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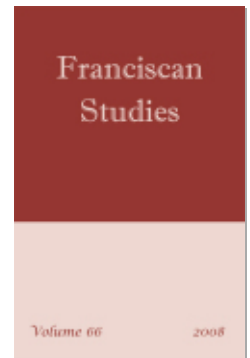
The “Umbrian Legend” of Jacques Dalarun

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THE “UMBRIAN LEGEND” OF JACQUES DALARUN¹

TOWARD A RESOLUTION OF THE FRANCISCAN QUESTION: INTRODUCTION TO THE ROUNDTABLE

In 1894, the Catholic and Franciscan world was rocked by the publication of a new and startling biography of Francis: the now famous *Vie de saint François* of Paul Sabatier. This monumental work was astonishing for several reasons, not the least of which was that it put into question the traditional written sources that had, for centuries, been used in telling the story of Francis, his early friars and his Order. The sources that came under suspicion from Sabatier's perspective were what he called the official sources: that is, those which had been commissioned either by the papacy or by the Order itself: namely, the two *vitae* of Thomas of Celano and the *Legenda maior* of Bonaventure. But they were suspect, he said, for two reasons: first, their hagiographical and theological purposes made them less than trustworthy as historical sources; and second, the alleged agendas inherent in their commissioning tended to present a Francis (and an Order) more in line with the intentions of the papacy and the clerical party within the Order than with the intentions of Francis himself. By contrast, the sources which Sabatier deemed to be more representative of the historical Francis were those which were said to have originated from the early companions of the saint, men associated most notably with Brother Leo.

As many here know, Sabatier's volume (and the claims made within his pages) launched a vigorous debate among scholars from this point forward, largely – though not exclusively – divided into two camps. On one side were the friars of all three branches of the Franciscan Family, defending the hagiographical Francis and the rectitude of their read of Franciscan history and identity. On the other side were

¹ A roundtable on Jacques Dalarun, *Vers une résolution de la question franciscaine: La Légende ombrienne de Thomas de Celano* (Paris: Fayard, 2007).

lay and non-Franciscan scholars who defended Sabatier's approach to the sources and their more humanistic Francis. Thus was launched what has been called the Franciscan Question: a question, ultimately, about the historical value of the sources about Francis and his Order; and the relationship of these sources to each other.

That debate has raged since the turn of the century, with multiple twists and turns, refinements and reassessments. But every major new development in the Franciscan Question has almost always been driven by the discovery of a new text, a new manuscript or new elements within the textual traditions of the manuscripts available to us.

An important new development in our understanding of the texts of early Franciscan history has recently been marked by the publication in 2007 of a new work by our colleague and friend, Jacques Dalarun, former director of the *Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes* in Paris and currently director of research at CNRS in Paris. His new work is entitled: *Toward a Resolution of the Franciscan Question: the Umbrian Legend of Thomas of Celano* – the subject of our roundtable presentation this evening.

This intricate and complex work, available at present only in French, may well prove to be one of the most important works of Franciscan research produced in the last half century, if some of its more startling hypotheses and tentative conclusions hold up to scholarly scrutiny and reflection. Tonight, we would like to briefly examine some of the major findings of Jacques Dalarun's new book.

Allow me to give a very brief overview of the overall plan or trajectory of the book and then introduce our distinguished panel of commentators for this evening. The volume is about a text – the *Umbrian Legend* – which has been virtually ignored by serious scholars of the Franciscan story. In its fullest form, it contains a brief narrative of selected events during the last two years of the life of Francis (stigmata, last moments with his companions, death, canonization and translation) and is then followed by a series of miracles attesting to the sanctity of the saint. The text was published in the famous Volume X of the *Analecta franciscana*, but only in a truncated form since its editors believed that, thanks to

its brevity and repetition of well-known facts and miracles about the life of Francis, it added nothing of importance to our understanding of the saint which other *legendae* already contained. Because of this, the *Umbrian Legend* has languished in obscurity, no one having taken the time to discern its origins, author, purpose or the history of its transmission as a text – until the present volume of Jacques Dalarun.

In his introductory pages, our author explains that he is interested in studying the intersection between heuristics and hermeneutics, between the material specifics of a manuscript (or a text within a manuscript) and how those material specifics can help illuminate the interpretation of the text. The *Umbrian Legend* presents an ideal case for understanding how the two issues are related to each other, indeed are essential to each other.

And so, after reviewing the historiography of the text (highlighting most notably the debate on the text between Michael Bihl and Giuseppe Abate), he begins a minute examination of the manuscript tradition of the *Umbrian Legend*: how the text came to be drafted, copied, disseminated, segmented and recombined with other collected texts, etc. – and what that might say about the intended purpose of the text, its usage, and its subsequent falling into oblivion.

Once having thus established the specifics of the text, he then moves on to position the text within the genre of Franciscan hagiographical production – he attributes the text to Thomas of Celano – and the usage of liturgical texts within the Franciscan Order. Finally, given this data, he then attempts to locate the text within Franciscan history, laying out several hypotheses as to where the text of the *Umbrian Legend* might fit into the scheme of the history of the Franciscan Order in the first half of the thirteenth century. The strength of one or the other of these hypotheses will determine whether Dalarun's book will have a major or marked impact upon the resolution of the Franciscan Question.

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TOWARD A RESOLUTION OF THE FRANCISCAN QUESTION: MANUSCRIPTS AND THE READING OF HISTORY

The “Franciscan question” studied in this book depends to a great extent on the manuscripts of the early *Lives* of St. Francis: when, by whom, for whom, and why they were written. Our view of the character and mission of the historical Francis depends on the answers to these questions. Since the sources are in many respects contradictory, so is our view of Francis. The “Franciscan question” is therefore the question of Francis himself as depicted in the sources. Here I shall be concerned with some of the codicological problems. The other speakers will address the sources themselves, hagiological and liturgical, and the broader question of Franciscan history, upon which I can only touch here.

In the book Jacques Dalarun studies in particular the manuscripts of the so-called *Umbrian Legend*. The term “legend” in the Middle Ages, incidentally, did not carry the implications of fabulous it has today and referred to reading – *legendus* meant “to be read” – from the life of a saint. The *legenda* concerning St. Francis were very numerous, and Dalarun describes their genealogy as a house of cards. The *Umbrian Legend* was not previously unknown, but it was only partially published and its importance not fully recognized. It was preserved, Dalarun says, like a hermit-crab, in the protective shell of the liturgy, for which it may have been written. It is as if, *mutatis mutandis*, it were known only from fragments like those recited in the evening prayer in which we just participated, and other fragments, from which the entire text had to be reconstructed.

Dalarun works in particular from the three manuscripts at Naples, Terni, and Assisi, all of which originated in Assisi. They present a unity of sense, as he puts it, if not of physical presentation, and from them he is able, by a remarkable feat of textual analysis, to reconstruct the integral original text. The process is complex and technical, and you would not thank me for describing it to you in detail. He studies both the content of the manuscripts and the style of the work, including what is known as the *cursus*, the type of rhythmical prose which was more or less forgotten until it was rediscov-

ered by the French scholar Noel Valois in the nineteenth century. It governed the length of the syllables in the words at the beginnings and ends of sentences and assured a dignified and sonorous style. It was used in papal documents in the eleventh century and increasingly in other types of works, including the *Lives* of St. Francis.

Dalarun shows that with a few exceptions (principally at the end of miracle 38 and the beginning of miracle 39, where there are signs of textual revisions) most of the differences between the manuscripts are scribal errors rather than authorial changes. When two of the manuscripts agree against the third, therefore, they as a rule establish a basis for reconstructing the text as it was written. Dalarun cites the distinction drawn by St. Bonaventura between copies, compilations, commentaries, and rewritings and shows that the *Umbrian Legend* was a rewriting based primarily on the *First* and *Second Lives* and the *Treatise on Miracles* by Thomas of Celano, and to a lesser extent on the *Readings for use in the choir*, also by Thomas, and the *Life* of Francis by Julian of Speyer. He establishes beyond reasonable doubt that it was written by Thomas of Celano and dates it at the outside between 1232 and 1253 and more narrowly between 1237 and 1244.

The history of the *Umbrian Legend* and the texts upon which it depends is closely tied to the early history of the Franciscan Order and particularly the controversial role of Brother Elias, who was General Minister from 1221-27 and again from 1232-39. The *First Life* by Thomas of Celano, of which the *Umbrian Legend* can be regarded as an abbreviated version, presents a favorable picture of Elias and an account of Francis himself and the foundation of the order which stresses hierarchy and charismatic leadership, unlike, for instance, the *Legend of the Three Companions*, which stresses fraternity and cooperation. These differences constituted what Dalarun calls a hagiographical crisis or imbroglio, which is embodied in the manuscripts of the various texts. The political controversies of the early order, especially those surrounding Elias, are built into the *Lives* and the manuscripts. The *Umbrian Legend* is on the whole favorable to Elias and contains mostly what may be called "inoffensive"

miracles, though some of those written in the 1220s and 1230s emphasize the role of Elias.

This brings us back to the manuscripts and the questions of when and for whom the Umbrian Legend was written. It was never, so far as is known, formally suppressed or condemned, but its “active life,” as Dalarun calls it, seems to have been short, and it was apparently circumvented or covered up in the three liturgical manuscripts, as the image of the hermit crab suggest. An interesting puzzle is presented by an erased inscription at the end of the text in the Assisi manuscript, which any of you who have Dalarun’s book can see on plate IV. It begins *generalis minister noster* followed by an illegible word of instruction, which may be *iussit*, *iniunxit*, or *precepit*, or on the contrary, *prohibuit*, but it does not say who the General Minister was or what he either ordered or forbade. A great deal depends on these words, which affect the entire interpretation of the purpose and use of the text. Some significant questions about the Umbrian Legend therefore remain, but in this book Dalarun has made a notable contribution to the study of early Franciscan history.

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TOWARD A RESOLUTION OF THE FRANCISCAN QUESTION: FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF HAGIOGRAPHY

I am extremely happy and honored to be part of this roundtable that celebrates Jacques Dalarun’s recent book, *Vers une résolution de la question franciscaine: La Légende ombrienne de Thomas de Celano* (Paris: Fayard, 2007). During his stay with us at the Franciscan Institute as Visiting Professor in 2004-2005, he and Jean François Godet-Calogeras led a seminar for us faculty and students on the so-called *Legend of the Three Companions* which did much more than simply interpret that text, and it was in the context of that seminar that his attention was drawn to the subject of his recent book, the *Umbrian Choir Legend*.

Jacques investigates the *Umbrian Choir Legend* within the larger context of Franciscan hagiographical production that begins with Celano's *Vita s. Francisci*, the *Legenda ad usum chori*, Julian of Speyer's *Vita s. Francisci*, the *Anonymous of Perugia*, the *Legend of the Three Companions*, the material of the companions transmitted in 1246 from Greccio, Celano's *Memoriale*, the *Dialogus de gestis sanctorum Fratrum minorum*, and finally Celano's *Tractatus de miraculis*, texts which make their appearance between 1229 and 1253, and even Bonaventure's hagiographical text, the *Legenda maior*. The text of the *Umbrian Choir Legend* was first brought to light by Michael Bihl in 1928, who discovered it in a Breviary in Naples, gave it the name of the Naples Legend of Saint Francis, and dated it between 1253 and 1260. Two years later, Giuseppe Abate discovered a more complete edition of the text in a breviary found in Terni, considered it to be incomplete and dated it between the years 1230-1239. Abate argued that parts of this liturgical text were re-written and were later included in Celano's *Memoriale* and *Tractatus*, and included some of the miracles which first appeared in Celano's *Vita* as well as in the important and official Assisi 338 manuscript. In 1895, Paul Sabatier first drew attention to the collection of miracles in Assisi 338, and he, as well as Abate some thirty-fives years later, suggested Thomas of Celano as author. Abate further argued that the Naples-Terni legend made its way into choral breviaries, while the *Legenda ad usum chori* made its way into portable breviaries (I leave the development of the liturgical context to Tim Johnson). Bihl responded to Abate in 1935, convinced of the Umbrian origin of the text, now giving it the name of *Umbrian Choir Legend*, and argued for its completeness. The discussion continued between Bihl and Abate, and the text was included, albeit in incomplete form, in Volume X of the *Analecta Francescana* in 1936. Since then, the Legend itself was largely ignored until it was discussed briefly in the context of Brother Elias' history by P. Sella in 2001¹, and then in this detailed study and critical edition of the text by Jacques.

¹ "La 'Malavventura' di Frate Elia. Un percorso attraverso le fonti biografiche." *Il Santo* XLI (2001): 215-300.

The *Umbrian Choir Legend* is a unique hagiographical text made up of approximately twenty-five pages of Latin text. Divided into two parts, the first part is composed of eleven paragraphs beginning rather abruptly (perhaps it is incomplete?) with the description of the Stigmata of Francis on LaVerna two years before his death in 1224, a description of his death, burial, canonization, and concluding with a description of the transfer of Francis's body to the newly built tomb church in 1230. The text itself is a "re-written" text using both Celano's *Vita* as well as Julian's *Vita*, as Jacques demonstrates through careful textual analysis. The perspective on the stigmata remains that of Celano from his *Vita*, though the stigmata is described as a "miracle," a perspective taken over from Julian (LJS 61). The second section of text is composed of miracles and is also "re-written" from miracles contained in Celano's *Vita*, the Legend for use in choir, Julian's *Vita*, as well as from some of the miracles contained in Assisi 338, which appear to be re-written in part two of the *Umbrian Choir Legend*, providing a version midway between that of Assisi 338 and the *Tractatus*. Because the description of the miracles taken from the source texts (1C, LCh, LJS, Assisi 338) undergo very little re-writing except for improvement to the *cursus* in the Umbrian Legend, this would suggest Celano's authorship and show him to be a writer continually perfecting his own work, while the texts he uses from other authors are usually significantly re-worked by him (cf. Part II of the *Memoriale*). Given the sources used to write the *Umbrian Choir Legend*, Jacques argues that the text was likely produced in Assisi. In addition, Jacques notes that in the Assisi 338, at the conclusion of the miracles (which reappear in UChL) one can identify, with technical assistance, three erased words: *minister*, *generalis* and *nos-ter*. These three erased words and what followed might suggest that the *Umbrian Choir Legend* did emanate from an official commission given to Celano, as Celano never worked without an official commission. But this does not mean that Celano was simply a scribe, rather he was a true author who had a personal perspective which he expressed in his writing despite the specific commission he received. The question of who might have commissioned the text – Elias, Albert of

Pisa, Haymo of Faversham, or Crescentius of Jesi – takes us into the history of text which will be treated by Michael Cusato, but Jacques does suggest the text should be dated between 1237 and 1245.

The main focus of the narrative part of the *Umbrian Choir Legend* is on Francis himself signed by Stigmata. This divinely sanctioned Francis blesses Elias as his successor, whom he "keeps at his right hand" (UChL IV:2). Elias is mentioned by name five times and always spoken of in a positive tone. But in addition to Elias, who was privileged to see the side wound, Ruffino too is mentioned as witness to the side wound, but presented rather negatively as he caused Francis much pain with his surreptitious touch. Angelo and Leo, "the dearest of all to him" are mentioned by name as the two brothers who sang the *Praises of the Lord* as requested by Francis himself as he drew near to death – Celano did not reveal these names in his *Vita* describing them there only as "his special sons" (1C 109). In his *Vita*, Celano mentioned that Francis entrusted his care to certain brothers who were very dear to him and he relied upon them as his "four pillars."² Here in the *Umbrian Choir Legend* we have four brothers mentioned, Elias, Ruffino, Angelo and Leo, thus including Elias among the four pillars of his dear brothers. Three of those named would sign the letter from Greccio in 1246 which accompanied the material collected at request of the general chapter in 1244, for material to complete Celano's *vita*. The Lady Clare, too, is named, together with the Poor Ladies at San Damiano as the funeral cortege stopped on its way into the city for Francis's burial, where the sisters lament Francis's passing, who leaves them abandoned and without consolation – a lament that takes on significantly greater valence with the movement against Elias in the last years before his deposition. Pope Gregory is named in the text only in the context of the canonization and transferral of Francis's body. So Gregory appears not as a counselor and confident of Francis but as one who simply testifies to Francis's holiness.

² 1 C 102 describes how Francis gave his care to "certain brothers" who were very dear to him, and "blessed Francis rested upon them as a house upon four pillars."

There follows in Part II a collection of miracles which is initiated with the description of a miracle that was worked by Francis “who carries the marks of the eternal king” on the day of his burial, thus linking the miracles directly to Francis’s Stigmata (a perspective Celano will repeat in his *Tractatus* where the foundation of the Order is presented as his first and greatest miracle, supported by Stigmata described in chapter two, the lengthiest chapter of miracles in the text). The miracles authorize and emphasize the holiness of Francis by calling attention to his unique role in the historical development of the Order. Francis’s role is God-given, suggests the *Umbrian Choir Legend*, and hence cannot be easily set aside.

What could explain the appearance of this rather strange little hagiographical/liturgical text? Given all the evidence Jacques marshals, and the three possible scenarios that he proposes for its origin, it seems most likely that Celano worked on the text as the movement against Elias was taking shape in his last years as general minister, in order to reaffirm Francis’s choice of Elias, as well as to underline Francis as the foundation of the Order. In response perhaps to this, the *Anonymous of Perugia* would appear in 1241, after the tumultuous chapter of 1239 which deposed Elias and set the Order firmly on the path of clericalization, after the election of the priest Albert of Pisa, and after the altered constitutional structure affirmed by that chapter. This narrative work of brother John, a disciple of Giles, narrates the history and development of the Order into a clerical ecclesial institution, and only “uses” Francis to demonstrate that a clerical order was his intention from the beginning. For John, the Order is the primary focus, while Francis the founder remains in the shadow, as the Order takes on a life independent of him and his intentions. John mentions the stigmata only briefly and in passing, and no miracles are included, in striking contrast to the *Umbrian Choir Legend* that presents the image of Francis as the Christ-like founder of the Brotherhood, marked with the wounds of Jesus, and fully in charge of the direction of the Order by relying on and blessing Elias as his vicar and successor. These two texts present two different understandings of the Franciscan Order, and would

continue to remain in tension throughout the rest of the thirteenth-century and into the fourteenth. Given this scenario though, as Jacques argued, it was thus likely that Thomas of Celano himself was responsible for the Franciscan Question, as all the hagiographical texts that appeared in the 1240s were responding to his understanding of Francis and the Order in the context of an Order that changed directions in 1239 leaving Francis in the shadows. And even though it was not transmitted in many exemplars, as an official text the *Umbrian Choir Legend* influenced subsequent hagiographical texts. It was used by the author of the *Legend of the Three Companions* to complete the last two chapters of his narrative dealing with Francis's Stigmata, death and burial – thus eliminating the need to posit a dependence on Bonaventure's *Major Legend* as suggested by Desbonnets. The *Umbrian Legend* was taken up again by Celano for some sections of his *Memoriale* as well as for his *Tractatus de miraculis*, and through these texts affecting indirectly even Bonaventure's *Legenda maior*.

So, what has Jacques Dalarun accomplished in his marvelous study?

First, his meticulous scholarship and careful methodology has provided a model for any future study of hagiographical texts, demonstrating the crucial role of manuscript history for a correct understanding of a text. It is simply impossible to interpret a text independent of its textual and contextual history. The meaning of the text emerges from the text in both its historical context of transmission and its reception.

Second, Jacques has suggested another part of the solution to the Franciscan question as it has come to be proposed in terms of understanding the sources, and the origin of the hagiographical texts which appeared in the 1240's and up through the 1260's, explaining the context of the General Chapter's request of 1244, and in relation to hagiographical production subsequent to 1246 with the material received from the companions. His proposed textual stem (p. 241) lays out quite clearly and neatly the relationship among the texts from Celano's *Vita* through his *Tractatus*. It is clear now that the *Umbrian Choir Legend* is a source for the *Legend of the Three Companions*, the *Memoriale* and the *Tractatus*. (He

has suggested the same for a second part of the question regarding the Leo texts in recent essays published concerning the AC and 2MP.) He has also raised critical questions about the relationship of Thomas of Celano and Julian of Speyer with regard to their *Vitae* and their possible collaboration.

Third, his study has made available to us a reliable new critical edition of this very significant and key text for understanding the hagiographical output of the 1240s and 1250s (his edition also, unfortunately makes the English translation in *FAED* 2, somewhat obsolete), together with the tools and information necessary for its interpretation.

Fourth, he has drawn scholarly attention to another neglected text, the *Dialogus de gestis sanctorum Fratrum minorum* attributed to Thomas of Pavia, who also responded to the request of Crescentius of Jesi and the general chapter in 1244 which sought more “signs and wonders” of Francis. It is a collection of 259 miracles (44 of which are attributed to Anthony of Padua, a hero for men like Haymo of Faversham and the clerical leadership after 1239) wherein Francis is practically absent, and the text appears as an affirmation that Francis is not the only one who can work miracles, and like the *Anonymous of Perugia* it removes Francis from the center of the life of the Order. Miracles are as thus as important as narrative to the understanding of a text.

And finally in studying the *Umbrian Legend*, Jacques has also brought to light new manuscripts of old texts, including a newly identified fragment of Celano’s *Memoriale*, adding another piece to the problematic textual history of that text, and providing a strong argument that the search for new manuscripts is not yet completed!

Much, much more could be said as it is impossible to present even a summary of his work in the time allotted. But in short, and hagiographically speaking, Jacques has freed us from bondage to the “magic circle” within which Paul Sabatier closed Franciscan scholarship. In doing so, he has opened the way for a more adequate appreciation of the processes which produced the various texts and images of Francis that appeared in the mid-thirteenth-century. He does not make the texts reflect his convictions or perspectives, but rather, he allows the texts to speak in their own voice as a result of

his method and his respect for the texts and authors he studies. We are all greatly in his debt for opening up these Franciscan texts for us. Because of this book, we are able to get closer to figures like Celano, and John the disciple of Giles, and Julian of Speyer, and Ruffino, the probable author of the Legend of the Three Companions, and Thomas of Pavia and his *Dialogus*, and even to Bonaventure, and thus, are able to come to an understanding of the little poor man from Assisi in all his complexity and contradictions, for after all, the authors are merely relating their own experience of Francis! For all of this, and with hope for what is yet to come, from the heart, I thank you Jacques!

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**TOWARD A RESOLUTION OF THE FRANCISCAN QUESTION:
 FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF FRANCISCAN LITURGICAL
 PRACTICE**

It is both a personal pleasure and professional honor for me to be here this evening and offer a response to Professor Dalarun's marvelous work on the *Umbrian Legend*. We first met some years ago when I was preparing to present a paper on Thomas of Celano's *Legend for Use in the Choir* at the International Medieval Congress in Kalamazoo, Michigan. As I approached the room where our session was being held, I saw Sr. Margaret Carney. She said, "Tim, I'd like you to meet Jacques Dalarun." All I could think was, "Oh, my God!" since my paper raised a question about Professor Dalarun's treatment of choir legends in his book *The Misadventure of Saint Francis*. Not only did Professor Dalarun listen attentively to my presentation, he also agreed to critique my paper in the months after our Kalamazoo encounter. Since our friendship began within the context of our mutual interest in choir legends, I am pleased indeed this evening to comment on Professor Dalarun's work on the *Umbrian Legend*.

The absence of a word or phrase in an otherwise complete text often intrigues scholars who wonder what words might have filled the blank on the page. Recent studies on Gnostic literature have focused on the Gospel of Philip, and a particular gap in the text provokes a disproportionate measure of interest and conjecture in undergraduate religion courses. At a certain point the text reads, "Jesus kissed Mary on her ____" (blank). Perhaps not nearly as titillating, but central to our concerns today, is the ____ (blank) that appears in the *ordinal* for liturgical worship written by the Minorite General, Haymo of Faversham. Intent on giving the Franciscan Order a proper order of worship, Haymo dedicated his generalate (1240-1244) to the systemization and codification of liturgical practice. Despite his obvious interest in worship within the Order, he neglected to prescribe a hagiographical legend for the Feast of Saint Francis. At the very point where a liturgical *vita* is to be named, there is a ____ (blank). Let me be clear about the significance of this ____ (blank). The Minister General, who endeavored to organize the entire liturgical life of his confreres, is unable to subscribe, or even suggest, a particular set of readings for the Feast of Saint Francis, the most significant feast day of the Order in terms of constructing internal identity and affirming ecclesial stature.

The ____ (blank) is not due to an absence of liturgical legends. Thomas of Celano's *Legend for Use in the Choir* was in circulation for over a decade. Other liturgical legends redacted from Celano's *First Life of Saint Francis* as well as Julian of Speyer's *Life of Saint Francis* were also available. Given the availability of texts, one could conclude that Haymo was not willing to present any of the existing choir legends to the community as a canonical text for liturgical use. Dissatisfaction with the choir hagiography persisted at least until 1254, since the General Chapter of Metz requested a new legend for liturgical usage because of the confusing array of legends in circulation. While the Lesser Brothers struggled with this issue, their fellow mendicants, the Preachers, also began work on a new liturgical *vita* of Saint Dominic requested at their chapter in 1254.

What the ____ (blank) in Haymo's ordinal and the Pisa legislation reveal is stunning. When it came time to worship on the day of their founder, the Minorite Order could not agree on a "prayed Francis" for the feast. This historical fact has not garnered attention from historians of Franciscan history because they focus on the major legends and prefer to draw their conclusions regarding Francis of Assisi and his heritage from these sources. One of the ironies of Franciscan studies is that historians have devoted their time and talent to the texts that were the least read by friars themselves and ignored the texts that the friars prayed and carried in their portable breviaries from the wild, western shores of Ireland to the distant steppes of Central Asia.

One of the many merits of Professor Jacques Dalarun's marvelous study is that he turns his formidable academic acumen to the various liturgical legends and takes them seriously. Why is this important? The answer is obvious if one takes into consideration the role of liturgy in the life of a religious community in the medieval period. Choir legends present a "prayed" image of the saint who is to be both contemplated and imitated. This is the nature of liturgical praxis, the "Do this in memory of me" that is repeated every day in the Eucharist celebration and extended throughout the day in the Liturgy of the Hours. The construction of Minorite identity, while clearly not limited to common prayer, was grounded in worship, and the image of Francis of Assisi presented in those intimate moments was integral to the construction of subjectivity among the brothers. Francis of Assisi's own devotion to the body and blood of Christ, together with an intense dedication to liturgical prayer, foregrounds the praxis of his followers.

If one is to take the choir legends seriously and consider the "prayed Francis" they present to the followers of the Poverello, a series of questions emerge in the wake of an attentive reading of Professor Dalarun's impressive monograph. It is important to note here that Professor Dalarun does not believe the *Umbrian Legend* was originally intended for choir use, but acknowledges that this is a fragile conclusion. One of the reasons he shies away from ascribing a preliminary liturgical end is the preponderance of miracles. I would ask him if

such an emphasis on miracles is not indeed the hallmark of Celano's earlier *Legend for Use in the Choir* and an increasingly necessary feature of Celano's entire hagiographical project given the demand of his fellow Franciscans for more miracle stories as Celano himself laments later?

If Celano did not compose the *Umbrian Legend* originally as a liturgical *vita*, his confreres evidently swiftly employed his text to this end. What emerges then from the redaction of the *Umbrian Legend* for choir is a "prayed Francis" noteworthy for his stigmata and miracles. As a consequence, the Francis that is contemplated and conceived as a paradigm for potential imitation is markedly different from the "prayed Francis" of the choir legend taken from Julian of Speyer, which ends with the stigmata, and Celano's earlier liturgical *vita*, which balances the life of Francis with the account of the stigmata, canonization, and posthumous miracles. This choir version of the *Umbrian Legend* is a link between the earlier focus of Celano, as it looks to the past emphasis on the miraculous tomb in the Basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi and toward the future perspective of Bonaventure, who will accentuate the stigmata.

The shift in the *Umbrian Legend* away from the life of Francis to a focus on his stigmata, canonization, and miracles as early as 1235 raises a question with regard to current historical interpretation of Franciscan sources. Giovanni Merlo, in his *Nel nome di san Francesco*, which the Franciscan Institute is translating, claims that Bonaventure's redaction of the source material creates "L'inimitabilità e l'irraggiungibilità di san Francesco." Repeated often enough, this belief that Bonaventure creates a Francis beyond reach, who is unable to be imitated by the brothers, has become something of a truism in certain circles.

Bracketing for a moment the textual fact that Bonaventure explicitly states the exact opposite in numerous sources, a question I would ask Professor Dalarun is if Celano himself is not to blame for any real or imagined separation of Francis from his confreres since the *Umbrian Legend* emphasizes Francis as a stigmatized miracle worker. Are there any stigmatized miracle workers among the friars in the audience gathered here this evening? If not, then there is clearly a gap

separating Celano and his confreres from the Francis portrayed in the *Umbrian Legend*. Surely this "prayed Francis" is much further beyond the grasp of the brothers than the spiritual man, who contemplates Christ and preaches the Gospel, proposed by Bonaventure. As early as 1235, Celano ignored the majority of Francis's life in favor of a passionate narrative of the stigmata joined to miracle accounts foreshadowing the resurrection. Just as it would be more difficult for Christians to imitate Christ in their daily lives if they only had the passion and resurrection accounts to read, so to, a hagiographical account of Francis devoid of a life narrative hardly seems to offer a holy man to be imitated, but rather a canonized saint to be admired from this side of eternity.

I would conclude my comments here with a heartfelt thank you to Professor Dalarun for the groundbreaking research evident in his latest monograph, and for the incredible stimulus it provides to all those interested in the story and heritage of the Poor Man from Assisi.

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TOWARD A RESOLUTION OF THE FRANCISCAN QUESTION: FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF HISTORY

Like a skilled craftsman, our distinguished author, after having studied the codicological issues related to the extant copies of the *Umbrian Legend*; after having examined the place of the legend within the hagiographical and liturgical traditions of early Franciscanism, [he] then turned to position the text within the flow of thirteenth-century Franciscan history. Such positioning has two goals: first, to discover whether the *Umbrian Legend* could shed some new light on our understanding of that history and, second, whether it might help resolve in some way the famous and vexing Franciscan Question. This is the substance of the fifth chapter of the monumental volume of Jacques Dalarun under discussion this evening.

He begins by laying out, on the basis of the codicological and hagiographical evidence, a spectrum of dates within which the *Umbrian Legend* could possibly have been written.

As an historian of scrupulous honesty, he gives us the widest possible range of dates within which the *Legend* could conceivably have been written, namely: between 1235 and 1253: the first date (1235) represents the drafting of the *Legend* of Julian of Speyer (from which it borrows); and the second date (1253) is that of the redaction of the *Treatise on the Miracles* of Thomas of Celano (which has borrowed from it). Within that spectrum, however (and for good reason), our author posits an even narrower range of years for our text: between 1237 and 1244. With the possible exception of the dyspeptic Franciscan erudite, Michael Bihl, who argued, against the position of the Conventual Giuseppe Abate, for a dating between 1253-1260 [a position followed by the editors of *Franciscan of Assisi: Early Documents*, since it has been, until now, the prevailing opinion], this new spectrum of dates (1237-1244) seems, on the basis of this study, not only judicious but quite sound. But can we get any closer and on what basis?

In the next part of the chapter, our author sets out three scenarios, three hypotheses, three possible points within this spectrum of dates, when, he contends, our elusive text could creditably have been written. Indeed, in a brilliant *tour de force* of hypothetical historical reconstruction, he presents to his readers a plausible case for all three and challenges us to examine each argument and, much like in the pedagogy of Abélard, come to our own conclusions. This evening, I will lay out the three scenarios in abbreviated form, after which I will make a few comments of my own about the strength or weaknesses of the three scenarios from the perspective of Franciscan history.

Before we begin, however, we should keep in mind a couple of things which will be important as we weigh the relative strength of each scenario. First, the *Umbrian Legend* consists of a short narrative section followed by a compilation of miracle stories which confirms the divine inspiration guiding both the founder and his movement. Second,

although the *Umbrian Legend* does not add anything new to our knowledge of Francis, it does have four emphases that distinguish it from other literary efforts of the time: (1) it begins with a striking restatement of the event of the stigmatization of Francis and a vivid description of the wounds; (2) it is marked by unusually laudatory remarks concerning Brother Elias of Cortona; (3) it includes a brief mention of the translation of the remains of Francis in 1230; and (4) it singles out by name Brothers Leo and Angelo as the companions dearest to the saint (whereas in 1 Celano all the companions were praised but remained unnamed). And a third datum will be the interpretation given to three enigmatic words found scratched out at the end of the version of the text found in the Assisi codex 338, namely: *Generalis minister n<oste>r* – "our minister general." Has the minister general commissioned the text, ordered its dissemination, non-dissemination or even destruction of the text? And to which general do these words refer? Fascinating questions whose answers depend on where one locates the *Umbrian Legend* in history.

The first scenario fixes the date of the redaction of the *Umbrian Legend* between 1237 and 1239: in other words, just prior to the deposition of Elias of Cortona at the General Chapter of Rome in 1239. The basis for this hypothesis is that the content of the *Legend*, most particularly its striking opening paragraphs on the stigmatization of Francis, could be read as a response by Thomas of Celano to doubts from within as well as from outside the Order about the reality of the stigmata. We should remember that the first narrative description of the event, after all, comes from none other than Celano himself. Doubts about the stigmata reflected doubts about what he conveyed in his narrative. Dalarun cites the papal bull of 5 April 1237, *Confessor Domini*, in which Gregory IX writes to all Christians testifying to the miracle of the stigmata and urging belief in their reality. Moreover, the day after, on 6 April, Gregory also sent out a bull in defense of the friars and their ministries. These two bulls were drawn up, according to our author, at the personal insistence of Elias who, apparently, had gone to the papal court to obtain these letters on matters he considered urgent to the Order: the di-

vine anointing of its founder and the protection of its ministries. Hence, the *Legend* gives the impression of being not only a defense of the reality of the stigmata of the founder but a defense, too, of his successor, Elias – a position consistent with Celano's praise of him in the *Vita prima* at a time when he was no longer even general. No such praise had been accorded in 1229 to the reigning general: John Parenti. Celano is depicted here as a strong partisan of Elias.

A second scenario would place the redaction of the *Legend* between the years 1241 and 1243, that is to say, within the generalate of Haymo of Faversham: the English cleric who had, more than any other, engineered the removal of Elias as general in 1239. Here, the text may possibly have been commissioned by the minister general himself in order to address a glaring lacuna in the Franciscan breviary, lacking appropriate readings for the feast of St. Francis itself. Or, alternately, the *Legend* may have been written at the initiative of Celano himself: at his own instigation and for his own reasons. In either case, our author claims, Thomas would have been reacting against the composition known as the *Anonymous of Perugia*: a text which purports to give us (as its title reads) "the beginning of the founding of the Order and deeds of those Lesser Brothers of Blessed Francis in religion"). But this seemingly innocent (or, as our author describes it: rustic) text is neither a chronicle nor a history; it is, according to our author, a polemical piece – and this, for two reasons. First, it presented an image of the early fraternity as group of companions with Francis more or less submerged within – one might even say subordinated to – the story of his own movement. This view of the Order – where the titular leader was subordinated to the larger group – was strangely similar to the aim of the democratic revolution led by Haymo at the General Chapter of 1239 which had reversed the centralization of power in the hands of the general which had been orchestrated by Elias during his second mandate. Indeed, Elias never makes an appearance in this text. This marginalization of the saintly founder and the presentation of the origins of the early fraternity as a process of human growth and development – rather than one under supernatural guidance – would have offended the hagiographer who

viewed – and had previously depicted – these events as divine manifestations of the grace of God. Similarly offensive: the *Anonymous* also appeared to dismiss the significance of the stigmata – an event of utmost importance in the mind of Thomas – dedicating a mere two lines of text to this profound mystery. Viewed in this way, the *Umbrian Legend* of Celano could have been written as a reply to the *Anonymous* – as well as to Haymo – insisting on the divine inspiration of Francis and his movement and presenting a ringing post-deposition defense of Elias, who is depicted in the *Legend* as the beloved disciple of the stigmatized Francis. As such, Haymo would certainly have rejected it for use within the *breviarium franciscanum*. And, whether originally commissioned by Haymo or at the initiative of Celano himself, the fact that it was not summarily destroyed might be evidence that the work may have been completed shortly after the death of the general in 1243 and thus serendipitously allowed to survive for a few more years.

The third scenario posits the creation of the *Umbrian Legend* in direct relationship to the call of Haymo’s successor, Crescentius of Jesi, at the General Chapter of Genoa in 1244 for the friars to gather together any information about Francis that they knew of, which would demonstrate the *signa et prodigia* (holiness and miracles) of their founder. At the same time, Thomas of Celano, the official hagiographer of the Order, was specifically mandated by the chapter to receive these materials and to work them into an additional *vita* of the founder. Dalarun, however, conjectures that Celano might first have actually responded to the general command, quickly drafting his own contribution about the saint – the *Umbrian Legend* – before receiving the famous packets of materials from the companions. But again, he would have written this short text in response to the *Anonymous of Perugia* and for essentially the same reasons. However, once he will have set himself to work on what would become the *Memoriale* (and eventually the *Treatise on the Miracles*), the *Umbrian Legend* would have appeared as but a skimpy sketch of things to come and would, therefore, have been forgotten about and dispensed with, if it were not for the fact

that a few copies had already reached the convents of Troia and Eremita.¹

These are the essential details of the three possible scenarios for the writing of the *Umbrian Legend* of Thomas of Celano presented by our colleague. Since our time this evening is brief, so too must my remarks be on this extraordinary and complex book.

I start with the second and third hypotheses first, spanning the years 1241-1244. In many respects, they are the most interesting and intriguing of the three; but, to my mind, they are also the most problematic. Let me make two points about the positioning of the *Umbrian Legend* within this span of years: (1) concerning the priority of the *Anonymous of Perugia*; and (2) about Celano as partisan protagonist in the politics of the Order.

First, both the second and third hypotheses pivot on the central role played in this period by the *Anonymous of Perugia*. Previously, Jacques and I have been almost alone in insisting that the content of the *Anonymous* has to be understood in the context of the tumultuous events of the Chapter of 1239 and in basic sympathy with its outcome. Indeed, only in this way can one understand the exceptional praise for Gregory IX (who had just deposed the minister general of the Order) and the depiction of preaching – increasingly a clerical prerogative – as the primary mission of the Friars Minor. However, in both of these hypotheses, our author posits that Celano in the *Umbrian Legend* was reacting to the dismissive approach taken by the author to the stigmata and to his almost-sociological portrayal of the beginnings of the early community, with its consequent diminishment of the role played by Francis. This, of course, would have been quite at variance with the portrayal of the divine inspiration of both founder and movement presented in the *Vita prima*. But this may be related more to literary aptitude rather than to intention or design. In other words: that the *Anonymous* presents a picture of the issue of leadership in the early fra-

¹ In truth, the narrative of the LO does not duplicate the testimony found in 2 Celano. If anything, it duplicates, even intensifies, what had already been presented in the *Vita prima*. Hence, the LO does not appear to me as a sketch of things to come, rather a forceful reiteration of things previously written.

ternity which, in some respects, echoes the decentralized approach to authority advocated by Haymo and the Northern Europeans, appears to me to be more coincidental than ideological; more in the eye of the contemporary observer than in the intentions of the author. For what the *Anonymous* gives us, in fact, in his own unpolished manner, is the way that authority *did* evolve within the early community: as a shared discernment among brothers of like-minded intention. Hence to view Thomas as countering the *Anonymous* and, through it, Haymo and his conception of Franciscan life, seems to me to be a bit overdrawn. The author of the *Anonymous*, a companion of Brother Giles, was not at all pained at the downfall of Elias; this is clear from the fact that he is never once mentioned in the narrative. But perhaps the reason has more to do with the perception of a change in the lifestyle and actions of the fallen general (which was *the* criticism of Elias from the companions) than with any notion of how authority was to be structured and exercised among the Minors. Finally, is it not indeed curious that, once the content of the *Anonymous* comes to be subsumed into the text of the *Legend of the Three Companions*, it virtually disappears from the scene as a text to be reckoned with or even remembered? Such a datum seems to weaken to some extent the force of our author's contention about the pivotal role played by the *Anonymous* as the spur to the redaction of a whole series of new sources on Francis, the *Umbrian Legend* in the lead.

Second, surely one of the most invigorating aspects of this exceptional book is that the second and third hypotheses, if correct, bring the person of Thomas of Celano out from the shadows as a significant player in the shaping of Franciscan history in the first half of the thirteenth century. Typically treated as the official hagiographer of the Order writing on commission within the bounds of his craft, we now come to better appreciate the man behind the text, with his own views on Franciscan life. We have known this already to some extent from the *Memoriale*. But the positioning of Celano as a strong partisan of Elias, openly challenging the general who had run him out of town (in hypothesis two) or supportive of the failed efforts to bring Elias back as general in 1244 (in hypothesis three), while fascinating and even tantaliz-

ing, seems somewhat vitiated by another important datum. For Elias, since mid-to-late 1238, had become a strong supporter of Emperor Frederick II, who in March 1239 – two months before the general chapter of Rome – had been excommunicated by Gregory IX. Anyone found openly supporting him could likewise incur the same sentence, as did Elias and some of his supporters who physically joined Frederick in his camp at Pisa in 1240. To imagine Thomas of Celano as being strongly and openly supportive of Elias after these events in the early 1240s is one thing; but to still be honored as official hagiographer of the Order and entrusted with the delicate task of writing the *Memoriale* and *Tractatus* with such heavy baggage seems somewhat unlikely in my view. Indeed, although the fact that Elias does not receive any effusive praise from Thomas in the *Memoriale* has been interpreted as a sign of Celano's political savvy, it might also be indicative that, by this time, his esteem for Elias had already waned – and precisely because of the tumult over the person and governance of Elias at the 1239 Chapter. Together, this is what makes the first hypothesis a more attractive option as the historical context for the writing of the *Umbrian Legend*.

I believe that our distinguished author is entirely correct to account for the unusual emphasis on the stigmata of Francis in the opening paragraphs of the *Umbrian Legend* by explaining it in reference to the bull of Gregory IX, *Confessor Domini*. In fact, three other bulls (not cited by our author) were drafted and sent by Gregory at roughly the same time to individuals and groups throughout Christendom on the very same subject of the stigmata. Clearly, Elias and Gregory had become concerned that too many Christians and religious – perhaps even within the Order itself – were expressing a corrosive skepticism about the authenticity of the stigmata. As noted earlier, for Celano, it had become *the* central reality confirming the unique holiness of the saint and, therefore, of the role to be played in the spiritual regeneration of the Church by the Order he founded.

The praise accorded to Brother Elias in this work has already been noted (four times explicitly, once implicitly); but the reasons for it have not. If our author is correct in dating

the *Umbrian Legend* between mid-1237 and mid-1239, the unusual praise of Elias could be explained by the fact that already by 1237 a movement was afoot, originating both in Germany as well as in France and in England and attested to separately in the chronicles of Jordan of Giano and Thomas of Eccleston to get rid of Elias. This testimony relates that friars in these regions had become not only disenchanted but angry with what they perceived to be the abuse of authority by the Italian general and were planning to remove him from power if they could get a chapter called. Indeed, a direct appeal had already been made to Elias by some of these friars but summarily rebuffed by him. Thomas, we assume, was living in or around Assisi at the time and would most likely have been privy to such murmurings. Whatever may have been his alleged faults, Thomas and Elias would have shared a similar appreciation of the sanctity of their founder as testified to in the gift of the stigmata. Moreover, Thomas was aware of the unique privilege Elias had had in seeing the side-wound of Francis in an intimate moment of caring for the saint and in disseminating news of this unheard-of miracle in his *Encyclical Letter*. On this matter, there was complete accord; and Elias, as propagator of this mystery – so central now to the identity of the founder and his Order – would merit a spirited defense in the *Umbrian Legend* now that he found himself under attack.

Nor should it be forgotten that in the *Vita prima*, Francis had been depicted by Celano in the account of Christmas at Greccio, as a deacon, dressed in the vestments of a deacon. The use of the word *levita* (rather than *deaconus*) was a deliberate choice on the part of Celano to subtly assert, in 1229, against the recent statements of Gregory IX, that the Friars Minor, following in the footsteps of their founder, were not an Order of priests but rather and more importantly *assistants* to the priests – levites in the post-exilic sense of the term. This ecclesial image was meant to attest that the Order could be – in fact, has been and was being – led by men who were not ordained priests but who could still, through their leadership, guide the Order of the stigmatized Francis in its work of spiritually revitalizing the Church. Elias stood in that same line of legitimate levitical lay leaders; when

challenged by some of the friar-clerics of northern Europe on these very grounds, Celano rose to defend him.

But the attack was also coming from another direction: from the side of the companions, disillusioned with not only with the personal excesses against poverty of the minister general but more importantly with his easy association with the *maiores*: the great and mighty of the world. This is the perspective of the *Sacrum commercium*, possibly written by Caesar of Speyer sometime between 1236 and late 1238, in which the basilica of San Francesco – whose construction had been overseen by Elias – was viewed as *the* symbol of the betrayal of the *minoritas* of the Order. But what is extraordinarily interesting is that, if true, how then to explain the fact that the *Umbrian Legend* singles out two of the companions – Leo and Angelo – for praise? An answer might be found in the fact that already by this time, some of the companions had begun distancing themselves from such forceful, public critiques of the new directions taken by the Order, like those leveled by Caesar and his followers. Celano, in this battle, seems to have sided with the general on this one. Indeed, when handed the veiled criticism of the basilica by the companions in the *Assisi Compilation* (who praise the Portiuncula not the basilica as the *caput et mater ordinis*), he veils it still more, rendering such criticism innocuous and harmless.

Ultimately, if the codicological evidence is not contradictory to it, the question of the *Umbrian Legend* must be answered by a demonstrable harmony between the content of the work and the historical context out of which it arose. As provocative and fascinating as the placement of the *Legend* as a reaction to events within the generalates of Haymo or Crescentius may be, it seems that the more consonant, if less dramatic, location might be within the last fateful years of the generalate of Elias. For the *Umbrian Legend* presents itself as a mini-, compressed and updated version of the same content of the last two years of Francis's life as presented in the *Vita prima* with a clarion emphasis on the miracle of the stigmata, mirrored in numerous other posthumous miracles flowing from it, rather than as a new and bold statement reflective of drastically changed and alarming times. If that

lessens to some small extent the contribution it makes to the resolution of the Franciscan Question, it is surely not for any lack of erudition or historical acumen on the part of our author and his superb and probing work.

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**DE ST. BONAVENTURE À LA *LÉGENDE OMBRIENNE*
 ET DE LA *LÉGENDE OMBRIENNE* À ST. BONAVENTURE**

Être lu, être lu de la manière dont Giles Constable, Michael Blastic, Timothy Johnson et Michael Cusato viennent de me lire, avec autant de finesse intellectuelle que d'amicale bienveillance, est la plus belle récompense dont un auteur puisse rêver. De leur amitié, ils ont ainsi donné un merveilleux témoignage dont je les remercie de tout coeur; mais de leur mérite aussi. Car il est de temps de le dire: l'ouvrage dont il est question est un livre illisible, présentant la découverte d'une légende déjà connue, qui de toutes façons n'apporte rien de neuf sur François d'Assise!

Pourtant – à cause de cela peut-être – j'ai rarement écrit un livre en pensant autant à ses lecteurs potentiels. La *Légende ombrienne* a des allures de puzzle et d'énigme: puzzle, puisqu'il faut la reconstituer en agençant les fragments livrés par quatre témoins manuscrits dont aucun ne donne la même portion de texte que le voisin; énigme, car on ne sait rien de son auteur ou de sa date – et les mots qui devraient en éclairer les circonstances de rédaction ou de diffusion, grattés, se présentent comme un mystère supplémentaire: *generalis minister noster*... À l'image de la *Légende* dont il traite, ce livre s'offre donc à ses courageux lecteurs comme un jeu, un défi. Au moment où il devrait se clore par une ferme conclusion, il s'ouvre sur trois scénarios entre lesquels le lecteur est invité à choisir. Arrivé au point où je n'étais plus en mesure de trancher, j'ai en effet passé le relais à autrui. Giles Constable, Michael Blastic, Timothy Johnson et Michael

Cusato ont relevé le défi. Et le jeu n'était pas vain, puisqu'ils m'ont beaucoup appris.

De leurs multiples suggestions, qu'il me faudra le temps d'absorber en détail, je retiens en particulier leur unanimité à souligner d'une part le rôle prêté à frère Élie dans la *Légende ombrienne*, d'autre part l'insistance de l'hagiographe sur les stigmates, une insistance qui annonce les développements à venir de Bonaventure. Je retiens aussi leur accord sur le fait que ce texte a certainement été écrit par Thomas de Celano entre 1237 et 1239, sur la fin du généralat du même frère Élie. Cet avis rejoint celui d'autres lecteurs (André Vauchez, Giulia Barone, Sylvain Piron, Marco Bartoli ...) et je crois pouvoir dire qu'il transforme l'hypothèse (plus exactement, la première de mes trois hypothèses) en acquis. À la suite de Michael Bihl, qui avait brutalement balayé la fine intuition de Giuseppe Abate, on s'accordait jusqu'à présent pour dater la *Legenda choralis umbra* de 1253/1260; or voici que la *Légende ombrienne* remonte de quelque vingt ans dans le temps et n'est plus séparée de la canonisation de François que par une dizaine d'années.

Le *satisfecit* global de Giles Constable, dont on connaît la science et l'acribie et qui fut déjà un des premiers recenseurs de mon premier livre, m'a comblé d'aise. Je lui suis particulièrement reconnaissant d'avoir signalé l'importance que joue le *cursus* latin dans mon enquête d'attribution. Comme Giles Constable nous en a lui-même si souvent donné l'exemple dans son œuvre, je suis persuadé que l'histoire, la codicologie et la philologie doivent avancer de concert, qu'elles ne sont au fond qu'une même discipline (presque au sens ascétique) au service de la quête de la vérité.

Mes lecteurs m'ont également éclairé sur des aspects du texte que je n'avais pas vus; ainsi quand Michael Blastis saisit la position singulière de Grégoire IX dans le récit: "Pope Gregory is named in the text only in the context of the canonization and transferral of Francis's body. So Gregory appears not as a counselor and confidant of Francis but as one who simply testifies to Francis' holiness." C'est là une différence essentielle entre la *Vie du bienheureux François* (la *Vita prima* de Thomas de Celano) et la *Légende ombrienne*: jamais cité dans la seconde, le cardinal Hugolin n'apparaît plus du

tout au cœur du projet franciscain; devenu le seul Grégoire IX, il est la sanction ecclésiale de la sainteté franciscaine qui s'est, quant à elle, totalement substituée au projet franciscain. Comme l'observe encore subtilement Michael Blastic, la *Légende ombrienne*, à la différence la *Vie du bienheureux François*, met les miracles du saint en rapport avec ses stigmates, selon un mouvement discrètement amorcé dans la *Légende de chœur* qui trouve plus tard son apogée dans le *Traité des miracles*. Je note à mon tour que la *Légende ombrienne* inaugure, à trois reprises, l'expression de François comme "porte-enseigne du Christ" qui sera remployée deux fois dans le *Traité des miracles*.

C'est cette centralité des stigmates et des miracles qui attire aussi l'attention de Timothy Johnson, au terme de sa belle variation sur le ____ blanc. Et j'entends bien sa question: en ne sélectionnant du parcours de François que ses stigmates et sa fin, en transmuant sa *Vie* en *Passion*, en accumulant les preuves de sa sainteté thaumaturgique, Thomas de Celano n'a-t-il pas sciemment voulu exhausser l'icône du fondateur vers des cieux inaccessibles au commun des frères? Si tel est le cas, pourquoi cette sainteté inimitable n'aurait-elle pas été proposée à la dévotion des frères dans une légende liturgique? Ne prie-t-on pas aussi ce qui est hors d'atteinte? Pour repousser l'idée que la *Légende ombrienne* ait pu être intentionnellement écrite comme légende liturgique, j'ai en effet mis en avant le fait que le "François prié" qui en ressort ne se prêtait guère à constituer un modèle de sainte vie pour les frères. Mais – suggère Timothy Johnson – si cela était fait exprès? Reste que la longueur totale de la *Légende ombrienne* (plus de trois fois la *Légende de chœur*, mais la moitié de la *Légende mineure* de Bonaventure) ne me semble s'adapter ni aux neuf lectures d'un office sans octave, ni au soixante-trois lectures d'un office avec octave. Reste que ce fut néanmoins le cas au moins à trois reprises.

Si mon livre n'avait servi qu'à permettre à Michael Cusato de remettre en perspective courants idéologiques et production textuelle au sein de l'Ordre des Frères mineurs, il n'aurait pas été écrit en vain. De cette fresque magistrale, je ne retiens ici qu'un point. Michael Cusato a la gentillesse de rappeler que nous avons été pour ainsi dire les deux seuls

à souligner l'accord de fond entre le contenu de l'*Anonyme de Pérouse* (le *Du commencement de l'Ordre* de frère Jean, compagnon de frère Gilles) et la coloration dominante de la période qui s'ouvre en 1239 par la déposition de frère Élie. La mise au point de Michael Cusato n'en est que plus précieuse: "In other words: that the *Anonymous* presents a picture of the issue of leadership in the early fraternity which, in some respects, echoes the decentralized approach to authority advocated by Haymo and the Northern Europeans, appears to me to be more coincidental than ideological ; more in the eye of the contemporary observer than in the intentions of the author." Il y a bien convergence objective entre frère Jean, l'auteur de la chronique *Du commencement de l'Ordre*, et les maîtres parisiens rédacteurs du *Commentaire de la Règle* pour minimiser le rôle du ministre général et réévaluer le rôle du chapitre général, mais il n'y a aucune complicité subjective entre la voix venue des ermitages ombriens et celle qui sort du *studium generale* de Paris. Je n'arrivais pas tout à fait à me défaire de l'idée que la *Légende ombrienne* avait été écrite en réponse au *Du commencement de l'Ordre*. Les interventions de conjuguées de Michael Cusato et de Sylvain Piron (*Annales. Histoire, sciences sociales*, 63, 2008, 183-85) me dessillent les yeux et m'incitent à poser la question: et si c'était en partie l'inverse ?

Giles Constable, Michael Blastic, Timothy Johnson et Michael Cusato n'ont pas craint de glisser quelques souvenirs amicaux dans leurs interventions. Qu'il me soit permis, à mon tour, de conclure sur une touche plus personnelle qui permettra à chacun de comprendre l'importance toute particulière que revêt pour moi cette présentation de mon livre à St. Bonaventure University, à l'instigation du doyen du Franciscan Institute.

L'idée de ce livre est née exactement ici, sur ce même campus, en ce même Doyle Hall, il y a exactement trois ans, en cette même fête de saint Bonaventure. Le 15 juillet 2005 par conséquent, au cours du dîner qui clôtura cette année-là la saint Bonaventure, la présidente de la St. Bonaventure University, sœur Margaret Carney, offrit au doyen du Franciscan Institute, frère Michael Cusato, un fac-similé du manuscrit 338 d'Assise. Le soir même, je demandais à Michael de bien

vouloir me le mettre de côté. Dans les jours qui suivirent, je feuilletais cette superbe reproduction du monument livresque de la mémoire franciscaine, tout en relisant la lumineuse description qu'en a donnée Luigi Pellegrini. J'avais déjà lu son article, mais jamais avec le manuscrit – ou presque – en mains. Je m'attardais sur le recueil de miracles des f. 44r-48r. Luigi Pellegrini appelait justement à en donner une nouvelle édition.

En ce mois de juillet 2005, je terminais une féconde année passée au Franciscan Institute comme Visiting Professor. De janvier à mars en particulier, j'avais dirigé un séminaire de recherche avec Jean-François Godet-Calogeras sur la *Légende des trois compagnons*. Depuis la fin du mois de juin, je donnais un cours dans le cadre de la Summer Session du Franciscan Institute. Mes trois heures de cours quotidiens me laissaient l'après-midi libre, mais l'esprit vide. Pour m'occuper les mains et me délasser l'esprit, comme on fait des mots croisés, je me mis à transcrire les miracles du manuscrit 338 d'Assise. Je ne savais pas que je venais de commencer un nouveau livre. Fin juillet, la transcription était finie, mais sur le dernier feuillet du recueil de miracles, j'avais noté la présence de trois mots grattés, dont personne ne disait mot et que je n'arrivais pas à déchiffrer sur le fac-similé. Rentré en Europe à la fin de l'été, à la première occasion, je me précipitais au Sacro Convento d'Assise et demandais à consulter le manuscrit. À la place voisine de la mienne, un lecteur avait laissé ses affaires. Il revint en même temps qu'arrivait mon manuscrit: c'était Luigi Pellegrini, qui fut depuis lors Visiting Professor au Franciscan Institute, succédant à Timothy Johnson dans ce poste envié que j'avais précédemment occupé et que Maria Pia Alberzoni occupa après lui; Luigi Pellegrini qui m'apparaissait au Sacro Convento en même temps que le 338! Nous lûmes les trois mots grattés de concert, à la lampe de Wood: *generalis minister noster*...

On comprendra que débattre ici, à St. Bonaventure University, avec des savants de première force qui sont aussi des amis très chers, de ce livre qui fête aujourd'hui les trois ans de sa conception ne peut me laisser indifférent. Dans les vêpres qui ont précédé notre table ronde, Michael Cusato a tenu à ce que les lectures soient extraites de la *Légende om-*

brienne. Sans doute ces mots qui ont résonné il y a quelques minutes sous la voûte moderne de la chapelle de l'Université n'avaient-ils plus jamais été lus dans une église franciscaine depuis sept cent soixante-neuf ans, depuis la déposition de frère Élie. Aujourd'hui, le François de la *Légende ombrienne*, le François un temps prié avec les mots de Thomas de Celano puis si vite oublié a repris vie à St. Bonaventure. Décidément, même dans les études franciscaines, l'Amérique reste à jamais le continent où les rêves peuvent devenir réalité.

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