) 71–96.

<sup>120</sup> *Hex.*, 16,30 (V, 408b) and DELORME, 192: "In septimo tempore scimus quod haec facta sunt: reaedificatio templi, restauratio civitatis et pax data. Similiter in tempore septimo futuro erit reparatio divini cultus et reaedificatio civitatis... Tunc erit aedificatio civitatis et restitutio, sicut a principio; et tunc pax erit".

<sup>121</sup> Cfr. C. DEL ZOTTO, *Le Conferenze sull'Hexaemeron di San Bonaventura. Conferenza prima: Dall'ascolto della parola di Dio alla conoscenza di Gesù Cristo centro del mondo e della storia*, in VM 53 (1982) 356–366.

<sup>122</sup> Eccli 15,5: "In medio Ecclesiae aperiet os eius et adimplebit eum spiritu sapientiae et intellectus et stola gloriae vestiet illum".

<sup>123</sup> *Hex.*, 1,1 (V, 329a) and DELORME, 1: "Secundo docet, ubi debet incipere: quia a medio, quod est Christus; quod medium si negligatur, nihil habetur".

key to unfold the mystery of all sciences which study the cosmos is the central position of Christ<sup>124</sup>.

Bonaventure lists the seven principal sciences and applies them to the mystery of Christ. They are metaphysics, physics, mathematics, logic, ethics, politics and theology. We are interested in the third and fourth sciences in a particular way.

The object of mathematics is the depth of the central position or point<sup>125</sup>. Applied to Christ it refers to His Passion. On the Cross, Christ was the synthesis of mathematical perfection in the most profound mystery of His central and mediating relationship with reality<sup>126</sup>.

The notion of *medium* is central to the Christology of the *Hexaëmeron*. It finds its original meaning within the inter-Trinitarian mystery, where the Son is eternally generated as the *ars Patris*, in whose image all reality is formed as a creation passing through a medium who expresses the inner life of the triune God<sup>127</sup>.

Bonaventure compares this eternally-generated medium to the tree of life, since the Son leads us back to the Father by giving life from His own fullness of life. It is on the Cross as the tree of life in the midst of paradise, that the Son is the source of true life as a participation in the inner life of the Trinity<sup>128</sup>.

<sup>124</sup> *Hex.*, 1,10 (V, 330b) and DELORME, 4: "Nota, quod incipiendum est a medio, quod est Christus. Ipse enim mediator Dei et hominum est (1. Tim 2,5), tenens medium in omnibus".

<sup>125</sup> *Hex.*, 1,11 (V, 331a) and DELORME, 5: "Tertium (medium est) centrali positione profundum".

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*: "Primum medium Christus fuit in aeterna generatione; secundum in incarnatione; tertium in passione; quartum in resurrectione; quintum in ascensione; sextum in futuro examine; septimum in sempiterna retributione sive beatificatione".

<sup>127</sup> *Hex.*, 1,13–14 (V, 331b) and DELORME, 6: "Pater enim ab aeterno genuit Filium similem sibi et dixit se et similitudinem suam similem sibi et cum hoc totum posse suum; dixit quae possit facere, et maxime quae voluit facere, et omnia in eo expressit, scilicet in Filio seu in isto medio tanquam in sua arte. . . . Istud est medium personarum necessario: quia, si persona est, quae producit et non producit, et persona, quae producit et non producit, necessario est media, quae producit et producit".

<sup>128</sup> *Hex.*, 1,15 et 17 (V, 332a) and DELORME, 6–7: "De isto medio dicitur in Genesi: Produxit dominus Deus de humo omne lignum pulchrum visu et ad vescendum suave, lignum etiam vitae in medio paradisi (Gen 2,9) . . . . Verbum ergo exprimit Patrem et res, quae per ipsum factae sunt, et principaliter ducit nos ad Patris congregantis unitatem; et secundum hoc est lignum vitae, quia per hoc medium redimus et vivificamur in ipso fonte vitae"; Cfr. *Hex.*, 23,31 (V, 449b) and DELORME, 273. The theme of the tree of life, referred to the Cross, besides providing the title for the *Lig. Vit.*, can also be found in *II Sent.*, d. 17, dub. 4

The eternally generated medium is thus the indissoluble bond between the Father and created reality. He confounds those who see no relation whatsoever between the divinity and the cosmos, seen as a product of God's creative power. Christ is the true metaphysical principle<sup>129</sup>.

Bonaventure goes on to explain how Christ is the psychical medium in His Incarnation. Drawing from medieval physics, the Seraphic Doctor sees a double medium, namely, the sun as the medium of the macrocosm and the human heart as the medium of the microcosm. Christ is the unique medium who diffuses light and life. In His Incarnation He is the sun and the heart, that is, the medium of history and of the whole created world<sup>130</sup>.

If we want to measure the extreme depth of the Christ-mystery, however, we have to consider Christ as a mathematical medium in His Crucifixion. Mathematics occupies itself with the medium of distance, which is deep because of its central position. Christ accepted death on the Cross in order to be able to go down into the deepest point of the earth, where He operated our salvation through the depth of His humility<sup>131</sup>.

(II, 428ab); *II Sent.*, d. 29, dub. 2 (II, 708b–709a); *IV Sent.*, d. 26, a. 1, q. 1, resp. ad 4 (IV, 662b); *Comm. Ioan.*, c. 6, n. 40 (VI, 325a); *Brevil.*, 2,10 (V, 228b); *Dom. II Adv. Sermo IX* (IX, 56ab); *Na. i Dmni. Sermo X* (IX, 116b–117a); *De S. Andrea Ap. vitae ex utraque parte fluminis* (Apoc 21,2) est Verbum incarnatum, quod est increatum secundum aeternam generationem et creatum sive factum secundum temporalem, et tamen in persona idem. Verbum increatum est origo omnium creaturarum . . . Verbum incarnatum temporaliter est origo reparationis omnium".

<sup>129</sup> *Hex.*, 1,16–17 (V, 332ab) and DELORME, 6–7: "Hoc est contra errores eorum qui credunt mundum ab aeterno creatum . . . Hoc est medium metaphysicum reducens, et haec est tota nostra metaphysica, de emanatione, de exemplaritate, de consummatione, scilicet illuminari per radios spirituales et reduci ad summum. Et sic eris verus metaphysicus".

<sup>130</sup> *Hex.*, 1,19–20 (V, 332b–333a) and DELORME, 8–9.

<sup>131</sup> *Hex.*, 1,22–23 (V, 333a) and DELORME, 10–11: "Hoc medium fuit Christus in crucifixione. In Psalmo: Rex noster ante saecula operatus est salutem in medio terrae (Ps 71,12). Terra enim plane centrum est, et ideo infima et ideo modica; et quia infima et modica, ideo suscipit omnes influentias caelestes, et ideo facit mirabiles pullulationes. Sic Filius Dei infimus, pauperculus, modicus, humum nostram suscipiens, de humo factus, non solum venit ad superficiem terrae, verum etiam in profundum terrae, scilicet operatus est salutem in medio terrae, quia post crucifixionem anima sua ad infernum descendit et restauravit caelestes sedes. Hoc medium est salvativum; a quo recedens damnatur, scilicet a medio humilitatis. Et hoc ostendit Salvator: Ego in medio vestrum sum, sicut qui ministrat (Luc 22,27); et in Mattheo: Nisi conversi fueritis et efficiamini sicut parvuli, non intrabitis in regnum caelorum (Matth 18,3). In hoc medio operatus est salutem, scilicet in humilitate crucis"; *Vig. Nat. Dmni. Sermo IV* (IX, 94a).

In this seemingly strange description, drawn certainly from medieval cosmology, Bonaventure delves right into the heart of the mystery of Christ. The Son of God not only became part of the earth by living among fellow human beings, but He wanted to experience the most profound feeling of material reality, by accepting to die on a Cross and go into the underworld. This going down was accomplished on the soteriological level, since this plunging into the abyss of death was the result of Christ's profound humility and of His extreme *kénosis*. Contemporary theology would speak of Christ's experience of the *hiatus*, or chasm of nothingness<sup>132</sup>.

Christ therefore restored the dignity of humankind by accepting to plant His saving Cross in the very centre of the earth. But the human race, puffed up with pride and selfishness, did not understand the hidden meaning of the Crucified Word, which descended to the very bowels of the earth through humility. The result is that every human person is in great danger of losing sight of this unique centre of attraction, who is Christ Crucified.

Every person stands in darkness, because of the rejection of one's own salvation. When one forgets how to measure himself, that is, how to come to terms with one's own limitations, presumption leads one to think that the whole universe can be measured instead. Bonaventure shows how the flame of wisdom has to be protected by the ashes of humility in order to continue to give light. Otherwise it will be blown out by the winds of perversion. This beautiful image refers to Christ and to His faithful followers. If we are to find our lost centre, we have to look for him in the midst of the ashes of humility, where He descended in order to be our flame of salvation. It is only by fixing our attention upon this hidden centre or medium that we can be saved. Created reality is a large circle in need of a centre. But this centre can be found only if we draw two lines intersecting at right-angles. The centre can only be found in the Cross<sup>133</sup>.

<sup>132</sup> Cfr. H. U. VON BALTHASAR, *Mysterium Paschale*, in *Mysterium Salutis*, Vol. 6, 204–207, 219–235.

<sup>133</sup> *Hex.*, 1, 24 (V, 333ab) and DELORME, 11: "Sed caligo subintravit, quia Christiani hunc locum medium dimitunt, in quo Christus hominem salvavit. Unde homo impugnat suam salutem, nesciens se metiri. Quod enim prodest, quod sciat metiri alia, cum se metiri

The image of the circle is applied to God by Bonaventure to explain His infinitude and His deep mystery<sup>134</sup>. It is clearly tied up with a theology of history, seen as a circle which emanates from God and closes itself again into God through the process of *egressus-reditus*. Christ is the center of this circular concept of salvation history<sup>135</sup>.

The Cross assumes cosmic proportions when seen in this light. All reality lies within the shadow of Christ's saving Cross, which gives meaning to being and its historical unfolding. The cosmological-soteriological dimensions of the mystery of the Crucified Word become the hermeneutical principle to read the book of creation, in which humankind is the centre of attraction. Coupled with the book of Scripture, which reveals the face of God for humankind as a Crucified Word, the Cross becomes a *crux intelligibilis*, in which heaven and earth, God and humankind, eternity and time, converge in the Person of Jesus Christ<sup>136</sup>.

(b) *The Logical Medium in the Resurrection*

The fruits of the Passion are manifested in the Resurrection. Bonaventure chooses logic as the science which is related to Christ as the medium in His Resurrection. Logic is built upon syllogism, which is essentially composed of two extremes and a middle term. The fact that the middle term is connected with both the argument and the conclusion shows that it functions as a medium drawing

nesciat? ... Sed unde est, quod humilitas non habetur nec lumina sapientiae? Quia ignis non custoditur in medio cinerum, sed lucerna nostra exponitur omni vento, et cito extinguatur lucerna. Statim enim ostendere volumus, si quid boni in nobis est. Sed mirabilis fuit sapientia divina, quae per cinerem humilitatis operata est salutem. Medium enim, cum amissum est in circulo, inveniri non potest nisi per duas lineas se orthogonaliter intersectantes<sup>134</sup>. This theme is developed by E. COUSINS, *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites*, 144; J. RATZINGER, *The Theology of History*, 146: "By His cross, Christ has definitely solved the geometry-problem of world history".

<sup>134</sup> *I Sent.*, d. 37, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, resp. ad 3 (I, 639b); *IV Sent.*, d. 43, a. 2, q. 2, resp. (IV, 898a); *Q. de myst. Trin.*, q. 5, a. 1, ad 7 et 8 (V, 91b); *Itin.*, 5, 8 (V, 310a).

<sup>135</sup> Cfr. Z. HAYES, *The Hidden Center*, 182; J. RATZINGER, *The Theology of History*, 138–147.

<sup>136</sup> E. COUSINS, *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites*, 180: "As eternal Logos, Christ is the source of order and form within the cosmos; as incarnate Logos, he performs the function of the *axis mundi* linking the zones of the universe; through his cross he restores the lost centre of the circle".

together two extreme propositions. Bonaventure applies this scholastic way of reasoning to the mystery of Christ.

Using Cousin's expression, "Bonaventure sees Christ confronting Satan in a type of cosmic *quaestio disputata*"<sup>137</sup>. He shows how Christ tricked the devil through His Paschal Mystery.

The argument of the devil is a false syllogism leading to death. Christ's argument is the true syllogism giving life and repairing the fallen state of humankind<sup>138</sup>.

The devil's false syllogism is composed of the following propositions: the rational creature should be naturally inclined to desire the similitude of its Creator, since it has been formed according to His image. The minor proposition is an invitation inciting the creature to eat of the forbidden fruit if it is to be like God. The conclusion would be that it is good to eat of the forbidden fruit in order to be like God. In this way, the devil promised life and gave death instead, leading humankind to sin and to be subject to suffering, misery and death<sup>139</sup>.

Christ's syllogism disarmed all the devil's arguments. Since the devil had distorted God's image in humankind, Christ became a man in order to restore this image to its former splendour. As an Uncreated Word, Christ had conformity in nature, equality in power and immortality in life with God. This was His major premise. The minor premise consisted in His union with humankind as an Incarnate Word, by accepting suffering, misery and death. Christ posed the major proposition out of His own essence and the minor one out of His mercy. The result was a marvellous harmony and synthesis, where suffering was won over by impassibility, misery by power and death by life. In this way, Christ drew all

<sup>137</sup> E. COUSINS, *op. cit.*, 144–145; Chr. Z. HAYES, *The Hidden Center*, 200–202.

<sup>138</sup> *Hex.*, 1, 26 (V, 333b) and DELORME, 13: "Hoc medium fuit Christus in resurrectione. Est autem, argumentum Christi et argumentum diaboli. Argumentum diaboli ducit ad infernum et est paralogismus et *sophisticum* argumentum et *destructivum*; argumentum Christi constructivum et *reparativum*".

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*: "Diabolus enim paralogizavit primum hominem et suppositus quandam propositionem in corde hominis quasi per se notam, quae est: creatura rationalis debet appetere similitudinem sui Creatoris, quae scilicet est imago ... sed si comederis, assimileris: ergo bonum est comedere de vetito, ut assimileris. Et per istum syllogismum omnes peccant ... Per istum paralogismum induxit diabolus hominem in *passibilitatem naturae*, in *necessitatem indigentiae*, in *mortalitatem vitae*".

human persons away from the slavery of the devil into the light of His life-giving Paschal Mystery<sup>140</sup>.

This syllogism shows Christ as the medium in His Crucifixion. In fact, the major premise regards His divinity. In order to arrive at the conclusion, namely, at the Resurrection as a victory over sin and death, it was convenient that Christ assume human nature and die on the Cross, so that He might be the medium linking both extremes and confounding the devil's trickery. In fact, Satan remained confused in front of the scandal of the Cross, and therefore lost his battle, defeated by the same weapons he used to deceive mankind<sup>141</sup>.

The revelation of this definitive victory of Christ over the devil on the Cross presents itself in the human but glorified Christ, who still bears the marks of the Passion<sup>142</sup>. In this way, the Crucified Word becomes the seal upon the cosmos and history. No one can open this sevenfold seal if not the one who revealed God for humankind upon the Cross<sup>143</sup>.

<sup>140</sup> *Hex.*, 1, 27 (V, 334a) and DELORME, 14–15: "Econtra argumentum Christi fuit *salvativum* et *destructivum* argumentum diaboli. Ex quo enim diabolus fecerat hominem dissimilem Deo, cum tamen promississet, similem se facturum; necesse fuit, Christum esse similem homini, ut faceret hominem similem sibi sive Deo. Christus ergo habuit *conformitatem naturae* in quantum Deus cum Patre, *aequalitatem potentiae*, *immortalitatem vitae*. In his tribus coniunctus fuit Patri. Necesse ergo fuit, ipsum in aliis tribus oppositis coniungi homini. Assumpsit ergo *passibilitatem naturae*, *necessitatem indigentiae*, *mortalitatem vitae*. Tria ergo habuit per essentiam et tria assumpsit per misericordiam. Necesse ergo fuit, ut tria vincerentur a tribus. Sed *vita* per essentiam superari non potuit a morte, nec *potentia* a penuria, nec *impassibilitas* a passibilitate. Necesse ergo fuit, ut homo transiret a mortalitate ad immortalitatem, a defectu ad opulentiam, de passibilitate ad coronam".

<sup>141</sup> *Hex.*, 1, 28 (V, 334a) and DELORME, 14–15: "Maior propositio fuit ab aeterno; sed assumptio in cruce; conclusio vero in resurrectione. Iudaei credebant Christum confusisse et improperebant ei. Si *Filius Dei* es, *descende de cruce* (Matth 27, 40). Nam Christus non dicebat: sinite me vivere, sed dicebat: sinite me mortem assumere et alteri extremitati copulari, pati, mori; et tunc sequitur conclusio. Unde ipse illius diabolo".

<sup>142</sup> *Hex.*, 1, 29 (V, 334b): "Et duo ibi ostendit, scilicet *gloriae sublimitatem*, eo quod impassibilis et immortalis, clausis ianuis, intravit tanquam Deus; postea ostendit *eis manus et latus* et confessionem extorsit a Thoma, ut diceret: *Dominus meus et Deus meus!* (Ioan 20, 20, 28)".

<sup>143</sup> *Hex.*, 1, 30 (V, 334b): "Non sine causa signatur liber septem sigillis. Ecce, inquit, *vici leo de tribu Iuda, radix David, aperire librum et solvere septem signacula eius* (Apoc 5, 5). Ista sunt septem media. In huius significatione Christus sepulcrum reservavit, et significat *apertorem libri*, et *linteamina removit*, et significat *manifestationem mysteriorum*".

(c) *Spiritual Vision through the Crucified Word*

When he explains the various uses of the term *revelatio* in the *Hexaëmeron*, Ratzinger defines it in three ways, of which the following is of special interest to our topic.

"*Revelatio* can also refer to that imageless unveiling of the divine reality which takes place in the mystical ascent"<sup>144</sup>.

This revelation has to do with wisdom, which is the result of unctio and not of learning. Wisdom can be of four types, which the Seraphic Doctor defines in the second *collatio*, namely, uniform wisdom, multiform wisdom, omniform wisdom and nulliform wisdom<sup>145</sup>. It is in this last type of wisdom that we are particularly interested in this section<sup>146</sup>. Bonaventure would describe it as an ascension through negation, or as the form of ecstatic rapture within Christ's Paschal Mystery of death, burial and Resurrection<sup>147</sup>.

The object of ecstatic wisdom is Christ Himself in His threefold mystery as Uncreated, Incarnate and Inspired Word. This is the theme which the Seraphic Doctor develops in the third *collatio*. Bonaventure shows that divine wisdom became manifest in the Incarnate Word. The Incarnation is the miracle of miracles<sup>148</sup>. In it is manifested the wisdom of God, who deigns to experience the human condition<sup>149</sup>.

In order to participate in the intra-Trinitarian life, it is necessary to pass through spiritual vision, which is revealed by the Inspired Word. This category can be seen as the best means to have

<sup>144</sup> J. RATZINGER, *The Theology of History*, 59.

<sup>145</sup> *Hex.*, 2,8 (V, 378) and DELORME, 23: "Ista forma (sapientiae) est mirabilis, quia modo est uniformis, modo est multiformis, modo omniformis, modo nulliformis. Quadriformi igitur se vestit lumine. Apparet autem uniformis in regulis divinarum legum, multiformis in mysteriis divinarum Scripturarum, omniformis in vestigiis divinatorum operum, nulliformis in suspensibus divinatorum excessuum".

<sup>146</sup> Cfr. Z. HAYES, *The Hidden Center*, 204–205; J. RATZINGER, *The Theology of History*, 61–62, 86–94.

<sup>147</sup> *Hex.*, 2,34 (V, 342b) and DELORME, 32–33: "Istud somnium significat mors Christi, sepultura Christi, transitus maris rubri, transitus in terram promissionis".

<sup>148</sup> *Hex.*, 3,13 (V, 345b) and DELORME, 39: "Hoc est maximum miraculum, ut quod Deus sit homo, primus sit novissimus; et ideo omnia miracula ad hoc miraculum respiciunt"; Cfr. C. DEL ZOTTO, *Terza Conferenza: L'intelletto come chiave della contemplazione nell'intelligenza del Verbo increato, incarnato, ispirato*, in VM 53 (1982) 534–546.

<sup>149</sup> *Hex.*, 3,15 (V, 345b) and DELORME, 40.

a profound experience of God in His concrete reality as an Incarnate and Crucified Word.

Bonaventure lists three types of vision: corporal, imaginary and intellectual vision<sup>150</sup>. The Seraphic Doctor applies this triple vision to the six days of creation in order to have the usual six-fold structure. In this way we have the six steps of spiritual vision leading us to true wisdom, namely, vision of natural intelligence, vision of intelligence elevated through faith, enlightened by Scripture, elevated to mystical heights through contemplation, revealed by prophecy, absorbed in God through ecstatic rapture. The six-fold vision provides the whole framework of the *Hexaëmeron*.

The mystery of the Cross enlightens the six-fold vision of the *Hexaëmeron*. The Seraphic Doctor introduces the theology of vision in the eighth conference, which forms part of the group of *collationes* dealing with the vision of intelligence elevated by faith. Bonaventure builds his conference upon the image of the two Seraphim of Isaiah 6,2. Both have six wings and stand respectively for God in His divine attributes and in His manifestation as an Incarnate Word in Christ<sup>151</sup>.

The second seraph is of special interest to us, because it manifests the *Deus humanatus*, who descends to our lowly state through His Incarnation, Crucifixion and descent into the underworld<sup>152</sup>.

In the tenth conference, Bonaventure shows how the intellect is elevated through faith by considering twelve speculations upon God in His divinity and humanity. The two poles of Bonaventure's theology are again present. The faith in the *Deus humanatus*

<sup>150</sup> *Hex.*, 3,23–24 (V, 347a) and DELORME, 44: "Visio autem est triplex, ut communiter dicitur: corporalis, imaginaria, intellectualis. Duae primae nihil valent sine tertiâ"; Cfr. J. RATZINGER, *The Theology of History*, 64–66.

<sup>151</sup> *Hex.*, 8,12 (V, 371a) and DELORME, 114: "Habemus ergo duos Seraphim clamantes et admirantes, restat dicere, quare sex alas habent, et tunc videbuntur ea quae fidei sunt. Fides enim est in Deum aeternum et humanatum".

<sup>152</sup> *Hex.*, 8,15 (V, 371b) and DELORME, 115–116: "Alter Seraph propinquior est nobis et habet similiter sex alas: tres secundum descensum, et tres secundum ascensum: secundum descensum veniendo ab ala super caput per medium ad alam super pedes. Hi sunt tres articuli secundum incarnationem, crucifixionem, descensum ad inferos secundum animam. Incipit enim a summo, quia necesse fuit, ut uniret sibi naturam, in qua appareret et per quam descenderet, quia ipse de se immutabilis est; deinde venit ad crucem, demum ad infernum".

becomes a vision of faith in the *Deus crucifixus*<sup>153</sup>. In this vision, God appears as the principle of creation, reparation and final reward. Faith is therefore the means by which our intellect can speculate God's attributes, of which His manifestation as a God united to the flesh and as a Crucified God are fundamental<sup>154</sup>.

A step further along spiritual vision is accomplished when our intellect is enlightened by the book of Scripture. Bonaventure compares Scripture to an immense ocean in which are hidden all mysteries. One has to sail into this ocean of Scripture in order to understand and expound God's Word. But there is a grave danger of sinking and losing oneself to this immense ocean, if one is not led by the wood of the Cross. The Cross becomes the key to unfold the mysteries of Scripture, and acquire the vision of eternal truths hidden from all eternity<sup>155</sup>.

Incarnate and Crucified wisdom pervades all beings, and extends itself to all dimensions and beyond all measurements, in order that we may penetrate the depths of Scripture by reading it with faith in the Word of the Cross<sup>156</sup>.

Scripture is fully revealed in the New Testament, but it will be fully understood only in eschatological times, when humankind will climb the mountain of God in order to acquire the vision of His divinity through Scripture, and become thus a contemplative Church<sup>157</sup>.

<sup>153</sup> *Hex.*, 10,3 (V, 377b) and DELORME, 127: "Duodecim speculationes sunt, quas habemus ex fide: credere Deum primum, Deum trinum et unum, et exemplar rerum, et creatorem mundum, ut formantem animam, dantem spiritum — Deum carni unitum, Deum crucifixum, medelam mentium, vitale pabulum, ultorem scelorum, praemium aeternum".

<sup>154</sup> *Hex.*, 10,8 (V, 378a) and DELORME, 128–129.

<sup>155</sup> *Hex.*, 13,5 (V, 388b) and DELORME, 147–148: "Cum navibus descendit (Ps 106,23) qui habet manuductionem lignum crucis; quia qui sine isto ligno vult intrare mare far Scripturae submergitur, in maximis erroribus cadens".

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*: "Haec dicit Sapientia incarnata (Delorme's edition adds *Crucifixus*): Ego in altissimis habitavi, in creatione; thronus meus in columna nubis, in incarnatione; in fluctibus maris ambulavi, in passione; profundum abyssi penetravi in penetratione Scripturarum (Eccl 24,7–8), quia aperti illis sensum post resurrectionem, ut intelligerent Scripturas (Luc 24,45). Propter fidem crucis Petrus super mare ambulavit".

<sup>157</sup> *Hex.*, 13,7 (V, 389a) and DELORME, 148: "Et hoc potissime refertur ad tempus novi testamenti, quando Scriptura manifestata est, et maxime in fine, quando Scripturae intelliguntur, quae modo non intelliguntur. Tunc erit mons, scilicet Ecclesia contemplativa". Although Bonaventure's expression reflects Joachim of Fiore's theories, it cannot be taken to confirm the abbot's teachings regarding the *ecclesia contemplativa* as an entity distinct from the New Testament revelation in a new age of the Spirit. In fact, in other passages, the

The book of Scripture is the principle of reparation. When the book of creation became blurred by sin, it was necessary to write a new book in order to repair the damage. God therefore transmitted His Word, which became the light leading back every person into God's embrace. The book of Scripture repaired humankind's fault in a special way in its revelation as a Word Incarnate and Crucified<sup>158</sup>.

In the fourteenth conference, Bonaventure considers the sacramental figures of Scripture. Four ages make up the entire history of the law, the time of the prophets and the time of Redemption. Bonaventure compares this whole process to a tree which yields its fruit in the opportune time, and reveals itself fully in the Cross of Christ<sup>159</sup>.

Bonaventure lists twelve principal mysteries of Scripture, three for each of its historical parts. In the first time, that preceding the law, Christ is prefigured in the tree of life in the midst of paradise, in the rainbow in the midst of the clouds and in Isaac who carries the wood for the sacrifice<sup>160</sup>.

The sevenfold division of time to indicate universality occupies the sixteenth conference. The sixth age, the age of the Incarnation,

Seraphic Doctor shows that what he intends by the contemplative Church is simply the eschatological image of all those who rise to contemplative vision of the seventh age, that is, the one linked with the sixth age, in which Christ revealed the Father once and for all to humankind. This is the picture presented, for example in *Hex.*, 23,4 (V, 445b) and DELORME, 265: "Sex sunt tempora, quorum sextum tempus habet tria tempora cum quiete. Et sicut Christus in sexto tempore venit, ita oportet, quod in fine generatur Ecclesia contemplativa. Ecclesia enim contemplativa et anima non differunt, nisi quod anima totum habet in se, quod Ecclesia in multis. Quaelibet enim anima contemplativa habet quandam perfectionem, ut videt visiones Dei"; Cfr. J. RATZINGER, *The Theology of History*, 104–110. In page 181, note 37, the author states: "It would seem that Bonaventure accepted Joachim in as far as this was possible".

<sup>158</sup> *Hex.*, 13,12 (V, 390a) and DELORME, 150: "Liber ergo Scripturae reparativus est totius mundi ad Deum cognoscendum, laudandum, amandum".

<sup>159</sup> *Hex.*, 14,6 (V, 394a) and DELORME, 158: "Unde pulcra est arbor, palus serpentis, serpentis erecto et umbra (Num 21,8); sed arbor crucis fructuosa"; *Hex.*, 14,11 (V, 395b) and DELORME, 161: "Quarto (Scriptura) est ad restaurandum salutem, quae non nisi per Christum restauratur".

<sup>160</sup> *Hex.*, 14,18–20 (V, 396ab) and DELORME, 163–164: "Dicamus ergo de Christo, quod est lignum vitae in medio paradisi (Gen 2,9) ... Signatur per arcum in nubibus, qui est signum foederis (Gen 9,13) ... Signatur, per Isaac, inquam, qui sibi ligna in collo portabat (Gen 22,6), scilicet lignum crucis".

becomes the age of prophecy and of sound doctrine. Again, Bonaventure borrows the age of prophecy and of sound doctrine. Again, Bonaventure borrows from the eschatological vision of Joachim to present this age of prophecy with the image of the angel bearing the seal of the living God, leading the Order of prophets, and living in perfect conformity with Christ<sup>161</sup>. It is certainly tempting to see Francis in this image, but we reserve the discussion of this topic for the next chapter.

The last vision of the *Hexaëmeron* is that of the intellect elevated to mystical heights through contemplation. When the human person does not look down, but lifts up its gaze, it becomes angelic. In other words, one enters the dynamics of hierarchic uplifting into God<sup>162</sup>.

The contemplative person is capable of delighting in wisdom, compared to the good woman who bears life through suffering. Divine wisdom gave life to the world through the suffering of the flesh of the Incarnate Word on the Cross<sup>163</sup>.

Contemplation is the result of divine illumination, but it passes through a mystical blindness. The cloud of unknowing is the only way to mystical enlightenment according to the axiom *excaecatio est summa illuminatio*<sup>164</sup>.

According to Bonaventure, our contemplation in the state of wayfarers has to pass necessarily through sacramental signs and through the spiritual senses of Scripture. In fact, the Passion of Christ is still awaiting its eschatological consummation when the seven seals will be opened and the hidden mysteries of Scripture will be fully revealed to the open vision of the contemplative soul<sup>165</sup>.

<sup>161</sup> *Hex.*, 16, 16 (V, 405b) and DELORME, 184–185: "Dies humanae formae, tempus vocis propheticae, tempus clarae doctrinae in quo esset vita prophetica. Et necesse fuit, ut in hoc tempore veniret unus ordo, scilicet habitus propheticus, similis ordini Iesu Christi, cuius caput esse Angelus, ascendens ab ortu solis habens signum Dei vivi (Apoc 7,2), et conformis Christo. — Et dixit, quod iam venerat".

<sup>162</sup> *Hex.*, 20, 2 (V, 425ab) and DELORME, 223.

<sup>163</sup> *Hex.*, 20, 5 (V, 426a) and DELORME, 225.

<sup>164</sup> *Hex.*, 20, 11 (V, 427a) and DELORME, 226–227.

<sup>165</sup> *Hex.*, 20, 15 (V, 428a) and DELORME, 228: "Intelligimus enim aliquo modo figurarum doctrinam, quibus testamentum vetus et etiam novum plenum est; ut patet per Apostolum, quod passio Christi et veritas fuit et figura, similiter resurrectio. Et ideo figurae nondum explanatae sunt; sed quando luna erit plena, tunc erit apertio Scripturarum, et liber

Eschatological times are presented as the age of contemplatives, when the sixth seal will be opened by the angel rising from the east. The contemplatives will be marked with the distinctive sign of poverty. Bonaventure even goes as far as to refer explicitly to Francis in this conference<sup>166</sup>. Since the images are the same ones which the Seraphic Doctor uses in the prologue to the *Legenda Maior*, it is more appropriate to study them in our next chapter.

The twenty-first conference considers the contemplation of the celestial hierarchy. Following the lead of the Areopagite, the Seraphic Doctor shows how hierarchy is concerned with the three acts of purification, illumination and perfection<sup>167</sup>. He also indicates the particular notes of the highest degrees of angelic hierarchy, namely, the burning love of the Seraph and the speculation of the Cherub<sup>168</sup>.

In the twenty-second conference, Bonaventure passes on to the contemplation of the Church militant and the soul elevated through hierarchy. According to a perfect correspondence between the hierarchical degrees of the Church with those of the angels, Bonaventure gives the noble place of the Seraphim to the Order of the apostles, and that of the Cherubim to that of the prophets<sup>169</sup>. This view is particularly important when we come to analyze the relationship between Francis and his Order according to Bonaventure's viewpoint.

In fact, Bonaventure makes an important distinction between the Order of the Cherubim and that of the Seraphim. The Cherubim are those who speculate upon Scripture, and Bonaventure places the

aperietur, et septem sigilla solventur, quae adhuc non sunt aperta. — Credite mihi, tunc videbitis quasi per plenilunium, quando leo noster de tribu Iuda surget et aperiet librum (Apoc 5,5), quando consummabuntur passiones Christi, quas modo corpus Christi patitur".

<sup>166</sup> *Hex.*, 20, 27–30 (V, 430ab) and DELORME, 232–233.

<sup>167</sup> *Hex.*, 20, 30 (V, 436a) and DELORME, 246.

<sup>168</sup> *Hex.*, 21, 33 (V, 436b) and DELORME, 247: "Ex verbi Dionysii, de Angelica Hierarchia ... extrahitur, quod amor Seraphim est continuus, summe intensus, summe penetrativus usque ad cor Dei, usque ad intima Dei ex intima animae procedens; et ponit proprietates ignis semper nobilis ... Et in hoc ostenditur amor continuus, superfervidus, scilicet intensus, superacutus, scilicet penetrativus. — De Cherubim dicit, quod suscipiunt copiose, speculantur praecare, perfrauntur iucunde illo lumine"; Cfr. *Hex.*, 22, 29–30 (V, 442a) and DELORME, 259.

<sup>169</sup> *Hex.*, 22, 6 (V, 438b) and DELORME, 250–251: "Et ideo Apostoli respondent Seraphim, quia apostolicus ordo conformatur Christo".

Preachers and the Minors among them<sup>170</sup>. The Order of the Seraphim belongs to those who accomplish the process of *sursum-actio* to ecstatic rapture. Francis belongs to this Order, so that the name *Ordo Seraphicus* refers to him alone, and not to the Order in the present course of history<sup>171</sup>. Ratzinger has developed this theme extensively in his study<sup>172</sup>.

The *Ordo Seraphicus*, however, can be realized only in the mystery of Christ's sufferings. With striking inspiration, Bonaventure interprets the apparition of the Crucified Seraph to Francis as a heralding of the eschatological Order of the Seraphim, which will be born out of great tribulation in the mystery of Christ's Cross. This passage is a splendid example of how Bonaventure applies a theology of history to the Franciscan Order<sup>173</sup>.

The last *collatio* is a contemplation upon the heavenly Jerusalem, to which the hierarchized soul must be conformed. The city which descends from heaven in Apocalypse 21,2, stands for the contemplation of the Incarnation of the Son in our human flesh, for His Crucifixion and Glorification<sup>174</sup>.

The soul which is conformed to the heavenly Jerusalem is signed on the forehead with the burning seal of love. At this point,

<sup>170</sup> *Hex.*, 22,21 (V, 440b) and DELORME, 256: "Secundus (ordo) est, qui intendit per modum *speculatorium* vel *speculativum* ut illi qui vacant speculationi Scripturae, quae non intelligitur nisi ab animis mundis... Huic respondet *Cherubim*. Hi sunt *Praedicatores* et *Minores*".

<sup>171</sup> *Hex.*, 22,22 (V, 440b) and DELORME, 256: "Tertius ordo est vacantium Deo secundum modum *sursum-actio*, scilicet *ecstaticum* seu *excessivum*. — Et dicebat: Quis enim iste est? Iste est *ordo seraphicus*. De isto videtur fuisse Franciscus".

<sup>172</sup> J. RATZINGER, *The Theology of History*, 46–55, especially 49–50: "Bonaventure is also of the opinion that the concrete Order of Franciscans is only *cherubicus* and not *seraphicus*. This means that the present Order of Franciscans is not yet the true Order of Francis. In his own person, Francis anticipates the eschatological form of life which will be the general form of life in the future".

<sup>173</sup> *Hex.*, 22,23 (V, 441a) and DELORME, 256: "Iste ordo non florebit, nisi Christus appareat et patiat in corpore suo mystico. — Et dicebat, quod illa apparitio Seraphi beato Francisco quae fuit expressiva et impressa, ostendebat, quod iste ordo illi respondere debeat, sed (amen) pervenire ad hoc per tribulationes. Et in illa apparitione magna mysteria erant".

<sup>174</sup> *Hex.*, 23,7 (V, 446a) and DELORME, 266: "Secundo elevatur ad contumendum civitatem de caelo descendentem (Apoc 21,2), hoc est *assumptam humanitatem*. *Filius enim Dei* descendit ad nostram humanitatem, et hoc est *descendere Jerusalem*... Mirabilem, inquam, *exortum* in nativitate, *occursum* in crucifixione, *consensum* in resurrectione et *ascensione*, *regressum ad iudicium*".

the angel bearing the seal of the living God will appear to sign the elect for the eschatological day of peace<sup>175</sup>.

The eschatological people of the sealed refer to all those who place their absolute trust in the Crucified Word. The ultimate aim of Bonaventure is to lead us to this tree of life, where we find true peace and wisdom<sup>176</sup>.

The Crucified Word was not simply an object of theological speculation for Bonaventure. It also became an experience of a mystical encounter with God. As Minister General, Bonaventure acquired a much deeper knowledge of Francis' life and mission, since now he had to face the same problems and shoulder them with the same responsibility of the Poverello. In the writings of the later period of Bonaventure's life, the image of Francis is certainly much more present, under the specific characteristics of the saint signed with Christ's Cross, the faithful disciple of the Crucified.

This typical Christ-image and its relation to Francis characterize the mystical writings of the Seraphic Doctor, the most famous of which is the *Itinerarium*. This treatise, born in an intense experience of prayer and solitude at the very place which evokes the mystery of the Cross in Francis' life, expresses an unparalleled awareness of, and faithfulness to, the Franciscan ideal. It describes a journey, the same journey traced by Francis, towards mystical union with God. Bonaventure tries to explain an experience too mysterious and intimate to be described in human language by Francis. The Seraphic Doctor succeeds fully in his endeavour, without violating the sense of mystery and intimacy which form part and parcel of every mystical experience.

The *Itinerarium* is a journey into depths. It departs from the surface, from the created sense world, to delve into the inner sanctuary of the human soul and its faculties, and finally to enter

<sup>175</sup> *Hex.*, 23,14 (V, 447) and DELORME, 269: "Sic anima contemplativa signatur a Deo. Unde sub sexto Angelo dicitur, quod apparuit Angelus habens *signum Dei vivi* (Apoc 7,2), hoc fuit in assignatione Ierusalem ut in caelo consistentis". For the relationship between the 144,000 sealed and the eschatological Order of Francis, cfr. J. RATZINGER, *The Theology of History*, 35–38.

<sup>176</sup> *Hex.*, 23,31 (V, 449b) and DELORME, 273: "Et dicebat: Ad hoc *lignum vitae* volui vos adducere".



into the holy of holies in the encounter with God. The goal of the journey is the sabbatical peace, following the six days of toil in creation. The hidden meaning of the whole journey, however, is the perfect coincidence of its way and goal, converging upon the Paschal Cross, which Bonaventure describes as the only door through which the soul can enter and find pasture.

The journey implies a progression towards perfection. Bonaventure gives an excellent structure to this spiritual progress, with the help of the Dionysian concept of hierarchy. In this process of *sursam-actio*, the soul is renewed in the blood of Christ Crucified by passing through the hierarchical stages of purification, illumination and perfection. These acts play a central role in the *Itinerarium*, but they are described in sufficient detail in the treatise *De Triplici Via*, which is specifically dedicated to their interaction and influence upon meditation, prayer and contemplation. Again, this *opusculum* is based upon the conviction that all mysteries are revealed in the Crucified Word, as they were revealed in the living image of Christ who is Francis, when his flesh became the outward manifestation of his burning charity for Christ Crucified in his soul.

The mystical experience of the Crucified, however, is not a private or intimate experience of Francis alone. Bonaventure is convinced that the Franciscan life calls necessarily for such an experience. Although the Seraphic Doctor has no doubt whatsoever regarding the full validity of learning in the Franciscan Order, yet he knows that the Gospel life demands a specific attitude toward learning. There is no true learning without the light emanating from Holy Scripture. Therefore, there is no true learning outside the true wisdom revealed in the Incarnate Word upon the Cross.

This is the thesis which the Seraphic Doctor staunchly defends in his *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*. He proves how Christ Crucified gives meaning not only to human life as such, but indeed to the entire created universe. He is the cosmic medium, the perfect principle of harmony, who confounds the devil's trickery. In Him all sciences converge as to a central point, so that human knowledge can arrive at the authentic object of its speculation.

For Bonaventure, history is not simply a chain of disconnected events. He defends the saving dimension of history. History can be interpreted theologically. The category which helps in accomplishing this theological interpretation of human history is

vision. Vision implies also a progressive penetration into God's mystery, through reason, faith, Scripture, contemplation, prophecy, ecstasy and final glorification. When one accomplishes this gradual progress through spiritual vision, one forms part of the paradise lost as a result of sin, dominated by the tree of life, who is Christ Crucified, the principle of interpretation of history and of the cosmos.

This chapter closes the first part of our analysis, and introduces us into the particular object of our attention, namely, the revelation of the Crucified Word in the Life of Saint Francis.

PART TWO  
THE LIFE OF SAINT FRANCIS  
IN THE LIGHT OF  
THE "VERBUM CRUCIFIXUM"

The "Verbum Crucifixum"

The "Verbum Crucifixum" is a Latin prayer of the Order of Saint Francis, which is a central part of the Order's liturgical life. It is a prayer of adoration and contemplation of the crucifix, and is one of the most important prayers of the Order.

The prayer was composed by Brother Diego of San Antonio, who was a member of the Order of Saint Francis. It is a prayer of adoration and contemplation of the crucifix, and is one of the most important prayers of the Order.

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE "VERBUM CRUCIFIXUM"  
AS THE REVELATION OF  
FRANCIS' SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

I. THE "LEGENDA MAIOR SANCTI FRANCISCI"

The *Legenda Maior Sancti Francis*, considered as a hagiographical masterpiece of the Middle Ages<sup>1</sup>, forms part of the group of legends popularly known as the "official" biographies of Saint Francis, in the sense that they were commissioned either by the Papal Curia or by the General Chapters of the Order.

The legend was commissioned by the Chapter of Narbonne (1260), which entrusted Bonaventure with the task of composing a new life of Saint Francis from the sources already existing, namely, the trilogy of Celano and the life written by Julian of Speyer<sup>2</sup>.

Bonaventure undertook the task out of a sense of gratitude towards Francis and, most probably, also out of a sense of duty towards the Order<sup>3</sup>. The *Legenda Maior*, in fact, was presented three years later to the Chapter of Pisa, in 1263<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Cfr. J.G. BOUGEROL, *Francesco e Bonaventura. La "Legenda Maior"*, Vicenza 1984; J. CABBELL, *La vita di S. Francesco d'Assisi secondo i biografi ufficiali ed i testi oculari*, in *DS* 12 (1965) 5-15; D. CREMI, *San Bonaventura biografo perfetto di San Francesco*, in *Discussioni e documenti di storia Francescana*, Firenze 1959, 12-38; E. LONGPRE, *Bonaventure, Salié*, in *DHGE*, Vol. 9 (1937) 759-760; G. MASCIA, *Vita di S. Francesco d'Assisi scritta da S. Bonaventura. Edizioni e studi*, in *Studi e ricerche francescane*, 3 (1974) 139-218.

<sup>2</sup> The need to compose a new legend of St. Francis from the ones existing, was already expressed during the generalate of John of Parma, in the Chapter of Genova (1254), as shown by H. GOLUBOVICH, *Ceremoniale Ordinis Minorum Vetustissimum sub B. Joanne de Parma Ministro Generali emanate anno 1254*, in *AFH* 3 (1910) 76, no. 74: "Item ordinetur de legenda beati Francis, ut de omnibus una bona compleatur".

<sup>3</sup> *Leg. M.*, Prolog. 3, in *Analecta Franciscana*, Vol. 10, Quaracchi 1941, 558 (From onwards, all references to the *Leg. M.* will be indicated by AF 10 and the page reference in parenthesis). In the *Leg. m.*, c. 7, leccio 8 (AF 10, 68), Bonaventure is even more explicit in explaining why he could not possibly refuse the task of composing a new life of St. Francis, out of his profound gratitude for the miraculous restoration of health which he received as a "puerulus" by the Poverello's intercession.

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. B. DISTELBRINK, *Bonaventurae Scripta*, 49-50.

The Chapter of Paris (1266) recognized the *Legenda Maior* as the official biography of Saint Francis. Moreover, it decreed that the existing biographies written prior to Bonaventure's legend, namely Celano and Julian of Speyer, be destroyed not only from the Order which possessed them<sup>5</sup>. Here we shall not enter into the merits of this decree, which has been object of much discussion among scholars<sup>6</sup>. Our aim is to accept the historical facts as they are and present them as a background for our treatment of the figure of Francis and the mystery of the Crucified Word in the *Legenda Maior*.

In obedience to the decree of Narbonne, Bonaventure composed the *Legenda Maior* from the sources already existing, adding some personal notes taken from his interviews with the few remaining companions of the saint. Thus the *Legenda Maior* could be seen as a reworking of older material, with some innovations from oral sources which Bonaventure worked together into a new form<sup>7</sup>.

Ever since the revival of Franciscan studies by Paul Sabatier, the *Legenda Maior* has constantly come under attack by critics. The

questions it poses regard its value as a historical document, its originality and the specific aims of its author.

Is the *Legenda Maior* a historical document, or is it simply a spiritual interpretation of the person and mission of Francis? Does it really present faithfully the Francis of history? Is it true that, for the most part, it repeats the existing biographies, reorganizing the documentary material in such a way as to reach a definite aim, namely, that of pacifying the discords of a fractured Order? These are some of the problems that modern scholars have tried to solve.

"It has been said that Saint Bonaventure contributed nothing new to the history of Francis and that he may as well not have written the *Legenda Maior*"<sup>8</sup>. In these words, Damien Vorreux synthesizes the opinions of a good number of scholars who have read Bonaventure's legend as a politically-motivated document which betrays the original ideal of Francis as contained in the limpid and down-to-earth accounts of the companions, transmitted later on by the "non-official" family of biographies and *florilegia*.

Little states, for example, that Bonaventure composed the *Legenda Maior* at the request of the Narbonne capitulars with the principal and explicit intention of quelling the discords within the Order<sup>9</sup>. Gilson notes that Bonaventure "was asked to write a Life of Saint Francis to put an end to the controversy kept alive in the Order by the existence of several different and to some extent contradictory lives"<sup>10</sup>.

Moorman is highly critical regarding the intentions of Bonaventure in composing the *Legenda Maior*<sup>11</sup>. He has some very strong expressions, such as: "Bonaventure never really understood the Franciscan ideal. His natural home was Paris and its lecture

<sup>5</sup> L. DI FONZO, *L'Anonimo Perugino tra le Fonti Francescane del secolo XIII. Rapporti letterari e testo critico* in ME 72 (1972) 247: "Item praecipit Generale Capitulum per obedientiam, quod omnes Legendae de beato Francisco olim factae deleantur, et ubi inveniiri poterunt extra Ordinem, ipsas fratres student amovere, cum illa Legenda quae facta est per Generalem Ministrum sit compilata prout ipse habuit ab ore illorum, qui cum beato Francisco semper fuerunt et cuncta certitudinaliter sciverint, et probata ibi sint posita diligenter"; Cfr. S. DA CAMPAGNOLA, *Francesco d'Assisi nei suoi Scritti e nelle sue biografie dei secoli XIII-XIV*, Assisi 1981, 94-101; G. DE PARIS, *Histoire de la fondation et de l'évolution de l'Ordre des Frères Mineurs au XIIIe siècle*, Paris-Grenobles 1928, 311-313; H. HOLZAPFEL, *Manuale Historiae Ordinis Fratrum Minorum*, Fribourg 1909, 33-34.

<sup>6</sup> Cfr. M. BIHL, *De vero sensu definitionis Capituli generalis an. 1266 Legendas antiquiores S. Francisci proscribens*, in AFH 40 (1937) 274-280. For further treatment of the historical circumstances in which the *Leg. M.* was composed, plus the various opinions of modern scholars, we are indebted to R.J. ARMSTRONG, *The Spiritual Theology of the "Legenda Maior" of St. Bonaventure*, doctoral dissertation at Fordham University, New York 1978, 17-55.

<sup>7</sup> For a thorough treatment of the making of the *Leg. M.*, cfr. M. BIHL, *De Legendis Maiore et Minore S. Francisci auctore S. Bonaventura. Praefatio* (AF 10, LXII-LXXXI); *Opusculum XXIII. Legenda sancti Francisci. Prolegomena*, c. 2 (VIII, LXXXVb-LXXXVIIb); *Dissertatio II. Vita seraphici Doctoris per modum annuallium enarrata*, c. 3, n. 11-14 (X, 53a-55b).

<sup>8</sup> D. VORREUX, *Major and Minor Life of St. Francis. Introduction*, in *St. Francis of Assisi. Omnibus of Sources*, edited by M.A. Habig, Chicago 1983, 615-626. Our quotation from page 617.

<sup>9</sup> Cfr. A.G. LITTLE, *Guide pour les Etudes Franciscaines*, in *Etudes Franciscaines* 40 (1928) 525-526.

<sup>10</sup> E. GILSON, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, English translation by I. Trethowan and F.J. Sheed, Paterson, New Jersey 1965, 21.

<sup>11</sup> J.R.H. MOORMAN, *The Sources for the Life of St. Francis of Assisi*, Manchester 1940, 141-151; IDEM, *A History of the Franciscan Order: From its Origins to the Year 1517*, Oxford 1968, 286-287.

rooms, not the forests of La Verna or the rocky caves of Greccio and Fonte Colombo ... Indeed, as we read through Bonaventure's *legenda* there is little or nothing to suggest that there was every-thing but perfect peace and quiet in the Order ... If we had no other source than this for the Life of Saint Francis everyone of us must admit that we should be immeasurably the poorer"<sup>12</sup>. "Bonaventura, as Minister General, had two objects in mind – to justify the Order in the eyes of the world and to draw the conflicting parties among the friars into greater concord. When we look at his *legenda* we see how closely it fits into this double policy"<sup>13</sup>.

In spite of these judgements, which are partly correct, the *Legenda Maior* still remains a masterpiece of hagiographical literature. As Armstrong states: "Bonaventure reworked, regrouped and rethought the materials of the written and oral traditions. The result of his efforts, as it appears in the *Legenda Maior*, is a portrait of the inner life of the Poverello rather than a mere external historical study. In this work there is nothing that militates against the earlier biographies, nothing that reveals a compromise or a misunderstanding of the ideals of Saint Francis"<sup>14</sup>.

Nevertheless, we must not be led to think that the *Legenda Maior* is only a theological and mystical reflection upon Francis. The legend presents itself as a historical document, and therefore it should be read also as a document of history, and not only as a spiritual or theological reflection upon Francis<sup>15</sup>.

It is important to clarify these problems if we want to appreciate Bonaventure's efforts to present an image of Francis who is true to history in the sense that he is true to his ideal and inspiration of the Gospel life. Otherwise it would be a useless task to study the *Legenda Maior*. True, the legend is a reworking of older material, it has a definite aim, it is more concerned with a theological reading of Francis' life than with a historical analysis in

<sup>12</sup> J. R. H. MOORMAN, *The Sources*, 141, 144, 148.

<sup>13</sup> J. R. H. MOORMAN, *A History of the Franciscan Order*, 287.

<sup>14</sup> R. J. ARMSTRONG, *The Spiritual Theology of the "Legenda Maior"*, 4 – 5.

<sup>15</sup> G. MICCOLI, *Bonaventura e Francesco*, in *S. Bonaventura Francescano*. Atti del XIV Convegno del Centro di Studi sulla Spiritualità Medievale, Todi 1974, 52: "La *Vita Sancti Francisci*, poichè si pone come opera di storia – e sia pure di una storia quale era pensata nel XIII secolo – come opera di storia anche, e non solo come una riflessione spirituale e teologica, esse va letta".

the modern sense. But the *Legenda Maior* does not betray the ideals of Francis. It is a sincere attempt to present a faithful image of the Poverello, because it comes from the pen of a worthy son of Francis and one of his most faithful followers, namely, Bonaventure<sup>16</sup>.

The fact that Bonaventure presents a particular image of Francis and his ideal does not militate at all against the historical value of his legend. After all, the aim of every true historian is not only that of presenting facts as they occurred chronologically. It is inevitable that a historian presents his interpretation of historical facts, without betraying objective truth regarding those facts<sup>17</sup>.

The lack of esteem towards the *Legenda Maior* by certain critics is also the result of a lack of familiarity with the other writings of Bonaventure. This is the point of departure of Clasen's detailed study upon Bonaventure's *Legenda*<sup>18</sup>. Indeed, the *Legenda Maior* can be understood correctly for what it is only when studied in the light of the global theology of Bonaventure. In this way it will become easier to see the interaction of the historical and theologico-mystical dimensions of the legend. The *Legenda Maior*, in fact, is

<sup>16</sup> Cfr. E. R. DANIEL, *St. Bonaventure a Faithful Disciple of St. Francis? A Reexamination of the Question*, in *S. Bonaventura 1274–1974*, Vol. 2, 171–187; E. PASZTOR, *San Bonaventura biografo di San Francesco? Contributo alla "questione francescana"*, in *DS 27* (1980) 83–107; M. STICCO, *San Francesco visita San Bonaventura*, in *San Bonaventura maestro di vita francescana e di sapienza cristiana*. Atti del Congresso Internazionale per il VII centenario di San Bonaventura da Bagnoregio, a cura di A. Pompei, Vol. 1, Roma 1976, 365–373.

<sup>17</sup> D. NIMMO, *Reform and Division in the Franciscan Order (1226–1538)*, Capuchin Historical Institute, Rome 1987, 74–75: "Every historian makes a limited selection of material from the much greater quantity of what is available, and his choice is guided by his interpretation of this theme, as he defines it. There is no reason to doubt that Bonaventure's selection came about in this way, and accordingly the acceptability of his account must be treated as a question of historical interpretation. Such questions do not lend themselves to quick and simple solution; if Bonaventure judged certain disputes and tensions irrelevant to the story he was concerned to tell, are we in a position to say that he was wrong?"

<sup>18</sup> S. CLASEN, *S. Bonaventura S. Francisci Legendae Maioris Compilator*, in *AFH 54* (1961) 244–245: "Dolendum tamen valde est Bonaventurae maiorem *Legendam* non tanti assiduari ut mereretur. Defectus methodici aliqui hac in re sunt culpandi. Primo nempe, auctores moderni solas *Legendas* Bonaventurianas de S. Francisco investigarunt, operibus aliis eiusdem Doctoris omnino neglectis". Other studies upon the *Leg. M.* by the same author, include: *Einteilung und Anliegen der Legenda Maior S. Francisci Bonaventuras*, in *FS 27* (1967) 115–162; *La Legenda Maior S. Francisci di S. Bonaventura*, in *IB 10* (1974) 49–65.

the result of Bonaventure's experience of the Franciscan life (the historical dimension) as well as of his theological reflection upon Francis' life and ideal (the mystical dimension). If one neglects one or the other of these basic elements, one risks losing sight of the richness of this medieval hagiographical document.

Our method of approach to the *Legenda Maior* will therefore take into account Clasen's accurate statement. After having considered the principal aspects of Bonaventure's Christology, centred upon the mystery of the Crucified Word, in the first part of our work, it is now possible to proceed in our analysis of the *Legenda Maior* from the point of view of the Christ-experience of Francis, also centred upon the *Verbum Crucifixum*. We shall try to read the *Legenda Maior* in the light of the texts already quoted in part one, in order to show that Bonaventure's theological synthesis is grounded upon a concrete experience of life, and precisely upon the life of Francis of Assisi. In this way, the *Legenda Maior* will present itself as a proof of the perennial novelty and validity of the Gospel life, as it was announced and lived by Francis in the humble following and the mystical contemplation of the poor and Crucified Christ.

We are fully aware of the importance of Bonaventure's sources, and particularly of Celano, in the composition of the *Legenda Maior*. However, our aim is not that of a critical study of the *Legenda* and its sources. This task has been accomplished with considerable success in Bihl's edition. We are rather interested in remaining within the framework of Bonaventure's theology, so as to harmonize the Christ-image and the Francis-image in the *Legenda Maior* with the global structure of Bonaventure's thought. At the same time, we do not intend to forget the central position of the *Legenda Maior* even in the historical and chronological dimensions of Bonaventure's life. The legend was composed during the second part of the life of the Seraphic Doctor. It is therefore the result of a steady growth in Bonaventure's theological maturity and in his awareness of the Christological foundations of the Franciscan experience. However, the *Legenda Maior* is not the last work of the Seraphic Doctor. It stands mid-way between the *Itinerarium* and the *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*. Its contents must necessarily refer to both works, therefore, as a point of arrival and a point of departure at the same time.

In our analysis we shall refer to the appendix or treatise upon the miracles, which forms part and parcel of the legend, especially with regards to the miraculous power of Francis' stigmata<sup>19</sup>. We shall also take into account the *Legenda Minor*<sup>20</sup>, where we note some interesting insights not present in the greater life. Finally, we shall also consider the sermons delivered by Bonaventure on the occasions of the feastdays of Saint Francis, because of their thematic affinities and chronological closeness to the *Legenda Maior*<sup>21</sup>.

We can sum up this brief introduction to the *Legenda Maior* by quoting the expert remarks of Brady regarding its intrinsic value: "From the time of Angelo Clareno to our day, there are those who consider Bonaventure's Legend a kind of political weapon which used earlier material either to achieve peace in the Order or to water down the message of Saint Francis. This is no place to answer such critics, except to point out their failure to see the real purpose and goal of the Legend: a rekindling of love for Saint Francis and for all the Seraphic Saint really stood for"<sup>22</sup>.

## II. THE PROLOGUE

The *Legenda Maior* is introduced by a prologue which is unique in its style and contents. In two paragraphs, Bonaventure condenses a theological reflection upon the mission of Francis as a herald of Gospel perfection. Francis is presented as an eschatological figure in whom God reveals the saving power of the Cross.

In this section we shall attempt to read the prologue in the light of the cruciform mission of Francis, which is subsequently unfolded along the fifteen chapters of Bonaventure's *Legenda*. For easy reference we shall present here the first two paragraphs integrally, since they are of fundamental importance to our theme:

<sup>19</sup> *De virtutibus sacrorum stigmatum* (AF 10, 627–630).

<sup>20</sup> *Leg. m.* (AF 10, 655–678).

<sup>21</sup> *Sermones de S. P. N. Francisco* (IX, 573a–597b). The sermons were delivered at Paris on the following occasions respectively: *Sermo V* (1255); *Sermo IV* (1262); *Sermo I* (1266); *Sermo II* (1267).

<sup>22</sup> I. BRADY, *The Writings of Saint Bonaventure regarding the Franciscan Order*, in *San Bonaventura maestro di vita francescana e di sapienza cristiana*. Atti del Congresso Internazionale per il VII centenario di San Bonaventura da Bagnoregio, a cura A. Pompei, Vol. 1, Roma 1976, 99–100.

1. "Apparuit gratia Dei Salvatoris nostri (Tit 2,11) diebus istis novissimis (Act 2,17; Hebr 1,2) in servo suo Francisco omnibus vere humilibus et sanctae paupertatis amicis, qui superaffluentem in eo Dei misericordiam venerantes, ipsius erudiuntur exemplo, impietatem et saecularia desideria funditus abnegare, Christo conformiter vivere et ad beatam spem (Tit 2,12-13) desiderio indefesso sitire. In ipsum namque, ut vere pauperculum et contritum, tanta Deus excelsus benignitatis condensatione respexit (Is 66,2; Iob 36,22), quod non solum de mundialis conversationis pulvere suscitavit egenum (1 Reg 2,8), verum etiam evangelicae perfectionis professorem, duces atque praecone effectum in lucem dedit (Is 49,6) credentium, ut testimonium perhibendo de lumine (Ioan 1,7), viam lucis et pacis ad corda fidelium Domino praepararet (Luc 1,76.79). Hic etenim quasi stella matutina in medio nebulae (Eccli 50,6), claris vitae micans et doctrinae fulgoribus, sedentes in tenebris et umbrae mortis (Luc 1,79) irradiatione praevalida direxit in lucem, et tamquam arcus refulgens inter nebulas gloriae (Eccli 50,8), signum in se dominici foederis repraesentans (Gen 9,13; Rom 10,15), pacem et salutem evangelizavit hominibus, exsistens et ipse Angelus verae pacis (Is 33,7), secundum imitatoriam quoque similitudinem Praecursoris destinatus a Deo, ut viam parans in deserto (Is 40,3; Marc 1,3; Luc 3,4) altissimae paupertatis, iam exemplo quam verbo poenitentiam praedicaret (Luc 24,47). Primum supernae gratiae praeventus donis, dehinc virtutis invictae adauctus meritis, prophetali quoque repletus spiritu (Luc 1,67) nec non et angelico deputatus officio incendioque seraphico totus ignitus et ur vir hierarchicus curru igneo sursum vectus (4 Reg 2,11), sicut ex ipsius vitae decursu luculenter apparet, rationabiliter comprobatur venisse in spiritu et virtute Eliae (Luc 1,17). Ideoque alterius amici Sponsi (Ioan 3,29), Apostoli et Evangelistae Ioannis vaticinatione veridica sub similitudine Angeli ascendentis ab ortu solis signumque Dei vivi adstruit non immerito designatus. Sub aperitione namque sexti sigilli vidi, ait Ioannes in Apocalypsi (Apoc 6,12), alterum Angelum ascendentem ab ortu solis, habentem signum Dei vivi (Apoc 7,2).

2. Hunc Dei nuntium amabilem Christo, imitabilem nobis et admirabilem mundo servum Dei fuisse Franciscum, indubitabili fide colligimus, si culmen in eo eximiae sanctitatis advertimus, qua, inter homines vivens, imitator fuit puritatis angelicae, qua et positus est perfectis Christi sectatoribus in exemplum. Ad quod quidem fideliter sentiendum et pie, non solum inducit officium quod habuit, vocandi ad fletum et planctum, calvitium et cingulum sacci (Is 22,12) signandique Thau super frontes virorum gementium et dolentium (Ezech 9,4) signo poenitentialis crucis et habitus cruci conformis; verum etiam irrefragabili veritatis testificatione confirmat signaculum similitudinis (Ezech 28,12) Dei viventis, Christi videlicet crucifixi (1 Cor 2,2), quod in corpore ipsius fuit impressum, non per naturae virtutem vel ingenium artis, sed potius per admirandam potentiam Spiritus Dei vivi (2 Cor 3,3)<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> Leg.M., Prol. 1-2 (AF 10, 557-558).

The opening phrase of the prologue is a theological reading of history under the category of revelation<sup>24</sup>. It is significant that the very first word of the *Legenda Maior* is the verb *apparuit*. This verb sets the tone for a specific approach to Bonaventure's biography, namely, that of spiritual vision. The whole life of Saint Francis is presented as a journey towards ecstatic vision of God in Christ Crucified, so that Francis' conformity to Christ through the stigmata becomes a sign, a revelation of God's grace, incarnated in his poor and humble person, and accessible to all those who, like him, become followers of Christ.

In one of his sermons on the feast of Saint Francis, Bonaventure explains how grace flows from the Cross, since it was upon the Cross that Christ was filled with the charisms of the Spirit<sup>25</sup>. This is the same theology we encountered in chapter one, where we discussed how grace flows from the *Verbum Crucifixum* as Bonaventure explains in the *Collationes de Donis Spiritus Sancti*.

God's grace is revealed to those who are truly humble and lovers of holy poverty. Francis is presented as an example of perfect humility and poverty, which are two fundamental values of the imitation of Christ, closely associated with the mystery of the Cross<sup>26</sup>.

True humility is a direct participation in the *kenosis* of the Incarnate and Crucified Word. It is the distinctive sign of Francis' mission, centred upon the following of Christ in this specific attitude of lowliness<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> For a structural analysis of the opening phrase of the prologue, cfr. L. PELLEGRINI, *Il ruolo "profetico" di Francesco d'Assisi. Analisi sincronica del prologo della "Legenda Maior"*, in *Francescanesimo e Profetia*, Collana "Dimensioni Spirituali", Vol. 8, Roma 1985, 153-187, especially 159-161.

<sup>25</sup> *Sermo IV de SPN Francisco* (IX, 590ab): "Crux Christi signum est diffusionis gratiae Dei, quia de cruce Christi, hoc est a passione, fluunt charismata gratiarum; et ideo signum Filii hominis, hoc est signum crucis Christi, in illo debuit collocari, qui fuit repletus charismatibus Spiritus sancti!"

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*: "Cum igitur crux Christi sit signum operum perfectorum Dei et omnium miraculorum; et beatus Franciscus fuit caelum omnia ista faciens: in ipso debuit crux Christi situari ut sic per signum illud exaltaretur. Ipse enim Dominus humilia respicit (Ps 112,5); ideo respexit beatum Franciscum humilem et pauperculum et signum suum illi impressit!"

<sup>27</sup> *Sermo IV de SPN Francisco* (IX, 589a): "Si igitur crux Christi est principaliter signum humiliatis, quod patet; audi Apostolum: *Humilitatis semetipsum, factus obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis* (Phil 2,8); crux enim Christi signum est humilitatis summae et vilificationis; et ideo in eo debuit collocari, qui habuit summam humilitatem, in

Humility stands at the roots of the spiritual life. As Armstrong rightly points out, in the prologue, Bonaventure lays down the triple structure of the *Legenda Maior*, by presenting Francis' life as a spiritual growth along the three hierarchical acts<sup>28</sup>.

The various biblical images which enrich the prologue all point to this direction. God raises Francis from the dust of a worldly life, so that he becomes a light for others through his faithfulness to the Gospel ideal. In this way Francis becomes a way leading to peace, the herald or angel of peace whose mission is that of John the Baptist, namely, to prepare a way in the desert of most high poverty through the preaching of penance. All these images show a striking similarity to the theology of the *Itinerarium*, and are a proof that the *Legenda Maior* is the historical actualization of the mystical theology of the journey applied to Francis.

Francis is the morning star in the midst of the clouds. He is also the rainbow, a sign of the Lord's covenant with humankind. The image of the rainbow is a strong symbol, which goes right to the heart of Francis' mission, revealing it as a cruciform mission rooted in the virtue of charity<sup>29</sup>.

Bonaventure makes use of three biblical personages in the prologue in order to explain Francis' mission. He compares Francis to John the Baptist who enlightens the humble and contrite to

beato Francisco, qui humillimum et vilissimum se reputabat". Humility is the theme of the fifth sermon of St. Francis, preached in 1255. In this sermon, Bonaventure presents the invitation of Christ in Matthew 11,29 as the "verbum abbreviatum", revealing the most profound contents of evangelical perfection which Francis embraced: *Sermo V de SPN Francisco* (IX, 590b): "Discede a me, quia mitis sum et humilis corde. Verbum istud est summi Doctoris et sumitur de Matthaei undecimo; verbum etiam istud potest esse perfecti imitatoris Christi, scilicet beati Francisci, et sumitur de Evangelio, quod legitur in eius festo. Sive autem dictum verbum sit Christi, sive beati Francisci, est verbum abbreviatum (Rom 9,28) et consummatum, quia in eo clauditur summa totius evangelicae perfectionis breviter et plane".

<sup>28</sup> Cfr. R. J. Armstrong, *The Spiritual Theology*, 52–53.

<sup>29</sup> *Sermo IV de SPN Francisco* (IX, 589a): "Vide arcum est benedic eum qui fecit illum (Eccl 43,12). Quis est iste arcus nisi crux Christi? Ergo in viro caelesti, in quo fuit dilatatio caritatis, debuit crux Christi poni, in beato Francisco". The image of the morning star in the midst of the cloud of Eccl 50,6, provided the theme for Gregory IX's homily on the occasion of the canonization of Francis (16 July 1228). It is also found in the Papal Bull of canonization *Mira circa nos* (19 July 1228), in *Bullarium Franciscanum*, Vol. 1, 42–45. A study of the Bull has been done by R. J. ARMSTRONG, "Mira circa nos". Gregory IX's view of Saint Francis of Assisi, in *Laurentianum* 3 (1984), 385–414.

prepare the way of the Lord through penance. Francis is also another Elijah, who is taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot, and who stands for the process of *sursumactio*, or the hierarchical uplifting of the soul into God. Finally, Francis is the angel bearing the seal of the living God. This last image merits special attention because it manifests Francis' cruciform mission in a unique way.

(a) *The Angel of the sixth seal and the penitential Tau*

The image of the angel of the sixth seal is instrumental in understanding Bonaventure's interpretation of Francis' life and mission. This apocalyptic image forms part and parcel of medieval eschatology, especially with regards to the interpretation of the Joachimite theology of history<sup>30</sup>.

Although Gerard of Borgo San Donnino had used the image of applied it to Francis in his *Liber Introductorius*<sup>31</sup>, Bonaventure does not hesitate to accept, formally at least, this interpretation of an author who was condemned by the supreme authority of the Church. What does Bonaventure intend to affirm exactly regarding Francis? For our topic we are interested mostly in his interpretation of the biblical image rather than in the intentions of the followers of Joachim of Fiore. Therefore we shall indicate the various uses which Bonaventure makes of this image, and then try to see his own interpretation.

In his *Quaestiones Disputatae de Perfectione Evangelica*, Bonaventure interprets the mission of the mendicants in the light of Apocalypse 7,2–3, and specifies its contents in the life of penance and in the grace of the Holy Spirit which accompanies the office of

<sup>30</sup> Cfr. S. BIHEL, *S. Franciscus fuitne Angelus sexti sigilli?*, in *Ani* 2 (1927) 59–90; S. DA CAMPAGNOLA, *L'Angelo del sesto sigillo e l'"alter Christus"*. *Genesi e sviluppo di due temi francescani nei secoli XIII–XIV*, Roma 1971, 163–197; J. RATZINGER, *The Theology of History*, 31–38; F. SIMONI BALIS CREMA, *Gioacchimismo e responsabilità escatologica*, in *Chi erano gli Spirituali?* Atti del III Convegno della Società Internazionale di Studi Franciscani, Assisi 1976, 148–179.

<sup>31</sup> H. DENIFLE, *Protokoll der Commission zu Anagni*, 101: "Item in XII capitulo versus finem ponit haec verba: 'Usque ad illum angelum, qui habuit signum Dei vivi, qui apparuit circa 1200 incarnationis dominicae', quem angelum frater Gerardus vocat et confitetur sanctum Franciscum".



preaching<sup>32</sup>. The text is evidently similar to the theology of the prologue of the *Legenda Maior*.

The same biblical text is also used twice in the *Commentarius in Evangelium Lucae*. When he speaks about the *consummatio discipulatus Christi et comitatus* in the bearing of the Cross, Bonaventure presents it as a sign of the living God, the distinctive mark of true and faithful discipleship. The disciples of the Crucified Lord are sealed with the sign of salvation<sup>33</sup>. The second instance regards an eschatological text about the day of the Son of man, when the Cross will be the visible sign of the consummation of Christ's Passion in all the members of His body<sup>34</sup>.

In the second sermon on Friday of Holy Week, Bonaventure quotes Apocalypse 7,2–3 in order to prove the power of the Cross against the devil<sup>35</sup>. The Cross is also the sign written upon all those who outwardly crucify their flesh and are inwardly conformed to Christ. Bonaventure explains how this conformity comes about through the virtues linked with the mystery of the Cross<sup>36</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> *Q. de perf. ev.*, q. 2, a. 3, resp. ad 12 (V, 164b): "Et quia Ecclesiae iam ditatae magis indigebant spiritalibus operibus quam vinitoribus et agricolis; hinc est, quod Spiritus sanctus religiones pauperulas suscitavit, quarum sollicitudo et cura tota esset ad *signandos servos Dei in frontibus eorum signo Dei vivi* (Apoc 7,2), vocando ad poenitentiam et ad gratiam Spiritus sancti".

<sup>33</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 14, n. 55 (VII, 376b).

<sup>34</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 17, n. 44 (VII, 439b–440a): "Hac autem passio incepta a capite et descendit in omnia Christi membra; qua consummata, tunc finis erit et tempus adventus secundi... Haec autem passio in capite Christi consummata, non nisi glorificatio et retributio plena, propter quod Apocalypsis sexto dicitur Sanctis desiderantibus secundum stolam: 'Adhuc sustinete modicum tempus, donec impleatur numerus fratrum vestrorum' (Apoc 6,11); et Apocalypsis septimo: 'Nolite nocere terrae et mari neque arboribus, quoadusque signemus servos Dei in frontibus eorum' (Apoc 7,3). Hoc est signum Dei vivi, quod est signum crucis, quo omnes electos oportet consignari".

<sup>35</sup> *Feria VI in Parasce. Sermo II* (IX, 266a): "Si invocamus Trinitatem, non timet diabolus, sed si invocatur Christus crucifixus, statim expavescit, et aufertur ei posse per crucem... Unde in Apocalypsi dicitur est Angelis, quibus datum est nocere terrae et mari, dicens: *Nolite nocere terrae et mari neque arboribus, quoadusque signemus servos Dei nostri in frontibus eorum* (Apoc 7,2–3)".

<sup>36</sup> *Dom. XXII p. Pent. Sermo V* (IX, 446ab): "Superscriptio habentis imaginem Dei est rigor disciplinae in conversatione; qui quidem rigor consistit in crucifixe exterioris hominis et configuratione ad vitam et mortem Christi. Qui quidem habet et portat secum humilitatem habitationis, acerbitatem compunctionis, integritatem castitatis, celsitudinem paupertatis, latitudinem caritatis, rectitudinem simplicitatis, affectum clementiae, zelum iustitiae, firmitatem constantiae, instantiam in orando, vigiliam in meditando, excedentiam in exultando; de qua superscriptione Lucae vicesimo tertio: *Erat autem et superscriptio scripta super eam litteris Graecis et Latinis et Hebraicis* (Luc 23,38); et Apocalypsis septimo: *Vidi alterum Angelum*".

The image of the angel bearing the seal of the living God is projected in its most profound eschatological connotations in the *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*. The first quotation refers to the prophetic Order of the sixth age, the age of prophecy, whose founder would be similar to the angel of the sixth seal<sup>37</sup>. The apocalyptic angel appears in time of great tribulation for the Church, that is, in the sixth age, which immediately precedes the seventh age, when peace is restored<sup>38</sup>. The third text refers to the hierarchized soul, which has the same number of the heavenly Jerusalem, namely, one hundred and forty four. This number, multiplied by one thousand, is the number of those who are sealed with the sign of the living God<sup>39</sup>. The soul is signed with the seal of God when it arrives at the contemplative stage. At this stage the soul is signed by the seal which is the expression of the way in which it must live in faithfulness. The seal is that of perfection rooted in charity, to which the contemplative soul arrives by means of a triple light of spiritual uplifting. The faithfulness to the seal of charity is best seen in the profession of the religious life of penance<sup>40</sup>. This important text of the *Hexaëmeron* can be regarded as a mystical reflection upon the life of Francis, who is uplifted through the hierarchical acts in order to receive the final seal of charity in his definitive encounter with Christ Crucified. In this way he himself becomes the angel with the seal of the living God, who stamps the foreheads of the elect with the penitential Cross of salvation.

<sup>37</sup> *Hex.*, 16,16 (V, 405b).

<sup>38</sup> *Hex.*, 16,29 (V, 408b).

<sup>39</sup> *Hex.*, 23,2–3 (V, 445ab): "Si autem ducantur duodecim per duodecim, erunt centum quadraginta quatuor, numerus scilicet civitatis Ierusalem. Anima enim sic hierarchizata est civitas, in qua Deus habitat et videtur... Quomodo potest hoc esse? Vide illud, quod dictum est, in fine Apocalypsis: circa medium autem dicitur est: *Vidi supra montem Sion Agnum stantem, et cum eo centum quadraginta quatuor millia, habentes nomen eius et nomen Patris eius scriptum in frontibus suis* (Apoc 14,1). In aperture autem sexti sigilli dictum est in Apocalypsi: *Vidi alterum Angelum... Et audivi signatorum, centum quadraginta quatuor signati ex omni tribu filiorum Israel* (Apoc 7,2–4)".

<sup>40</sup> *Hex.*, 23,14 (V, 447a): "Sic anima contemplativa signatur a Deo. Unde sub sexto Angelo dicitur, quod apparuit Angelus habens *signum Dei vivi*. Huic Angelo apparuit signum expressivum, quantum ad modum vivendi consonum isti signo, quod est, quod signatur: *Ex tribu Iuda duodecim millia signati* (Apoc 7,5); et hoc est, qui habet hanc triplicem lucem elevatam, triplicem oportet quod habeat perfectionem, respondentem caritati. Unde signare hoc modo est per professionem ad hoc alligare et imprimere signum, ut respondeat illi signo caritatis".

In order to clarify the symbolic connotations of Bonaventure's use of Apocalypse 7,2–3, we must also consider another biblical text closely associated with it and instrumental in the prologue of the *Legenda Maior*. This is Ezekiel 9,4. Bonaventure is aware of the inseparable link between both texts, since he unites them together into a specific mode of interpretation. The seal imprinted upon the foreheads of the elect is the Hebrew letter Tau, which is an evident symbol of the Cross<sup>41</sup>. The Tau is the sign of penance<sup>42</sup>. It is also a sign of new life in baptism, since this sacrament is the seal of the Cross which saves and which signs the elect<sup>43</sup>.

In two of the sermons of Saint Francis, Bonaventure quotes these biblical texts together, and refers them to the stigmata which are the seal of God upon the body of the Poverello. In this way Francis appears as a visible sign of exterior penance rooted in the Cross, and of an interior conformity to Christ Crucified. His person is the expression of the mission of the angel of the sixth seal, and he becomes the eschatological herald of salvation<sup>44</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> Cfr. O. SCHMUCKI, *Das Leiden Christi im Leben des heiligen Franziskus von Assisi*, in CF 30 (1960) 18–26: "Francis and the mystical Tau"; D. VORREUX, *A Franciscan Symbol: The Tau*, English translation by M. Archer and P. Lachance, Chicago 1979.

<sup>42</sup> *Comm. Luc.*, c. 17, n. 44 (VII, 440a): "Hoc est signum Dei vivi, quod est signum crucis, quo omnes electos oportet consignari; Ezechielis nono: 'Signa thau supra frontes virorum gementium et dolentium'; et post: 'Transite, inquit, per medium civitatis et occidite. Omnem autem, quem videritis thau, ne occidatis' (Ezech 9,4–6)".

<sup>43</sup> *Dom. II p. Epiph. Sermo I* (IX, 180a) and BOUGEROL, *Sermo 8*, 188: "Et hoc est quod expresse et secundum litteram dicitur Ezechielis nono: Signa thau super frontes virorum gementium et dolentium (Ezech 9,4), de morte Christi per compassionem; et sequitur, quod transierunt percussores per medium civitatis, et percusserunt omnes, qui non habebant signum thau, id est crucis, in frontibus suis, quod amabile signum per baptismum imprimit Dominus spiritualiter in bonum salutis".

<sup>44</sup> *Sermo II de SPN Francisco* (IX, 574b–575a): "(Franciscus) fuit signaculum ... expressivum per zelum supernae salutis, secundum illud Apocalypsis: Vidi alterum Angelum ascendentem ab ortu solis, habentem signum Dei vivi. Hoc quidem signum est zelus humanae salutis; unde in Ezechiele: Signa thau super frontes virorum gementium et dolentium"; *Sermo IV de SPN Francisco* (IX, 587a): "(Franciscus) enim maxime exercuit se in humilitate et poenitentia, et placuit Domino imprimere in eo stigmata crucis, stigmata suae passionis; unde et de ipso potest intelligi illud verbum Apocalypsis: Vidi alterum Angelum ascendentem ab ortu solis, habentem signum Dei vivi, ut scilicet imprimeret signum illud super frontes virorum gementium et dolentium". In one case, Bonaventure quotes Apoc 7,2 with regards to the community of those who live in conformity to Christ and not to the individual case of Francis: *Sermo II de SPN Francisco, Collatio* (IX, 582b): "Legitur, quod Angelus, qui venit ab ortu solis, signavit ab omni tribu servos Dei Israel (Apoc 7,2–3). Illi sunt signati, qui sunt sursum in conformi vita Christi".

Before attempting to individuate Bonaventure's interpretation of these two biblical images, it is important to refer to their role in the *Legenda Maior*, as well as in the *Legenda Minor*. The image of the angel of the sixth seal of the prologue reappears in the scene of the stigmatization, where Bonaventure recapitulates the whole process of spiritual growth of Francis along six visions of the Cross, leading to the experience of La Verna. The stigmata are the seal of the exterior and interior conformity of Francis to Christ Crucified, and place the Poverello in an eschatological light<sup>45</sup>.

The same image recurs twice in the *Legenda Minor*. The stigmatized Francis is carried down from La Verna across towns and villages as a herald of peace in order to inflame hearts with the fire of God's love manifest in his crucified body<sup>46</sup>. The entire life of Francis is a proof of his angelic ministry, consummated in his conformity to Christ Crucified<sup>47</sup>.

The text of Ezekiel is even more evident in its reference to the Cross as a distinctive sign of a life of penance. The prologue presents Francis as a herald of peace. He calls all those who want to follow Christ to mourn and weep, to put on sackcloth and live in penance. Bonaventure is interested in presenting a penitential picture of Francis. He does not lack the joyous vitality of the saint who composed the Canticle of Brother Sun, but he is also presented as a

<sup>45</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 13, n. 10 (AF 10, 620): "Iam denique circa finem, quod simul tibi ostenditur et sublimis similitudo Seraph et humilis effigies Crucifixi, interius te incendens et exterius te consignans tamquam alterum Angelum ascendentem ab ortu solis, qui signum in te habetis Dei vivi (Apoc 7,2), et praedictis dat firmitatem fidei et ab eis accipit testimonium veritatis (Ioan 5,33–34)".

<sup>46</sup> *Leg. m.*, VII, lectio 1 (AF 10, 675): "Et quia propter excrecentes in pedibus clavos ambulare non poterat, faciebat corpus emortuum per civitates et castella circumvehi, ut tamquam alter Angelus ab ortu ascendens (Apoc 7,2) servorum Dei corda ignis divina flamma succenderet, pedes quoque in viam pacis dirigeret (Luc 1,79) frontisque ipsorum Dei vivi signaculo consignaret (Apoc 7,3)".

<sup>47</sup> *Leg. m.*, VII, lectio 9 (AF 10, 678): "Igitur ut summaria quadam praescriptorum omnium epilogatione sermo claudatur, quisquis superiora perlegerit, finali consideratione perpendat, quod ipsius beati Patris Francisci mirabiliter facta conversio, efficacia in verbo divino, sublimium praeogativa virtutum, propheticarum spiritus cum intelligentia Scripturarum, obedientia creaturarum ratione carentium, sacrorum impressio stigmatum et celeberrimus transitus ex hoc mundo ad caelum tamquam testimonia septem saeculo toti luculenter ostendunt et adstruunt, ipsum velut praeclearum Christi praecentem, signum Dei vivi in se ipso habentem (Apoc 7,2), et venerandum esse officio et doctrina authenticum et admirabilem sanctitatem".

saint who is constantly weeping in solitude at the very thought of Christ's sufferings during the Passion<sup>48</sup>.

Francis is the herald of the penitential Tau. Bonaventure deliberately underlines this detail in order to present Francis' mission as a mission of penance rooted in the mystery of the Cross. Thus, the naked Francis in front of bishop Guido of Assisi, is clothed with a poor cloak on which he marks the sign of the Cross<sup>49</sup>.

Bonaventure gives a very particular interpretation of the Tau. Although he is faithful to his sources<sup>50</sup>, he introduces the image of Ezechiel 9,4 in order to present Francis as the person whom God signs with the seal of the Cross in order that he may assume the prophetic ministry by calling everyone to repentance by the preaching of the Word of the Cross<sup>51</sup>. In this way, Bonaventure is definitely interpreting the entire life of Francis in the light of the mystery of the Cross, as the opening paragraph of the treatise on miracles aptly demonstrates<sup>52</sup>.

The sign of the Cross has the power of healing. Francis touches the sick man with the small stick in the form of a Tau and heals him,

<sup>48</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 1, n. 5 (AF 10, 562); c. 5, n. 8 (AF 10, 580); c. 10, n. 4 (AF 10, 603); *Leg. m.*, I, lectio 4 (AF 1, 656).

<sup>49</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 2, n. 4 (AF 10, 565): "Oblatus est autem ei mantellus pauper et villis cuiusdam agricolae servientis episcopi, quem ipse grater suscipiens, cum caemento quod sibi occurrit, ad modum crucis manu propria consignavit, operimentum formans ex eo crucifisci hominis et pauperis seminudi".

<sup>50</sup> *3 Cel.*, 3 (AF 10, 273).

<sup>51</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 4, n. 9 (AF 10, 575): "Hic postmodum in omni sanctitate proficiens, antequam fieret Minister in Francia — siquidem primus ibidem ministerii gessit officium — (frater Pacificus) meruit iterato magnum Thau in fronte Francisci videre, quod colorum varietate distinctum, faciem ipsius miro venustabat ornatu. — Hoc quippe signum vir sanctus magno venerabatur affectu, frequenti commendabat eloquio et in eis quas dirigebat litterulis manu propria subscribebat, tamquam si omne ipsius studium foret *signare Thau*, iuxta dictum propheticum *super frontes virorum gementium et dolentium*, ad Christum Iesum veraciter conversorum"; Cfr. *Leg. m.*, II, lectio 9 (AF 10, 662). Bonaventure also speaks about Francis' personal veneration for the Tau, especially in the use he makes of it when signing letters. An example is the Tau on the parchment of the benediction given to brother Leo on La Verna: Cfr. *Leg. M.*, c. 11, n. 9 (AF 10, 608–609).

<sup>52</sup> *Leg. M.*, Mirac. I, n. 1 (AF 10, 627): "Totum quidem viri Dei studium, tam publicum quam privatum, circa crucem Domini versabatur; et ut crucis signaculo cordi eius a principio suae conversionis impresso corpus consignaret exterius, in ipsa se cruce recludens, habitum poenitentiae sumpsit crucis imaginem praeferentem, quatenus, sicut mens eius intus Dominum crucifixum induerat, sic et corpus eius indueret arma crucis, et in quo signo Deus potestates aëreas debellarat, in eodem suus exercitus Domino militaret".

leaving the seal of the Tau on the spot which had been restored to perfect health<sup>53</sup>. Bonaventure interprets this fact and all the other miracles in the light of the centrality which the mystery of the Cross assumes in Francis' life, rendering him a glorious bearer of the Cross and hence an instrument of salvation<sup>54</sup>.

(b) *Bonaventure's interpretation of Apoc 7,2–3 and Ezech 9,4*

"The notion of the *angelus ascendens ab ortu solis* has become the central concept of Bonaventure's theological understanding of Francis as well as of his theology of the history of salvation<sup>55</sup>.

Indeed, the *Legenda Maior* is a historical document of major importance, since it is an attempt to place Francis in an eschatological light. Bonaventure is interested in a theological reading of historical facts, and hence sees Francis as a saint whose mission is incarnated in history. God calls Francis to make him a herald of Gospel perfection and an instrument of grace in times of great crisis. His mission is angelic<sup>56</sup>. In other words, Francis is a messenger of the definite realization of salvation history. He assumes the same mission of the prophet clothed in the linen garment who signs the elect with the Tau, the distinctive mark of salvation.

The problem regarding Bonaventure's interpretation of eschatological texts in the case of Saint Francis can be posed in the

<sup>53</sup> *Leg. M.*, Mirac. X, n. 6 (AF 10, 651).

<sup>54</sup> *Leg. M.*, Mirac. X, n. 7 (AF 10, 651): "Sed ecce, dum per diversa miracula glorioso Patris Francisci mens narrationis varietate distracta decurrit, promerente ipso crucis glorioso signifero, in signum salutis Thau non sine divina directione pervenit, ut ex hoc possumus advertere, quod sicut crux militantis post Christum fuit sublimitas meriti ad salutem, sic et triumphantis cum Christo facta est firmitas testimonii ad honorem".

<sup>55</sup> J. RATZINGER, *The Theology of History*, 34. In pages 31–38, the author makes a detailed analysis of the eschatological position of St. Francis, which Bonaventure develops particularly in the *Hex*.

<sup>56</sup> Francis' angelic ministry is expressed in its double dimension of a life of prayer and active preaching in *Leg. M.*, c. 10, n. 1 (AF 10, 602): "Erat quidem oratio contemplanti solatium, dum, supernarum circuitu mansionum Angelorum concivis iam factus, ferventi desiderio *quaerebat Dilectum* (Cant 3,1–2), a quo solus eum carnis paries disungebat"; *Leg. M.*, c. 12, n. 12 (AF 10, 615): "Cum his et aliis multis miraculorum prodigijs praeco Christi praedicans coruscaret, attendebatur his quae dicebantur ab eo, ac si *Angelus Domini loqueretur* (Iudic, 2,4)"; *Leg. M.*, c. 13, n. 5 (AF 10, 617): "*descendit angelicus vir Franciscus de monte* (Matth 8,1)".

following terms. Does Bonaventure follow a Joachite trend in interpreting Francis as the angel of the sixth seal? Or does he propose his own interpretation? Ratzinger deals with this problem in sufficient depth of analysis. So we can accept his expert conclusion that Bonaventure does not approve of Joachim's theology of history, especially as it was interpreted by subsequent Joachites like Gerard of Borgo San Donnino. However, the Seraphic Doctor does not entirely reject Joachim's views<sup>57</sup>.

In his study, Bihel concludes that, in the *Legenda Maior* Bonaventure went so far as to spread Gerard's interpretation of Francis' mission, even though he did this unintentionally<sup>58</sup>.

Most probably, Bonaventure's aim was far removed from that of the Joachites. According to the study of Simoni Balis-Crema, the eschatological images of the *Legenda Maior* have a moral orientation, in order to affirm Francis' evangelical perfection, which God Himself proves through the gift of the stigmata. So they cannot be interpreted as a historico-temporal renewal in a Joachite sense<sup>59</sup>.

It is definitely true, however, that Bonaventure does not hesitate to make use of images and symbols which were part of the medieval interpretation of history. Indeed, Bonaventure certainly accepts the fact that Francis was sent by God *diebus istis novissimis*, that is, during the final age. However, the Seraphic Doctor differs from the Joachites in interpreting this expression. Francis' mission is eschatological in the sense that it is a mission which will be operative as long as it is the continuation of the same mission of Christ. It is a mission rooted in the mystery of Redemption realized once and for all upon the Cross. Francis is the prophet who reminds all generations of the saving power of the Cross, which will be consummated at the end of the time, but whose consummation has already been prefigured, in a certain way, in his own person, a perfect icon

<sup>57</sup> J. RATZINGER, *The Theology of History*, 181, par. 5, note 37.

<sup>58</sup> S. BIHEL, *S. Franciscus fuitne Angelus sexti sigilli?* in *Ant* 2 (1927) 90: "Licet in Ordinis Minorum initio plures Joachitae fuerint qui omnes S. Franciscum maximis laudibus libenter extollebant, primus qui Angelum sexti sigilli Seraphicum Patrem esse certe asseruit, est Gerardus a Burgo S. Donnini, auctor *Introductorii in Evangelium Aeternum*, 1254. Principalis autem huius interpretationis propagator, licet forsitan praeter eius intentionem, dici potest S. Bonaventura qui iam in Gerardum graviter animadvertit".

<sup>59</sup> Cfr. F. SIMONI BALIS-CREMA, *Gioachimismo e responsabilità escatologica*, 173-174.

of the Crucified Lord. That is why Francis becomes a model of Gospel perfection. His person synthesizes the most profound values of discipleship. Through penance, that is, through the Cross, Francis' vision is purified so that he might behold the pure rays of light in the experience of bodily and spiritual transfiguration.

Our next step will be precisely that of individuating the slow but definite unfolding of this process of conversion or purification, in which the eyes of Francis' spirit are rendered more pure to pass through sensible vision onto the vision of the spirit, or inner vision, and up to the vision of divinity itself. This process has just one point of reference, namely, the Crucified Word. It is the Word of salvation which Francis encounters and of which he becomes the messenger or angel, so that in every age, every person can follow his expert footsteps in the journey to contemplative union, and form part of the future Seraphic Order whose coat of arms is the seal of the Cross.

### III. THE SIX VISIONS OF THE CROSS

In chapter thirteen of the *Legenda Maior*, Bonaventure concludes the account of Francis' stigmatization with a synthesis of the main stages which led him to the vision of the Crucified Seraph. He summarizes them in the six visions of the Cross, which form the basic structure of the first four chapters of the biography. The Seraphic Doctor presents the stigmatization as the full realization of these signs which marked Francis' progress along his spiritual journey of ever increasing degrees of God-likeness<sup>60</sup>.

In his account of the miracles which follow the biography, Bonaventure points out the secret which underlines Francis' progress in virtue along the way to evangelical perfection, namely, the Cross of Christ, which shines forth in various events and characterizes his life and mission<sup>61</sup>.

<sup>60</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 13, n. 10 (AF 10, 620): "Ecce, iam septem apparitionibus crucis Christi in te et circa te secundum ordinem temporum mirabiliter exhibitus et monstratus, quasi sex gradibus ad istam septimam, in qua finaliter requiesceres, pervenisti".

<sup>61</sup> *Leg. M.*, *Mirac.* 1, n. 1 (AF 10, 627): "Sed et a principio temporis, quo Crucifixo militare coepat, diversa circa eum crucis praefulserunt mysteria, sicut vitae ipsius considerati

The first four chapters of the *Legenda Maior* provide a historical account regarding Francis' conversion to the Gospel life and the slow growth of the Order until the definitive approval of the *Regula Bullata*. Bonaventure does not write an accurate chronological account of facts covering a rather long period of time (1205 – 1223). He just makes an intelligent choice of the most significant facts from the sources at his disposal, and weaves them together into a specific theological interpretation. He even goes as far as to insert some facts which are not found in the other sources, accommodating them to his interpretation of the Francis-image he intends to present.

In the first section of the *Legenda Maior*, Bonaventure wants to demonstrate how God's grace lifted Francis from the dust of a worldly life, to make him a herald of Gospel perfection through a life of penance centred upon the mystery of the Cross. What we intend to analyze in this part of the biography is precisely the slow but ever-growing awareness of Francis regarding his specific call to follow Christ, poor and Crucified. Bonaventure reads this fact of Francis' life through the category of spiritual vision, which passes through the humanity of the Crucified Word. In six successive visions, Francis is presented as the prophet signed with the seal of the Cross, which helps him to purify his spiritual vision to behold the pure light of the divinity hidden within the sacrament of the Paschal Cross.

In this way we have a first plan of Francis' spiritual journey. Since it is closely linked with the process of his conversion, we intend to analyze it in this chapter. The second plan regards chapters five to thirteen of the *Legenda Maior*, where Bonaventure presents Francis' progress in virtue through the three hierarchical acts as a journey undertaken in the faithful following of the Crucified. This will be the theme of our next chapter. We can regard these as a parallel approach to the goal to Francis' spiritual journey in the total transfiguration of his person in the likeness of the Crucified and Glorified Christ in the experience of the stigmatization and *transitus*.

decursum, clarior innotescit: qualiter apparitione crucis dominicae septiformi tam cogitatu quam affectu et actu totius fuit in Crucifixi effigiem per ipsius ecstaticum transformatus amorem<sup>61</sup>.

The fundamental element of Francis' spiritual experience centred upon the Cross seems to be that of ecstatic vision. The symbolic connotations of the six-fold nature of the visions of the Cross leading to the seventh on La Verna are the practical application of Bonaventure's theology of the six steps of the soul's journey leading to ecstatic rapture in the *Itinerarium* to the life of Saint Francis.

Before proceeding to analyze Bonaventure's accounts of the visions of the Cross in the *Legenda Maior*, it might be helpful to see the various uses which the Seraphic Doctor makes of specific terms associated with the category of vision.

A look at the computer read-out of the *Legenda Maior* presents some very interesting insights into the subject of vision. The most important key-words linked with vision are *visio*, *video*, *videor*, *apparitio*, *appareo*, *contuitus* and *contueor*<sup>62</sup>.

The noun *video* is used sixteen times with reference to the Cross in the *Legenda Maior* and eight times in the *Legenda Minor*<sup>63</sup>. Numerically speaking, one half of Bonaventure's references to *visio* are associated with the theme of the Cross.

The verb *video* offers the same picture. It refers to the Cross thirty times in the *Legenda Maior* and eleven in the *Legenda Minor*<sup>64</sup>.

<sup>62</sup> <i>Visio</i>	= 43x, 32 in <i>Leg. M.</i> ,	11 in <i>Leg. m.</i>
<i>Video</i>	= 132x, 109	23
<i>Videor</i>	= 73x, 61	12
<i>Apparitio</i>	= 8x, 6	2
<i>Appareo</i>	= 54x, 40	14
<i>Contuitus</i>	= 6x, 2	4
<i>Contueor</i>	= 9x, 8	1

Cfr. respectively, in *CETEDOC II*, 344, 335 – 336, 336 – 337, 39, 38 – 39, 79.

<sup>63</sup> Cfr. *CETEDOC II*, 344. In the *Leg. M.*, *visio* recurs 3x in the vision of the weapons, 3x in Silvester's vision, 8x in the La Verna episode and 2x in relation to the healing power of Francis' stigmata. In the *Leg. m.* it is referred 1x to the vision of Christ fastened to the Cross, 1x to Silvester's vision, 5x to the La Verna episode and 1x to Francis' *transitus*.

<sup>64</sup> Cfr. *CETEDOC II*, 335 – 336. In the *Leg. M.*, *video* recurs 1x in the prologue, 1x in the vision at Spoleto, 3x in Silvester's vision, 1x to designate Francis' devotion to the Cross and churches, 2x in Pacificus' vision, 1x in reference to Francis' prayer, 2x in the vision of the Crucified Seraph, 2x with reference to the stigmata, 12x with reference to the witnesses of Francis' stigmata, 2x with reference to the healing power of the stigmata, and 1x in recapitulating the visions of the Cross.

Of minor importance is *videor*, which recurs twelve times with reference to the Cross in the *Legenda Maior*<sup>65</sup>.

The noun *apparitio*, instead, is exclusively used with reference to the Cross, six times and two times respectively<sup>66</sup>.

Even the verb *appareo* is of great importance. In the *Legenda Maior* it is exclusively associated with the Cross, thirteen times in all. In the *Legenda Minor* it recurs nineteen times out of a total of forty<sup>67</sup>.

*Contuitus* is used once in each biography with reference to the Cross. The verb *contueor*, instead, is practically always linked with the Cross, five out of eight times in the *Legenda Maior*, and one in the *Legenda Minor*<sup>68</sup>.

These indications point out the profound theological nuances of vision with reference to Francis' experience of the Cross. Not only is Francis outwardly presented in mystical union with Christ Crucified through apparitions or visions, but it is his very being that experiences this inner dynamism of spiritual vision. His entire life is a turning of his gaze upon the Crucifix in the mystical sense. It is a journey through the obscurity of faith, in the continual striving for contemplation, through the illuminative gift of apparition, into ecstatic peace of vision and loving union with God.

Before we analyze Bonaventure's accounts of the six visions of the Cross, it is important to note that we do not intend to undertake

<sup>65</sup> Cf. *CETEDOC II*, 336–337. In the *Leg. M.*, *videor* recurs 1x in relation of Francis' desire for martyrdom, 2x in the La Verna episode, 1x in the *transitus*, 3x with reference to Francis' corpse seen as a glorified body, and 5x with reference to miracles associated with the stigmata.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. *CETEDOC II*, 39. In the *Leg. M.*, *apparitio* is used 1x in c. 8, n. 10 (birds foretell the seraphic apparition), 1x in c. 11, n. 14 (apparition at Arles), 2x in c. 13 (La Verna episode) and 2x in the miracle accounts linked with the theme of the Cross.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. *CETEDOC II*, 38–39. In the *Leg. M.*, *appareo* recurs 2x in the prologue, 1x in the apparition of Christ fastened to the Cross, 1x in the meeting of Francis with the leper, 2x in the apparition at Arles, 1x with reference to Christ's paschal apparitions, 5x in the La Verna episode, 1x in Francis' apparition to bishop Guido, and 6x in the miracles associated with the stigmata.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. *CETEDOC II*, 79. *Contuitus* is used with reference to the meeting with the leper in the *Leg. M.*, and in the apparition of Christ fastened to the Cross in the *Leg. m.* In the *Leg. M.*, *contueor* is used 1x with reference to the theology of the *Inn.*, c. 1, n. 3 ("quae per visibilibus species transire ad contuendam invisibilibus"), 1x in Silvester's vision, and 3x with reference to Francis' stigmata.

a historico-critical analysis of the relative texts. Although no serious study would reject the historical value of Bonaventure's *Legenda* globally considered, the faithfulness of individual facts to historical truth can certainly be discussed<sup>69</sup>. Here we shall concentrate upon Bonaventure's theological interpretation of these accounts, in his endeavour to present an image of Francis definitely centred upon the mystery of the Cross.

(a) *The vision of the weapons marked with the Cross*

The context of Francis' first vision of the Cross<sup>70</sup> is chapter one, dealing with his manner of life while still in secular attire. The theme which dominates this chapter is his compassionate love for the poor. God fills Francis with his grace so that he becomes an attentive listener of the Gospel. The account of Francis' generous almsgiving for the love of God<sup>71</sup> provides a basic motif of the *Legenda Maior*, which deals with Francis' rapid progress along the way to God, seen as charity or as the fountain-fullness of goodness.

Bonaventure moves to the theme of the illness which Francis had to go through as a young man<sup>72</sup>. The biographer prescind from the historical causes linked with this episode in order to interpret it theologically. Francis' illness is the beginning of a painful process of purification towards unction of the Spirit. Francis is purified by patient suffering. Indeed, poverty and patient suffering are instrumental in enabling him to discover the depth of Christ's love on the Cross.

The first vision of the Cross takes place within the context of a dream, following Francis' act of kindness towards the poor knight.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. O. SCHMUCKI, *Das Leiden Christi*, 242–252: "Apparitions of the Crucified in the life of St. Francis".

<sup>70</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 1, n. 3, (AF 10, 561): "Nocte vero sequenti, cum se sopori dedisset, palatium speciosum et magnum cum militaribus armis crucis Christi signaculo insignitis clementia sibi divina monstravit, ut misericordium pro summi Regis amore pauperi exhibitam militi praecostenderet incomparabili compensandam esse mercede. Unde et cum quaeret, cuius essent: illa omnia sua fore militumque suorum, superna fuit assertione responsum. Evigilans itaque mane, cum nondum haberet exercitium animus ad divina perscrutanda mysteria nesciretque per visibilibus species transire ad contuendam invisibilibus veritatem, magnae fore prosperitatis indicium aestimabat insolitam visionem".

<sup>71</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 1, n. 1 (AF 10, 560).

<sup>72</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 1, n. 2 (AF 10, 561). Sources in *1 Cel*, 3 (AF 10, 7) and *Iul*, 2 (AF 10, 336).

The theme of chivalry, so typical of the Middle Ages, is elevated to a spiritual level, in which Francis' dream foretells his future knighthood in the army of the Crucified. The links with medieval hagiographical literature are evident in the use of the knight-image, but we are more interested in Bonaventure's interpretation of Francis' dream. He states that, as yet, Francis was not an expert in interpreting divine mysteries, nor did he know how to pass from visible species to the co-perception of the invisible truth beyond<sup>73</sup>.

(b) *The vision of Christ fastened to the Cross*

The second vision of the Cross is unique among the texts of the Franciscan sources of the thirteenth century<sup>74</sup>. Only Bonaventure has it. This fact has aroused some problems from the critical point of views. Schmucki, for example, raises serious doubts about its historical authenticity. He suspects that the Seraphic Doctor included it in the *Legenda* in order to have the complete list of the seven *apparitiones crucis*. In certain expressions, in fact, the vision resembles Celano's accounts of the speaking Crucifix of San Damiano<sup>75</sup>.

The apparition, however, is significant from a mystical point of view. It is preceded by one of the most important turning points of Francis' spiritual journey, namely, his encounter with the leper. The leper-image is central to the second apparition of the Cross. Bonaventure states that Francis loved lepers because of Christ, who appeared as a leper when He died on the Cross. The theology of the suffering servant of the Book of Isaiah provides the context for this

<sup>73</sup> This is the same theology found in *Itin.*, 2,11 (V, 302b).

<sup>74</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 1, n. 5 (AF 10, 562): "Solitaria proinde loca quaerebat, amica moeroribus, in quibus dum gemitibus inenarrabilibus (Rom 8,26) incessanter intendere, post longam precum instantiam a Domino meruit exaudiri. Dum enim una dierum sic sequestratus oraret et prae nimietate fervoris totus esset absorptus in Deum, apparuit ei Christus Iesus veluti cruci confixus. Ad cuius conspectum liquefacta est anima eius (Cant 5,6), et memoria passionis Christi visceribus cordis ipsius adeo impressa medullitatis, ut ab illa hora, cum Christi crucifixio veniret in mentem, vix posset a lacrymis et gemitibus exterius continere, sicut ipse postmodum familiariter retulit, cum appropinquaret ad finem. Intellexit per hoc nempe vir Dei illud evangelicum sibi dici: Si vis venire post me, abnega semetipsum et tolle crucem tuam et sequaris me! (Matth 16,24)".

<sup>75</sup> O. SCHMUCKI, *Das Leiden Christi*, 244–245.

expression<sup>76</sup>. The same encounter with the suffering Christ leads Francis to feel deep compassion for the poor and suffering<sup>77</sup>.

Bonaventure is interested in underlining Francis' response to the apparition. At the sight of Christ who appeared "as if" He were fastened to the Cross (*veluti cruci confixus*), Francis' soul is moved to great tenderness. Bonaventure makes use of nuptial images taken from the *Canticle of Canticles* to describe this mystical experience<sup>78</sup>.

The account of the apparition is rich in vision terminology. Through the mysterious experience of the Crucified, Francis passes over to the profound meaning of the apparition, which communicates to him a sense of deep compassion, that is, of a co-suffering with Christ in the concrete physical and psychological state of human suffering which He assumes.

The effect of the apparition was that of impressing such a vivid memory of Christ's Passion in Francis' heart<sup>79</sup>, that he would often weep when Christ's sufferings came to his mind. This unique experience is described in terms of an impression of a mystical wound of love<sup>80</sup>.

Bonaventure's interpretation of this episode is purely spiritual. For the first time, Francis feels the inner invitation to follow Christ

<sup>76</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 1, n. 6 (AF 10, 562): "Nam cum prius leprosorum non solum consortium, verum etiam longinquum contuitum vehementer horreret, iam propter Christum crucifixum, qui iuxta verbum propheticum contemptibilis ut leprosus (Is 53,4) apparuit, ut semetipsum plene contemneret, humilitatis et humanitatis obsequia leprosis benefica pietate praestabat".

<sup>77</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 8, n. 5 (AF 10, 593): "Afflictis quoque qualicumque corporali molestia mira compassionis teneritudine condescendens ... Itaque liquecebat animus eius ad pauperes et infirmos, et quibus non poterat manum, exhibeat affectum".

<sup>78</sup> *Cant 5,5–6*: "Surrexi ut aperiam dilecto meo; manus meae stillaverunt myrrham, et digiti mei pleni myrrha probatissima. Pesulium ostii mei aperui dilecto meo; et ille declinaverat atque transierat. Anima mea liquefacta est ut locutus est".

<sup>79</sup> *De Sanctis Angelis. Sermo V* (IX, 626ab): "Beatus Franciscus ita vivam memoriam habebat iugiter de passione Christi, ita quod videbatur sibi, quod videret ipsum Crucifixum".

<sup>80</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 13, n. 10 (AF 10, 620): "Iam in principio tuae conversionis Crucifixi visio compassivi doloris gladio mentaliter te transfigens (Luc 2,35)". The same image of Francis' mystical wound of love linked with his co-suffering with Christ Crucified is found in *2 Cel.*, 11 and 127 (AF 10, 137 and 205); Cfr. O. SCHMUCKI, *Das Leiden Christi*, 253–254: "The impression of the spiritual wound of love".

by taking upon himself the weight of the Cross. The citation from Matthew 16,24 seems to be an anticipation of the episode of the consultation of the book of the Gospels with Bernardo da Quintavalle in the church of Saint Nicholas in Assisi<sup>81</sup>.

The account of this second vision of the Cross in the *Legenda Minor*<sup>82</sup> has two characteristic elements which differ from the account we have just considered. First of all, Bonaventure introduces the episode with the Gospel text of Matthew, whereas in the *Legenda Maior* the text provides the conclusion for the apparition. In this way, the interpretation of the Seraphic Doctor is even more explicit in underlining the force of the Gospel words upon Francis' soul. Then, Bonaventure concludes the episode with a reference to the parable of the hidden treasure in Matthew 13, 44–46, in order to emphasize Francis' decision to follow Christ in the way of the Cross.

Bonaventure centres Francis' discipleship in the mystery of the Crucified. The love of the Poverello towards lepers and beggars has the specific aim of individuating the contents of the call to Gospel perfection in the following of the suffering Christ. Coupled with these concrete acts of disinterested love is the fact that Francis cherishes the foundational values which form part and parcel of the imitation of the Crucified Christ<sup>83</sup>.

Although the second vision of the Cross can be of doubtful historical authenticity, it is certainly a major stepping stone in the consideration of Francis' conversion to the discipleship of the Crucified. Bonaventure concludes the first chapter of the *Legenda Maior* by presenting Francis as the one who carries Christ Crucified in his heart and whose body is already engulfed exteriorly in the embrace of the Cross<sup>84</sup>.

<sup>81</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 3, n. 3 (AF 10, 567–568).

<sup>82</sup> *Leg. m.*, l. lectio 4 (AF 10, 656).

<sup>83</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 1, n. 6 (AF 10, 562): "Induit ex tunc spiritum paupertatis, humilitatis sensum et affectum intimae pietatis". The virtue of piety is rooted in the superabundant gift of God's love in the offering of Christ upon the Cross.

<sup>84</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 1, n. 6 (AF 10, 563): "Mortificationi carnis invigilabat attentius, ut Christi crucem, quam interius ferebat in corde, exteriori etiam circumferret in corpore".

(c) *The episode of the Crucifix of San Damiano*

Bonaventure begins the second chapter of the *Legenda Maior* with the episode of the speaking Crucifix of San Damiano<sup>85</sup>. The context of this mystical experience is markedly ecclesiological, both in the circumstances in which it takes place, as well as in the explicit command of the Crucifix. For a comparative study of the sources and the historical value of Bonaventure's account, the studies of Clasen and Schmucki provide useful critical insights<sup>86</sup>.

The importance of the San Damiano episode does not lie simply in the impact which the invitation of the Crucifix left upon the youthful sensibility of Francis. Bonaventure looks at this experience as a fundamental milestone in Francis' perfect conversion to the Gospel life. It sets the tone for the Poverello's mission centred upon the witness to Christ's supreme love for all those who are redeemed by His Paschal Mystery. San Damiano is an experience which will be a recurrent theme in the life of Francis, seen as an act of obedience to Christ's command to assume an ecclesiological mission. The spoken Word which Francis heard from the Crucifix becomes the spoken Crucified Word with which he becomes intimately familiar and which he preaches to all those who follow his invitation to penance. This fundamental element

<sup>85</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 2, n. 1 (AF 10, 563): "Quoniam autem servus Altissimi doctorem non habebat aliquem in huiusmodi clementia eum in gratiae visitare dulcedine. Dum enim die quadam, egressus ad meditando in agro (Gen 24,63), deambularet iuxta ecclesiam Sancti Damiani, quae minabatur prae nimia vetustate ruinam, et in eam, instigante se spiritu, causa orationis intrasset. Cumque lacrymosis oculis intenderet in dominicam crucem, vocem de ipsa cruce dilapsam ad eum corporeis audivit auribus, ter dicentem: Francisce, vade et repara domum meam, quae, ut cernis, tota destruitur! Tremefactus Franciscus, cum esset in ecclesia solus, stupet ad tam mirandae vocis auditum, cordeque percipiens divini virtutem eloqui, mentis alienatur excessu. In se tandem reversus, ad obediendum se parat, totum se recolligit ad mandatum de materiali ecclesia reparanda, licet principalior intentio verbi ad eam ferretur, quam Christus suo sanguine atque vivit (Act 20,28), sicut enim Spiritus sanctus edocuit, et ipse postmodum fratribus revelavit".

<sup>86</sup> Cfr. S. CLASEN, *S. Bonaventura S. Francisci Legenda Maioris compiler*, in AFH 54 (1961) 253–259; O. SCHMUCKI, *Das Leiden Christi*, 245–252. This author also gives a theological interpretation of the iconography of the Crucifix of San Damiano, which is indispensable for an understanding of Francis' spiritual theology regarding Christ Crucified, and also of Franciscan theology of the Cross in general. A specific study on the San Damiano Crucifix is that of O. VAN ASSELDONK, *Il Crocifisso di San Damiano visto e vissuto da San Francesco*, in *Laurenianum* 22 (1981) 453–476, with further bibliographical indications.



relegates in a second place the whole problem regarding the historical details of the episode and the concrete nature of the experience, torn between an inner, purely spiritual awareness of Christ's presence and a quasi-miraculous conversation between a Crucifix that utters audible words and a young man whose youthful dreams could exert a great influence upon his sensibility. Although the literary genre of medieval hagiographers does not betray solid historical truth, one cannot help feeling that any mystical experience can be communicated only by means of a message which transcends its purely material contents.

The ecclesiological dimension of the San Damiano episode, and indeed, of chapter two of the *Legenda Maior*, is not only understood in the light of Francis' endeavour to repair the three churches in order to obey Christ's command. It should also be analyzed in relation to the life of prayer of the primitive fraternity, which is definitely centred upon the Crucifix and the churches which the first friars encountered<sup>87</sup>. The prayer *Adoramus te* of the Testament, which Francis taught to the brothers, is a lovely synthesis of ecclesiology and soteriology. As in the San Damiano episode, the Crucifix and the churches are so closely associated, that Francis' spiritual vision passes through them, and they become strong reminders of the value of prayer celebrating the salvific value of the Cross.

In this meditation upon the visions of the Cross in Francis' life, Bonaventure describes the speaking Crucifix of San Damiano as the sublime throne of Christ and as the secret mercy seat<sup>88</sup>. This description agrees perfectly with the iconographical lay-out of the Crucifix of San Damiano, which presents Christ as a glorious Lord in His *beata passio*. The image of the mercy-seat to designate the Cross is taken precisely from the *Itinerarium*<sup>89</sup>. The mercy-seat is

<sup>87</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 4, n. 3 (AF 10, 572): "Servabant illi patris sancti documenta per omnia et ad omnes ecclesias et cruces, quas a longinquo videre poterant, iuxta datam sibi formam orantes, se humiliter prosternebant".

<sup>88</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 13, n. 10 (AF 10, 620): "Sed et auditus vocis de cruce tamquam de throno Christi sublimi et secreto propitiatorio (Num 7,89) procedentis, iuxta quod tuo sacro firmasti eloquio, vera indubitanter fuisse creduntur".

<sup>89</sup> *Itin.*, 7.2 (V, 312b): "Ad quod propitiatorium qui aspiciet plena conversione vultus, aspiciendo eum in cruce suspensum".

secret, since it hides the mystery of divine wisdom, revealed in Christ Crucified to the contemplation soul of Francis<sup>90</sup>.

The San Damiano episode dominates chapter two, in the sense that Bonaventure traces the process of conversion of Francis and his awareness of his ecclesiological mission in the light of the spoken invitation of Christ Crucified.

Nowhere is this theology more evident than in the episode of Francis' public renunciation of his family possessions<sup>91</sup>. What strikes the reader in the account is Bonaventure's insistence upon nakedness. Francis strips himself naked and becomes an image of the poor and naked Christ on the Cross<sup>92</sup>. The poor cloak which is offered to him becomes a symbol of extreme poverty and conformity with Christ Crucified. Francis, in fact, marks it with the sign of the Cross.

Bonaventure definitely links nakedness with conversion and conformity to Christ. Nakedness is synonymous with the poverty and suffering of Christ's supreme self-offering on the Cross. We have already dealt with this theme in our consideration of the theology of poverty in the *Apologia Pauperum* with reference to its patristic sources in Saint Jerome. Therefore we shall not continue to elaborate in this case, since Bonaventure is anticipating the same theme of spiritual nakedness which he defends in the *Apologia Pauperum*, written nearly eight years after the *Legenda Maior*.

It is important to note a characteristic element of spiritual nakedness in the case of the *Legenda Maior*. Bonaventure, in our

<sup>90</sup> The theme of mystery which envelops the revelations of Christ Crucified to Francis during prayer is of great importance in the *Leg. M.*, particularly in the La Verna episode. When speaking about the gift of prayer of St. Francis, Bonaventure notes in c. 10, n. 4 (AF 10, 603): "Ibi visus est nocte orans, manibus ad modum crucis protensis, toto corpore sublevatus a terra et nubecula quadam fulgente circumdatus, ut illustrationis mirabilis intra mentem circa corpus perlustratio testis esset. Ibi etiam, sicut certis est comprobatum indicis, incerta sibi et occulta divinae sapientiae (Ps 50,8) pandebantur, quamvis illa non vulgaretur exterius, nisi quantum Christi urgebat caritas (2 Cor 5,14) et proximorum utilitas exigebat".

<sup>91</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 2, n. 4 (AF 10, 564-565).

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*: "Sic igitur servus Regis altissimi nudus relictus est, ut nudum sequeretur crucifixum Dominum, quem amabat; sic utique cruce munitus, ut animam suam ligno salutis committeret, per quod de mundi naufragio salvus exiret (Sap 14,1-7). Cfr. J. CHATILLON, *Nudum Christum Nudus Sequere*, in *S. Bonaventura 1274-1974*, Vol. 4, 763-767.

case, sees nakedness as a newness of life<sup>93</sup>. That is why, paradoxically enough, Bonaventure describes Francis' victories over his carnal passions in terms of nakedness<sup>94</sup>. The naked Francis assumes the limpid innocence of humankind's original state in grace, lost as a result of sin, but regained in the blood of the naked and Crucified Christ. The theme of nakedness in close association with the Crucified dominates the episode of the *transitus*. We shall therefore consider it again in the last chapter.

Francis, therefore, becomes a new man. He is convinced of his ecclesiological mission to be the herald of the great king, for whom he is ready to endure patient suffering with joy and inner peace<sup>95</sup>. For the love of Christ Crucified Francis serves the lepers and embraces a mendicant life. Bonaventure motivates Francis' mendicity on the grounds of Christ's own radical choice to become intrepid in not feeling ashamed of begging. For the love of the Crucified, Francis wins over every feeling of shame in being a mendicant. In his choice, which is the result of the command of Christ Himself, Francis introduces a new way of life which is markedly ecclesiological<sup>96</sup>.

<sup>93</sup> Cfr. O. SCHMUCKI, *Das Leiden Christi*, 353–356. In these pages, dealing with the symbolic association of the Cross with clothing, the author presents various patristic sources which deal with the theme of nakedness as newness of life in baptism or in the rite of initiation to the religious life in monastic Orders. For the significance of nakedness in baptism he quotes CYRILLUS HIEROSOLYMITANUS, *Catechesis Mystagogica* II, n. 2, in PG 33, 1078: "Statim igitur ut ingressi estis, tunicam exuistis: quae veteris hominis cum actibus expoliati imago erat. Exuti, nudi fuistis, in hoc quoque nudatum in cruce Christum imitantes". For the significance of nakedness in the religious life the author quotes IOANNES CASSIANI, *De Institutis Coenobiorum*, IV, c. 5, in CSEL 17, 50–51: "Quamobrem ita nudatur quisque, cum receptus fuerit, omni pristina facultate, ut ne ipsum quidem quo operatus est indumentum habere permittatur ulterius, sed in concilio fratrum productus in medium exuatur propriis ac per manus abbatis induatur monasterii vestimentis, ut per hoc se non solum universis rebus suis antiquis noverit spoliatum, verum etiam omni fastu deposito mundiali ad Christi paupertatem et inopiam descendisse".

<sup>94</sup> *Leg.M.*, c. 5, n. 4 (AF 10, 578–579). Bonaventure associates nakedness with the virtues of austerity and poverty; *Leg.M.*, c. 5, n. 1 (AF 10, 577): "Unica paupere coniectus tunicula, in nuditate Domino serviebat et frigore (2 Cor 11,27)"; *Leg.M.*, c. 7, n. 2 (AF 10, 587): "Ad huius, inquit, culmen qui cupit attingere, non solum mundanae prudentiae, verum etiam litterarum peritiae renuntiare quodam modo debet, ut, tali expropriatus possessione, introeat in potentias Domini (Ps 70,15–16) et nudum se offerat brachiis Crucifixi".

<sup>95</sup> *Leg.M.*, c. 2, n. 5 (AF 10, 565).

<sup>96</sup> *Leg.M.*, c. 2, n. 7 (AF 10, 566): "Depositaeque omni verecundia propter amorem pauperis Crucifixi, mendicabat apud eos, inter quos abundare solebat, debile corpus, attritum leiunius oneribus lapidum supponendo".

(d) *The visions of Silvester, Pacificus and Monaldus*

This second group of visions regards the experience of other persons, in which it is Francis who appears marked with the sign of the Cross. In this section we shall deal with the contents of chapters three and four of the *Legenda Maior*, particularly with the texts of the three visions, but also with those events linked to them.

The underlying theme of these chapters is the progress of the evangelical life of Francis and the first brothers. In this process, the reader's attention is drawn to the revelatory dimension of Francis' apostolic mission, expressed as a prophetic calling to announce the mystery of Christ as a Crucified Word.

It is significant that Bonaventure notes the importance of the Porziuncola chapel at the very beginning of chapter three. This is not just a thematic continuation of chapter two, but a deliberate choice to present the initial drive of Francis' radical option of the Gospel life. Francis discovers his apostolic vocation at the Porziuncola, the chapel dedicated to the Virgin who conceived the Word, full of grace and truth<sup>97</sup>. It is precisely in this ecclesiological dimension that Francis becomes fully aware of his call to follow Christ by bearing his Cross through a life of self-denial and through the apostolic preaching of the Incarnate and Crucified Word.

The contents of Francis' mission are the calling of all persons to penance, the heralding of eschatological peace and the prophetic witness of salvation<sup>98</sup>. The revelatory character underlined in the prologue again comes to the forefront to enlighten the apostolic mission of Francis and the miraculous growth of the Order under his guidance. It is in the light of this full revelation of the Word in the witness of a radical choice of a cruciform life that we must consider the three visions having as their theme Francis signed with the Cross, which complete the six-fold structure of spiritual vision centred in the mystery of the Crucified Word. It is no wonder that the visions we have already considered are characterized by a

<sup>97</sup> *Leg.M.*, c. 3, n. 1 (AF 10, 567): "In ecclesia igitur Virginis Matris Dei moram faciente servo ipsius Francisco et apud eam quae concepit *Verbum plenum gratiae et veritatis* (Ioan 1,14) continuis insistente gemitibus, ut fieri dignaretur advocata ipsius, meritis Matris misericordiae concepit ipse ac peperit spiritum evangelicae veritatis".

<sup>98</sup> *Leg.M.*, c. 3, n. 2 (AF 10, 567).

spoken word, audible to the exterior senses or to the inner senses of Francis who accepts them as the Word of Christ.

The fourth vision of the Cross<sup>99</sup> forms part of the vocation narratives of the first brothers. Bonaventure speaks specifically about Bernard, Giles and Silvester. Silvester's dream presents Francis as the one whose life is a witness to the Word of the Cross. Silvester did not approve of Francis' way of life, that is, of the Gospel life he was preaching. God's response in the dream is aimed at proving the full validity of the life of the first brothers. The golden Cross which Silvester sees coming out of Francis' mouth embraces the whole world. It is a cosmic Cross, a proof of the revelatory dimensions of Francis' mission to proclaim the salvation of the world by means of the Crucified Word.

In the *Legenda Maior* Bonaventure gives an interpretation of the dream, stating that Francis was destined by God to break the power of the devil with the help of the Cross, so that he would enlighten everyone with truth by his way of life and by his doctrine, that is, by the preaching of the Gospel<sup>100</sup>.

It is in this same light that Bonaventure speaks of Francis' preaching of the glory of the Cross<sup>101</sup>. The power of the Crucified Word shone in the person of the Poverello, because it had purified

<sup>99</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 3, n. 5 (AF 10, 568): "Illo quoque tempore cuidam sacerdoti civitatis Assisii, nomine Silvestro, honestae conversationis viro, quaedam a Domino fuit ostensa visio non laetanda. Cum enim modum et viam Francisci fratrumque suorum humano spiritu abhorreret, ne periclitaretur pro temeritate iudicii, respectu fuit supernae gratiae visitatus. Videbat namque in somnis totam Assisii civitatem a dracone magno (Dan 14,22) circumdari, prae cuius magnitudine nimia tota regio videbatur exterminio subiaceret. Contuebatur post haec crucem quandam auream ex ore procedentem Francisci, cuius summitas caelos tangebatur, cuiusque brachia protensa in latum usque ad mundi fines videbantur extendi; ad cuius etiam aspectum praefulgidum draco ille teter et horridus penitus fugabatur. Hoc dum sibi tertio monstraretur, divinum aestimans esse oraculum, viro Dei et fratribus suis per ordinem enarravit, ac non multo post temore mundum relinquens, vestigiis Christi sic perseveranter adhaesit, quod vita ipsius in Ordine authenticam reddidit eam quam in saeculo habuerat visionem".

<sup>100</sup> *Leg. M.*, II, lectio 8 (AF 10, 661): "Intellexit vir pius et Deo devotus, ad hoc Franciscum destinatum a Domino, ut, gloriose crucis assumpto vexillo, draconis maligni robor elideret parcularisque veritatis fulgoribus tam doctrinae quam vitae mentes fidelium illustraret".

<sup>101</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 3, n. 6 (AF 10, 568): "Ex huius visionis auditu vir Dei non in gloria est elatus humana, sed bonitatem Dei in suis beneficiis recognoscens, fortius animatus est ad hostis antiqui fugandam versutiam et crucis Christi gloriam praedicandam".

him. The episode of Francis' inner conviction about the forgiveness of his sins follows this statement, in order to promote the absolute validity of his prophetic mission. Francis feels the inner joy of forgiveness through a divine act of the Spirit who sanctifies him after his purification in the faithfulness to the saving power of the Crucified Word. Grace descends into Francis through the virtue of the Word Incarnate and Crucified and of the Inspired Word.

The Crucified Word to which Francis listens in his conversion becomes the Crucified Word which he and his fraternity proclaim. Bonaventure notes how Francis sends the brothers to a "cruciform" preaching expedition. Although the idealistic nature of the account is clearly evident, especially in Bonaventure's insistence upon the first seven brothers who followed Francis' example, the message comes through in the contents of the preaching mission of the fraternity, in which the theme of the call to penance is again present. Christ is born anew in those who accepted the penitential preaching of the Crucified Word which the first brothers humbly proposed<sup>102</sup>.

Chapter four provides the two remaining visions. The context is the gradual progress of the Order, leading to the confirmation of the *Regula Bullata* of 1223. Bonaventure continues to present Francis' mission in a prophetic light. Indeed, one can assert that the prophetic dimension predominates in chapter four.

The life of the primitive fraternity is built upon the conviction that its mission is apostolic<sup>103</sup>. Bonaventure bases Francis' apostolic option on the fact that it is simply the actualization of Christ's own option, consisting in His self-offering unto death for the Redemption of all<sup>104</sup>.

Bonaventure does not forget the contemplative dimension of the primitive fraternity. He illustrates the life of prayer of the friars as a way in which they live in penance. Francis teaches the brothers

<sup>102</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 3, n. 7 (AF 10, 569): "Iam enim sterilis et pauperula simplicitas sancti Patris pepererat septem et desiderabat universitatem fidelium, ad poenitentiae lamenta vocatam, Christo Domino parturire".

<sup>103</sup> Cfr. B. FAJDEK, *La Vocazione Apostolica dell'Ordine dei Frati Minori secondo gli Opuscoli di San Bonaventura*, Studia Antoniana 30, Roma 1987, 41-73.

<sup>104</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 4, n. 2 (AF 10, 572): "Ideoque magis omnibus quam sibi soli vivere praelegit, illius provocatus exemplo, qui unus pro omnibus mori (2 Cor 5,15) dignatus est".

to pray, even though they do not possess the liturgical books for the canonical hours. The only book they have is the book of the Cross, which they lovingly meditate, helped by Francis' words which had the Crucified Word as their theme<sup>105</sup>. Bonaventure links the meditation of the book of the Cross with the invitation to praise God for all His creatures<sup>106</sup>. Therefore, the book of the Cross is the full revelation of the inner meaning of the book of creation. In Francis' person these two documents become one in the book written within and without, namely, in the global synthesis of created reality in its definite return to the state of primordial grace through the Crucified Word of life.

The contemplative dimension of Francis' life, centred upon the Word of the Cross, becomes the means by which the Poverello enters into the dynamism of a transfiguration. In a paragraph which shows striking parallels to the prologue, Bonaventure presents Francis as a new Elijah on a fiery chariot of light, who is uplifted to mystical heights through the process of *sursumactio* and appears transfigured. His mission becomes prophetic, because he is the image of the future Order of spiritual persons, since in him the Holy Spirit is fully present<sup>107</sup>. The text could certainly lend itself to various polemic interpretations, but Bonaventure is not speaking about a historical actualization of a new Order of Spirituals, but rather of the eschatological dimension of Francis' mission, which is certainly aimed at forming a "Spiritual" Order in the authentic sense of the term, namely, as a new way of evangelical life vivified by the grace of the Spirit which appears visibly in the person of the Poverello<sup>108</sup>.

<sup>105</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 4, n. 3 (AF 10, 572): "Vacabant enim ibidem divinis precibus incessanter, mentaliter potius quam vocaliter studio intendentes orationis devotae, pro eo quod nondum ecclesiasticos libros habebant, in quibus possent horas canonicas decantare. Loco tamen illorum librorum crucis Christi continuatis aspectibus diebus ac noctibus revolvebant, exemplo patris et eloquio eruditi, qui iugiter faciebat eis de Christi cruce sermonem". *Feria VI in Parasce. Sermo II* (IX, 265b): "Qui frequenter legeret librum istum Sapientiae (crucis) multum inflammaretur ad amorem Dei. Beatus Franciscus pauper fuit et frequenter istum librum legit, ita quod cor inflammatum habuit supra modum; quod bene paruit".

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*: "Docuit insuper eos Deum laudare in omnibus et ex omnibus creaturis".

<sup>107</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 4, n. 4 (AF 10, 572–573).

<sup>108</sup> S. CLASEN, *S. Bonaventura S. Francisci Legendae Maioris compilator*, in AFH 54 (1961) 268: "Bonaventura namque theologus oeconomiam Dei considerans Franciscum sextae Novi Testamenti aetati attribuit, quae et a Christi incarnatione incipiens usque ad

The eschatological mission of Francis unfolds itself in the preaching of the wisdom of the Cross. Bonaventure presents the Poverello as a herald sent from above, who comes to the world to lead all humankind back into God through the power of the Spirit and the preaching of the Gospel<sup>109</sup>.

This radical choice passes necessarily from the experience of the Cross. That is why the mission of Francis and the first brothers was an occasion to endure patient suffering and persecution. Bonaventure presents the discipleship of the first friars in the light of the mystery of the Cross<sup>110</sup>.

The theme of apostolic preaching of the Cross provides the occasion for the last couple of visions namely those of Pacificus and Monaldus. Pacificus' vision<sup>111</sup> of the two flashing swords intersecting at right angles, and marking Francis' body with the sign of the Cross, reveals the characteristic note of the Poverello's mission. The image of the swords is emblematic, since in Scripture the Word of God is compared to a sword<sup>112</sup>.

Monaldus' vision of the Chapter of Arles closes the group<sup>113</sup>. It

Christum iterum venturum durabit et cui in creatione Die formatio hominis et in historia Veteris Testamenti aetas prophetarum correspondent".

<sup>109</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 4, n. 5 (AF 10, 573): "Ibi quoque factus evangelicae praeco, civitates circumibat et castra (Matth 9,35), non in doctis humanae sapientiae verbis, sed in virtute Spiritus annuntians regnum Dei (1 Cor 2,13; Luc 9,60). Videbatur intentibus homo alterius saeculi, quippe qui mente ac facie in caelum semper intentus, omnes sursum trahere conaretur".

<sup>110</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 4, n. 7 (AF 10, 574): "Multa quidem eis in diversis partibus orbis inferebantur convicia tamquam personis despicabilibus et ignotis, verum amor Evangelii Christi adeo ipsos patientes effecerat, ut quaerent potius ibi esse, ubi persecutionem paterentur in corpore, quam ubi, cognita sanctitate ipsorum, mundano possent gloriari favore".

<sup>111</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 4, n. 9 (AF 10, 575): "Cumque apud castrum Sancti Severini eum praedicantem reperisset in monasterio quodam, *facta manu Domini super se* (Ezech 1,3), vidit eundem crucis Christi praedicatorum Franciscum duobus transversis ensibus valde fulgentibus in modum crucis signatum, quorum unus a capite ad pedes, alius a manu in manum per pectus transversaliter tendebatur. Non noverat faciem servum Christi, sed tanto monstratum miraculo mox agnovit. Subito stupefactus ad visum, incipit meliora proponere, tandemque verborum ipsius compunctus virtute, tamquam si esset gladio spiritus ex eius ore procedente transfixus, saecularibus pompis omnino contemptis, beato patri evagatione cohaesit".

<sup>112</sup> *Hebr* 4,12.

<sup>113</sup> *Leg. M.*, c. 4, n. 10 (AF 10, 575–576): "Dum enim egregius praedicator, qui et nunc Christi praeclarus confessor Antonius de titulo crucis: *Iesus Nazareus, rex Iudaeorum* (Ioan 19,19) in Arelatensi capitulo fratribus praedicaret, quidam frater probatae virtutis,