

THE FRIAR SAINTS SERIES

Editors for the Franciscan Lives

The Very Rev. Fr. OSMUND, O.F.M., Provincial, and C. M. ANTONY

Editors for the Dominican Lives

The Rev. Fr. BEDE JARRETT, O.P., and C. M. ANTONY

ST. BONAVENTURE

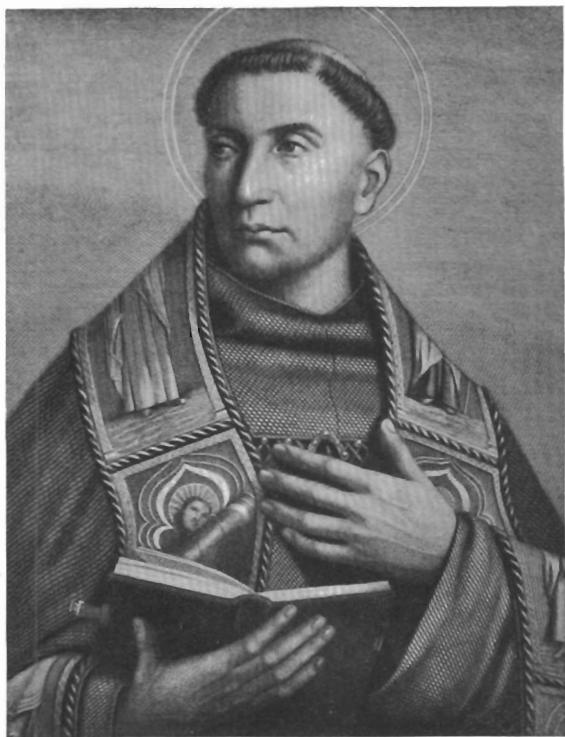
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ST. BONAVENTURE.

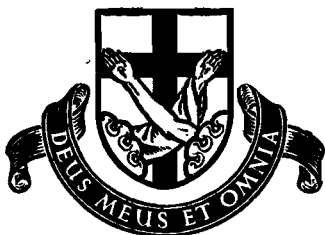
*From an engraving by Eitel after the painting by
Cavazzola (P. Morando)*

SAINT BONAVENTURE

THE SERAPHIC DOCTOR
MINISTER-GENERAL OF THE FRANCISCAN ORDER
CARDINAL. BISHOP OF ALBANO

BY THE REV.

FR. LAURENCE COSTELLOE, O.F.M.



WITH SIX ILLUSTRATIONS

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.

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PREFATORY NOTICE.

THE first two volumes of the "Friar Saints" Series now published will be followed at short intervals by four more "Lives," two at a time, Dominican and Franciscan together. Should the first six "Lives" prove successful they will be followed by a second set of six. The order of publication will probably be as follows:—

Dominican.

(1) **St. Thomas Aquinas.**
By Fr. PLACID CONWAY, O.P.

(2) **St. Vincent Ferrer.**
By Fr. STANISLAUS HOGAN, O.P.

(3) **St. Pius V.** By C. M. ANTONY.

(4) **St. Antoninus of Florence.** By Fr. BRIDE JARRETT, O.P.

Franciscan.

(1) **St. Bonaventure.** By Fr. LAURENCE COSTELLOE, O.F.M.

(2) **St. Antony of Padua.**
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(3) **St. John Capistran.**
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- (5) **St. Raymond of Pennafort.** By Fr. THOMAS SCHWERTNER, O.P.

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- (5) **St. Leonard of Port-Maurice.** By Fr. ALEXANDER MURPHY, O.F.M.

- (6) **St. Peter of Alcantara.**
By Fr. EGBERT
CARROL, O.F.M.

The "Friar Saints" Series, which has received the warm approval of the authorities of both Orders in England, Ireland, and America, is earnestly recommended to Tertiaries, and to the Catholic public generally.

The Master-General of the Dominicans at Rome, sending his blessing to the writers and readers of the "Friar Saints" Series, says: "The Lives should teach their readers not only to know the Saints, but also to imitate them".

The Minister-General of the Franciscans, Fr. Denis Schuler, sends his blessing and best wishes for the success of the "Lives of the Friar Saints".

F. OSMUND, O.F.M., PROVINCIAL,
F. BEDE JARRETT, O.P.,
C. M. ANTONY,

Editors.

FOREWORD.

THE life of Saint Bonaventure, the "Seraphic Doctor," is now appropriately presented to the public as the first of the Franciscan lives in this "Series of the Lives of the Friar Saints". Till the days of this "Second Founder of the Franciscan Order," the simplicity of our Holy Father St. Francis had been the salient feature of his institute: no successful effort had hitherto been made to organize the growing Order unto the full measure of its efficiency. Speaking generally, everything so far had been left to individual initiative, and the keynote of those early days is struck in the liberty enjoyed by the individual—a liberty which, though charming to contemplate and of irresistible appeal to a democratic age, is yet incompatible with the distinctive work a corporate body must perform if its deeds are to justify its exist-

ence. To effect this purpose a certain amount of that rigid uniformity attendant on all organization was imperatively demanded.

Under the influence of St. Bonaventure this was successfully accomplished. Among the many elements that entered into this process of development we must, perhaps, assign the most conspicuous place to the systematic pursuit of learning which our Saint engrafted on St. Francis' ideal of contemplation and zeal, and which, under the guidance of God's Providence, has been destined to render the Franciscan Order an effective force in dealing with the world's most vital problems. Together with this pursuit of learning came the introduction into the Order of a uniform exterior observance; an observance inculcated and fostered by a systematized code of Constitutions and ordinances which remain substantially the same to-day as when first framed centuries ago.

The life of St. Bonaventure may, accordingly, be considered as the ideal to which the modern Franciscan tends: an ideal in which the simplicity of St. Francis is blended with a thorough grasp of the latest developments in scientific thought: in which personal holiness, because cognizant of self-weakness, is large-

hearted and generous in its sympathy with others: in which the multitudinous details of active and administrative life are raised by a strong interior spirit from what might be a fertile source of distraction into a means of closer union with God.

We have now but to add that the following pages on the life-work of St. Bonaventure, written by the late Fr. Laurence Costelloe, O.F.M., are based on the critical life of the Seraphic Doctor contained in the tenth volume of his works (Quaracchi, 1902). At the request of his superiors he intended to revise and publish his work, but sudden death frustrated his design. This revision has now been undertaken by the Rev. Fr. Leo, O.F.M., who has verified the sources, and introduced such changes as were demanded by the prescribed length of this work.

OSMUND COONEY, O.F.M.,
Provincial.

THE FRIARY, FOREST GATE, LONDON,
Feast of the Annunciation, 1911.

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THE Holy Father has expressed his great pleasure and satisfaction that the "Friar Saints" Series has been undertaken; and wishes it every success. He bestows "most affectionately" His Apostolic Blessing upon the Editors, Writers, and Readers of the whole Series.

CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH.

It is refreshing to turn from the depressing materialism of the present time to the inspiring faith of the Middle Ages. The change of outlook is invigorating ; it has on the soul the effect which a bracing atmosphere has on the body.

The temper of modern times tends to enfeeble our sense of the supernatural. If we would maintain undiminished our spiritual vigour we must withdraw occasionally from its influence and endeavour to dwell for a time in a more healthy religious atmosphere.

This is why I would take my readers back to the thirteenth century—a period glowing with the faith and fervour of the great spiritual revival effected by St. Francis and St. Dominic. I do not intend to treat of that epoch and its characteristics generally ; a field so wide could be but very imperfectly surveyed in these pages. I think we shall receive a clearer and more forcible impression of it if we study it as exemplified in the life of one

of those great saints who personified its spirit in themselves. Of course we should find this in all its fulness in St. Francis, but there are so many works treating of the Seraphic Patriarch that only the discovery of some entirely new aspect of his marvellous life would fully justify another. I do not pretend to this; but I consider that we shall achieve our purpose by studying the life of one of Francis' most remarkable sons, viz. the Seraphic Doctor, St. Bonaventure. This great man presents to us an aspect of the Franciscan spirit which those who study the life of St. Francis in all its literal simplicity may fail to discover. For actual pre-eminence in learning and the establishment of means to secure its continuance amongst his followers do not at first sight appear to receive either approval or support from the life of St. Francis. Learning and the honour naturally attaching to it seem to savour of temporal greatness, but direct and absolute opposition to this was the dominant note in Francis' life. He would have his brethren called "Friars Minor," or lesser brethren, and he directly says in his Rule: "Let those who are unlearned not seek to learn". Yet we find St. Bonaventure—deeply imbued with the spirit of St. Francis, and seventh General of his Order—bearing the high dignity of Master of Theology and Arts, and as Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, occupying one of the most exalted stations in Christendom.

In the course of our survey we shall discover the secret of this apparent anomaly. No one appears to have been more fully alive to its existence than St. Bonaventure himself, as frequent references to it in his writings testify. It is from these references and the explanations they contain that we receive the truest insight into the development of the spirit of learning in the Franciscan Order.

St. Bonaventure was born in the year 1221, at Balneumregis, the modern Bagnorea, in the vicinity of Viterbo. His parents were John and Ritella Fidanza. Their station in life is a matter of conjecture. One historian asserts that John Fidanza was descended from the noble house of Fidanza of Castello, and was a Master of Medicine. We are in no way concerned to prove the nobility of Bonaventure's ancestors. His personal eminence in learning and holiness, with which alone we are concerned, was not the inheritance of rank or station. It may have been otherwise with those instincts of piety and virtue that developed in his soul even as a child. To the fostering care of a devout mother the presence of these may justly be attributed. Experience teaches us that the mother's influence, if it be good, and well and prudently directed, is paramount in the life of the child for all time, determining it for good according to the degree of its own excellence.

Of the early years of our Saint only one striking episode is preserved to us, which is thus recorded

by himself in his introduction¹ to the Life of St. Francis. Lamenting his "inability and unworthiness to relate that life most worthy of all imitation," he feels himself bound, "through the love he is compelled to feel for our Holy Father," to undertake the task which the General Chapter so urgently laid on him. "For," he continues, "through his invocation and merits I was snatched from the jaws of death while yet a child—as I remember with fresh and vivid memory. Were I then to refrain from publishing his praises I should fear to incur the crime of ingratitude." In his smaller life of St. Francis,² he again refers to this incident, but adds a further detail. "God does not cease," are his words, "to glorify his servant by numberless miracles wrought in various parts of the world, as I myself can vouch from personal experience. For as I lay dangerously ill as a child, I was snatched from the very jaws of death and restored to healthy life owing to a vow my mother made to the Blessed Father Francis."

Around this incident, thus simply recorded, the legend has grown up that our Saint owes his name to a prophecy uttered by St. Francis on the occasion of his cure. We are told that the sick child was presented to Francis by the anxious mother who with tears besought his intercession. The Saint took the child in his arms and, raising his eyes to

¹ "Legenda Major Sti Francisci," Prolog. No. 3.

² "Legenda Minor Sti Francisci," Lectio Octava.

Heaven, prayed earnestly for its restoration. Assured that his petition was granted, he restored it to its mother, and regarding it with prophetic gaze, exclaimed, *O buona ventura*—"Oh good luck!" We cannot vouch for the authenticity of this narrative, but it has the support of a fairly reliable tradition. One thing is certain, that prior to the time of our Saint, the name Bonaventure was in existence. From his father he appears to have received the name of John, and in many MSS. he is frequently referred to under that name. He has also been referred to as Eustachius, Jacobus, Euty chius. This must be attributed partly to errors in transcription and partly to the Saint's intercourse with Greek theologians who adapted the Greek form of his name. Bonaventure, however, is the name by which he was commonly known to his contemporaries, and it is the one under which his fame has come down to us.

As has been said, the story of his boyhood is lost to us. We might sketch a fanciful portrait of it, to harmonize with the holiness and learning of his subsequent life, but conjecture is not history. In the absence of recorded facts we are condemned to silence. The biographers to whom we might look for enlightenment on this matter are silent. They seem so intent on proclaiming the world-wide fame of his mature years and recording his great achievements on behalf of the Church and the Franciscan Order, that they have overlooked the

comparatively obscure period of his youth. This was no uncommon fault with the chroniclers of that period. We have another very striking example of it in the insoluble obscurity in which the biographers of the renowned Duns Scotus have left the question of his birthplace and nationality. We do not know where Bonaventure acquired the rudiments of learning; we do not know with anything like certainty the name of the convent in which he made his novitiate. Our certain knowledge of him dates from his appearance in Paris in the year 1242.

Certain of our Saint's words, however, lift the veil, though somewhat slightly, from the shadows that obscure his early years. Writing in after years against a detractor of the Rule he professed, Bonaventure thus gave expression¹ to the trend of his earlier thoughts: "Do not take offence," he wrote, "that in the beginning, the brethren were simple and unlettered. This ought rather to raise the Order in your esteem. For my part I acknowledge as before God that what chiefly drew me to love the life-work of Blessed Francis was that it bore so close a resemblance to the beginning and growth of the Church. As the Church began with simple fishermen and afterwards numbered renowned and skilled doctors, so too did it happen in the Order of the Blessed Francis. In this way God makes it

¹ "Epistola de tribus Quæstionibus," Tom. VIII, p. 336. No. 13.

evident that the Institute was founded not by the prudence of men but by Christ."

With his mind penetrated with that miracle of his early years we can readily conceive how the spiritual awakening started by the Franciscan movement seized on Bonaventure's thoughts. His mother's vow, harmonizing with his youthful desires, would clothe those impulses with the glamour of the virtue of religion. It is certain that our Saint entered the Franciscan Order as a youth; all the ancient chroniclers testify to this. The precise year of his reception, however, is a debatable question. To the learned editors of our Saint's works¹ it seems almost established that he entered the Order in the year 1238. We know authoritatively that it was in the novitiate of the Roman Province St. Bonaventure received the habit, but the name of the friary has not come down to us. The three years following on his profession in 1239 were spent in the study of philosophy at some quiet house of the Roman Province which tradition tells us was Orvieto. Wherever these three years were passed, our Saint's lecturers could not but notice his opening powers, and plans were formed for developing those conspicuous abilities which would reflect, they were sure—and time has ratified their conviction—such glory on the Order. Accordingly in 1242 Bonaventure proceeded to the University of Paris.

¹ "Opera Omnia" (Quaracchi, 1902), Tom. X, pp. 42, 43, 44.

CHAPTER II.

SANCTITY AND LEARNING.

WHEN St. Bonaventure arrived at Paris he was twenty-one years of age and had spent three years in the Order. In those days Paris was the great centre of philosophical and theological learning. Universities devoted to the study of those branches did not exist in Italy until fully a century later, hence all who were desirous of acquiring proficiency in these sciences had to journey to France. The Franciscans founded a monastery at Paris about the year 1216.¹ Only about twenty years later were they thoroughly established there. By the munificent benefactions of St. Louis and his saintly mother, Blanche of Castille, they succeeded in erecting a large church and monastery. The latter was to be the chief house of studies not only for France but for all the Provinces of the Order.

A very detailed account of this convent, and of the nature of the studies, and the manner in which they were pursued, is given by Wadding.² There was accommodation for 240 Friars, including professors. The school comprised four departments, one for Grammar, Rhetoric and Logic respectively, and one for Theology and Philosophy. The study

¹ "Wadding," Tom. I, Anno 1219. No. 43.

² Tom. II, Anno 1234. Nos. 17-36.

rooms and public lecture halls were the largest and best appointed in the city. They were four in number, each measuring seventy-six feet by forty-six. Unlike similar structures of that period, they were built without pillars and were lighted by eleven large windows. At the end of the Theological hall stood a large rostrum composed of two stages or compartments, from the higher of which the Licentiates and Doctors lectured, whilst the lower served for the Bachelors who under the guidance of the former were sometimes allowed to lecture on Physics and Theology. Each morning there were two lectures on Theology, and in the evening two on Scripture. An hour was devoted every day to the discussion by students and professors of the matter treated of in class. Once a week the public defence of some thesis was undertaken. Like the other students of the University the Friars, when necessary, attended lectures outside their own convent. They underwent examinations and took their degrees publicly. As early as the year 1234, we find special ordinations, issuing from the Minister-General of the Order, determining the number of Friars to be sent to Paris from each Province and regulating the manner in which they were to be presented for degrees. Two Fathers from each Province were generally chosen every year for the degree of Doctor. Having successfully complied with all the tests, public and private, imposed by the University, they were for-

mally proclaimed Doctors in the court of the Archbishop of Paris.

To this world-famous centre of theological learning Bonaventure came in 1242, and for three years followed the ordinary University course which was based mainly on Scriptural Exegesis and on the Exposition of the "Book of Sentences". This oft-referred-to work was a compendium of Dogmatic Theology written about the year 1140 by Peter Lombard. It takes its name from the fact that its doctrine is based upon the "Sentences," i.e. the views or opinions of the Fathers of the Church. Divided into four books, it treats respectively of God and the Trinity; of Creation and the Fall; of the Incarnation; and finally of the Sacramental system. For years it constituted the recognized text-book among scholastic theologians whose labours and lectures upon it are embodied in the immense commentaries bequeathed to us.

At this time the great Franciscan doctor Alexander of Hales occupied the chair of Theology at Paris. Born in Gloucestershire, he derived his name from the monastery in that county at which he was educated. Before his entrance into the Order (1222) he had studied at Paris and was already one of the most renowned professors of that University. He was subsequently styled and is now known as "The Irrefragable Doctor," and "The Monarch of Theologians". There is, perhaps, no greater blessing for a rich and growing

mind than to come early and to remain long under the influence of another mind which, while equally rich, is yet more highly educated and matured with a wider experience than itself. During the three years our Saint was following Alexander through his expositions of Scripture and of "The Sentences of Lombard"—studying his points of view, his workable materials and his constructive methods—the magnificence of his master's genius allured him as with magnetic force; and Bonaventure's emulous efforts to be worthy of his master's care could not but lead him to undreamt of heights of knowledge.

We catch a glimpse of their mutually cordial attitude from a few of their casual expressions. Whereas St. Bonaventure refers to Alexander as "his master" and "his father" and in his choice of a decision is drawn almost unconsciously to "that Father's" opinion, Alexander anticipated in the case of his pupil the verdict of Sixtus IV. That part of the Bull of canonization serves as so apt a commentary on Alexander's words that we quote it in full. "Bonaventure was great in learning, but not less great in humility and holiness. The innocence and dove-like simplicity of his life were such that the renowned Doctor Alexander of Hales used to say of him, 'It seemed as though Adam had never sinned in him'."

In 1245, when twenty-four years of age, Bonaventure received his degree of Bachelor. Following

this came the necessary letters from the Minister-General, our Saint then fulfilling the office of Professor to his own brethren and at times teaching publicly in the University under the guidance of a fully-qualified lector. That same year Alexander died, and the chair thus vacated was filled by John of La Rochelle. Three years later, however, he resigned, and then at the command of the Minister-General, John of Parma, and at the earnest entreaty of the authorities of the University, Bonaventure succeeded to the post. This took place in 1248. Bonaventure was now a Licentiate, i.e. he was "licensed" or allowed to lecture publicly in view of his qualifications being recognized. It was no doubt a trial to his humility to follow so eminent a light as the "Monarch of Theologians," but fortunately personal distrust yielded to obedience. One of the ancient chroniclers, referring to this event, shows us Bonaventure as his contemporaries saw him. "This Brother Bonaventure," writes Blessed Francis of Fabriano, "was a most eloquent man, wonderful in his understanding of the Sacred Page and of the whole of Theology. He was also an excellent lecturer, a very fine preacher and in his presence every tongue was hushed."

Bonaventure occupied this post from 1245 to 1257, and during that time acquired those stores of knowledge which he at first communicated to his pupils in the form of lectures, and then, with after-thoughts, corrections and additions bequeathed to

the world in the four folio volumes known as "The Commentary on the Sentences of the Lombard". His love of God growing in proportion, Bonaventure ultimately reached those sublime heights of contemplation which earned for him the title of Seraphic Doctor. To the Saint his youthful age seemed unequal to the fulfilment of such a task. His superiors, however, in laying on him the burden of obedience, felt assured that he would more than justify the wisdom of their appointment. And indeed so exceptional were the natural and supernatural gifts of this Seraphic Doctor that Sixtus IV. could say of him in his Bull of Canonization: "Such things he uttered on sacred science that the Holy Ghost would seem to have spoken through his mouth." And again, "Enlightened by Him Who is the Light, the Way, the Truth and the Life, in the space of a few years he attained to incredible knowledge".

The timidity with which his humility undertook the work contrasts strangely with the universal appreciation it has received at the hands of others. Thus at the end of the third volume, he writes: "I render thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ, that taking pity on the poverty of my knowledge and ability, He has enabled me to come to the end of this work. I beseech Him to aid me to go forward in my work unto the merit of obedience and the welfare of my brethren—for which two motives alone this task was undertaken." And again in the

Introduction to the second volume, "By the help of God's grace I have ended the Commentary on the first book, and at the instance of the Brethren must needs begin the second. . . . I do not intend to propound new opinions but to reproduce those that are generally admitted. Nor should anyone think that I wish to be the author of a new book; I am sincerely conscious and acknowledge that I am but a poor and faulty compiler."

This is the language of profound humility which is all the more striking in view of posterity's verdict on our Saint, and his writings. Salimbene,¹ a contemporary chronicler, writes as follows of Bonaventure: "He then lectured on the whole Gospel of St. Luke—a beautiful and excellent treatise: and he wrote four books on the Sentences which even to this day remain useful and esteemed. It was then the year 1248 but now the year 1284." Gerson, the learned chancellor of Paris University, is more unstinting in his praise. "Were I to be asked," he writes, "who is the most eminent amongst all the doctors, I should answer, without prejudice, 'Bonaventure'. I know not that Paris ever possessed another such Doctor." And again, "In Theology there is nothing more sublime, more divine, more salutary, nor more sweet than Bonaventure's writings". The following striking testimony of Pope Sixtus V in the Bull *Triumphantis Jerusalem*—conferring on St. Bonaventure the title

¹ "Chronica," p. 129.

of "Doctor"—adumbrates his two salient characteristics as embodied in his title "The Seraphic Doctor". "In his writings," the Pope's words run, "Bonaventure united to the deepest erudition an equal amount of the most ardent piety, so that whilst enlightening his readers, he also moved their hearts, penetrating to the inmost recesses of their souls."

Numberless other proofs might be adduced of the high esteem in which Bonaventure's works have always been held, but these will suffice. As an instance, however, of the widespread popularity they enjoyed it is curious to note that amongst the depredations of his book-borrowing friends which Charles Lamb, the genial author of the "Essays of Elia," deploras,¹ is the abstraction of his "Opera Bonaventuræ". "That foul gap in the bottom of the shelf facing you, like a great eye-tooth knocked out, with the huge Switzer-like tomes on each side (like the Guildhall giants in their reformed posture, guardant of nothing) once held the tallest of my folios, 'Opera Bonaventuræ,' choice and massy divinity, to which its two supporters (school divinity also, but of a lesser calibre—Bellarmine and Holy Thomas), showed but as dwarfs—itsself an Ascapart!"

The fundamental characteristic underlying the fervour and the love of the Seraphic Doctor's writings, is his ever-conscious realization of God's

¹ "The Two Races of Men".

presence. This with Bonaventure was not a feature of passing or variable devotion ; it rested upon the basis of philosophical conviction, and of vivid childlike faith. To Bonaventure, in his system of thought as in his spiritual ideals, God is constantly and emphatically the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the Source and Centre, by Whom and in Whom and from Whom all things are. Throughout the whole of his writings God is ever the central idea round which all converges. As in his writings so in his life. In this continual and abiding presence of God—the very spirit as it is also the ideal of monastic solitude—his soul, his entire being, grew and blossomed, turning ever to the light and warmth of the Divine Beauty as the sunflower to the sun.

Not only was this the source of his light and unction, it was also the guiding principle of his spiritual and mental life. Hence sprang that moderation of tone—the calm balancing of evidence as in the presence of an impartial Judge. Hence that humility—his simultaneous knowledge of God and himself—to which all arrogance and pretension are so alien. Hence, too, that directness of aim—fastening on the essence of facts, rather than on their accidental surroundings—which ensured at once a love of truth for truth's sake, and limpid, simple utterance as its worthiest channel. In God's sight all men are brothers, so it became our Saint to communicate his lights in the spirit of deference

and self-effacement. Hence, finally, came that unflinching loyalty to His Lord's revelations which implies aversion to curious searchings, singular views, and novel innovations—which, when not the result, are often the occasion of heretical betrayal of the trust committed to our care.

CHAPTER III.

THE MENDICANT ORDERS ASSAILED.

FROM 1248 to 1255 Bonaventure taught publicly at Paris with great distinction. About this time, however, owing to a violent outburst of opposition to the Mendicant Friars on the part of the secular professors of the University, he was compelled to suspend his lectures. This occurrence affords us a valuable insight into the condition of the Friars at that epoch. It shows us how they were regarded by their friends and by their enemies, and it enables us to form a better estimate of their merits. Their lives and actions were openly and unsparingly impeached. They were put on their trial before the entire Church, and their very existence depended on the issue. Every weak spot in their constitution was laid bare—their faults and failings were proclaimed with emphasis. Their adversaries were men of repute and learning—doctors and professors of the most renowned Theological School of Christendom. Thoroughly versed in all the

wiles of controversy, and apparently animated by religious zeal, they were unscrupulous in their methods, and frequently had recourse to slander and falsehood. The conflict was thorough and decisive. Issuing triumphant from such an ordeal the Mendicant Orders proved once and for all that their position in the Church of Christ is impregnable. So important an incident ought not to be lightly dismissed.

Various causes tended to create a spirit of opposition to the Friars. Jealousy at their success, and a spirit of worldliness to which their lives was a constant reproach, appear to be the chief. The Friars succeeded in attracting universal admiration. Their professors were the most brilliant in the University; their lecture halls the best appointed; their audience the most enthusiastic. They enjoyed the favour of the Pope and of the King, both of whom conferred many privileges on them. They possessed neither money nor lands, yet they stood in need of nothing. They had renounced the pomp and glory of the world, but the world ran eagerly after them. Their preaching attracted immense crowds and their confessionals were thronged. They were the least by profession but the greatest by repute. To some extent they supplanted the secular clergy. The bishops and the Faithful found themselves less dependent upon the latter, for the Friars formed willing and efficient substitutes for them in almost every capacity. The spirit of

the secular clergy of Paris at that period was not such as to enable them to view this new development without hostility. An indevout and worldly spirit reigned amongst them, and they were profoundly indifferent to the highest maxims of the Gospel. This we learn from the strain in which Pope Alexander¹ writes to the Bishop of Paris in the year 1256: "Concerning certain masters and scholars of Paris it is notorious that they glory not in being considered the children of peace but rather in being the authors of scandal; they glory not in being called the sons of God, but of Satan. So great is their disorder that they hinder piety not only in themselves but also in others, and impede the salvation of souls which we so greatly desire."

The smouldering elements of discord were fanned into flame in the year 1254, and the secular and regular professors came to an open rupture. The matter arose thus. A noisy brawl occurred amongst the students. The civil guard intervened; a riot ensued, and one student was killed and several were wounded. Such encounters were not infrequent, and they resulted in creating a bad spirit between the magistrates and the authorities of the University. The latter sought to exempt the students from civil jurisdiction, whilst the former, in the interests of public order, insisted on subjecting them to it. The occurrence just recorded brought matters to a

¹ Cf. "Wadding," Tom. IV, Anno 1256. No. 23.

climax. The University demanded the punishment of the civil guard, the magistrates refused compliance. Thereupon the entire staff of secular professors suspended their lectures and withdrew from the city. The Regulars kept their halls open and continued to teach. This gave great offence to the secular professors, and when the difference between them and the municipal authorities was eventually settled, and they had once more resumed their duties, they did not forget it. Determined to prevent its recurrence, they framed a statute binding the Regulars to act in accordance with the majority of the professors. To this they refused to submit, and in consequence they were forced to abandon their Chairs. They appealed to the Pope who eventually reinstated them and revoked the obnoxious statute.

Meantime the agitation against them was vigorously carried on. Its leading spirit was William of St. Amour, a doctor and professor of the University. Prominently associated with him were Odo of Douay, Christian, Canon of Beauvais, John Belin and John of Gectville, an Englishman and Rector of the University—all men of consequence and possessing considerable influence. William of St. Amour was a type of the worldly-wise Christian, and he represented a large and powerful element at Paris. He was a man of undoubted ability and learning, but wanting in moderation and soundness of judgment. Possibly he may have meant well,

but blinded by prejudice he did not see the injustice of his conduct, nor the falseness of his views. He aimed at expelling the Regulars from the University and eventually obtaining their suppression. He wrote and preached against them. His book on the "Perils of the Last Times," his sermon on the "Publican and the Pharisee," his pamphlet on the "Robust Beggar," were violent onslaughts upon them. They were based on false principles and teemed with slander and invective. William endeavoured to show that the mendicant form of life was unchristian and pernicious, and that those who professed it were outside the pale of salvation. Mendicancy, preaching, hearing confessions, and teaching publicly were the capital sins that consigned the Friars to reprobation.

He speaks thus of mendicancy: "There is a great danger attendant upon begging. Those who live by it become flatterers, liars, detractors, thieves and unjust. To leave all things for Christ and to follow Christ begging is not an act of perfection. Regulars may not beg even though the Church permits it. Whoever begs whilst in good health sins grievously. Hence, whoever places himself in the necessity of doing so is not within the pale of salvation."

To preach and hear confessions was also on the part of the Friars wrong and unjustifiable: "Although authorized by the Pope or the bishop they may not preach unless invited by the parish priest.

They may not live by the Gospel. Those who preach to the Faithful who have their own pastors, viz. bishops and priests, are not true but false Apostles. It is greatly to be feared that such as these will grievously injure the Church unless they are expelled from it. Confession to Mendicants, approved of by the Pope, does not satisfy the Easter Precept."

To become professors and teach publicly was another grievous transgression: "The office of master is an honour, and Religious should not aspire to honours. Seeing that they belong to a state of perfection, they should observe the Gospel Counsels, one of which is: 'Wish not to be called master'. Aspiring to the dignity of master they transgress this counsel and thereby sin publicly, scandalize the Faithful and deserve to be shunned."

Such were the opinions proclaimed by William, and the effect they produced was deplorable. A species of universal boycott was instituted against the Mendicants. Students were dissuaded from attending their lectures; they were excluded from the University, and the people were exhorted to refuse them alms. Matters reached such a crisis that the Dominicans were way-laid and beaten in the streets so that they were afraid to leave their convent. The opposition to the latter seems to have been much keener than to the Franciscans, and it would appear that they were forced to quit the University earlier. It is certain that St. Bona-

venture lectured publicly on the question in dispute. His treatise on "Evangelical Perfection" is a reply to the utterances of William of St. Amour. It is recorded that the latter, hearing of the Saint's action, sent one of his adherents to report the substance of his lectures—to which he wrote a rejoinder. As we intend to treat in detail of Bonaventure's apology for the Franciscan Order, we shall make no further reference to it here. Lest, however, a false impression concerning the merits of this controversy should remain on the minds of my readers, I consider it expedient to point out, in the next chapter, how it was regarded by the Holy See.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MENDICANTS VINDICATED.

THE commotion caused by William of St. Amour's book extended to the Court, and the pious King Louis, desirous of removing the scandal, formally referred the matter to the Holy See. Two doctors of the Paris University were appointed to take the book to the Papal Court and present it for examination to the Pope. This project having become public, William and his chief adherents determined to defend their views and set out for Anagni. The Pope received the King's envoys and regarded the matter as of very grave importance. He appointed a Commission of Cardinals carefully to examine the

book and to judge between the Mendicants and their opponents.

A public discussion was instituted at which were present representatives of both parties. On the side of the Mendicants were the Ministers General of the Dominican and Franciscan Orders—Humbert of Rome and John of Parma—Albert the Great, St. Thomas of Aquin, O.P., Bertrand of Bajona, O.F.M., and, according to some authors, St. Bonaventure. We cannot say with certainty who the defenders of St. Amour's book were. It is doubtful if he himself had arrived at Anagni before the work was condemned. Albert the Great and St. Thomas powerfully vindicated the cause of the Mendicants. The treatise composed by the latter, "*Contra impugnantes Dei cultum*," is a masterly defence of the principles attacked by St. Amour. St. Bonaventure's work on "Evangelical Perfection" is no less solid and convincing. It was written in connection with this dispute and was very probably submitted to the Commission. This may account for the assertion put forward by some writers that Bonaventure was present at Anagni and took part in the discussion—an assertion which more accurate investigation has almost entirely discredited. On the arrival of William and his followers a strenuous effort was made to avert the impending condemnation, and even to effect its revocation, but to no purpose.

After an examination extending over several

weeks the Cardinals gave their decision. It was an unconditional condemnation of Amour's book, which was ordered to be publicly burned both at the Papal Court and at the University of Paris. The sentence was proclaimed by the Pope in the Bull *Romanus Pontifex* issued on 5 October, 1256. Referring to William and his supporters the Pontiff says :—¹

“They heaped calumny on the Brethren and placed a stumbling-block in the way of the chosen children of the Church. Nay, more, in the excess of their bitterness they burst forth into malicious invectives, and composed a certain book which is most pernicious and detestable—a book not only not according to reason but utterly opposed to it; not true but false; not edifying but scandalous; not enlightening but misleading. This book having been brought to Our knowledge, We entrusted it for examination to certain Cardinals that they might discover and diligently consider all that it contained. Which having carefully and with due deliberation performed, they report to Us that the said book contains many things false and pernicious concerning the Pope and the bishops, also concerning those who, overcoming the world and its works, live by alms in strict poverty. It also assails those who, burning with zeal for souls and devoted to sacred science, greatly further the spiritual welfare of God's Church. It condemns the state of life of

¹ Cf. Wadding, Tom. IV, Anno 1256. No. 31.

poor Religious, such as the Friars Preachers and Friars Minor, who by the power of the Spirit, having abandoned earthly things, aspire with all their force to the heavenly reward. The book is a veritable hot-bed of scandal and disorder, and greatly injures souls by withdrawing them from devotion, the giving of alms, and entrance into holy Religion. This same book which bears the title 'Perils of the Last Times,' with the advice of Our Brethren and by Our Apostolic authority We reject and condemn for ever as wicked, iniquitous and execrable, and containing bad, false and nefarious sentiments. We strictly command all its possessors to burn it and procure its destruction within eight days from the issue of this Our condemnation. Against those who despise Our command We pronounce sentence of excommunication."

This condemnation does not appear to have produced the desired effect. The agitation against the Friars still continued. It was found necessary to counteract the pernicious influence of Amour's teaching by some more direct and forcible method, and to this end the Pope addressed¹ the following letter 19 October, 1256, to King Louis and the French bishops:—

"Not without much bitterness of heart and trouble of mind, We have learnt that certain Masters and Doctors and others, 'sharpening their tongues like swords,' and 'bearing the poison of

¹ Ibid. No. 33.

asps in their lips,' for the defamation, vexation and destruction of the innocent, have wickedly poured it out in slander and injuries on our beloved sons, the Brothers of the Order of Preachers and Friars Minor. By lecturing and preaching and otherwise, they have dared to say that they were not in the way of salvation; that their Mendicancy was neither salutary or meritorious, since health permitting, and other reasonable hindrances ceasing, they should work with their hands and not depend for necessary help upon others. Furthermore, they have asserted that they may not preach nor hear confessions, even when authorized by the Pope or the bishop, lest they encroach upon the rights of the parish priests, and many other things false and reprehensible have they uttered against them. Now these same Orders for some time back have been approved by the Holy See as holy, renowned and illustrious. And some of the Brothers thereof, having reached their heavenly country, are inscribed in the catalogue of the Saints and shine like suns in the Church of God, whilst by their Brethren the light of holy doctrine is shed over the whole world, the Gospel of Christ is earnestly and efficaciously preached, and right and sound counsel and salutary example prevail. Furthermore, as the aforesaid Brothers are assiduously and continually engaged in the study of the Holy Scriptures and the Word of God, in saying the Divine Office and in prayer, they are by no means indulging in idleness, but exercising

themselves in the best and highest pursuit, for wisdom is the noblest attainment ; nor do they do more who devote themselves to external labours, than those who are engaged in the study of divine things. Hence, the Lord, whilst Martha was busy working and ministering, commended principally the docility and devout attention of Mary to His word. From this it appears clearly that the Brothers are not bound to work with their hands. Nay more, were they to neglect spiritual things for manual labour they would be abandoning, not without detriment to their souls, the greater for the lesser, the necessary for the unnecessary. Moreover, these Brothers, having left all things for God, when they beg the bare necessaries of life, imitate the poor Christ and practise Evangelical Perfection. Hence, it clearly follows that they are in the way of salvation, and by the observance of their Rule merit eternal life. Furthermore, by commission or command of the Roman Pontiff or the Bishop of the Dioceses they may lawfully preach and hear confessions. Therefore, We strictly command all the Doctors or Masters who have dared to deny these things, publicly to retract and renounce the same and hold and proclaim the contrary. Should they refuse to do this they must be proceeded against by suspension, excommunication, and the perpetual deprivation of their benefices. Lay people transgressing in this matter are to be seriously reprimanded."

Some of the prominent adherents of William of St. Amour accepted the Papal condemnation in a submissive spirit and publicly retracted their false opinions, and promised on oath never more to maintain them. Amongst these were Christian of Beauvais and Odo of Douay. William himself was not so tractable. He had recourse to evasions and explanations, and endeavoured to show that his views were not really condemned. He continued to foster a spirit of hostility to the Mendicants amongst his partisans at Paris, and eventually he drew upon himself the sentence of perpetual banishment from France. Under pain of excommunication and forfeiture of all his benefices he was forbidden ever to return, and under like penalties he was prohibited to preach or teach. His friends at Paris did all in their power to procure his recall, but they were strenuously opposed by the Mendicants. Thus, the ill-feeling between the two parties was maintained, and it was only by the renewed intervention of the Pope and the employment by him of stringent measures against the secular professors that order was established and the Mendicants treated with justice and tolerance.

After ten years' exile Pope Clement permitted William to return to Paris. He had not abandoned his old opinions, and it needed a severe reprimand on the part of the Pope accompanied by a threat of further banishment to restrain him from again assailing the Mendicants. After his death, some

years later, the agitation against the Friars gradually died out, and they regained the esteem and confidence in which they had formerly been held.

CHAPTER V.

MINISTER-GENERAL.

BONAVENTURE was elected Minister-General of the Franciscan Order in the year 1257. At that time the Order was passing through a serious crisis in its history. Internal difficulties had arisen concerning the observance of certain points of the Rule. Some of the Brethren advocated the rigorous and literal acceptance of all its prescriptions: others contended for a more mild and liberal interpretation. Amongst the advocates of both views were extremists who sought to introduce excessive rigour or undue laxity: the main body on either side were men of moderation. These eventually prevailed and preserved to the world the Order of St. Francis in the only feasible way in which it could continue to exist. Those who aimed at too great laxity, which would deprive the Order of its distinctive features, and those who would accentuate those features until they became impracticable or grotesque, were gradually eliminated.

The process by which this was effected was slow

and fraught with the gravest danger to the Order. It could be accomplished successfully only under the prudent guidance of a wise Superior. Bonaventure was eminently such a man. His predecessor, John of Parma, could not cope with the difficulties of the situation. He was possessed of great ability, and his heroic sanctity has raised him to our altars, but he seems to have lacked that enlightened judgment and liberal sympathy which smooths away opposition and brings conflicting views into harmony. Where the motive of subjection is the love of God and the desire of perfection, the exercise of authority must be tempered with infinite tact and kindness. The inflexible rigour of the stern Superior is so wholly opposed to the spirit of Christ, to whom the Religious ever looks, that instead of securing obedience it excites resentment, and if it does not culminate in apostasy begets an abiding spirit of bitterness and discontent. With one section of the Order the latter appears to have been the effect of John of Parma's rule. Some writers¹ affirm that he was released from his office at the express wish of the Sovereign Pontiff.

In view of his failure, Bonaventure's success is all the more conspicuous. In order to appreciate this success at its proper value we must consider briefly the difficulties that troubled the peace of the Order. What precisely they were it is somewhat

¹ Cf. Wadding, Tom. IV, Anno 1256. Nos. 2 and 3.

difficult to determine. They must be traced back to the influence of Brother Elias. For a period, even during the lifetime of St. Francis, this man seems to have exerted an influence in the Order second only to that of the Saint himself. He was truly a remarkable man and the story of his life is strange and sad.

- - An intimate friend and devoted disciple of St. Francis, he had been deemed worthy by the latter to rule the Order during his absence in Palestine. Though full of admiration for the Seraphic Father and professing intense reverence for his saintly life and Christ-like spirit, he appears never to have quite accepted his views concerning the absolute poverty and rigorous mode of life he wished to impose upon his followers. He seems to have considered that such austerity would render impossible its uniform and continued observance by any considerable body of men. Whilst a few chosen souls such as Francis himself could live up to it, the heterogeneous multitude who were flocking to the Order could not prudently be expected to do so. Hence he advocated certain mitigations in the matter of poverty. What these were we cannot definitely affirm. His views and actions are presented to us from a thoroughly hostile standpoint. His biographers, generally speaking, were his avowed opponents, and although they were men of remarkable virtue and integrity of life, we can hardly believe that they were free from the in-

fluence of bias and party spirit. In their eyes Elias was a wrecker—the enemy of their Order and the destroyer of its high ideals. Hence their accounts of him must be cautiously received and allowance made for the exaggerations of pious zeal.

We are told that Elias sought to introduce the use of money; that in visiting the Order he rode on horseback; that he wore a somewhat elegant habit; that there was a general tendency to relaxation discernible in his life. No doubt he was guilty of these things, but in view of subsequent developments it is not easy to determine how far they were incompatible with the spirit of the Rule. We are told that he was a man of remarkable foresight and a born ruler. Perhaps he wished to establish from the beginning what the natural evolution of circumstances was eventually to achieve. He may have foreseen that certain prescriptions theoretically feasible for all, and practically so for a few, would actually become impracticable for the general body of the Order. Thus by the very force of circumstances it soon became necessary for the Friars to use money at least indirectly. Be the country where they reside Catholic or Protestant, friendly or hostile, there are instances where to live means to use money. Nor does the Minister-General of the Order now visit the Order on foot, nor is the Franciscan habit of the present day such perhaps as would meet with entire approval from those

early rigorists. But there has been no substantial defection from the primitive spirit of the Rule; these modifications have arisen as the necessary result of changed conditions. Nor is this to be wondered at. Christianity itself began even as the Franciscan Order. Like to that Order it increased and developed. In course of time, whilst theoretically maintaining its highest ideals, it practically ceased to make them the guiding principles of its general conduct. Thus, community of goods, prevalent in the time of the Apostles, gradually ceased. Again, the successors of the Apostles who were counselled to possess neither gold nor silver nor scrip eventually appear as temporal rulers; and the Saviour's doctrine of submission to evil gave way, when circumstances demanded, to armed resistance. The highest ideals of Christianity were practically abandoned by the multitude, and maintained only by the few. Indeed, it is very questionable from an historical point of view, whether the absolute perfection of the Gospel outlined in the counsels of our Lord could ever be more than the ideal of the very few—something to which one or other favoured soul might actually attain but which was never intended to be the practical aim of society in general. This must be borne in mind when studying the history of the Franciscan movement, which was an attempt to restore literally and rigidly the highest Christian ideals. Broadly speaking it succeeded and continues to succeed. The Order

can never revert to the attitude of the world towards the Evangelical Counsels although time and circumstances may modify its interpretation of them.

The Friars have absolute community of goods ; they are bound to the poor use of the necessities of life. Whilst some interpret their obligations in this and all other matters most rigidly, and emulate St. Francis in every respect, others, although fully observing the substance of the Rule, quite justifiably regard its precepts in a milder light. They are none the less true Franciscans. Of late years there has arisen a class of writers whom we may describe as the academic critics of the Rule and Spirit of St. Francis. Regarding the Franciscan movement from an extrinsic and speculative point of view, they are particularly attracted by its more rigorous features. But they look upon them as things of the past and discuss them with melancholy interest. They seem to think that the Franciscan ideal has vanished from the world, and that the modern Friar is scarcely a representative of his prototype. Whoever is not a Francis, or a Giles, or a Juniper, is not worthy of consideration. To the professor of the Rule of St. Francis there is something particularly irritating in the attitude of these writers. He knows that he is observing the Rule in its simple literalness—that there is no precept of it which he does not fulfil ; yet because he does not realize the romantic ideal conceived by these shallow critics he

receives at most only tolerant pity or condescending regard.

But to return to Elias and the dissensions his influence created in the Order. He seems to have gained over to his side the majority of the Provincial Ministers, so that he was twice elected General. On both occasions, strange to say, his administration ended in his deposition. Still, many of his supporters adhered to him and he was proposed a third time for the office of General. On this occasion Elias was ignominiously rejected by the Pope, who also deprived him of some privileges he enjoyed. Thereupon, overcome by pride and indignation, he set the Pontiff at defiance, and sought the protection of his declared enemy, the Emperor Frederic. He thus absolutely abandoned the Order, but there remained behind him some who advocated his views. We are even told that the succeeding General, Crescentius, was one of his followers and pursued a similar policy. Certain it is the dissensions increased during his time of office.

We have seen how John of Parma, his successor, failed to grapple with the difficulties of the situation. Wadding¹ represents him as stern and uncompromising in his views, and as equally rigorous in forcing those views on others. When at length he saw that many Religious, who would conscientiously carry out a less lofty ideal, were being simply forced

¹ Tom. IV, Anno 1256. No. 2.



Photo. Alinari

Pinturichio, pinx.

THE CORONATION OF OUR LADY.

*From the picture in the Vatican, Rome.
(St. Bonaventure is the figure to the left of the group of Saints).*

by reason of his well-meant yet none the less stringent insistence to a revolt against the very principle of obedience, John summoned a General Chapter at Rome and resigned his office. According to certain writers,¹ Alexander IV., the Cardinals and the Brethren assembled sought to persuade him to continue in office. John, however, was resolute in his refusal. For a whole day the business of the Chapter was suspended; still the Minister-General stood firm. Then the Vocals² "in view of his determined attitude said to him: 'Father, you who have invited the whole Order and know the merits of all the Brethren, tell us who is the best suited to succeed you?' There and then John replied 'Brother Bonaventure of Bagnorea; no one is more worthy than he'. Thereupon he was unanimously elected."

CHAPTER VI.

DISCIPLINE AND OBSERVANCE.

BONAVENTURE was teaching at Paris when he was elected Minister-General. However reluctant he may have been to accept the responsibility, he did not think of shirking it. He was a young man—only thirty-seven years of age—and fully conscious

¹ Author of the Chronicles of the XXIV Generals. "Analecta Franciscana," Tom. III, pp. 286, 287. Also Bernard of Besse. Ibid. p. 698.

² Salimbene. p. 137.

of his deficiencies and of the arduous task before him. That he undertook it calmly and confidently shows that he possessed the virtue of fortitude in no slight degree. He was well aware of the dissensions within the Order and of the relaxation of discipline that prevailed amongst some of the Brethren. To remedy these was his first concern.

Shortly after his election he wrote¹ a remarkable letter to the Provincials of the Order. He began by acknowledging his unfitness for the high and important office to which he had been called, alleging the weakness of his body, the imperfection of his mind, the inexperience of his life and the repugnance of his will. Still, he did not dare to resist the voice of obedience, and to make up for his shortcomings he counts upon the worthy co-operation of the Provincial Ministers. He then refers to the irregularities existing in the Order which had begun to endanger its success and bring it into disrepute amongst the Faithful. Remembering that the Order was then in existence barely fifty years it is interesting to consider what these were. Ten causes of relaxation are enumerated by Bonaventure :—

1. Too great multiplication of temporal affairs for which money is eagerly sought, carelessly received, and recklessly handled.
2. The idleness of some of the Brethren.
3. Useless travelling from place to place, to the

¹ Cf. "Opera Omnia" (Quaracchi), Tom. VIII, p. 468.

scandal rather than to the edification of the people.

4. Importunate begging, whereby the Brethren are feared as highwaymen.

5. The construction of costly and pretentious buildings, which disturbs the peace of the Order and exposes the Brethren to the attacks of their enemies.

6. The increase of dangerous friendships from which arose suspicions, calumnies and scandals.

7. The imprudent bestowal of offices on those who were incapable of discharging them.

8. The eager reception of legacies and officious interference with obsequies, to the great offence of the secular clergy.

9. Frequent and expensive change of residence, to the disturbance of the locality and the prejudice of poverty.

10. Finally, expensive living, by which the Brethren became a burden to the people.

Whilst many, he remarks, are blameless in these matters, still, the evil redounds upon all, and must not be overlooked nor tolerated on any account. He then points out the remedy and insists on its application. He concludes his letter with the following remarkable utterance: "Should I learn from the Visitors whom I desire to pay special attention to these matters, that my directions have been obeyed, I shall give thanks to God and to you; but if it should be otherwise (which God

forbid), you may rest assured that my conscience will not permit me to allow the matter to pass unnoticed. Although it is not my intention to forge new chains for you, yet must I in compliance with the dictates of conscience aim at the extirpation of abuses."

From this we can gather the nature of the policy adopted by the Saint. It was clearly one of firmness and moderation. Perceiving that they arose from minor causes, such as the particular views of individuals, he makes no reference to the internal dissensions of the Order. He aimed at uniformity on general lines, convinced that if this were accomplished lesser differences would gradually disappear, or, at least, lose their power of seriously disturbing the peace of the Order. The Rule was to be observed; no abuse was to be tolerated. But whilst strongly condemning the excesses of those who aimed at relaxation, he was not less determined in restraining the zeal of those who sought excessive rigour. This provoked the displeasure of the latter. In view of the Saint's words quoted above and of the Constitutions enforced by him at the Chapter of Narbonne, their failure to agree with his policy demonstrates how extreme were the views they entertained. And it is apparent that those who regard such men as representing the true spirit of the Order are seriously mistaken. Excessive rigour is as foreign to the latter as excessive mildness. True virtue avoids

both extremes, and Bonaventure's wisdom enabled him to aim at the golden mean.

In 1260 our Saint celebrated the General Chapter of Narbonne. Here the various Constitutions hitherto established in the Order were revised and promulgated anew. These Constitutions differ but slightly from those that prevail at the present day. The vicissitudes of six hundred years have necessitated certain additions and modifications, but they have remained substantially the same and constitute an enduring monument to the wisdom and foresight of Bonaventure. Wadding¹ says of them: "The Statutes of Bonaventure are weighty—the outcome of mature deliberation and discussion—and they are redolent of a truly religious spirit. In them is enjoined whatever is of primary importance and necessity. They ought never to be abrogated, but whatever modifications changes of time and place may call for should be added to them, for of all they are the most excellent." The Annalist is unsparing in his condemnation of the attempts made at various times to change them. "One cannot but be displeased," he writes, deploring a state of things which now happily no longer exists, "at the facility with which some make laws at General Chapters. It would seem as though one could not consider himself a renowned ruler unless he posed as a legislator and drew up new laws to mark his term of office. Hence, we have daily

¹ Tom. IV, Anno 1260. No. 11.

fresh and bewildering laws, and such a multitude of crude and undigested statutes, that the poor subject does not know to-day what he may have to observe to-morrow."

The Constitutions of Narbonne were distributed under twelve heads and formed an enlightened and prudent interpretation of the twelve chapters of the Rule. Writing¹ to the Provincials six years after their promulgation, Bonaventure attributes the existence of certain irregularities to their non-observance. His appeal to the prelates of the Order on this occasion reveals the burning zeal of the Saint: "Lest the 'blood of souls'—not only of those committed to our care but of all who esteem the religious life—should be 'demanded at our hands' I adjure you by the shedding of Christ's Most Precious Blood and by the Wounds of His Passion, which appeared with unmistakable clearness on the body of our Holy Father, St. Francis, that like prudent and faithful servants of Christ you apply yourselves diligently to the rooting out of pestiferous abuses, and that you show yourselves attentive to discipline and examples of religious fervour. In the first place, excite the Brethren to a love of prayer, and at the same time entreat and even compel them to observe the Rule faithfully—'fearing the countenance of none; rooting up and pulling down; wasting and destroying'; committing the disaffected and insubordinate to prison,

¹ "Opera Omnia," Tom. VIII, p. 470.

or expelling them from the Order, as the laws of justice and piety may demand, lest, whilst with cruel mercy you spare a diseased member, the corruption extend itself to the entire body."

No reasonable man reading these words of Bonaventure could doubt his earnestness in procuring regular observance, or think of accusing him of remissness or laxity. It only shows how extreme were the views of a certain section of the Order when we find them attempting to do so. Peter John Olivi, the leader of the rigorists, replying to some who sought to justify their relaxations by saying that Bonaventure and others lived very laxly, says :¹ "Hitherto, it was the custom to adduce worthy men as examples of perfection ; now, alas ! they are brought forward to justify relaxation and inobservance. . . . Let me say what I think of Bonaventure. He was a most excellent and pious man, and in his teaching he insisted on the perfection of poverty. But he was of a somewhat delicate constitution and therefore, perhaps, inclined to be somewhat indulgent to himself, as I have often heard him humbly admit. For he was not greater than the Apostle who said ' We all offend in many things '. Still, the prevailing relaxation affected him so much that I heard him declare at the Chapter of Paris that from the day he was made General there never was a moment when he was not prepared to be ground to dust so that the Order might retain the purity and strict-

¹ Cf. "Opera Omnia," Tom. X, p. 50.

ness intended by St. Francis and his companions, and attain the end they aimed at. On this account the holy man may be excused somewhat, though not entirely. He was not one of those who sought to justify relaxation or assail the purity of the Rule, making such conduct the rule of their lives. If he was in any way found wanting he regarded the matter with grief and sorrow." In conclusion, Peter John Olivi makes the astounding assertion that he does not consider Bonaventure's attitude to have been mortally sinful. "I do not think," he says, "that such men are to be judged guilty of mortal sin unless, taking everything into account, this kind of excess should in their case be considered enormous."

Assuredly, Bonaventure is deserving of our sympathy. On the one hand we find him grief-stricken at the relaxations in the Order and doing everything in his power to remedy them; on the other hand we find him assailed as conniving at them and in some degree responsible for them. The rigorists could not distinguish between what was strictly commanded and what was a matter of perfection. This latter could be recommended but not enforced, and because our Saint's wisdom would not allow him to attempt its enforcement they accused him of laxity.

It has been said in a previous chapter that the observance of St. Francis was something peculiar to the Saint himself and could not become a matter

of obligation for all. Strict observance admits of many degrees of perfection. This Bonaventure perceived, and whilst sincerely desiring that which was most perfect he felt that it was unattainable. Hence, he chose a middle course and steadfastly adhered to it. By this means unity and peace were on the whole well maintained in the Order during his Generalship. Still the elements of discord were not destroyed. They were only held in check by the powerful personality of the Saint. They continued to operate slowly and imperceptibly, giving rise in time to the fanatical sect known as the Fraticelli. We are justified in thinking that the maintenance of the body of the Order in its substantial purity was due to the wise administration of Bonaventure. A more rigorous General or a less observant one might have led the Order to some extreme which would have wrought its ruin. From this point of view our Saint deserves the title which has widely been bestowed upon him of Second Founder of the Franciscan Order.

CHAPTER VII.

INCIDENTS OF ADMINISTRATION.

BONAVENTURE'S life, for the ensuing years, is a record of fast-succeeding events centring mainly round the work of his personal sanctification and his exertions for the welfare of the Order. On

23 October, 1257, our Saint received the degree of Doctor of Theology. The differences between the University and the Mendicant Friars had gradually passed away and a better spirit prevailed. Still, the favour bestowed upon our Saint is to be attributed principally to the letter of the Sovereign Pontiff commanding the University to extend all its privileges to the Friars Thomas of Aquin and Bonaventure.

During the Pentecost of 1258¹ we find him assisting at the foundation of a hospital at Pisa. In the official record of this institution we read how "Friar Bonaventure, the Minister-General of the whole Order of Friars Minor, was, at the command of Pope Alexander, present at the afore-mentioned foundation; at the command of the same Holy Father he made each and every benefactor of the hospital a sharer in the prayers said and good works performed by all the members of the Order".

Bonaventure celebrated five General Chapters—that of Narbonne in 1260; of Pisa in 1263; of Paris in 1266; of Assisi in 1269; of Lyons in 1274. These Chapters are the most convincing proofs of his indefatigable activity. In each of them, apart from the general efforts made to further regular observance, some special ordination of a remarkable kind was enacted. Thus, in the Chapter of Pisa, the suffrages for the dead were regulated, and amongst the Masses and prayers appointed to

¹ Cf. "Opera Omnia," Tom. X, p. 52.

be said for deceased benefactors we find the Solemn Requiem for the parents of the Brethren. In the Chapter of Assisi in 1269 the recital of the Angelus and the celebration of a Mass every Saturday in honour of our Lady were prescribed. In the Chapter of Paris, by the tact and prudence of Bonaventure, a somewhat serious difference which had arisen between the Franciscans and Dominicans was amicably settled. The disagreement arose concerning the respective spheres of the Inquisitors of the two Orders. The office of Inquisitor, already held by the Dominicans, was assigned to the Franciscans by Innocent IV. in the year 1254. The settlement of this dispute became the occasion of the consolidation of that spirit of fraternity and friendship that has ever since existed between the two Orders, and which, as is commonly known, originated in the reciprocal brotherly love of Francis and Dominic.

It is asserted that it was at the Chapter of Narbonne that the Franciscan habit received its present shape. Up to that time it appears to have been more or less identical with the dress worn by the Umbrian shepherds—a simple tunic with a girdle, and a hood to protect the head. It is not, however, easy to determine the precise nature of the alteration effected.

There is one incident of Bonaventure's administration which calls for special attention; an incident which has deeply influenced the historical estimate formed of him by certain writers. This is his action

with regard to John of Parma—his predecessor in the Generalship of the Order. The upholders of the rigorous observance of the Rule pretend to see in it evidence of harshness, injustice, nay, even of duplicity. This assumption, needless to say, is utterly devoid of solid foundation.

Owing to the peculiar temperament of the times and some untoward circumstances, John of Parma fell under the suspicion of heresy, and at the request of the Sovereign Pontiff it became necessary for Bonaventure to investigate the charge. The biographers of our Saint are at variance in determining the year in which this trial was held. Wadding¹ and the editors of our Saint's works² place it under the year 1257, but as Father Livarius Oligier, O.F.M., points out in a review³ of Father Lemmens' recent "Life of St. Bonaventure," the investigation is known to have been proceeded with before Cardinal John Cajetan, who at the time was the Protector of the Order. Cardinal Cajetan, however, was nominated Protector of the Order "shortly after the assumption of Pope Urban," who was elected Pope, 29 August, 1261. This is a typical instance of the chronological difficulties and uncertainties which are associated with the life of our Saint.

¹ Tom. IV, Anno 1256. Nos. 5 and 6.

² Tom. X, p. 48. No. 4.

³ "Archivium Franciscanum Historicum," Annus III, Fasc. II, p. 346.

How a man so remarkable for learning and virtue as the ex-General should have provoked such an accusation demands some further explanation.

In the first place, it must be borne in mind that this was the period when the Inquisition reigned in all the fervent zeal of its recent institution. Whatever savoured in the least of heterodoxy, either in theory or in practice, aroused its vigilance. It was closely investigated and its author, no matter what admirable qualities he might otherwise display, was regarded with suspicion and distrust. This attitude of the ecclesiastical authorities was fully justified by the prevalence of false mysticism, under the guise of which the Waldenses and Albigenses were just then putting forth the most pernicious and subversive doctrines.

True mysticism is the perfection of Christianity. Its essence is union with God. The more perfectly it accomplishes this union, the more thoroughly it achieves its end. It is the noblest and most exalted aspect of religion, but, at the same time, it is attended by very grave dangers. The mystic sees only God and his own soul—or rather he has no direct consciousness of anything but God alone. He converses with God and is guided directly by him—anything else is to a large extent ignored.

The danger of this state is apparent. The mystic is at the mercy of his imagination and of a thousand natural influences which he is liable to mis-

take for the voice of God. And when he thinks that God speaks, no matter to what folly or extravagance the imagined voice may urge him, nor how clearly it may oppose the dictates of obedience, he considers himself bound to obey it; for is he not sure, even as St. Peter, that he "must obey God rather than man!" Unless he possess a sound judgment and a thorough grasp of Catholic doctrine, or, failing these, unless he be humbly submissive to the teaching of some competent spiritual guide, he needs must go astray. This danger, Francis, who was a mystic in the truest sense of the word, avoided perfectly, but as much cannot be said of some of his earlier followers. For notwithstanding Pontifical utterances and the enactments of General Chapters, they persisted in maintaining that their particular views concerning the observance of the Rule were the only permissible ones. A mild form of fanaticism seems to have laid hold of them. Their immoderate regard for the Rule and its observance led them to extremes. They were convinced that it was inspired by our Lord Himself and they attributed to it an authority equal to that of the Gospels. Contending that it was perfectly clear and intelligible, they denied that any authority on earth had the power to explain or interpret it. In these ideas they were strengthened by the writings of Joachim, Abbot of Flora.

This remarkable man flourished about the latter

portion of the twelfth century. He was deeply imbued with the spirit of mysticism, and its dangers were only too fully realized in his case. In treating of the Blessed Trinity he erred seriously, and his doctrine was condemned by the Fourth Lateran Council. He seems to have considered himself inspired, and he gave utterance to a long series of prophecies concerning the Church's future. He declaimed vehemently against all ranks of the clergy—denouncing Popes, Cardinals and Bishops for their indifference and corruption, and predicting for them the most terrible punishments. Turning to the relations between mankind and God he proceeded to divide Revelation into three epochs: that of the Father, or the Old Testament; that of the Son, or the New Testament; and that of the Holy Ghost—a period which was to come and which would be much more perfect than the preceding two. It was to be characterized by the most powerful and universal sway of Divine Love, a clear vision of the eternal truths, and the rise of a contemplative monachism.

Notwithstanding these peculiar tenets, Joachim was a man of rare virtue and piety and he died in full union with the Church. He was regarded by many as a saint and a prophet, and his writings were thought to be divinely inspired. John of Parma, indeed, held him in high esteem, but some of the Brethren with whom he was intimately associated, and to some extent identified, exceeded

the bounds of all moderation in their ardent advocacy of him. Inflamed as they were with intense religious fervour and deeply penetrated with a spirit of penance and self-sacrifice, the teaching of Joachim appealed most forcibly to them. His denunciation of the worldliness of the age, his contempt for all things temporal, his love of contemplation, and above all, his vivid prophecy about the institution of a new Religious Order in which the light and love of God would govern all, filled them with unbounded admiration. They pretended to see in Joachim the precursor of St. Francis and the realization of his prophecy in the Order he established. Amongst the most extreme partisans of Joachim were two intimate friends of John of Parma—Friars Gerard and Leonard. Upon these principally rested the suspicion of heresy. They were tried, found guilty, and condemned to perpetual confinement.

The trial of Blessed John of Parma then came on. He was accused of leaning to the views of Abbot Joachim and of wavering in his belief in the Trinity. The ex-General, perhaps, inclined somewhat to certain of the Abbot's views; in any case the suspicion that such was the fact had subjected him to many and great persecutions. The public character of John, the immense influence he wielded over a great part of the Order, rendered it imperative that the case should be thoroughly investigated and a definite issue come to at a public trial. Were

John guilty of heresy—the stern measure would be more than justified; were he innocent—his name would gain lustre from the ordeal, and malicious tongues be silenced.

The details of the trial have not come down to us. Wadding¹ merely gives us the result, stating “that iniquity was not found in him”. He admits, however, that John was too favourably inclined to the mysticism of Joachim, and that he submissively retracted in the presence of the Cardinal and assembled Fathers. A few details we have, but it is impossible to determine how far they are coloured with partisan prejudice. One historian states that the suavity of John’s answers so wrought on his opponents that they openly declared that as a heretic he should be sentenced to perpetual imprisonment. To be stigmatized as a heretic was more than John could bear in patience. Drawing himself to his full height and looking up to heaven he professed clearly and with ardent zeal his adherence to all the articles contained in the Apostles’ Creed. “He assumed the rôle of an innocent follower of Christ,” writes Angelo Clarenus, “and averred that he did believe as he ever had believed on that question as on all other questions what the Church holds and the Saints teach.” This further incensed his accusers; and they determined to imprison for life their late Minister-General. That he was finally

¹ Tom. IV, Anno 1256. No. 6.

acquitted must be attributed to the intervention of Cardinal Otto Boni—then one of the most influential members of the Sacred College and afterwards Pope Adrian V. He dispatched two letters, one to the Cardinal President, the other to Bonaventure, in which, among other things, he wrote: “It is with the deepest regret I have learned of the process instituted against John of Parma, and that party strife has led to his arraignment on a charge of heresy. For many years—even before my elevation to the Cardinalate—I have had personal warrant both as to the orthodoxy of his doctrine and the holiness of his life; nor have I yet found anyone more loyal to his creed or more faithful to his ideals. So firmly am I persuaded of this, that I have no hesitation in saying that his faith is my faith. Let me then most earnestly beseech you that this trial be not conducted recklessly nor with partisan bias. He and I are one: injustice towards him will redound on me; the verdict you pass on him you pass also on me; his sentence, too, is mine—and my sincerest wish is to be fully associated with him.”

These letters produced the desired effect. John left the Assembly fully acquitted, and availing himself of the choice of residence that Bonaventure courteously extended to him, withdrew to the friary at Greccio. There he spent many years in the practice of every virtue and finally expired in the odour of sanctity.

Angelo Clarenus¹ condemns the part played by Bonaventure in this inquiry. "Bonaventure," he states, "on the testimony of John of Parma himself, acted wrongly in no slight degree; for whilst discussing the question in dispute privately with John of Parma in his cell he agreed with him, affirming that he thought as he did, but publicly in presence of the Brethren he showed that he held the contrary." And again he says: "Brother John enters; as one suspect of heresy he is forced to take an oath; a wise man is cross-examined by those less wise, an aged man by youths; one full of the Holy Ghost is searched into by the indevout, and by those who follow the desires of their heart. Then the wisdom and holiness of Bonaventure were obscured and vanished, and his mildness by the agitation of his soul was changed into violent anger. To such an extent was he carried away that he exclaimed: 'If it were not for the honour of the Order I should have him publicly punished as a heretic'."

To preside at this trial was one of the painful duties which his position placed upon Bonaventure. At the instance of the Brethren and the Sovereign Pontiff he was bound to undertake it. John of Parma had acquired a great reputation for holiness, and his indefatigable labours on behalf of the Order and of the Church had made his name famous throughout Europe. Furthermore, he was a per-

¹ Cf. "Opera Omnia," Tom. X, p. 49.

sonal friend of Bonaventure, for was it not he who recommended him for the office of General! In the face of these considerations it is incredible that he should have been guilty of injustice or duplicity towards him. It is much easier to believe that Angelo Clarenus, carried away by party spirit, gave ready credence to the exaggerated reports circulated by the admirers of John of Parma, who were bitterly, though unreasonably, indignant that Bonaventure should have listened to the accusation of heresy and lent his authority to the investigation that followed.

CHAPTER VIII.

ST. FRANCIS' BIOGRAPHER.

AT the General Chapter of Narbonne, in 1260, Bonaventure was requested to write the life of St. Francis. Owing to the circumstances that surround it, considerable importance attaches to this incident. There already existed several legends of the Saint. Thomas of Celano had written one in 1229. His work received the approval of Gregory IX., who had officially recommended it to the Brethren. In the year 1246, at the request of the Minister-General, Crescentius, appeared the "Legend of the Three Companions," written by Brothers Angelo, Rufinus and Leo. A second life was written by Thomas of Celano in 1247 or 1248.

A few years ago the well-known French writer,

M. Paul Sabatier, edited a work¹ which he contended was anterior to any of these. He maintained it was nothing less than a complete life of St. Francis written by Brother Leo in the year 1227—within a year of the Saint's death. This remarkable work had been already well known, but according to M. Sabatier its authorship and the date of its *compilation* had been misconceived. Although the learned writer supports his contention with weighty arguments he cannot be said to have rendered it certain. He is enamoured of the tone and spirit of the book. If it be an original work and the production of Brother Leo, it is, to the modern critic, an ideal biography. It reveals simply and forcibly the human side of Francis. The personal traits of the Saint are brought prominently before us in all their unique individuality. We have the real, living man—not the stereotyped example of every virtue which the earlier hagiographers delighted in. Still it must be admitted that the book is characterized by the prejudices of its author. Certain sayings and doings of Francis which appealed to his prepossessions are insisted upon with evident emphasis. Indeed, to such an extent is this apparent that the work cannot be regarded as purely historical. It is largely polemical and would seem to have been designed to refute the ideas of the moderate party concerning certain points of observance.

Before quitting this subject it may be said that

¹ "The Mirror of Perfection," by Brother Leo, Paris, 1898.

the ardour and enthusiasm with which the greatest literary critics of the day, Catholic and non-Catholic, devote themselves to the investigation of the sources of St. Francis' biography, is one of the most remarkable phenomena which our times witness. We hear of the formation of societies composed of the ablest scholars of Europe for the study of early documents relating to Francis and his Order. How the words of Christ are herein verified: "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted!" I doubt if there is a personality in history, exclusive of the Divine Founder of Christianity, whose words and actions are so closely studied in a spirit of loving admiration as are those of St. Francis.

To return to Bonaventure and the task imposed upon him by the General Chapter, the importance of the latter becomes apparent when we reflect that as far as the Order could effect it, the legend he was about to compose was to be the sole record of the life of Francis which should come down to posterity. This purpose evidently underlay the demand for its composition, for when the work was finished and submitted to the General Chapter of Pisa three years later it was officially approved of and all the other legends were formally proscribed. More stringent measures still for the suppression of the older legends were adopted at the Chapter of Paris in 1266. Therein was framed the following Constitution: ¹ "The General Chapter commands

¹ "Rinaldi," p. 11. Cf. "Opera Omnia," Tom. X, p. 58.

under obedience that all the legends of St. Francis hitherto composed be destroyed, and that where they can be found outside the Order the Brethren shall strive to remove them, for the legend composed by the General was written according as he had it from the mouth of those who, as it were, had been always with Blessed Francis and knew everything with certainty, and those things which are proven are therein diligently set down."

On the part of modern historiographers this ordination has excited much criticism, and even the warmest admirers and staunchest advocates of the Order must confess their inability to account for it adequately. At first sight it appears to be a very high-handed and obscurantist procedure, little in keeping with the ingenuous simplicity of the Franciscan spirit. It looks like an attempt to put out the light—to abolish the true ideal and substitute a counterfeit in its stead. But in reality it was nothing of the sort. At the present day it is impossible to determine the precise motives that actuated the authors of that statute, but no one who is even slightly acquainted with the condition of the Order at the period can fail to conjecture what most likely was the prevailing influence.

The Chapter aimed at introducing peace and harmony amongst the Brethren and producing uniformity of thought and action in their common life. We have seen that these most desirable elements were wanting—that there were dissensions