

Singing with Angels: Iacopone da Todi's Prayerful Rhetoric	221
ALESSANDRO VETTORI	
Just talking about God: Orthodox Prayer, among the Heretical Beguins	249
LOUISA A. BURNHAM	
Friar Alonso de Espina, Prayer and Medieval Jewish, Muslim and Christian Polemical Literature	271
STEVEN J. McMICHAEL	

PORTALS TO THE SACRED

<i>Illi qui volunt religiose stare in eremis</i> : Eremitical Practice in the Life of the Early Franciscans	307
JEAN FRANÇOIS GODET-CALOGERAS	
At Prayer in the Shadow of the <i>Tree of Life</i>	333
AMANDA D. QUANTZ	
Byzantine Icons, Franciscan Prayer: Images of Intercession and Ascent in the Upper Church of San Francesco, Assisi	357
AMY NEFF	

TRADITIONS IN TIME

Franciscan Liturgical Prayer	385
EDWARD FOLEY	
The Discipline of the Heart: Pedagogies of Prayer in Medieval Franciscan Works of Religious Instruction	413
BERT ROEST	
From Contemplation to Inquisition: The Franciscan Practice of Recollection in Sixteenth-Century Spain	449
WILLIAM J. SHORT	
Contributors	475
Index	479

INTRODUCTION

Therefore let us also, having such a cloud of witnesses over us. . . . Hebrews 12:1

If the truth be told, I do not believe that "Franciscan Prayer" as a specific, exclusive category of spirituality existed in the Middle Ages, or in any other age for that matter—only Franciscans at prayer. Certainly, this "cloud of witnesses" known erstwhile and today as Poor Ladies, Zocolanti, Minorites, Beguines, Observants, Damianites, Capuchins, Conventuals, and Friars Minor, along with countless unnamed, uncategorized, or forgotten individuals and groups, testify to the reality of Franciscans who pray. The essays in this volume demonstrate, however, that the variegated practices and beliefs of these men and women throughout the medieval period undermine any reification of prayer into strictly essentialist or doctrinal definitions. Theologians, of course, must speak of different spiritual charisms within ecclesial communities and historians should duly note the specific themes and cultural circumstances of particular writers; yet, there is no single, uniform Franciscan manner of prayer because there is a plurality of unique Franciscan witnesses, whose desire to live an evangelical life fostered as many individual expressions of prayer as people committed to the Poor Christ. It is first and foremost the experience of Francis of Assisi that grounds this perspective on "Franciscan Prayer."

His first biographer, Thomas of Celano, notes that Francis did not so much pray, but that he became a prayer.¹ Another writer after Thomas observed that the Poverello did not wish others to slavishly copy his actions, perhaps because they could not or would not do so.² Nevertheless, Francis undoubtedly wanted his brothers and sisters to pray often and everywhere. Clare, Bonaventure, Scotus, Angela, Iacopone, and many others throughout the Middle Ages scarcely differ in this desire. Each one sought to discover their identity in the presence of God, surrounded by fellow witnesses to the divine. Although none was a duplicate image of the other, "family

¹ 2 *Cel*, 95, *FAED* 2, p. 310; *Fontes*, p. 531.

² *AC* 61, *FAED* 2, p. 164; *Fontes*, pp. 1555-1556.

resemblances" emerged among those who were inspired to pray and follow the Gospel life within the Franciscan communities that quickly spread throughout Europe and beyond.³ These resemblances or similarities have not escaped the notice of those writers, both medieval and modern, who identified certain spiritual features prominent in a "family" such as the Franciscans and less perceptible among religious "families" like the Dominicans, Benedictines, Cistercians and others. Already in the thirteenth century Bonaventure remarked that while the Franciscans were drawn first to contemplation and then study, their mendicant brothers, the Dominicans turned first to academic labor and then spiritual speculation.⁴ Later day theologians have sketched the familial similarities of Franciscans with the broad strokes of interiority, affectivity, and individuality as opposed to an evident emphasis on exteriority, rationality, and traditional community life among the Dominicans.⁵ While a certain family provenance is undeniable and identifiable in religious communities such as the Franciscans and Dominicans in the Middle Ages, a careful consideration of Franciscan men and women reveals that they, too, were intensely devoted to external action, often particularly fond of intellectual endeavors, and continually drawn to life together in homes, convents and hermitages.

But who were these people, and how did they pray? The authors of this present volume render readers a great service by examining a broad spectrum of Franciscans at prayer. These scholarly contributions are divided into five sections, so as to underscore resemblances and points of convergence without suggesting an exhaustive, singular narrative.

The first section, *Early Witnesses*, commences with an essay by Michael Blastic, "Prayer in the Writings of Francis of Assisi and the Early Brothers." Blastic situates the Poverello within the quotidian of thirteenth century Umbria and, through a careful consideration

³ Ludwig Wittgenstein speaks of "Familienähnlichkeiten" or "family-resemblances" as "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing; sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail" in *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford, 2002) ns. 66-67, pp. 27-28. On Wittgenstein's family-resemblance concepts and the definition of religious categories, see John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion* (New Haven, 1992), pp. 3-5.

⁴ *Hex* 22.21 (5.440b).

⁵ See the section "Minorite Prayer and Parisian Theology" in the essay "The Prothemes of Bonaventure's *Sermones dominicales* and Minorite Prayer" in this volume.

of the first Franciscan prayer texts and the social dynamics proper to family and home, demonstrates that any attempt to understand Francis of Assisi at prayer must take into consideration the symbiotic relationship between the fraternal form of life and how the brothers prayed. Ilija Delio's "Clare of Assisi and the Mysticism of Motherhood" reads the writings and early hagiographical accounts of the Assisi noblewoman from the perspective of thirteenth century evangelical movements and the rise of vernacular theology. As Delio notes, Clare's appeal to maternal imagery and the affective gestures of gazing and embracing, promote prayer as a birthing process, whereby Christ takes flesh in the life of believers. J.A. Wayne Hellmann's contribution, "Prayer in the *Life of Saint Francis* by Thomas of Celano," focuses on the earliest hagiographical account of Francis of Assisi. Hellmann's treatment of Celano's ecclesiastical, yet intimately fraternal interpretation of Francis at prayer uncovers a fourfold structure of conversion, mission, transformation, and glory, which is paradigmatic for the Gospel life of the brothers.

The juxtaposition of reasoned intellectual endeavors and prayer among Franciscans is the basis for the second section, *Contemplation and the Academy*. My essay, "The Prothemes of Bonaventure's *Sermones dominicales* and Minorite Prayer," examines the fundamental role of prayer in Franciscan evangelization articulated by the Parisian professor and pastor, Bonaventure of Bagnoregio. His artful construction of the prothemes, common to thirteenth century sermons, displays how those formed by theological study are transformed into impassioned preachers through the performance of public prayer. Jay M. Hammond's "Contemplation and the Formation of the *vir spiritualis* in Bonaventure's *Collationes in Hexameron*" outlines and clarifies the Seraphic Doctor's strategy of reflexive reading found in the magisterial, albeit incomplete, sermon series offered to his Parisian confreres. Following Hammond's analysis, the polemical controversy surrounding the reception of Aristotle at the University of Paris serves as a pedagogical opportunity, in which Bonaventure instructs the *virii spirituales* entrusted to him in the practice of contemplative prayer. While John Duns Scotus and Bonaventure lay claim to a common religious provenance evident in their theorization of prayer, Mary Beth Ingham uncovers the striking difference between these Franciscan academicians in "*Fides quaerens intellectum*: John Duns Scotus, Philosophy and Prayer." Ingham's comparative study highlights how the journey of prayer in Scotus's *Tractatus de Primo Principio*, in contrast to

the Augustinian-Bonaventurian model, is a preeminently rational, interpersonal dialogue between creature and Creator that is grounded in the reality of contingent order, and marked by the affirmative language of praise.

The rich diversity, creative expressions and broad contours of prayer among Franciscans throughout medieval culture emerge in the third section, *Mysticism, Orthodoxy, and Polemics*. In "Angela of Foligno's Spiral Pattern of Prayer," Diane V. Tomkinson elucidates the uniquely relational approach to prayer of the Umbrian penitent found in the *Memorial*. Although the Latin text composed by Angela's male confessor from her vernacular accounts evinces a linear, sequential mode of exposition common to hierarchical theologies of ascent, Tomkinson underlines the interdependent, inclusive, ever-expanding concentric nature of Angela's Trinitarian mysticism. Another imaginative Italian mystic is the subject of Alessandro Vettori's "Singing with Angels: Iacopone da Todi's Prayerful Rhetoric." While Iacopone's vernacular poetry demonstrates he was no stranger to polemical controversy, his *Laude* also encompass a wide variety of prayers ranging from petitionary exclamations to dialogical exchanges suitable for theatrical presentation and audience interaction. Vettori notes, in particular, how Iacopone's poetical, prayerful rhetoric overflows not into an apophatic silence, but into the melodious, harmonious song of pre-lapsarian humanity, chanted anew by Francis of Assisi in a world recreated by divine favor. In her essay, "Just talking about God: Orthodox Prayer among Heretical Beguines," Louisa A. Burnham first looks beyond Italy to communities of men and women linked to the Beguines, before returning to Todi and Assisi to examine the intriguing extant manuscripts that exemplify their textual traditions and spirituality. Burnham cautions those who are quick to draw clear lines of demarcation between orthodoxy and heresy—be they inquisitors or historians—since the Franciscans she studies appear to be opaque exemplars of creedal orthodoxy, yet transparent witnesses to the spirit of God. Questions of orthodoxy and heresy, controversy and prayer coalesce and intersect the Abrahamic religions in Steven J. McMichael's "Friar Alonso de Spina, Prayer, and Medieval Jewish, Muslim and Christian Polemical Literature." As McMichael shows, monotheistic communities considered prayer a privileged venue to malign and even demonize the other, as they praised and appealed to their common Creator. Franciscans like Alonso were not immune to this temptation despite Francis of Assisi's willingness to promote a form of *convivencia* among peoples of faith.

While Francis and his followers crisscrossed Europe and lands beyond to proclaim the Gospel, they indicated, through their writings, building projects, and artistry, a predilection for permanent locales where they, like their ancestors in faith, hoped to encounter the divine in the company of one another. The fourth section, *Portals to the Sacred*, takes up this intense Franciscan interest in the spatial dynamic of prayer that is paradoxically accentuated by the peripatetic impulse of the early brothers. Jean François Godet-Calogeras analyzes the language and the experience behind the carefully crafted words of these first witnesses in the *Rule for Hermitages*. Godet-Calogeras's essay, "*Illi qui volunt religiose stare in eremis: Eremitical Practice in the Life of the Early Franciscans*," places the brothers at the crossroads of action and contemplation, where their communal longing for God's justice is cultivated in secluded places that remain, nevertheless, within earshot of the world's concerns. While shifting attention away from the countryside to the city, Amanda D. Quantz also links prayer and ministry in "At Prayer in the Shadow of the *Tree of Life*." Quantz goes inside the refectory in the Florentine convent of Santa Croce to illustrate how the narrative fresco of Bonaventure's Christological meditation functions as a reminder of Franciscan institutional identity and a summons to Christ-centered ministry beyond the cloister walls. Amy Neff's contribution, "Byzantine Icons, Franciscan Prayer: Images of Intercession and Ascent in the Upper Church of San Francesco, Assisi," illuminates the central *Deesis* vault within the sacred pilgrim space dedicated to the Poverello. Blending narrative and images, Neff demonstrates how religious and laity alike would be drawn into the salvific descent and ascent of Christ and, gazing upward, be caught up in the intercessory prayer of the stigmatized Francis in the company of the Virgin Mary.

The final section, *Traditions in Time*, concerns the liturgical worship of early witnesses as well as the pedagogical strategies and prayer practices of Franciscans from the beginning to the threshold of the modern era. Beginning with a foundational study entitled "Franciscan Liturgical Prayer," Edward Foley identifies the twofold focus on the Eucharist and the Divine Office that marks Francis of Assisi's approach to ecclesial prayer, and sketches out the development of his liturgical insights among his first and second generation brothers. Of particular interest according to Foley is the fourth Minister General, Haymo of Faversham, whose legislative acumen transformed a religious movement that initially displayed scant interest in a fixed liturgical regime into a major arbitrator of the Roman Rite. Institutional

concern with the praxis of prayer, both personal and liturgical, fostered an intense interest in spiritual pedagogy according to Bert Roest. In his wide-ranging study, "The Discipline of the Heart: Pedagogies of Prayer in Medieval Franciscan Works of Religious Instruction," Roest follows the textual testimony of male and female communities in the Low Countries, Germany, and Spain through the centuries as they develop educational strategies promoting the conceptualization and interiorization of prayer that mirror their self-understanding as Franciscans. William J. Short examines prayer and the climate of fear during the turbulent era of Reformation Europe in "From Contemplation to Inquisition: The Franciscan Practice of Recollection in Sixteenth Century Spain." Drawing particularly on the writings of three prominent Iberian Franciscans, Bernabé de Palma, Francisco de Osuna, and Bernardino de Laredo, Short underscores the richness of the Franciscan contemplative tradition that ultimately fell victim to the suspicions of ecclesiastical authorities.

Whether we find them in the Reformation period, the decade surrounding the Fourth Lateran Council, or somewhere during the intervening centuries, medieval Franciscans witness to a vibrant spirituality characterized by myriad expressions of prayer. Ranging from quiet whispers in eremitical solitude to poetic praise on urban theater stages, their prayer is intimately tied to the cultures surrounding them and the religious communities within which they lived and died. In a masterly fashion, the authors who contributed to this volume have sketched out the many striking features of these Franciscans at prayer. Essay after essay uncovers the unique perspectives, practices and shared characteristics of these fascinating men and women. This depiction is compelling, but of course, somewhat incomplete. Just as family portraits are determined not merely by the artistry of the painter, but by which family members appear for the sitting, so too, there are still other Franciscans whose experiences are yet to be revealed. Nevertheless, this volume succeeds in providing far more than a fleeting glimpse or snapshot; the depth and breath of the studies allow readers to gaze intently and linger over the images of Franciscans at prayer.

Simply put, I delighted in the opportunity to collaborate with the scholars represented in this volume and wish to acknowledge my appreciation. Their empathetic insights, mastery of sources, and analytical capabilities are evident with every turn of the page. Many thanks go to Steven J. McMichael in particular, who demonstrated

he is not only a trusted friend through the journey of life, but also a wonderful colleague and general editor. I owe a debt of thanks to Jean François Godet-Calogeras, whose generosity and keen eye were invaluable in the final stages of this project. I am grateful for the calm, professional expertise of Julian Diehl and Marcella Mulder from Brill Academic, who have guided the text from inception onward. The completion of this project would have been undoubtedly delayed had I not been granted a sabbatical in the fall of 2006. For this reason, I extend a warm word of thanks to William T. Abare, Jr., President of Flagler College and Father Michael Cusato, Director of the Franciscan Institute. In the end, the Franciscan insistence on the interpersonal dimensions of prayer is confirmed by my wife and favorite Franciscan witness, Agnieszka. More than anyone else, she has shown me the difference between praying and becoming a prayer. My efforts here are dedicated to her.

Timothy J. Johnson
Flagler College
St. Augustine, Florida