

CLARE OF MONTEFALCO (1268-1308)  
THE LIFE OF THE SOUL IS THE LOVE OF GOD

by

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**Abstract:** *Clare of Montefalco (1268-1308). The Life of the Soul is the Love of God*

This dissertation introduces St. Clare of Montefalco, a medieval mystic of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, to the English-speaking world. The thesis examines aspects of her theology emphasized in her spirituality as well as presenting her life in the context of her culture. The background material contains the social, cultural, ecclesiastical, religious, and political background of the times in which she lived. Since there are no extant writings of Clare of Montefalco, the chief sources used in the thesis are Il Processo di Chiara da Montefalco, which was held in 1318 and the Vita S. Clarae de Cruce, which was written before 1320.

The sources studied provide information about Clare and her relationship to her family, her culture, and her Church. They also provide information about Clare's life as a religious and a mystic. The thesis is heavily dependent on non-autobiographical material. Therefore, conscious of the use of hagiography, the dissertation discusses what hagiography is and how Berengario, her initial biographer and the bishop who invoked the apostolic process of canonization, makes use of this particular genre.

The dissertation presents Clare as an alternative theology resource of the Middle Ages different from that provided by the scholastic and monastic teachers of the period. Using the expertise of Bernard McGinn and Jean LeClercq, the thesis presents a comparison among the three types of theology; namely, scholastic, monastic and vernacular. Clare crosses the boundaries between the categories of vernacular and monastic theologian.

Having developed a method for claiming Clare as a theologian, and using the words and deeds of Clare, as seen and heard by the people who lived with her or whom she encountered, the thesis gives a portrait of the relationship of Clare to God and Jesus Christ. Integrating her theology of God and Jesus Christ to how she lived her life in *imitatio Christi* completes the presentation of Clare of Montefalco as theologian, teacher, contemplative, and mystic.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<u>AS</u>	<u>An Augustine Synthesis</u>
FAS	“St. Francis as an Educator”
FOM	<u>The Flowering of Mysticism</u>
<u>GFR</u>	<u>Greyfriars Review</u>
<u>JAAR</u>	<u>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</u>
LOL	<u>The Love of Learning and the Desire for God</u>
<u>OCD</u>	<u>On Christian Doctrine</u>
PC	<u>Il Processo di Canonizzazione di Chiara da Montefalco</u>
ROT	“The Renewal of Theology”
Vita	<u>Vita S. Clarae de Cruce: Ex codice Montefalconensi saeculi XIV Desumpta</u>

## **Appendix I**

### **Comparison of the Three Types of Theology Present in the Middle Ages**

## INTRODUCTION

Saint Clare of Montefalco (1268-1308), also known as Saint Clare of the Cross, is well-known in the Italian-speaking world. The research, initiated by the Augustinian priests, brothers and nuns of Umbrian Italy, began in 1981, the first centenary celebration of the canonization of St. Clare. This inquiry into Clare's life involved the preparation of the critical edition of the Relatio, the short version of the Process of Canonization of 1318-1319,<sup>1</sup> as well as the historical documents on the Monastery of the Holy Cross on the years when Clare was the abbess of that monastery (1291-1308).<sup>2</sup> Besides the primary documents presented in the aforementioned texts, other topics have also been written regarding Clare and her spirituality. For example, La Spiritualità di S. Chiara da Montefalco, after presenting a brief introduction to the movements of spirituality in Umbrian Italy and in the Augustinian tradition, presents a picture of Clare's spirituality while she lived in the two reclusorio as well as under the Augustinian rule.<sup>3</sup> Added to this collection of texts on Clare and her spirituality are two books that speak about Clare and her times. Containing essays about her relationship to religious movements of her time, including the Penitential movement and feminine religious movements, these texts also compare Clare to more well-known persons of her time, such as Angela of Foligno and Jacopone da Todi.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Enrico Menestò, Il Processo di canonizzazione di Chiara da Montefalco (Firenze: "La Nuova Italia" Editrice, 1984), pg. xxxiii-xxxvii and lxvi-lxix. This text will be abbreviated PC throughout the thesis.

<sup>2</sup>Silvestro Nessi, ed., Chiara da Montefalco. Badessa del Monastero di S. Croce (Montefalco, 1981).

<sup>3</sup>Silvestro Nessi, ed., La Spiritualità di S. Chiara da Montefalco (Montefalco: Monastero S. Chiara, 1986). S. Chiara della Croce. Maestra di vita spirituale (Montefalco: Monastero S. Chiara della Croce, 1983) contains letters, homilies, meditations, and conferences given by several Augustinians concerning Clare's spiritual life.

<sup>4</sup>Claudio Leonardi and Enrico Menesto, eds., S. Chiara da Montefalco e il suo tempo (Perugia/Firenze: Regione dell'Umbria/La Nuova Italia, 1985) and Santa Chiara da Montefalco e

However, in the English-speaking world, she is most well-known for the following reasons: the signs of the Passion that were found in her heart after her death;<sup>5</sup> an incorruptible body;<sup>6</sup> entering religious life at the very young age of six;<sup>7</sup> and finally, since the late fifteenth century, the center of a controversy between the Franciscans and Augustinians as to whether she is a Franciscan tertiary or an Augustinian nun.<sup>8</sup>

**This thesis will seek to present Clare of Montefalco, a medieval mystic of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries to the English-speaking world. Besides presenting the life and context of Clare of Montefalco, the thesis will lay out aspects of theology operative in the spirituality of Clare.**

Why choose Clare of Montefalco as the topic for a dissertation? In researching the early Franciscan women of the Third Order, that is, those women who lived in the same century as Francis, four women stood out in the received tradition: Angela of Foligno, Rose of Viterbo, Margaret of Cortona, and Clare of Montefalco. Much information is available in English for the first three women, very little for Clare of Montefalco. Secondly, Clare of Montefalco is a part of the history of my religious congregation, the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi of Penance and

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(Perugia/Firenze: Regione dell'Umbria/La Nuova Italia, 1985) and Santa Chiara da Montefalco e il suo ambiente (Montefalco, 1983).

<sup>5</sup>For example, see Chiara Frugoni, "The Imagined Woman," in A History of Women in the West: Silences of the Middle Ages, ed. Christine Klapisch-Zuber (Cambridge/London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991), 386; Marion Habig, The Franciscan Book of Saints (Chicago, IL: Franciscan Herald Press, 1979), 611; Cecily Hallack and Peter F. Anson, These Made Peace: Studies in the Lives of the Beatified and Canonized Members of the Third Order of St. Francis of Assisi (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1957), 112.

<sup>6</sup>For example, see Herbert Thurston, The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism, ed J.H.Crehan (Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), 241, quoting John Addington Symonds; Louis Biersack, The Saints and Blessed of the Third Order of Saint Francis (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Press, 1943), 27; Hallack, 113; Habig, 611.

<sup>7</sup>For example, see Biersack, 26; Habig, 610; Hallack, 110.

<sup>8</sup>For example, see Raffaele Pazzelli, St. Francis and the Third Order: the Franciscan and Pre-Franciscan Penitential Movement (Chicago, IL: Franciscan Herald Press, 1982), 153; Raffaele Pazzelli, The Franciscan Sisters: Outlines of History and Spirituality (Steubenville, OH: Franciscan University Press, 1993), 30-37.

Charity. There is a stained glass window in her honor in our hundred-year-old chapel, built around 1885, four years after Clare's canonization. Thirdly, I wished to find out, if possible, how Clare fits into the Franciscan family. Fourthly, since little is known about this Italian woman mystic, I felt it was time to present her to the English speaking world. Finally, because modern Italian theologians claim her as both a teacher and as a mystic, I wished to find out what was the basis for this assertion about Clare of Montefalco. This dissertation will shed greater light on these observations. As part of this thesis, it is necessary to present background material to her life and a brief biography. This material will contain the social, cultural, ecclesiastical, religious, and political background of the times in which Clare lived. Clare's stance as an example of a medieval mystic, and as a concrete illustration of the religious life of women during this time will also be addressed. After developing a method for claiming Clare as a theologian, this thesis will then present the implicit theology of Clare of Montefalco by giving a portrait of the relationship of Clare to God and Jesus Christ. This presentation of her theology begins by looking at her visions, instructions to the sisters of her community, and confrontations with members of the sect of the Free Spirit. The thesis intends to integrate the implicit theology concerning God and Jesus Christ, with the way in which she lived her life in *imitatio Christi* and her unique spirituality. This involves presenting pertinent episodes from her life, as well as describing the way she lived the life of the virtues, especially those virtues which Clare herself saw exemplified in Jesus Christ, and the virtues which other people saw her living, as intimately conformed to Christ's life. She was reported to bear, not the external stigmata, as Francis of Assisi did, but the internal stigmata, bearing within her heart not only the crucified Jesus, but also other signs of the Passion.<sup>9</sup> Through the integration of the words and deeds of Clare's life, this thesis will also seek to present Clare as an alternative theological resource of the Middle Ages different from that provided by the Scholastic teachers of the period.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>PC Article CLIX, CLIII, CLIV, CLV, CLXVI, CLXVII, CLXVIII, CLXIX, CLXXVII, CLXXIX, CLXXXIII, CLXXXVI; *Vita S. Clarae de Cruce: Ex codice Montefalconensi saeculi XIV desumpta*, edited by A. Semenza *Analecta Augustiniana* 17 (1939): 175. 403-406. This text will be abbreviated as *Vita* for the remainder of this thesis.

<sup>10</sup>Not having an opportunity for a formal education, as the scholastic theologians had, Clare basically is dependent upon visions to present her theology. Augmenting these visions will be the instructions given to her sisters, as well as the conversations Clare had with members of the

Chapter 1 of this thesis begins with a brief biography of Clare of Montefalco, focusing on her family life, the city of Montefalco, as well as the different forms of religious life open to women during this time period. Chapter 1 concludes with a discussion of Clare as a mystic.

After a short discussion on the role of hagiography (sacred writings) in relationship to Clare and her biographer Berengario, Chapter 2 will delve into the primary sources used for the thesis. These include the Process of Canonization, the critical edition of which was prepared by Enrico Menestò, and the *Vita* of Berengario, the critical edition of which was prepared by A. Semenza.

Although Clare of Montefalco was not a university educated woman, she was considered to be a teacher of theology by people of her time. Chapter 3 will seek to articulate the sense in which Clare might be considered as a theologian as well as to explain the method used to discover and articulate her theological output.

Chapter 4 presents Clare's thoughts about God, under the titles of God as Creator, Ruler and Judge, Teacher and Spirit of Truth. Chapter 5 continues the discussion about God under the title of the God who suffers, bringing us into contact with how Clare speaks about Jesus Christ and her commitment to the Passion and Death of Jesus.

Although Clare's commitment to the sacramental life of the Church and her living a virtuous life do not have a major place in proving Clare to be a theologian, they are an essential part of her life. Chapter 6 will discuss these topics and their relationship to Clare's theology of God.

As can be seen from the above topics, no mention has been made of the Franciscan-Augustinian question, which is still being discussed in today's literature about Clare of Montefalco. Since the topic seems neither to add nor detract from Clare's role as theologian, there will be no discussion of this particular topic.<sup>11</sup>

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sect of the Free Spirit.

<sup>11</sup>André Vauchez, Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages (Cambridge University Press, 1997) and Pazzelli's Franciscan Sisters, published in 1993, contain a significant reference to Clare of Montefalco as a Franciscan Tertiary.

## CHAPTER 1

### BIOGRAPHY AND BACKGROUND OF CLARE OF MONTEFALCO

#### Section 1: Clare of Montefalco, her city and family.

Clare lived her entire life in Montefalco, a small walled city overlooking the plains of Umbria. With ecclesiastical approval, Clare, at the age of six, joined her sister, Giovanna, in the reclusorio provided by their father, Damiano. There, over the years, Clare drew closer to the Passion of Christ through prayer, meditation and ascetical practices. Under the tutelage of her sister, Clare also learned to live a life devoted to poverty, chastity, and obedience as well as to focus on the acquisition of other virtues. At this time, the small community of three or four women did not live under a specific religious rule.

With the growth of the community, construction of a new reclusorio was begun in 1280, but before its completion, Giovanna and Clare's father died, leaving the community in desperately poor conditions. The community members were obliged to beg for their daily sustenance, and, even though the building was not completed, they moved into the reclusorio in 1281.

In 1290, after the completion of the new living quarters and oratory, the community was granted the Rule of St. Augustine, and their convent became known as the Monastery of the Holy Cross. With the death of Giovanna in 1291, Clare unwillingly took over the duties of the abbess of the monastery. Clare was 23 years old at the time, and eventually grew into her role as a wise and discerning abbess.

Though she lacked any formal training, Clare was recognized for her scholarly knowledge of Scripture and the teachings of the Catholic Church. She disputed with the members of the sect of the Free Spirit,<sup>12</sup> discussed theological and scriptural questions with

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<sup>12</sup>The sect of the Free Spirit will be developed at length at a later time.



noted theologians, and conversed with Cardinals, and priests, as well as faithful men and women from the surrounding areas.

Around twenty-three years of age, Clare entered the realm of mystical experience. She was reputed not only to predict the future and read the thoughts of the sisters of her community, but also to perform miracles. She was seen as elevated into God through visions and revelations. Among the most famous is the vision of the Pilgrim Christ searching for a place to plant his cross. Christ finds that place in the heart of Clare, and from the time of this particular vision, Clare physically feels the presence of Christ in her heart.<sup>13</sup> During the weeks before her death, Clare was often heard to say that she was not afraid to die because she carried the crucified Jesus in her heart (Vita, 397-398; PC art. 142). It is for this reason, that, after her death on 17 August 1308, her sisters cut open her heart and found in it the symbols of the Passion of Christ. These symbols included the crown of thorns, the three nails, the whip and the column used for the scourging. (Vita. 403-406; PC art. 159. 163-189).

Both civil and ecclesiastical authorities accepted the fact that the symbols of the Passion were found in her heart, as well as the fact that Clare's body was found not to be corrupt. Monsignor Berengario di Donadio, the vicar for the Archbishop of Spoleto, hearing of these phenomena, came to Montefalco, and seeing Clare and the symbols in her heart, began to urge that Clare be acclaimed as a saint. He began the process of canonization for Clare between 1309 and 1310 and wrote a *Vita* of her life between 1309 and 1316. Her process of canonization was put forward to Pope John XXII in 1318-1319, but Clare was not canonized until 1881.

Clare lived her entire life in Montefalco and in constant contact with her physical family, whether that be with women relatives who were part of her religious community, or with her brother, who was a Franciscan Friar and visited often at the monastery. To understand Clare better, therefore, it is necessary to look at the social and cultural milieu that influenced her life.

Montefalco. Montefalco, called the "balcony of Umbria,"<sup>14</sup> because it rises almost fifteen hundred feet above the Umbrian valley, lies southwest of Assisi and Foligno. Like

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<sup>13</sup>PC art. 128; Vita, 175.

<sup>14</sup>Maurice Rowden, The Companion Guide to Umbria (London: Collins, 1969), 184.

Assisi, it is a walled city, whose original walls surrounded the castle of Coccorone, the earliest name of Montefalco. Coccorone was originally a part of Foligno's feudal holdings, but in the struggle between the Guelphs (pro-Papacy) and the Ghibellines (pro-emperor),<sup>15</sup> Foligno (Ghibelline)<sup>16</sup> was beaten by Perugia (Guelph) and the castle of Coccorone became a papal holding. At about this time, the name was changed from Coccorone to Montefalco, and Montefalco joined the pontifical side in the continued conflict between Church and State.<sup>17</sup> This conflict between Guelphs and Ghibellines, between Foligno and Montefalco, continued throughout Clare's entire life. Clare is often asked to pray for peace (PC 60.12-21) and the release of prisoners (PC 378.3-379.4; 478.10-31; 497.29-498.24), as well as to bring soldiers back to life (PC 419.2-32) or to heal their wounds (PC 60.12-21). She is even mentioned by Symone Iacobi, witness #228, as being a peacemaker between the cities of Montefalco and Trevi (PC 228.9-229.33).<sup>18</sup>

Montefalco is a city of churches, convents and monasteries. At the time of Clare, the city housed fifteen churches and five convents/monasteries.<sup>19</sup> Originally, the houses of

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<sup>15</sup>The struggle between the Guelphs and Ghibellines focussed on control of land, family feuds and ecclesiastical and imperial authority. This was the time of the rise of the city-states in Italy, and each city wished autonomy and freedom from both the Papacy and the Emperor. See David Abulafia, Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor (NY: Oxford Press, 1988); Warren H. Carroll, The Glory of Christendom: A History of Christendom, Vol 3 (Front Royal, VA: Christendom Press, 1993), chapters 7-9; Barbara Tuchman, A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century (NY: Ballantine, 1978), chapter 12; Peter Denley, "The Mediterranean in the Age of the Renaissance," in The Oxford History of Medieval Europe, edited by George Holmes (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 220-275. Nessi, PC. 517-529, gives a history of the conflict and its effects on Montefalco.

<sup>16</sup>Paul Lachance, "Introduction, in Angela of Foligno: The Complete Works (NY: Paulist Press, 1993), 43.

<sup>17</sup>Nessi, PC, 517. For a more detailed description of the history of Montefalco, see Silvestro Nessi, Le origini del comune di Montefalco (Spoleto: Ente Rocca di Spoleto, 1977).

<sup>18</sup> There were over 400 witnesses questioned at the time of the official Apostolic Canonization Process held in 1318-1319. Symone Iacobi was listed as the 228<sup>th</sup> witness.

<sup>19</sup> Besides being a city of churches and monasteries, Montefalco also houses today, in the former church of S. Francesco, one of the largest art collections in the province. Most of the art work dates from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>19</sup> The frescoes in the churches have been

Montefalco were centered on the roads that led to the church of S. Fortunato (Nessi, PC, 517), the patron saint of Montefalco, who converted them to Christianity in 390. As the town grew, the number of churches increased. By the time of Clare's birth, all of the churches presently in Montefalco had already been built.<sup>20</sup> Clare's parental home was near the church of S. Giovanni Battista, one of the first built along the original wall (Nessi, PC 520, Vita, 91).

The building of convents and monasteries was regulated not only by episcopal approval, but also by the Commune itself (Nessi, PC, 520). The Friars Minor built a convent there in 1242, but later moved it to a more populated location. The Commune approved the building of the monasteries of Ss. Maria e Paolo<sup>21</sup> and S. Maria Maddelena in 1268.<sup>22</sup> Both the Benedictine monastery of Ss. Benedetto e Agnese and the Augustinian monastery of S. Illuminata joined Clare's Augustinian community, the former in 1411, the latter in 1480.<sup>23</sup>

The Family of Clare. Clare's immediate family included her mother, father, and three siblings: her older sister, Giovanna, whom she followed into the first reclusorio at the age of six; her younger brother, Francesco, who entered the Friars Minor; and her younger sister, Teodora, who died as an infant.<sup>24</sup> These family members are mentioned in the Process of

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restored within the last twenty years.

<sup>20</sup>The Chiesa di S. Caterina del Bottaccio later became the monastery and church of S. Croce, the Augustinian monastery, where Clare spent the last twenty years of her life. The critical edition of the documents relating to the construction of the monastery can be found in Chiara da Montefalco: Badessa del Monastero di S. Croce, edited by Silvestro Nessi (Montefalco: Associazione dei Quartieri di Montefalco, 1981), 14-21.

<sup>21</sup>Monastero dei Ss. Maria e Paolo joined Clare's community in 1463. See Nessi, PC, 628.

<sup>22</sup>S. Maria Maddelena was originally a Poor Clare monastery, hostile to Clare, but became an Augustinian community prior to 1393, and was joined to Clare's community in 1815. See Nessi, PC, 628.

<sup>23</sup>Nessi, PC, 548-551. These monasteries evolved from recluses founded before 1273.

<sup>24</sup>Sister Thomassa (Witness #39, who had lived with Clare for 26 years. Nessi, PC 624) states in PC 170.10-12 that Clare was met by a devil, who wished to stop her from visiting her sister, Giovanna, in the first reclusorio. Although afraid, Clare continued to walk. The devil withdrew and entered Clare's family home in order to torment Theodorucia (Theodora), her sister.

Canonization and the *Vita*. More information can be gathered about them from other contemporary documents, preserved in the monastery of the Augustinians in Montefalco.<sup>25</sup>

Clare's father, Damiano, was the son of Giacomo (nicknamed Vengente/Bengente) of Pietruccio.<sup>26</sup> His brothers, Simone and Viviano, continued the acquisition of property begun by their father, and because of the absence of Damiano's name on these property deeds, Nessi assumes that he was the youngest son of Giacomo (PC, 580).<sup>27</sup> From Sister Marina, a contemporary of Clare, we learn that Damiano was "a good man and lived a good life."<sup>28</sup> Damiano took on the responsibility for the maintenance of the first reclusorio near S. Leonardi, the hospital for the poor, and was assisting the small community with their move into the second reclusorio, near the church of S. Caterina del Bottaccio, when he died around 1282.

Not much is known about Clare's mother. Her name is not even mentioned in the Process or the *Vita*, but in what seems to be the first printed biography of Clare, written by an anonymous Augustinian in 1497, she is called Iacoba (581). In the archives dealing with the church of S. Rocca,<sup>29</sup> considered the 'Portiuncula' of the Third Order, both Damiano and Iacoba are listed as third order members, and are mentioned as the parents of "Joanna Francisca.

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<sup>25</sup>Silvestro Nessi has summarized these documents about Clare's family in PC. 576-605. These notarized documents include the purchase and selling of land with an accompanied receipt of the purchase/selling price; the compensation given to a Roman soldier for theft; dowry payments.

<sup>26</sup>Since last names were not customarily used at this time in history, the children were named in this shortened fashion. Thus Giacomo of Pietruccio is Giacomo, the son of Pietruccio.

<sup>27</sup>Nessi makes no mention of the fact that Clare's parents were members of the Third Order of St. Francis, and had received the habit of the tertiaries and professed their rule. See Gabriel Andreozzi, "San Rocco in Montefalco, La 'Portiuncula' del Terz'ordine regolare," in Analecta TOR, IV (1945-1947), 211.

<sup>28</sup>PC 100.11-12: Qui Damianus fuit bonus homo et homo bone vite. Sister Marina entered the first reclusorio around 1280 (Clare would have been 12 years old) and was present during the rest of Clare's life. According to Nessi (PC 620), Marina's name appears in various notarized records of the monastery until 1323.

<sup>29</sup>These archival documents were published in the early seventeenth century, but include documents from at least 300 years earlier. See Andreozzi, *S. Rocco*, 211.

Franciscus, Clara, Theodora."<sup>30</sup> After the death of her husband, Iacoba entered the second reclusorio with her daughters and lived there until her death in 1285.<sup>31</sup>

Knowledge about Clare's older sister, Giovanna, comes from both the *Process* and the *Vita*. Giovanna was considered by many to be a woman of great holiness (*Vita*, 97; PC 98.19; 439.2). She, like Clare, felt great consolations while at prayer (*Vita*, 91; PC 266.24-30) and often went into raptures, lasting for hours (*Vita* 92; PC 171.2-6). Giovanna was also Clare's teacher in living the religious life. She taught Clare to keep silence, to mortify her senses, to pray often, and to meditate, especially on the Passion of Christ. She encouraged her to work diligently (*Vita* 91; PC art. 14.17; 170.33-171.2; 268.8-16), and to live the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience (*Vita*, 94; PC art. 13. 14, 19, 33, 39, 40, 41), even though they were not under religious rule at this time.<sup>32</sup>

As rectrix of the reclusorio into which Clare entered, Giovanna was responsible for the welfare of the sisters. Thus, she urged Clare to eat a little meat.<sup>33</sup> reproached Clare for overdoing physical disciplines (*Vita*, 93; PC Art. 26: 104.8-9; 105.10-11; 176.16-21)<sup>34</sup> and

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<sup>30</sup>Andreozzi, S. *Rocco*, 211: Anno Dni 1240 in Montefalchio bonus vir Damianus de Damianis et bona mulier Iacoba eius uxor....fuerunt ab eorum nominibus nominati (Joanna Francisca, Franciscus, Clara, Theodora).

<sup>31</sup>Piergili, 90, as quoted in Nessi, PC, 582, fn 24. Andreozzi, S. *Rocco*, 211: Iacoba mater vixit in Ordine Tertiario et post mortem coniugis se inclusit in monasterio novo cum suis filiabus et obiit circa annum 1285 religiosa tertiaria regularis. Note that Iacoba is not a member of the Third Order Regular, since the TOR was not fully developed until the beginning of the fifteenth century, but she would be considered a Third Order secular living in community, similar to the life of the Beguines.

<sup>32</sup>In PC 266.28-30, Francesco, Clare and Giovanna's brother, states that Giovanna took care of him as a mother, and taught him to be good. *Vita*, 97; PC 172.1-16 relates the following story which places Giovanna in a more harsh moment. While the sisters were preparing to receive Holy Communion, Clare was in her cell, waiting to be called. Having been forgotten, Clare rushed to the place of prayer without wearing the proper mantle. Giovanna scolded her and sent her back to her cell. Clare obediently went, but with much grief in her heart. However, Christ came to her, gave her communion and she was consoled.

<sup>33</sup>*Vita*, 93. However, Clare, in youthful fervor, disposed of it, and then wept because her own need to abstain became more important than her obedience to Giovanna.

<sup>34</sup>PC 176.19-20 states: "If you observe such harsh and rough fasting, you will not be able to serve God and you will die before your time." (Si tu servabis tam forte et asperum ieiunium.

ordered Clare not to hide herself when their brother, Francesco, came to visit (Vita, 96; PC Art. 34; 98.19-22; 114.31-115.4; 188.26-33). When the sisters were required to go begging for their basic necessities, Clare also wished to go, but because of Clare's many raptures which could happen at any time, Giovanna, after consulting with the other sisters, forbade her to go out of the reclusorio (Vita, 98; PC Art. 43).

When the community of sisters grew too large for the first reclusorio, Giovanna, with the approval of God and the church, moved the reclusorio near the Church of S. Caterina.<sup>35</sup> On the completion of the building, Giovanna, with the consent of her community, begged for an approved Rule of life and that the monastery be called the Monastery of the Holy Cross (Vita, 170; PC Art. 35). Gerardo, bishop of Spoleto, granted the community the Rule of S. Augustine on 10 June 1290.<sup>36</sup> Giovanna was named the first abbess.

After Giovanna's death in 1291, Clare grieved, not only because of the death of her beloved sister, but also because she was chosen to be the next abbess of the monastery. Giovanna, however, appeared to Clare, and said to her: "My death was nothing but a passing into life."<sup>37</sup> Clare rejoiced in Giovanna's new state of life, and accepting the counsel of the bishop of the diocese, she accepted the role of abbess of the monastery.

There is more known about Francesco, Clare's younger brother, not only because he was a witness at the apostolic process in 1318 (PC 266-299), but also, because, as a member of the Friars Minor, more extensive documentary evidence is available concerning him. Francesco was born about four years later than Clare, and it is known that he would often visit Clare and Giovanna in their first reclusorio, listening to the instructions given him by his sister. Clare, who encouraged him to live a good life (PC 267-8). After entering the Friars Minor, Francesco studied in many different schools (PC 272), and was, therefore, a well-educated man. In fact,

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non poteris servire Deo et morieris ante tempus.)

<sup>35</sup>Vita, 97, tells of Giovanna's vision of a cross of great beauty surrounded by a community of holy ladies.

<sup>36</sup>See Chjara da Montefalco: Badessa del Monastero di S. Croce, 14-17.

<sup>37</sup>Vita, 170: Non fuit mors mea sed transitus ad vitam. See PC 181.25-32. In PC 262.1-8, Giovanna says: Non fui mortua sed fuit unum trapassum de ista vita ad aliam.

Clare reminds him that she would be happier if he were a humble, prayerful cook in the kitchen rather than a man of great learning.<sup>38</sup>

Clare was always close to her brother. She prayed for him when he was in spiritual and mental anguish (PC 284.5-15), reprimanded him when his faith was weak (PC 282.30-273.2), and wanted him close to her when she was dying (PC 291.18-292.3). On her deathbed, Clare entrusted the sisters of her community to him, reminded him to be good, and spoke her final testimony to the sisters in her community in his presence (Vita, 401; PC 292.3-25). Clare even appeared to him in his sleep to console him about her death (PC 286.13-287.6).<sup>39</sup> Francesco called together the Friars Minor, wishing to celebrate her funeral with great solemnity (PC 294-5). Sister Johanna, his cousin and the abbess of the monastery after Clare, convinced him not to bury her, since the sisters believed that Clare had the signs of the Passion in her heart. Francesco agreed (PC 294.28-295.31).

Francesco was present at the first civil and ecclesiastical process on 22 August 1308, the episcopal process held by Berengario in 1309, as well as the apostolic process of 1318. From the annals of the Friars Minor, it is known that he lectured at the convent of Foligno in 1306 (PC, 583), was present at the acquisition of a plot of land next to the monastery of S. Croce in 1307, and at the new treaties between Montefalco and Trevi in 1313. Elected Minister Provincial in 1316, he promulgated new constitutions for the community (PC, 584). After the apostolic process held in 1318-1319, Francesco became vicar to the bishop of Terni, Egidio of Montefalco, until 1323. He was recalled to Avignon in 1324, and acting as envoy, brought episcopal letters to the Pope. He returned to Italy in 1325. In 1326 he was named the Inquisitor General for the Duchy of Spoleto and the last recorded event listed for him was in December of that year. Nessi, therefore, assumes that he died in the following year, 1327 (Nessi, PC, 585). With Francesco's death, the immediate family of Clare of Montefalco ceased to exist. However,

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<sup>38</sup>PC 272.26-29: Et dico tibi pro parte mea quod maiorem consolationem haberem si tu esses laicus et coquinarius fratrum cum uno bono spirito et fervore devotionis, quam si esses de quibuscunque lectoribus unus maior.

<sup>39</sup>Clare only appeared to Francesco after he had complained to her, in his prayer, that she had appeared to other people, but not to him.

through documents and the witnesses of the process, Nessi is able to complete the family tree of the Pietrucchio family to the early 1500's (Nessi, PC, 585-605).<sup>40</sup>

Although Clare left her natural family at an early age, it has been shown that she never totally cut herself off from her relatives. It is now necessary to look at the religious life of her times, in order to place Clare in the context of a spiritual family.

## Section 2. Clare as a Religious.

Clare of Montefalco entered the reclusorio at the age of six in order "to serve God and to do penance."<sup>41</sup> To better understand Clare's life as a penitent in both the reclusorio and the monastery, it is necessary to look at the origins of the penitent movement during the thirteenth century.

Throughout the centuries, the concept of practicing penance was based on the biblical notion of conversion.<sup>42</sup> The lay penitents of the Middle Ages, living in a developing urban and merchant class society, needed a spirituality that would assist them on their journey to God.<sup>43</sup>

Although there were lay reform groups present before the papacy of Gregory VII (1073-1085),<sup>44</sup> the Gregorian reform caused a major upheaval in church structures and also challenged traditional hierarchies.<sup>45</sup> The reform stressed two major areas of concern that cut across both

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<sup>40</sup>See Nessi, PC, 602-605 for a complete family tree. Clare's family was always supportive of her and the monastery and, in many cases, the women entered the monastery and the men became the financial advisors for the monastery.

<sup>41</sup>PC 97.9-10: et ibi intravit ad serviendum Deo, et ad faciendum penitentiam.

<sup>42</sup>Robert Stewart, *De Illis qui Faciunt Penitentiam: the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order* (Rome: Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 1991), 122.

<sup>43</sup>Western Christian society of this period was Catholic; therefore, the laity looked to the Church to provide them with a healthy spiritual life. See Stewart, 120-122.

<sup>44</sup>See Jean Leclercq, François Vandenbroucke and Louis Bouyer, ed., *The Spirituality of the Middle Ages* (NY: Seabury Press, 1982), 262f; Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977, 1992), 3-37.

<sup>45</sup>André Vauchez, *The Spirituality of the Medieval West* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1993), 105. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother* (Berkeley, CA: University



moral and political arenas.<sup>46</sup> The concern for the reform of the clergy by controlling simony and the keeping of concubines and the elimination of lay investiture of bishops gave two different messages to lay people. Gregory VII insisted that the clerics be recognized as superior to the laity<sup>47</sup> and encouraged them to live together in monastic-type settings (the beginning of the canons regular). At the same time he called forth the laity to assist in the reform of the clergy by encouraging the lay people to shun those priests who kept concubines, even to the point of not attending their Masses.<sup>48</sup> Gregory VII also stressed the fact that all baptized people, including the laity, were called to assist in the reform of the Church, provided they were in communion with Rome.<sup>49</sup> Thus, the laity reacted not only to the individual reform of their specific parish clergy, but also to the Pope's call to join in the Crusades. The call to crusade against the Moslems in the Holy Places of Israel moved the laity to participate in freeing the holy city, Jerusalem, not only to liberate the places where Christ walked on earth, but also to proclaim anew the coming of Christ's kingdom.<sup>50</sup> Devotion to Christ, yearning for individual and collective purification<sup>51</sup> and a need to gain personal knowledge of Sacred Scripture,<sup>52</sup> combined

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of California Press, 1982), 250, states that the steady growth in the importance of "clerical authority and mediation" through the "elaboration of canon law, the growth of the penitential system, and the elaboration of ecclesiastical bureaucracy" produced a rift between the clergy and the laity.

<sup>46</sup>See Karl Morrison, "The Gregorian Reform," in Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century, edited by Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff (NY: Crossroad, 1992), 177-80; Joseph Dahmus, Dictionary of Medieval Civilization (NY: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1984), 337.

<sup>47</sup>Robert E. Lerner, "Gregory VII, Pope," in Dictionary of the Middle Ages, edited by Joseph Strayer (NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1983).

<sup>48</sup>Richard Kuchhefer, "Reform, Idea of," in DMA; Vauchez, Spirituality, 105.

<sup>49</sup>Vauchez, Spirituality, 105.

<sup>50</sup>Adriaan H. Bredero, Christendom and Christianity in the Middle Ages (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1986, 1994), 19; Vauchez, Spirituality, 106-8.

<sup>51</sup>See Leclercq, Spirituality, 243-248; Vauchez, Spirituality, 109.

<sup>52</sup>cf Bredero, 27, 221, 267, 374; Vauchez, Spirituality, 114-115.

within the mundane existence of the laity, called them to achieve salvation through the lay state.<sup>53</sup>

Separating the clergy from the laity and calling the laity to become more active in reform and in the Crusades gave rise, in the twelfth century, to the need for a more definite form of lay spirituality focussing on penitence. The monastic clergy, who thought that the sacred was their exclusive province,<sup>54</sup> had become quite wealthy and were "endowed with an influence upon society which reached a hitherto unequalled level."<sup>55</sup> In addition to this "sorry" state of monasticism, the social conditions of the new cities, the increased population and the rise of the merchant class were the conditions now in place for the rise of the evangelical movements.

Some lay people had already been living a quasi-monastic life without religious profession,<sup>56</sup> and monastic orders allowed lay brothers or *conversi* to live within the confines of the monastery, but in a separate building and with lower status.<sup>57</sup> Military orders, such as the Knights Templar, attempted to "achieve a synthesis between specific aspects of the lay state (work, warfare, charity) and ideals which had until then had been lived solely in cloisters (common life, obedience, asceticism)."<sup>58</sup> However, it was the penitential spirituality of the lay movements that drew the people. Since earliest Christian times, men and women had been living lives of communal penance. During this period of the Middle Ages, however, other

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<sup>53</sup>Vauchez, 109.

<sup>54</sup>Latin was the official language of the church, and was not understood by many lay persons, since they were not able to attend the schools open to the noble and the wealthy. The laity became spectators at Mass and were educated to the scriptures through the art and architecture of their church buildings. Privatization of religion occurred and centered on local shrines to saints, detachment from the Eucharist, veneration of saints, and superstitions. See Bredero, 355-358; Vauchez, Spirituality, 114-115.

<sup>55</sup>Vauchez, Spirituality, 111.

<sup>56</sup>Bredero, 40-44; Vauchez, Spirituality, 137.

<sup>57</sup>Bredero, 133-4; Vauchez, Spirituality, 138.

<sup>58</sup>Vauchez, Spirituality, 139. The Knights Templar were suppressed by the Council of Vienne in 1312. See Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, edited by Norman Tanner (London/Washington DC: Sheed & Ward/Georgetown, 1990), 333-359; J.D. Conway, Times of Decision: Story of the Councils (Notre Dame: Fides, 1962), 199-208.

ascetical practices were introduced besides the mortification of the flesh. The penitents chose to forego entertainment and any type of social life; refused to bear arms and to swear oaths; dressed and lived simply.<sup>59</sup> Henry Susa, cardinal of Ostia, states:

In a broad sense, those persons are called religious who live in a saintly and religious manner in their homes, not because they submit to a specific rule, but on account of their life, which is harder and simpler than that of other lay people who live in a purely worldly fashion.<sup>60</sup>

The lay movements of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries brought before the clergy, and all people, the need to return to the life of the Gospel. This life also demanded the requirement of voluntary poverty. For the lay people engaged in these movements, the need for the clergy to give up both their wealth and their power was a definite prerequisite for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>61</sup> All around them, as cities grew and populations increased, they saw the clergy choosing power and wealth over charity to the poor. It was up to lay people to show the way to live voluntary poverty, and because they lived poorly, they also felt that they could preach and proclaim the word of God. With the increase in vernacular translations of Scripture,<sup>62</sup> they were able to come closer to Scripture and because of their own personal sanctity, these lay people felt called to speak to others about God, even though this was not an accepted practice of the times.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Vaucherz, Spirituality, 140-142. Andr  Vaucherz, The Laity in the Middle Ages (Notre Dame/London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 122, states that "penitence was a condition, virtually a way of life. It meant assuming a humble and repentant attitude, the only one suitable for a sinner before God who wished to be joined to Him through love. This was why he [sic] had to seek nakedness and poverty, rather than authority, knowledge, or the dignity of the priesthood."

<sup>60</sup>Henry of Susa, *Summa aurea*, book III (Venice, 1570), 193, as quoted in Vaucherz, Spirituality, 142.

<sup>61</sup>Leclercq, Spirituality, 257-260; Bredero, 25; Vaucherz, Spirituality, 110. Walther von der Vogelweide, a German poet of the thirteenth century, writes in "The Papacy as Wolf," quoted in Norman F. Cantor, The Medieval World, 300-1300 (NY: Macmillan Publishers, 1968), 282, says to the Lord, "Thy work is hindered and thy word gainsaid,....Thy ministers rob here and murder there, and o'er thy sheep a wolf has shepherd's care."

<sup>62</sup>Bredero, 362.

<sup>63</sup>Gratian's Decretals (1140), quoted in Vaucherz, Spirituality, 115, states: "in the presence of

These lay movements were also open to women. In some cases, preachers provided dowries for women to enter monasteries,<sup>64</sup> even though the women's monasteries were in spiritual and material subjection to male orders.<sup>65</sup> In other cases, married and unmarried women were welcome to join the movements. For women not wishing to enter monasteries or to re-marry, these lay movements paved the way for non-celibate people to achieve salvation, not because of celibacy but through obedience and penance.<sup>66</sup> In fact, for them, "to turn to God was to become the penitent."<sup>67</sup>

These lay movements then, as a whole, stressed poverty, penance, lay preaching, sanctity outside of the clerical and monastic tradition, charity and almsgiving.<sup>68</sup> Since the people chose to live in poverty and did not wish to acquire buildings and wealth as the monks and clerics before them, they also promulgated the idea that to work for one's living was blessed and necessary.<sup>69</sup> From the proceeds of their work they fed and clothed themselves, but all

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clerics lay people should not presume to give any teaching, unless at the request of the former."

<sup>64</sup>Bredero, 25. Jean Leclercq, "Women's Monasticism in the 12th and 13th Centuries." *GFR* 7/2 (1993), 179, gives two negative consequences present in women's monasteries at this time: namely, "superiors were often chosen by the head of the family who owned and endowed the monastery...and that monastic life was for all practical purposes reserved to the nobility."

<sup>65</sup>Vauchez, *Spirituality*, 118. Leclercq, *Women's Monasticism*, 190, states that "there was the conviction that women constituted a special category of human beings. They were thought to lack those qualities that would enable them to control their own destiny, take responsibility for themselves, and govern themselves. in short, to respond to the inspirations of the Spirit without depending on the decisions of monks, religious or ecclesiastics."

<sup>66</sup>Vauchez, *Spirituality*, 127. Leclercq, *Women's Monasticism*, 189, quotes St. Hugh, bishop of Lincoln (1186-1200) preaching: "All who are true Christians must have hearts that are open to love, lips that are faithful, and bodies that are pure." Hugh of Lincoln taught that "married couples who remained within the limits of their state should not be regarded as lacking the virtue of chastity any less than others."

<sup>67</sup>Stewart, 123, 171. Stewart, 171, also states: "The way of penance was the way to God. In a sense, the way of penance was the way of the mystic."

<sup>68</sup>Vauchez, *Spirituality*, 130-133.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, 122-123. Stewart, 119-120, sees the approbation of the Humiliati by Innocent III as also giving a more positive view of marriage and work. "The pope not only approved an order of married penitents, but also exalted the place of work in the religious life, work for the

excess funds were given to the poor. The spirituality promulgated by these dedicated lay people also gave hope to those people who were engaged in the activities of money lending and commerce, since they too were searching for a spirituality geared to their particular state in life.

However, what led to a renewed spirituality also led, in some cases, to schism and heresy. "By accusing others of betraying the Gospel one ends in betraying it oneself. One forgets that it teaches humility and love, and the human means it employs are often unexpected ones."<sup>70</sup> Because the lay movements called for clerical reform, rampant anti-clericalism often appeared. This extended not only to priests and bishops, but also to the place of the sacraments of the Church. Specific movements, especially some groups of Cathars and Waldensians, discredited the clergy and the sacraments, since the "universal priesthood of the faithful made ordination superfluous..."<sup>71</sup> They preached that the validity of the sacraments was dependent upon the sanctity of the minister.<sup>72</sup> Thus, common confession of offenses took the place of the sacrament of Penance,<sup>73</sup> and Waldo, the founder of the Waldensians, for example, conferred the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, and celebrated the Eucharist.<sup>74</sup>

By the thirteenth century, the non-heretical penitent groups who lived poorly and wished to preach the word of God were accepted and approved by the Papacy.<sup>75</sup> For example,

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sustenance of the community and to aid the poor."

<sup>70</sup>Leclercq, Spirituality, 262.

<sup>71</sup>Vaucher, Spirituality, 118.

<sup>72</sup>Leclercq, Spirituality, 264. This is a return to the Donatist heresy, already condemned during Augustine's time.

<sup>73</sup>Confession at this time could be made to any layman. See Leclercq, Spirituality, 264; Bredero, 25-6.

<sup>74</sup>Leclercq, Spirituality, 264. For more information on the Cathars and Waldensians, see Malcolm Lambert, Medieval Heresy (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977, 1992), chap. 4-8, 19; Lester Little, Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 120-127, 134-145; Strayer, 181b-191a, 508a-513b; Margaret Wade Labarge, A Small Sound of the Trumpet (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1986), 209-212; Shulamith Shahar, The Fourth Estate (London/NY: Routledge, 1983, 1991), 233-235, 260-267.

<sup>75</sup>Decrees from canon law also protected and controlled the penitential movement. See Cassiano Carpaneto, "Lo stato dei penitenti nel 'corpus iuris canonici'," in I frati penitenti di san

Innocent III approved the Humiliati's three orders as well as accepted the new orders founded by St. Francis of Assisi and St. Dominic.<sup>76</sup> Likewise, the Hermits of St Augustine were joined together under the name, Augustinians.<sup>77</sup> Gregory IX also promulgated the penitential life of both Franciscan men and women by approving the rule of St. Clare, the life of the Damianite ladies, and the third order of St. Francis.<sup>78</sup>

Both monastic and non-monastic communities of men and women, placed under the protection of the papacy, grew in numbers, especially in the Umbrian valley of central Italy. In some cases, this papal protection was a matter of controlling those communities of women who did not adhere to a specific rule or specific order.<sup>79</sup> At other times, the protection of the Pope, or

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Francesco nella società del Due e Trecento, edited by Mariano D'Alatri (Roma: Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 1977), 9-19.

<sup>76</sup>Nessi, PC, 533.

<sup>77</sup>This occurred in 1243 and was solidified in 1256. Nessi, PC. 534, 543; Giovanna Casagrande, Religiosità penitenziale e città al tempo dei comune (Roma: Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 1995), 24.

<sup>78</sup>Stewart, 183-186. The connection of the Franciscans to the Penitential movement is well documented. Although many Penitential groups of the early 13th century were approved by the Church, it is the Franciscan penitential movement that remains the most prominent. Whether this was accomplished by the Franciscans themselves or by the hierarchical authorities has been the topic of much discussion. See Mario Sensi, "Anchoresses and Penitents in Thirteenth -and Fourteenth-Century Umbria," in Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy, edited by Daniel Bornstein and Roberto Rusconi (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 60-61; Nessi, PC 534; Alfonso Pompei, "Terminologia varia dei penitenti," in Il movimento Franciscano della penitenza nella società medioevale, edited by Mariano D'Alatri (Roma: Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 1980), 16-22; Réginald Grégoire, "Movimenti di spiritualità in Umbria nei secoli XIII e XIV," in La spiritualità di S. Chiara da Montefalco, edited by Silvestro Nessi (Montefalco: Monastero S Chiara, 1986), 56-63; Gabriele Andreozzi, Il terzo ordine regolare di san Francesco nella sua storia e nelle sue leggi (Roma: Editrice Franciscanum, 1993), 9-25; Alfonso Pompei, "Il movimento penitenziale nei secoli XII-XIII," in L'Ordine della penitenza di san Francesco d'Assisi nel secolo XIII, edited by Octavian Schmucki (Roma: Istituto Storico de Cappuccini, 1973), 9-26.

<sup>79</sup>At this time, the rule and the order were not always similar. For example, Clare of Assisi lived under a form of the Benedictine rule, but was classified as belonging to the Franciscan order. See Nessi, PC, 535-537.

that of the local bishop, affirmed the independence of these religious women.<sup>80</sup> In some cases, forced enclosure would become a part of this control. At other times, reclusion, freely chosen, would become a necessary part of another way of living religious life, somewhere between the eremetical and monastic life, which is considered a part of the penitential life of the thirteenth century.<sup>81</sup> The desire to serve God and to do penance could also be found by living in voluntary reclusion. According to Nessi, this third way of living religious life included:

an impassioned and sincere search for a new spirituality, the desire of spontaneous and total adaptation into the Gospel, the imitation of Christ, and the inspiration through the *form of life* of the primitive Christian community with its charisms.<sup>82</sup>

At the age of six, Clare of Montefalco received permission to enter the first reclusorio, wishing to serve God and do penance. Following in the footsteps of her sister, Giovanna, she remained within the city walls of Montefalco, while the early Desert Fathers and Mothers had chosen to move away from the world and city-life. She lived her early life as one of the lay penitents, other groups of which were so prevalent in her day.<sup>83</sup> Reclusion took on different forms during this time period: the community situation exemplified by Clare and her community; the recluse living alone as exemplified by the leper-recluse, Giovannetta, a devotee of Clare of

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<sup>80</sup>Brenda Bolton, "Via Ascetica: a Papal Quandary," in Monks, Hermits and Ascetic Tradition, edited by W.J. Shiels (London: TJ Press, 1985), 162-163; Edith Pasztor, "The Popes of the Thirteenth Century and Women Religious" GFR 7/3 (1993): 402; Mario Sensi, "Incarcerate e penitenti a Foligno nella prima metà del Trecento," in I frati penitenti di San Francesco, edited by Mariano D'Alatri (Roma: Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 1977), 294, 304.

<sup>81</sup>Sensi, *Anchoresses*, 57.

<sup>82</sup>Silvestro Nessi, "La Vita di Chiara nei due reclusori," in La spiritualità di S. Chiara da Montefalco, 98: nella ricerca appassionata e sincera di una spiritualità nuova, nel desiderio di adeguamento spontaneo e totale al Vangelo, nella imitazione di Cristo e nella ispirazione alla *forma vitae* delle primissime comunità cristiane con i loro carismi.

<sup>83</sup>Nessi, *Vita di Chiara*, 100, mentions four other reclusori, established in Montefalco around 1268, the year in which Clare was born. There were two monasteries also founded around this time. Three of the reclusorio, including that of Giovanna and Clare, became monasteries in their own right - one Benedictine, the other two Augustinian, while the final two joined with the Benedictine monastery, and that of S. Caterina became part of the monastery of S. Croce. Giovanna and Clare's community after 1290.

Montefalco;<sup>84</sup> and a more strict type of eremitical life, lived by Sister Agnes on Monte Cucco, also known by Clare.<sup>85</sup>

As the community of Giovanna and Clare grew, more space was needed, and, therefore, they moved into a different reclusorio which was built near the church of S. Caterina.<sup>86</sup> Again, because of growth in numbers, as well as their wish to become a monastic order, the community requested from the local bishop, Gerardo, an approved rule and the right to build an oratory, two signs of the approbation of the bishop to the orthodoxy of the community.<sup>87</sup> However, both the civil authorities of Montefalco and the authorities of the other monasteries impeded this process for two years on the premise that there would be too many monasteries in the city.<sup>88</sup> Finally, in 1290, Bishop Gerardo granted them the rule of S. Augustine and the right to build an oratory.<sup>89</sup>

Life in the reclusorio followed the pattern of monastic life in terms of their "keeping silence, mortification of the senses, assiduousness in prayer and other good works,"<sup>90</sup> as well as a period of probation for the new members and sister servants. Although the reclusorio was penitential in many aspects, the balance of connecting with the outside world was also present, in terms of Clare's continued association with her family,<sup>91</sup> with the people of Montefalco, and

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<sup>84</sup>Giovanetta had visions of Clare's holiness. See Vita, 289; PC art. 77.

<sup>85</sup>PC 193.32-194.5 At one point in Clare's life, she wished to join this group, but fearing excommunication, stayed in the reclusorio. See Vita, 95, 349; PC, art. 31.

<sup>86</sup>See Nessi, PC, 556-575 for both documentary evidence and the similarities and differences in life style between the reclusorio and monastery.

<sup>87</sup>Nessi, *Vita di Chiara*, 101; Nessi, PC, 538; Attilio Bartoli Langeli, "I penitenti a Spoleto nel Duecento," in *L'Ordine della penitenza*, 304-305.

<sup>88</sup>Nessi, *Vita di Chiara*, 101. Perhaps the main cause of concern was the fact that the people of Montefalco were responsible for the care of these communities in terms of food, necessities and financial backing.

<sup>89</sup>See Nessi, *Chiara da Montefalco*, 14-17, 18-21.

<sup>90</sup>Vita, 92: ...in tenendo silentio restrictione sensuum, assiduitate orandi et aliis bonis operibus diligentissime observabat.

<sup>91</sup>Giovanni Antonelli, "Conclusion," in *S. Chiara da Montefalco e il suo tempo*, 466.



other nearby cities, such as Spoleto and Foligno. Clare and her sisters did participate in begging in the city streets. However, Clare, under the direction of her sister and the sisters of the community, finally became rigidly enclosed, not because of the decree of strict enclosure or the bishop, but because of the care and concern of the sisters who did not wish to have Clare go into her mystical trances in public. Mention of giving thanks to God or Jesus Christ would often send Clare into ecstasy no matter the place or the time (Vita, 98; PC, art. 43, 44).

Clare's life under the rule of S. Augustine changed somewhat from that of life in the first two reclusorii. First of all, as abbess, Clare was responsible for the acceptance of dowries and the purchase of land surrounding the initial monastery.<sup>92</sup> Also under her rule, she devised a plan so that the sisters who were called to a deeper level of prayer would be able to do so, while others, not so gifted, would occupy themselves in the normal day-to-day exercises of monastic living. Clare acquired a secretary, Johanna, a distant relative who later became abbess after Clare's death.

It is important to remember that while Clare and her community were given the Augustinian rule in 1290, over half of Clare's life was not lived under any specific rule. By the time of Clare's death in 1308, not only was the Augustinian rule an essential part of Clare's life, but also the community truly became a part of the Augustinian order.<sup>93</sup>

Besides being a professed religious woman, Clare can also be considered a mystic in the tradition of the medieval women of her time, joining the lineage of men and women mystics, so prominent in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

### Section 3. Clare as Mystic.

In presenting Clare of Montefalco as a mystic of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century, we must first of all describe mysticism in the Western Christian tradition, and then, move specifically to the mysticism of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, especially in regard to the women mystics.

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<sup>92</sup>Nessi, PC, 569-570. During Clare's last illness, these economic negotiations were taken care of by friends of the community, especially by Angelo, the son of Clare's cousin, Vannillo.

<sup>93</sup>Nessi, PC, 571-573.

Bernard McGinn defines mysticism in the following way. "The mystical element of Christianity is that part of its beliefs and practices that concerns the preparation for, the consciousness of, and the reaction to what can be described as the immediate or direct presence of God."<sup>94</sup> What is essential in describing a mystic, therefore, is the nuance of how he or she is conscious of God's presence and how that presence directly affects his or her life.

Caroline Walker Bynum, in Jesus as Mother, presents three questions about mysticism and women mystics especially, in the thirteenth century. She asks: (1) "Why were women so prominent in thirteenth-century mysticism? (2) Why did their piety have the particular characteristics it did? (3) What do they teach us about female piety and self-awareness?"<sup>95</sup> Although Bynum answers these questions through a study of the writings of the nuns of Helfta, I believe that the explanation she gives could apply to almost any woman mystic of that period. She states the following reasons for the prominence of mysticism in the thirteenth century:

...the presence of institutions within which women could be socialized by women...made it possible for them to develop genuinely positive images of their substitute religious life....(2) it is fostered by a theology that emphasizes God as accessible in intimate union and comprehensible in human images, yet just, powerful, infinitely more glorious and complicated than any particular human vision of him.<sup>96</sup>

The laity, searching for a greater bond to the church and other ways of living the apostolic life of the early Church, introduced and developed, for both men and women, different ways of living the spiritual life.<sup>97</sup> An alternative open to both women and men at this time was to be an "inspired vessel," a prophet.<sup>98</sup> Elizabeth of Schönau (1129-1165) stated: "In these days God

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<sup>94</sup>Bernard McGinn, The Foundations of Mysticism, Volume I of The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism (NY: Crossroad, 1991), xvii.

<sup>95</sup>Bynum, Jesus as Mother, 184.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., 258-262.

<sup>97</sup>See John van Engen, "The Christian Middle Ages as an Historiographical Problem," American Historical Review 91 (1986), 546-552.

<sup>98</sup>Caroline W. Bynum, "Religious Women in the Later Middle Ages," in Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation, edited by Jill Raitt (NY: Crossroad, 1988), 129. See Bonnie Anderson and Judith Zinsser, A History of Their Own (NY: Harper & Row, 1982), 204-205; Bynum, Jesus as Mother, 260-262. For Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure,

made manifest His power through the frail sex, in these handmaidens whom He filled with the prophetic spirit."<sup>99</sup> The thirteenth century was not only a time when prophets were needed by the church to propose new models of religious life for the community, but also a great period of "artistic, material, and intellectual civilization....It is always as if [the mystic] were humanity's finest flower; the product at which each great creative period of the race had aimed."<sup>100</sup> To lead a spiritual life, men and women needed to be open to the call of the Spirit and to respond to this call with their entire minds and hearts. Although there were men mystics during this period, the specific interest of the present thesis is the mysticism of the medieval woman.

There was a definite affiliation between women mystics and the Church. In many cases, the Church approved the mystics' visions and writings, especially when the mystic's spirituality centered on the Eucharist and their *imitatio Christi* promulgated the humanity and the divinity of Jesus. This spirituality was in direct refutation of some of the prevalent heresies of the time.

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women were prophets, and, in fact, they considered prophecy a higher calling than priesthood, continuing the hierarchy of gifts presented by Paul (Roms 12: 5-6). There were certain restrictions placed on prophetic women. See Bynum, Jesus as Mother, 251, fn 292 and Summa Theologica II-II, 177, 2, conclusion; III, 27, 5, ad 3 as quoted in Eleanor McLaughlin, "Equality of Souls," in Religion and Sexism, edited by Rosemary Radford Ruether (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 236. Laurie Finke, "Mystical Bodies and the Dialogics of Vision," in Maps of Flesh and Light: The Religious Experience of Medieval Women Mystics, edited by Ulrike Weithaus (NY: Syracuse, 1993), 44, sees the mystic's inspiration as divine and she is "the receptacle, the instrument of a divine will."

<sup>99</sup>Elizabeth of Schönaue (1129-1165), Annales Palidenses, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores, t. 16, p. 90, as quoted by Emile Zum Brunn and Georgette Epiney-Burgard in Women Mystics in Medieval Europe (NY: Paragon, House, 1989), xiii.

<sup>100</sup>Evelyn Underhill, Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness (New York, NY: E.P Dutton, 1911, 1961), 453.

especially the Albigensian heresy in France and the Cathars in Italy<sup>101</sup> and the Heresy of the Free Spirit in Italy.<sup>102</sup>

At the same time, the mystics, especially the Beguines, were sometimes suspect by the clergy because they were not as closely regulated as the nuns and recluses. However, the thirteenth century mystics,

by reasons of their spiritual aspirations,...played an incontestable part in the revolution that was to allow the laity to become acquainted with the sacred texts and theological knowledge, no longer exclusively through sermons and prayer books but, thanks to translations and writings, in the vernacular.<sup>103</sup>

The women mystics, whether they were in cloistered, traditional monasteries, the quasi-religious life of the beguinage, or the life of a recluse, were taught how to meditate and pray, were given the time and solitude needed to develop a closer union with God by prayer and reflection, and developed a positive self-awareness of their worth.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup>Lambert, Medieval Heresy, 44-62, 105-146. Walter L. Wakefield and Austin P. Evans, Heresies of the Middle Ages (NY: Columbia, 1969,1991), 230-241, 447-630; Peters, 103-137; M.D. Lambert, "The Motives of the Cathars: Some Reflections," in Religious Motivation: Biological and Sociological Problems for the Church Historian, edited by Derek Baker (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), 49-59.

<sup>102</sup>Robert Lerner, The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages (Notre Dame, IN/ London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1972); Livario Oliger, De secta spiritus libertatis in Umbria saec. xiv: disquisitio et documenta (Roma, 1943), who accepts the genuineness of the accusation; Lambert, Medieval Heresy, 181-188, who sees the accusations as a part of the slander used in treating the beguines and beghards; Wakefield and Evans, 411-438.

<sup>103</sup>Zum Brunn and Epiney-Burgard, xxii.

<sup>104</sup>Elizabeth A. Petroff, Body and Soul:Essays on Medieval Women and Mysticism, (NY: Oxford, 1994), 20; Bynum, Jesus as Mother, 185, 259. Other commonalities included: celibacy, common spiritual practices, access to books and ideas, opportunities for leadership; canonical offices, mantras or repetitive prayer. See Bynum, Jesus as Mother, 185; Bynum, Fragmentation and Redemption (NY: Zone Books, 1992), 134-135; Labarge, 26-28; Bynum, Religious Women, 134f; Petroff, Body and Soul, 20, for the differences between those women raised in religious life and those who joined at a later age. The latter are more aware of male dominance and female inferiority than the former. Likewise, widows seemed to have re-gained some personal power and are freer to choose a different life-style than marriage. See Bynum, Religious Women, 130f; Labarge, 26-28; Joel T Rosenthal, in Medieval Women and the Sources of Medieval History, edited by Joel T. Rosenthal (Athens/London: University of Georgia, 1990), x, for differences between men and women in terms of the stages of their

Clare's introduction to the spiritual life began at an early age. Even before entering the first reclusorio, which was attached to her family home, Clare would find places to pray in her father's house (Vita, 91), and would often go to the nearby church of Blessed John (Vita, 91). On trips to visit her sister in the reclusorio to hear admonitions from her, it is reported that Clare was sometimes stopped by the devil who tried to stop her from going to Giovanna.<sup>105</sup> This was one of Clare's first mystical experiences and visions.

In order to serve God and to do penance (PC 97.1), Clare, at the age of six, was given permission to enter the reclusorio. She was taught by her sister, also considered to be a very holy woman, to be prayerful, obedient and "always to reflect on God and the Passion of Christ."<sup>106</sup> Clare observed the customs of the community by keeping silence, even when caring for the sick; mortifying her senses by placing ashes on her food; eating the hardest and most rotten apples; and eating grape leaves, as well as those of the plum and elm trees.<sup>107</sup> Clare, through her constant prayerful reflection and ascetical practices was considered by many to grow in the living of virtue, while she grew in age.<sup>108</sup>

During her adolescent years, Clare continued to do numerous austere practices, including the use of the discipline, the wearing of a hair shirt, sleeping on the floor or on twigs, rather than on the bed, and more extreme fasting.<sup>109</sup> In fact, Giovanna was so concerned about her austerity that she investigated Clare's penitential practices causing Clare to hide what she was doing from her sister, Giovanna, and the other sisters (PC 105.1-10). Clare continued to

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physical life and their spirituality.

<sup>105</sup>PC, 170.1-11. In one instance, the demon withdrew and entered the Damiano house to torment Clare's sister, Theodorucia, who died.

<sup>106</sup>PC 258.22-23: soror Iohanna...admonebat ipsam s. Claram quod semper cogitaret de Deo et in passione Christi.

<sup>107</sup>PC 101.28-102.16; 169.18; 267.8, 33.

<sup>108</sup>PC 97.30; 99.18-100.13; 169.2; 267.8.

<sup>109</sup>PC 111.34-112.25; 174.16-175.9; 268.8-11. The severe austerities were the cause of Clare's weak stomach, and, therefore, she was ordered by her confessor, doctor and Johanna to drink a little wine as well. See PC 113.11-24; 187.2-19.

pray both day and night, often using the devotional practices of the time, such as, genuflecting and prostrating herself and praying the simple Office which consisted of saying Our Fathers with outstretched arms.<sup>110</sup>

The elements of prayer, fasting, and living a life of virginity "encouraged the emergence of visionary experience. Visions themselves initiated further learning and growth, granted the visionary both greater wisdom in dealing with others and great ability to help those in need."<sup>111</sup> Poverty also was an essential element in bringing about closer union with God. Clare and her sisters had nothing and begged for nothing and lived on voluntary offerings. They usually kept enough only for one meal, and when they had only one slice of bread to share, "the sisters were filled with greater sweetness, joy and pleasure in poverty than when, at other times, they had been full."<sup>112</sup>

From an early age Clare had visions. As a young child, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to her along with the Boy Jesus, who played with Clare, and from whom she received spiritual consolation (Vita, 92). Later, Clare was blessed with powerful visions. Some of the visions Clare used to educate her sisters to a life of prayer. Others were given to Clare to strengthen her Christian beliefs as she spoke with theologians, heretics and other people. Many of them were given to her as part of her complete entrancement with loving God and living out the Passion of Jesus.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup>Vita 93-97; PC 111.30-33; 185.3-17; 268.17-268.33. Sister Marina (Witness #38), in PC 102.28-104.1, watched Clare praying at night and attempted to imitate her as she genuflected and prostrated herself a thousand times.

<sup>111</sup>Petroff, Body and Soul, 20. Eleanor McLaughlin, "Women, Power and the Pursuit of Holiness in Western Christianity," in Women of Spirit, edited by Rosemary Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 102, considers this "power out of holiness," to which all are called.

<sup>112</sup>PC 273.14-16: quod cum maiori suavitate et letitia et iucunditate in pauperate predicta saturarentur et pascerentur, quam cum alias amplius in temporalibus habundarent. See also Vita 96-97.

<sup>113</sup> It is essential to remember that although Clare and other medieval mystics, both men and women, had visions; it is not the visions that produce the mystic. "The mystical element within Christianity...centers on a form of immediate encounter with God whose essential purpose is to convey a loving knowledge (even a negative one) that transforms the mystic's mind and whole

As a further clarification of Clare's mysticism and the reality of her visions, which will be used in the context of searching out her theology, it is possible to situate her visions within the seven stages listed by Elizabeth Petroff in her introduction to Medieval Women's Visionary Literature.<sup>114</sup>

Stage One, the purgative stage, is permeated with descriptions of spiritual attacks by the devil.<sup>115</sup> For Clare and her sisters, these visions were meant to hinder prayer (Vita, 97),<sup>116</sup> and thus, it was only through the power of prayer that the demons could be overcome. Although Petroff considers this to be the first stage of visionary activity, Clare and the sisters continued to be bothered by demons. In two known cases, the demons came to the gate of the monastery, but were turned back by the prayers of Clare and the sisters. In fact, Clare said to the sister in charge of the gate to the oratory: "You do not know for whom you are searching. Stop and pray, for that is a demon who wishes to ensnare us, and it can only be held back by prayer."<sup>117</sup>

Clare revealed to her confessor, Tommaso, that she had been troubled by demons for seven years, and that the demons, appearing in the form a man, a woman or some beast, would often beat her, attempt to choke her, and threaten her because she refused to allow them entrance into the monastery (Vita, 337-8). Throughout these encounters Clare remained faithful to God, and counted on God's constant assistance. It was only through prayer that Clare could

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way of life." McGinn, The Flowering of Mysticism, 26. In pages 27-30, McGinn goes on to suggest that visions should best be regarded as "*visualizations* in the sense of powerful imaginative creations based on intense meditation on the imagery of the Bible and the liturgy, as well as artistic representations of Christ, the angels and saints, heaven and hell, and so on."

<sup>114</sup>Elizabeth Alvida Petroff, ed., Medieval Women's Visionary Literature (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>115</sup>*Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>116</sup>Clare states: "I saw demons who wanted to ensnare me." [demonēs vidi qui me impedire volebant.]

<sup>117</sup>Vita, 173. Tu nescis quid vadis querendo, insiste orationi. Ille enim est demon qui vos impedire, et ab oratione retrahere nitebatur.

fight off the demons. She said to Sister Thomasso: "I cling to the great God and many spiritual riches are given to me."<sup>118</sup>

Stage Two, the psychic stage, sends the visionary to look beyond herself and to become concerned with the spiritual welfare of others. It is in this stage that she foresees events, such as births and deaths, recognizes the spiritual states of others, and she acts as a spiritual authority for the instructions of others.<sup>119</sup>

Clare was well known for her ability to know the secrets hidden in the mind of others. Although no visions are stated relative to her actually "seeing visions" concerning others' secrets, most of the witnesses classified this gift as part of her "prophetic spirit" (PC art. 86) or as directly revealed to her by God (PC art. 90). However, Clare did see visions of the death and judgment of Ceptus (PC art. 93), the death of the brother of Sister Catherine (PC 296), the deaths and final judgment of some of the sisters of the monastery (Vita, 337), as well as the death of Brother Bartucci (PC art. 95) and the kidnapping of Brother Jacobus of Colleforti (PC art. 94) and Brother Thome (PC art. 96). She often predicted the arrival of visitors to the monastery, even having a meal prepared for them ahead of time.<sup>120</sup>

Stage Three, the doctrinal stage, involves the mystic in the use of visions to guide others. Besides direct visions, Clare and her sisters learned aspects of Christian doctrine through prayer, sermons and through their discussion of religious subjects among themselves. The doctrinal visions also serve as "parables in visual form and as teaching devices by the saint or mystic."<sup>121</sup>

Most of the doctrinal visions of Clare will be addressed more thoroughly in later chapters, when this thesis directly considers the theology/spirituality of Clare. However, a brief

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<sup>118</sup>PC 222.6-7: magis Deo adhaereo et magis datur michi lucrum spirituale.

<sup>119</sup>Petroff, Visionary Literature, 7-8.

<sup>120</sup>PC art. 91, presents the arrival of Margarita, a pilgrim and holy woman, with whom Clare spoke about God and other spiritual matters, even though they did not speak each other's language. See PC art. 99-102 for predictions of other arrivals. Vita, 299 and PC art. 105 state that Clare predicted the arrival of evil people and false teachers, in order to warn the sisters of the monastery and guard them against any false teachings.

<sup>121</sup>Petroff, Visionary Literature, 9



mention of a vision, which occurred after the death of her sister, Giovanna, in 1291, shows a direct correlation between Clare's visions and her theology/spirituality.

In the first part of the vision, Clare sees a small torch with a large beam appear before her and rise above her. For Clare, this was an indication of the resurrection of Giovanna's body as well as her belief in the arrival of Giovanna in paradise.<sup>122</sup> In the same vision, Giovanna appears to Clare. Clare asks her sister: "Have you anything to say about death?" Giovanna responds: "My death was nothing but a passing into life."<sup>123</sup> Giovanna confirms Clare's belief in the resurrection, and also continues to instruct Clare, even after her death.

Stage Four, the devotional stage, comes from the contemplation centered around the life of Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary.<sup>124</sup> Clare not only placed herself at the foot of the cross in the Passion of Christ, but she also envisioned Christ during other periods of his life: as an infant in Bethlehem (Vita. 291); as a young boy, who played with her when she was young (Vita. 92); as a young man, who gave her the Body of Christ, when she missed the reception of Holy Communion with her sisters (Vita. 97); as a beautiful lamb having the face of a man (Vita. 98); as the young pilgrim carrying his cross, who searched the world over for a place to plant his cross and found that place in the heart of Clare (PC art. 128; Vita. 175); at the foot of the cross and on the cross with Christ (PC art. 49; Vita 99-100);<sup>125</sup> as the glorified Christ with his head in heaven and his feet over the earth.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup>Vita 170: *Facula autem accensa erat et nimia claritate fulgeat. Flamma etiam facule erat magna nimis. Et ex hoc clara de sororis salvatione secure, tantam concepit letitiam, et voluntatem suam voluntati domini coaptavit, quod si potuisset sororem ad seculum revocare.*

<sup>123</sup>*Ibid.*: In tanto etiam iohanna clare apparuit. Clara autem tunc interrogavit eam dicens: Ionna numquid tu fuisti mortua? Que respondit: Non fuit mors mea sed transitus ad vitam.

<sup>124</sup>Petroff, Visionary Literature, 9-11.

<sup>125</sup>In Vita, 457.3-14, Paula, the abbess of the monastery of St. John in Spoleto, sees Clare and Christ crucified together on the cross.

<sup>126</sup>Vita 291. 338. In Vita, 393, Paula saw Christ receiving Clare in the form of a burning torch. Vita, 399, states that Bartholuccia, saw Christ and the Trinity accepting Clare into heaven.

According to the *Vita*, Clare had two visions of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the one when she was a child and played with the Boy-Jesus (*Vita*, 92) and the other when the Blessed Virgin wished to know if Clare wished to see a particular prelate. Clare told the Blessed Virgin that she did not want to see him, but she did want to have news about him (*Vita*, 176).

In Stage five, the visionary participates in the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ. Petroff considers this a difficult stage because of the pain involved as well as the danger to the sanity of the visionary. However, the visionary is also able to identify with Christ in two ways; namely, that of the passive sufferer, who begins to accept her own suffering and that of the active sufferer, who participates, through her life, in the activity of atonement.<sup>127</sup>

During her adolescence, Clare asked that God show her the Passion of Christ. This prayer was answered (*Vita*, 100) and from that point onward, the Passion

remained in her soul always, both while she slept and while she was awake...so fixed in her heart was the Passion, she so felt and suffered with the pains of the passion of Christ...[that] in every member of her body, Clare seemed to feel the pains of Christ in herself with great intensity.<sup>128</sup>

For a period of eleven years after this vision, Clare suffered from great tribulation of spirit. In fact she saw herself on a sea of tribulation in a small boat and whipped by the sea. During this time, Clare did more austere penance, reached total emptiness and debilitation and, at times, lost all natural powers of her body (PC 259.24-33).

However, at the end of this period, Clare had another vision, that of a certain man carrying a fiery lamp with oil in one hand and a bundle of chaff in another. Even though the man placed the chaff near the flame, he was not able to light the chaff. The man said to Clare: "Dip the chaff in oil, and thus they will burn well."<sup>129</sup> Clare knew that "by dipping the chaffs of

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<sup>127</sup>Petroff, Visionary Literature, 11-16.

<sup>128</sup>PC 258.27-259.17: S. Clara quod totam passionem seriatim viderat et remansit in anima sua ipsa visio semper, et dormiendo et non dormiendo, donec commendabat et stabat in se et quasi semper plorabat...tantum erat fixa in corde suo ipsa passio, etiam tantum sentiebat et conpatiebatur doloribus passionis Christi et ymmaginabatur dolorem capitis pro corona spinea...et in omnibus membris suis ipsius Clare videbatur sentire dolores Christi in se cum magna afflictione.

<sup>129</sup>Paleas intinge in oleo, et sic bene ardebunt.

desires into the oil of humility, that she placed herself totally into the divine will."<sup>130</sup> Clare received the consolation of the Passion of Christ, and she also came to understand that humility was the foundational virtue for all other virtues (PC art. 60).

Because of Clare's total participation in the life of Christ, and, following in the footprints of Jesus, she was compassionate toward others, healing them not only spiritually, but also physically. She not only raised people from the dead (Vita, 338-9; PC art. 119), but also took on their sins so that they could be forgiven (PC 275.17-276.2). She was kind to her enemies and the enemies of the monastery (PC art. 83) and often had the sisters pray for people who had died in sin, "lest they be condemned to be separated from Jesus Christ."<sup>131</sup>

In Stage six, the unitive or erotic stage, the "divine figures woo the visionary" in various ways.<sup>132</sup> In the life of Clare of Montefalco, Jesus Christ comes to her in the garb of a pilgrim, having traveled a long distance. He carries his cross upon his shoulder and he says to her: "Clare, I seek a strong place, in which I can plant the cross, and for the planting of this cross, I find this a fitting place." From that time until her death, as was told by Clare to Sister Johanna, the abbess of the monastery after Clare, Clare "always sensed the presence of the cross in her heart."<sup>133</sup>

With this vision, Clare becomes inevitably bound in a special way to Jesus Christ and also becomes an example of how closely tied the Man-God relationship became for Clare when she secured herself to the divine will. "The man-God relationship is not seen as a theoretical, abstract, spiritualistic relationship; it is seen as an interpersonal relationship, that even implies a felt relationship."<sup>134</sup> The language of love between humans and God, promoted by Bernard of

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<sup>130</sup>Clara...visionis interpretationem clarissime intellexit et paleas desiderii quod habebat in humilitatis oleo infundendas cognovit ac deinde voluntati divine totaliter se subiecit.

<sup>131</sup>ne ab ipso Iesu Christo divisi dampnarentur.

<sup>132</sup>Petroff, Visionary Literature, 16-19.

<sup>133</sup>Vita 175; PC Art. 128 and PC 294.28-295.4: Circuivi, sed non inveni locum ubi istam crucem fundarem, sed locus iste aptus est ad istam fundationem....Et dixit Clara dicte Iohanne quod ex tunc in corde suo semper sensibilem crucem sensit.

<sup>134</sup>Leonardi, "Chiara e Berengario. L'agiografia sulla santa di Montefalco," in S. Chiara da Montefalco e il suo tempo, 378: Il rapporto uomo-Dio non è visto come rapporto teorico.

Clairvaux in his commentary on the Cantic of Canticles, had come into fruition in Clare of Montefalco by this implanting of Christ's cross into her heart.<sup>135</sup>

The final stage, Stage seven, encompasses the divine and cosmic ordering; in other words, visions of the whole of heaven in perfect order.<sup>136</sup> It is in this stage that Clare sees the final judgment of souls (PC art. 74; Vita 287).

It is not possible to categorize every vision that Clare had into the above stages. It is also not possible to show Clare's visions in these successive stages, as she seems to move among the stages presented here. For example, Clare had visions of attacks by demons early on in her life (Vita 97), as well as in her later life (Vita 173). In what is classified as the second stage, Clare foresees future events from her childhood to the end of her life. She moves back and forth among the different stages, seeing Christ in His Passion and Death (Stage four and five), while at the same time, she has visions of the final judgment of souls (Stage seven). However, through the visions that are related, we can recognize that Clare falls into the category of a medieval visionary.

Added to this search for God through visions, meditation and prayer, mystics also promulgated service to others, whether in counseling, teaching, or in the nurturing service of the sick and the poor. It shall be seen later how Clare's visions not only gave her authority to teach her sisters, but also to converse with theologians, clerics and other learned men of her day. As Eleanor McLaughlin so aptly states regarding mystics:

They demonstrated an ideal of Christian perfection which united contemplation and action, learning and piety, preserved individual gifts in the context of obedience to community, embraced common sinfulness in the joy of experienced forgiveness, and held together the realities of God transcendent and immanent, All-Might and All-Love, Father and Mother....Sainthood or holiness

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astratto, spiritualistico; è visto come un rapporto interpersonale, che implica anche un rapporto sensibile.

<sup>135</sup>Of the frescoes in the oratory of the monastery of S. Chiara da Montefalco, one of the most famous portrays Christ's planting of the cross into Clare's heart.

<sup>136</sup>Petroff, Visionary Literature, 19-20.

was a pilgrimage toward God which supported a human nature of paradoxical and mysterious wholeness.<sup>137</sup>

Clare, herself, felt the need to join contemplation and action, and she was well aware of the need for compatibility between the two. "In services her heart was drawn continually to God. She wondered how some person could object to doing services, because doing such did not lessen prayer and devotion but augmented them powerfully."<sup>138</sup> She herself worked with the lepers and the sick, especially in the first reclusorio. She says to her sisters, after being made abbess of the monastery in 1291, that one could not arrive at the higher virtues except through austerity of penance and works. In her later years, due to her illnesses and her frequent raptures, Clare could not work as she wished. However, she encouraged her sisters to do so and said to the younger sisters: "If I would have the body that you have, I would never lie in bed."<sup>139</sup>

#### Section 4: Conclusion to Chapter 1.

Chapter 1 has placed Clare of Montefalco both in her physical surroundings, as well as in her religious context. From her early childhood in her well-to-do family, she received both the physical and moral support to live a life of penance and commitment to God and Jesus Christ. It is also evident that, even though she was enclosed in the cloister of city and monastery, Clare was aware of and was influenced by the political and religious structure of the world around her.

Having situated Clare in her cultural, religious and social context, chapter two will examine not only the general effects of hagiography on the biography of medieval women, but also its specific effects on the primary documents concerning Clare: namely, the Process of Canonization and the *Vita*, both written within ten years of her death.

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<sup>137</sup>McLaughlin, *Women, Power*, 122-123.

<sup>138</sup>Vita, 94: In ipso vero servitiorum exercitio cor habebat continue ad deum erectum et nimium mirabatur, quomodo persona aliqua poterat servitia recusare, asserens in exercitiis huiusmodi orationem et devotionem non minui sed potius augmentari.

<sup>139</sup>Vita, 171; PC art. 51: Si ego corpus haberem sicut vos habetis, numquam in lecto lacerem.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE PRIMARY SOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF THE THEOLOGY/SPIRITUALITY OF CLARE OF MONTEFALCO

Unlike other medieval mystics, such as Angela of Foligno and Hildegard of Bingen, who wrote and/or dictated their biographies and theology, Clare did not leave any writings. Thus, a study of Clare's theology and spirituality is severely hampered by this lack of sources written or dictated by Clare herself. It is possible, then, only to use other written sources about Clare that follow closely upon her death in order to discover and examine her spirituality and theology. Investigations of her holiness were begun by Berengario di Donadio di Sainte-Affrique, the vicar-general for the diocese of Spoleto, within ten years of her death. From his investigation come two primary sources of information concerning Clare's life and her theology. These are the proceedings of the Process of Canonization<sup>1</sup> held in 1318-1319, and the *Vita*<sup>2</sup> of Clare of Montefalco, written by Berengario prior to that Process.

To present a fuller account of Clare's life, her teachings and her life of virtue, it will be necessary to look carefully at these two primary sources, which are considered to be hagiography, as well as to consider the ecclesiastical context of the times in which she lived. Thus, this chapter begins with a discussion of hagiography, its relationship to medieval women and Clare in particular, especially as seen by Berengario, the official inquisitor for her Process. Chapter Two continues with a closer examination of the above-mentioned sources as to the

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<sup>1</sup>*Inquisitio processus canonizationis Clarae di Cruce Montisfalconis ordinis sancti Augustini (+17.VIII.1308) ab 6.IX.1318 ad VII.1319 facta*, in Il processo di canonizzazione di Chiara da Montefalco, edited by Enrico Menestò (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1984), 1-513.

<sup>2</sup>*Vita S. Clarae de Cruce: Ex codice Montefalconensi saeculi XIV desumpta*, edited by A. Semenza Analecta Augustiniana 17 (1939): 88-102, 169-176, 287-299; 17 (1940): 337-349, 393-409, 445-457, 513-517.

dates of their completion, the preparation of their critical editions, followed by a brief survey of their format, style, content, and language.

### Section I. Hagiography.

Historia est quae praeterita narrat,  
Prophetia quae futura narrat,  
Hagiographa quae aeternae vitae gaudia jubilat.<sup>3</sup>

The term *Hagiography*, which comes from two Greek words, (*hagios*), meaning holy and (*graphe*), meaning writing, originally referred to the last of the three divisions of Sacred Scripture, that is, the Writings, which include the Psalms, Proverbs, Job, and the Song of Songs and was first used in an English context in 1583. By the 1800's, the words *hagiographer*, *hagiography*, and *hagiographic* were being used, in a somewhat polemical sense, to refer to the writings of the lives of the saints, especially in the Roman Catholic tradition in the West.<sup>4</sup>

The lives of the saints in the Christian tradition began with interest in the martyrs of the early Church. These martyrs, set up as an example for all Christians, were honored not because of what was written about them, but because they had died for Christ. Thus, they were included in the celebration of the Eucharist after the time of Polycarp (+167).<sup>5</sup> However, not all martyrs

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<sup>3</sup>"History is that which tells of the past, Prophecy is that which tells of the future, Hagiography is that which praises the joy of eternal life." Honorius of Autun (fl. ca. 1100), In Psal., PL 172.273B, as quoted in Felice Lifshitz, "Beyond Positivism and Genre: 'Hagiographical' Texts as Historical Narrative," Viator 25 (1993): 95.

<sup>4</sup>Cf The Oxford English Dictionary, prepared by J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989). Robert Southey first used the polemical sense of the word. For example, he writes in 1817: "A miraculous conception is the only miracle that the Romish Hagiographists have not bestowed upon their saints." Lifshitz, 108, states that it was only in the nineteenth century that "historiography stood ready to be purged of those who dared write of saints or miracles in history at all, rather than within the confines of 'hagiography,' 'superstition,' 'folklore,' or 'popular devotion.'" Thus, Thomas J. Heffernan, in Sacred Biography (NY/Oxford: Oxford, 1988), 16-18, introduces the words "Sacred Biography" in place of the word "hagiography." Lawrence Cunningham, "Heroic Sanctity and Contemporary Culture," in The Bent World, edited by John R. May (Ann Arbor, MI: Scholars Press, 1981), 111, reminds us that, in the West, it is St Augustine, "not some credulous medieval monk," (as Cunningham puts it), who was interested in the lives of the saints, as seen in his City of God, Book XXII.

<sup>5</sup>Flor van Ommeslaeghe, "The *Acta Sanctorum* and Bollandist Methodology, in The

were remembered in the hearts of the people to the degree of these early martyrs, e.g. Polycarp, Ignatius of Antioch, Perpetua or Felicity. As time went on, it was necessary to write down what was remembered about the other saints of the early Church. In many cases, historical data were not available, and therefore, the hagiographer had to build a scenario around the saint, sometimes with no more than the date of death, or the presence of a particular shrine or relic.<sup>6</sup> The fundamental objective of the story, however, was to set the saint before the people as an example not only to imitate, but as a "*fons potentiae* (a source of power/virtue)."<sup>7</sup> It was essential that the community have strong examples of the experience of the connection between God and the people. The goal of the telling of the stories of the saints was to show how the saints, and thus everyone, arrived at closeness to God.<sup>8</sup> Thus, for the hagiographer,

[t]he saint embodies divine presence in the world and enacts divine agency. In its turn, hagiography tells the story of the saint as a means for revealing God's truth and purpose. Closely tied in function, saint and story contain in each occurrence Christianity's own story. The saint is understood to be the true

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Byzantine Saint, edited by Sergei Hackel (London: Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, 1981), 158. See Hippolyte Delehaye, The Legends of the Saints (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1962), for a more explicit discussion of the hagiography around the martyrs.

<sup>6</sup>van Ommeslaeghe, 160.

<sup>7</sup>Cunningham, 114. Jane Tibbets Schulenburg, "Saints' Lives as a Source for the History of Women, 500-1100," in Medieval Women and the Sources of Medieval History, 1990), 287, includes teaching "Christian virtue" and strengthening "Christian resolve" as elements of this edification. During the later Middle Ages, other reasons for initiating sainthood for holy men and women also became important. Schulenburg, *Saints*, 287-8, includes: the hope of attracting "pilgrims, material donations, as well as special privileges to the monastery or sanctuary....Many of the lives of the *mulieres sanctae*...served as guides for female religious." Vauchez, "L'influence des modèles hagiographiques sur les représentations de la Sainteté, dans le procès de canonisation (XIII<sup>e</sup> - XV<sup>e</sup>)," in Hagiographie Cultures et Sociétés, IV<sup>e</sup> - XII<sup>e</sup> Siècles (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1981), 587, 590, includes the pressure exercised by civil authorities, as well as the interiorization of previous hagiographic writings, such as the Vitae Patrum. Donald Weinstein and Rudolph Bell, Saints and Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 1-6, see a definite relationship between the "Nominalists and the Realists." Philip Sheldrake, Spirituality and History (NY: Crossroad, 1991), 61, 62, agrees with Weinstein and Bell and also sees "a disposition to equate moral with social nobility."

<sup>8</sup>James William McClendon, Biography as Theology: How Life Stories Can Remake Today's Theology (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1974, 1980), 91, 93, 96-99.



disciple of Christ.... The saint was known by actions, understood in the most tangibly concrete sense: the saint's activity made the saint's identity....the saint was the story embodied - humanity redeemed - and the story was the Word.<sup>9</sup>

Likewise, the biographies of holy men and women are essential to the community, in this case, the community of the Church, since "images are of the very substance of religion," and are of major importance to the community for whom they are written, since the biographical subjects show "how certain great archetypal images of that faith do apply to their own lives and circumstances, and by extension to our own."<sup>10</sup>

After the sixth century, holy men and women were proclaimed holy both by popular demand as well as under the aegis of the local bishop, but by the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century, the canonization of saints had to be approved by the Papacy.<sup>11</sup> In the early fourteenth century, at the time of the process of canonization for Clare of Montefalco, canonization proceedings fell under "the type of archival evidence that would pass muster with the lawyers of the Roman curia."<sup>12</sup> There were two categories of material used to gather information about the saints' lives: liturgical documents and literary documents.

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<sup>9</sup>Susan Ashbrook Harvey, "Women in Early Byzantine Hagiography," in That Gentle Strength, edited by Lynda Coon, et al (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 37, 51. McClendon, 91-96, 99, sees biography as essential for the community, that "images are of the very substance of religion," and are of major importance to the community for whom they are written, since the biographical subjects show "how certain great archetypal images of that faith do apply to their own lives and circumstances, and by extension to our own."

<sup>10</sup>McClendon, 91-96, 99.

<sup>11</sup>Cunningham, 112.

<sup>12</sup>Lifshitz, 106. Pierre DeLooz, "Towards a Sociological Study of Canonized Sainthood in the Catholic Church, in Saints and Their Cults: Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore and History, edited by Stephen Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 191-192, indicates eight categories in which the saints can be distinguished: "those designated in the first thousand years AD by a local church; those designated by the pope between 993 and 1234; those who were designated by a local church between 993 and 1234 without papal intervention; those who between 1234 and 1634 were designated and canonized by the Holy See according to the old procedure; those who between 1234 and 1634 were designated by local churches in spite of papal reservation; those who were canonized after 1634 according to the new procedure; those who were only beatified after 1634; those who were designated by local churches between 1159 and 1634 but whose cult was ratified by the Holy See according to the

**Liturgical Documents.** These chronicles include archeological and epigraphical documents; namely, inscriptions on buildings, tombs, statues and monuments; local calendars, such as would appear in liturgical settings and the Ordo for the Divine Office; and martyrologies.<sup>13</sup>

**Literary Documents.** Both the Acta Sanctorum and the Acta proconsularia, that is, the documents from the Processes of Canonization, provide useful information concerning the lives of holy men and women. Both Acta deal with individual saints, in either calendar order, that is, in monthly order or in yearly order. The Acta Sanctorum chronicled the lives of holy men and also revealed "the lives of strong, independent women, most of them tough-minded and gifted with a sense of humor, whose activities shattered the stereotypes about feminine behaviour in the Middle Ages."<sup>14</sup> It was the *Vita* of the individual woman that not only placed that woman in the "collective memory of the community," but also "served the very important historical function of keeping alive the memory of the saint and her cult."<sup>15</sup> In most cases, the Acta Sanctorum was preceded by a prologue, which introduced the author, the date of writing as well as the "prosography" of the document.<sup>16</sup>

At the time of canonization, especially in the later Middle Ages, a second life was then written which attributed new miracles and more virtues to the holy woman.<sup>17</sup> After the canonization, another life might be written, either by the original nominators or by the

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new procedure." Clare of Montefalco falls into the fourth category, namely, by the Holy See according to the old procedure.

<sup>13</sup>van Ommerslaege, 160.

<sup>14</sup>Petroff, Body and Soul, 161.

<sup>15</sup>Schulenburg, *Saints' Lives*, 286.

<sup>16</sup>van Ommeslaeghe, 162.

<sup>17</sup>Between 1319 and 1329, Clare's apostolic process of canonization was summarized by Cardinal Napoleone Orsini and other Cardinals, which contained the "principal aspects of her life along with a selection of thirty-five particularly convincing miracles." See André Vauchez, Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages, 482. An Italian translation of this *Relatio* can be found in Agostino de Montefalco, Vita, miracoli e rivelazioni della Beata Chiara da Montefalco (Venice, 1515).

commissions charged by the Pope, which would include the acclamations of the witnesses brought forward at the Process of Canonization.<sup>18</sup> These "*vitae*" are directly concerned with female roles in the church and society as well as contemporary perceptions, ideals, and valuations of women."<sup>19</sup> Also available, as hagiographical material, were the sermons preached on the day of a saint's celebration, or the day of the funeral as well as the writings of the women themselves, including letters, religious poetry, spiritual advice, testaments, and those vision accounts available.<sup>20</sup>

When reading such hagiographical material, it is important to realize that many biographers imitated the writing styles of previous hagiography, such as the *Vitae Patrum*, the lives of the Desert Fathers.<sup>21</sup> In fact, Petroff asserts that the lives of such women as Clare of Montefalco and Margaret of Cortona were perfect examples of the ascetical life lived by the desert Fathers and Mothers.<sup>22</sup> Other writings, such as the Legenda aurea, by Jacob of Voragine, were also used as models of biographical writing for some *vitae* of the saints. For example, Vauchez compares aspects found in the Legenda aurea with aspects found in the lives of the

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<sup>18</sup>Vauchez, *L'influence*, 585, 587, 588. André Vauchez, La Sainteté en Occident aux derniers Siècles du Moyen Âge (Rome: Palais Farnèse, 1981), 427, regards the Process of Canonization as the richest documentation available and delineates the official process: the first bull, usually from the Pope (especially after the Gregorian Reform), a commission of three questioners, at least one of which was a bishop, was chosen, the site and dates of the inquiry were also established. See, Vauchez, La Sainteté, 50.

<sup>19</sup>Schulenburg, *Saints' Lives*, 285.

<sup>20</sup>Bynum, *Religious Women*, 136, 137.

<sup>21</sup>Petroff, Body and Soul, 111.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 115. Cunningham, 119, presents the idea that the "desert has its roots in the similar experience of the children of Israel and of Jesus, both of whom went to the desert to wrestle with temptation and to seek communion with the absolute." Rydén, 537, agrees with the fascination of the desert Fathers and Mothers, but is also aware that there were many other kinds of saints, such as, "the holy fool, the exorcist, the pious aristocratic woman, the reformed harlot, the female ascetic disguised as a monk, and the itinerant eunuch monk accompanied by a young girl."

Dominicans, Dominic and Peter Martyr, as well as the Franciscans, Francis of Assisi and Elizabeth of Hungary.<sup>23</sup>

Hagiographical material supplemented by historical and literary sources present a more objective presentation of the life of the saint, but one must also keep in mind that the "saints' lives are ultimately reflections of the mind-set and world of the hagiographers...and their own personal views of sanctity and society."<sup>24</sup> When Berengario writes Clare's *Vita*, one must not only be aware of the fact that he is filtering Clare's life through an indirect reconstruction of the mentality and spirituality of the era which frames the life and actions of Clare of Montefalco, but also that there were sufficient numbers of witnesses to these events.<sup>25</sup> At the time of Clare's apostolic canonization process in 1318, the role of the saints was often an expression of papal policy.<sup>26</sup> In Clare of Montefalco's case, this may have been a drawback, since she was considered to be under the protection of both Cardinals Napoleone Orsini and James Colonna, both of whom had connections with the Spiritual Franciscans.<sup>27</sup> However, Berengario presents two sides of Clare's story, one of which presents Clare in a positive light to the papacy, namely, her conflict with the leader of the sect of the Free Spirit, a heresy prevalent during this time, while the second, her relationship to the above-mentioned Cardinals, which places her in conflict with the papacy. Berengario presents an objective picture of Clare, even though her relationship with friends of the Spiritual Franciscans, who were in opposition to the papacy at

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<sup>23</sup>André Vauchez, "Jacques de Voragine et les saints du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle dans la *Légende dorée*," in *Legenda Aurea: Sept Siècles de diffusion*, edited by Brenda Dunn-Lardeau (Montréal: Éditions Bellarmin, 1986): 27-56.

<sup>24</sup>Schulenburg, *Saints' Lives*, 306. Cunningham, 115, 117 states: "Hagiography tells the story of Christianity 'from below' as opposed to systematic theology that reflects on Christianity 'from above.' In that sense there is far less control on the [charged] imagination of the hagiographer than on the ratiocinations of the theologian."

<sup>25</sup>Antonelli, 465.

<sup>26</sup>Michael Goodich, *Vita Perfecta : The Ideal of Sainthood in the Thirteenth Century* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1982), 45.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 167.

this time, was not a plus in the eyes of the papacy, and may have been a deterrent to her canonization in 1318.<sup>28</sup>

In addition, hagiography must also present the faith dimension of the holy men and women. This faith dimension, which must also be present in the hagiographer, centers on three elements:

the first...is the need for purity, for a feeling of spiritual perfection, which comes from separating oneself from natural and carnal thoughts and acts;.... the second...is the feeling of reverence, the emotions of love, awe, and fear that believers direct toward divinity and its attributes.<sup>29</sup>

and the third essential element is the acceptance on the part of the believer of God's active assistance in this world.<sup>30</sup> Besides placing the saint in an historical and cultural context, the hagiographer must also assist the reader in recognizing the Christian virtues present in the individual. Thus, a primary role of hagiography is "to strengthen the faith of the weak, to instruct the unlettered, to excite the wavering, to provoke the devout to imitation, and to confute the rebels and infidels."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 179-181.

<sup>29</sup>Weinstein and Bell, 4-5.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 5. Sheldrake, 98-99, sees hagiography as an expression of "ideology - in other words, the ways in which what we believe connects with power-structures....and that traditional thinking about holiness began with a fixed ideal rather than with an individual's concrete situation." He also implies that "institutional holiness demands conformity," which, in the case of these four women (Angela of Foligno, Margaret of Cortona, Rose of Viterbo, and Clare of Montefalco) is not true. These women did not conform to the traditional form of institutional holiness, since they were not members of an established group of cloistered religious women. Angela of Foligno, Margaret of Cortona and Rose of Viterbo were on the fringes of the Church in terms of their life-style, while Clare of Montefalco, in her religious convent, lived under the rule of St. Augustine, but also lived the life of a thirteenth century Penitent.

<sup>31</sup>Jacques de Vitry, quoted in Goodich, 65. There is a connection between the saint's spirituality and the culture of the time in which he or she lived. Sheldrake, 75-78, stresses the different stages in the development of the hagiography of a particular saint. The three stages include: emergence, which includes origin and expansion; maintenance and stability, and finally, senility or breakdown. This last may lead either to a "radical flexibility," that is, a "new synthesis between the tradition and its context...[taking] the risk of opening itself up anew to the concrete demands of the gospel in the present," or to "resistance and rejection of the need for

Hagiography in Regard to Medieval Women. Probably the most criticized person in the study of hagiography is the author of the hagiographical work, especially when the life-story concerns a *mulier sancta*, whether that holy woman is a religious or a lay person. At times there were differences between the way the biographers would write a woman's story, and how others see her:

It is very surprising...to see one hagiographer, for instance, characterize a female saint by her silence, when she was a successful preacher and writer of sermons. Even if she claimed to be divinely inspired in all her speech, that speech existed and was heard by an audience.<sup>32</sup>

We also recognize the fact that women medieval mystics were rarely "mainstream figures, and their ideas were not a part of the intellectual debate of their time."<sup>33</sup> When we read these texts

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flexibility." Susan Mosher Stuard, "Sources on Medieval Women in Mediterranean Archives," in Medieval Women and the Sources of Medieval History, 354, also sees the need to be "interdisciplinary in [the] approach to history." See also Walter Principe, "Broadening the Focus," Christian Spirituality Bulletin 2/1 (Spring, 1994): 1-4. For particular questions to answer when discussing the lived experience and the theology of the saint, see Principe, 3-4; Suzanne Noffke, Catherine of Siena: Vision Through a Distant Eye (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), especially the Appendices; Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, "Remembering the Past in Creating the Future: Historical-Critical Scholarship and Feminist Biblical Interpretation," in Feminist Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship, edited by Adela Yarbo Collins (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1985), 48-55. Principe, "Broadenings," 4, also mentions the fact that an "author's silence about some issues is itself indicative of the partiality of the author's spiritual teaching."

<sup>32</sup>Petroff, Body and Soul, ix. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Religious Women*, 136, states that "male biographers romanticized and sentimentalized female virtue....were also far more likely to attribute sexual or bodily temptations to women's natures than to men's....we must pay particular attention to what women saints said and did, avoiding the assumption that they simply internalized the rhetoric of theologians, confessors, or husbands." Carolly Erickson, The Medieval Vision (NY: Oxford University Press, 1976), 9, states that "any description of medieval perception is little more than a hypothesis based on a limited quantity of heavily biased evidence." Principe, "Broadening the Focus," 3, asks the question, "How many of these portraits were filtered through the outlook and judgments of these men, with their ideals of spirituality?" McGinn, Flowering of Mysticism, 16, 18, however, stresses the importance of this gender perspective between men and women as "one of the most remarkable characteristics of the new mysticism of the later Middle Ages."

<sup>33</sup>Petroff, Body and Soul, x.

about medieval women mystics, it is necessary to remember that they have a "different experience of the body, a different epistemology, and a different relationship to language."<sup>34</sup>

Remembering that the main purpose of the life of the saint was to convince the readers that this person was truly a saint, the hagiographers, following in Augustine's footsteps "obeyed the traditional rhetorical injunction to teach, move, and delight."<sup>35</sup> The biographies, therefore, stressed not only the moral elements of asceticism and contemplation, but also the active service, miracles and visions of the saint.<sup>36</sup> Including these elements, Berengario, in his introduction to the *Vita* of Clare, states that he intends to show the holiness and miracles of Clare's life, to preserve her memory for the posterity of the Church.<sup>37</sup>

There is also a definite symbiosis between the women and their contemporary biographers, most often clerics and/or confessors.<sup>38</sup> Some women were not conversant with the

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid. Bynum, *Religious Women*, 137, concurs.

<sup>35</sup>Petroff, *Body and Soul*, 162. Lifshitz, 97, n7, also includes the following reasons for biographies of saints: to provide communities with "written traditions" and to defend their independence and their property rights; to fuel "episcopal rivalries;" to convey "political and theological stances;" and to propagate an "individual author's or group's notion of 'the holy.'"

<sup>36</sup>Lifshitz, 101, sees the introduction of these elements as glorification of the subject, which are intended "to inspire emulation; to express ideals which "change over time...their authors are sometimes more concerned with the tastes of the public or with some didactic aims." This may be true the further one is removed for the actual times in which the holy person lived. It is also the reason that one must be careful in discussing the theology of this particular holy person. One must sift out what actually happened in the life of the holy person and what comes out of the biographer's own theology. However, in Clare's case, since her process and biography was written within ten years of her death, her life and her words were still quite actively present in the minds of the sisters with whom she lived, and by other witnesses to her holiness.

<sup>37</sup>*Vita*, 88: (C)ogitavi in animo inquisitionem facere super vita et miraculis domine memorate ut in futurum per lapsum temporis probationis facultas et copia non periret et romana ecclesia cum super his vellet inquirere posset sufficientiorem instructionem habere.

<sup>38</sup>Schulenburg, *Saints' Lives*, 289-291, states the fact that, in some cases, the women were capable of writing their own biographies, but "despite the high level of educational and literary competency of female religious during this early period, it seems that nuns were relegated to function as copyists, and only infrequently were they designated as authors of *vitae*." Some women, for example, Hildegard of Bingen (+1179), were able to write their own lives, and other women, such as Angela of Foligno, dictated their life stories to their confessors. Others,

official Latin language of the Church. The majority of the women were able to read and write in their particular "vulgar" language, but needed the expertise of the more educated clergy, not only to write the Latin translation, but also to lend authority and approbation to their life, words and deeds, especially if they were lay penitents, that is, the Tertiaries, who lived alone, at home, or in community and lived neither in the lay state in the world or as religious in the cloister.<sup>39</sup> In Clare's case, Berengario did not write her life because it was what she wished nor because she wished to receive the approbation of the church, but because he believed in her holiness and wished her to be held in high esteem by the Papacy and the church.

Although the lay Christian community received their *ideas* about holiness from clerical instruction, there were many different ways that lay people made *use* of these ideas about holiness, since the "laity's emphasis upon the practical benefits of cultic veneration" often differed from that of the clergy's use or purpose.<sup>40</sup> Often the lives of the saints stressed a particular aspect of Christian life essential to Church orthodoxy. For example, after Lateran Council IV in 1215, there was more stress placed on the saint's love of the sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist, since the canons of that Council stipulated the necessity of receiving these sacraments at least once during the Church year.<sup>41</sup> In the *Vita* of Clare, Marina, one of the sisters of Clare's community, who had known Clare since she was six years old, mentions a discussion which she and Clare had regarding transubstantiation, and the fact that

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such as the Beguine, Hadewijch (ca. 1250), and Marguerite Porete (+1310) have no official biography, but manuscripts of their writings are available.

<sup>39</sup>Petroff, *Body and Soul*, 140; Danielle Régner-Bohler, "Literary and Mystical Voices," in *A History of Women in the West*, 434, 447; Jo Ann McNamara, "The Rhetoric of Orthodoxy," in *Maps of Flesh and Light*, 10, 11. Sheldrake, 63, states that "two subsidiary priorities, those of the *clerical over lay* and *majority over minority*...may also be distinguished...The spirituality of the medieval West frequently appears to be confined, with few exceptions, to religious orders, the theologically literate and to mystics."

<sup>40</sup>Weinstein and Bell, 11.

<sup>41</sup>Tanner, 245, art. 21; Petroff, *Body and Soul*, 140.



Clare not only believed in the miracle of the Eucharist, but had inspired knowledge of how the miracle took place.<sup>42</sup>

Knowing this and recognizing that the hagiographers were writing individual life-stories about individual women, one can understand the diversity of styles and the variety of actions and words which were stressed by them. Berengario formulated 315 questions, the *articuli interrogatorii*, to direct the answers of the 486 witnesses summoned to the apostolic process of canonization, so that the particular aspects of the "life, conversation and miracles of holy Clare,"<sup>43</sup> attributes of the canonical canonization process regulated by the Curia, would be stressed. These questions directly addressed her lived faith and experience.

Having briefly mentioned what the hagiographers did to bring knowledge of the holy women to the Christian community, it is also necessary to stress what these men received from the study and close contact with these women. According to Petroff,

First of all, the women seem to present men with a compelling image of living faith. Second, the men are attracted by the women's gift of prophecy...Third, the women are intercessors with God...Fourth, medieval holy women demonstrate a new kind of teaching in action.... Finally, women have refreshing new viewpoints; they can react and respond to situations directly...without recourse to precedents.<sup>44</sup>

In examining the life of Clare of Montefalco as written and promulgated by Berengario, one can see his recognition of Clare's faith, his recognition of Clare as prophet, who knew past, present and future events. Berengario also stressed Clare's dedication and service to God, as well as her

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<sup>42</sup>Vita, 344-345. Marina entered the reclusorio around 1280, and, thus, was present at all the major events of Clare's life. She was present both at the communal process of 1308 and the diocesan process of 1309. See Nessi, PC, 620.

<sup>43</sup>Menestò, PC, CLVI. Thus, the responses of the witnesses are much the same and are often recorded with the same words. Menestò, PC, CLVII, states two exceptions to this format: namely, Clare's brother, Francesco (Witness #45), a Friar Minor [See PC, 266-299], and Tommaso Boni (Witness #160), who is the only witness to disclaim the holiness of Clare, and accuses one of the sisters of Clare's community of artificially constructing the symbols found in the heart of Clare after her death (PC, 434-436).

<sup>44</sup>Petroff, Body and Soul, 139-140.

constant life of prayer and intercession not only for herself, but also for her community and the people with whom she came in contact.

The hagiographer, however, was also influenced by outside forces, such as the particular tenets held by the Church, the leanings of the bishop of the diocese, the interests of his house or order, political interests, and, not least, the expectations of local devotees, both clerical and lay.<sup>45</sup>

Since Berengario is also a product of his times, his particular slant on Clare's life, virtues and miracles is dependent on this context as well. Thus, this next section not only considers the Church during this time, but also its influence on Berengario's writings.

The Church Context and Hagiography. From 1215 to the years of the apostolic process of canonization for Clare of Montefalco held in 1318-1319, the Church held four Ecumenical Councils and had twenty-one Popes.<sup>46</sup> There is no known personal contact between any of the Popes and Clare of Montefalco, except the request for her prayers from Clement V. written in a letter to her from the Cardinal Protector, Pietro Colonna.<sup>47</sup> Her connection with the hierarchical Church was mainly through the bishop of Spoleto and Cardinals Napoleone Orsini. Giacomo

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<sup>45</sup>Weinstein and Bell, 13. Bridget Cazelles, "Introduction," in Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe, edited by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Tímea Szell (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 4, states that in times of conflict lay people tended to be ridiculed, while in "relatively calmer times, in the tenth and early twelfth centuries," lay people were a "necessary complement to the contemplative life lived within the institutional church." Cunningham, 118, concurs, while Schulenburg, *Saints' Lives*, 308, sees "churchmen....attempted to shape and control women and female sexuality by dictating how women should think and behave.

<sup>46</sup>For a discussion of the Papacy from 1215 to 1318, see Geoffrey Barraclough, The Medieval Papacy (NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1968); Peter Herde, "Election and Abdication of the Pope: Practice and Doctrine in the Thirteenth Century," in Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Medieval Canon Law, edited by Stephen Kuttner and Kenneth Pennington (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1985), 411-436; Brian Tierney, "Pope and Bishops Before Trent: An Historical Survey," in The Papacy and the Church in the United States, edited by Bernard Cooke (NY/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1989), 11-24; Walter Ullman, The Medieval Papacy, St. Thomas and Beyond (Westminster: The Aquin Press, 1960).

<sup>47</sup>Nessi, PC, 623, quoting Battista Piergili, Vita della B. Chiara detta della Croce da Montefalco (Foligno, 1640, 1663), 123.

and Pietro Colonna and other priests and clerics.<sup>48</sup> Clare's relationship to the hierarchical Church, therefore, must be seen rather by looking at the Ecumenical Councils themselves whose decrees focussed on the power struggle between the Church and the State, the combatting of heresy, and most importantly, the Church's spiritual reform. Although the struggle for political power between the Church and State was an essential part of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries,<sup>49</sup> it is the battle against heresies and their spiritual reforms that most influenced Clare and Berengario.

Of the four councils held between 1215 and 1319,<sup>50</sup> the Fourth Lateran Council called by Pope Innocent III in 1215, although held prior to Clare's birth, had the most influence on the Church of this period. It is this council that denounced not only the Albigensian (Cathari) and Waldensian heresies (#1), but also excommunicated heretics and their protectors (#3) and granted the power of excommunication and the power of absolution from excommunication to bishops (#47, 49). It also condemned Joachim of Fiore's teaching on the Trinity (#2), reiterated the Church's teaching on the Trinity (#1) and, for the first time, used the term

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<sup>48</sup>For biographies of these three cardinals, see Nessi, PC, 615, 621-2, 622-3; Herde, *Election and Abduction*, 426-436; Giuseppe Alessi, ed., Dizionario Biografici degli Italiani (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1982), 311-314, 399-402; Catholic University of America, ed., New Catholic Encyclopedia (Washington, DC: CUA Press, 1967); Carl Arnold Willemssen, Kardinal Napoleon Orsini (1263-1342) (Vaduz Kraus Reprint, 1965), 134-145; 195-197.

<sup>49</sup>For a more complete history of the conflict between Church and State, see David Abulafia, Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor; J.H. Burns, ed., The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c.350-c.1450 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Warren H. Carroll, The Glory of Christendom; George Holmes, ed., The Oxford History of Medieval Europe; R.W. Southern, Western Society and the Middle Ages (London: Penguin, 1970); Carl Stevenson, Medieval History: Europe from the Second to the Sixteenth Century (NY/ London: Harper & Bros, 1935, 1943; Brian Tierney, ed., The Crisis of Church and State, 1050-1300 (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964, 1980); Brian Tierney, ed., The Middle Ages, Volume 1, Sources of Medieval History (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970, 1973); Barbara W. Tuchman, A Distant Mirror.

<sup>50</sup>See New Catholic Encyclopedia; J.D. Conway, Times of Decision: Story of the Councils; Francis Dvornik, The Ecumenical Councils (NY: Hawthorn Books, 1961); Hubert Jedin, Ecumenical Councils of the Catholic Church (NY: Paulist Press, 1960); Joseph Strayer, ed., Dictionary of the Middle Ages; Norman Tanner, ed., Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, 227-360.

"transubstantiation," in connection with the changing of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ (#1).<sup>51</sup> This Council also promulgated the reception of confession and communion at least once a year (#21), and set up norms for the celebration of Mass and the recitation of the Divine Office (#17, 19). There were also prescriptions for the care of the sick and the dying by both priests and doctors (#22) as well as legislation on the sacrament of Extreme Unction (#20). This council prohibited the promulgation of new religious rules and the new religious orders being formed had to accept one of the already approved rules (#13).<sup>52</sup>

The First Council of Lyons, called by Pope Innocent IV in 1245, did not directly affect the life of Clare, but was basically assembled for political reasons and centered around the Church's conflict with Emperor Frederick II.<sup>53</sup> However, one must recognize the continued conflict between the Guelphs (pro-Papal) and the Ghibellines (pro-Emperor), since this conflict continued to be present during Clare's lifetime.

The Second Council of Lyons, held in 1274 under Pope Gregory X, but chaired by St. Bonaventure,<sup>54</sup> centered around the "reunion of all Christians in firm faith and fraternal love, the organization of a great Crusade to redeem the Holy Lands, and the reform of flabby morals among clergy and laity."<sup>55</sup> Besides redefining the phrase *Filioque*,<sup>56</sup> the council stressed the doctrine of purgatory, and "confirmed the privileges of the four mendicant orders founded

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<sup>51</sup>Anne Derbes, Picturing the Passion in Late Medieval Italy (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 17, states that the realization of Christ's physical presence on the altar was also experienced visually, not only in the elevation of the Host so that the congregation could see Christ's presence, but also by mystics seeing "the crucified body of Christ at the elevation of the Host."

<sup>52</sup>The approved rules were those of St. Augustine, St. Basil and St. Benedict. The Franciscan Rule for the Friars Minor was orally approved by Innocent III in 1209 and in written form in 1223. See Arnaldo Fortini, Francis of Assisi (NY: Crossroad, 1980, 1985), 300-302.

<sup>53</sup>Jedin, 68-71; Conway, 164-176.

<sup>54</sup>Dvornik, 59. Thomas of Aquinas died on the way to the Council, and Bonaventure died during this Council.

<sup>55</sup>Conway, 177.

<sup>56</sup>Tanner, 230.

during the thirteenth century - the Franciscans, Dominicans, Hermits of St. Augustine and Carmelites"<sup>57</sup> At this time there was controversy between the secular clergy and the mendicant orders centering on the care of souls and preaching, and, although no restrictions were placed on the Franciscans and Dominicans because of their visible service to the Church, the Carmelites and the Hermits of St. Augustine were temporarily restricted (#23) by the Council.<sup>58</sup>

The Council of Vienne, called by Pope Clement V in 1311-1312 with the approval of the King of France, was the first Council held after the Pope had moved to Avignon in 1308.<sup>59</sup> The Council defined the pastoral activities of the mendicant orders (#10), and under the auspices of Raymond Lull, a Franciscan Tertiary, advocated the creation of chairs for teaching Hebrew, Greek, Arabic and Chaldean at the universities of Bologna, Oxford, Paris and Salamanca,<sup>60</sup> making available better translations of Sacred Scriptures (#11. 24). While condemning the communities of Beguines and Beghards that had been formed at the beginning of the century (#16. 28), the Council also prepared the way for the reconciliation of the two factions of the First Order Franciscans, the Spirituals and the Conventuals, who, since the death of Francis, could not agree on the way to live Franciscan poverty (#37-38).

Having briefly examined the four major Ecumenical Councils of the thirteenth and fourteenth century, it is important to establish how Berengario used the directives of these Councils in developing the questions for the Process of Canonization. Berengario was also

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<sup>57</sup>Jedin, 75.

<sup>58</sup>Strayer, 641. Tanner, 327, quotes from the Council: "We also forbid absolutely to members of these orders. in regard to externs, the office of preaching and hearing confessions and the right of burial. Of course we do not allow the present constitution to apply to the orders of Preachers and Minors; their approval bears witness to their evident advantage to the universal church. Furthermore, we grant that the order of Carmelites and that of the Hermits of Saint Augustine, the institution of which preceded the said general council (Lateran IV), may remain as they are, until other regulations are made for them. We intend in fact to provide both for them and for the other orders, even the non-mendicants, as we shall see to be for the good of souls and for the good state of the orders."

<sup>59</sup>Carroll, 349. Only certain bishops were invited and these also had to be approved by the King of France.

<sup>60</sup>Dvornik, 65-66.

aware of the political and ecclesiastical milieu of his times, and, because he wanted to show Clare as an orthodox member of the Catholic Church in an age of many heresies, it was necessary for him to establish the truth not only about Clare's holy life, but also about her commitment to the Church.

Berengario, a Frenchman who assumed the duties of vicar general to the bishop of Spoleto, Pietro Paoli Trinci,<sup>61</sup> did not know Clare personally, since he had assumed his duties in Italy only a short while before Clare's death. Clare became known to him only after he rushed to the monastery at Montefalco upon hearing of the discovery of the symbols of the Passion found in Clare's heart after her death (*Vita*, 88).<sup>62</sup>

Berengario was not a theologian, and classified himself as being "intent about spiritual questions in general and the legal intricacies of the law courts [in particular]."<sup>63</sup> However, he formed the questions for the inquests and the process of canonization with the help of "theologians, secular doctors and other experienced people."<sup>64</sup> and, in treating of the life, virtues and miracles of Clare, he stressed those elements of Catholicism, especially in the field of the spiritual life, that would anchor Clare within the orthodoxy of Catholic doctrine and practice. Although Berengario mentions the miracles that were performed by Clare during her lifetime and after her death, he is more concerned about presenting Clare in terms of her orthodoxy and her life of virtue.<sup>65</sup> In writing about the confrontation between Clare and Bentivenga, a member

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<sup>61</sup>Romana Guarnieri, "La *Vita* di Chiara da Montefalco e la pietà Brabantina del '200: Prime indagini su un'ipotesi di lavoro," in *S. Chiara da Montefalco e il suo tempo*, 330, states that Trinci was a Guelph, was named Camerlengo [the highest office] of the College of Cardinals and was charged to administer the finances of the Council of Vienne.

<sup>62</sup>For a more extensive biography of Berengario after 1308, see Nessi, PC 608-609.

<sup>63</sup>*Vita*, 88: "...in spiritualibus generalis causis et anfractibus indiciorum intentus. It is important to remember that the preparations for the Council of Vienne had already begun and Pietro Paoli Trinci was heavily involved with them. Thus, Berengario became the spokesperson for the diocese. See Guarnieri, *La Vita*, 329-330.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*: "...plurum religiosorum peritorum lectorum in theologia et etiam secularium doctorum et peritorum aliorum..."

<sup>65</sup>Goodich, 67, stresses the following three levels present in the lives of the saints in the thirteenth century; "1) as a contemporary reworking of the time-honored themes of Christian

of the sect of the Free Spirit, Berengario stresses her adamant refusal to accept the tenets of the quietist spirituality practiced by this sect, and thus placed her within the orthodox Church, who had condemned quietism in the practice of the spiritual life.

It is also important to remember that Berengario, a Frenchman, had to have been aware of the condemnation and death of Marguerite Porete, a French Beguine, in 1310,<sup>66</sup> who was considered to be a member of the sect of the Free Spirit. The Council of Vienne (1311-1312) is said to have used excerpts from Porete's book, Miroir des simples âmes [The Mirror of Simple Souls], in order to condemn the Beguines and Beghards.<sup>67</sup> The Council of Vienne states that these two groups of women and men "preach on the Holy Trinity and the divine essence, and express opinions contrary to the Catholic faith with regard to the articles of faith and the sacraments of the church."<sup>68</sup> The Council mentions eight specific errors:

First, that a person in this present life can acquire a degree of perfection which renders [that person] utterly impeccable and unable to make further progress in grace...Secondly, that it is not necessary to fast or pray after gaining this degree of perfection... Thirdly, that those who have reached the said degree of perfection and spirit of liberty, are not subject to human obedience nor obliged to any commandments of the Church....Fourthly, that a person can gain in this life final beatitude in every degree of perfection that he will obtain in the life of the blessed. Fifthly, that any intellectual nature in itself is naturally blessed, and that the soul does not need the light of glory to elevate it to see God... Sixthly, that the practice of virtues belongs to the state of imperfection and the perfect soul is free from virtues. Seventhly, that to kiss a woman is a mortal sin since nature does not incline one to it, but the act of intercourse is not a sin, especially in time of temptation, since it is an inclination of nature. Eighthly, that at the

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piety; 2) as a spur to religion and an effective tool against disbelief and heresy; and 3) as a guide to the changing character of Catholic sainthood in response to contemporary social and political conditions."

<sup>66</sup>For a development of the Beguines in France and Marguerite Porete's affiliation with them, see Marguerite Porete, The Mirror of Simple Souls, translated and introduced by Ellen L. Babinsky (NY/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1993), 5-26.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 5. See Romana Guarnieri, *La Vita*, 348-353.

<sup>68</sup>Tanner, 375, art. 16.

elevation of the body of Jesus Christ, they ought not to rise or show reverence to it.<sup>69</sup>

Thus, one can see why Berengario, considering Clare's ability to answer difficult questions brought forth by noted theologians and scholars, has her address the problem of impeccability and quietism. Berengario not only emphasizes her obedience, disciplinary practices, continued devotion to God through prayer even while doing manual labor, but also her dedication and practice of the virtues, especially virginity, and her reverence and love of the Eucharist.

Berengario also emphasized Clare's love of the Trinity, even to the point of using words similar to those of Canon #1 of Lateran IV to describe what Clare believed.<sup>70</sup> Clare had a vision of the Trinity (Vita, 102) which her confessor attested to, but which he could not remember or understand, but which he placed within the teachings of the Church (Vita, 169). Basically, Clare's connection to the Trinity does not come from her own words and actions, but from having been seen in the presence of the Trinity in the visions of others.<sup>71</sup>

The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) promulgated regulations on the recitation of the Divine Office. Although the nuns of the monastery did not have a breviary until 1305 (Vita, 346; Nessi, PC, 570), the sisters recited the canonical hours faithfully, either by reciting Our Fathers or by using Psalms and readings which they had memorized (PC arts. 65, 123; Vita, 345; Nessi, PC, 562, 565-6).<sup>72</sup> After the purchase of the breviary, Clare taught her sisters to read and they prayed the Divine Office "in the custom of the Roman Church."<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 383-384, art. 28.

<sup>70</sup>Vita, 169: in qua quidem vidi deum trinum in persones, et unum in substantia, et dei essentiam in gloria infinita. Lateran IV: tres quidem personae sed una essentia, substantia seu natura simplex omnino.

<sup>71</sup>These were the visions of Margherita (Biography in Nessi, PC, 620) and Paula (Biography in Nessi, PC, 627) as found in Vita, 450.10-14; 455.28-457.2; 513.1-26; 514.1-6. The discovery of the three stones found in Clare's gall bladder after her death, which both ecclesiastical and civil leaders pronounced as being symbols of the Trinity (PC art. 162 and 312; Witnesses #1, 38, 39, 59, 62, 67) also contributed to the necessity of mentioning Clare's belief in the Trinity.

<sup>72</sup>Nessi, PC, 562, 565-566.

<sup>73</sup>Vita, 346: secundum consuetudines romane ecclesie.



The Second Council of Lyons, in attempting to reiterate the Church's teachings for the Greeks, emphasized the doctrine of purgatory.<sup>74</sup> According to the visions of Clare, she often saw the Lord judging souls, and the status of those souls (*Vita*, 99, 290). In one case, while her sister Giovanna was still living, a man who had recently lost his wife asked the sisters to pray for her. While at prayer, Clare saw the woman in purgatory, but because of Clare's prayers and the man's good deeds, the woman's time of punishment was soon over, and she was taken up into heaven (*Vita*, 99). Another time, having cried for three days after the death of her sister, Clare saw a burning torch moving up into heaven, symbolizing Giovanna, her sister, reaching the Beatific Vision (*Vita*, 170; PC 262.1-4). Thus, Berengario stressed the prevalent beliefs of the Church and of Clare regarding heaven, purgatory and hell.

During the time of these four Councils, different forms of religious life for men and women developed. Pope Innocent III approved the rules for the three distinct groups of the Humiliati, as well as other groups of lay penitents.<sup>75</sup> Innocent III also approved the First Order of St. Francis in 1209, while Gregory IX approved the Second and Third Order rules of the groups founded by St. Francis.<sup>76</sup> During the time of Alexander IV (1254-1261) numerous houses of religious women of Augustinians and Benedictines in the Spoleto valley were approved by either the pope or local bishop (*Nessi*, PC, 534). In 1296, Pope Boniface VIII entrusted the care of the female monasteries of the Spoleto area to the Friars Minor (*Nessi*, PC, 542), even though the Augustinians had been present in the area since 1249 (*Nessi*, PC, 543). The Augustinian religious communities, both male and female, were placed under the protectorate of Cardinal Pietro Colonna by Celestine V in 1294 and he was reinstated to that office once again by Clement V (*Nessi*, PC, 571).

During this time, the Franciscans were divided into two factions related to the question of the correct living of Franciscan poverty. The Council of Vienne addressed this question in the Franciscan order and all religious orders, but even after this debate and conclusions from the

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<sup>74</sup>Conway, 192-193.

<sup>75</sup>*Nessi*, PC, 533; Stewart, 115-117, 119, 185. Stewart, 365-371, also gives the complete Bull of Approbation.

<sup>76</sup>Fortini, 300; Stewart, 69.

Council of Vienne, the controversy continued into the papacy of John XXII.<sup>77</sup> Thus, Berengario stressed Clare's allegiance to the Augustinian Order rather than any affiliation with the Franciscan community.<sup>78</sup>

Throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the Church attacked the prevalent heresies of their day. Another example of Berengario's need to show Clare's continuing faithfulness to the Church is a lengthy discussion on the sect of the Free Spirit and Clare's refutation of that heresy. Clare's relationship and confrontation with the heresy of the Free Spirit will be discussed more fully in a later chapter.

Conclusion to Section 1. In summarizing the context of the sources of Clare's life, as written by Berengario, it is important to note the following: First of all, medieval writers of lives of the saints wished to show the saint as an example of following Christ and/or living a virtuous life. "wherein questions of historical accuracy were subordinated to the demonstration of the turning of a soul to God, its triumph over sin, and its journey toward spiritual perfection."<sup>79</sup> In Clare's case, emphasis was placed on her agreement with Church doctrine.

Secondly, Clare's process of canonization and biography were both written within ten years of her death and during the time of upheaval within the Catholic Church. This tumult was caused not only by the location of the papacy in France, but also by the presence of the conflict in the Franciscan tradition in regard to the Spirituals and the question of the correct way of living the poverty of Saint Francis. The presence of different heretical sects in Italy, especially that of the sect of the Free Spirit again made it necessary for Berengario to stress the orthodox beliefs of Clare.

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<sup>77</sup>Tanner, 391-401, art. 38, gives the Church's stance on the living out of poverty according to the "rule and life of the Friars Minor" as well as observing "poverty, humility and the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, which we have firmly promised." Philip F. Mulhern, Dedicated Poverty (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1973), 97-131.

<sup>78</sup>The question whether Clare of Montefalco is Augustinian or Franciscan has no relevance in this thesis.

<sup>79</sup>Kate Greenspan, "Matre Donante: The Embrace of Christ as the Virgin's Gift in the Visions of 13th-Century Italian Women." Studia Mystica 13/2,3 (Summer/Fall, 1990), 36. Cf Frederick G. McLeod, "How to Read the Lives of the Saints of Old," Review for Religious 53/3 (May-June, 1994): 402-414.

Thirdly, the Acta of the four Councils of the Church which occurred during Clare's lifetime are well preserved. One must be aware of the ramifications of these Councils on Berengario as a representative of the hierarchical structure of the Church.

Having looked closely at the hagiographical context of Clare's biography, we are now ready to examine the primary sources used in this thesis. This will be done through emphasizing their dates of completion, the preparation of the critical editions, as well as a brief look at their format, style, content and language.

## Section 2. The Sources.

Date of Completion. The text for the Process of Canonization was completed after the apostolic process of canonization of Clare of Montefalco, which was held from 6 September 1318 until July 1319.<sup>80</sup> However, there were information-gathering processes held prior to 1318. The first, occurring five days after her death, was a local one held on 22 August 1308 by the civil authorities of Montefalco, after finding the symbols of the Passion of Christ in the heart of Clare. Berengario, hearing of the finding of the symbols of the Passion and the Trinity in Clare's body, came to Montefalco, set up a questionnaire and held the first informative process between 1309 and 1315. Delegates were then sent by Cardinal Napoleone Orsini to Pope John XXII, and the first inquisition of the Curia was conducted between 1316 and 1317. From this inquisition, ending in the promulgation of two Papal Bulls, the apostolic process began. The first, *Magna nobis exultationis*, was given in Avignon on 25 October 1317. The second, *Dudum vobis*, was given in Avignon on 22 March 1318. Finally, Berengario was allowed to continue the process of canonization, and completed the questioning of the witnesses in Montefalco in the Church of the Friars Minor.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>Clare of Montefalco had four other canonization proceedings, those of 1331, 1743, and 1854, but she was not canonized until 1881. For a complete history of these canonization proceedings, see Enrico Menestò, PC, XXII-XLV; Menestò, "I processi per la canonizzazione di Chiara da Montefalco: A proposito della documentazione trecentesca ritrovata" Studi Medievali 23 (1982): 983-1000; Carlos Alonso, "Il processo medievale di canonizzazione di Sta. Chiara da Montefalco" Analecta Augustiniana 46 (1983): 401-410.

<sup>81</sup>Pazzelli, The Franciscan Sisters, 34.

There are various opinions regarding the dating of Berengario's *Vita*. Battista Piergili, author of a 1640 biography of Clare, and Luke Wadding, author of the *Annales Minorum* in 1637, specify the date to be 1310, while Michelle Faloci Pulignani, author of an 1884-1885 biography, says it was written between 1315 and 1316. Pietro Tommaso de Töth, author of a 1908 biography, gives the date to be before 1316 and Silvestro Nessi specifies the date of writing to be between 1310 and 1315.<sup>82</sup> According to Berengario, however, the date of the writing took place after the completion of the first informative process, which was held between 1309 and 1315. Berengario states:

At that moment...I knew the will of God in this task; namely, that I must inquire about the life and miracles of Clare....Thus I began to inquire, recalling witnesses. From the words of the witnesses, I compiled what is contained in the following....I inserted only what I perceived from the words of the witnesses....I preserved the truth of the facts and spoken words.<sup>83</sup>

Menestò also studied the "first inquisition" held by Cardinal Napoleone Orsini between 1316 and 1317. This inquisition of twelve witnesses included the questioning of Ubertino da Casale (Witness #5), Angelo Tignosi (Witness #2) and Andrea Tignosoni (Witness #10), whose testimony was also included in the apostolic process held between 1318 and 1319.<sup>84</sup> With these

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<sup>82</sup>Enrico Menestò, "Problemi per un'edizione critica della *Vita* di Chiara da Montefalco scritta da Béranger de Saint-Affrique," in *La Spiritualità di S. Chiara da Montefalco* (Montefalco: Monastero S. Chiara, 1986), 205.

<sup>83</sup>*Vita*, 90-91: Et in ipso instanti...cognovi voluntatem dei in isto negotio, me scilicet debere inquirere super vita et miraculis sancte clare predictae....Ex tunc ergo cepi inquirere, testes examinaui aliquos de receptis, licet paucos de pluribus. Et de dictis testium compilavi que in subsequentibus continentur....nichil nisi fallar inserui nisi que solum ex dictis testium comprehendi....ut veritatem factorum et dictorum verborum in sua origine verius conservarem.

<sup>84</sup>Menestò, *Problemi*, 207. Although Ubertino da Casale (a Friar Minor who later joined the Benedictine order) is mentioned by name as responding to Article 212 (PC, 32), there is no record of his testimony. However, Berengario mentions him in the *Vita* (*Vita*, 450-451) as being cured of a groin hernia through the intercession of Clare. Angelo Tignoni was not a witness at the process of 1318-1319, but is mentioned by name in the *Process* in articles 60, 97, 99, and 126 by Sisters Johanna (Witness #1), Marina (Witness #38) and Tommasa (Witness #39) and in the *Vita* (297, 453). Andrea Tignosone, a Friar Minor, who was the father of Sister Andreola (whom Clare raised from the dead so that Andreola could speak with her father [PC, 60, 145, 228-230) and the chaplain of the monastery of St. Clare, was mentioned by name in the *Process* in articles 2, 5, 118 and 119 by Sisters Johanna, Marina and Tommasa, as well as in the

two historical references in hand, Menestò thus concludes that the *Vita* was begun in 1315 and finished after 1317.<sup>85</sup>

Critical Editions. Enrico Menestò compiled the critical edition of the Process of Canonization from four manuscripts discovered in the Archivio Segreto Vaticano.<sup>86</sup> He includes the following in the development of the critical edition: vocalisms (the use of the vowels) in the text, the use of consonants, groups of consonants and vowels, morphology (the internal structure of words), syntax, special spellings, and a lexicon of words which the witnesses used, which were more Italian than Latin.<sup>87</sup> Thus, in most of the text, the main language used is Latin, with some of the words of Clare written in pre-Italian.

Up to the present time, there are four manuscripts available from which the critical edition of the *Vita* was compiled: Codex n.2 in the monastery of St. Clare of Montefalco, from the first half of the fourteenth century; the Vaticano Barberiniano Latino 383 and the Casanatense 21, both from the end of the fourteenth century; the Parigino Latino 896 from the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>88</sup> From these four manuscripts, three critical editions of the *Vita* have been prepared: that of Faloci Pulignani in 1884-1885, De Töth in 1908, and finally Alfonso Semenza in 1940.<sup>89</sup> Menestò considers Semenza's critical edition the best of the three, since Semenza does not alter the errors that the Montefalco codex passed on, but does footnote the errors with both the reasons for the changes, as well as the manuscripts in which the changes were found.<sup>90</sup>

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testimony of Phillipus Andree [sic] (Witness #214), a merchant from Montefalco, and Nicola (Witness #231), the rector of the church of St. Silvester in Montefalco.

<sup>85</sup>Menestò, *Problemi*, 207.

<sup>86</sup>PC, LXXIV-CIV.

<sup>87</sup>See also Menestò, PC XLV-LXXIII, and Menestò, *I processi*, 971-983, 1000-1021, for further clarification.

<sup>88</sup>Menestò, *Problemi*, 209.

<sup>89</sup>*Ibid.*, 209-210.

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*, 210. The variations occurred because of the changes of names from *beatus Ludovicus* with *beatus Nicholaus de Tolentino*, as well as *Franciscus* with *Augustinus*, and *fratres minores*

Format, Style, and Content. Although both the *Vita* and the *Process* contain the life, virtues and miracles of Clare of Montefalco, there are differences in both format and content between the two documents. While the *Process* is written in formal, repetitive statements and contains the testimony given under oath of 486 witnesses (although only 419 are given by name) in regard to 315 particular articles,<sup>91</sup> the *Vita* is written in narrative prose style.<sup>92</sup> It is interesting to note that the witnesses include 42 clergy and religious, while the remainder are from the laity, rich and poor, learned and uneducated.<sup>93</sup> Secondly, because of the historical context in which Berengario is writing, and the fact that he wishes to present Clare to the Roman curia in the best possible way, there were some things that are stressed in the *Vita*, which are barely mentioned in the *Process*.

For example, the *Vita* mentions the fact that Clare had a vision of the Trinity. She did not remember the particulars of the vision, but Berengario stresses the fact that Clare did not show anything contrary to the teachings of the early Church Fathers. Berengario states that Clare "saw God, three in persons, one in substance, and the being of God in infinite glory."<sup>94</sup>

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with *heremitani* or *predicadores*. See Leonardi, *Chiara e Berengario*, 375 and Leonardi, "Menzogne agiografiche: il caso di Chiara da Montefalco,": in *Fälschungen im Mittelalter* (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1988), 435-437.

<sup>91</sup>PC, 3-33, contains the specific statements relating to the life, virtues and miracles. PC, CLXXXIII-CLXXXVI presents a table of the articles and the witnesses who discussed them. PC, LIII-LXVI lists the names of the witnesses and their place of origin. Menestò, CLVII, states that Francesco (Witness #45) and Tommaso Boni (Witness #160) differ from the other witnesses, the former responds to only seven articles, while the latter negatively responds to Clare's holiness.

<sup>92</sup>Guarnieri, *La Vita*, 356-367, presents the hypothesis that the *Vita* of Clare of Montefalco is patterned after the *Vita* of Marie Oignies, written by Jacques de Vitry in the early thirteenth century. However, one could also state that the *Vita* was modeled on that of Saint Martin, Bishop, in Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, Volume II, translated by William Granger Ryan (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 292-300.

<sup>93</sup>Ottorino Pietro Alberti, "Il processo apostolico di Chiara da Montefalco." in *La spiritualità di S. Chiara da Montefalco*, 19-20.

<sup>94</sup>*Vita*, 169: In qua quidem videt deum trinum in personis, et unum in substantia, et dei essentiam in gloria infinita.

The only mention of the Trinity in the Process relates to the finding of the three gallstones in Clare's gall bladder after her death.<sup>95</sup> Likewise, the only mention of the Holy Spirit in the Process is in relationship to Clare's gift of prophecy and insight, and her capability of being able to discuss Sacred Scripture and deep theological questions with great discernment with both clerical and lay scholars, despite her lack of formal training.<sup>96</sup>

Berengario gives a long discussion between Marina (Witness #38) and Clare on the Holy Eucharist. As was discussed in Chapter 1, Clare presents the doctrine of transubstantiation, and also states that she not only believes with great faith, but also knows the truth through divine inspiration.<sup>97</sup>

Even though the objectivity of the Process may be lost in the historical reconstruction of the *Vita*, the *Vita* itself contains valuable information necessary to get a true picture of Clare of Montefalco. We must continually be aware of the fact that Berengario is pushing the canonization of Clare forward. Thus, the *Vita* will be nuanced, for example, with statements about Clare's orthodoxy, in order to stress her allegiance to the Catholic Church in a time when heresy was present in this part of Italy. Since the *Vita* was written so closely to the actual time of Clare's death, and given the fact that it was written by Berengario, who was responsible for the proceedings of the Apostolic canonization process, I believe that the *Vita* gives a reliable picture of her life, that is, it is the "history of a life not the testimony of the history of a cult."<sup>98</sup>

It is also important to look closely at how Clare's life bridges the gap between the life of a lay penitent and the monastic life, because this may present another bridge to the development

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<sup>95</sup>PC, 89-91, 155-6, 248-9, 317, 322, 341-2.

<sup>96</sup>PC 42-4, 136-7, 211-2, 278, 279-286, 333-4; *Vita*, 172. It is interesting to note that, after Clare's death, religious women, especially Paula of the monastery of St. John in Spoleto, saw Clare ascending into the presence of the Trinity (*Vita*, 393, 450, 455-457, 513, 514).

<sup>97</sup>*Vita* 344-5.

<sup>98</sup>Leonardi, *Chiara e Berengario*, 372: "...sono testimoni della storia di un culto piuttosto che testimonianza di una vita. Menestò, CLVIX, also attests to the fact that Clare's earlier images, both in words and in her iconography remain faithful to the saint's image, both in the *Vita* and the Process. One could compare this to the nuances added to the various lives and images of Francis of Assisi.

of her spirituality and her knowledge of God. Since she lived the life of a lay penitent for over 16 years of her life, and she lived the monastic life for the final 18 years of her life, it is possible to connect her experiences as both a lay penitent and a monastic recluse in terms of the development of her own theological stance.

Conclusion to Chapter 2. Both the *Vita* and the *Process* stress Clare's love of the Passion of Christ and, in the testimony of her brother, Francesco, this love of the Passion of Christ stems from Clare's compassion with the suffering God.<sup>99</sup> It is important to remember that Francesco, Clare's brother and a Franciscan teacher of theology, sees Clare's life through theological eyes. Thus, his testimony in the *Process* is affected by the dominant theological categories of the day. For example, he stresses the virtues that Clare practiced by delineating the three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, as well as the four cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. No other witness comes at Clare's life of virtue from this point of view. Although Berengario recognizes Clare's life as virtuous, he does not see her primarily through theological categories, but rather through the current orthodox issues of Church. He represents both the episcopal and legal aspects of the Church, which can be seen both in the types of questions he prepared for the witnesses as well as the way he presents Clare's life in the *Vita*. Berengario needs to present Clare to the Church as a fit representative of orthodoxy in her life and in her miracles.

Nevertheless, in both the *Vita* and the *Process*, we are given a picture of Clare as totally dedicated to her wish to be united with God, which, for Clare, seemed to stem from her commitment to the Passion of Jesus Christ. Finally, both the *Vita* and the *Process* present a picture of Clare both in the history of the Church and in Christian spirituality, as shall be seen in the final three chapters of this thesis.<sup>100</sup>

There are, however, other sections in the *Process* and the *Vita*, which are not in such close alignment, which we need to address more carefully. We recognize that the *Process*

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<sup>99</sup>PC, 274. See Leonardi, *Chiara e Berengario*, 379-382.

<sup>100</sup>Alberti, 29, 32-35.



presents a history of the life of a saint, from people who actually knew, spoke and even lived with Clare. It developed through the asking of 315 specific questions, answered under oath by people who knew her most of her life,<sup>101</sup> and contained an objectivity not present in the *Vita*. The *Process* does contain contact with the witnesses, and it was available to Berengario in the *Vita*, even though it is clearly a hagiographical profile of Clare, her life and miracles.<sup>102</sup>

If we look at one example presented in the *Process* as Question #112, we can see the differences of presentation found in the *Process* and then modified by Berengario in the *Vita*. Question 112 deals with Clare's confrontation with Bentivengna, the leader of the sect of the Free Spirit, and specifically addresses the concept of sin and whether men and women are able to commit sin. Two of the four people whose testimony is available spoke at length concerning this confrontation, namely Sister Thomassa and Father Francisco. The former attests to the confrontation without stating any exact words of Clare, while the latter presents a lengthy and heartfelt response which treats of sin as mortally offending God's creation, transgressing God's mandates and resisting the pleasures of living in the divine will (PC 287-288). In the *Vita*, however, Berengario presents a more scholastic-type response from Clare which deals with the ordering of one's will to God (*Vita*, 340-341), as well as stressing the fact that sin replaces true freedom and makes one a slave to the devil (*Vita*, 341). Even though Berengario uses different language from Clare, he is reliable in presenting the truth of what Clare has said.

Berengario was responsible for the initiation of the apostolic process of canonization. The introduction to the *Vita* presents a picture of a man who struggled with himself to begin the apostolic process. Recognizing Clare's holiness and the need to have an historical record of her life and miracles for posterity's sake, Berengario, nevertheless, was hesitant to begin this process for four reasons: 1) his ignorance of what the process entailed; 2) his wish that the bishop and the sisters of Clare's monastery would not be scandalized; 3) his concern over the

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<sup>101</sup>We are looking at 158 of these questions, since the remainder of the questions deal directly with the finding of the signs of the Passion in heart and her miracles.

<sup>102</sup>Alberti, 29-31. Alberti, 31, also presents the importance of the *Process* from a linguistic point of view. Menestò sees the *Process* as containing both the social and hagiographic points of view (CLV) as well as two authoritarian points of view, namely, the people of God and the ecclesiastical authority (CLVI).

fact that the inquiry would be paid for by the sisters of the monastery, who lived very poorly; and 4) his conviction that the process was the concern of the Curia, not the local bishop, under whom he served (Vita, 88-89). Berengario spent considerable time praying over this dilemma in order to find out God's will for him and for Clare. After seeing Clare in a vision, resplendently clothed in white and praying before the altar of God, he received consolation and felt very peaceful, knowing that he must write Clare's story (Vita, 90-91).

Berengario has given us a clue into his reasons for looking into Clare's life and miracles, since he felt himself impelled to tell Clare's story. At this time in hagiographical history, he was also at an advantage. He could present Clare's life of virtues and her miracles, but, instead of giving them a pious and devotional backdrop, he could bring out her fidelity to the Church by delineating, in lengthy detail, her confrontation with those who were unfaithful to the Church's teaching.<sup>103</sup> He could present Clare as a bloodless martyr, who defended the Faith with words and deeds, rather than with her own blood.<sup>104</sup>

Berengario was dependent on the testimony given by the 480 witnesses at Clare's apostolic process. We sense that he is a reliable source not only because he has told us that he had "preserved the truth of the facts and the spoken words in their true source."<sup>105</sup> but also because the witnesses attested to the truth of their testimony, given under oath, in the presence of notaries and within the judicial system of the times. In fact, this objective atmosphere gives credibility to the hagiographer of the thirteenth century. Michael Goodich, in his definitive study on thirteenth century hagiography, states: "The canonization trials and official biographies which were the product of learned religion adhered to new standards of judicial

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<sup>103</sup>Goodich, 8, states that the "confirmation of papal standards for sainthood, the rise of scholasticism, the continuing barbs of the heretics, the conflict of religious orders and the rise of newly enfranchised social classes tended to free the thirteenth century hagiographer from pious convention, and to enhance his trustworthiness."

<sup>104</sup>In PC art. 116, Sisters Johanna, Marina and Thomassa attest to Clare's desire to die a martyr's death in defense of the Faith.

<sup>105</sup>Vita,91: ...fallar [sic] inserui nisi que solum ex dictis testium comprehendí quinimmo et ea que ex dictis testium sunt collecta salvis tamen substantialibus in quantum potui coartavi de impolito stilo dictaminis nichil curans ut veritatem factorum et dictorum verborum in sua origine verius conservarem.

accuracy and objectivity."<sup>106</sup> In speaking of the role of the hagiographer of the thirteenth century, Goodich also states that:

the contemporary hagiographer also performed an educational role, aimed at a church increasingly subjected to the criticism of heretics and non-believers. His work therefore had to be based upon reliable testimony, which could not be easily undermined; this fact considerably enhances the value of the saints' lives of the thirteenth century as a source of historical data.<sup>107</sup>

We also realize that there are certain conventions placed on Berengario as the official hagiographer. He must address the status of Clare's life of virtues and her miracles. After all, Berengario is presenting Clare as a candidate for canonization. He is also bound by the demands of the papacy in showing her as a true daughter of the church, hence his adherence to the literary style of the scholastic theologian in his presentation of Clare's confrontation with the heretics.

Thus, both the *Vita* and the *Process*, written within ten years of Clare's death, present a picture of Clare's words and deeds according to the canons of the day regarding these two works, even though direct quotations of Clare's words are much too sparse. The intent of both these documents is to present Clare as a holy woman and worthy of canonization. Although there are differences between the literary style of the documents, both documents present Clare as an orthodox believer of the Catholic Church, who, despite her lack of formal theological training, is able to converse with both the learned and the so-called illiterate people of her times. It is from these two documents that this thesis will determine the explicit and/or implicit theology of Clare of Montefalco.

We have placed Clare in the cultural, religious and ecclesiastical setting of her day. We have covered the provenance of the primary sources about Clare, and the effects of medieval hagiography on her words and deeds. We are now ready to move into the heart of the thesis; namely, the quest for her theology. In order to do this, it is necessary to look at Clare in the tradition of the theologians of her day, and decide if Clare can be placed into any of these categories. This is the task of Chapter Three.

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<sup>106</sup>Goodich, 4.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., 68.

## CHAPTER 3

### PLACING CLARE OF MONTEFALCO IN THE FRAMEWORK OF MEDIEVAL THEOLOGY

Clare of Montefalco left no writings, either from her own hand or by dictation to those who knew her. Even though Sister Johanna, who succeeded Clare as abbess, was her secretary (Vita, 399), Clare's thoughts about God, the Church, the sacraments and living the Christian life were not written down in any orderly fashion. Clare was considered to be illiterate, not only because of her unfamiliarity with the Latin language, but because she did not have the university schooling available to the lay and religious men of the times.<sup>1</sup> She herself addressed her lack of knowledge concerning Sacred Scripture (PC art. 126; PC 68.28-69.1; Vita. 342-3), but the witnesses at her Process of Canonization verified that "her words were living words, subtle, profound and in agreement with divine Scripture and the holy Fathers [of the Church]."<sup>2</sup>

Clare was also not in sympathy with any type of theological speculation that would diminish a person's devotion to God. She said to her brother, Francesco: "I would have greater consolation if you were a lay kitchen friar with a good spirit and fervor of devotion, than if you

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<sup>1</sup>Rosario Sala, "Esperienze e parole di Chiara," in *S. Chiara da Montefalco: Dove ci porta il cuore*, edited by Giuseppe Zois (Edizioni Ritter, 1995), believes that Clare knew how to read and write because of her family background, but that she spoke the local dialect of Montefalco rather than the dialect of Umbria. Mariateresa Fumagalli Beano-Brocchieri, "The Feminine Mind in Medieval Mysticism," in *Creative Women in Medieval and Early Modern Italy: A Religious and Modern Renaissance*, edited by E. Ann Matter and John Coakley (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 29, states that the lack of formal education is a "sociological fact, not a cultural one....The paths of culture did not belong exclusively, even then, to the schools; nor should we forget that the direct or indirect knowledge of Augustine alone...was already a vehicle of philosophical culture." McGinn, *Flowering*, 323, fn 12-13, discusses three kinds of medieval literacy, including the professional reader (the scholar), the cultivated reader (the recreational reader), and the pragmatic reader (the business reader).

<sup>2</sup>PC art. 60:...et verba eius erant verba viva, subtilia, profunda et consonantia Scripture divine et sanctorum Patrum. Dominican Brother Neapoleo of Spoleto concurs. PC art. 126; PC 68.27-69.1; 124.10-125.2; 146.31-147.7; 199.8-200.6; 232.8-22; 277.14-16; 360.18-361.3; 363.17-24; 368.24; 472.9-13; Vita, 171.

were one of the greatest of teachers."<sup>3</sup> Clare, like the Early Fathers, Francis of Assisi, St. Bonaventure, and the monastic theologians understood that the final goal of knowledge is growth into the love of God.<sup>4</sup>

Thus this chapter will determine if Clare can be considered a theologian in any sense of that term. We will first look to those people who knew Clare well. Therefore, we begin with a description of the important witnesses who attest to Clare's theological capabilities. Do these witnesses have the credibility to speak in Clare's defense? Secondly, we need to look more closely at the three types of theology present in Clare's time; namely, speculative, monastic, and vernacular. Thirdly, we need to see if we can place Clare in the context of any or all these types of theology and if we can also attest to the witnesses' credibility in addressing Clare as a theologian. If we can do this, then it should be possible to conclude that Clare is a theologian and be able to describe a method which can be used to explore Clare in her theological role. The final section of this chapter will center on a description of such a method.

Section 1: Witnesses to Clare as a Theologian. Article 126 of the Process states: "Clare responded subtly, truthfully and deeply to difficult questions in theology when she was asked. and often many teachers and those expert in theology sought holy Clare. and holy Clare

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<sup>3</sup>PC 272.28-30: Et dico tibi pro parte mea quod maiorem consolationem haberem si tu esses laicus et coquinarius fratrum cum uno bono spiritu et fervore devotionis. quam si esses de quibuscunque lectoribus unus maior.

<sup>4</sup>Augustine, On Christian Doctrine (NY/London: Macmillan/ Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1958), 73, states that those "who [do] not turn all [their] knowledge toward the praise and love of one God from whom [they know] that everything is derived - [these] may seem learned. But [they are] in no way wise." Francis of Assisi, in his letter to Anthony of Padua, 79, states: "It pleases me that you teach theology to the brothers, as long as - in the words of the Rule - you 'do not extinguish the Spirit of prayer and devotion' with study of this kind." Francis of Assisi in Bonaventure, Life of St. Francis, in The Soul's Journey into God, The Tree of Life, The Life of St. Francis, translated by Ewert Cousins (NY: Paulist, 1978), 281, also states: "I want my friars to be disciples of the Gospel and to progress in knowledge of the truth in such a way as to increase in pure simplicity." Trapé, La teologia di S. Chiara in S. Chiara da Montefalco e il suo tempo, 425, quoting Augustine states: Amate scientiam, sed anteponite caritatem (love knowledge, but place love before it). St. Bonaventure, in The Soul's Journey, states: "But if you wish to know how these things come about, ask grace not instruction."

satisfied them and responded sufficiently and well."<sup>5</sup> Clare's brother, Francesco, himself a teacher of theology, emphasized Clare's ability to answer his questions on theology and Sacred Scripture more clearly than what he could find in the writings or doctrines of others (PC 276.30-277.16). Sisters Johanna, Marina and Thomassa, nuns of her monastery, attest to the fact that they were present at the grate when Clare spoke to some of the learned men and she spoke words that were so "profound, pleasing and agreeable"<sup>6</sup> that both the sisters and the visitors were greatly moved by them (PC 68.27-69.1; 124.10-125.2; 146.31-147.7; 199.8-200.6; 232.8-22; 472.9-30).

Although there were 486 witnesses mentioned in the documents for the Process of Canonization of 1318, only five of these witnesses have extensive testimonies. Besides the testimony of Francesco, Clare's brother and a Friar Minor (PC 266-299: witness #45), there are four extant testimonies from sisters who had lived with Clare: Sister Johanna, witness #1 (PC 34-95); Sister Marina, witness #38 (PC 97-166); Sister Thomassa, witness #39 (PC 166-262); Sister Francesca, witness #67 (PC 329-348). Sister Johanna, Clare's secretary and the sister who succeeded Clare as abbess, was a relative of Clare's (PC, 602-603) who not only testified at the apostolic process of canonization at 1318, but also at the diocesan process of 1309. Her incomplete testimony covers the years of Clare's life from 1297 until Johanna's death in 1345. As Clare's secretary, Johanna was privy to many things that were not known by the other sisters and Johanna was constantly at Clare's side during her illnesses and at her deathbed (PC, 617). Clare had also cured Johanna of tuberculosis (PC art. 120). Sister Marina, a childhood friend of Clare's, was with Clare in the first reclusorio, having entered around 1280 (PC 100.14-101.5), and, therefore, was present at all the events of the last 28 years of Clare's life. Sister Thomassa, who entered the second reclusorio in 1282, was very knowledgeable of the facts surrounding Clare, since she was present for most of Clare's adult life (PC art. 35). However she was not

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<sup>5</sup>PC art. 126:...ipsa sancta Clara subtiliter, veraciter et profunde respondebat de mangnis [sic] et arduis questionibus in theologia, quando interrogabatur, et quandoque veniebant ad eam mangni lectores et periti in theologia, petentes ab ipsa sancta Clara, et ipsa sancta Clara satisfaciebat eis et respondebat bene et sufficienter [sic].

<sup>6</sup>PC 124.17: ...profundas, delectabiles et amenas...

present at her death, since she was taking care of the grate at that time (PC art. 159). Sister Francesca had lived with the saint for only two years (PC art. 3). However, she was the daughter of the doctor who had cared for Clare for many years (PC 330.18-20).

Besides these people who spent much time with Clare on a day-to-day basis, other people, on meeting with Clare, found her to be quite knowledgeable about matters pertaining to Scripture and theology. Brother Provenzano, a Dominican brother from Spoleto, not only preached to the sisters of the monastery but also spoke with Clare, "from whom he heard words of great devotion and in agreement with Sacred Scripture, that his mind was inflamed to devotion, and he was astounded about this."<sup>7</sup> Likewise, Lord Bartolo of Spoleto, a lawyer, witnessed that he had spoken to many other teachers of theology, but they did not speak as well about divine things as Clare did (PC 363.23-24).<sup>8</sup> Tommaso of Gubbio, her confessor, to whom Clare confided her mystical experiences, often discussed Scripture with her, and was so pleased with Clare's responses that he said that "Solomon could not have answered better."<sup>9</sup> Finally, Ubertino da Casale, who was the chaplain for Cardinal Napoleone Orsini and the resident theologian for Cardinal Pietro Colonna (PC, 625), both known to Clare, said: "Truly the knowledge of this lady surpasses that of our theologians!"<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>PC 360.20-361.3: post predicationem vero locutus fuit dictus testis dicte s. Clare, a qua audivit verba mangne [sic] devotionis et consonantia Sacre Scripture, que verba accendebant mentem eius ad devotionem, et ex hoc dictus testis multum mirabatur. See PC, 623, for a short biography on Brother Provenzano.

<sup>8</sup>Bartolo had known Clare's sister, Giovanna, and was a frequent visitor to the monastery. See PC, 607.

<sup>9</sup>PC 68.33-34:...Salomon non respondisset melius. See PC, 624-625, for a more complete biography.

<sup>10</sup>Trapè, *La teologia*, 413: Veramente la scienza di questa donna supera quella dei nostri teologi! See PC, 625, for a more complete biography of Ubertino and his relationship to Clare. Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose* (San Diego, CA: Time Warner, 1986), has Ubertino say to Brother William of Baskerville, the protagonist of the story: "Clare...When female nature, naturally so perverse becomes sublime through holiness, then it can be the noblest vehicle of grace."

Berengario, who did not know Clare personally, summarized the depositions on Clare in the following way:

Although Clare was not a learned woman, nevertheless she had clarity of the knowledge of Scriptures and ardor for love of the divine in her soul, for the mirror of life and she effectively showed the magisterium of doctrine to those who adhered to it. For the preachings of the learned sometimes seemed to be reduced into nothing, compared to the talks of Clare. She simply understood the Scriptures above human intellect to the point that she gave more beautiful talks on something, however great, by most subtle expositions. Before the death of her sister, she spoke rarely and very little. Now, because of the onus of the accepted office, she taught the other ladies most discretely.<sup>11</sup>

We can conclude that Clare was respected not only for her knowledge about Scripture and theology, but also for the clearness of her expression in speaking about Scripture and theology. They show their belief in her knowledge of Scripture and theology, and also her power to move people to do good, as her brother, Francesco so emphatically reiterates:

[The] hearts of people were effectively changed both from evil into good and from sin into the grace of God, if they were in sin, or from the good to the better, if they were in the state of virtue...if someone had a plan that was not good, it was changed into good and if someone had a plan that was good, it became better.<sup>12</sup>

We have found that the witnesses are credible, since they not only were familiar with Clare throughout their lives, but, in many cases, especially in the case of the male witnesses, they were theologians in their own right. From the people who lived with Clare and from the

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<sup>11</sup>Vita, 171: Et quamvis clara mulier licterata non esset quantum tamen lumen intelligentie scripturarum, et divini amoris ardorem habebat in anima, per vite speculum et magisterium doctrine eis qui sibi adherant effectualiter ostendebat. Nam predicationes licteratorum quantumlibet redigi videbantur in nichilum, clare sermonibus comparate. Supra intellectum humanum scripturas intelligebat subtiliter, adeo quod de re aliqua quantumcumque modica per expositiones subtilissimas sermones pulcerrimos faciebat. Et quae ante sororis obitum rarissime et parcissime loquebatur nunc propter honus [sic] suscepti officii discrete et dissertissime alias dominas instruebat.

<sup>12</sup>PC 278.3-8: quod corda hominum quorumcumque efficaciter inmutabat vel de malo in bonum et de peccato in gratiam Dei, si in peccato erant, vel de bono in melius, si in statu virtutis erant....si aliquid propositum habuisset non bonum mutabatur in bonum, et si bonum habebat accendebatur ad melius. See the testimony of witnesses 59, 72, 116, 167, 169, 175, 179, 181, 182, 185, 189, 205.



others who spoke with her about God and other spiritual matters, Clare's knowledge of theology and Scripture was accepted as being given to her by God. This was due not only because of God's great kindness and love, but also because of Clare's holiness and prayer life.<sup>13</sup>

Although many witnesses attested to the fact of Clare's knowledge of theology and Scripture, is it also possible to place her under one or more of the three theological traditions present during her historical time? We will first examine the three types of theology, and then, in the following section, examine Clare and her relationship, if any, to these theologies.

## Section 2: The Three Types of Medieval Theology Present in the Time of Clare.

The early Fathers of the Church perceived a mystic as "someone who discovers and penetrates the mystery of God and [God's] works."<sup>14</sup> Can one not also consider a theologian to have the same purpose? With this in mind, we need to examine more closely the three types of theology present in Clare's time; namely the monastic, scholastic and vernacular theologies.<sup>15</sup> Before delving into a discussion of where Clare fits in these three traditions, it is necessary to compare and contrast them with each other. This will be done through the use of a chart, which compares six particular characteristics and their components relative to each tradition. Historically, monastic theology preceded scholastic theology, which preceded vernacular

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<sup>13</sup>PC 486.2-19 states that Clare told Brother Gilius that one knows one is divinely inspired because the "soul remains in fear and reverence...that in no way does the inspiration or the suggestion of the devil bring about" (Est quando anima remanet cum tymore et cum reverentia....quod nullo modo facit inspiratio vel subgestio diaboli). Vita, 347, states that Clare's ability to read Latin, and therefore, pray the Divine Office, was also divinely infused, since she was not taught the language, had entered the reclusorio as a young child, and there were no books containing the Office until Tommaso, her confessor, presented them with a copy. Stefano Sala, "La vita dell'anima è l'amore di Dio," in S. Chiara della Croce: Maestra di vita spirituale, 23-24, states that this expertise does not come as a result of some parapsychological claim, but from Clare being a "most unique witness to Christ and from an experience of the Holy Spirit" (di una testimonianza singolarissima di Cristo e di un'esperienza dello Spirito Santo).

<sup>14</sup>Thadée Matura, Francis of Assisi: The Message in His Writings, translated by Paul Barrett (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1997), 31.

<sup>15</sup>Bernard McGinn, The Flowering of Mysticism. Men and Women in the New Mysticism-1200-1350, Volume III: The Presence of God (NY: Crossroad/Herder, 1998), 19, uses the term *vernacular theology* to indicate a type of theology used mainly by men and women mystics.

theology. However, we must also recognize two essential elements present in comparing and/or contrasting these types of theology.

First of all, there is the fact that during the time of Clare of Montefalco, all three of these types of theological traditions were present. The monastic *lectio divina* method was being occluded by the scholastic *disputatio* method, which symbolized a more intellectual approach to doing theology rather than the reflective approach promulgated by the monks and nuns of the 11th and 12th centuries. The scholastic tradition was at its peak of perfection, while the monastic tradition was waning somewhat. The vernacular tradition was emerging and gaining strength. Although the scholastic method was at its peak and would continue to be so for centuries to come, the ordinary person (not scholastically trained) was becoming more literate. Men and women, especially men and women mystics and those who wished to follow the evangelical life of preaching to the common people, needed to present the knowledge of God and how to follow the Gospel in a less scholarly, more intuitive and reflective approach.<sup>16</sup> The traditional context of the monastic theology was becoming more connected with a broader set of religious communities, whose members were less educated than the monks of the previous centuries.

Secondly, it is essential to remember that variant theological methods are never in opposition to each other, but rather they contain different nuances of doing theology. For example, if one looks at the goal or aim of each type of theology, one would recognize that the aim of all three theologies is knowledge and love of God. However, monastic theology will use the sources available to them at the time, while the scholastic tradition will add the aspect of order and summation. The vernacular language, which opened up the doors for both men and women to become more and more involved in theological reflection, as well as the vernacular translations of Scripture, would allow these men and women to come to their knowledge and love of God. This would be accomplished more through experience and reflection, rather than

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<sup>16</sup>It is not being said that the scholastic theologians were not reflective and intuitive. One can only consider the prayers of Thomas Aquinas and the Journey of a Soul into God of Bonaventure to recognize both reflection and experience in the life of a scholastic theologian. After all, the sermons of both Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure were also given to the common people.

through the logic and dialectical processes promulgated by the more scholarly approach of both monastic and scholastic followers.

Looking more closely at some of the other characteristics of monastic, scholastic and vernacular theologies by studying the chart provided,<sup>17</sup> one can see two basic similarities among the three theologies. The aim of all three is love and knowledge of God. Theologians of all three traditions begin with Scripture and the Fathers of the Church. However it is in the method and genre in which the three theologies differ.

Both the monastic and vernacular traditions pray and reflect Scripture and the Fathers of the Church through their experience, whether this be the communal experience of the monks and nuns or the lived personal experience of the lay and religious men and women in the vernacular tradition. Although the scholastic tradition is also rooted in reflection, the scholastic theologians do not necessarily deal with their own personal experience or direct their reflections toward either communal or personal experience. By reading either Thomas Aquinas or Bonaventure in their scholastic mode, one does not learn about the person of either Thomas or Bonaventure. However, when reading Bernard of Clairvaux, Julian of Norwich, or Clare and Francis of Assisi, for example, both personal and communal experiences are underpinnings of their writings.

Even though monastic and vernacular traditions move through communal and/or personal experience, the genre of these two traditions can differ. The monks promulgated their teachings through Biblical commentary and sermons, while the vernacular tradition introduced other methods of disclosure, especially through hagiographical biography or autobiography, diaries and, especially, through the use of visions. When one looks at the main body of materials from the scholastic tradition, one sees the stress placed on *summae*, rather than on letters or personal diaries. Even the sermons of Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas, for example, can be categorized through an orderly and systematic method<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>18</sup> Again, one must remember that we are looking at the body of work of a Bonaventure or Thomas Aquinas before they moved into their spiritual theology period near the end of their lives.

One can also compare and contrast these three traditions in other ways as well, but for the purpose of brevity, these specific genres relative to the three traditions will be the basic foundations to discuss the similarities and differences used in regard to judging Clare of Montefalco as a theologian.

### Section 3. Clare and Her Relationship to the Three Theologies.

Scholastic Theology. We begin with topic of Clare and scholastic theology for two reasons. First of all, Clare is considered to be an illiterate woman, since she did not have a mastery of the Latin language nor did she have any formal university training. Thus, she will probably not have much in common with this tradition. Secondly, since Clare did not leave any extant body of writings, it will also be difficult to place her in this tradition. Thus, it is impossible to see Clare as achieving the aim or goal of scholastic theology, which is scientific and logical in nature. Likewise, Clare's theological statements are not on an impersonal plane, but come from her own personal reflection and experience. Clare was not a philosopher and did not have ready access to the Fathers of the Church, except possibly through Augustine, the praying of the Divine Office (after 1305), and her study of his Rule. One would have to conclude, therefore, that Clare has no close ties to the scholastic tradition since prayer and reflection, not *quaestio* and *disputatio* were the essential elements of her way to know God.

However, both Berengario, her contemporary biographer, and Agostino Trapè, a present day Augustinian theologian, attempt to place her in this category. Trapè states that Clare of Montefalco had a definite lived theology, as do all mystics and saints,<sup>19</sup> and he also attests to Clare's lived faith, as can be found in the Process and *Vita*. This lived faith includes both her faith in God (PC art. 117; PC 64.1-5; 272.30-273.22; 280.31-281.3; Vita, 99, 100, 396) as well as her orthodox defense of the Catholic faith (PC art. 112, 116; PC 173.11-15; Vita, 342, 344, 395), even to the point of wishing for martyrdom (PC 227.16-30). Clare, in response to a statement by Bentivenga, a noted leader of the Sect of the Free Spirit, that he was afraid to preach his faith, stated: "I am not afraid. Nor am I afraid to preach my faith, which God gave

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<sup>19</sup>Trapè, *La teologia*, 410.

me, to the whole world; and indeed my faith is better than yours,"<sup>20</sup> since she perceived Bentivenga's spirit was not one of faith, but of faithlessness (Vita, 343).

However, in trying to prove that Clare had an orthodox knowledge of that faith, Trapè is limited by two areas already mentioned; that is, that there is no written material from Clare's own hand and that Clare does not approve of the use of theological speculation.<sup>21</sup> He responds to the question of the lack of writings from Clare by stating that the contemporaries of Clare, that is, "scholarly priests, attentive nuns, well-educated laity," have given, although in limited detail, some of Clare's thoughts relevant to logical/rational theology. These can be classified as both implicit sources for Clare's theology as well as explicit statements of the words of Clare by the witnesses.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, to study Clare as a speculative theologian Trapè suggests considering these implicit and explicit sources. The implicit sources will necessarily mean a closer look at both the testimony of witnesses to Clare's wisdom and knowledge, which has already been done in the previous section. This will also include looking at the visions which Clare had and which she used to teach and instruct her sisters and others who came to her. But first we will examine the explicit sources of Clare's theology, namely the direct words spoken by Clare to her sisters and other witnesses.

It has been mentioned previously that the major context of Clare's theology can be found in her instructions to her sisters and her dialogue with other people, whether religious.

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<sup>20</sup>PC 225.23-25: Ego non timeo nec timerem fidem meam predicare per totum mundum tantam fidem dedit michi Deus; et ideo melior est fides mea quam tua.

<sup>21</sup>Trapè, *La teologia*, 410.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 410-11: dotti sacerdoti, monache attenti, laici colti. Piergili. 143, in Agostino Trapè, *La teologia*, 411, also states: "It is certain that it would be possible to see many more things of her apparent doctrine relative to her knowledge of Sacred Scripture and mystical theology, if the carelessness of the people in that century had not deprived us of these treasures" (È certo, che si sarebbero potute notare molte cose altissime della sua dottrina appartenenti all'intelligenza della S. Scrittura e alla mistica teologia, se l'inavvertenza delle genti di quel secolo non avesse privato noi di questi tesori). Trapè, *La teologia*, 410-411, mentions two theologians who knew Clare well; her brother, Francesco, and the Augustinian canon, Tommaso, Clare's confessor.

clerical or lay. However, the most direct statements of Clare's scholastic tradition according to Trapè come from questions on spiritual theology, that aspect of theology comprising both ascetical and mystical theology, which were addressed by Clare in her encounter with members of the sect of the Free Spirit, especially Bentivenga. We must remember that the audience for whom Berengario is writing the *Vita*, a summary of the testimonies given in the Process, is a panel of Cardinals, some of whom knew Clare and had discussed theological questions with her.<sup>23</sup> Others had specific expectations in accepting the theology of Clare, especially in regard to her orthodoxy in teaching,<sup>24</sup> and basically in regard to the Sect of the Free Spirit.

It must be noted, however, that the speculative theological answers Clare gives in her confrontation with Bentivenga, a well-known member of the sect of the Free Spirit, are found only in the *Vita* of Berengario and not in the Process itself. The responses to Bentivenga that are found in the Process are not speculative in nature, although similar in content. Thus, one must ask whether these responses are actual responses of Clare herself or an adaptation of Clare's thoughts and words put into more scholastic theological language by Berengario, or even by her brother, Francesco, theologian and teacher of theology, in collaboration with Berengario. However, it is these responses found in the *Vita* which are used by Trapè to prove that Clare is a theologian in the speculative sense. Clare did not respond to every tenet that the sect professed, but she specifically addressed questions connected with spiritual theology: Christian liberty, the impeccability of human beings, loss of desire in the soul, and the goodness of God.<sup>25</sup>

Although Berengario, in his hagiographical *Vita*, placed Clare within the speculative

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<sup>23</sup>John Coakley, "Introduction: Women's Creativity in Religious Context," in Creative Women, 13, states that in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, there is evidence "of a positive and sympathetic interest in women's voices among the men who were in the position of mediating these to a broader audience." In Berengario's case, he wants to present Clare in the best possible theological light to the commission for her canonization.

<sup>24</sup>Katherine Gill, "Women and the Production of Religious Literature in the Vernacular, 1300-1500," in Creative Women, 65, states that "these expectations [of the audience] can direct choices of subject, genre, style and language." Noffke, 125-152, presents a series of methodological questions to ask when considering the theology of medieval women.

<sup>25</sup>These are specific topics condemned by the Council of Vienne (1311-1312). See Chapter 1. The actual responses and a longer discussion of these questions will be given in Chapter 6.

theology of the hierarchical Church and Trapè also considers her a theologian for this same reason, it is difficult to see Clare, an illiterate woman, fitting into this category. This would not be the customary place one would find a medieval woman of this period. Rather, as an enclosed religious nun it would be more probable to place her as a theologian in the monastic tradition.

Monastic Tradition. In the monastic tradition, theology is based not so much on logic and speculation, but on experience and the need to learn about God in order to draw closer into the truth and love of God.<sup>26</sup> Thus, it is more suited for the medieval religious woman of this period, who had no formal scholastic training. It is built on prayer, reflection and contemplation of the doctrines of the faith for the main purpose of becoming more deeply entrenched in this love of God.<sup>27</sup> We have seen from Clare's life as a religious and a mystic that she experienced God through prayer, reflection, events in her daily life, and, as Berengario continues to stress, in the doctrines of the faith. Her whole life was centered on God and becoming united to God through love, the goal of monastic theology.<sup>28</sup>

There are other aspects of monastic theology which show that Clare reflects characteristics of the monastic tradition rather than of the scholastic tradition. Clare's main audience was the sisters in the monastery of the Holy Cross. In a sense, then, Clare had more of a pastoral tendency in her teaching, rather than the mainly academic sense of the speculative theologian. She was most concerned about the sisters' spiritual formation rather than their intellectual development. It has been noted that she spoke with priests and other religious, as well as educated lay persons, again for the purpose of their spiritual growth. We shall find that Clare considered the subject matter of these discussions and instructions to stem from her experience as a sinner searching for God, from one searching for specific ways of

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<sup>26</sup>Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 6, 290. See Leclercq, *Renewal*, 77, 86.

<sup>27</sup>See Leclercq, *Renewal*, 68; *Love of Learning*, 7, 234, 285. The latter, 266, classifies this higher knowledge "which reaches completion in prayer and contemplation" as true *gnosis*.

<sup>28</sup>Jordan Aumann, *Spiritual Theology* (Huntington, IN: Sheed & Ward, 1980), 11, states that the "study of Christian perfection [the perfection of charity] should proceed scientifically and systematically, although its aim is not to produce scholars but to form holy Christians."

desiring God, striving to become one with [God]. Anthropological problems, problems of love, faith, the relationship of grace and free will were the major concerns. The mysteries of the faith were...mainly those associated with Christology and the Eucharist. Eschatology was dealt with because the definitive and eternal possession of God was the ultimate goal for those who consecrated their lives to seeking God alone.<sup>29</sup>

As we shall see in further chapters, it is these particular topics which Clare addresses. Her desire for God, the relationship of grace and free will, her love for the Eucharist and her total commitment to Jesus Christ are essential elements in her instructions to people. These are also the dominant elements in which Clare lives out her own spiritual life. We will also see how Clare confronted the heretics of the Free Spirit, as well as anyone else who had strayed from the teachings of the Catholic Church.

The sources of monastic theology centered on both Sacred Scripture and the Fathers of the Church.<sup>30</sup> We have no written statements that would prove that Clare was familiar with the early Church Fathers.<sup>31</sup> Clare's lack of knowledge of Scripture did not deter her brother and others asking her questions concerning the Word of God. We have already noted that she was capable of answering both theological and scriptural questions well. But, there is only one

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<sup>29</sup>Leciercq, *Renewal*, 81.

<sup>30</sup>Aumann, *Spiritual Theology*, 27-31, also delineates the following as sources for spiritual theology; namely, Tradition, dogmatic and moral theology, history of spirituality, writings of saints and mystics, experimental sources such as personal experience and the various branches of psychology.

<sup>31</sup>Trapè, *La teologia*, 423-425, states that Clare has close affiliation with St. Augustine, not only because of her following of the Rule of St. Augustine, but in her statements on free will and grace. In *La spiritualità*, Trapè states: "I have found that she [Clare] marvelously responded in the way of St. Augustine, in particular on the concept of Christian liberty, the concept concerning love which is neither ideal nor ended, the concept of Providence who acts well when allowing evil" (troviamo che essa risponde mirabilmente a quella di s. Agostino, in particolare il concetto della libertà cristiana, il concetto dell'amore che non può essere mai ozioso né mai può arrestarsi, il concetto della provvidenza che opera bene anche quando permette il male, il concetto dal rapporto). Trapè, 418, uses Augustine's *Ench.* 3, as the authority for Clare's response on the permission of God and states that Clare was in agreement with the scholastic theologians on this topic.



example from both the *Process* and the *Vita* that mentions a scripture passage and how Clare dealt with a specific question concerning this passage.

Tommaso, the canon of Gubbio, Clare's long-time confidant and confessor, asked Clare: "How was it that God could say to Moses, 'You will see my back; however, you will not see my face' (Ex 33.23)?"<sup>32</sup> To which Clare responds:

Whoever in this life sees God, nevertheless it is that they see the back of God, not that in God there is peculiarly a front or a back, but by such similitude, sometimes spoken, those who seem to see the back of God in this life are in contrast to those who see God in glory.<sup>33</sup>

Clare stated that those who have seen God, who have been enraptured in God in this life, as Clare herself has been, see only a fraction of the power and glory of God. It is only in the Beatific Vision that one will see God in all God's glory.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, in regard to Clare's modes of expression and thought processes, we will discover that Clare's theology/spirituality comes through the conversations that she had with her sisters and others. She stressed the fact that they must live humble, simple and sincere lives in

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<sup>32</sup>PC 277.19-20: *Posteriora mea videbis, faciem autem meam non videbis*. Vita, 346, words this question a little differently. It states: You will see my latter glories, however, will you not be able to see my face, when frequently, the Lord chooses to have appeared to holy persons in this life? (*Posteriora mea videbis, faciem autem meam videre non poteris, cum tamen frequenter sanctis personis in hac vita dominus apparuisse legatur?*)

<sup>33</sup>Vita, 346: *Quicquid in hac vita de deo videtur, dei tamen posteriora dicuntur ostendi, non quod in deo proprie sit anterieus vel posterius, sed per quamdam similitudinem quodammodo loquitur, quia ea que in hac vita de deo videntur posteriora videri dicuntur respectu eorum que in gloria videbuntur.*

<sup>34</sup>PC 277.20-24: Francesco explains this to mean that "the latter glories of God are those of the human and temporal, which cannot be seen by the creature, however the face of God are those divine and those spiritual things in God, which cannot be seen in this world, but that are believed and hoped for with grace, that everyone will see clearly all things in glory." (*quod posteriora Dey sunt ista humana et temporalia, que a creatura videri possunt, facies autem Dey sunt ipsius divina et ipsius spiritualia in ipso Deo, que in mundo isto videri non possunt, sed creduntur et expectantur cum gratia, quousque omnia videbit clare in gloria*).

constant service and praise of God, in order that their wills would be totally united with the will of God, and thus they would achieve total union with God.<sup>35</sup>

Although Clare lived at the end of the thirteenth century, and may have been aware of some issues of scholastic speculative theology - after all, her brother was a teacher and reader of theology - she chose to speak about God in simple and unpretentious language.<sup>36</sup> Clare used very few similes, metaphors or images in her language, as was then customary in monastic theology.<sup>37</sup> She does have visions concerning the virtues that involve the arrows of vices and virtues penetrating her heart. She sees heaven as a mountain radiating with the light of grace. Although she refers metaphorically to herself as a small boat surrounded by the sea of God's presence, in most cases, Clare uses simple direct language in her instructions and teaching.

However, it will be seen in Clare's understanding and speaking about God, Jesus Christ, creation and humanity, that she, just as the theologians in the monastic tradition, saw that the "principal purpose" of this contemplation, reflection and learning about God was not, as the contemporary scholar, Leclercq, puts it,

to reveal the mysteries of God, to explicate them or derive from them any speculative conclusions but to impregnate [her] whole [life] with them and to order [her] entire existence to contemplation.<sup>38</sup>

As we have just seen there are many characteristics present in Clare's words and actions that are also appropriate to monastic theology. We especially make note of those relative to the consistent searching for the will of God in whatever one does. For Clare, her life and her words

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<sup>35</sup>Leclercq, Love of Learning, 248-265.

<sup>36</sup>In Berengario's *Vita*, Clare addresses the leader of the sect of the Free Spirit in complicated, speculative terminology. It is difficult to believe that Clare would have spoken in these terms. It is possible that Berengario, an educated man, took Clare's beliefs and thoughts and put them into what would be considered more acceptable theological language. After all, Berengario wished to have Clare accepted by the Cardinals of the Roman Church in order that she would be recognized for her fidelity to the Church and for innate holiness.

<sup>37</sup>Leclercq, *Renewal*, 78, 82. See Leclercq, Love of Learning, 9, 245. Clare is similar in this to Francis of Assisi. See Matura, 11.

<sup>38</sup>Leclercq, Love of Learning, 279.

were constantly centered on becoming more closely united with God and everything she said or did must bring her into this closer union or must be removed from her life. It is not her intellectual life that is the dominant basis for Clare to be considered as a theologian. We must mention again her lack of educational training that was, as in scholastic theology, essential to the monastic tradition of the 11th and 12th centuries. Rather, it is her spiritual life dominated by her knowledge of God, which most lends itself as the basis for making any claim concerning Clare as a theologian. Her spiritual experiences present us with the best means of finding how Clare perceived God and God's Son, Jesus Christ. In other words, in order to discover Clare's theology, we need to look at the words and actions that are an integral part of her daily life. In order to do this most effectively, let us consider Clare in relationship to the third form of theology present in her time, namely, vernacular theology.

Vernacular Theology. Vernacular theology is described as a "different linguistic [matrix which] shaped different actualizations of an understanding of faith that was not bound to the professional schools or the cloister."<sup>39</sup> In other words, although there were diverse vernacular languages being promulgated in the thirteenth century, the goal of vernacular theology, as was the goal of both monastic and scholastic theology, was the same, namely union with God. However, vernacular theology came from different genres than that of both scholastic and monastic theology. The technical genre of scholasticism, namely, *lectio, questio, disputatio*, and *summa* and the "monastic genres of biblical commentary, letter-treatise, and written rhetorical sermons" were replaced by other forms of literary expression.<sup>40</sup>

We have already looked at hagiography and the use of visions in relation to Clare of Montefalco in previous chapters of this thesis. We need to examine more closely the use of the vernacular language in Clare. The use of the vernacular languages presents another creative way of presenting theology.<sup>41</sup> In some cases, the hagiographic and visionary material were written in

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<sup>39</sup>McGinn, Flowering, 19.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>41</sup>See McGinn, Flowering, 21, 329, fn 85-87, and 330, fn 94, for a broader discussion of this topic.

the vernacular and then translated into Latin "in order to give them a more universal and permanent status as a part of high culture."<sup>42</sup> In Clare's case, both the Processo and the *Vita* were written in Latin, with some sayings of Clare of Montefalco written in early Italian.<sup>43</sup> Berengario used the official language of the Church to bring forward the cause of Clare for sainthood. Berengario, a priest trained in the scholastic method, like many writers of the biographical material of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, used the authority and status of the Latin language to lend prestige to their promulgation of the holiness and theological status of the men and women mystics of this period.

Another distinction between vernacular theology and the theology rendered as monastic and/or scholastic returns us to what the early Christians in the Byzantine Empire called the discipline of *theologia*. It is a discipline as

conceived to be a way to vision, to what the Greeks called *theoria*, an experience which 'assumes as its key situation a reciprocal, active and passive vision, a spectacle in which men are both viewers and viewed.'.... Theology in this sense is more than spiritual or mystical insight, although it is impossible without it. It implies a capacity to lead others along the way to it.<sup>44</sup>

In other words, theology and contemplation, *theologia* and *theoria*, become one and the same thing. The end result of both theology and contemplation is union with God. If one looks at the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and the men and women mystics of these eras, one can see again this union between theology and contemplation. This vision of union with God had been separated by "domination of formal logic in the medieval universities [which] made for clear, accurate and precise thinking, but also [led to] a division between prayer and thought, between speculation and mysticism."<sup>45</sup> The vernacular theologians of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries re-opened a way of speaking about one's knowledge and experience of God

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>43</sup>For example, see PC art.131, 134, 137.

<sup>44</sup>C. Kerényi, The Religion of the Greeks and Romans (London, 1962), 144, as quoted in George Every, "The Decay of Monastic Vision," Theoria to Theory 1 (October, 1966 - July, 1967), 20.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 25.

in what is considered a non-intellectual tradition. It is as though the monastic tradition from the early Christian era blended with the vernacular language and led the way to a type of doctrine that ran parallel to the highly systematic schools of the scholastic tradition. It led the way for individuals who surrendered their human will to the divine will and united themselves to God through love developed through their own

concept of God, [their] own unconditional surrender of [their] will, [their] attitudes towards creatures, [their] process of rising from the love of God to the contemplation of God, [their] great love of God coloring the universe for [them], [their] finding of happiness in a will purified and detached from that is earthly.<sup>46</sup>

Clare of Montefalco, a monastic woman, not connected to the speculative school of theology, is, however, joined to the monastic type of theology of her day, especially in regard to *lived faith*, "a condition for and the result of monastic theology."<sup>47</sup> If one looks at Clare in the context of vernacular theology, one recognizes the fact that she seeks not only knowledge of God, but also makes this seeking a part of her heartfelt desire to be united with God. We recognize this as an outgrowth of Clare's monastic life, where her experience of God, her living out of her spiritual life, is dependent upon her monastic community experience. She reflected this experience through her contemplation, and then filtered it once again into her community, whether that is to her sisters with whom she lived or those who consulted her at the monastery.

As the scholar, Leclercq, states:

This experience presupposes nothing more than the pursuit of the spiritual life led in a community whose essential aim is the search for God. It presupposes the grace necessary for one who desires to increase his [sic] faith through living the spiritual life, as we would say today: through spirituality. On the part of the abbots [or abbesses], or those who teach spiritual living, it assumes the grace of being able to communicate its ineffable quality. It is charismatic in nature...This experience promotes the presence in the Church of spiritual men [or women] rather than of intellectual masters, and history has shown that the former are also capable of being guardians of the faith....They [abbots and/or abbesses] watched over the monks [or nuns] entrusted to their care and when the need arose, they extended the same pastoral solicitude to the entire Church of God.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Hammer, 25.

<sup>47</sup>Leclercq, Love of Learning, 264.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 265.

At the same time as one considers the shift in medieval theology from that of the scholastic and/or monastic theology to a "more serious reflection on human experience in its cultural particularity and therefore pluriformity,"<sup>49</sup> one can also consider several characteristics of vernacular theology that will give a foundational base upon which to fit Clare into this specific field.

We recognize that what is crucial in the study of scholastic and/or monastic theology is also required in the study of vernacular theology. The three forms are not separate theologies, but different aspects of the study of God and God's presence in each individual person. The diversity of approaches to theology does not focus on what is studied but on the method used. The goal of any theology is the knowledge of God, but we must realize that the "objective knowledge of God...is no more than the preparation for a subjective, personal, a 'committed,' we might say, knowledge, and these are not two antagonistic types of knowledge, but two degrees of the one and the same search for God."<sup>50</sup> Vernacular theology is not experimental psychology. It is not a study of extraordinary phenomena, such as visions or tears. It is a holistic approach to theology, and thus dependent on a foundational theology of God and Jesus along with the careful analysis of the religious experience of God and Jesus in each person's life. As an added aspect to this experiential approach to theology, one can see that vernacular theology is especially enhanced by viewing spiritual experience as essential in becoming closer to God and thus may serve both men and women better in their way of doing theology in the Middle Ages.<sup>51</sup> Clare was a woman born into a culture where formal university education was not open to women, and thus, her religious experience, which could have been considered emotional, subjective, irrational and illogical, was in direct contrast to the theology promulgated by the most recognized theologians of the times.<sup>52</sup> However, Franciscan Giovanni Bonvisi of Lucca speaking to the sisters of Monteluce adds

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<sup>49</sup>Sheldrake, 49.

<sup>50</sup>Leclercq, Love of Learning, 267.

<sup>51</sup>Sheldrake, 50-51.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 51.

authority to these holy women who are enflamed with the love of God: "Speak in charity and you will speak theologically (*per teologia*). One may understand the Scriptures without *grammatica*, namely by a certain light from God. *Grammatica* is nothing but a language."<sup>53</sup> It is by looking at a woman's religious experience that one discovers other treasures upon which the holistic viewing of theology hinge. Sheldrake states that the "liberation of women's experience has meant the reinforcement of other values such as subjectivity, feelings, the relational, nurture, reverence, compassion, the sacredness of all life and the earth."<sup>54</sup> It is through reflection on experience (whether one is a man or woman) that one can also begin to theologize. Thus, one can take Clare as an example of someone who reflects on her monastic experience, and, because of the time frame in which she lived is able once again to unite *theologia* and *theoria*, both theology and contemplation, into one unified whole. One can see how Clare combines aspects of both the monastic and vernacular theological traditions in theological reflection on her lived experiences as well as in her instructions to her sisters and all who come to her for enlightenment.

There is another question that needs to be addressed in regard to recognizing Clare as a theologian of her day. This involves the consideration of authority. By what authority can Clare be considered a theologian? We look at two aspects of this question.

The first aspect is the fact that between vernacular theologians and those of the other two traditions one must be aware that in the latter two cases, men dominated the scene, while in the vernacular tradition men and women are placed on an equal basis and "a real mutual interchange between male and female theological voices [was] carried on in the vernacular."<sup>55</sup> Clare, as a woman of the Middle Ages, has no university training and since she is not educated, from where does her authority to teach spring?

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<sup>53</sup>Giovanni Bonvisi da Lucca (c 1399), as quoted in Gill, 77.

<sup>54</sup>Sheldrake, 51.

<sup>55</sup>McGinn, *Meister Eckhart*, 4. On page 7, McGinn states: "In the case of the vernacular languages, however, men and women began on the same footing, and it is instructive to note how often female writers, including the vernacular theologians, appear at the very beginnings of the written forms of many of the European languages."

In 1155, a distinction had been made and promulgated by the Church between the "*officium docentis* and the *officium praedicandi*. The former is the office of teaching, by which every human is obligated to correct the intellectual and moral errors of his brethren. The latter is public teaching, which is reserved to bishops and priests in their churches and abbots in their monasteries."<sup>56</sup> Henry of Ghent (1217-1293), master teacher at the University of Paris, stated that women could not teach *ex officio* (the official teaching of the Catholic Church), but could teach *ex beneficio*. "Speaking about teaching from divine favor and the fervor of charity, it is well allowed for a woman to teach just like anyone else, if she possesses sound doctrine."<sup>57</sup>

Thus, it can be said that Clare had the authority to teach as long as she was under the auspices of divine favor and was teaching out of her love for God and her neighbor. We have already seen that Clare possesses sound doctrine by looking at the testimony of the witnesses who spoke to this question during the canonization process. We know that Clare is filled with the love of God and teaches others because of her desire to have everyone united to God. We need to address briefly the second aspect of the question of Clare's ability to theologize, the source of her knowledge.

We have seen how Berengario, in the *Vita*, summarized Clare's ability as a theologian, but he also gives us a hint as to how Clare received her ability to speak about God and other spiritual things with words which were "profound, pleasing and agreeable."<sup>58</sup> Berengario tells us that Clare began her most serious teaching after she became the abbess of the monastery; thus it would appear that the grace of the office brought added knowledge and wisdom to Clare. Clare believed that God gave all her gifts to her, including the gift of knowledge (169.26-31; *Vita*, 393), for she said: "Who teaches the soul except God? There is no better teacher in the

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 8. Note that Clare of Montefalco could be placed under both of these categories since she was a baptized Christian and an abbess of her monastery.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 1, quoting Henry of Ghent, *Summae Quaestionum Ordinarium*, vol. 1 (Paris: Badius Ascensius, 1520; reprint, St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1953), Art. XI, q. 11, f.78r.

<sup>58</sup>Augustine, OCD, 136, quoting Cicero, *Orat.* 21.69, uses the words "teaches, delights and moves."



world but God."<sup>59</sup> She also believed that God revealed things to her through her holy office, and because of the prayers of the sisters and other good people that were said for her. Clare stated:

I am aware that whoever is in the office in which I am,...God presents many things to her,...and unless God protects me by it, I would fall into so much evil and into many defects, but God sustains me through you and through the prayers of good people.<sup>60</sup>

Although Clare believed that it was through the prayers of the good people around her that she knew Scripture and other spiritual things, other people, including theologians and her own sisters, attest that she knew these things because of her holiness and the fact that God revealed these things to her (PC art. 45, 125; PC 316.9-28; 447.9-16). In fact, an unnamed nun from Spoleto saw the revelations of God given to Clare with a sound of a trumpet (PC art. 62; Vita, 171). Some of Clare's sisters saw Clare in the presence of a bright pillar of fire, which sent shoots of fire and "spiritual anointings" upon Clare and the ladies (Vita, 172). Tommaso, the above-mentioned canon of Gubbio, said that "the Holy Spirit was sent and given to Clare in a sphere of fire."<sup>61</sup>

Clare herself gives us another clue into how she attained her wisdom and knowledge. She prayed. She was totally attentive to God. She meditated not only on God's kindness and gifts to her but also on the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Passion of Jesus. She was also able to balance both the active and contemplative part of her life. No matter what she did, including the common services of the monastery, "she did them devoutly and with humility and in silence, and while doing them, she was seen to be totally intent on God, and did not lessen

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<sup>59</sup>PC 170.16-17: *Quis docet animam nisi Deus? non est in mundo ita bonum magistramentum sicut Dey [sic: sicut Dei].*

<sup>60</sup>PC 53.19-24:...et istam conscientiam habeo quod quecumque persona esset in officio in quo ego sum, quod Deus obstenderet ei plura, quia defectus mei prestant magnum impedimentum, et per me nisi Deus me defenderet ego caderem in multa mala et in multos defectus, sed Deus me substinet propter vos et propter orationem bonarum personarum. See PC art. 104; 138.29-139.7; 141.22-31; 219.18-33. In PC 210.29-30, Sister Thomassa remembers Clare's words: "If not because of you and the honor of the monastery, I would do such things that would be against God" (*Si non esset propter vos et propter honorem monasterii, ego facerem tale quid quod esset contra Deum*).

<sup>61</sup>Vita, 172:...quod spiritus sanctus in spere ignis missus et datus fuerat ipsi clare.

her prayer and devotion."<sup>62</sup> Clare would struggle with demons and remain in the place where they were because "no matter how many I see, I cling more to God, who is greater, and more spiritual wealth is given to me."<sup>63</sup> During the eleven years of her *Dark Night*, which began in the first reclusorio and continued into the monastery, Clare received "an extraordinary richness of knowledge and wisdom, through which she became - she who was illiterate - expert in Sacred Scripture and theology, capable of resolving subtle theological, biblical and mystical questions, and also those proposed from philosophy."<sup>64</sup> Clare prayed, was open to the will of God, and, in fact, synchronized her will to the will of God (PC art. 123; Vita, 393). She left herself open to the Spirit of God in her life, just as Augustine says: "No one rightly learns those things which pertain to life with God unless [that person] is made by God docile to God, to whom it is said in the Psalm, 'teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God'."<sup>65</sup>

Having examined briefly the three forms of theology present during Clare's time, what conclusion can we draw from this discussion of speculative, monastic and vernacular theology

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<sup>62</sup>PC art. 25:...faciebat ea devote et cum humilitate et in silentio. ita quod dum ista etiam faciebat. videbatur tota intenta in Deum et non dimittere orationem et devotionem suam. See Vita, 172; PC 111.18-29; 184.20-185.2; 289.1-9. Vita, 94; Clare wondered how people could object to work, since they did not "lessen prayer and devotion, but more powerfully expanded them" (asserens in exercitiis huiusmodi orationem et devotionem non minui sed potius augmentari). She also encouraged her sisters to do bodily work, which disposed the mind to God and fortified virtues. See Vita, 171; PC art. 55; 122.12-25; 197.9-18.

<sup>63</sup>PC 222.2-14: Et dixit ipsa testis quod dicta soror Clara dixit sibi frequenter quod libenter videret demones et staret in loco ubi frequenter apparerent, quia 'quanto sepius video. tanto magis Deo adhareo et magis datur michi lucrum spirituale.

<sup>64</sup>Stefano Sala, "Chiara: alter Christus," in *S. Chiara della Croce: Maestra di vita spirituale*, 76: Fu in questo periodo che si relaizza la sua ricchezza di scienza e di sapienza, per cui diventò, essa illiterata, esperta in S. Scrittura e in teologia, capace di risolvere sottili questioni teologiche e bibliche e mistiche, anche se proposte dalla filosofia. See Vita, 100-102.

<sup>65</sup>Augustine, OCD, 142. *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, C.6, states that "the heart of a [person] is called right if [that person wishes] all things that God wills" (AS, 735) and CXXIV.2 states "Who are of a right heart? Those who direct their own will by the will of God, and do not attempt to bend the will of God to their own will" (AS, 736). Note: Unless otherwise stated, the quotes from Augustine are taken from *An Augustine Synthesis*, as arranged by Erich Przywara (NY: Sheed & Ward, 1936). This will be designated by AS, followed by paragraph number.

in terms of Clare being called a theologian? We have concluded that Clare, because of her prayer and reflection, had a definite theology. We know that she had a great desire to be united with God, and, was so united with God. We also know that she is not a speculative theologian. She does not follow in the footsteps of the educated master theologians of her day, since she does not have any theological writings nor is there any personal testimony that she was such a theologian. However, we have seen that Clare, as an enclosed religious nun, had some of the identifying characteristics of monastic theology, especially, in regard to her aim and goal, her audience, her sources, her way of developing her theology, and her basic intellectual method.

As Clare reflected upon her experiences of God in her life, through prayer and contemplation on the Scripture, Clare developed a theologian's knowledge of God and God's presence in her life and could speak clearly and logically of this experiential knowledge and be dogmatically and morally accurate. She lacked, in the words of a contemporary writer, a "university education in theology but nonetheless taught eloquently of God."<sup>66</sup> Clare did not separate theology and contemplation, as was often prevalent in scholastic writers, who defined theology in terms of "the force and logic of reason enlightened by faith."<sup>67</sup>

The witnesses proclaimed Clare's knowledge of theology and scripture as being similar to the learned theologians of her day, and, in fact, in some cases, they attested to the fact that she excelled them in her knowledge of the faith. Thus, even though she was not a speculative theologian, Clare was an excellent example of the theologian as described by one of the greatest scholastic theologians of her time. Bonaventure. He not only realized the importance of the knowledge of God, but also knew, through his own personal experience, that knowledge of God can never be separated from a constant desire for God:

But if you wish to know how these things come about,

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<sup>66</sup>Mary E. Giles, ed., The Feminist Mystic and Other Essays on Women and Spirituality (NY: Crossroads, 1982), 34. Giles also states: "Women theologians today, as well as men, are emphasizing the verb rather than the noun precisely because it conveys process instead of condition: there is a marked tendency, for instance, to refer to *be-ing* rather than *being*."

<sup>67</sup>P. Eugène de L'Enfant Jésus, Je veux voir Dieu (Tarascon, 1949), 428, as quoted in Leclercq, Love of Learning, 268. We recognize that there were many scholastic theologians of this period, who did not separate theology and contemplation as, for example, Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas.

ask grace not instruction,  
 the groaning of prayer not diligent reading,  
 the Spouse not the teacher,  
 God not man,  
 darkness not clarity,  
 not light but the fire,  
 that totally inflames and carries us into God  
 by ecstatic unions and burning affections.  
 This fire is God,  
 and his furnace is in Jerusalem;  
 and Christ enkindles it in the heat of his burning passion.<sup>68</sup>

We conclude, therefore, that Clare should be understood primarily as a vernacular theologian with the understanding that she has some characteristics of the monastic theologian, as well.

#### Section 4: Method of Finding Clare's Theology.

Having placed Clare in both the monastic and vernacular theology traditions, this thesis is ready to examine her knowledge of God and Jesus Christ and how she applied this on a daily basis to her own life. To do this, a specific method of uncovering Clare's implicit theology needs to be identified.

Because there are no written words of Clare's that are extant, we can only draw out Clare's theology, in its implicit form, from a broader range of materials than just the written and/or spoken word. This will be accomplished by analyzing her visions; by reading carefully the few words we have from Clare herself as attested to by the witnesses at her process of canonization; by looking at how Clare lived out her life on a day-to-day basis; and, whenever possible, by considering the above through the cultural milieu of her time in history.

Clare is a contemplative, a mystic and a woman, who was both abbess and teacher. As a contemplative, she is alone, but not lonely. As a mystic, she hears her inner voice and the voice of God calling her to more perfect union with God, and her entire life is filled with the desire to be united more perfectly and more completely with God. Her brother, Francesco, witnesses to the fact that Clare said:

By love and charity the soul is united to God and will be one with God in the will, because such is the friendship of God for the soul and that of the soul for

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<sup>68</sup>Bonaventure, Soul's Journey, 115.

God because of love, that whatever God wishes, the united soul thus wishes, and whatever such a soul wishes, God also wishes; and according to this it is no wonder if the soul, because of the love and charity that it has for God, wishes to die a thousand times, if it would be necessary, before being separated from God or wish to be disconnected from God...It is no wonder that the soul says that neither death, nor life, nor any other creature is able to separate it from God (Rom 8.38). Indeed all death, pain and tribulation that the soul could suffer for God would be most sweet to her.<sup>69</sup>

As both abbess and teacher of the sisters in her monastery, Clare has close ties to the monastic tradition, as we have seen, but she also has affinities to the mendicants of the period. Her lived theology centers not around the scholastic tradition, but around the practical living out of faith, finding its way into the spiritual living out of one's knowledge of God. Taking into consideration all of these aspects present in Clare's life, this thesis will attempt to detect Clare's implicit theology of God. This theology arose from her uniqueness as a person, not only because of her experiences reflected upon in her contemplative stance, but also in relationship to her life in community with others. This stance is a unique way of becoming united to God, in which Clare, like other women mystics of her time, in the words of a modern-day writer "consistently acted in a free manner, creating an atmosphere and style in and through her person that was consonant with *her* needs and desires."<sup>70</sup> Clare was true to herself and to her loving God and neighbor, even though she was often tested through adversity and pain throughout her life.<sup>71</sup> For women like Clare, there was no definite model that she could follow and she,

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<sup>69</sup> PC 274.8-16: Similiter dicebat quod ex amore et caritate anima unitur Deo et fit unum cum ipso in voluntate, quia tanta est amicitia Deo ad animam et anime ad Deum ex caritate, quod quicquid Deus vult, vult anima sic unita, et quicquid vult talis anima, vult etiam Deus ipse; et propter hoc non est mirum si anima, ex amore et caritate quam habet ad Deum, vult milies mori, si oporteret, antequam ab ipso dividi vel deiungi vellet. Unde dicebat quod non est mirum quod anima dicat quod nec mors, nec vita, nec aliqua creatura possit eam separare a Deo; immo omnis mors, et omnis tribulatio, quam pro ipso sufferre posset, esset sibi dulcissima.

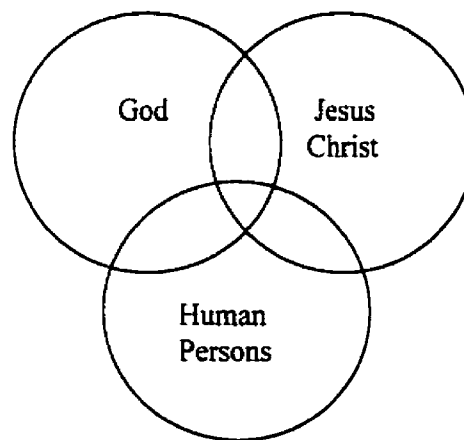
<sup>70</sup>Giles, 8-9. Giles, 29, also states that this uniqueness is a "response to the creative urge within and which is indeed essential to life."

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 24.

therefore, had the "freedom, risk, responsibility and the joy of being opened to whatever the moment may bring forth."<sup>72</sup>

Besides being a woman impelled by God to be united to God in a perfect union, it is also necessary for Clare to be in a relational stance with those around her. Clare's brother Francesco recognized this in Clare's life and attributed to her the following words: "The entire life of the soul is charity and the love of God."<sup>73</sup> We recall the message of Richard of St. Victor that, although joined to God through the three stages of purgation, illumination, and union, a true contemplative, a true mystic must also be gathered into a fourth stage. This stage is one "wherein are resolved all distinctions in loving and the perfect love lives actively and contemplatively, loving herself, her neighbor, her Beloved."<sup>74</sup>

Therefore, within this understanding of Clare as a woman who was abbess, teacher, contemplative, and mystic, the next three chapters will analyze Clare's visions, words and actions in terms of her relationship to God and Jesus Christ as well as her relationship to those around her. In other words, we will delve into Clare's implicit theology in regard to mutuality and her affinity with God, Jesus Christ, and human persons as can be seen in this diagram:




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<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>73</sup>PC 274.2: Dicebat quod total vita anime est caritas et amor Dei.

This drawing illustrates a view of the hypothesis that the theology/spirituality of Clare leads to a unified whole. For Clare, there can be no separation of her commitment to and love of God and Jesus Christ from her commitment to and love of the people around her. What Clare believes about God and Jesus - how she loves God and Jesus Christ - cannot remain an interior and passive manifestation to her alone but must become an outward activity as shown in her love of neighbor through her words and actions. Thus, Clare's spirituality, her vernacular theology, and her monastic theological tradition are exhibited in what she says and does. How will this be shown?

There will be four parts to this process. First, I will organize the material presented in the primary documents of the *Processo* and the *Vita* according to themes centering on the names Clare uses for God, and, in this process, introduce the specific topics of God, Jesus Christ, and the human person. Second, I will find how Clare reveals these themes through her life and words. Third, I will analyze these words and events in order to discover, if possible, the implicit theology and operative spirituality. Finally, after this analysis the thesis will again return to the development of Clare's more holistic approach to theology, namely how her teachings are reflected throughout her life. This is a methodology more appropriate to Clare as woman, mystic, and enclosed nun. It will attempt to make explicit the unique aspects of her personality, her theological concepts, her spirituality and way of life, by drawing out from the documentation the underlying themes, attitudes, ideas, and experiences that Clare encountered on her journey into perfect union with God.

However, there will also be times when this thesis will be conscious of Clare's connection to speculative theologians. Clare did not live in a vacuum unconscious of what had come before. After all, she was a professed Augustinian nun, following the Rule of St. Augustine. She was also aware of the Franciscan tradition, not only because her parents were third order members, but also because her brother was a master theologian, a teacher of theology as well as a Franciscan. Clare has roots in both the Franciscan and Augustinian tradition. What better examples of these two traditions than the two great theologians, Augustine and Bonaventure, who can be considered true representatives of the monastic

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 15.

theology of her abbey as well as of her own spirituality. On occasion, their writings will be explored for significant contrast and continuities.<sup>75</sup>

Will we find anything original in Clare's theological stance? It is difficult to say at this point in the thesis. Matura says about the theology and spirituality of Francis of Assisi that he will not be

introducing new elements or proposing a radically different hierarchy of the old one (theology). This is so because, even when biblical revelation is systematized and interpreted by a particular theology, it is still a body of knowledge to which nothing can be added and from which nothing can be taken away. It has its own internal cohesion in which the truths of faith are interlinked in a balanced hierarchy.<sup>76</sup>

We might, in the end, say the same thing about Clare of Montefalco.

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<sup>75</sup>There are even times, in the critical editions of the *Process* and the *Vita*, when the names of Francis and Augustine are presented together. See PC art. 136, 144.

<sup>76</sup>Matura, 177.



## CHAPTER 4

### THE THEOLOGY OF GOD AS SEEN IN CLARE'S WORDS/DEEDS

The purpose of this chapter is to search for the ways Clare knows and experiences God. since, as we have already stated, how she relates to God is reflected in how she lives out her continued desire and search for God. Did Clare have any visions concerning God? What are the words, the titles, which she applies to God? Is there anything in her life that validates a particular idea of God?

Prior to entering into the discussion of the titles and names Clare uses for God, we must address the emphasis Berengario places on Clare's relationship to the Trinity. As mentioned in Chapter 1, we recall the importance of the Trinitarian doctrine in the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. Thus, Berengario, in his need to situate Clare in the context of the orthodox Church, stressed the Trinity in her life. Berengario's *Vita* states that Clare of Montefalco spoke of the Trinity<sup>1</sup> and had a vision of the Trinity,<sup>2</sup> while witness 161. Blaxio of Spoleto, states that Clare often contemplated the Trinity.<sup>3</sup> However, there is no documentation of Clare using the word *Trinity* in either the *Vita* or the *Process*. What is the basis for these particular statements by Berengario and Blaxio, who was often present when Clare conversed with others?

Because of his duties as Vicar General to the Bishop of Spoleto, Berengario's initial interest in Clare and the major reason for his coming to Montefalco was to make an inquiry "about the life and miracles of holy Clare and, especially, about the signs of the Passion of Christ and the *Trinity* which were discovered in the body of Clare."<sup>4</sup> After Clare's death, three

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<sup>1</sup>Vita 169.

<sup>2</sup>Vita, 102, 169.

<sup>3</sup>PC 260.12-18. Blaxio or Biagio di Palliccio of Spoleto (PC, 609), an oblate of the monastery, was in charge of the denunciation of Bentivenga, and, afterwards, requested permission to retire to live the eremetical life on Monteluco.

<sup>4</sup>Vita, 90: super vita et miraculis sancte clare predicte et de insigniis passionis christi et

stones of equal density and size were found in her gall bladder. Both theologians and non-theologians saw this phenomenon as symbolizing the Trinity (Vita, 406; PC art. 162). The nuns of the monastery (Witnesses 1,38,39,67), lay people and clergy also saw the stones,<sup>5</sup> but do not specify that they are a metaphor for the Trinity.

The significance of the Trinity in Clare's life was also stressed in the visions that Paula, the abbess of the monastery of S. John in Spoleto had about Clare after Clare's death in 1308.<sup>6</sup> While these visions seem to relate more to Paula's image of the Trinity, the connection to the Trinity appears to be generally accepted by various people. Whether this is due to the culture and/or the theology of the persons who attested to Clare's Trinitarian relationship, there are not enough facts available from either Clare's words or her actions to warrant this assumption.

One cannot assume from the lack of mention of the Trinity by Clare that she was unaware of the Persons of the Trinity. Clare makes no mention of God as Father or Jesus as Son. However, we will find that Clare attributes to the Father God's love for her and is well aware of Jesus Christ as God. Documentation shows that Clare was very aware of the presence of the Holy Spirit in her life. Clare recognized the power of the Holy Spirit not only through the revelations which she received, but also in the words which she spoke in instructing the sisters, confronting heretics and conversing with people about God and other spiritual matters (PC art. 86; PC 445.19-25). Witnesses at Clare's Process of Canonization, recognizing the presence of the Holy Spirit in her life, stated that she was also able to predict future events. She predicted the capture and imprisonment of certain people, the deaths of sisters and other people, as well as the arrival of people to the monastery.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>The stones are still intact and are on display in the Church of the Holy Cross in Montefalco. In his book, *The Testimony of Blood* (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1929), Ian Grant makes mention of this phenomena, as well as that of the signs of the Passion in Clare's heart. In Chapter IV, "Santa Chaira of Montefalco," 79-122.

<sup>6</sup>Vita, 393; PC 450.10-14; 455.28-457.2; 513.1-26; 514.1-6. PC, 627 gives a brief history of the monastery of S. John in Spoleto.

<sup>7</sup>PC art. 86, 91, 92, 93-102. In PC art. 105; 53.29-54.25; 142.1-5; 261.12-23; 284.16-28; Vita, 299, Clare predicts the arrival of two friars, Petrus and Jacobus, whom she sees coming in the form of a wolf, who would steal souls from God and a pig, who represents hatred and unclean acts.

Although we recognize the fact that Clare is aware of the presence of three persons in the Trinity, we must also recognize that this is not a major theme in Clare's God-knowledge. Nevertheless, there are other themes about God that can be explained through the examination of her words, visions, and deeds.

#### Section I: God as the Giver of Grace.

Francisco, Clare's brother, says of Clare that she believed that the "love of God is the life of the soul."<sup>8</sup> In Clare's life there is a continual connection between her love of God and her love for her neighbor, and, in a more compelling sense, how she experienced God's love for her.

God's love for Clare showed itself through the wealth of graces which were given to her (PC art. 108; 222.2-14; Vita. 172). Recognizing God's gifts to her, and well aware of the constant presence of God in her life, Clare had a vision fifteen years before her death. She saw a beautiful mountain, like a city, from which the splendor of God shone forth in rays, symbolizing "good thoughts and inspirations, which God sent out into the hearts of the friends of God and of good people."<sup>9</sup> Among those thoughts and inspirations sent by God, Clare especially stressed the constant grace of God's presence in her life as well as the grace to be faithful to God (PC 53.9-28; 141.22-32; 219.18-33; 225.14-31; 271.15-19). She stated: "On the side of God I am well, but on my side I am full of sin."<sup>10</sup> At another time, she tells her sisters: "Sisters, you know that if God would leave us, we, on our part, would do evil and nothing else."<sup>11</sup>

What do we learn about God from Clare's vision and these few remembered words? First of all, God is bounteous and the giver of all gifts. Secondly, God has set Clare free from

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<sup>8</sup>PC 274.2: *Tota anime est caritas et amor Dei*

<sup>9</sup>PC art. 74; 36.32-37.6; 130.30-131.5; 206.15-27; 278.28-279.4: *quos ipsa sancta Clara extimabat esse bonas cogitationes et inspirationes, quas Deus inmictebat in corde amichorum Dey et bonarum gentium.*

<sup>10</sup>PC 287.17-18: *Ex parte Dey sum bene, sed ex parte mea sum plena peccatis.*

<sup>11</sup>Vita, 298: *Cogitetis sorores quod si deus nos dimitteret, nos pro parte nostra malum et non aliud faceremus.* See PC 219.18-33.

her tendency to be sinful. Thirdly, God is totally present in Clare's life as a loving and freeing God and, thus, Clare is aware of this constant presence in her life. Finally, although Clare does not use the terms actual or sanctifying grace, she recognizes the necessity of grace as a gift from God knowing that she could sin and do nothing good.

There are others ways that God's grace and love are manifested in Clare's life. While Clare believed in her own sinfulness, many witnesses attested to Clare's holiness and virtue. For example, Lady Massiecta, who knew Clare throughout her life, said, "what is good in her she had through the grace of God, from whom all good things come."<sup>12</sup> Other witnesses stated that she was a woman of great serenity and was neither exalted in prosperity, nor disturbed by adversity or tribulation. Clare considered both as gifts from God. If prosperity came to her, it came as grace from God, and it was only through the grace of God that she was worthy of both happiness and adversity. Over a period of time, she was not concerned about either. Clare said to her sisters: "There was a time in which I was disturbed in adversity and exalted in prosperity. Afterwards I changed, in so far as I was disturbed by consolations and I rejoiced in tribulations. But now, I neither care about one or the other."<sup>13</sup>

God's faithfulness to Clare, God's constant presence in Clare's life, and Clare's absolute serenity in the presence of both sadness and joy, were the most recognized ways that the goodness of God and God's love were known by Clare. However, these were not the only ways that God showed love to Clare. Clare also stressed God's love through the creation of the world and through the mercy and forgiveness showed to sinners, which will be addressed later in this thesis.

Aware that Clare knew and believed in God's love for her, we have already noted *how* God showed this love to Clare. What we need to consider now is whether this constitutes a

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<sup>12</sup>PC 466.2-5: Et dixit quod, si quid boni est in ea, ab ea habuit per gratiam Dei, a quo omnia bona sunt. See also PC art. 122, where witnesses 1, 38, 39 attest to the fact that "Clare...was a woman of great holiness and...virtue, in great grace and beloved by God" (Clara...erat domina mangne sanctitatis et...virtutum et in mangna gratia et dilectione Dei).

<sup>13</sup>PC art. 124: Tempus fuit in quo ego turbabar in adversis et exultabam in prosperis. Postea fuit michi mutatum, quod tribubar in consolationibus et gaudebam in tribulationibus; modo autem nec de uno nec de alio curo quicquam.

theology concerning the love of God. We are reminded again that Clare is *not* a speculative theologian, that she spoke from her experiences and reflection on those experiences. Recalling that Clare had a deep knowledge of Scripture, whether that knowledge was given to her by divine infusion or because of her reflection/contemplation on the liturgical celebrations of the monastery, or as promulgated by the preachers/confessors who came to the monastery, we know that she believed and lived out her belief in God's love for her throughout her life. She continued to follow the path begun by Augustine who stated: "In order that we might receive that love whereby we should love, we were ourselves loved, while as yet we had it not...For we would not have wherewithal to love [God], unless we received it from [God] by [God] first loving us."<sup>14</sup> God loves us in order to show how we should love. God loved Clare in order to show Clare how to love others.

Conclusion to Section 1. Although Clare is not presenting anything new theologically about the presence of God's love for her, her vision of God's bountiful gifts of grace and her recognition of the effects of grace in her life give us an inkling of her theology of grace given by the loving and freeing hand of God. In the process of articulating the gifts God had given her, Clare, in her own way, *implicitly* acknowledged those gifts as being given by the God Who loved her. Her reflected experience led her to the knowledge and experience of God's love for her. This God-knowledge so infiltrated her life that it permeated her relationship with creation as well as her relationship with other people.

## Section 2: God as Creator.

Through her brother Francesco's testimony, we learn that Clare grounded her knowledge about God by calling God Creator, Redeemer, and Ruler-Judge. Francesco states:

[Clare] also said that it is no wonder that the soul loves God above everything....The reason for this was, because God is our Creator, who created us from nothing, and formed us in God's image. Likewise God is our Redeemer, who saved us with his blood and suffered on the roughest cross, on which with

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<sup>14</sup>*De gratia Christi et de peccato originali, contra Pelgium et coelestium, libri duo.* xxvi.27. (AS, 623). Augustine reiterates this in his Homily on the First Epistle of St. John, when he says: "Behold, we are urged to love God. Could we love [God] unless [God] has first loved us?...He has first loved us and not because we were loving."

reproaches, censures and vast sufferings he suffered cruelly and died for us. Likewise he is our Ruler, who governs and rules us, promises eternal life, and gives faithfully without deceit.<sup>15</sup>

According to Francesco, Clare recognized God as Creator since God "created us from nothing, and formed us in God's image." Again, we must stress that Clare is not accustomed to using the speculative language implied by the phrases "created us from nothing" or "formed in God's image" in any of her admonitions or teachings to the Sisters or others. Clare, however, reflects on the Creator God from another point of view.

During the final days of her life, having been carried on a cot to the oratory of the monastery, Clare said to the sisters surrounding her: "I see the justice of God in everything, and I see that all things created by God are good and I see nothing evil, except sin."<sup>16</sup> Clare reiterates what Scripture says concerning creation: "God looked at everything [God] had made, and God found it very good" (Gn 1.31). But Clare was also aware of the reality of sin in this good world.

First of all, Clare probably reflects on the book of Genesis and its teaching that all creation is good, because it comes from a God who loves. She adds the caveat concerning sin, that is, which comes not from the good God, but from the creature God created.

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<sup>15</sup>PC 274.16-25: Dicebat etiam quod non est mirum si anima diligit Deum super omnia in centuplo plus quam seipsam: ratio cuius erat, quia ipse est creator noster, qui de nichilo nos creavit, et ad suam imaginem nos formavit; similiter ipse est redemptor noster, qui nos suo sanguine redemit et reconperavit in cruce durissima, in qua cum opprobriis, vituperiis et immensis doloribus pro nobis mortuus fuit et crudeliter occisus, similiter ipse est gubernator noster, qui nos gubernat et regit, et vitam eternam promittit, et fideliter sine falatia dabit. Bonaventure, Collations on the Ten Commandments, translated by Paul J. Spaeth (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1995), 19-20, states: "That God is of great authority, is clear for three reasons. First, it is he who creates us by his great power. Second, it is he who rules and governs us by his marvelous wisdom. Third, it is he who saves us by his generous kindness."

<sup>16</sup>PC art. 137: Ego video iustitiam Dei in omnibus, et video quod omnia creata a Deo sunt bona, et nichil malum video nisi unum....Ieu vego la iusticia de Dieu en omne couse, e vego que tote le couse create sunt bone, e non vego alcuna couse mala se non uno, lo peccato. See 71.21-33; 78.23-31; 149.4-12; 236.26-237.1; 336.3-12; Vita, 397-398.

Secondly, Clare looked at creation and its unique relationship to justice. She noticed the relationship between creation and justice, and proclaimed the goodness of creation ("all things created by God are good") as opposed to the human person's weakness ("except sin"), which unites the theme of creation with the theme of justice ("the justice of God in everything"). Uniting these two themes is also a focus in Sacred Scripture, as typified in Psalm 146:

Happy the one whose help is the God of Jacob,  
 whose hope is in the Lord God,  
*Who made heaven and earth*, the sea and all that is in them;  
 Who keeps faith forever,  
*secures justice for the oppressed*,  
 gives food to the hungry.  
 The Lord sets captives free;  
 The Lord gives sight to the blind.  
 The Lord raises up those that were bowed down:  
 the Lord loves the just.<sup>17</sup>

In the scholastic tradition of the times, creation and redemption were usually combined. This combination is not only present in Scripture,<sup>18</sup> but also present in the teaching of the medieval scholars of the period. For example, Bonaventure united creation and redemption in very specific terms. He states:

I say that certain factors pertain to the knowledge of the [first] commandment...These are the two greatest foundations of faith. The first is the knowledge of the Creator and the second is the knowledge of the Redeemer; these are the two roots or the two spiritual eyes, directing us in the way of the commandments of God.<sup>19</sup>

It was the Uncreated Word that created man, and the Incarnate Word who recreated him. For it is not fitting that a structure so noble as human nature should have one architect to make it and another to restore it when it had been

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<sup>17</sup>Psalm 146.5-8. See also Psalms 18.1-20; 33; 74.12-23; 77.14-21; 78.65-72; 89.12-15; 103: 104; 110; 121; 124; 135; 136; 147; Isaiah 42.1-7. Italics are mine.

<sup>18</sup>For example, see Ps 69. 34-36; Ps 74, 77, 107, 136; Isaiah 42.1-9; 43.1; 44.21-28; 1Pet 1.18-21; Rev 21.1-5.

<sup>19</sup>Bonaventure, Ten Commandments, 33.

ruined. But the same Creator-God who formed it has restored it as the God-man.<sup>20</sup>

Clare, rather, combines the themes of creation and justice, and, in so doing, introduces the reality of sin in relationship to creation. She saw herself and others as sinful creatures, where sin and evil were not created by God, but allowed by God (Vita, 342). Clare said to her brother that she saw herself as more evil than any other woman on earth, but that she was in awe at the way God had made the earth and that this helped her (PC 269.9-11). She considered herself the "least of all creatures" totally dependent on the love of God and the prayers of the sisters and other good people (PC 53.19-24). Ingratitude to God was regarded by Clare as the greatest of sins, since the true relationship between the Creator and creatures was damaged by this lack of gratitude for God's Goodness (PC art. 104; Vita, 298).

Conclusion to Section 2. There are five theological concepts we can perceive from Clare as she spoke about God, the Creator. First of all, creation is good. Besides diverging from Bonaventure who stressed the relationship between creation and redemption, she also can be contrasted with him from another point of view. For Bonaventure, creation is good, because it is the expression of God's love: "Good is not identified with self-sufficiency but with plenitude overflowing... If God were not self-communicating, God would not be the highest Good. The most perfect is the most diffusive."<sup>21</sup> Clare does not give evidence of this kind of insight that situates the goodness of creation in the goodness of God. For Clare, creation is good because Scripture proclaims the goodness of creation. Clare's implicit theology of God as Creator focuses on the goodness of creation seen in the Genesis context of all creation being good.

Secondly, Clare is adamant about the truth that sin was not created by God, but is allowed by God, implying that God, in creating human persons in God's image, bestowed the

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<sup>20</sup>Bonaventure, "Sermon II on the Nativity of the Lord," in What Manner of Man?, translated by Zachary Hayes (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1974, 1989), 73.

<sup>21</sup>Catherine Mowry LaCugna, God For Us: The Trinity and Christian life (San Francisco, CA: HarperSan Francisco, 1991), 165, using Bonaventure, I Sentences, 45. 2. 1. resp. LaCugna, 179 n.124, states that a thorough study of Bonaventure's creation spirituality and theology of providence would be a basis for a contemporary ecological theology.



grace and the freedom to choose. This is not anything new and agrees with both Augustine and Bonaventure.

Augustine, who believed in the goodness of creation and the presence of sin in creation, states:

Sin, certainly, has not been made by [God], and it is evident that sin is nothing and that [persons] fall away to nothingness when they sin....no creature is bad but that unregulated pleasure perverted it....It is therefore not the creature which I made that I condemn, but the sins which I did not make.<sup>22</sup>

Bonaventure reiterates that all creation is good and that "sin is not any kind of essence but a defect and corruption....opposed to good itself; it has no existence except in the good; it has no source except from the good which is the free choice of the will" (*Breviloquium*, III.1.1).<sup>23</sup>

Because human beings are made in the likeness of God, Augustine believed that "even in their very sins souls are only striving for a certain likeness to God in their proud, perverted, and so to speak, servile liberty. Thus our first parents could not have been persuaded to sin if it had not been said to them: 'You shall be as gods' (Gen. 3.5)."<sup>24</sup> The freedom of the human

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<sup>22</sup>Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of St. John*, in *Selected Writings*, translation and introduction by Mary T. Clark (NY/Ramsey/Toronto: Paulist Press, 1984), 275. In Augustine, *Sermones (de Script. N.T.)*, LI.ii.3 (AS, 280), "no creature is bad but that unregulated pleasure perverted it....It is therefore not the creature which I made that I condemn, but the sins which I did not make." In *Epistolae*, CXL.xxiii.56 (AS, 63), Augustine also states: "Our nature is not evil of itself, since the creature is rational by the life of the spirit, even when deprived of that good...that is to say, even when vicious." Likewise, in *The Trinity*, XIII.12.16, Augustine states that "the nature was corrupted by sin, not as it was created upright from the beginning."

<sup>23</sup>Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, translated by Erwin Esser Nemmers (St. Louis/London: B. Herder, 1946), III.1.3, Bonaventure states: "[S]ince free will corrupts ...by withdrawing from the true good, all sin, in so far as it is of this kind, both exists from the will as its origin and exists in the will as its proper subject." Thus, like Augustine, Bonaventure sees sin as a moving away from God by means of free will, a gift from God.

<sup>24</sup>Augustine, *The Trinity*, translated by Stephen McKenna (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1963), XI.5.8. In the *Confessions*, *Selected Writings*, VII.16, Augustine states this another way. He says: "Your justice displeases the wicked; but displeasing also are vipers and reptiles which you created good and suited to the lower parts of your creation, to which indeed the wicked themselves are well suited, insofar as they are unlike you, although they become suited to the higher parts insofar as they become more like you. And I inquired what wickedness was and I found that it was not substance but a swerving of the will

person to sin is permitted by God, but this freedom, this liberty, is a "servile liberty," since the human person enters the service of the devil, not service to God.<sup>25</sup>

Clare is also in agreement with Bonaventure when she cursed the demons and dealt harshly with sinful people and especially with those people who led others astray, or, in the words of Bonaventure, could "turn the human mind away from the reverence of its Creator" (Ten Commandments, 38, par. 21). He enumerates three acts which could turn humanity away from the Creator; namely, "pacts with demons....false and superstitious fabrications...incorrect evaluations of the material world" (Ibid., par. 22-29).

Thirdly, Clare stresses the fact that the relationship of sinful humanity to the Creator places the person in humble stance before God, constantly grateful to the Creator God. Sin separates the creature from the Creator and it is only through grace and living a life of virtue that one continues to be in right relationship with God.

Fourthly, Clare adds the dimension of truth to her discussion of creation. In being able to remain in God's image, and recalling that God has given the human the freedom to choose, one must choose God or live in constant deceit and separation from God.

For Clare, it is God's freedom, which erupts into creation, not only in the creation of the material world, but also in allowing humanity the freedom to choose God, or not to choose God. But in allowing humanity this freedom to choose between God and sin, Clare also recognizes the God Who is Ruler-Judge.

### Section 3: God as Ruler/God as Judge.

Besides seeing God as Creator and Redeemer, Clare proclaimed God as *gubernator* - that is, Ruler. Under this title, Francesco stresses three of God's roles. He proclaims God as the One who "governs and rules," the One who "promises eternal life" and the One who "gives faithfully without deceit" (PC 274.23-25). For Clare, the role of God as Ruler proclaims God as the One who promises eternal life, and the One Who gives faithfully in truth. Thus, Clare does not emphasize God as Ruler but accentuates God as the One who judges.

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from the highest substance, you, O God, toward lower things, casting away what is most inward to it and swelling greedily for outward things."

<sup>25</sup>See Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of St. John*, in Selected Writings, 290-292.

In 1293, Clare had a vision of God sitting in judgment. Although Clare did not see God judging each individual soul, she did see every soul, including her own, looking at their individual works. Clare saw the condemned souls raked into the depths, but she could not tell if the souls were condemned into hell or purgatory. She only heard much shouting and noise. However, she did see those who had lived a life of rectitude on earth ascending directly into heaven. (PC art. 74; PC 36.15-32; 130.30-131.5; 206.1-15; 279.1-15; Vita, 287-288). As the Psalmist says: "[B]ut it is God who executes judgment, putting down one person and lifting up another person" (Ps 75.7).

During this vision, Clare, looking at her own faults and sins, waited for God to judge her.

She herself clearly knew what she had failed to do, by not observing what was done in her operation [deeds]. She saw that no guarantee of salvation was left for her...She did not despair of the mercy of God and, nevertheless, expecting her own damnation, she was prepared with peace and tranquility of soul...content that the divine will was fully fulfilled in her.<sup>26</sup>

It is God whom Clare has failed. Therefore, it is God who judges her, just as the Psalmist says. "Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment" (Ps 51.4). Although she also heard herself called to damnation by the devil, Clare overheard God telling the angels and saints that she would come directly to heaven after 15 more years (PC art. 74).

Another time, while Clare was examining her defects and her ingratitude to God, she cried in her cell because she was so vile and evil. Going to the oratory to pray Office and hear Mass, Clare "saw God in her and herself in God as in a mirror, and she saw herself united to God in an indescribable union." Berengario goes on to describe Clare as recognizing that she was "as nothing with respect to the infinity of the divine. On the contrary, it seemed as if she was a basin immersed in the middle of the sea, full of water and absorbed in the water."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Vita 287: [S]e defecisse clarissime cognoscebat, modum in operando debitum non servando. Cumque nullam quodammodo salvationis fiduciam sibi superesse videret....quod de dei misericordia non desperabat et tamen sui dampnationem expectans erat parata cum pace et tranquillitate animi substinere...contentaque quod divina voluntas de se ipsa plenarie impleretur.

<sup>27</sup>Vita 345: vidit deum in se et se in deo velud [sic] in speculo, et se deo videbat unitam, inenarrabili unione....ipsa tamen sibi ipsi videbatur quodammodo quasi nichil respectu

In the first vision, one recognizes that even though God judges, it is the individual soul which looks at its words and actions, and then waits for God's judgment upon her. Clare knew that she needed to be judged by God since she saw herself as not doing what she should have, and, in this humble stance before God, she accepted God's judgment upon her, whatever that might be. She recognized her dependence upon God's mercy, but also wished to be in tune with God's will, desiring to do the will of God, whether that will of God condemned her to hell or welcomed her into Paradise. Finally, how she judged herself was not always how God judged her. She was harsher with herself than God was. Again, Clare recognizes God's unbounding and freeing love. God's mercy is all encompassing and recognizes human frailties. How we see ourselves is not always how God sees us.

The second vision, which places God in Clare and Clare in God, presents two images for union with God: the mirror and the basin. The mirror reflects God in us and ourselves in God. Made in God's image, Clare reflects the image of God. The image of the basin immersed in the middle of the sea is full of water and absorbed by the water shows us a God, who is as vast as the sea, and is totally absorbed into Clare and Clare into God. Clare's desire to be united with God comes to pass in her total absorption into the sea of God.

In the cases when Clare judged herself to be evil and worthless, she also recognized that, with God's help, she was capable of becoming united to God both in this life and in the life to come. Even on her deathbed, Clare, after having confessed her sins to her confessor, stated: "I do not know if I have anything else to say to you. I go to my Lord."<sup>28</sup>

We must continue to recall that we are not looking at a medieval theologian from a scholastic point of view, but we are considering a medieval woman who looks at judgment and justice, sin and punishment from an experiential, womanly point of view. There are definite similarities between what Clare teaches about sin and judgment and what the medieval

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*infinitatis divine. Inmo [sic] ut secundum aliqualem similitudinem exprimatur, videbatur quasi esset unum beccerium in medio maris mersum plenum aqua, et infra ipsam aquam absortum. See PC 36.5-12; 41.21-32; 259.18-25; 271.20-28; 287.15-17.*

<sup>28</sup>PC 243.8-9: *Nescio quod ego habeam tibi aliquid aliud dicere. Ego vado ad Dominum meum.*

scholastic theologian teaches. She does not have the vocabulary or process, but she has the experiential knowledge. We need only look at a few examples from Augustine and Bonaventure to see these similarities.

Augustine emphasizes the fact that sinful souls bring about their own punishment, when he states: "When therefore God punishes, [God] punishes as a judge,...not by bringing evil upon them...but by driving them on to that which they have chosen, to fill up the sum of their misery."<sup>29</sup> It is essential that the soul work off the debt that the person has accrued during the person's life on earth. If this is not done, then some time of punishment after death needs to be given. Augustine states: "If therefore it [soul] does not pay by working justice, it will repay by suffering misery....If it does not pay what it owes by works, it will pay what it owes by suffering."<sup>30</sup> Augustine also stresses the fact that God is both merciful and just. He states: "We in our perversity want God to be merciful in such a way as not to be just....God shows himself to be both; [God] is supremely both. [God's] mercy does not prescribe [God's] justice, nor does [God's] justice sweep away [God's] mercy. [God] is merciful and just."<sup>31</sup>

Bonaventure, likewise, advocates the position that sinners condemn themselves, since when the sinners appear before God as Judge, they are "accused, convicted and exposed: accused by the voice of conscience, convicted by the evidence of [their] live[s], exposed by the light of divine wisdom, so that in all justice, sentence must be passed against [them]."<sup>32</sup>

Clare sees God as the Ruler-Judge, as the One Who "promises eternal life" not only in relation to God's mercy and the gift which makes it possible for Clare to unite herself to God, sinful as she is, but also in relation to sin and its consequences. We have seen from the previous

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<sup>29</sup>Augustine, Enarrationes in Psalmos, V.10 (AS, 231).

<sup>30</sup>Augustine, De libero arbitrio, III.xv.44 (AS, 229).

<sup>31</sup>Augustine, Sermones de Script.N.T., XXII.v.5 (AS, 238).

<sup>32</sup>Bonaventure, *The Triple Way*, II.C.6, in The Works of Bonaventure, Volume I, translated by José de Vinck (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1960), 75. See Bonaventure, 4. *Sentences*, d.43.a.3.q.1, in Spiritual Exercises According to Saint Bonaventure by Dominic Faccin (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1955), 60; The Tree of Life, 42; Breviloquium, VII.1.1; Soliloquy, III.2.5.

section that sin is the element humanity introduces into creation, but we can observe sin and its ramifications especially in its relationship to the God Who is Ruler and who "gives faithfully without deceit." For sin is *deceit* - lying to oneself and each other about one's relationship to the Creator God. God does not lie and God is ever faithful. The human person has the choice to lie *and* be unfaithful. Let us look closer at Clare's concept of sin and its effects on the human person.

Sin. We have already discussed the connection Clare makes between creation and justice in the previous section. We need to spend some time with Clare's knowledge of sin and her sensitivity to it and its consequences.

There are several sins which Clare mentions most often and which she urges the sisters and those who come for counseling to avoid; namely, the sin of impurity, since this is counter to the example set by the chaste Christ (PC 43.1-5; 136.25-28; 167.13). Others include the sin of ingratitude to God, which she considers the greatest sin (PC art. 104: 53.12-16); the sin of mendacity, which can lead one to commit other sins (PC 101.13-16; 173.10-14; 288.1-26; 288.13-16; 211.18-22; 281.1-10; 354.30-355.6; Vita, 292, 294-295, 341, 344); and the sin of pride, since it places a person out of correct relationship with God (Vita, 292). Clare strongly reproved sinners (PC art. 59: 274.26-276.2; Vita, 292, 296, 341-342, 394), because sin separates a person from God (PC 69.2-10; 274.30-31; 275.14-276.2; Vita, 296). The separation from God is caused because a sinner chooses service to the devil rather than service to God (PC 280.3-281.3; Vita, 342). Augustine himself states: "Those who by sinning have become wholly unlike [God] are said to be far from [God]. Those who by a virtuous life received [God's] likeness are said to draw near to [God]."<sup>33</sup> Clare specifies these sins as more damnable than others, since, through the wrong use of one's free will, the sinner chooses oneself rather than God. The Creator-creature relationship has been broken and severed, and the sinner becomes separated from God.

Having dealt with Clare's concern about sinners being separated from God, it is also important to note that she was also solicitous about anyone who died without having received the sacrament of Penance. Clare not only prayed for their recovery, but also in some instances

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<sup>33</sup>Augustine, *Letter 187: On the Presence of God*, in Selected Writings, 411.

prayed that they would be restored to life, so that they could confess their sins. When Paganonus, a local man of Montefalco, died, after having been covered with sand, Clare was upset since he died without confession. She said to Johanna, her cousin: "Oh, if he were able to confess. I suffer pain and am filled with compassion that he died without confession." Clare prayed for the man saying: "O Lord, give him some time that he can confess and bring him back to life so that he can confess." The man came back to life, was given food to eat, and made his confession.<sup>34</sup>

Again, we see Clare's concern for people who are being separated from God. To repair the separation that is an effect of one's sins, Clare depends on the sacramental value of forgiveness as given through the sacrament of Penance. The sacrament has the power to repair the breach between creature and Creator, to proclaim once again, through the penance received in the sacrament, that we are being invited to constant conversion. Finally, in a time when the Heresy of the Free Spirit and other heretical sects had no use for the sacrament of Penance and desecrated its use, Clare strongly advocates the value of the sacramental life of the Church.

We recall the powerful story of the man whose sins Clare took upon herself in order that God would forgive them. God had refused her request for forgiveness of these sins twice before. Clare believed that God would grant her wish whatever she asked (Vita, 393) and so, taking upon herself the sins of the man (just as Jesus did), she asked forgiveness of her sins. She was forgiven and in taking on her role as mediator between the sinful man and the merciful Judge brought forgiveness for the man's sin (PC 275.17-276.2). Clare stands before God as a humble creature before her Creator, as a person separated from God begging to be reunited with God, and, believing in God's love for her, she is forgiven, and, in turn, so is the man, whose sins she bore.

What do the actions of Clare in this story tell us about her theology in regard to grace and prayer? First of all, Clare stresses again the power of prayer for those in need, and, therefore, the constant reminder of the power of the communion of saints to intercede for us

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<sup>34</sup>PC art. 127; 69.2-30; 147.8-12; 233.23-32; 299.32-300.33; 495.1-25; 510.15-511.16: *O si fuisset confessus aliquid esset; me doleo et compatio quia mortuus est sine confexione....O domine, da ei tantum spatium quod possit confiteri et reducas eum tantum ad vitam quod possit confiteri.*

before God. Secondly, we see again how dependent Clare is on God's mercy. The loving and freeing God forgives sins and, wanting all the created beings united to God, welcomes the sinner back. Thirdly, Clare shows us the constancy of prayer. She did not give up her prayers and petitions even after God had refused her request to forgive the man's sins. Not only is the grace of forgiveness implied in this story, but the power of persistence in constantly knocking on the door of the judge's home in order to have one's petition answered. Finally, we recognize in this incident, Clare's union with God, her oneness with the God who surrounds her in the sea of love, whose love, therefore, spills out into her compassion for others. Thus, Clare, through her actions, teaches us that God's love for us demands that her love must also spill over in love and concern for others.

Clare's concern for other sinners is not felt in a vacuum. She knows that sin, separating the soul from God, brings particular consequences to the sinner. For Clare, the punishment for sin can carry over after death into hell or purgatory. The next two parts of this section introduce us to Clare's idea of life after death.

Hell. For Clare, hell was the place of the damned (Vita, 288, 340) and the cursed demons (PC 287.33-288.26), the place in which souls would suffer great pains, be separated from God (PC 168.14; 330.1-3) and undergo punishment forever (PC 274.30-34). Clare who counted herself among the most wretched of all people said to the sisters: "I am worthy of all the damnation, pain and distress, just as those demons of hell, because I often speak with this eloquence of spirit and virtue, and people count me better, when I am the most evil of women."<sup>35</sup> Another time, Clare said to the sisters that she would rather suffer the intense pains of hell in this world rather than lose her virginity and honor and be separated from God in the next.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>PC 285.23-25: Ego sum digna onni dapnatione et pena et confusione, quasi ultra quam demones de inferno, quia de ista eloquentia tanti spiritus et virtutis sepe loquo. [et] ipse me reputant milioem, cum sim pessima mulierum.

<sup>36</sup>PC 168.14-17; 330.1-4: quod ipsa, antequam perdere suam verginitatem et honestatem, potius vellet in hoc mundo quam diu haberet vivere stare in inferno <et> cum penis infernalibus corporaliter affligi, dummodo non speraretur a Deo.



Again, separation from God is the key issue in Clare's theology. If her total desire to be united with God both in this life and in the next included both suffering and pain, even the pains of hell, Clare would gladly have accepted them. She was concerned when people spoke well of her and, thus, placed her above other creatures, other human persons. Clare knew her place before God. She was creature and, therefore, on equal terms with all other creatures. Thus, even though the context may be different, Clare is consistent in her desire to be united with God, never to be separated from God, because she knows that she would be condemned without the continuing abundance of God's love for her. Having seen the angels raking the damned souls into a place apart from God, Clare was well aware that hell and separation from God were synonymous. While she stated this differently than Augustine and Bonaventure, all three teach the same truth.

Augustine equates hell with the lack of peace, defined as the "tranquility of order" (The City of God, XIX.13). In hell, therefore, the souls which have separated themselves from this orderly peace, "the wicked and impious should weep in their torments for the loss of the good that was in their natures perceiving that they were taken from them by a most just God whom they despised when [God] was the generous distributor of bounty" (Ibid.).<sup>37</sup>

For Bonaventure, hell, the "infernal punishment," is the place where the "wicked are eternally tortured, evil [persons] as well as spirits." and the punishment is threefold:

because of their aversion from God they suffer the loss of the sight of God;  
because of the turning to commutable good they receive the punishment of a material fire; because of the conflict of will and reason they receive the punishment of a worm.<sup>38</sup>

Purgatory. Pope Innocent IV (+1254) recommended the term, purgatory, the Latin word for purification, for use in a letter sent to the apostolic delegate in Greece. This was done in order to stress the place where "sins are truly purified by that temporal fire - not grievous or capital sins which have not first been remitted by penance, but small and slight sins which

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<sup>37</sup>Augustine of Hippo, Selected Writings, 457-458.

<sup>38</sup>Bonaventure, Breviloquium, VII.6.2-6. See Bonaventure, *Soliloquy*, III.3.6-14. which further explains the torments and pains of hell.

remain a burden after death."<sup>39</sup> However, the Second Council of Lyons (1274) did not use fire language - since this was opposed by the Greek Orthodox Church - but did stress the "purgatorial or cleansing punishments," which could be alleviated by the faithful on earth offering the "Sacrifice of the Mass, prayers, almsgiving, and other religious deeds."<sup>40</sup>

One can see the influence of the Council on Clare and the sisters of the community. For example, while Clare's sister, Johanna, was still alive, a man whose wife had died, came to the monastery to recommend his wife to Johanna's prayers and also to find out the status of his wife's soul. Clare, now in her early twenties, saw the woman in purgatory finishing her severe punishments, and, through Clare's compassion and prayers for the woman, as well as the good works which the husband would perform, was able to shorten the woman's time in purgatory (Vita, 99). Likewise, Clare saw Ceptus of Spoleto,<sup>41</sup> standing before God who was clothed in judicial garments and another young man holding a sword ready to slay Ceptus. Clare had great compassion for Ceptus, asking God: "Lord, may you be patient with him." God said to Clare:

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<sup>39</sup>John Clarkson, John Edwards, William Kelly, John Welch, ed. The Church Teaches (St. Louis/London: B. Herder Book Co., 1955, 1961), 347-348. Jacques Le Goff, The Birth of Purgatory, translated by Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981, 1984), 154-161, discusses the beginnings of the use of the noun, *Purgatory*. Barbara Newman, From Virile Woman to WomanChrist: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 109-122, stresses the fact that purgatory represents a "condition of suffering, both punitive and redemptive....which had existed in inchoate form since the subapostolic age, and in a more or less rationalized form since Augustine," especially in two "woman-centered" texts, the *Acts of Thecla* (second century) and the *Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas* (c203). She also emphasizes the point that in the medieval period, devout women interceded for the souls in purgatory through prayer and fasting, especially for members of their family.

<sup>40</sup>Clarkson, 348-349.

<sup>41</sup>Ceptus had tried to persuade Clare to leave the monastery of the Holy Cross and enter a monastery in Spoleto. He was also the man who, after having endangered the chastity of one of the religious women (PC 46.27-47.2), which had been seen by Clare in a vision (PC art. 88. 92; Vita, 294), was scolded severely by Clare, repented and did severe penitence for his sins. See PC 610, under Cetto of Spoleto.

"He shall not be killed, but he will pay the great price." Clare, with her sisters, prayed for him and she knew that he was bound into purgatory, but saved from the fires of hell.<sup>42</sup>

Clare was also able to relate to the sisters of the monastery whether community members, who had died, were suffering great pains in purgatory or had entered into paradise (Vita, 337). For example, Andriola appeared to Clare, while Clare was at prayer, asked for Clare's blessing as she went from purgatory to heaven (PC 284.29-285.7).<sup>43</sup>

From the above examples, one can see that Clare believed in the power of prayer to release souls from purgatory. She also believed in the difference between the temporal pains of purgatory and the eternal pains of hell. This is not unique to Clare as can be seen from the following examples.

From the second century and from the writings of the Early Fathers of the Church, there have been indications that the Church prayed and celebrated the Eucharist for the dead.<sup>44</sup> Augustine, without using the word "purgatory," did commend prayers for the dead.<sup>45</sup> Bonaventure stressed the intercessory power of the Church for the dead, including "sacrifices, fasting, alms, and other prayers and voluntarily assumed sufferings for the quicker and easier expiation of their sins" (*Breviloquium*, VII.3.1).<sup>46</sup>

Bonaventure considers purgatory as a "corporeal fire which punishes the souls of the just who have not in this life completed their punishment and the satisfaction for sin....their

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<sup>42</sup>PC art.93; 49.30-50.18; 140.1-20; 215.32-216.25; Vita. 294: Nequaquam domine sed indulgeatur sibi....Non occidetur sed solvet magnum bannum.

<sup>43</sup>Andriola was the daughter of Andrea di Tignosone, one of the chaplains of the monastery (PC art. 2, 5, 118, 119). Around 1305, Clare raised her from the dead so that she could say good-bye to her father (PC art. 118; Vita, 338-9). See PC, 606.

<sup>44</sup>Gerald O'Collins and Edward Farrugia, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology* (NY/Mahweh: Paulist Press, 1991), 197. See Strayer, DMA, 215-217.

<sup>45</sup>O'Collins and Farrugia, 197. Le Goff, 61-85, states that Augustine is the "true father of Purgatory" and "was the first to introduce a number of ingredients that later went on to make up the doctrine of Purgatory."

<sup>46</sup>Le Goff, 250-256, stresses other aspects of Bonaventure's concept of purgatory.

punishment is not so severe as to prevent hope....[W]hen they are sufficiently purged, they immediately depart and enter into the glory of paradise" (Breviloquium, VII.2.2).

Clare lived out and brought forward the teachings of the Church on Purgatory, especially those stressing the expiatory aid of prayer in shortening the soul's punishment. She and her sisters followed the then-known orthodox teachings of the Catholic Church on the communion of saints.

If sin necessitates punishment after death, a life of virtue and penance brings about a life in the glory of God in heaven. The last part of this section delves into Clare's concept of heaven.

Heaven. For Clare, heaven is the place where God dwells with the saints and angels. Heaven, which Clare saw in a vision 15 years before her death, was filled with great splendor and the glory of the saints (PC art. 74; 35.32-37.19; 130.30-131.5; 205.23-207.15; 278.25-279.29). Clare saw heaven as a beautiful mountain full of windows, from which rays like the sun shone forth (Vita. 287). After receiving this vision, Clare was refreshed with the "sweetest dew which restored her and by the sweetest manna which comforted her both spiritually and corporally."<sup>47</sup>

A few days before her death, Clare had another rapture in which she saw the saints. "the fraternity of life eternal." standing off in the distance, and knowing that she was called by God (PC 264.7-22; Vita, 399), asked the saints: "Speak to holy Mary that she will receive my soul." She also said to the ladies: "Exult always in the Lord and sing the Te Deum, because my Lord Jesus Christ wishes to take me with him. All eternal life and the heavenly society are preparing themselves for my reception, and I wish to invite the whole world to these nuptials."<sup>48</sup> In a subsequent sentence, Clare also stated: "I cannot stay here any longer. Do you see that? Behold,

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<sup>47</sup>Vita, 288: Et ex tunc cepit clara sentire rorem suavissimum qui eam refrigerabat interius et recreabat, et manna dulcissimum quod ipsam spiritualiter et etiam corporaliter confortabat.

<sup>48</sup>PC art. 133, 134, 135, 136; Vita, 397: O fraternitas vite eterne....Dicite sancte marie quo accipiat animam meam....Exultemus omnes in domino et cantemus te deum laudamus, quia dominus meus ihesus christus ducere me vult secum. Omnis etiam vita eterna et celestis societas pro mea receptione se parat, et ego totum mundum vellem ad istas nuptias invitare.

eternal life is being prepared for my reception, because both [Augustine and Francis] and all the saints are coming to take me with them because my Lord Jesus Christ wants me."<sup>49</sup>

Thus, for Clare, heaven is the place where one is truly united with God and the nuptial celebration is blessed with the presence of all the angels and saints. The union with God that Clare had encountered on earth becomes an eternal union with God in heaven. Clare, coming to the end of her life, does not speak of the Beatific Vision, but instead, speaks of an eternal wedding feast, where she will be united with the God Who Loves her.<sup>50</sup>

Conclusion to Section 3. Francesco states that Clare recognized God as Ruler in three roles; namely, as the One Who: 1) governs and rules; 2) promises eternal life; 3) gives faithfully without deceit. In Clare's life, however, we find that she was more concerned about the latter two characteristics rather than the first one, since she recognized God more as Judge than Ruler.

God continues to be the merciful and compassionate God, but God must judge harshly those who choose to separate themselves from God through sin. But Clare, though her own prayers, compassion, and experiences, recognizes God as the loving God who wishes to be eternally united with all.

Secondly, Clare believes in the power of prayer to re-unite sinners to God. It is also obvious that God judges human persons in ways that differ from how we judge others or ourselves. Again, we recognize Clare's humble stance as she stands as creature before her Creator.

Thirdly, because human persons are made in the image and likeness of God, humanity has the freedom to choose whether to be in eternal union with God or in eternal separation from

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid.: Ego hic non possum amplius permanere. Vos quid facitis? Ecce vita eternal pro mea receptione paratur, quia me vult et sanctus Augustinus {Franciscus} et omnes sancti ad ducendum me secum veniunt quia dominus meus ihesus christus me vult. Semenza, *Vita*, 397, fn 99, cites the manuscripts where *Augustinus* and *Franciscus* have been interchanged, due to interpolation. Berengario di Donadio, *Vita di Chiara da Montefalco*, edited by Rosario Sala (Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 1991), 95, fn 47, extends Semenza's explanation. See Donadio, *Vita*, 45, fn 15.

<sup>50</sup>The term *Beatific Vision* is a term used in speculative theology. Clare does not use this term, but instead uses the spousal image of a wedding feast, eternally celebrating her union with her desired and beloved One.

God. Thus, for Clare, continued union with God implies the necessity of prayer, continued conversion and acts of penance.

Fourthly, we recognize the fact that Clare acknowledged the power of the sacrament of Penance in order to breach the gap between God and sinner. Finally, the experience of God's merciful love in Clare's life must overflow into compassion for others.

We have seen how Clare remains within the orthodox teaching of the magisterium in regard to the last things, but it is also important to see how Clare recognized God as Ruler in God's role as the One who gives *faithfully without deceit*.

It is interesting to note that Francesco uses the phrase *faithfully without deceit* rather than the more positive statement of *faithfully with truth*. Perhaps Francesco is trying to stress Clare's strength and courage in speaking against the deceit and falsehood of the members of the sect of the Free Spirit. Clare unmasks the deception of Bentivenga and his sect of the Free Spirit. She brings to light the truth concerning the abbot living in sin and also exposes the secret thoughts and actions of the sisters of her community. However, what this says about Clare is that, for her, the presence of deceit (of non-truth) is not a characteristic of God. What God gives is constant fidelity to the truth and it is only in the faithful God that one can find truth.

Berengario wished to place Clare's knowledge of God in relationship to the Trinity and Francesco wished to present Clare's God-knowledge within the limits of God as Creator and Ruler. Clare, however, through her words and her experiences, brings us back to the fact that no matter what title is given to God, it was essential for her that her life be immersed in God's truthfulness and fidelity. Thus it is under the title of God as the Spirit of Truth that we reach the culmination of Clare's knowledge about and experience of God.

#### Section 4: God as Teacher and God as the Spirit of Truth.

Clare, in her constant search for the will of God, said to her sisters: "Who teaches the soul except God? There is no teacher in the world as great as God."<sup>51</sup> These words were spoken both for the edification of the sisters and to encourage them to be faithful in prayer, because it is

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<sup>51</sup>PC 170.15-16: Quis docet animam nisi Deus? non est in mundo ita bonum magistramentum sicut Dey. Sister Tommasa, a life-long friend of Clare's and a member of her community, is the only witness to attest to these words of Clare. Job 36.22 states: "Behold, God is sublime in His power. What teacher is there like Him?"

only in listening to God in prayer that one will learn the truth of what one must say and how one must live. For John states:

As for you, the anointing you received from God remains in your hearts. This means that you have no need for anyone to teach you. Rather, as God's anointing teaches you about all things and is true - free from any lie - remain in God as the anointing taught you (1 John 2.27).

Reflection on the Book of Job and the Johannine writings may have led Clare to extend her belief in God as Teacher from reflection into action, but there is also a passage from Augustine's writings which parallels Clare's interest in the God Who is Teacher. Augustine states:

For [God who teaches you] is within; but when [you] teach, [you], as it were, [go] forth to those who are without. For we hear the truth from within, and we speak it to those who are without, outside our heart. We are said indeed to have in our heart those of whom we are thinking, but this is said only because we seem to have a kind of image of them stamped upon us. For, were they altogether within, surely they would know what is in our heart, and so would have no need for us to speak to them.<sup>52</sup>

Clare, following what the Teacher-God has taught her through interior reflection, becomes a teacher and promulgator of the truth to those whom she encounters.

As abbess of the community, Clare was responsible for the instruction of the sisters of the monastery. Not only did she teach them how to live an exemplary religious life, but also through the assistance of the God-Teacher, she was able to reveal the thoughts and actions of the sisters and other people, so that they would not endanger the life of their souls, and thus separate themselves from God. The basis of her concern for the sisters and her reading of their hearts was the recognition of God as Truth. She was particularly unrelenting in her protection of the sisters' virginity (PC art. 73: 35.12-31; 130.18-29; 205.9-22). She did not allow any secret conversations between the ladies and their confessors (PC art. 72: 35.4-11; 129.24-130.17; 204.32-205.8), since she wished the sisters to delight only in God and she did not want them to falter in their service to God (Vita, 176).

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<sup>52</sup>Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, (AS, 914).

Clare was also able to see into the hearts and souls of the sisters in order to correct them whenever they did anything wrong and to encourage them not to sin (PC art. 86, 59). At the Chapter of Faults, Clare would often mention a sin or defect of a particular sister, without mentioning the sister by name. She would also warn the sisters about the visions and thoughts which they had had which were against God and were brought about by the devil (PC 47.10-48.3; 138.27-139.7; 214.5-24). Clare would say: "I, if I wished, know well and could name the woman to whom such has happened, but I prefer rather to rebuke her in secret."<sup>53</sup> The sister about whom Clare spoke came to Clare in such a way that the other sisters did not know about it, and Clare admonished her.

In order that they might save their souls, Clare reproved the sisters in private for their dishonest thoughts and secret conversations. She would say to them: "I know well your secret and hidden speech and I know that you have such tendencies and thoughts, which are against God and in peril of your souls."<sup>54</sup> Clare also guarded the actions of those sisters who did errands outside the monastery. In one case, two women did something dishonorable, which is not mentioned in the text. Clare, knowing this without being told, reprimanded them (PC 136.14-27). Likewise, two sisters sent to buy wax, stopped at the house of one of the sisters' relatives. They had something to eat and also looked at the woman's betrothal gifts. Clare, again knowing this without being told, corrected the women, and did not permit them to buy wax again (PC 136.28-137.9).

Not only did Clare, through the power of the Holy Spirit, know the secret thoughts and conversations of the sisters of the monastery, but she also knew the thoughts and actions of other people. For example, Clare told the abbot of the monastery of S. Erasmus, Jacobus, to "dismiss the concubine which you have and do good deeds for God from your benefices."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>PC art. 89: Ego, si vellem, bene scirem ostendere vel nominare illam dominam cui talia, sed malo eam corripere in secreto.

<sup>54</sup>PC art. 87; 44.10-13: Ego bene scivi et scio vestra colloquia secreta et occulta et scio quod vos habetis tales tentationes et cogitationes, que sunt contra Deum et in perditionem animarumstrarum. See PC 137.30-138.13; 212.20-213.3; 334.17.17-20; 363.25-364.22.

<sup>55</sup>PC 355.4-5: Rogo te quod dimictas concubinam, quam habes, et quod beneficias pro Deo de beneficiis tuis. This was attested to by witness 372, who accompanied Jacobus on this



Likewise, Blaxius, Clare's friend for many years, had asked Clare for guidance in living a better life. She recommended faithfulness in prayer and contemplation, which he promised to do. However, he failed in this endeavor and Clare called him to her, and, while reprimanding him said: "It was not to give peace to me, but I wish to give it to you."<sup>56</sup> Finally, Clare often corrected her brother for "his depravity of person, other dissolutions, and inappropriate words." After being reproved by Clare, he was always changed into a better person, and he would visit Clare as often as he could in order to hear her "virtuous eloquence and doctrine."<sup>57</sup> Clare, in her personal experience and response to God follows John's admonition to remain in God, by proclaiming the truth which has been revealed to her, and, in the process of proclaiming the truth, she herself also became an excellent teacher.

Moving from Clare's instructions and admonitions to her sisters and to her brother, Francisco, there are many instances in her meetings with other people that also illustrate her commitment to God as the Spirit of Truth. Let us look at a few of these examples.

We return again to Clare's encounter with Bentivenga, the false teacher of the sect of the Free Spirit. Clare, in speaking to Bentivenga about her willingness to suffer even death in order to defend the truth, says: "For my God, to whose love I cling, is the Spirit of Truth who gives boldness, constancy and courage. Through the God who has made me more courageous, more constant and more secure, my soul does not fear the punishments of the body, however many, received from the Lord, which draw me closer to my Lord God."<sup>58</sup>

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journey, and was not aware of the abbot having a concubine. Clare was reluctant to talk about the concubine in the presence of her sisters and there is no mention of the incident or what happened to the concubine.

<sup>56</sup>PC 439.25-26, witness 161: Non erat michi pax significare, sed volui mictere pro te.

<sup>57</sup>PC 284.8-15: <et eum videbat> aliquando in pravitate persone, aliquando in aliqua dissolutione, aliquando in verbis non ordinatis...Et de hiis omnibus dure et rigide ipsum corripbat; in quibus correctionibus semper in melius mutabatur. Et quandoque <se> sentiret non bene dispossitum, libenter procurabat ire ad eam, quia ex ipsius virtuosa eloquentia et doctrina.

<sup>58</sup>Vita, 343: Nam deus meus cui amore inhereo [sic] est spiritus veritatis qui...audacem constantiam tribuit et tanto audacior et constantior quis efficitur et securior nec corporis penas timet, quanto quis appropinquat amplius domino deo meo.

Throughout Clare's life, she despised mendacity and no one ever accused her of telling any lies (PC art. 73; Vita, 93). She continued to guard the sisters against any dishonesty, especially in their prayer life (PC art. 88), and was particularly diligent in guarding the sisters against the insidious teachings of false preachers (PC art. 105; Vita, 298-299).

Clare, in being faithful to the Spirit of Truth, attests to her belonging to God. She proclaims this faithfulness, urging those who are harboring falsehood, to return, to be converted back to this God of truth. For example, a Friar Minor, Brother Giacomo, by name, who had kept a very dangerous secret to himself while speaking with Clare, was reproved by Clare for not revealing the secret. She also recognized the fact that not telling the truth at a given time could lead one to continue to be untruthful, thus escalating the option to be sinful, rather than choosing to live in truth in the eyes of God. The brother did not deny the charge and Clare said to him: "If you had denied this fact of yours to me before you left, you would, after returning to me, have to mention more sins. Do you think that God deceived me?"<sup>59</sup>

Another time, one of the chaplains of the monastery, having been told so by another person, accused Clare and the sisters of the monastery of doing something that was sinful. Clare was aware that someone who wished to bring harm to her and the monastery had told this to him. She said to the chaplain: "If it was evil, even if it was diabolical, God would reveal it. But, in truth, it is not God who spoke to you, because God does not lie...but it was a man who said this through the suggestion of the devil." After revealing the name of the person, Clare went on to say: "If such evil touches me, I do not need to dismiss it, because I do not care about my dishonor. But because this deceit touches the entire monastery, I have to excuse it and say that it is false and was not made either about me or about the sisters of this monastery."<sup>60</sup> Since God is

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<sup>59</sup>Vita, 295-296: Si ante relationem a me tibi factam ista negaveras, modo tamen post meam relationem taliter mentiendo plus peccas. Putasne me deus deceperit? See also PC art. 88; 45.13-26; 213.33-214.3. Brother Thomas Boni (witness 160), the only witness who did not believe in the holiness of Clare, used Brother Giacomo as a example to show that Clare had dealings with heretics (PC 435.1-6).

<sup>60</sup>PC art. 125; 68.19-26; 146.22-30; 232.31-233.6: Si istud malum fuisset cogitatum Deus potuisset vobis revelare, si dictum fuisset etiam diabolus potuisset revelare. Set pro vero istud malum etiam non fuit cogitatum, et ideo non fuit Deus qui vobis dixit, quia Deus non mentitur. nec eciam fuit dictum, et non fuit diabolus qui hoc dixit, set fuit homo quo dixit suggestione

Clare's Teacher, either through her innate wisdom or through divine revelation, she is capable of recognizing truth and falsehood, as Scripture says: "We belong to God and anyone who has knowledge of God gives us a hearing, while anyone who is not of God refuses to hear us. Thus do we distinguish the spirit of truth from the spirit of deception" (1 John 4.6).

Conclusion to Section 4. For Clare, God is the One and Only True Teacher. God is without deceit, bound in truth and ever faithful. As a faithful disciple of God and as one who is willing to serve God, Clare committed herself to a life of truthfulness. Clare, in becoming the image and likeness of God, must also be a truthful teacher, leading all whom she meets into the truth of God and into true knowledge of themselves. The main aim in all her teaching was to make sure that no one would be separated from God in this life or in the next life. Clare, by being faithful to prayer and contemplation, was able to show all whom she encountered the best way to achieve union with God. For Clare, this was the road of truthfulness. Truthfulness was a major foundational virtue in Clare's life. It permeated all of her dealings with herself, others, and, most especially, with God, Who is Truth and the Teacher of Truth. God never deceived her. God never lied to her.

Conclusion to Chapter 4. "God created the human person in God's image; in the divine image God created them, male and female God created them (Gn 1.27)...And God saw all that God had made, and that it was very good" (Gn 1.31). With these words, Scripture introduces us to the fact that all humanity is made in God's image, but humanity is not God. However, Godet states that "God is not of the earth, God is not human. The resemblance to God can reside then only in the 'male and female.' The Human, male *and* female, is like God."<sup>61</sup> How does Clare image God in her life? What does Clare implicitly and explicitly say about this God whom she experienced? What does Clare teach us about God, in Whose image we are made?

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diaboli....Si istud malum tantum tangeret me non curarem me excusare. quia non curarem de infamia mea. Set quia istud mendatium tangit totum monasterium. ideo volo excusare et dico quod istud est falsum et non fuit factum nec per me nec per sorores istius monasterii.

<sup>61</sup>Jean Francois Godet, Clare of Assisi: A Woman's Life. Symbols of the Feminine in her Writings (Chicago, IL: Haversack, 1991), 19.

In Clare's writings, visions and actions, we recognize her acknowledgement of the strength of God combined with God's tenderness and nurturing.<sup>62</sup> Let us look at how Clare shows these attributes of God by looking at God as Creator and as Truth.

For Clare, God is the Creator and all humanity are creatures in relationship to God. God's freeing and generous love shows itself through the presence of the Spirit by which all persons "live, move, and have their being" (Acts 17.28). This is expressly present in Clare's life and teaching through her continual realization of God's grace of loving kindness and favor toward her. She knows who she is because of God's generosity and God's freely given, though undeserved, love. She would be nothing without God and God's gifts.

Clare is in a definite relationship with God as creature to Creator. She placed herself in relationship to the transcendent God, but also recognized the immanent presence of God in her life through the gift of the freedom of choice. Clare's entire life was bound up in becoming totally united to this God who had chosen her to be grace-filled and immersed in love.

Clare recognized the gift of freedom of choice and its ramification of possible separation from God. Thus, through God's grace and her constant diligence in seeking God's will, whether this be through prayer, acts of penance, or striving in the life of virtues, Clare's road to God was bound in the strength and tenderness of God, in God's gracious and generous love, in God's gift of freedom and in the ramifications of choice. She spent her life teaching this to others. She encouraged and admonished others through her teaching, prayers, example, and even through her miraculous intervention that all persons should be eternally united to God.

She looked at God, the Creator, therefore, not from the point of view that intelligence and knowledge are the most essential elements of being made in God's image, but that the will to be united to God and the freedom to chose this path are. God, though Creator and transcendent, is also immanent and present to Clare. Thus, Clare, in the biblical tradition,

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<sup>62</sup>Godet, 22-27, introduces these two characteristics as examples of the words we can use to describe the masculine and feminine characteristics of God, recognizing the fact that strength without tenderness and tenderness without strength do not present a complete image of who God is.

presents grace as "divine enabling, divine empowerment, divine companionship, divine liberation."<sup>63</sup>

In Clare, we can also see the connection between God as Creator and God as Judge, in other words, between protology and eschatology, creation and final justice, when she introduces the element of sin as a human component and not divinely created. Sin for Clare, is the choice that finally separates one from God. In her discussion of sin, she also presents her belief in hell as the eternal separation from God, purgatory as the temporal separation, and heaven as the eternal nuptial union with God.

These are not new or different insights in theology, but complete the cycle of the story of grace and the freedom of the human person to choose between God and eternal happiness or hell and eternal separation.

The second theme of Clare's knowledge and experience of God centers on her belief in God as Truth and God as ever faithful. Clare's recognition of God as the God of Truth allows her to see the truth of her own condition before God as well as the thoughts and condition of the sisters and other persons with whom she comes in contact. Clare was acclaimed by witnesses to be truthful in her words and in her actions. Even though not present at certain actions of others, she was able to know what they had done which would have turned them away from being faithful and true to God. Clare images the strength and courage of her convictions, but also images the tenderness she has for all people and her concern that they never be separated from God. Clare always listened to the truth which God had planted within her heart and admonished others to do the same.

Clare's attention to the truth also bound her to be truthful in her dealings with her sisters. Clare as abbess is concerned about her sisters. She detects their falsehood and duplicity, whether in word, conscience or actions. She is outspoken with the sisters, calling them to be honest with themselves as well as to her. She assisted other people also to admit their sinfulness and encouraged them in their continued conversion and repentance. She used the power of God

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<sup>63</sup>Michael Scanlon, OSA, "Christian Anthropology," in A New Dictionary of Theology, edited by Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins and Dermot A. Lane (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988), 39.

at work within her, not only to prophesy future things, but also to read the hearts and minds of others, and thus bring them back to the path of truth.

Clare as mystic finds herself enveloped in God's Truth. She sees herself united to God and God united to her, even in this life, and assuredly, in the life to come, since God promises eternal life to those who are faithful, to those who live in truth. Again, her contemplation of God as Truth was not a mere intellectual understanding of the mysteries surrounding God but in her own experiences she was present to these mysteries. She was in touch with the truth as it was unveiled, communicated, revealed to her in very concrete ways, in ways beyond the pretenses, lies, distortion, and concealment harbored by certain persons. Her awareness was a knowledge and evaluation of what was going on in others. She had the ability to sense the presence of evil, to recognize it and name it in all its forms. She fearlessly used this gift to protect herself and her sisters and others from harm.

We can see the strength of God manifest in Clare's life. We see her life of virtue as the unending energy to possess God. In the service of truth, this fragile woman was willing to suffer pain, to confront heretics and the devil, and even to suffer death by martyrdom in order to possess the God of her desires. She may have been frail of body, but she was definitely strong in the Spirit. She had tremendous perseverance and courage and was adamant in becoming totally united, totally immersed into God.

But we must also be consciously aware of the fact that, for Clare, God is also merciful, that is, in the words of Godet, "sensitive to suffering and sorrow."<sup>64</sup> God is a nurturing God, who brings forth life, nourishes it, and helps it to grow. All of this is achieved through God's grace and the gift of true freedom. In Clare's life, she mirrors this image of God as nurturer, as tender lover, in how she cared for the sisters under her charge, not only physically by serving them and taking care of them when they were ill, but also by her care and concern for their immortal souls. She worried about their physical and spiritual needs, but she was also the safeguard of their virtue. In her correction of her sisters and other people, she was the compassionate one, always loving them with the generous, unfailing love that God had shown to her.

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<sup>64</sup>Godet, 67.

What Clare teaches about God is that God is Creator, Judge and Truth and that God mirrors both strength and tenderness. God is transcendent and immanent. By giving totally, God mirrors for human persons what it truly means to be human and to be made in the image and likeness of God. In the next chapter, we will determine how Clare experiences, envisions and speaks about the perfect image of God, Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER 5

### CLARE'S THEOLOGY OF JESUS CHRIST: THE GOD WHO SUFFERS

We have seen in the previous chapter that Clare recognizes God as the One-Who-Is-Truth, and the One from whom she does not wish to be separated. We will find, in this chapter, that Clare sees Jesus Christ as the God-Who-Suffers. This chapter, therefore, looks at two aspects of Clare's knowledge of Jesus Christ, namely, through his humanity and through his Passion and Death.

Clare was deeply embedded in her times. Thus, it is necessary to look briefly at the humanity and Passion of Jesus Christ as emphasized in the Middle Ages, before moving into a closer look at Clare's theology of Jesus Christ.

Since before the twelfth century, but especially through the writings of Anselm (1033-1109), Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) and other monastic theologians, the devotion to the humanity of Jesus Christ had been more deeply promulgated.<sup>1</sup> It was through the preaching of the Friars - "Franciscan, Dominican, Carmelite, and Crosier" - who traveled throughout Europe and beyond, that people "were brought closer to the humanity of Christ."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Anselm, Cur Deus Homo, Proslogian in St. Anselm: Basic Writings, translated by S.N. Deane (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1962); Bernard of Clairvaux, Song of Songs, translated by Kilian Walsh and Irene Edmonds (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1971-1983). For secondary sources, see Richard Kieckhefer, "Major Currents in Late Medieval Devotion," in Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation, 84-85; Gerald O'Collins, Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 202-203; Ewert Cousins, "The Humanity and Passion of Christ," in Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages, 377-380, mentions Anselm, Bernard of Clairvaux, Aelred of Rievaulx and Eckbert, Benedictine abbot and spiritual director of Elizabeth of Schönau; Sloyan, 131.

<sup>2</sup>Gerard S. Sloyan, The Crucifixion of Jesus: History, Myth, Faith (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 136.



The monastic theological tradition, in developing the theology of the Incarnation, saw its entire prayer and sacramental life as signs of the continuing presence of Christ. The Bible was seen as the sacrament of the Incarnation, the Liturgy as the continuation of the Incarnation and the Sacrament of Penance as an extension of Christ's redemptive presence in the Incarnation.<sup>3</sup> Not only was Christ the just judge and mediator between God and humanity, but Jesus was also the compassionate Savior, in whose footsteps the monks and nuns wished to follow.<sup>4</sup> The monks and nuns saw that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, proclaimed the immanence of God and humanity's likeness to God, but they also acknowledged God's transcendence as awesome and powerful Creator.<sup>5</sup>

Clare, following the tradition of her times, emulated the path of women mystics and other vernacular theologians in regard to their relationship to Jesus Christ and his humanity. This path represented a balance between the contemplative and active life and aspects of their spirituality centered on the synthesis of being and doing. By opposing the "theological and ascetical dualism" prevalent in the intellectual and ecclesiastical arena, mystics focused their spirituality on the "integration of mind and affect."<sup>6</sup> The women mystics were driven by the love of God toward God, but this powerful incentive needed to be protected by the boundaries of discipline and obedience, the open listening to God and the Church.<sup>7</sup> It was necessary for the mystics to integrate the spiritual and physical together in order to maintain the balance between the affect and the intellect. The women did this through their *imitatio Christi*, the imitation of

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<sup>3</sup>See Claude J. Peifer, *Monastic Spirituality* (NY: Sheed and Ward, 1966), 83, 90, 142.

<sup>4</sup>The iconography of the period also changed from the portrayal of Christ Triumphant to that of the Suffering Christ. See Derbes, 1-34.

<sup>5</sup>Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, 184f, 248f, 255. McLaughlin, *Women, Power*, 124-126, sees the language of the mystics as more "balanced between 'male' and 'female' metaphor and symbol for God and the holy....Obedience was balanced by nurturance, imagery of battle was accompanied by imagery of birth, labor and growth, and God's transcendence was contained within the immanence of sacramentality and mystical union."

<sup>6</sup>McLaughlin, *Women, Power*, 126.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 123.

Christ.<sup>8</sup> Jesus Christ was both human and divine. Therefore, to imitate Christ meant to unite the human and divine elements of the person, and once again proclaim to all that "God created humankind in [God's] image, in the image of God [God] created them; male and female [God] created them. God blessed them" (Gn 1.27-28a).<sup>9</sup>

The discipline of the women mystics, their asceticism and self-abnegation, included not only self-inflicted physical suffering, such as flagellation, fasting, vigils, but also the 'psychological' suffering of rebelling against their families and the accepted culture of their day. Physical discipline, no matter how bizarre, was, for them, a sharing in and joining with the sufferings of Jesus.<sup>10</sup>

The women's devotion to the humanity of Christ showed itself in other ways, as well. Their simple life style, the manner in which they dressed, their communal and prayer life brought them closer to the disciples who followed Jesus in the early Church. These women wanted to live a more perfect life. In order to do so, they had to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Heffernan, 185-193; 216-218; Étienne Ledeur, "Imitation du Christ," in Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, 7, cols. 1562-87; Suor Giovanna della Croce, "Un secolo, il XIII. e la sua mistica," in S. Chiara da Montefalco, 127-139, presents Clare's mysticism in the context of Bonaventure, Aquinas and Eckhart relative to the lived experience of the mystic, the tendency toward humanism and Christocentrism.

<sup>9</sup>Schneiders, 267, stresses the fact that spirituality is "Christian religious experience....The Transcendent who is the horizon, the focus, and the energizing source...is an Other who is personal, living, and loving and is fully revealed in a human being, Jesus of Nazareth." See LaCugna, 292-296; Jaroslav Pelikan, Jesus Through the Centuries: His Place Through the Centuries (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1985), 134-140.

<sup>10</sup>Finke, 41f; Anderson and Zinsser, A History of Their Own, 205, 209. See Petroff, Body and Soul; Bynum, Fragmentation and Redemption; Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Szell, Images of Sainthood; Angela of Foligno, Complete Works, translated by Paul Lachance (NY: Paulist Press, 1993); Louis Dupré and James A Wiseman, eds., Light from Light (NY: Paulist Press, 1988); Petroff, Visionary Literature; Caroline Walker Bynum, Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987); Wiethaus, Maps of Flesh and Light. Bernard McGinn, The Growth of Mysticism (NY: Crossroad, 1994), gives a history of the relationship of asceticism to mysticism up to the thirteenth century.

<sup>11</sup>It is also the reason why many of the women wished to preach and teach. To follow in the

For the mystics, their love and knowledge of God was not obtained through intellectual exercise, but through the opening of themselves to the power of the Holy Spirit. They became the 'prophets,' the receptacles of this power and conveyed this love, this knowledge of God through their use of bodily images,<sup>12</sup> and "created their own images of the deity, and their own phrasing for the ultimate gift of union."<sup>13</sup> Clare, like many women mystics before and after her, knew God not through the intellectual study of God, but through her experience of God.

### Section 1: Clare and the Humanity of Jesus Christ.

For Clare of Montefalco, Christ in His humanity brought God closer to her and she closer to God. God, the Creator, for whom all creation is good became Christ, the God-Man, who showed to Clare another aspect of God's presence in the world.<sup>14</sup> Clare continued to live

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footsteps of Jesus meant to move about from place to place preaching the kingdom of God. Discussion on the humanity of Jesus Christ in the Middle Ages can also be found in Bynum, Fragmentation and Redemption, 129-133, 143-146, 200-222; Bynum, Holy Feast and Holy Fast, 211, 252-3, 273-5; Bynum, Jesus as Mother, 185, 250; Beano-Brocchieri, Feminine Mind, 22-26; JoAnn McNamara, "The Rhetoric of Orthodoxy: Clerical Authority and Female Innovation in the Struggle with Heresy," in Maps of Flesh and Light, 20-21; Petroff, Body and Soul, 217; Maggie Ross, "Sexuality, Otherness and the Truth of Self," Vox Benedictina 10(1993), 346-52; Cousins, Humanity and Passion of Christ, 375-391.

<sup>12</sup>For a discussion on the use of bodily imagery in medieval mystics' writings, see Caroline Walker Bynum, "Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages," Renaissance Quarterly 39/3 (Autumn, 1986): 300-439; Margaret R. Miles, Carnal Knowing (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1989); J. Giles Milhaven, "A Medieval Lesson on Bodily Knowing," JAAR 57/1 (Spring, 1989): 341-372; Martha J. Reineke, "This is My Body," JAAR 58/2 (Summer, 1990): 245-265; Ross, Sexuality, 333-364; Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church," in Religion and Sexism (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 150-183; Petroff, Body and Soul, 204-224.

<sup>13</sup>Anderson, Zinsser, 208. See Régnier-Bohler, 427-482; McNamara, Rhetoric of Orthodoxy, 9-27, for further discussion on the relationship of language to medieval women mystics. Bynum, Fragmentation and Redemption, 196, states that from the love poetry and romantic stories of the period, women mystics acquired "a vocabulary of feelings" to express the immanence of God.

<sup>14</sup>Leonardi, Chiara e Berengario, 380, states that, for Clare, "God is seen and known in the humanity of the Word: all the events of the Man are events of God" (Dio è visto e vissuto nell'umanità del Verbo: tutte le cose dell'uomo sono cose di Dio). Casagrande, Religiosità, 347,

out the importance of the Incarnation that the monastic tradition began. Clare, at the end of the thirteenth century, also became a "mature expression of this new [religious and spiritual] sensibility centered on the humanity of Christ."<sup>15</sup> She became the "heiress of the most significant expressions of the spirituality of St. Francis and the mirror of the renewed Augustinian traditions."<sup>16</sup>

Let us look more carefully at how Clare of Montefalco showed this growth in sensitivity to the humanity of Jesus Christ by first looking at the visions which Clare had concerning Jesus Christ, centering around the "successive phases of the mystery of the redemption."<sup>17</sup>

Berengario states in the *Vita*: "It is believed by many people of good faith who knew Clare well that, at different times, she saw Christ in all the actions that he did in this life."<sup>18</sup> Whether these sightings were acts of meditative imagination or the means of communicating mystical experiences, one must be aware that Clare truly desired to enter into the events of Christ's life, thus bringing her closer to God.<sup>19</sup> Ewert Cousins calls this type of religious

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also states that these women mystics have direct experience of this Jesus, who is the "God-Man, the incarnate God" (Dio-Uomo, il Dio incarnato).

<sup>15</sup>Casagrande, *Religiosità*, 348: Angela e Chiara sono espressione matura di questa nuova sensibilità [religiosa e spirituale incentrata sull'umanità di Cristo. Casagrande includes Angela, Ubertino da Casale, Jacopone da Todi and Margaret of Cortona in this statement.

<sup>16</sup>Giovanna della Croce, 138-139: Chiara della Croce è figlia del suo secolo. crede delle più significative espressioni della spiritualità di S. Francesco e specchio della rinata tradizione agostiniana divenuta una nuova esperienza religiosa monastica.

<sup>17</sup>Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 262. Leclercq says this about two monastic theologians. Bernard of Clairvaux and Peter the Venerable.

<sup>18</sup>*Vita*, 175: Creditur etiam a personis pluribus fide dignis que claram plenius cognoverunt, quod ipsa diversis temporibus vidit christum in omnibus actibus quos ipse exercuit in hac vita. Berengario in *Vita*, 175, also states that Clare revealed her visions to her confessor. Tommaso, and to her sisters for the following reasons: to give glory to God, to supplement her instructions to her sisters and others and to display her nothingness and ingratitude, since "she wished to hide her holiness from everybody" (ad dei honorem, instructionem proximi, aut ad sui confusionem et obstentationem sue nullitatis et ingratitude conclusit).

<sup>19</sup>Casagrande, *Religiosità penitente*, 348 + fn 179, states that "if the suffering humanity of Christ is in great part the center of their [Angela of Foligno and Clare of Montefalco] visions, it

consciousness and religious experience "the mysticism of the historical event," which he explains thus: "One recalls a significant event in the past, enters into its drama and draws from it spiritual energy, eventually moving beyond the event towards union with God."<sup>20</sup> For Cousins, this is more than just recalling the event, because this consciousness is a form of mystical awareness, since it differs "from our everyday forms of consciousness" and it "provides a path to another form of transcendence, namely, contact with God."<sup>21</sup>

Becoming an active participant in the events of Christ's life allowed Clare to discover both the meaning and the value of a particular event.<sup>22</sup> For Clare, these mystical experiences of being present in the events of Christ's life begin with Christ's birth in Bethlehem, and end with Christ's return to heaven after his Resurrection.<sup>23</sup> These visions are not in any particular chronological order, since the latter vision occurred when she was quite young, while the former vision occurred close to her death.

Visions. Her vision of the birth of Jesus occurred three weeks before the feast of the Nativity.<sup>24</sup> Clare saw coming forth from the newborn Christ-child a path that led to the house of

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has been said that both arrive at a knowledge of God in God's totality; namely, they perceive the mystery of the Trinity as the climax of their perfect comprehension of the Divine" (E se l'umanità sofferente di Cristo è in gran parte il centro delle loro visioni, va pur detto che entrambe pervengono ad una cognizione di Dio nella sua totalità, cioè percepiscono il mistero della Trinità come culmine della loro perfetta comprensione del Divino).

<sup>20</sup>Ewert Cousins, "Francis of Assisi and Christian Mysticism," in Mysticism and Religious Traditions, edited by Steven Katz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 166.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 167. See Cousins, *Humanity and Passion*, 383-384; Giovanna della Croce, 138-139.

<sup>22</sup>Cousins, *Humanity*, 383.

<sup>23</sup>Clare's presence in the earlier events of Christ's life is related only in the *Vita*, whereas Clare's presence to the events of the Passion and Resurrection are mentioned in both the *Vita* and the Process.

<sup>24</sup>Clare often had extended periods of raptures, especially before the major feast days of the Church, such as Christmas and Easter as well as the feast days of virgins, such as Catherine, Agnes, Clare, and Margaret (PC 177.31-178.1). Clare also went into the enraptured state when she or anyone spoke about God and the saints, and especially the Passion of Christ (PC art. 68; 34.1-25; 128.28-129.2; 203.32-204.7; *Vita*, 172).

God the Father, and rays coming from that house descended upon her. Clare, giving thanks for this great blessing, sang songs of praise along with the angels. The sisters heard her singing but they did not understand what she sang (Vita, 291).<sup>25</sup>

The *Vita* also relates the story of Clare, who as a very young child, saw the Boy-Jesus, hidden in the folds of Mary's cloak. Mary told Jesus to walk with Clare. Jesus took Clare's hand and brought her many consolations, but when Clare wished to continue to play with him, Jesus returned to his mother and mother and son both withdrew (Vita, 92). Chiara Frugoni considers this delightful story a "daydream of a child who still longs for her home and games."<sup>26</sup> However, it does not diminish the fact that, even as a young child, Clare was already aware of the presence of God in her life and had the ability to image that Presence.<sup>27</sup>

Christ as a young man appeared to Clare on several occasions. At one time, Christ brought the Eucharist to Clare, since she had missed the reception of Communion with the other sisters. They had forgotten to call her from her cell when it was time to receive, and, realizing that she was late, she ran to the church without dressing properly, that is, without wearing her mantle. Clare's sister, Giovanna, the rectrix of the reclusorio, forbade her to receive, sent her back to her cell, where she wept bitterly. Christ came bringing her communion and other spiritual consolations (Vita, 97).

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<sup>25</sup>In one of the churches of Montefalco, a fresco depicts Clare as being present at the Nativity scene.

<sup>26</sup>Chiara Frugoni, "Female mystics, Visions, and Iconography," in Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy, 131. A fresco of this story is found in the oratory of the monastery of the Holy Cross in Montefalco. Frugoni, *ibid.*, 132, fn 11, also cites the fact that, after Clare's death, "the Virgin appeared to an abbess of the convent of San Nicola of Norcia carrying the saint [Clare] *sub sua clamide*," just as Jesus was placed *sub clamide*.

<sup>27</sup>It is interesting to note that in some cases in the Middle Ages, Clare of Assisi for example, women's conversion or turning to God occurred early in their lives, while men's conversion, as in the case of Francis of Assisi, often occurred later in their lives, with much more drama involved.

On another occasion, Clare saw herself holding a lamb that had the face of a young man. Clare felt great consolation emanating from the eyes of the lamb, and exclaimed to those standing around her: "You, who sit at rich tables, look at the lamb who carried the cross."<sup>28</sup>

Christ also appeared to Clare wearing a crown of flowers on his head, which he then placed on Clare's head as a sign of betrothal (Vita, 170).<sup>29</sup> Although this particular vision does not appear in the Process, at the end of her life Clare referred to the nuptials that awaited her in heaven. She wished that the entire world would be present for the banquet which awaited her (PC art. 130, 134; PC 71.21-23; 77.24-33; 148.14-16; 235.20-236.2; 334.21-335.15; Vita, 397). Likewise, Clare spoke to the sisters about her love for Jesus Christ, and the fact that he wanted her to come to him. All the saints, including Francis and Augustine, were coming to take her to heaven. Clare stated:

Behold life eternal is being prepared for my reception because it and holy Francis [and Augustine] want me, and all the saints are coming to lead me with them...My Lord Jesus Christ wants me. Arise, my soul, to my most faithful love, Jesus Christ, who says to me that he will take me to him. My spirit will meet my most faithful love, Jesus Christ, who said to me that I would come to him, and my soul is so delightfully full and inebriated by his word that it cannot continue unless it goes to him.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Vita, 98-99: Vos qui sedetis ad mensas pingues respicite ad agnum illum qui crucem portavit.

<sup>29</sup>In PC 392.13-14, witness 116 states that he had heard that Christ was seen in Clare's arms in the form of a young man [puer], but whether this represents Christ in some form of betrothal or this represents the vision of the lamb in Clare's arms, is not clear. For development of the mystic's union with God and Christ, the concept of 'mystical marriage,' and the use of Scriptural texts from the *Song of Songs*, see Angela of Foligno, Complete Works, 142-144; Bynum, Jesus as Mother, 134-135, 140-146, 171-173, 180-184, 242-244, 247-262; Bynum, Holy Feast and Holy Fast, 150-161, 246-250; Bernard McGinn, The Foundations of Mysticism, 208-211; McGinn, The Growth of Mysticism, 144-146, 198-223, 140-245, 306-308; Petroff, Visionary Literature, 238-9; Hadewijch, The Complete Works (NY: Paulist, 1980).

<sup>30</sup>PC art. 136, 144: Ecce vita eterna pro mea receptione paratur quia me vult et sanctus Franciscus [et Augustine], et omnes sancti veniunt ad ducendum me secum, quia dominus meus Ihesus Christus me vult...Escontrose l'anima mia a lo mieu dilecto fidellissimo Ihesus Cristo, que me a dicto que me venha a lui. Obviavit anima mea dilecto meo fidellissimo Ihesus Christo, qui dixit michi quod veniam ad eum, et anima mea est tantum repleta dulcedine et inebriata in verbo eius quod non potest contineri quin vadat ad eum. Also see PC 73.4-13; 78.9-22; 91.3-18;

Clare had become so intimately united to Jesus Christ throughout her life, that she called him her faithful love and her faithful friend (PC 73.11). She saw death as a fulfillment of this union with her friend and lover. From now on her life would be changed from an earthly plane to a heavenly one. Although Clare's words were permeated with the recognition of and closeness to the humanity of Jesus, Clare did not forget that Jesus Christ is God. On the day of her death, Clare, responding to the doctor's query of where she would like to go, stated: "Behold my God who calls me. I want to go to my Lord [God]."<sup>31</sup>

Before her death, Clare saw Christ, his head in heaven and his feet hovering above the earth (Wisdom 18.16). A ray of light, emanating from the eyes of Christ, shone onto the face of Clare. With the sign of the cross, Christ blessed her monastery, the city of Spoleto and the earth (PC 468.19-33; PC 392.15; Vita, 338).<sup>32</sup> Christ, suspended between heaven and earth, reinforces for Clare the fact that, even though Christ is no longer physically present on earth. His presence is felt on earth and Christ continues to mediate God's blessings upon the good earth.

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148.28-149.3; 150.5-11; 236.11-25; 239.29-31; 335.16-23; 336.29-31; Vita, 397, 398. Note the fact that Augustine is in brackets. In the critical editions studied, the names of Francis and Augustine are often interchangeable due to the continued discussion on Clare's possible allegiance to the Franciscan family.

<sup>31</sup>PC art. 148; 74.12-26; 82.19-21; 150.33-151.1; 241.9-13; 264.7-26; Vita, 399: Ecce Deum meum, qui vocat me. Ego volo ire ad eum [Deum meum][Dominum meum]. See Bernard McGinn, "The Language of Love in Christian and Jewish Mysticism," in Mysticism and Language, edited by Stephen Katz (NY: Oxford University Press, 1992), 202-235, for a discussion on the "special role of erotic love as a favored enabling symbol to express union with God" (227). Beano-Brocchieri, 29-30, states that the mystics "could make use of only one unique, concrete, and common language: the amorous or conjugal and/or the maternal relationship."

<sup>32</sup>Frugoni, *Female mystics*, 134, sees this representation of Christ's Ascension, and also, the Resurrection, as a representation of the mystery as being rendered "visible and concrete, a token of the desire to participate emotively in the miracle as it unfolds." In Vita, 393, Paula, the abbess of the monastery of St. John in Spoleto sees Christ, in human form, receiving Clare into heaven in the form of a burning torch, whereas Bartholuccia, (Vita, 399), sees both Christ and the Trinity receiving Clare into heaven.



Conclusion of Section 1. How is it that this frail, uneducated woman of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century could even be able to know and experience God, especially through the many visions she had of Jesus Christ? We recognize that it is Jesus Christ, according to a contemporary writer, who "as an actualized person, is the image of God in a human person."<sup>33</sup> Clare, who stands in radical dependency upon God and who celebrates this dependency because of her belief and experience of God's grace and the gift of her freedom to choose God, is able to recognize the God-Man, Jesus Christ.

Clare was well aware that Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man. She recognized the divinity of Christ in his role as the mediator of grace between God and humanity. Christ showed the compassionate face of God by bringing Clare the Eucharist when her own sister forbade her to receive. Christ is the faithful God who continues to call her to himself, even at the point of her death. Christ as God, with his head in the heights, and as man with his feet on the earth, continues to be the way between the physical world God created and the world which God had prepared for all the beloved.

Jesus is the newborn child, the Mediator of the gracious, loving God, who bestows all grace and blessing. Clare recognized the humanity of Christ in the young boy who was willing to comfort Clare in her youth. Jesus is her Bridegroom who bestows his love on her and prepares her for the nuptial feast in heaven. Jesus comes to her, dressed as a humble pilgrim, bringing with him the way to Clare's heart, through his cross, suffering and death. It is in the suffering God, the God who is willing to become poor for all, who epitomizes the loving, truthful, faithful, strong, and merciful God, discovered in the previous chapter.

Jesus is the Way to God Who is Truth and the Giver of all grace. He is the Mediator between God and humanity (1 Timothy 1.51; Romans 9.5). Even from childhood, Clare was constantly aware of the presence of God in her life. Clare's goal was always to be connected with God. If that meant she played with God as a young child, in the form of the Boy-Jesus, we can recognize her delight in God playing with her, as Scripture proclaimed (Proverbs 8.30-31).

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<sup>33</sup>Janet K. Ruffing, "Theological Anthropology," in The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality, 48.

For Clare, as for most women mystics of her time, the reception of Communion was the closest contact a person could have with God. The vision of Christ bringing Clare Holy Communion not only accentuates the presence of God in the Eucharistic presence, but also the presence of the God-Man, Jesus Christ, who personally visits each person during this so-intimate contact with God.

When Clare sees the face of Jesus on the body of the lamb, there are two aspects of Christ being presented here. Christ, as God, humbling himself taking the form of a human person, and, in this case, of the most humble lamb, presents not only the example of the humble God, but also that of the poor and compassionate God.<sup>34</sup> Christ images a God, who is humble, poor and compassionate, just as he images a God, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Christ presents to us a God, who is near and dear to each human person.

The portrayal of Christ as the Bridegroom is a familiar representation of Christ in the Middle Ages, especially to women mystics. They are spiritually betrothed to Jesus and, just as marriage between a man and a woman unites them into one person, so this mystical betrothal unites Clare and Jesus in an eternal union of love. This mystical union is the highest point of any contemplative's life, and, for Clare, her final joy is to be totally immersed in God. We recall Clare's vision of herself in a basin surrounded by water that represents Clare's total union with God and God with her.<sup>35</sup>

Because Clare believed that all human persons are made in the image and likeness of God, she recognized that Jesus is the perfect example of the human person as intended by God the Creator. It is Jesus who is responsible for the presence of the power of the Spirit, God's personal power, into the world. Grace and other consolations are also mediated through Jesus Christ. Jesus as the Immanent God so enveloped Clare's life that she become one with him.

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<sup>34</sup>Perhaps reading into the vision in another way, it is possible to say that Clare is reminding us that we need to look behind the presented face which we see in order to see the goodness of God emanating from a humble person just as Jesus Christ used the parable of Lazarus and the rich man to present an allegorical model of the person who is considered to be worthy of union with God (Luke 16.19-31).

<sup>35</sup>See Bernard McGinn, *Meister Eckhart*, 14, for further bibliography on this topic.

Throughout her life Clare walked with Jesus and was totally immersed in imitation of Him. She lived a life of radical poverty, since Jesus had come into this world as humble and poor. She was compassionate as Jesus was. She preached the truth in order that this knowledge would unite, not only Clare herself, but also all the people with whom she spoke, to God and God alone. It did not matter to Clare whether those people were men or women, single or married, rich or poor. It was union with God and working for the kingdom that was essential in her life. Jesus had spoken to her about eternal union with him. Clare believed, and lived her life conscious of that daily choice given her to choose to be united with God.

Even though Clare recognized and became a part of the different stages in the Redemption story of Jesus Christ, it is His Passion and Death to which she was most dedicated. Devotion to the Passion and Death of Jesus was not unusual at this time in the history of the Church since both the humanity of Christ, and especially the Passion, had become an integral part of the devotional practices of the Church.<sup>36</sup>

## Section 2. Clare and the Passion of Christ.

A young Lord Jesus Christ, dressed in white clothing, carrying a cross on his shoulders, similar to and equal in form and size as the true cross on which he was crucified, appeared to the praying Clare. Jesus Christ said to Clare, "I seek a strong place in which I can plant the cross and for the planting of this cross I find this a fitting place." Christ also imparted to her, "If you are to be my daughter, you must die on the cross."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Ellen M. Ross, The Grief of God: Images of the Suffering Jesus in Late Medieval England (NY/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), vii-viii; Gerard S. Sloyan, 131-132.

<sup>37</sup>Vita, 175: Iuvenis quidam pulcerrimus dominus ihesus christus indutus albis vestibus, deferens quamdam crucem in humero similem et equalem in forma et magnitudine vera crucis, in qua ipse estitit [sic] crucifixus, clare oranti apparuit. Qui etiam dixit ei: Ego quero locum fortem, in quo possim crucem fundare, et pro crucis fundatione hic reperio locum aptum. Et adhuc ipse christus adiunxit: Si vis esse filia moriaris in cruce. In PC 234.4, 10-11. Witness 39 also states that Christ appears to be "very tired" (multum fatigatus) and had "searched through the whole world" (Et quesivi per totum mundum). In PC 70.7-10. Sister Giovanna, her secretary, states Jesus' words in this way: "I have been searching to find a strong place to plant this cross, and I have not found it, and I came this way, because it seems to me that this place is strong to plant this cross and I wish to plant it here" (Ego ivi querendo ut invenirem locum fortem pro

This vision of Christ that occurred fifteen years before Clare's death, when she was twenty-five years old, was the culmination of Clare's visions about Jesus Christ. It represents Christ as a Pilgrim traveling the world to find a place to plant his cross, that is, to find a place where the truth of his Passion and Death can be fostered, grown and bear much fruit. It is not in the ground where Christ plants his cross, but in the heart of Clare herself. She is the place that is strong and willing to bear his cross.

Clare's brother, Francesco, believing in Clare's love for the Passion, stated that Clare saw God as "our Redeemer, who saved with his blood and suffered on the most rough cross, on which, with reproaches, censures and vast sufferings, he suffered cruelly and died for us."<sup>38</sup> For most of her life, Clare participated as fully as possible in the Passion of Christ. Clare's dedication to the Passion of Christ became a focus of her spiritual life (PC art. 46-50; Vita, 99-100). She saw the Passion as yet another manifestation of God's love for the world. God sent Jesus to suffer and redeem the world. Clare patterned her own ascetical life of penance around the imitation of Christ's sufferings. It is from Christ's compassion to others that Clare also learned to be compassionate to others.

From the time she was six years old, Clare was taught and encouraged by her sister, Giovanna, the rectrix of the first reclusorio, not only to meditate on God but also to enter more fully into the Passion of Christ (PC 258.21-26; Vita, 93-4, 99, 172). In fact, Giovanna told Clare that if she thought about anything else, it would be considered a sin.<sup>39</sup> Clare, using the known devotional practices of the day, genuflected and prostrated herself in the form of the cross during her nightly prayer (PC 102.28-103.27; Vita, 93). In compassion for the Passion of Christ, she also wept copious tears, which she tried to hide from her sisters. She did this by covering her face or, if the sisters were at table, by serving them, so that they would not see her tears, since the sisters kept their eyes downcast during the meal (PC art. 48, 50; 120.18-20, 26-34; 194.18-22; 195.17-31; Vita, 99). Clare used the form of meditation promulgated by Aelred

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*fondando dictam crucem et non inveni, et modo veni huch, quia videtur michi quod sit locus actus et fortis ad fundandum istam crucem et hic volo eam fundare).*

<sup>38</sup>PC 274.19-22.

<sup>39</sup>PC 258.23-4: quod si de aliis vel alio cogitaret erat peccatum.

of Rievaulx, even picturing the accoutrements of the table as representing the various aspects of Christ's Passion (PC 193.34-194.3). She applied this reflective meditation through "compassion, conformity and imagination to the Passion of Christ."<sup>40</sup>

Clare "suffered much for Christ and showed many signs of sorrow for the compassion of the pain which Christ had suffered on the cross for us."<sup>41</sup> In fact, Clare so wished to become a part of the Passion of Christ that she prayed that she could see the Passion in its entirety (PC art. 49) knowing that God would give her whatever she asked (PC art. 117; 60.3-11; 145.9-16; 227.31-228.8; Vita, 99). Thus, she found herself at the foot of the cross, along with the Blessed Virgin Mary and two hundred other people (Vita, 100).<sup>42</sup> She fully participated in the Passion and Death of Christ to the point that she herself felt the sufferings of Christ present in her body (PC 258.17-262.8).<sup>43</sup> Clare, in her adolescent enthusiasm, shared this vision with one of the other sisters, stating that the sister could also share in this vision, if she would only request it. However, the other sister, knowing that she was not as holy as Clare, said that this could not possibly be accomplished in her. Clare, believing that she had thought herself holier than the other sister, became inconsolable. The graces of the consolation of the Passion, which she had had prior to this, were taken away from her. Clare, in order to become more closely bound to the exterior sufferings of Christ, increased her ascetical practices, to the point that she became

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<sup>40</sup>PC art. 47; 120.16-16; 193.28-194.17: Item quod ea que videbat vel alias apprehendebat per sensus corporales, reflectebat et applicabat ad compassionem et conformitatem et ymaginationem passionis Christi.

<sup>41</sup>PC art. 46; 120.8-15; 193.7-27: Item quod ipsa santa Clara, dum vixit in adholescentia sua et usque ad suum obitum, multum compassiebatur Christo et multa singna doloris ostendebat et ostendit dum vixit, propter compassionem doloris quem Christus passus fuit in cruce pro nobis.

<sup>42</sup>Berengario is the only one who mentions the number of people at the foot of the cross. Frugoni, *Female mystics*, 149, sees this picture of a holy person at the foot of the cross as both a "spatial and temporal break...where the *where* and the *when* of the story are negated....human time [is inserted] within the cycle of divine time."

<sup>43</sup>Margarita of Carcasona, whom Clare had seen coming to the monastery, also had a vision of Clare at the foot of the cross and from the nail in the Jesus' foot came a great light, which penetrated the soul of Clare. PC art. 122; 65.15-21. For more information on Margarita, see PC, 620. In Vita, 457.3-14, Paula, the abbess of the monastery of St. John in Spoleto, envisioned Clare and Christ crucified together on the cross.

ill (PC 259.5-18). For eleven years, from 1288 to 1299, Clare suffered this dark night of the loss of the consolation of the Passion.<sup>44</sup> After a period of time, Blaxio of Spoleto, a friend of the monastery, was asked by Clare to pray that God would restore in her the grace of the Passion. She believed she had squandered this great grace of God, the grace of the consolation of the Passion of Christ. This was accomplished in her and Clare said to Sister Thomassa: "I know that it is both restored to me and remains in my soul."<sup>45</sup>

It was during the eleven years of this interior struggle that many important events occurred in Clare's life. She professed the Augustinian Rule, lost her sister in death, assumed responsibility as abbess of the monastery, and had the vision of Christ who planted his cross in her heart. She also

became skilled in the reading of the human heart, in interior struggles...she had the gift of knowledge and wisdom, born in love, that attracted priests, brothers, theologians...to the monastery. To the intense internal apostolate among her sisters corresponded an exceptional external apostolate, with which she converted many people.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Sala, *Chiara: Alter Christus*, 75, considers this experience of Clare as being similar to that of the "Apostles without Jesus, of Magdalene who searched for and did not find Jesus and of the sadness of the disciples of Emmaus who had lost Jesus. The void, the sepulchre, total aridity, the interior break between faith in Christ and the non-presence of Christ....now nothing, in fact "desperation" for feeling this, for ingratitude toward God" (un'esperienza simile a quella degli Apostoli senza Gesù, della Maddalena che cerca e non trova Gesù e della tristezza dei discepoli di Emmaus che hanno perduto Gesù. Il vuoto, il sepolcro, l'aridità totale, la rottura interiore tra le fede in Cristo e la non presenza di Cristo...ora più nulla, anzi la 'disperazione' per sentirsi causa, per l'ingratitude verso Dio).

<sup>45</sup>PC 260.12-19: Scio quod est michi restituta et stat in anima utraque et non contrariatur una alteri.

<sup>46</sup>Zois, *Parola di Santa*, 28: Chiara diventò esperta del cuore humano, delle lotte interiori...ed ebbe il dono di una scienza e di una sapienza, incarnate nell'amore, che attirarono al monastero di S. Croce preti, frati, teologi...All'intenso apostolato interno tra le sue Sorelle corrispose un eccezionale apostolato esterno, col quale convertì...innumerevoli. Sala, *Chiara: alter Christus*, 76, sees this period not only as Clare's total purification, but also her period of realizing much of her basic wealth, as described above. Sala stresses the fact that during this period, Clare never ceased praying or performing acts of penance.

Finally, as Clare's death approached, the nuns of Clare's community recalled at least three separate occasions when Clare responded to their words or actions with the same statement concerning the cross of Jesus Christ. Clare responded: "I have Jesus Christ, my crucified, within my heart."<sup>47</sup> On the first occasion, the sisters asked Clare if she was afraid of dying (PC art. 131, 142; 76.20-77.2; 80.7-18; 147.3-148.2; 149.32-150.1; 234.25-235.4; 239.4-13; Vita, 397). During the second, one of the sisters made the sign of the cross over Clare (PC art. 132, 143; PC 71.1-2; 77.3-12; 80.19-81.2; 148.3-5; 150.2-4; 235.5-15; 239.14-28; 335.5-10; 336.26-28; Vita, 397). On the third occasion, one of the sisters placed a crucifix near Clare's side so that she could see it (PC art. 145; PC 73.17-32; 81.19-21; 150.12-15; 239.32-34; Vita, 398). It is for this reason, that, after her death, the sisters opened up her heart and found the symbols of the Passion within her heart.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>PC art. 131, 132: ...ieu aio Ihesu Christo mieu crucifixo intor en lo cor! or Ego habeo Yhesum Christum meum crucifixum in corde.

<sup>48</sup>PC Article CLIX, CLIII, CLIV, CLV, CLXVI, CLXVII, CLXVIII, CLXIX, CLXXVII, CLXXIX, CLXXXIII, CLXXXVI; Vita 175; 403.17-406.36. Berengario wrote the biography and began the Process of Canonization because of the finding of the signs of the Passion in Clare's heart. See Vita 88, 90. Brother Thomas Boni de Fulgineo, a Friar Minor, questions the validity of the symbols of the Passion found in Clare's heart, and says that they were artificial and made by a nun from Foligno, who had died before the Process of Canonization was begun (PC 434-436). For further information on the signs of the Passion found in Clare's heart after her death, see *S. Chiara da Montefalco: Dove ci porta il cuore*, edited by Giuseppe Zois: *Acta Sanctorum* (Paris: V. Palmi, [1863]-1940), vol 35, 672-673; Nessi, *Badessa*, 48-57, for notarized documents; Elfriede Grabner, "Gallensteine als Heiligenattribut: Clara von Montefalco in Ikonographie und Legende," in *Dona Ethnologica*, edited by Helga Gerndt and George R. Schroubek, 172-184 (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1973); Vauchez, *La sainteté*, 106 fn 22, 408 fn 352, 504 fn 17, 509, 517, fn 57; *Dizionario*, 510; Pietro Palazzini, *La spiritualità della Croce in Chiara da Montefalco ed una sua probabile fonte: la 'Devotio Crucis'*, in *S. Chiara da Montefalco e il suo tempo*, 389-408; Margaret Flansburg, "The Miraculous Heart of St. Clare of Montefalco," in *Augustine: Mystic and Mystagogue*, edited by Friederich von Fleteren and others (NY: Peter Lang, 1994), 587-611; Frugoni, *Female Mystics*, 134, 147; Frugoni, "The Imagined Woman," 386-390; Pierre Debongnie "Essai critique sur l'Histoire des Stigmatisations au Moyen Âge," in *Études Carmélitaines* (Paris: P. Téquil, 1936), 36-41. The symbol of the crucified Jesus and Clare's heart are also on display in the Church of the Holy Cross in Montefalco. Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1995), 318-329, discusses the practices associated with resurrection of the body and its manifestations in the bodies of holy people before and after death. Thus, for the sisters to open up Clare's body after her death (see

Two days before her death, after having consoled and instructed her sisters, Clare recommended them to the crucified Jesus Christ: "My most beloved daughters and sisters, I commend you all and my soul in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ crucified."<sup>49</sup> Both in life and in death, Clare's love for the Passion of Christ was manifest to the sisters and to all those with whom she came in contact.

Conclusion to Section 2: Clare, in imitating Christ through her dedication and devotion to the Passion of Christ, offered her entire life to Christ crucified. She personified in her life the fact that she was a "co-redeemer with Christ" and became "in the end, co-crucified with Christ."<sup>50</sup> There is no way that one can celebrate Clare of Montefalco without celebrating the Passion of Christ. From the age of six until her death at the age of 40, Clare lived within the Passion and Death of Christ. She truly can be called Clare of the Cross, not because she lived in the Monastery of the Holy Cross, but because she was physically, spiritually and mystically united to that cross. Her life spoke the language of sorrow centered in the Passion of Christ. She spoke the language of joy, centered in the Resurrection of Jesus, through her constant contact with God in prayer and in the everyday events of her life.<sup>51</sup> Clare became significant for the Church as "a woman [who] can render anew Christ crucified within herself,"<sup>52</sup> and this at a time of crisis within the Church, as Claudio Leonardi states:

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p. 323) was in keeping with the practices of the day.

<sup>49</sup>PC 146; PC 74.1-5; 81.22-82.2; 150.16-19; 240.1-13; 336.32-337.12; Vita, 398: Filie mee carissime et sorores, ego vos omnes et meam animam commendo in morte Domini Ihesus Christi crucifixi.

<sup>50</sup>Leonardi, *Chiara e Berengario*, 381: chi è con Cristo con-redentore non può non essere alla fine con-crocifisso.

<sup>51</sup>Leonardi, "Universalità di Chiara da Montefalco," in *Processo*, xvi. Annice Callahan, "The Relationship Between Spirituality and Theology" *Horizons* 16/2 (1989), 271, states that the mystics, who are dedicated to the Passion of Christ, especially in his pierced heart "experience the feminine dimension of the heart of Christ: receptivity, relationality, vulnerability and nurturing."

<sup>52</sup>Leonardi, *Chiara e Berengario*, 385: che una donna poteva rendere redivivio in sé il Cristo crocifisso.



In the moment in which with Boniface VIII, the Church shows its theocratic and oppressive side, and the Franciscan Order is tormented by opposing factions; while it outlines...the Avignon papacy and its subjection to political powers, this small, very great woman shows, with her life, that the one who hopes for God, who wants to see God, that what she desires with love is shown in all human life: the cross becomes not a moment of Christian experience, but the only moment.<sup>53</sup>

We recall that the monastic theologians prior to Clare stressed the phases of the Redemption from the Incarnation to Pentecost. Although Clare had visions of herself present at the majority of these stages, her relationship to Jesus definitely centers on the Passion, which is *the* religious experience for her. This religious experience, which flows from her love of God, is an essential element of both monastic and vernacular theology. Recalling that both monastic and vernacular theology is grounded in the "experience of union with God,"<sup>54</sup> Clare is a follower of these traditions, since her reason for being grounded in the Passion is to become more closely united to God.

Clare's Christology is a lived Christology of the Passion in her life. For Clare, to be grounded in the Passion means to imitate Christ in his sufferings and his compassion: that is, to live out her faith within her community and stemming from her spiritual life, which is a "biblical experience inseparable from liturgical experience....It presupposes the grace necessary

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<sup>53</sup>Leonardi, *Universalità*, xvi: nel momento in cui con Bonifacio VIII la Chiesa mostra il suo volto teocratico ed oppressore, e l'Ordine francescano è dilaniato dalle fazioni contrapposte: mentre si profila...il papato avignonese e la sua soggezione al potere politico, questa piccola grandissima donna mostra con la sua vita come chi sperimenta Dio, chi vuole vedere Dio, chi lo desidera con amore, lo scopre in tutta la vita umana: la croce diventa non un momento dell'esperienza cristiana, ma il solo momento.

<sup>54</sup>Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 263. Leclercq, 264, states that this experience involves "study and reflection," "inner illumination," as well as "perpetually residing in the interior of faith, never losing sight of faith, never departing from the practice of faith, and which at every level remains an act of faith." Leclercq, 279, also states that "monastic thought," unlike scholastic thought, "is less affected by the concerns of the moment: rather it is governed by the enduring necessities of the search for God."

for one who desires to increase his faith through living the spiritual life, as we would say today: through spirituality."<sup>55</sup>

One can say that Clare's Christian life, lived in the religious life, depends on her lived spirituality in order to illustrate her theology.<sup>56</sup> In the visions that Clare had of Christ, we have seen that she participated in his entire life. Thus, to live in the truth of Christ's humanity, Clare needed to suffer as Christ suffered. Thus, her penance and austere living were not centered around Clare, but were focused on the commitment Clare had to the Passion of Christ. We have seen in the previous chapter that Clare's theology concentrated on God who is Truth, and that this living out of truth was an essential part of her daily life. Clare's "religious thought and spiritual life, the pursuit of truth and the quest for perfection [went] hand in hand and permeate[d] each other."<sup>57</sup>

For Clare, her theology is a lived faith, an experiential living of the Passion of Jesus Christ and, therefore, in order to search further for Clare's Christology, we will look, in the final chapter, at how her experience of Jesus Christ is lived out within her life.

Conclusion to Chapter 5: the God Who Suffers. What does Clare tell us about Jesus Christ through her lived faith? Jesus Christ is the God-Who-Suffers, the Redeemer, and the one who, therefore, shows compassion to all humanity. Jesus Christ suffered not for himself, but for each and every one of us. Jesus Christ, the Pilgrim, who appeared to Clare with bare feet, is the humble God, who comes into the world in order to bring humanity back to God. Jesus Christ, as Redeemer, is single-minded in his purpose - to return all of us to God. Clare, in her meditation and contemplation on Jesus Christ throughout the liturgical year, centered her life on Christ's Passion. What we see manifest in her life is what she believes is the Truth about Jesus Christ.

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 264-265.

<sup>56</sup>Leclercq, Love of Learning, 240, states that the living of Christian life in the religious life is another difference between monastic and scholastic theology, where the Christian life is lived in the world.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 245. Leclercq, 266, goes on to say that this monastic theology is the "true *gnosis*,....that kind of higher knowledge which is the complement, the fruition of faith and which reaches completion in prayer and contemplation."

Is this a complete Christology? Not necessarily, but it is a Christology which is lived out in Clare's words and actions. It is a Christology that is steeped in the culture of her times. Suor Giovanna della Croce states:

We catch in her the light of an impassioned love, joined to the summit in confirmation to Christ in the mystery of the Passion and Death. Clare of the Cross is the daughter of her century, heiress of the most significant expressions of the spirituality of St. Francis and mirror of the renewed Augustinian traditions....Italy has in her, thanks to the autobiographical documentation recalled in the Process of Canonization, the eloquent testimony of the dimensions and fundamental contexts of the thirteenth-century mysticism, of a whole new spirituality, dynamic and operative, of a mystical theology, lived and destined to nourish the monasticism of the following centuries.<sup>58</sup>

Besides being a testimony in the context of mystical theology, this impassioned love is also an essential part of vernacular theology. McGinn states: "The vernacular theological tradition was a true theology, like the scholastic and monastic, insofar as it was a serious attempt to foster greater love of God and neighbor through a deeper understanding of the faith."<sup>59</sup>

Clare of the Cross, in contemplating the humanity and divinity of Christ, proclaimed the Passion of Christ as the gateway to entering into union with Christ. Clare became the woman who carried on the banner of devotion to the Passion, which had become prevalent in this century,<sup>60</sup> but also was "the moment of connection between the universality of Francis [of

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<sup>58</sup>della Croce, 138-139:

<sup>59</sup>McGinn, *Meister Eckhart*, 9.

<sup>60</sup>Cousins, *Humanity*, 386-7. Sloyan, *The Crucifixion of Jesus*, 123-144, gives a brief history of the development of Passion piety in the West. Jean-Marc Laporte, "Christology in the Middle Ages," in *The Christological Foundation for Contemporary Theological Education*, edited by Joseph D. Ban (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988), 112, fn 15, states that for the people of the late thirteenth century, a "period of painful social, economic, political, and cultural dislocation, the dislocated members of the suffering Christ, so graphically portrayed in the art of the day, were fraught with meaning." See Derbes, *Picturing the Passion*, for an in-depth history of the changes in thirteenth-century paintings on the Passion and Death of Christ. Henk van Os, Eugène Honée, Hans Nieuwdorp, Bernhard Ridderbos, *The Art of Devotion in the Late Middle Ages in Europe: 1300-1500*, translated by Michael Hoyle (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 104-129, stresses the devotional paintings and texts prevalent during the latter thirteenth and early fourteenth century.

Assisi] and Catherine [of Siena]."<sup>61</sup> In the living out of her religious life, in her concern for the Church and for humanity, Clare not only epitomized the compassion of Christ and Christ's fidelity to humanity, but also set an example of how best to imitate Christ in joining her heart to the heart of Christ.

Clare's affinity to Christ, the God-Who-Suffers, is best seen in the painting of the pilgrim Christ presenting His cross to her and Clare's acceptance of the Cross, which is plunged into her heart. This erotic symbol of Clare's union with Christ signifies her total acceptance with all her "heart, soul, mind and strength" (Dt 6.5; Dt 13.3; Dt 30.6; Jos 22.5; Mt 22.37; Mk 12.30; Lk 10.27), not only of the suffering and pain endured by Christ, but also of the gift of continual compassion with all those who suffer.<sup>62</sup>

Ellen Ross, in studying the images of the suffering Jesus in late Medieval England, postulates that it is the suffering and death of Jesus, not his resurrection, that "captivated the imagination of medieval Christians" because of the "miracle that God became enfleshed in order to suffer on behalf of humanity," in order "to manifest the full mercy of divine compassion."<sup>63</sup> In the lives of individual believers, this suffering of Jesus was borne out in terms of "contrition, compassion, and longing...Pain functions...as a part of the process of identification with Christ as the person advances in relationship to the Divine and learns to perceive God as Love."<sup>64</sup> Thus, the symbol of the crucified Jesus conveys the "depth of a merciful God's love for humankind."<sup>65</sup> We have already seen in Clare how she pursued and experienced suffering in her own life, not for the sake of suffering, but because she wanted to be as close to Jesus as she could. For her, the cross, which Christ implanted in her heart, became

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<sup>61</sup>Leonardi, *Universalità*, xvii: Chiara è il momento di raccordo tra l'universalità di Francesco e quella di Caterina.

<sup>62</sup>Sala, *Chiara: Alter Christus*, 76.

<sup>63</sup>Ross, *The Grief of God*, viii.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 5.

the symbol and the reality of God's love for her and her love for God, of God's union with her and her union with God and the will of God.

For Clare, contemplation becomes united with action in the sufferings of Christ and the love of God that must necessarily pour out into love of neighbor (Mt 22.39; Mk 12.31; Lk 10.27; Rom 13.9; Gal 5.14; Jas 2.8). This love of neighbor extended itself outward to the entire Church as Leonardi states:

The distinctive life of Clare became the inheritance for the universal Church and represented a moment necessary in the history of spiritual knowledge in the West...the knowledge that the more humble and lowly action in favor of others, burdened like the sorrow of God, is a sign of hope and salvation."<sup>66</sup>

In the next chapter, we will see that Clare, in her suffering with Jesus Christ, suffers for all the people around her, whether they be the sisters in her religious community, her own brother, or the people of the surrounding towns.

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<sup>66</sup>Leonardi, *Universalità*, xvii: la singolare vita di Chiara è divenuta patrimonio della Chiesa universale, e rappresenta un momento necessario nella storia della conoscenza spirituale dell'Occidente...la coscienza che l'atto più umile e basso a favore degli altri, carico com'è del dolore di Dio, è un segno di speranza e di salvezza.

## CHAPTER 6

### CLARE'S THEOLOGY OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS IN GOD

In the previous chapters, we have placed Clare of Montefalco, a mystic of the late thirteenth and fourteenth century, as a vernacular theologian who followed in the monastic, rather than the speculative, tradition. Although she saw God as Creator and Judge, it is obvious that she centered her life around God as the One-Who-is-Truth and God as the One-Who-Suffers for others and is Compassionate. This truthful and compassionate God was manifest to Clare through creation, and, most specifically, through the human person. As we have looked at the relationship between Clare and God, we must now look at how she related her knowledge and experience of God towards the people with whom she lived and whom she met.

Clare's knowledge of God as Truth and Compassion impregnated her whole life and directed her life into true contemplation; in other words, Clare was not content only to be bound into God, but she was also bound into the lives of those around her. For Clare, true contemplation was not quietism, was not a solitary existence but showed itself in an active participation in the lives of others.

In this chapter, we will see how Clare's theology of God was incarnated in her relationship with others. After speaking briefly about her sacramental life, the chapter will examine more closely her theology of the virtuous life. It will conclude by selecting specific examples from her life, which illustrate the integration of her knowledge of God as Truth and Compassion.

#### Section 1: Sacramental Life.

Clare had a great reverence for the sacraments of the Eucharist, Extreme Unction, and Penance. Berengario, in his questions to the witnesses, stressed these sacraments, since it was the sacraments of Penance, Extreme Unction, and the Eucharist that were most often attacked or

misused by the heretics of the day. In some cases, the heretics celebrated these sacraments without the benefit of ordained priesthood and the Process stresses the fact that Clare received the sacraments many times a year, especially on major feast days, but also at other times, by the hands of authorized Catholic priests (PC art. 147). The sisters received the Eucharist near the iron grate of the monastery (Vita, 399), and Clare received the sacrament of Penance standing up, just as the priest did.<sup>1</sup> Clare also received Extreme Unction twice before her death (PC 82.10-13; 241.2-4; 337.18-20).

It is the Eucharist, however, which occupies a central place in the life of the Church from earliest times, and, as we shall see, in the life of Clare.<sup>2</sup> In a conversation with Marina on the Eucharist, Clare presents her belief in the presence of Christ under bread and wine that are changed through the words of the priest. Clare, speaking about

grace and the sacrament of the altar, asked Marina: "Do you believe that the body of Christ is in the consecrated host?" Marina responded: "I believe." Clare said: "And I believe. There was a time in which I had this belief by faith alone. However, now I have it be certitude and faith." Marina said: "How, Clare?" Clare responded: "In a certain vision, the Lord revealed to me how the substance of the bread and wine, in the blink of an eye at the words said by the presbyter, immediately are changed in substance into the Body and Blood of Christ and how all the hosts of the world, in a blink of an eye are made together, by different priest, no impediment present, into the Body of Christ."<sup>3</sup>

In examining Clare's response to Marina, we cannot help but notice the similarities between Clare's words and the words proclaimed by the Fourth Lateran Council. One can only

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<sup>1</sup>PC 337.22-24: Sister Francesca states that vidit ipsam s. Claram confiteri cum fratribus sacerdotibus et stare cum eis ad confexionem, sicut stant persone confitentes.

<sup>2</sup>Peifer, 103-120, gives a history of the Eucharist from apostolic times.

<sup>3</sup>Vita, 344-345: super gratia et virtute sacramenti altaris, et ipsa clara invicem conferebant. Cui domine clara dixit: Credis tu quod sit in consecrata hostia corpus christi. At illa respondit: Credo. Clara dixit: Et ego credo. Tempus fuit in quo ego habui hoc tantum per fidem. Nunc autem habeo per certitudinem et per fidem. Marina dixit: Quomodo clara? Que respondit: In quadam visione mihi dominus revelavit quomodo panis et vini substantia subito in ictu oculi ad debiat verba presbiteri transubstantiantur in corpus et sanguinem christi et quomodo omnes hostie mundi a diversis presbiteris uno alij nullum impedimentum prestante in ictu oculi possunt confici corpus christi.

conjecture that Berengario's use of the terms *sacrament of the altar* and *changed in substance*, and his reference to the fact that *no impediments* must be present are, in fact, his words and not Clare's. The Council states:

His body and blood are truly contained in the *sacrament of the altar* under the forms of bread and wine, the bread and wine *having been changed* in substance, by God's power into his body and blood, so that in order to achieve this mystery of unity we receive from God what he received from us. Nobody can effect this sacrament except *a priest who has been properly ordained according to the church's keys*.<sup>4</sup>

We also recall how devastated Clare was when she was not able to receive communion with the other sisters, because she was not dressed properly, and, as happened in the lives of other mystics, Christ Himself brought her the holy sacrament (PC 172.1-16; Vita. 97).<sup>5</sup>

Clare, like St. Paul (1Cor 10.16-24), was concerned about how the sisters received the Eucharist (PC 11.2-22; 27-34). She herself came to Mass with true sorrow for her sins (PC 67.1-16). Jovanna, the nun who succeeded Clare as abbess, recalls in her testimony that after Jovanna had received communion with the other sisters, Clare asked: "Jovanna, how are you

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<sup>4</sup>Tanner, 230, Canon 1: *Iesus Christus, cuius corpus et sanguis in sacramento altaris sub speciebus panis et vini veraciter continentur, transsubstantiatis pane in corpus et vino in sanguinem potestate divina, ut ad perficiendum mysterium unitatis accipiamus ipsi de suo, quod accepti ipse de nostro. Et hoc utique sacramentum nemo potest conficere, nisi sacerdos, qui fuerit rite ordinatus secundum claves ecclesiae.* (Italics are mine). It is difficult to tell if these are Clare's exact words or Berengario speaking through Clare. In Vita, 515. Berengario discusses a dream which he had after having collected together the information about the life and miracles of Clare, in which he sees the pieces of the sacrament, not yet consecrated, scattered throughout the world. He anxiously collects all the pieces and brings them to the altar. The symbolism of the relationship between the information and the unconsecrated hosts brought to the altar has not been clearly explained. Sala, *Vita di Chiara da Montefalco*, 136. fn 71 states that Berengario's dream was "inserted into the testimony without any order" (Tardivo ricordo di un sogno fatto in precedenza dall'autore, ed inserito nel testo senza nessun ordine). See Bynum, *Holy Feast*, 51-52; *Fragmentation*, 123, 128.

<sup>5</sup>Bynum, *Fragmentation*, 129, states: "[E]cstatic experiences and mystical feeding were often not merely the result of reception of communion, but a substitute for it, particularly in cases where confessors or superiors denied the woman access to the elements." Bynum, *Holy Feast*, 54, states: "[T]he food on the altar was the God who became man; it was bleeding and broken flesh...it was suffering. To eat God, therefore, was finally to become suffering flesh with his suffering flesh; it was to imitate the cross." See Bynum, *Fragmentation*, 124-129.



after receiving the body of Christ?" Giovanna said she was well, but Clare said to her: "I know that you are not as you usually are after receiving Christ and that you have not received Christ as you are accustomed to receive him." She concurred with Clare and stated that her thoughts were not as ordered as usual.<sup>6</sup> Clare's fidelity to the teachings of the Church also included her fidelity to the sacramental life of the Church. It is the sacrament of Penance that not only reconciles one with God, from whom Clare received pardon for her sins, but it also reconciled her with the community. The Eucharist, however, played the most important part in Clare's life, because it was a very concrete way for Clare to become more closely united with Christ, and through Christ, with God. The Eucharist became for Clare the outward sign of her inner union with God as well as a specific reason to live in compassion with others.<sup>7</sup> In fact, it was during the Mass, in the appearance of a host, that Clare "saw a divine guidance and the true divine essence. She herself understood the demonstration and the unity of that guidance and divine truthfulness, that she saw God in herself and herself in God, and she saw herself as nothing in God with respect to the divine infinity."<sup>8</sup>

Thus, for Clare, God's grace, present to her through the sacramental life of the Church, brought her closer to both the God of Truth and the God of Compassion. She was graced to share in God's life (1 Pet 1.4). Another aspect of this transforming divine gift given to her was her recognition of how this grace united her more totally to God and to others, not

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<sup>6</sup>PC 42.12-18: Item dicit ipsa testis quod quadam vice Iohanna testis receperat communionem cum aliis sororibus et postea venit ad Claram; et dixit: "Iohanna quomodo stas tu et quomodo es de receptione corporis Christi?" Et ipsa testis respondit et dixit: "Bene." Et s. Clara dixit sibi: "Scio quod non es sicut consuevisti et Christum etiam non recepisti in te in illo modo sicut te tu consuevisti recipere illum." Et dixit ipsa testis quod ita erat verum, quia ipsa non habebat mentem ordinatum sicut consueverat habere. This example was used by Giovanna to show Clare's prophetic spirit, but it also shows Clare's reverence of the Eucharist.

<sup>7</sup>Casagrande, Religiosità penitente, 348, states that both "Angela and Clare increased the cult of the Eucharist" (Ed è sulla linea dell'esperienza di questa che Angela e Chiara valorizzano il culto dell'Eucarestia).

<sup>8</sup>PC 67.12-16: quasi aperiretur unum ostium et vidit unam rectitudinem divinam et essentiam divinam rectam, quasi una virga rectissima et videbat et cognoscebat se apodiatam et unitam illi rectitudini et veritati divine, quod videbat Deum in se et se in Deo, et videbat se quasi nichil in Deo respectu infinitis divine.

only through the sacraments but also through her asceticism and her life of virtue. If we want to continue looking at Clare in her relationship with the God of Truth and the God of Compassion, as well as in her relationship with other human persons, it is necessary to look more deeply into her life of virtue.

## Section 2: The Virtuous Life of Clare of Montefalco.

The canonization processes of the early thirteenth century centered mainly on the life and miracles of the proposed saint. However, by the end of that century, the process also included an extensive investigation into the virtues exemplified by the holy person.<sup>9</sup> "Where true merits preceded and where amazing miracles followed, there is sure evidence of sainthood, leading us to venerate [the one] whom God thus indicates for our veneration."<sup>10</sup> In keeping with the tradition of the Church, as Vauchez says, "the perfection attributed to a man or a woman had long been closely linked to the influence they exercised on the moral and spiritual plane...and sainthood was the fruit of a devout, ascetic and virtuous life, assuring to those who

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<sup>9</sup>Vauchez, Sainthood, 33-50.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 499, quoting Innocent III, *Cum Secundum*. 3.IV.1200. This became a necessary prerequisite, since, at this time, it was essential to the Curia that the person for whom the canonization process was being put forward, was graced by God and not in league with the devil. PC art. 89 examines the fact that Clare, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, was able to tell if a vision which a sister had was from God or the devil (Vita, 292). Clare was also adamant in protecting the sisters from any persons, especially those members of the sect of the Free Spirit, who presented the face of virtue, but were under the influence of the devil (PC art. 112; Vita, 298).

Vauchez, Sainthood, 514-515, also mentions the fact that during the last third of the thirteenth century, "no saint who was the subject of an enquiry belonged to the category of repentant sinners. Further, the hagiographical texts describing those who had already been canonized began to be amended to eliminate anything that might give too vivid a picture of their imperfections." We recall that in her conversations with Bentivenga, a member of the sect of the Free Spirit, Clare, in comparing Mary Magdalene and Agnes, and the goodness that results from conversion, states that Magdalene, after her conversion, was "so contrite, had such fervor of devotion and love, and such fullness of virtue, that according to merit, she could possibly exceed the virginity of Agnes" (*quia in magdalena post peccatum potuit esse tanta contritio, tantus devotionis et caritatis fervor, tantaque plenitudo virtutem quod potuit in merito super excedere virginitatem agnetis*).

led it the power to work miracles."<sup>11</sup> Thus, Clare's life of virtue and the power of prayer are emphasized by those witnesses attesting to the miracles worked for them or for others (PC art. 99, 119, 120, 121, 127).

By stressing the virtues practiced by Clare during her lifetime, both the Process and the *Vita* extend the tradition of canonizations sanctioned by the Church in the early fourteenth century. Prior to studying the particular virtues exemplified in Clare's life, it is essential to examine not only the visions Clare had concerning the relationship between vices and their parallel virtues, but also her teaching on the ways to acquire virtues.

Visions of Clare concerning the warfare between virtues and vices. Clare had two visions concerning the "spiritual warfare" between vices and virtues.<sup>12</sup> The first took place during her eleven years of interior trial while the second occurred after this period. In the first case, two different types of arrows bombard Clare, one representing vices, the other virtues. At first, Clare turned away from the arrows of vice. She then realized that "unless she looked at the vices and sustained the conflict of arrows she would not have full insight nor could she return to the clarity of mind which she had prior to this time of tribulation."<sup>13</sup> Each vice was then bombarded by a virtue, its particular characteristic being opposite the particular characteristic of the vice. From this vision, Clare gained considerable insight into the life of virtue, recognizing that "continuing virtue repelled vice, vice did not affect her in anyway, and its impulse frustrated, vice fell into the ground. However, the vices having fled, the virtues remained inside of her with their own particular properties."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 528.

<sup>12</sup>Augustine, The City of God, XIX.10 (Selections, 451-2), states that in the "body, which will be renewed by resurrection...the virtues no longer struggling against any vice or evil whatsoever, will have as the reward of victory eternal peace which no adversary may disquiet."

<sup>13</sup>Vita, 100: Cognovit autem quod predictum conflictum non poterat evitare, quia nisi videret vitia et conflictum sagittantium substineret non posset plenum lumen habere nec redire ad aillam claritatem quam habuerat tempore retroacto.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 101: Hoc tamen clara in illa visione cognovit quod virtus continue vitium repellebat et vitia eam non tangebant in aliquo, sed ictu frustrato cadebant in terram. Virtutes autem cum suis proprietatibus remanebat in clara vitio profugato. Frugoni, *Female Mystics*, 131, classifies these two visions as examples of what she calls "mental imaging, which is at once an act of memory

In the second case, Clare saw herself among many trees of different sizes and magnitude and she herself was on the top of one of the higher trees.<sup>15</sup> Clare recognized that she was carrying an obstacle, so she struggled to gain the branches of a higher tree, in order to rid herself of the impediment. The impediment, however, seemed to come along with her, and Clare was unsatisfied and insecure. While considering this, "she was elevated above all the other trees, separated from all earthly things, placed in safety, and had nothing to fear."<sup>16</sup>

In both cases Clare recognizes the continual conflict between vice and virtue, and the fact that both can be present at the same time. However, if one does not recognize the defect, in other words, if one does not have true knowledge of self, one will not be able to discover the virtue necessary to be able to deflect the vice (PC 259.18-23). One can look upon this knowledge concerning virtues and the discovery of the reality of vices in one's life as part of Clare's constant commitment to living out the truth in her own life. Likewise, Clare also recognized the fact that clinging to vice impedes one's progress in becoming united with God. The metaphor of the deflection of the arrows of vices into the earth, and Clare's being situated in the highest of trees (which separate her from earthly things) shows the prominence of practicing the virtues in order to bring one closer to God and heavenly things. Likewise, Clare sees in this vision the continual struggle between virtue and vice, another answer to the question of quietism, so prevalent at the time, not only in the Sect of the Free Spirit, but also in other monastic situations.

Witnesses to Clare's Living a Virtuous Life. Four of the five major witnesses at the process of canonization; namely, Sisters Marina (#38), Thomassa (#39), Francescha (#67) and

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and a means of communicating mystical experiences...The well-known literary and artistic theme of the *Psychomachia*, in which moral concepts are represented through personification, here acquired the force of an image and event, becoming a part of the saint's vision."

<sup>15</sup>Jacopone da Todi (1230-1306), *Lauds*, translated by Serge and Elizabeth Hughes (NY: Paulist Press, 1982) discusses the idea of vices and virtues in relationship to the branches of trees (88.35, 74-112). In *Laud* 88.133-140, he talks about the battle between vices and virtues. See Appendix B.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 169: Et in ista cogitatione existens fuit ab inde super omnes istas arbores elevata, et in tali loco reposita, quod erat a terrenis omnibus separata, et posita in securo, quod nichil eam oportebat timere.

Brother Francesco (#45), attested to Clare's living a virtuous life from an early age (PC art. 1).<sup>17</sup> Article 122 of the Process states: "It was revealed by God to many good and faithful people...that holy Clare, while she was still in the world, was a woman of great holiness and great state of virtue, in great grace and beloved of God."<sup>18</sup> Finally, articles 310-315 of the Process center on the reports of Clare's sanctity and life, including her virtuous life (PC 317.20-318.16; 319.28-320.28; 322.13-323.22; 327.14-328.19; 364.23-365.26; 424.22-426.9; 468.34-470.30; 482.30-484.4; 493.19-494.33; 505.30-507.5; 508.1-18).<sup>19</sup>

Other witnesses attested to visions that they had of the virtuous Clare entering heaven among a large procession of angels and saints (Vita, 349, 400-401). After her death, Francesco, Clare's brother wished to have Clare buried, but the sisters of Clare's community did not wish to bury her "because this most precious body has such virtue and blessing."<sup>20</sup> Clare was placed in a wooden coffin until a new church was consecrated in 1430 and her incorrupt body was placed in a different box and buried in a stone shed. In 1577 this decorated box, which is still intact at the monastery of the Holy Cross in Montefalco, was replaced by a crystal box.<sup>21</sup>

Many witnesses acclaimed Clare as living a virtuous life during her lifetime. During this time in history, her incorrupt body would also have been seen as a sign of her holiness. Living a life of virtue brought Clare into holiness of life. Before examining some of the virtues

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<sup>17</sup>The testimony of Sister Giovanna (Witness #1), Clare's secretary, is incomplete and first begins with article 68.

<sup>18</sup>PC 19.2-6: Item proponit et probare intendit syndicus et procurator predictus quod revelatum fuit a Deo pluribus bonis et fidedignis personis, adhuc sancta vivente, quod ipsa sancta Clara, dum erat adhuc in seculo, erat domina magne sanctitatis et in magno statu virtutum et in magna gratia et dilectione Dei.

<sup>19</sup>Vita, 292 states: "Clare was known for her fullness of virtues. She was known for the mirror of her exemplary life" (Claruit autem clara virtutum plenitudine, claruit vite speculo exemplari).

<sup>20</sup>PC 294.15-17: Non placeat Deo quod sepeliatur; quia istud corpus pretiosissimum est tante virtutis et benedictionis, quod deberet poni in cello.

<sup>21</sup>Nessi, "Un raro cimelio nel monastero di S. Chiara a Montefalco" Commentari 14 (1963), 3-5.

present in Clare, it is necessary to examine the elements that Clare considered essential in living out a life of virtue.

Elements Necessary to Living a Virtuous Life. For Clare, living a life of virtue implied several elements. First, one must have the desire to practice a life of virtue and Clare encouraged her sisters to live a virtuous life, and was also adamant in demanding this from those friars who cared for the spiritual life of the sisters (PC 292.27-29).

Second, one must acquire the ability to see the vices and the counteracting virtues. As part of her vision of the "spiritual conflict" between vices and virtues, Clare received this insight (PC 259.24-33). For example, Clare recognized the presence of pride as the foundational vice for all one's sins and defects, and, thus, for Clare, humility became a basic foundation for living the religious life (PC 164.32-165.9). After her sister's death, Clare saw Giovanna in the presence of God in heaven. Although saddened by the death, Clare accepted God's will in her sister's death. As another result of this vision, Clare received the ability to perceive "good and evil and the different degrees of vices and virtues."<sup>22</sup> in other words, Clare was noted for her clairvoyant truth.

Third, one must perform acts of penance, including physical work, to order the mind for God. Jacobus Ugolini, a witness who knew Clare as a young child, recalled that Clare, at the age of 5 or 6, had taken the ripened fruit of the chestnut tree. She called on "the mercy of God, pierced her breast and legs with these fruits...and through this she began to be introduced to God and the life of goodness."<sup>23</sup> We need not mention again the many acts of penance and mortification that Clare did throughout her life. Clare, not expecting her sisters to follow her example of extreme penance and mortification, did, however, recommend to them the necessity of physical labor and external forms of penance. Sister Marina stated that Clare told the sisters that "they should perform bodily works in order to acquire the grace of God, because then the grace of God which comes with personal labor is better and stronger. If grace comes without

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<sup>22</sup>Vita. 170: In eadem etiam visione lumen intelligentie fuit divinitus clare datum quod cognoscebat bonos et malos et quemlibet in suo gradu malitie silicet et virtutis.

<sup>23</sup>PC 493.10-18: Clara accipiebat cardos castaneorum pungentes et, invocans misericordiam Dei, percutiebat pectus suum cum ipsis cardis et crura similiter...Dixit quod ex tunc incepit esse introita ad Deum et bonam vitam.

work, it is not as strong....Bodily work fortifies the soul in virtues."<sup>24</sup> Even after becoming abbess of the community, Clare continued to do manual labor, including cooking, cleaning and nursing the sick sisters (PC art. 24, 25, 57, 58). When Clare was older and more sickly, she was heard to say to the younger sisters: "If I would have the body which you have, I would never remain in bed."<sup>25</sup>

Clare also recognized the necessity of perseverance in achieving perfection or completeness in the spiritual life. Clare was persistent in her activities to live a holy life to such a degree that Sisters Thomassa and Marina stated that as Clare grew in age, she also grew in virtue (PC 168.31-169.2; 99.18-100.13; 267.8-16). Clare, in her concern for her sisters, also instructed them in the necessity to persevere in the life of virtue, since if one did not, the faults once conquered would return (PC 271.29-34). Thus, concern for the souls of the sisters and those others with whom she came in contact was the basic reason why she would correct their faults and failings (PC art. 1; PC 272.19-21; 329.1-331.13). Even on her deathbed, Clare reminded the sisters to continue to live a virtuous life (PC 292.19-29).

Finally, Clare stressed fear as the "guardian of virtue and easy security from falling" and reverence for God as necessary for the "watchful soul and for the keeping of grace, just as Scripture says" (Ps 19.9; Ps 111.10).<sup>26</sup> Francesco, after having been reprimanded by Clare for

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<sup>24</sup>PC 122.17-22: quod deberent etiam laborare corporaliter pro acquirenda gratia Dey. quia, sicut ipsa Clara dicebat, quando gratia Dey venit cum labore persone melius conservatur et est magis fortis; et si gratia veniat sine labore, non est ita fortis. Et quando anima habet gratiam...quia labor corporalis fortificat animam in virtutibus. See PC art. 55; PC 197.9-18; Vita, 170. We must also remember that the stress placed on physical labor and mortification is a response to the quietism advocated by the sect of the Free Spirit.

<sup>25</sup>PC art. 56, Vita, 171: Si ego corpus haberem sicut vos habetis, numquam in lecto iacerem.

<sup>26</sup>PC 281.8-10: Timor custos virtutum et securitas facilis ad lapsum. Et timor Domini ad custodiendam animam, et ad gratiam conservandam teste scriptura se super omnia superponit. Other Scripture quotes concerning fear of the Lord are: 2 Chr 19.7-9; Job 28.28; Prv 1.7,29-31; 2.2-5; 8.10-14; 9.10; 14.26-27; 15.33; 16.6; 19.23; 23.17; Isa 11.2-5; 33.6; 2 Cor 5.11. Trapé, *Le teologia di S. Chiara*, 416, 421, attributes a question by a friar named Ligio, who asked Clare how one knew if an inspiration comes from God. Clare responded: "When the soul feels reverence, because good inspirations carry the soul to fear for itself and profound reverence toward God" (Quando l'anima sente venerazione, perché le buone ispirazioni portano l'anima a temere di se stessa e ad avere una profonda riverenza verso Dio). Trapé gives no bibliographic

his levity and lack of good example in the practice of virtue, was impressed by Clare's sternness and severity. He felt that "like a sword, her words passed through the depths of his heart and his entire soul, so much so that stupefied with fear and worn out and contrite with sorrow, he promised to be on guard and avoid such things."<sup>27</sup> Clare not only influenced her younger brother, but also other people as well, due to her life of virtue and prayer (PC 278.9-15).

Having recognized the necessity of achieving a life of virtue, Clare was also specific about certain virtues. These were essential, not only to keep her united to the God of Truth and Compassion, but also to extend her faithfulness and love to the sisters of her community and others whom she met. We will meet some of these specific virtues in the next two sections.

### Section 3: Clare's Encounters with Others.

Clare felt compelled to deal bluntly and courageously with those whom she considered sinners. Coming from her desire not to have anyone separated from God and/or Jesus Christ, she would speak with great forthrightness to them. Let us look at two examples, one dealing with a repentant sinner, Crescius, and the other, dealing with Bentivenga, whom Clare confronted several times, and whom she found to be unrepentant.

Clare exhorted Crescius, a sinful man, who had come to Clare seeking truth and repentance, to look very closely at his sinful deeds. She said to him:

O most miserable and wretched man! How can you not know of all that you do continuously against the Creator? How can you not know that you are worthy of hell, demons and eternal punishment? How can you not know that the world cannot sustain you? How can you not be troubled in the presence of your God for all these sins which you continuously do in yourself and which you do to others?<sup>28</sup>

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data for this question and Clare's response.

<sup>27</sup>PC 282.8-16: Et in ista rigiditate et rigore reprehensionis cum tanta virtute et efficacia loquebatur, quod ipsius cordis medullus et animam totam predicta verba sua ut gladius pertransibant, ita quod stupefactus timore et doloris correctione astrictus et contritus, proponebat a talibus sibi cavere et a predictis totaliter deviare, et etiam sibi promixit a talibus abstinere.

<sup>28</sup>PC art. 1; 275.2-7: O miserrime et vilissime hominum! Quomodo non cogitas de tot et tantis que contra creatorem tuum fecisti et continue facis? Quomodo non cogitas quod es dignus inferno, demonibus et pena eterna? Quomodo non cogitas quod terra non deberet te sustinere?



Crescius went on to ask Clare to ask God to take his life so that he would sin no more, but Clare, knowing that he was truly converted and had returned to God, spoke some more with him. He confessed his sins, guarded himself from further sin because of the fact that Clare saw the truth of his repentance (PC 275.8-17).

The best example of Clare's commitment to the Truthful God was in her dealing with Bentivenga, the acknowledged leader of the sect of the Free Spirit, an heretical sect prolific in the area around Montefalco. Before considering Clare's dealings with this sect and its leader, let us look briefly at this sect and some of its beliefs and teachings.

Encounters with Members of the Sect of the Free Spirit. Many different heresies present in the Western world during Clare's time were offshoots of the Albigensian, Cathar or Waldensian sects.<sup>29</sup> The heresy of the Free Spirit, however, stands alone from these, and is classified as *pre-quietist*, a forerunner of the sect of quietism that emerged in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>30</sup>

Prior to the thirteenth century, the term "Free Spirit" was connected with mysticism and the pursuit of coming closer to God.<sup>31</sup> During the thirteenth century, it also represented an ideal for the mendicant movements of the Franciscans, Dominicans and Augustinians.<sup>32</sup> What, therefore, caused the term "Free Spirit" to be also connected with a heretical organization? Lerner gives the following reasons:

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Qomodo non confunderis in conspectu Dey tui de tot peccatis que continue facis in te et in aliis quibus potes? The man was converted.

<sup>29</sup>See Lambert, Medieval Heresy; Edward Peters, ed. Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980); Wakefield and Evans, Heresies of the High Middle Ages.

<sup>30</sup>Lambert, Medieval Heresy, 186. Massimo Petrocchi, "Correnti e linee della Spiritualità umbra ed Italiana del Duecento," in Filosofia e cultura in Umbria tra medioevo e rinascimento (Gubbio: Centro di studi umbri, 1967), 162; Lachance, 29, states that it "exhibited quietistic and apocalyptic tendencies."

<sup>31</sup>Lerner, 234; LaChance, 40.

<sup>32</sup>Lerner, 234.

The turbulence of the age combined with a growing dissatisfaction with the clergy and the sacramental system made some men [sic] cast about for different spiritual and emotional shelters than the ones which had served them before. The heresy of the Free Spirit offered a new hope for godliness and was most satisfying to certain personalities in its extreme demands.<sup>33</sup>

The late thirteenth century saw the rise of conservative orthodoxy, and apprehension among ecclesiastical powers, both secular and regular, with the laity's pursuit of the apostolic life. "Imitating the apostolic life and reaching union with God [were] two goals that dominated the spirituality of the high and later Middle Ages."<sup>34</sup> In the mendicant orders, the question of how poverty was to be lived was being challenged by ecclesiastical authorities as well as by the communities themselves. The laity were impatient with this type of behavior and began to search for ways to arrive at spiritual perfection without the guidance of the Church. There were also wars, famine and plagues, as well as economic crises caused by the political scene occurring between those who were pro-Emperor (the Ghibellines) and those who were pro-Papacy (the Guelphs).<sup>35</sup> Various types of people, including aristocrats, members of both monastic and mendicant religious orders, beguines and beghards, and prosperous lay people became followers of the heresy of the Free Spirit, whose main purpose was to become one with God.<sup>36</sup>

The members of the Free Spirit were "highly ascetical in their *pursuit* of perfection and both bodily and spiritual abnegation were absolute prerequisites for deification."<sup>37</sup> Their primary aim was "divine annihilation" and the achievement of "trances."<sup>38</sup> In order to achieve

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 236.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 233.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 234-5.

<sup>36</sup>Lerner, 229-233; Lachance, 40-42; Romana Guarnieri, "Il Movimento del libero spirito dalle origini al secolo XVI" in Archivio Italiano per la storia della piet , 4 (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1964), 404-405; Ellen Babinsky, "Introduction," in Marguerite Porete, 11-13.

<sup>37</sup>Lerner, 239-240.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 240.

these states, the members seeking *earthly* deification would go about preaching their particular ideals or, opposite to this active evangelization, would become entirely passive.<sup>39</sup> The ideal of spiritual perfection that is, residing in the beatific vision was achieved through direct relationship to God. Thus, the sacraments were no longer necessary, and, therefore, the authority of the laity became far superior to that of the priesthood.<sup>40</sup> One of the beliefs, which also proved to be a major reason for the failure of the heresy was the fact that the self-abnegation and the turning toward God entailed by it, led to the denial not only of the world but also of the Church. Because of the consequent anti-social behavior, and the fact that both the Empire and the Church, through the power of the Inquisition, held considerable control during this time, the heresy gradually declined.<sup>41</sup>

In regard to Clare and her encounters with members of the Free Spirit there were other beliefs professed by those Free Spirits who lived in the Spoleto valley centering on the following: absolute liberty; the impeccability of human beings; the possibility that the spirit loses all desire in this life, an opinion that entailed quietism and apathy; negation of free will; the non-existence of hell; and the view that God is not good.<sup>42</sup> These beliefs are those that Clare refutes in her conversations with Fra Bentivenga of Gubbio, a preacher of the sect of the Free Spirit.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 241.

<sup>40</sup>It is in these two beliefs that the Free Spirit heresy most resembled the Waldensians and also became forerunners of the sixteenth century Reformation. See Lerner, 241.

<sup>41</sup>Lerner, 243.

<sup>42</sup>Petrocchi, 162; Guarnieri, *Il movimento*, 405-8; Giovanni Miccoli, "La storia religiosa," in *Storia d'Italia*, 2, edited by Giulio Einaudi (Torino, 1941), 941; Romana Guarnieri, "Fratelli del Libero Spirito," in *Dizionario degli istituti di perfezione*, edited by Guerrino Pellici and Giancarlo Rocca (Roma: Edizione Paoline, 1977), 639.

<sup>43</sup>It must also be noted that there were other contemporaries of Clare who spoke against the Free Spirits, among them, Angela of Foligno, Ubertino da Casale, and other Franciscans. See Miccoli, 942; Guarnieri, *Il movimento*, 404-5; LaChance, 82, 95, 98-9, 106; *Angela of Foligno, Instructions*, 2, 3, 25; Stewart, 197, 208-210, 224; Petrocchi, 162.

Before discussing Clare's responses to Bentivenga, it is important to note that Clare herself had some of the characteristics promulgated by the sect of the Free Spirit, since she was often elevated into union with God through her raptures, prayers and visions. Johanna, the abbess after Clare, states that Clare "saw God in herself and herself in God, and she saw herself as nothing in God with respect to divine infinity."<sup>44</sup> In other words, Clare had reached glimpses of union with God in this earthly life, which was one of the goals of sect of the Free Spirit. It has also been seen that Clare's lifestyle was one of self-abnegation and self-denial, and there were many times when she was completely unaware of her physical body, even for long periods of time (Vita, 100, 172-3; PC art. 67, 68; 466.6-29). However, unlike the sect of the Free Spirit, Clare steeped herself in the sacraments of the Church, especially the Eucharist, Penance and Extreme Unction. She was also in constant contact with the orthodox Church through her confessors, her brother, and the Cardinals of the Church, who were her protectors and defenders.<sup>45</sup>

Clare not only prayed for divine guidance in answering the difficult questions brought forth by members of the sect of the Free Spirit, but she also had visions relating to the sect. The visions of Clare were tools that she used to educate her sisters and other people who came to speak to her. Since both visions and the direct words of Clare are utilized in the refutation of the beliefs of the Free Spirits, as promulgated by Bentivenga, both will be examined in turn.

Clare's Visions concerning the sect of the Free Spirit. The first vision occurred prior to Clare's first meeting with Bentivenga, the Friar Minor, who was called 'the Apostle' (PC 278.13), and was a disciple of Gerardo Sagarelli.<sup>46</sup> Clare saw a house in which a great number

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<sup>44</sup>PC 67.11-16: quod videbat Deum in se et se in Deo, et videbat se quasi nichil in Deo respectu infinitatis divine. See Vita, 345. Lerner, 241, quotes Pico della Mirandola, a layman who spoke at the last session of the Fifth Lateran Council (1517), from his Oration on the Dignity of Man: "[H]e who is a seraph, that is, a lover, is in God; and more, God is in him, and God and he are one." Augustine, Sermones (de Scripturis Novi Testamenti), XIV.iii.3, states: "In [yourself] you can do nothing except lose [yourself]; nor do you know how to find [yourself], unless [God] who made [you] seeks [you]" (AS, 734).

<sup>45</sup>Cardinals Napoleone Orsini, James and Peter Colonna are the three cardinals mentioned. See PC 18, 58, 125, 147, 200, 226, 228, 290, 317.

<sup>46</sup>G. Barone, "Chiara da Montefalco," in Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani, 510. See

of people stood around a form of the crucified, a manifestation of the devil, who gave them great consolations, but which also led them into illicit actions (PC 43.1-5; 137.20-29; 212.1-13; 280.2-16). In this vision, a demon said to Clare: "We have one of yours." Clare responded: "Not one of mine, nor would he be one of yours, if he would believe what I say."<sup>47</sup> Clare not only recognizes the evil prevalent in the sect, but also the fact that the people of this sect are not in communion with the Church and, therefore, were not true followers of Christ. Truth is essential in Clare's dealings with this sect. Even though the crucified Christ is present among the followers of the sect, it is not a true presence of Christ, but that conjured up by the devil, since the result of the sect's "following of Christ" did not produce good deeds but illicit and immoral actions.

Clare continued to prepare herself for this confrontation with Bentivenga through her own prayer and the request of prayers from her sisters in the monastery (Vita, 342). Prayer was an essential element in Clare's being able to confront those people who questioned her, as it was throughout her daily life. She had total faith that God would give her whatever she asked (Vita, 100). Thus, in confronting this sect, she put her faith in the words which Jesus said to the disciples, when he sent them out on mission: "Do not worry about what you will say or how you will say it. When the hour comes you will be given what you are to say. You yourselves will not be the speakers; but the Spirit of your Father will be speaking to you" (Mt 10.19-20).<sup>48</sup>

After the conversations with Bentivenga, Clare saw Christ with bare feet, wearing a long garment. Clare wanted to kiss Christ's feet, but Christ first covered his feet, then allowed Clare to kiss them. Thus, "Clare knew Christ in his fidelity and chastity and she, like Christ, held the sect of the Free Spirit as dishonorable and shameful."<sup>49</sup> Christ appeared to Clare in the

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Miccoli, 942; Guarnieri, *Il movimento*, 404-5; Barone, 510, for more information on Bentivenga.

<sup>47</sup>Vita, 340: ...unum habemus de tuis...De meis non, nec de tuis fuisset, si meis locutionibus credidisset.

<sup>48</sup>PC art. 149 states that while Clare was in rapture, she often spoke about matters pertaining to God, and she would say to the sisters, who were commending her on these thoughts: "These are not my thoughts, sisters" (Non sunt cogitationes, sorores, mee).

<sup>49</sup>Vita, 344: Et clara ex visione huiusmodi intellexit christum in honestate et pudicitia quam

garb and stance of a penitent. It was the stance of humility and the power of Christ's presence that gave Clare the strength to confront the faulty thinking of the members of this sect. The vision also solidified her choice of her way of life, one that was single-minded and set on following in the footprints of Christ. For Clare this included the life of virginity, of total dedication to Christ and humility, two attributes not promulgated by this sect.

After having warned her sisters of the deceptions of the sect and guarding them against private speech with the heretics (PC art. 86, 112, 113), Clare also went to Church officials to destroy the heresy and have Bentivenga arrested and imprisoned.<sup>50</sup> Clare notified Brother Andrea of Perusco, the inquisitor, as well as Bernardo of Pesauero, who was with Cardinal Napoleone Orsini, warning them with these words: "This error must be destroyed,...lest the work of Christianity be destroyed, because this brother does much evil...this heresy is both evil and subtle, that unless a person have a spirit which contains the spirit of God, a person will not be able to protect himself from his (Bentivenga's) deception."<sup>51</sup> As a result, Bentivenga was finally placed permanently in jail.<sup>52</sup>

After this, Clare had a vision of falling hail, from which a stream of water flowed throughout the province. It carried off the most beautiful trees, destroying the delicious fruit, which was then worthless, just as the heresy of the Free Spirit was considered ineffective after Bentivenga was imprisoned (Vita, 344; PC 280.20-30). Truth prevailed. The power of the God of Truth overcame the fruits, now rotten and worthless, because they were cut off from the tree of the Free Spirit, no longer having nourishment from the false foundations of the sect.

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ipsa semper dilexerat diligendum, et quod deus habet odio istos hereticos, de secta spiritus libertatis, qui tenant opera inhonesta et turpia non esse peccatum.

<sup>50</sup>In the study of the Council of Vienne, we have noted that the local bishop received the right to excommunicate heretics. See Canons 16 and 28.

<sup>51</sup>PC 226.32-227.3: Ille error destruat...ne destruat factum christianitatis,...quia ista eresis est ita maledicta et ipse ita est subtilis, quod nisi sit anima que habeat spiritum Dey, non poterit homo se custodire a deceptione sua.

<sup>52</sup>Guarnieri, *Il movimento*, 409. Petrocchi, 162, states that in the early part of the fourteenth century, Pope Clement V (1305-14) sent Rainerio, the bishop of Cremona, into the Spoleto valley to put an end to the heresy in that area.

When Clare first encountered Bentivenga, she did not immediately answer his questions, but spent the night in reflective prayer, where she encountered a disturbed Christ who told her that Bentivenga believed these errors because he was blind to the truth (Vita, 342, 343). Clare told Bentivenga that she was dependent on God's revelation for the answers to the questions asked. She was also aware that what she said could be found in Sacred Scripture as well as in the writings of the Fathers of the Church, even though she did not have firsthand knowledge of them. If the Scriptures and the early writers would follow Bentivenga's teachings, they could no longer be considered holy (Vita, 343), or true, which is impossible, since both Scripture and the Early Fathers of the Church are an essential part of the Church's teachings. Again, Berengario stresses Clare's fidelity to the truth of the teachings of the Church. He also reiterated his belief in her infused knowledge of Scripture and the teachings of the Fathers of the Church.

Clare's Responses to Specific Questions. Although Clare did not respond to every tenet which the sect professed, she did address these questions, which can be classified as relating to spiritual theology: Christian liberty; the impeccability of human beings; loss of desire in the soul; the goodness of God.<sup>53</sup>

Christian liberty. Bentivenga begins by saying that a person has absolute liberty and can do whatever he or she wishes. Clare, in answering the question regarding the freedom to do and act, states:

Human persons can do what they will in this way; namely that their will is ordered towards God. God gives them a proper human will and gives them this ordered will, namely the will of God Himself, and they so adopt the will of God to themselves that they seek nothing that could be contrary to the will of the divine. Then they are able to do whatever they wish, because they are not able to wish anything except what God wishes.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>These are specific topics condemned by the Council of Vienne (1311-1312).

<sup>54</sup>Vita, 340-341: Et homo potest facere quod vult, hoc modo videlicet quod eius voluntas sit ordinata in deum. Est enim possibile quod deus sic ordinat voluntatem alicuius persone, quod voluntatem propriam hominis sibi aufert et dat ei voluntatem ordinatam suam scilicet ipsius dei et voluntatem talis persone deus sue voluntati taliter coadaptat ut nichil appetat quod divine possit esse contrarium voluntati. Et tunc talis persona potest facere quicquid vult, quia velle ipius aliud non est, nisi quod deus vult.

Clare, implying that the grace of God is working within a person, believes that this is true only if the person's will is ordered toward God because then that person is able only to want what God wants. It is another way of saying what Augustine said: "Love God and do what you will."<sup>55</sup> Trapè adds the following: "Christian liberty is not a point of departure, but a point of arrival; it is not against the law, but above the law, and exceeds it, not violating it but observing it through love and with love: love transforms wishing into a need and gives to the soul complete freedom."<sup>56</sup>

Clare, in responding to her confidant, Biagio of Paoluccio, who had asked her if there was anything God would not do for her, said: "Whatever I ask, the Lord does for me. God so ordered my will that I want nothing that is displeasing to God."<sup>57</sup> Clare, totally dedicated to God, followed the will of God completely in her life.<sup>58</sup>

Impeccability. As a complement to the topic of Christian liberty, the sect also believed that human beings could not sin, because they have free will, and thus whatever they choose will be good. Because human persons are created in the likeness of God, they have the capacity to choose, but this capacity to choose has been impaired, not destroyed by sin.<sup>59</sup> For Clare, freedom to sin is never a choice, and to choose to sin is not true freedom. She states: "If the freedom to sin is given to the soul, this is not freedom but submission and servitude to the devil...and the soul forsakes the will of God."<sup>60</sup> Thus, freedom to do the will of God does not

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<sup>55</sup>Trapè, *La teologia*, 417, fn 10.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.: La libertà cristiana non è un punto di partenza, ma un punto di arrivo; non è contro la legge, ma supera la legge, e la supera non violandola ma osservandola per amore e con amore: l'amore trasforma il dovere in un bisogno e dona all'animo la piena libertà.

<sup>57</sup>Vita, 393: Quicquid peto dominus mihi facit, deum tamen sic meam disposuit voluntatem quod nil volo quod domino displiceret. Biagio di Pallico of Spoleto, also called Blaxius, was witness #161 at the Process of 1318, and had known Clare for 15 years. See PC 609, for his biography and PC 438.5-442.7 for his testimony at the process of 1318.

<sup>58</sup>Vita, 343. In PC 146.3-18, witness #38 states that Clare, even in the greatest adversities, such as the deaths of parents, did not go against the will of God.

<sup>59</sup>O'Collins, *Dictionary*, 81.

<sup>60</sup>Vita, 341: Et si peccandi libertas daretur anime, hoc non esset libertas sed subiecto et



give the person the right to sin, since then, the person is not free in the theological sense, but bound to the work of the devil (John 8.34).

In fact, Clare told Bentivenga that God would have more compassion on known sinners than on Bentivenga, because Bentivenga does not believe in sin and causes others to sin. Clare called him the "wretched one, the blind one," the one "who deceives God and all creatures, totally hypocritical, false, totally erroneous", who appears "virtuous on the outside, and inside is totally full of thievery, sins and most fetid brutality. I do not believe that all the demons in hell know how to teach doctrine with such wickedness, such spite and so many errors and so much perversity."<sup>61</sup> But, Clare, in her compassion, also felt sorrow and pain for sinners, since "because of their sins, their souls are separated from God and from grace and its virtues and are joined with demons."<sup>62</sup>

Loss of desire. One of the Friars Minor asked if it were possible that a person could lose desire in this life.<sup>63</sup> Clare responded by saying that the loss of desire in the soul is possible only if one is in rapture and totally absorbed into God and thus, is at peace (Vita, 341). However, since the "soul of the faithful is not able to remain this way in this life...it always seeks more and longs for the higher...or if it does not do this, it falls, because the love of God cannot exist in inactivity."<sup>64</sup>

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*servitus dyaboli...et a dei deviat voluntate. See PC art. 112.*

<sup>61</sup>PC 287.23-288.1: O miserrime! O cece!...qui decipis Deum et omnes creaturas, totus ypocritatus, falsus, totus erroneus, qui exterius virtuosus appares, et interius...rapina et peccatis et brutalitate fetidissima totaliter es plenus. Clare, in PC 289.10-290.2, warns her sisters about this harmful man, again stating that while he is claimed to be holier and wiser above any others, he is actually the "son of the devil, and a vessel full of every iniquity and spite and unheard of perversity" (cum sit filius diaboli et vas plenum omni dolo et nequitia et malitia et inaudita perversitate).

<sup>62</sup>PC 288.10-12: quia propter peccata anime separantur a Deo et a gratia et virtutibus eius, et coniunguntur dominibus.

<sup>63</sup>This anonymous friar, about whom Clare is not able to tell if he is a follower of the sect or not, considers himself to be in perfect peace.

<sup>64</sup>Vita, 341: Nunquam fidelis anima potest stare fixa in hac vitam...quin semper appetat maiora et altiora et cupiat querat et inveniat....aut si hoc non faciat quod decreseat, quia amor

Clare regards the person who is considered to be in the state of perfect peace and who is not disturbed by offenses against God to be spiritually dead, just as the human body is considered dead when it feels nothing (Vita, 394; PC 46.1-2). In fact, Clare, known for non-violence and her compassion for others, even goes so far as to recommend that that person be struck by a blow on the cheek or be hit by a stone in order to see that that person has neither peace nor patience. Clare also recommended that the person be questioned on what would disturb him or her and then observe what response is given (Vita, 394).

Clare also remarked that no human person can remain in this state of perfect absorption in God for long periods of time, since they must stop and take food and drink (Vita, 395). Clare herself would often be enraptured for long periods of time (PC art. 66, 67), and was said to have been fed by heavenly dew (PC art. 74, 77, 78). There were times when she was brought back into reality, not only to do the work of the community, but also to refresh herself (PC art. 130). Often the sisters distracted her to keep her with them (Vita, 288), and they also ordered people not to sing the praises of God near the monastery, since this set Clare off into rapture in God (PC art. 68).

Thus, in answering the questions asked by the members of the sect of the Free Spirit, Clare responded well and, in the tradition of Augustine. Agostino Trapè states: "I have found that she [Clare] marvelously responded in the way of St. Augustine, in particular on the concept of Christian liberty, the concept concerning love which is neither idle nor ended, the concept of Providence who acts well when allowing evil."<sup>65</sup>

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dei nescit existere otiosus. Vita, 395 also states that persons cannot remain continually in this state, but, after a period of time, must refresh themselves with food. Clare speaks from her own personal experience. Trapè, *La teologia*, 417-418, sees Clare's words as a "precise translation" of Augustine's words in *Psalms* 31.2,5. Augustine says: "Love cannot be empty... Give me an empty love and nothing is working" (amor vacare non potest...Da mihi vacantem amorem et nihil operantem).

<sup>65</sup>Agostino Trapè, "La spiritualità di s. Chiara e la regola di s. Agostino," in *La Spiritualità*, 141: troviamo che essa risponde mirabilmente a quella di s. Agostino, in particolare il concetto della libertà cristiana, il concetto dell'amore che non può essere mai ozioso né mai può arrestarsi, il concetto della provvidenza che opera bene anche quando permette il male, il concetto dal rapporto. Trapè, *La teologia*, 418, uses Augustine's *Ench.* 3, as the authority for Clare's response on the permission of God and states that Clare was in agreement with the

Clare was not gentle in her dealings with Bentivenga, since she saw in him a friar who was an acknowledged leader of the sect of the Free Spirit, but also a man who was responsible for the fall from grace of many poor souls, a person close to the demons, not to God. She said to him:

O wretched one! O blind one! O totally in darkness!....[There are great perils for souls] when they mortally offend [God's] creation, when they transgress [God's] mandates and resist divine pleasures, because on account of sins, the souls are separated from God and from grace and its virtues, and are joined with demons.<sup>66</sup>

For Clare, Bentivenga represented a person who delivered "false and superstitious fabrications," since, for example, he stated that God was not good, since God allowed sin. Clare responded to this lie:

God is not the author of sin and if God committed sin, God would not be God, but this would be sin....There is in humanity the doing of forbidden sin, which is always evil, and in God the permission [of sin] that is always good. Thus what God does then is good, namely, the permission itself and the good which follows, because the fruit and nobility of virtue appears better because of the worthlessness of vice.<sup>67</sup>

Clare also recognized the goodness of God by allowing humans the right to choose between God and evil. However, when a person chooses to sin, Clare does not consider this to be true freedom, but slavery to the devil. She says again to Bentivenga:

If the freedom to sin is given to the soul, this is not freedom but submission and servitude to the devil. For a person, by sinning, is made a slave of the devil and

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scholastic theologians on this topic.

<sup>66</sup>PC art. 112; 287.23-288.12: O miserrime! O cece! o totaliter obtenebrate!....quando creatorem suum mortaliter offendunt et quando mandata sui trasgrediuntur et voluptati divine resistunt, quia propter peccata anime separantur a Deo et a gratia et virtutibus eius, et coniunguntur demonibus.

<sup>67</sup>Vita 342: Deus non est auctor peccati, et si peccatum faceret, deus non esset, hoc autem peccatum esset....Est enim in homine peccati prohibiti operatio que semper est mala, et est in deo permissio que semper est bona. Unde quod deus ibi facit est bonum scilicet ipsa permissio et bonum inde sequitur, quia fructus et nobilitas virtutis melius apparet propter vitii vilitatem.

forsakes the will of God. At the same time, the soul, going against the will of the Lord sins and by thus sinning, is made a slave and handmaid of the devil.<sup>68</sup>

Again Bentivenga, wishing to entrap Clare and sneering at her ignorance, questions the relationship between the virginity of Agnes and the sin of Magdalene, that is, whether the virginity of Agnes is more pleasing to God than the sin of Magdalene. Clare responds:

There is no doubt that the virginity of Agnes pleases God, and on that account the sinful state of Magdalene is displeasing. Neither do I deny by this that there is greater merit for Magdalene than Agnes, because in Magdalene after her sin, she could be so contrite, have such fervor of devotion and love, and such fullness of virtue that, in merit, she could exceed the virginity of Agnes (Lk 7.47). It is not that sin pleases God, but that the subsequent good afterward does.<sup>69</sup>

Encounters with the Sisters in Clare's Monastery. Besides these direct encounters with people outside the monastery, there are also many examples of how Clare instructed her sisters to be honest about themselves by advocating certain virtues and other ways of living. This section will look especially at the virtues of humility, faith and chastity.

Humility. Scripture considers humility as necessary for eternal life. It states: "I assure you, unless you change and become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom of God" (Mt 18.3; Mk 10.14). Like many men and women religious before her, Clare believed that the virtue of humility was the basis of religious life and the foundation for the acquisition of all other virtues (PC art. 54; PC 122.12-25; 197.9-18; Vita, 170).<sup>70</sup> Guerric of Igny praised "the

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<sup>68</sup>Vita 341: Et si peccandi libertas daretur anime, hoc non esset libertas sed subiecto et servitus dyaboli. Homo enim peccando dyaboli servus efficitur, et a dei deviat voluntate et ideo anima contra voluntatem domini faciens peccat et peccando sic efficitur subiecta dyaboli et ancilla.

<sup>69</sup>PC 224.21-34; Vita 342: Non dubito quia agnetis virginitas deo placuit, et ideo displicuit corruptio magdalene. Nec nego per hoc quin maioris meriti possit esse magdalena quam agnes. quia in magdalena post peccatum potuit esse tant contritio, tantus devotionis et caritatis fervor, tantaque plenitudo virtutum quod potuit in merito super excedere virginitatem agnetis. Non quod peccatum deo placuit, sed bona postmodum subsequuta.

<sup>70</sup>Article 54 states: "Also that she said for them [the sisters] to be poor and have humility as the fundamental virtue." Bonaventure, following in the footsteps of Francis of Assisi, claims poverty as the basis of all virtue (*Sermo 1 in Epiphania* [Faccin, 142]; *Epistola de Imitatione Christi*, n. 7 [Faccin, 142]; *Quaestiones Disput. de Perf. Evang.*, q.2.a.1 [Faccin, 143]). Nessi,

simplicity of Christian humility" since 'holy simplicity' is the "humility which safeguards the integrity of the mind, which ensures the search for God alone."<sup>71</sup> Richard of Saint-Victor's final four paragraphs of the De IV Gradibus center around Jesus Christ as *the* example of the compassionate One to whose humility "one should conform oneself if one wants to resemble the highest degree of consummate love" and, using the example of liquified metal, Richard says: "[A]s liquified metal runs easily down to lower depths in whatever way is opened to it, so the soul in this degree humbles itself spontaneously to be obedient to all things and freely bows down in all humility to the command of the divine will" (42).<sup>72</sup> Thus, this simplicity and humility stems from the realization of the humility of God in becoming human - in becoming Jesus Christ.<sup>73</sup> In two of her visions, Clare sees Jesus with bare feet, a sign of the humbleness of the person. In the first vision, Clare has just confronted the leaders of the Sect of the Free Spirit. In the second, Christ comes as a pilgrim to plant his cross in her heart. In her imitation of Christ, therefore, Clare exemplified what Christ Himself stated: "Take my yoke upon me, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Mt

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"Una questione posta e risolta male," in La Spiritualità, 248, uses the fact that Clare did not mention poverty in her final words, as the reason why Clare was not affiliated with the Franciscans. However, in Clare's imitation of Christ, she lived poorly and humbly, both virtues promulgated by Francis of Assisi. Likewise, Augustine in his Rule considers the necessity of personal and communal poverty. See Rule, I.3-5, V.1-2.

<sup>71</sup>Leclercq, Love of Learning, 254, quotes Guerric of Igny from *Exord. magn. Cist.*, d.3, c.8, PL 185, 1059.

<sup>72</sup>Richard of St. Victor, De IV Gradibus Violentae Caritatis in Les Quartes Degres de la Violente Charite edited by Gervais Dumeige (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1955): (43): Hec est forma humilitatis Christi ad quam conformare se debet quisquis supremum consummate caritatis gradum attingere volet....(42):Et sicut metallum liquefactum quocumque ei via aperiture facile ad inferiora currendo delabitur, sic anima in hoc esse ad omnem obedientiam se sponte humiliat et ad omnem humilitatem juxta divine dispositionis ordinem libenter inclinat.

<sup>73</sup>Hallman, 106, quotes Augustine saying, "[T]hat the cause of all diseases might be cured, namely pride, the Son of God came down and was made humble. Why are you proud, O man? God was made humble for you. Perhaps you would be ashamed to imitate a humble man; at least imitate a humble God" (*In Jo. Trac.* 25.16).

11.29).<sup>74</sup> Secondly, Clare always placed herself in a dependent relationship with God. She based this on the fear that she would be separated from God, and on the realization of her stance as creature in relationship with Creator.<sup>75</sup> Finally, Clare, after her eleven-year trial, had a vision concerning the necessity of humility.

In this vision, a young man appeared to Clare with a lit lamp and some oil in one hand and carrying a bundle of chaff in the other. Even though he placed the chaff over the burning flame, it did not light. The man then told Clare to dip the chaff in the oil and thus the chaff would burn, which she did. Through this vision Clare realized that

dipping the chaff of desires into the oil of humility, she placed herself, thereafter, totally into the divine will. She internally counted herself as nothing....And she, not only for the aforesaid affliction but also for other serious matters she did for the judgment of the divine will, received great peace, consolation and light, more than she had had before. God not only took her from her previous state, but also raised her to a higher one. Through this abundance of graces, she did not destroy her self-disdain or the humility that she had had in the conflict.<sup>76</sup>

Even before this vision, Clare was well known for her humility (PC art. 3; PC 97.17-18; 101.3-5; 170.30-33; 267.8-13). She performed the humblest of duties around the house (PC art. 1, 15, 24, 25; Vita, 94), which she continued to do even after she was made abbess (PC art. 25,

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<sup>74</sup>Augustine, in The Trinity, VIII.4.7, XIII.17.22, considers Jesus Christ as the perfect exemplar of the virtue of humility. Bonaventure concurs. See Tree of Life, 5-8, 10, 15, 16, 25; Life of St Francis, VI.1, 5; VII.1.

<sup>75</sup>Trapé. *La teologia*, 421.

<sup>76</sup>Vita, 102: paleas desiderii quod habebat in humilitatis oleo infundendas cognovit ac deinde voluntati divini totaliter se subiecit, et se nichil penitus reputavit....Et cum se non solum afflictioni predicte sed etiam aliis gravioribus pro divine voluntatis arbitrio obtulisset pacem, consolationem et lumen accepit amplius quam antea habuisset. Et deus ipsam non solum ad statum anteriorem reduxit, sed etiam ad altiorem provexit. Et per habundantiam gratiarum contemptum sui et humilitatem non perdidit que habuerat in conflictu. Sister Marina, in PC 165.18-25, states that Clare, through this vision, knew that she was freed from the eleven year tribulation. Sister Thomassa, in PC 260.1-11, adds the following words of Clare: "My Lord, if you want to keep me in this tribulation forever, I am prepared to endure it and more, if you wish to give me more" (Domine mi, si semper vis me tenere in ista tribulatione. ego sum parata sustinere, et plus si tu vis plus dare michi).

37; Vita, 98). Clare also went out begging for bread and other necessities prior to the building of the monastery (PC art. 38-39), until she received visions or went into ecstasies at the mention of the name of God. Then, under holy obedience, Clare was ordered by her sister, the rectrix of the monastery, to remain in the monastery and thus, she became a permanent recluse until her death (PC art. 39, 44; Vita, 98).

Clare, in her concern for the sisters of the monastery, would correct the faults of the sisters, but would do so in a humble manner (PC art. 86; PC 211.9-212.19). Likewise, she accepted the office of abbess, even though she wished always to be considered as one of the lesser people. Out of obedience to the local bishop, she accepted that role, but she continued to count herself as more evil and needy than any other person, including the most evil of women (PC 269.1-11), since "she had the living memory of all the kindnesses of God which were given to her, of which and for such she gave thanks to God....and thus became more recognizably humble."<sup>77</sup>

Clare, in her relationship to the God of Truth and in her acceptance of her humble stance before God, neither rejoiced in times of adulation from others as well as periods of adversities or tribulations, since she considered both to be gifts and graces from God (PC 270.22-271.7; Vita, 393). However, Clare was also concerned when a friar came to her, saying that he was not disturbed by any event occurring in his life, even if he committed sin. In fact, the friar stated: "For four years I was in great peace and quiet that I did not receive or change due to any event,...I saw myself in such perfection, that I saw and knew God in everything and I was continually loved in God...and I do not care if God removes or God gives."<sup>78</sup> But Clare, fearing that he belonged to the sect of the Free Spirit, warned him of the danger, and she said to him:

I confess that sometimes the soul is so joined to God, elevated and absorbed into God that at this point it cannot see or feel anything except God. But this cannot

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<sup>77</sup>PC 271.15-20: habebat enim memoriam vivam et integram omnium benefitiorum Dey que sibi facta erant, de quibus et tantum Deo gratias agebat, quia ex dono benefitiorum Deo reddebat gratiarum actionem, et in se semper reconoscebat maiorem humilitatem.

<sup>78</sup>Vita, 395: Ego fui per anno IIII in quadam pace maxima et quiete quod ex facto aliquo turbationem vel mutationem aliquam non accepi,...quod me in tanta perfectione videbam, quod videbam et cognoscebam deum in omnibus et continue delectabar in eo....quia non curo sive auferat sive donet.

possibly last in this world, since the person who is in this state and grace, after a certain period of time, must stop and refresh itself with food. After the soul returns to itself, such a soul is subjected to fear, and also lives in fear itself.<sup>79</sup>

In answering the friar's question, Clare tells us more about herself as well. Since she finds herself in this state of complete absorption into God, she also can accept both joy and tribulation, but on returning to herself, Clare again recognizes her finiteness, and, in great fear, stands humbly before God.

Clare also treated the rich and poor alike in her conversations and dealings with them, but she was most gracious to the poor, giving of her personal possessions, but also asking the sisters to give from the communal possessions (PC 272.1-14). She could be kind to the good and those doing good, but she could also be harsh to those doing the contrary, even to her own brother. One time she said to him: "I wish that you would be a man of such humility and such virtue, that you would be an example for others."<sup>80</sup>

Clare stressed the foundation of humility in her life and the life of anyone wishing to be perfect, since humility places a person in correct relationship with God. One stands in truth before the God of Truth, as well as in good relationships with those around one. All are dependent upon God for God's gifts and God's mercy.

Faith. Humility, as the basis of all the virtues, places one in right relationship with God, thus strengthening one's belief that God can and will do whatever one asks (Mt 17.20; 21.21-22; Lk 17.6; Heb 11.6). Faith, a gift from God, also brings about "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 5.1), courage and strength (1 Cor 16.13; Eph 6.16; Heb 10.39).

Clare exemplified the virtue of faith first of all in her belief, not in human wisdom, but in the power of Christ (1 Cor 2.5; PC 291.1-6). Christ would protect her and the sisters from

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid.: fateor quod aliquando anima est sic deo coniuncta et elevata et absorta in deum quod in illo puncto non videt nec sentit aliquid nisi deum. Sed hoc non in hoc numdo non potest haberi durare continue, quoniam persone etiam que statum et gratiam istam habent, modico tempore in hoc statu consistunt et cito reddeunt ad se ipsas. Et postquam ad se redierint statim anima talis cuiuscumque persone timori subiacet, et debet etiam de siepsa timere.

<sup>80</sup>PC 272.23-25: Vellem quod tu esses unus homo tante humilitatis et tante virtutis, quod tu esses aliis in exemplum. It was on this same occasion that Clare wished that her brother was a kitchen friar rather than a teacher of theology.



both physical thieves and spiritual robbers. When asked by Francesco if they needed more physical protection in the monastery, Clare responded: "I have such faith and confidence in Christ Jesus, that, through His power, I am defended from thieves and robbers. Thus they are not able to injure me or my sisters."<sup>81</sup>

Likewise, when Clare and her sisters suffered great poverty so much so that they had to share a slice of bread, she said to Francesco that God would relieve their poverty. "They were filled and supported with greater sweetness, joy and pleasure in poverty than when they had their fill at other times...and together the sisters were content."<sup>82</sup>

We also recall that Clare believed that whatever she asked from God, God would give to her (PC art. 117). Thus, Clare was granted her desire to participate fully in the Passion of Christ. She not only saw herself at the foot of the cross, but she also suffered the pains of the crucifixion interiorally (PC art. 46, 47, 49; PC 165.5-10, 258.17-259.17; Vita, 100). Her belief in the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist was later expanded to certitude, when she experienced the true meaning of Christ's Eucharistic presence through a vision and divine revelation (Vita, 344-345).

On her deathbed, Clare continued to believe in Christ's power to protect her and that Jesus Christ was coming to take her into his heavenly kingdom. She said to Johanna: "Arise, my soul, to my most faithful love, Jesus Christ, who says to me that he will take me to him. My spirit encountered my most faithful love, Jesus Christ, who said to me that I will come to him, and my soul is so delightfully full and inebriated in his word that it cannot continue unless it goes to him."<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>PC 272.31-273.2: *Tantum fidem et confidentiam habeo in Christo Iesu, quod a quibuscumque furibus vel latronibus ego me defenderem sua virtute, ita quod nec me, nec sorores meas leder possent.* See PC 99.6-8.

<sup>82</sup>PC 273.10-15: *quod cum maiori suavitate et letitia et iucunditate in pauperate predicta saturarentur et pascerentur, quam cum alias amplius in temporalibus habundarent...<et> possent ipse sorores communiter contentari.*

<sup>83</sup>PC art. 144: *Escontrose l'anima mia a lo mieu dilecto fidelissimo Ihesu Cristo, que me a dicto que me ne venha a lui. Obviavit anima mea dilecto meo fidelissimo Ihesu Christo, qui dixit michi quod veniam ad eum, et anima mea est tantum repleta dulcedine et inebriata in verbo eius quod non potest contineri quin vadat ad eum.* See Vita, 397.

Virginity. When physical martyrdom was no longer possible, unless one became a missionary, virginity became a form of martyrdom as a profession of faith.<sup>84</sup> Thus, Francesco, Clare's brother, in witnessing to the virtues that she exemplified, stated that Clare "protected the cleanliness, purity and virginity of her body in such a way because she said that [virginity] was the divine virtue of the heavens and that she valued this virtue of Christ above others."<sup>85</sup> Clare, in her single-heartedness, not only saw God and God's will for her (Mt 5.8), but also showed others how to live the life that God wished.<sup>86</sup>

Clare was zealous in her protection and promulgation of this virtue, not only for herself but also for her sisters as well as others with whom she spoke. Clare taught the virtue of chastity both by word and example (PC art. 53). Clare "was concerned with things of the Lord, in pursuit of holiness in body and spirit" (1Cor 7.34). She refrained from speaking about frivolous things with others (PC 166.30-34) and she was totally honest in her speech, actions and conversations (Phil. 4.8; PC 168.25-27; 329.25-33; 330.24-29). She often said to the sisters, that before she would lose her virginity, she would rather remain in the world as long as the devils are in hell, so that she would never be separated from God.<sup>87</sup>

Clare had an unusual, personal way of protecting her virginity. She would cover her face and head, in order to hide her beauty and to withdraw from the citizens of the world, especially when she left the reclusorio to beg or to go to S. Leonardi to take care of the lepers (PC art. 40, 41). Clare, in speaking to people, especially men, at the window of the reclusorio or

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<sup>84</sup>Peifer, 186-187.

<sup>85</sup>PC 269.28-31: quia munditiam et virginitatem et puritatem corporis commendabat in tantum quod ipsa dicebat quod hec virtus erat virtus celestis et divina; quam virtutem Christus pre aliis diligebat. Vita, 398, states that Clare is drawn to Christ's "most pure appearance" (tuo aspectu purissimo), and under his "protection so pure" (cum un esvardo tanto puro) (PC art. 144; 91.3-18; 150.5-11; 239.29-31; 336.29-31).

<sup>86</sup>PC 363.9-14: et etiam fuit sibi obstensa puritas quam Deus volebat in anima...

<sup>87</sup>PC 168.14-17; 330.1-6: quod ipsa, antequam perdere suam verginitatem et honestatem, potius vellet in hoc mundo quam diu haberet vivere stare in inferno <et> cum penis infernalibus corporaliter affligi, dummodo non seperaretur a Deo. Bonaventure likewise states: "prefer to keep you soul holy for a hundred years, even though apart from the enjoyment of God, than to sin once by impurity" (Sermo 1 de S. Agnete Virg. et Mart. Tom.IX, p. 503, as quoted in Faccin, 153).

the iron grate of the monastery, would cover not only her face, but also her hands as well, even when monetary transactions were taking place (PC art. 33, 70, 71; 34.26-35.3; 98.1-7; 129.16-23; 204.23-31; 330.7-15). This included family members, especially her younger brother (PC art. 34, 70; PC 34.26-35.3; 129.11-15; 204.13-22; 267.1-6; Vita, 96), her attending physician (PC 330.16-17) and even her sisters in the monastery (PC 98.29-32; 168.20-24; 270.7-10).<sup>88</sup> She would say to the people who were speaking to her and who wished to see her face: "We can speak without seeing."<sup>89</sup>

As a small child Clare was reprimanded by her sister, Giovanna, when she found Clare in bed with her legs bared. From that time on, when she slept, Clare tied her tunic in such a way that no part of her body, including her legs, was showing (PC art. 1; 99.1-17; 168.7-13; 330.23-29).

Clare, in her great zeal for the living of virginity, often spoke to her sisters about protecting this virtue very carefully (PC art. 1; 35.12-31; 97.27-32; 98.23-29; 166.26-29; 167.4-16; 329.8-15; Vita, 175). She admonished the sisters to speak with other people, including their confessors, only in the presence of the other sisters (PC art. 72, 73). She would often point out the temptations, thoughts and deceptions of the devil to the sisters (without naming the sisters who had these temptations) (PC art. 87, 88, 89; 295.19-24) and would recommend precautionary measures to assist them and others in avoiding these temptations. To her brother, Clare said: "When you have impure and worldly thoughts, you should not dwell on them slowly and easily, but you must resist immediately and repel them virtuously and efficaciously."<sup>90</sup>

For Clare, and thus, for her sisters as well, the greatest protection for virginity was truthfulness both in word and in action (PC art. 73; PC 36.15-21; 98.23-29; 99.6-8; 167.;

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<sup>88</sup>When Clare was ill and she needed to be uncovered because of the physical examination or being cared for by the sisters, she would close her eyes in order that she might not look at the doctor or the sisters while she was not properly clothed.

<sup>89</sup>PC art. 34: *Loqui possumus sine videre*. See PC 114.31-115.7; 167.16-20; 188.26-189.2; Vita, 96.

<sup>90</sup>PC 282.27-29: *Quando habes cogitationes non puras et mundas, non deberes in talibus cogitationibus sicut piger et mollis inmorari, sed statim deberes resistere et virtuose et efficaciter repellere*.

168.25-28; 173.11-174.4; 270.1-6; 329.19-330.4; 330.26-29; Vita, 95). It is one of the reasons why Clare was so adamant about her fear of the sect of the Free Spirit, since she believed that the members of the sect were filled with "iniquity, impurity and brutality."<sup>91</sup>

After Clare's death, many of the witnesses attested to Clare's life of virginity and chastity (PC art. 1, 122, 310-315; PC 317.20-318.16; 319.28-320.38; 322.13-323.19; 327.14-328.19; 424.26; 509.16-510.11; Vita, 348). There were several women who had visions of Clare going into heaven and being numbered among the heavenly virgins (Rev. 19.6-8).<sup>92</sup>

Although Clare did not teach anything new about the living of virginity and chastity, she did carry on the tradition of the Church, which, at this time, stressed the necessity and excellence of the virtues of chastity and virginity to achieve Christian perfection. In her lifetime, Clare watched over her virginity as well as the virginity of the sisters under her care. She was adamant in her mortifications of the flesh and was faithful in asking God's help in preserving this precious gift, since like humility, it brought one closer to the God of Truth.

Clare's dedication to truth and her care and concern for her sisters was often shown by her knowledge of their thoughts and deeds, even though these were private and not spoken aloud. In fact, the sisters "guarded themselves carefully lest they think anything that was against God, because they learned, believed, and knew by experience that holy Clare knew such things by divine revelation."<sup>93</sup>

Clare was able to tell a sister when she was not praying with her heart, but only with her lips (PC 214.30-31), and she told her cousin, Johanna, that she had not received the body of Christ with as ordered a mind as usual (PC 42.12-18). To this same Johanna, Clare spoke

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<sup>91</sup>PC 289.21-34: *vas onnis iniquitatis et immunditie et brutalitatis*. See Vita, 389. One can recall the visions which Clare had concerning the sect of the Free Spirit, especially that of Christ appearing to Clare, and not allowing her to kiss his bare feet. This, for Clare, symbolized the necessity of chastity at all times. See PC 236.13-25; 289.21-34; 294.19-24; Vita, 339, 344.

<sup>92</sup>PC art. 203; PC 317.1-6; 320.25-30; 407.4-15; Vita 349 (Margherita); Vita 399-400 (Bartholuccia); Vita, 402 (Paula); Vita, 403 (Sibilia).

<sup>93</sup>PC art XC: *Et ideo sorores dicti monasterii, quando sancta Clara predicta vivebat, cavebant sibi studiose ne cogitarent aliquid quid esset contra Deum, quia intelligebant, credebant et per experientiam sciebant quod sancta Clara predicta sciebat talia per revelationem divinam*. See Vita, 298.

concerning Johanna's wish to be alone in her cell, rather than praying with the other sisters, and told her that not only was this a temptation by the devil, but also would stop within six months, which it did (PC 42.19-35).

Encounters with Others. At another time, Clare, a spiritual director for a man from Spoleto who had a good reputation in the area, had directed the man to spend more time in prayer, possibly as a time of retreat. He persevered for four days, but then he found himself talking about legal matters rather than keeping himself in a prayerful attitude. He went home sorrowful because he disobeyed Clare's orders. After a little while, he received a message from Clare that he should come to visit her in Montefalco, which he did, knowing that she knew about his defection from prayer. Clare exonerated him and he returned home to try again (Vita, 297).

Clare was also very concerned about preachers coming to the monastery who could lead the sisters from the path of truthfulness. She was often able to predict the arrival of such people days before, and thus prepare the sisters for their arrival. She would call them by name, describe their habits, say when they would arrive and from where. If the person came to speak to a particular sister, Clare would warn that sister of this person's arrival, and forbid the sister to meet with the person (Vita, 298-299).

On one particular day, two friars arrived at the monastery, Clare knowing ahead of time about their arrival. She had warned the sisters that one had taken the form of a wolf and the other, a pig. The former wanted to steal their souls, and the latter personified unclean acts. Clare met them at the gate, and refused them admittance into the monastery, and forbade them to speak to the sisters (Vita 299).<sup>94</sup>

#### Section 4: Christ-rooted Compassion for Others.

Clare's ascetical practices have already been linked to the physical aspects of Christ's suffering.<sup>95</sup> If one studies other aspects of Clare's life, however, one can see this *imitatio Christi* more clearly. This section looks at Clare's lived theology, her spirituality, and her experiential

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<sup>94</sup>Sala, *Vita*, 35: These two friars were Brother Salomene (the wolf) and Brother Giacomo of Capitone (the pig), both from Montefalco and both Friars Minor.

<sup>95</sup>See Peifer, 184-186.

expression of being one with Christ. Clare externalized this inner presence of Christ in her heart in two ways. She situated herself into Christ's sufferings and she never compartmentalized this imitation of Christ and this union with his sufferings, but she had universal compassion for all those she met.

Suffering. Clare not only "suffered much for Christ and showed many signs of sorrow because of her compassion with the pain which Christ had suffered on the cross for us,"<sup>96</sup> but she also suffered for all the offenses committed against God (PC 45.31-46.2; Vita, 290, 394-5). The sisters, who had been with her from the beginning, said that when Clare spoke about the Passion or heard sermons on the Passion, she would cry copious tears and often inflicted exterior pains on herself as well (Zec 12.10; PC 120.8-15; 193.7-27). She encouraged the sisters "to consider and meditate on the Death of Christ with tears and compassion and much devotion."<sup>97</sup> When Clare confronted the members of the sect of the Free Spirit, it was often with the intention of suffering the same pains that Christ suffered in his lifetime due to their faithless obstinacy, which Clare also encountered with the members of the sect of the Free Spirit (Vita, 343). Clare also suffered from people acclaiming her holy, believing she was not worthy of that appellation (PC art. 84-85; PC 41.21-42.2; 135.22-136.7; 210.27-211.5) and from the tribulations sent by devils and heretics (Vita, 337, 342). All the pain and tribulations which she suffered, however, were sweet to her since they did not separate her from God and kept her in union with the suffering Jesus (Phil 1.28.29; 2 Tm 2.3-13; 2 Pet 13-17; PC 274.13-17).

The external penances that Clare did were those promulgated by Peter Damian and were customary practices of the Roman Church at this time.<sup>98</sup> Clare made use of the discipline (PC

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<sup>96</sup>PC art. 46: Clara, dum vixit in adulescentia sua et usque ad suum obitum, multum compassiebatur Christo et multa singna doloris ostendebat et ostendit dum vixit, propoter compassionem doloris quem Christus passus fuit in cruce pro nobis. See Rom 4.23-25; 1Cor 1.18-25; 1Pet 1.18-21, 2.21-25.

<sup>97</sup>PC 193.17-18: inducendo sorores ad considerationem et meditationem mortis Christi cum lacrimis et cum conpassione et devotione multa.

<sup>98</sup>Pelikan, The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300) (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 127; Leclercq, Spirituality, 117-118; Morrison, 189; Vauchez, Spirituality, 61.

art. 7, 8, 10; Vita.), sometimes to the point that her sister, Giovanna, had to order her, under obedience, not to be so severe, since she would not be able to do the work of God, if she was ill (Vita, 93). She also wore a hair shirt, fasted and abstained (PC art.12; Vita, 94), slept on the bare floor or an unstuffed pallet, went barefoot unless she was ill, and wore only one tunic, and that, patched and worn (PC art. 7, 11).

Because of her excessive penances when she was young, Clare suffered great infirmities throughout her life, but due to the grace of God, she suffered them with joy, love and serenity (PC art. 74; 65.31-68.9; 109.1-110.17; 174.19-25; 180.33-183.2; 332.19-333.10; Vita, 94). Although there is no specific illness mentioned by name, some symptoms have been given. Because of her compassion for the sufferings of Christ, she often had severe pains in her hands, feet and sides (PC 258.27-259.17; Vita, 397-98), to the point that, at times, she seemed to be breaking apart (*dissolvi*), PC 72.1), while, at other times, she was unable to move her arms and legs (Vita, 17). She also had a wound in her side, which often needed to be cleansed (PC 71.34-72.6). Because of her extensive fasting, and the types of food she ate, when she did eat, she had a form of digestive illness (Vita, 396). Witnesses stated that she was not colic (PC art. 153: 83.3-6; 152.2-14; 242.15-33; 237.9-238.1; 337.32-338.8), and she could be treated with the customary remedies and medicine of the day (PC 78.32-79.9). However ill Clare was throughout her life, she died, not of the colic or any other illness. The witnesses to her death attested to the fact that she did not have any of the normal characteristics of those who had died, but "she died sweetly and without any sign of pain."<sup>99</sup>

Clare's participation in the suffering of the God-Who-Suffers, also brought about her total commitment to Christ's Passion and Death. Clare suffered both internal and external pains in direct imitation of Christ's suffering. But this compassion with Christ's suffering also placed her in direct contact with the internal and external sufferings of others. Clare, in identifying herself with the humanity of Jesus Christ, identified with the crucified humanity of Jesus. Because she suffered with Christ, she was at the end "co-crucified with Christ."<sup>100</sup> Her total involvement with the Passion of Jesus Christ, was not just an awareness of Christ's Passion, but

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<sup>99</sup>PC 237.24: *sed decessit dulciter sine aliquo signo doloris.*

<sup>100</sup>Leonardi, 381: *chi é con Cristo con-redentore non puo essere alla fine con-crocifisso.*

her total experience into the Passion of Christ.<sup>101</sup> She became one with Christ's suffering and death. Clare became immersed in God not only through her experience of God as Creator and the giver of Truth, but, most especially, in the fact that it was enough to look upon Christ in the flesh of the human person and concentrate her "admiration, love, and desire on him."<sup>102</sup>

Compassion for others. Clare, when seeing the pilgrim Christ carrying his cross, had compassion for him (PC art. 128; PC 69.31-70.16; 147.13-25; 233.33-234.17), which also overflowed over into compassion for others.<sup>103</sup>

The sisters of her monastery were witnesses that Clare would often do the penances given to the other sisters, even though she was not required to do so (PC art. 18; 108.19-22; 180.8-21). Not only did she care for the sick and infirm sisters, but she also suffered their pain and would often take on the pain of the afflicted sister, so that the sick sister would feel some relief (PC art. 22, 23; 110.18-111.11; 183.4-184.3; Vita, 94).

Clare did not just suffer with or have compassion on the sisters of her community. Clare's co-suffering with Christ moved her, like Francis of Assisi, to wash the sores of the lepers Clarelle and Cincta, and to kiss them and clothe them (PC 40.9-25; 134.12-135.2; 209.27-210.7).<sup>104</sup> She was noted for her generosity in not only giving of her own personal belongings to the poor, but convincing the sisters of the monastery that some of the communal

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<sup>101</sup>Ibid., 383.

<sup>102</sup>Suor Giovanna della Croce. "Un secolo, il XIII e la sua mistica," in Zois, Dove ci Porta il Cuore, 138: ora bastava guardare Cristo e concentrare su di lui ammirazione, amore, desiderio.

<sup>103</sup>Menestò, "The Apostolic Canonization Proceedings of Clare of Montefalco, 1318-1319," in Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy, 115, states "through her assimilation with Christ in his humanity, of which Clare was more concretely conscious, this nun from Montefalco set a standard and exercised an apostolate both within and beyond the community." Richard of St. Victor understands compassion for others as a direct consequence of union with God. See Richard of St. Victor, "Epître a Séverin sur la charité;" Richard de Saint-Victor, "Les quatre degrés de la violente charité", edited by Gervais Dumeige (Paris: J. Vrin, 1955) for the critical text and Richard of St. Victor, Selected Writings on Contemplation, translated by Clare Kirchberger (London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1957) for a partial translation into English.

<sup>104</sup>See Newman, 119-122, for a discussion of co-redemption through co-suffering as an imitation of Christ.



property also be given to them (PC art. 80, 113; PC 39.12-35; 133.12-134.9; 208.28-209.14; 272.1-14). It is said by Sister Thomassa, one of the sisters who knew Clare most of her life, that "having compassion and charity for the afflicted and non-afflicted... she instructed the non-afflicted in spiritual goods and holy words, and the afflicted by making each and every one of them stronger."<sup>105</sup>

Clare's closest imitation of Christ can be seen in her compassion for sinners, since she did not wish them to be separated from God or Jesus Christ (2 Thes 1.9-10; PC 274.2-275.1; Vita, 343). Clare was saddened by the untimely death of Paganonus, who had been buried alive in a sandpit, and who had died without confession. Clare and the sisters prayed for Paganonus, who was revived, made his confession and then died on the same day (PC art. 77; PC 69.2-30).

There were many great sinners who came to Clare, asking that she pray for them. Among them was Crescius (PC 274.29-275.3) and an unnamed man, for whom Clare, believing in his conversion, said that she would pray. Clare went twice to pray for God to forgive him, but in each case, she was denied her request. The third time,

for the sake of great charity and compassion of piety that she had for him, she came to prayer, and before she came [to prayer], she took upon herself the sins of that sinner, and with great contrition for those sins, taking on herself the reputation of the sinner, she presented herself to God, and before God she prayed with all fervor and prayer for the sinner. Wherefore God received her kindly, poured consolation into her and showed her that God was listening. This was evident from the effect namely, that the man whose sorrow Clare had taken upon herself, was converted from his evil way, as Clare herself said to him.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup>PC 39.12-35: quia vidit frequenter dictam s. Claram habentem compassionem et caritatem ad proximum afflictum et non afflictum, quo ad non afflictum in bonis spiritualibus et sanctis verbis istruendo, et quo <ad> afflictos illa omnia et singula in diversis personis et diversis temporibus exercendo. PC 285.8-286.4 extols the fact that Clare prayed and inspired those who were evil to be good and those who were good to be better. See Vita, 170, 294.

<sup>106</sup>PC 275.26-276.1: Tertia vero vice alias, propter magnam caritatem et pietatis compassionem quam habebat ad illum, ad orationem accessit, et antequam acederet [sic], illius peccantis peccata se induit, et tanquam peccatrix omnium peccatorum illorum induta, et magna contritione illorum peccatorum, se reputans peccatorum illorum indutam, presentavit se Deo, et ante Deum cum omni fervore et oratione pro dicto peccatore instructis oravit. Qui Deus ipsam benignè recepit et consolationem infudit in eam, et eam exauditam ostendit, quod patuit ex effectu, quia ille cum dolore et contritione relocutus sibi Clare, a via sua mala conversus est sicut sibi dixit dicta Clara.

Clare had compassion on those whose children caused their parents grief, either because of their life style or because of illness and death. The son of Lord Bartholus, a close friend of Clare's, doubted his vocation to the Friars Minor because of his unbelief in God. After Bartholus and Clare prayed for him, the son was strengthened, returned to the Friars and died believing "that he was among the elect of God."<sup>107</sup> Clare brought Sister Andriola back to life, since Clare had promised her father, the chaplain of the monastery, that he would see her before she died. The sisters prayed for Andriola, believing that God "has the power to bring life to a stick."<sup>108</sup> Andriola was revived, spent time with her father, and died later that day (PC 119; PC 60.22-62.15; 145.21-25; 230.1-27).

Clare also prayed for those people who caused great hardship and persecuted her and the other sisters of the monastery (Mt 5.11-12, 44-48; Rom 12.14-21). "She suffered for those with bodily needs but more so for those of the soul. She prayed for the conversion of sinners and enemies. Those who harmed the monastery she loved spiritually and she pleaded with the Lord for them and prevailed against their trials."<sup>109</sup> Among these was Puccarellus, whom Clare saw suffering excruciating pains because of his offenses to the monastery, and who was saved by the prayers of Clare and her sisters (PC 109.23-31; 181.31-182.19; Vita, 290). Others included: Brother Petrus Salomonis, a Friar Minor of Montefalco (PC 40.33-41.3; 135.9-16; 210.15-19), Lord Thomassius (PC 40.30-33; 109.21-110.4; 135.7-9; 181.33-182.19; 210.15-19) and the Poor Clares from the monastery of S. Maria Magdalene (PC 41.4-15). In her dealings with Bentivenga, a member of the sect of the Free Spirit, Clare was "filled with compassion at [his] misery and deception" not only because he was in error, but also because she feared that he would destroy others because of his "beautiful, subtle speech."<sup>110</sup> Clare, however, believed

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<sup>107</sup>PC 363.25-364.22: et quod credebat quod sit inter electos Dei. Lord Bartholus was witness 82 at the Apostolic Process of Canonization. See Vita, 290.

<sup>108</sup>PC 99: Potens est enim Deus ponere spiritum in ea, quia potest ponere in uno ligno.

<sup>109</sup>Vita, 290: Compatiebatur necessitatibus corporum sed multo amplius animarum. Pro peccatorum conversione orabat, inimicos et eos qui nocebant monasterio diligebat spiritualiter, et pro eis dominum exorabat et eorum pericula precavebat.

<sup>110</sup>PC 224.5-225.31: Et dixit quod tunc vidit dictam s. Claram plangere multum compaciendo miserie et deceptioni ipsius fratris Bentevegne.....multos subverteret propter loquelam suam

that God would have more compassion on those deceived by Bentivenga's preaching, rather than on Bentivenga himself, unless he repented (PC 225.1-20; 287.7-291.18; Vita, 343).

Another event which unites Clare's prophetic ability and her compassion for others concerns the young woman, Bichola, who, on a certain Good Friday morning came to the monastery and asked permission to see Clare and the other ladies in order to enter the monastery. Illuminata, the doorkeeper, refused to let her in, and, Bichola, weeping and in great anguish, went back home. Meanwhile, Clare, in a vision, saw a certain "beautiful, green and large shoot outside the cloister before the gate of the monastery, and the shoot desired to come into the monastery, since it was not able to live elsewhere in order to send out its branches. I saw that Illuminata took the shoot, plucked it out and threw it out of the monastery; and this shoot wilted and died."<sup>11</sup> Clare called Illuminata to her, and demanded that she, along with another sister, find the young woman, which they did. Bichola, having changed her name to Christina in honor of the day, entered the monastery (Vita, 339; PC art 91).

Clare not only brought spiritual consolation to others through her prayers and sacrifices, but she brought physical relief as well. Clare raised people from the dead, cured people of leprosy, fevers, and epilepsy, called the "falling death." She cured the blind, the lame, the deaf and mute. She also cured Giovanna, her secretary and cousin, and others from the advanced stages of tuberculosis of the lungs.<sup>12</sup>

"Clare, from adolescence to her death, suffered much for Christ and showed many signs of sorrow for the compassion of sorrow which Christ had suffered on the cross for us."<sup>13</sup> By

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pulcrum et suculum. See PC art. 112; PC 57.22-24; 144.8-14; 287.7-291.18.

<sup>11</sup>PC CXI: Ego vidi et Dominus michi ostendit quod quedam propago pulcra et viridis et magna quasi unus faciculus sarmentorum cum frondibus erat extra in clauastro ante hostium monasterii. et illa propago desiderabat transponi intra istud monasterium et non poterat alibi vivere vel mittere radices. Et videbam quod Illuminata accipiebat istam propaginem et evellebat eam, et prohibiebat eam extra monasterium; et illa propago marcescebat et moriebatur.

<sup>12</sup>PC art. 119-121, 127; Vita 345, 449, 452-454, 514.

<sup>13</sup>PC 7: XLVI: Item quod ipsa sancta Clara, dum vixit in adulescentia sua et usque ad suum obitum, multum compassiebatur Christo et multa signa doloris ostendebat et ostendit dum vixit, propter compassionem doloris quem Christus passus fuit in cruce pro nobis.] See also *Articuli Interrogatorii* XLVII - XLIX.

contemplating the passion of Christ in His compassion for humankind, Clare became compassionate toward Christ and others. She realized in an extraordinary way her feminine capacity for empathy, her ability to share in someone else's experiences and feelings. She could not only project her own personality into the personality of Christ to understand him more thoroughly but she could actually experience the suffering and the compassion of Christ and at times even felt she was present at the crucifixion. The crucifixion was so real to her and her imagination that her feeling of compassion caused her to pour out tears of sorrow. Her contemplation and her heartfelt sorrow were the spark for both rapture and compassion for others. She could enter with her whole being, her mind, heart and emotions into the sufferings of Christ and into his sorrow and compassion for sinners. Just speaking about the Passion to others or hearing others speak about it would put her into a rapture that sometimes lasted for days. The grace received was a mystical transformation into the suffering and compassionate Christ.

This profound sense of empathy moved Clare to a very active compassion for people in their physical and spiritual needs. She provided clothing for the needy, food for the hungry and sound and clear advice for sinners and the confused. Her compassion extended to women lepers as she washed their sores. It reached out in forgiveness to Martin Thomasso who insulted the nuns and even to Brother Petrus who did damage to their home. It is also exemplified in the manner in which Clare lived out the virtue of justice.

Conclusion to Chapter 6. The Rule of St. Augustine opens with the following statement: "The chief motivation for your sharing life together is to live harmoniously in the house and to have one heart and one soul seeking God" (Rule, I.2). What Augustine is promulgating is both love of God and love of neighbor, which brings about total unity.<sup>114</sup> One cannot be united with God, unless one is in harmony with one's neighbor. Augustine states: "If they had peace, they would not destroy unity" (*Homilies on the Psalms*, Psalm 121.13 [*Selections*, 246]). Thus,

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<sup>114</sup>Augustine, *The Trinity*, VIII.7.10-11, 8.12, discusses the synonymity between the phrases "love of God" and "love of neighbor." One implies the other, if one has true love. See *The Trinity*, IX.2.2, XIV.14.18, XV.18.32; *The City of God*, XIX, 14 (*Selections*, 459); *De moribus Ecclesiae* I.26.48,49 (AS, 640). In *Sermones de Scripturis Novi Testamenti*, CCLXI, 8.8 (AS, 318), Augustine states that it is in Christ that one is able to love God and neighbor.

Clare, in her final instructions to her sisters, reminds them of this fact. Clare, having lived under the Augustinian Rule for almost twenty years, reminded the sisters, in her use of the phrase *unity of love*, that they should "live then, all of you, in harmony and concord; honor God mutually in each other; you have become [God's] temples" (Rule, I.8).<sup>115</sup>

Clare was totally focused on God in her prayer, service and devotion. While she performed the menial tasks around the reclusorio and monastery, "she did them devoutly, and with humility and in silence, and while doing them, she was seen to be totally intent into God, not diminishing prayer and her devotion."<sup>116</sup> She entered the first reclusorio to do penance and to serve God (PC art.2, 7; PC 273.5-15, 406.27-407.1; Vita, 91, 97). She was faithful in serving God even during the eleven years of her interior proof (Vita, 288) and she would have suffered physical martyrdom, if necessary, to remain faithful (PC art. 21, 116; PC 227.26-30). Clare was known to fight the devil and any persons who would seduce the sisters away from serving God (PC art. 107; Vita, 176, 298-9, 337, 349). This faithfulness is seen through her continual praise, honor, and thanksgiving to God (PC art. 3, 5, 65; Vita, 92, 154, 288, 299, 344). Clare also speaks about God with whomever she comes in contact, asking them to serve God in whatever walk of life they have entered (PC art. 53, 111; PC 261.24-30; 167.16-31; 354.1-355.27; 456.30-457.1; Vita, 296). Clare believed that God would do whatever she asks, because God is the Giver of all gifts (PC art. 112, 117, 127; PC 225.26-31; 227.34-228.8, 273.23-30; Vita, 100, 117, 175, 289, 290, 337, 338, 339, 343, 345).<sup>117</sup> Clare is united to the will of God. But Clare's love of God also flowed over into love and compassion for others. Clare was very conscious of

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<sup>115</sup>Sage, 21, states that Augustine sees "harmony at the very foundation of religious life...the true countenance of charity, its most precious fruit, its most visible sign." See Sage, 134-145.

<sup>116</sup>PC art. 25: faciebat ea devote et cum humilitate et in silentio, ita quod dum ista etiam faciebat, videbatur tota intenta in Deum et non dimittere orationem et devotionem suam. See Vita, 172.

<sup>117</sup>PC art. 119, which is an account of Clare's raising Andriola from the dead, in order that she might see her father one last time, as Clare had promised, said to the sisters: "Sisters, ask God to replace her spirit within her, so that her father can see her alive. For God is capable of replacing her spirit within her, because God can even make a stick live" (Captivelle, *rogate Deum quod reponat in ea spiritum tantum quod pater possit eam videre vivam. Potens est enim Deus ponere spiritum in ea, quia potest ponere in uno ligno*).

both the materially and spiritually poor, and not only did she give material goods to those in need (PC art.13, 80, 81; Vita, 94, 289, 290), but she prayed for those who were physically and spiritually ill, and, through God, received healing for these people (PC art. 13; PC 274.26-32; Vita 289, 337-338, 345).

## CONCLUSION

Clare of Montefalco knew and experienced God in many ways. She also proclaimed God to others, and, in that proclamation, inflamed her heart and the hearts of those with whom she prayed and conversed. Clare, in responding to questions placed before her by noted theologians and well-educated lay men and women, not only enlivened their faith, but also was able to respond to their questions through the use of her knowledge of the faith. She was committed to the truths of Catholic doctrine, and used her knowledge and her love of God to transform and correct others who came to speak with her.

During Clare's time, she followed the models of those saints who had preceded her in terms of her asceticism, her prayer life, her morals and her life of virtue. Added to these qualities, Clare was also a mystic and visionary, whose visions assisted her in teaching the truth to the sisters of her monastery as well as many others. We have seen, however, that Clare, as the leader of her religious community and as a prominent person in the city of Montefalco and other places, was also a model of truthfulness and compassion. She was a teacher of truth and promulgated the life of virtue.

Does Clare have anything to say to our era? I believe so. Clare lived her entire life committed to God and the desire for union with God. Clare accomplished this as a lay person living as a recluse in community and, for most of her life, as a vowed monastic religious living under the Augustinian rule. Clare did not separate her commitment to God from her way of life. Whether as a lay person or as a nun, she can teach us how to live in total dedication to the God of truth and compassion. She encouraged people from all walks of life, whether rich or poor, whether men or women, to follow their own path to true desire for and union with God.

Clare also raised questions of truth in a culture surrounded by heresy, especially the heresy of the sect of the Free Spirit. Clare can be a model for us who live in a culture not

necessarily surrounded by heresy, but beset by mendacity in personal, social, business and political arenas.

Clare had a holistic approach to theology, spirituality and morality. She never compartmentalized her knowledge of the God of truth and compassion from living this out in her dealings with others as well as in her own personal life. She lived in the constant presence of God even though she was doing manual labor or confronting heretics.

In her recent book, The Fire in These Ashes, Joan Chittister reminds us that "spirituality is theology walking. Spirituality is what we do because of what we say we believe. What we dogmatize in creeds, spirituality enfleshes and what we enflesh is what we really believe."<sup>1</sup> In speaking about the mystics of previous ages, she reminds us that for "seers such as these, God was tangible and God loved the fleshly dimensions of life as well as its cognitive ones. For the mystics, God was more than an idea to be grasped; God was an experience to be encountered in every area of life."<sup>2</sup>

Clare definitely developed a spirituality of her own. Her visions and other mystical experiences, her life in both a recluse and a monastic community, her political, cultural and familial backgrounds gave her the wherewithal to be an individual in her journey to union with God. She did not expect the sisters with whom she lived to follow in her footsteps, in doing the ascetical practices which she practiced, but to develop their own way to God. Her concern was always the truth of being united to God and Jesus Christ and to do all in their power to remain on this path of desire. As abbess of her community, she discerned the specific gifts of the sisters and encouraged them to promote both their prayer lives and work, as long as they remained in harmony with each other. She did, however, expect that all the sisters and others who were not religious would recognize in what they said and did that they were images of the God who spoke the truth and the God who was compassionate to all.

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<sup>1</sup> Joan Chittister, The Fire in These Ashes: A Spirituality of Contemporary Religious Life (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1995), 103.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 148.



**Appendix I**  
**Comparison of the Three Types of Theology Present During the Middle Ages**

Characteristic	Monastic Theology	Scholastic Theology	Vernacular Theology
1. Aim/Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-“impregnate their [monks] whole lives with them [mysteries of God] and to order their entire existence to contemplation.”<sup>1</sup></li> <li>-love of learning and the desire to be united to God (LOL, 263)</li> <li>-sanctity (LOL, 243)</li> <li>-“deepening the understanding of faith (<i>intellectus fidei</i>) and enkindling charity (<i>experientia caritatis</i>), so that the believer could arrive at the higher understanding of love (<i>intelligentia amoris</i>)”<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-achieving clarity (LOL, 247)</li> <li>-“organize Christian erudition by means of removing any subjective material so as to make [knowledge] purely scientific (LOL, 279)</li> <li>-“deepening the understanding of faith (<i>intellectus fidei</i>) and enkindling charity (<i>experientia caritatis</i>), so that the believer could arrive at the higher understanding of love (<i>intelligentia amoris</i>)” (FOM, 19)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-“theology which was a serious attempt to foster greater love of God and neighbor through a deeper understanding of faith”<sup>3</sup></li> <li>-desire for union with God by love and the surrender of the human will to the divine will.<sup>4</sup></li> </ul>
2. Means of developing theology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-prayer, reflection, contemplation (LOL, 7, 234, 285)</li> <li>-use of Scripture and the Fathers of the Church</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-use of philosophy and logic</li> <li>-reflection is not rooted in experience and not directed toward it (LOL, 279)</li> <li>-placed on impersonal and universal plane of metaphysics (LOL, 279)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-natural wisdom, knowledge of human nature and powers of observation</li> <li>→ ability to read hearts (FAS, 13)</li> <li>-“mediation of living tradition, beginning with the Bible and including liturgy, other forms of prayer and iconography, as well as the consultation with clerical advisors”</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Jean Leclercq, The Love of Learning & the Desire for God (NY: Fordham, 1961), 279. This text will be abbreviated to LOL in this chart.

<sup>2</sup> Bernard McGinn, The Flowering of Mysticism, 3. This text will be abbreviated FOM in this chart.

<sup>3</sup> Bernard McGinn, “Meister Eckhart and the Beguines in the Context of Vernacular Theology,” in Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics: Hadewijch of Brabant, Mechtilde of Magdeburg, and Marguerite Porete, edited by Bernard McGinn (NY: Continuum, 1994), 9. This text will be abbreviated ME in the chart.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Hammer, OFM, “St. Francis of Assisi as an Educator and his Pedagogical Method,” in Franciscan Education Conference XI/11 (November 1929), 25. This text will be abbreviated FAS.

<sup>5</sup> Jean Leclercq, “The Renewal of Theology,” in Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century, edited by R. Beaumont (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 82. This will be abbreviated ROT.

3. Sources	Scripture; Fathers of the Church; monastic experience reflected through these elements'	Scripture; Fathers of the Church; Philosophers	(FOM, 29) -religious instincts similar to the Fathers of the Church -Scripture, contemplation, experiences -new theological and linguistic possibilities → "theologian expressions dependent, in large part, on the vernacular linguistic matrix in which it took form" (ME, 7) -Vernacular theology or "theologies" (FOM, 19)
4. Intellectual Method	-reflective reading → <i>lectio divina</i> (LOL, 244; ROT, 82) -dialectical reasoning, to some extent, especially in regard to the liberal arts (LOL, 248-250) -conversation, not debates as in the scholastic method (ROT, 83)	-reading and study without prayer as a necessary element → knowledge for knowledge's sake (LOL, 244) -use of disputation between master and pupil, including those from liberal arts and theology (LOL, 250) - <i>lectio; quaestio/disputatio/ predicatio</i> (ME, 9) Men who are teachers, writers, philosophers, and theologians	-men and women not educated through the university or monastic setting → "men and women began on the same footing" (ME, 7) -entirely new kind of sublimity, in which the everyday and the low were included, not excluded, so that, in style and in content, it directly connected the lowest with the highest" (FOM, 19)
5. Basic users of theology	-monks		
6. Genre	-Biblical commentary -letters; treatises -written rhetorical sermons (FOM, 20)	<i>Lectio, questio, disputatio, summa</i> (FOM, 20)	-hagiography -visions -spiritual diaries -prose or poetic dialogues -brief treatises, letters, and vernacular (FOM, 20-21)
7. Basis of the Study of Theology	Experience of the reality of faith and the need to learn about God in order to draw closer into the truth and love of God. (LOL, 6, 263-4, 290; ROT, 77-8)	-submit God's mysteries to reason, rather than to faith (LOL, 238) → the scholastics -make faith derive from intelligence rather than intelligence from faith (LOL, 238)	-experience and reflection on that experience -religion of the heart, rather than religion of the intellect (FAS, 15)
8. Audience	-monks and children (ROT, 80-81) -Christian state of life in religious life (LOL, 240)	-men who have received liberal arts training (LOL, 239) -state of Christian life in the world (LOL, 240)	-non-educated people, both lay and religious (ME, 10-11) -increasing lay literacy and new forms of social diversification demand another method of education (ME, 8) -scholastic and non-scholastic theologians

			→ 'different and wider audience than that addressed by traditional monastic and scholastic theology' (ME, 8)
9. Types of Subjects Taught	-liberal arts taught in liturgical setting (I.OI., 251-56) -school setting for the service of God, not self (I.OI., 239) -'biblical experience is inseparable from liturgical experience' (I.OI., 265)	-university based curriculum	NA
10. Tendency	pastoral tendency in a monastic setting : 'spiritual theology which completes speculative theology ; it is the latter's completion and fulfillment' (I.OI., 279)	-pastoral in a 'worldly' setting -'professional, scientific, and academic theology of the Schoolmen' (FOM, 19)	'everything must spring from the heart and be comprehended by the spirit' (FAS, 15)
11. Relationship to the Church	Reform of the Church through search for God (ROT, 82)	Need for action concerning 'controversy, pastoral administration, and solution to new questions' (I.OI., 279)	Pastoral reform of the laity in their own language
12. Modes of Expression	-mystical vocabulary → <i>lectio divina</i> (I.OI., 244 ; ROT, 82) -oral or written (ROT, 83) -'linked with style and with literary genres which conform to the classical and patristic tableau' (I.OI., 245) -Biblical commentary and letters (ME, 9)	-'accent is not longer placed on grammar, the <i>littera</i> , but on logic' (I.OI., 246) -non-literary language → technical language (I.OI., 247) -Latin as the principal language (FOM, 21)	-vernacular languages → 'new language-fields offered new theological possibilities, especially in an era when the still forming vernacular tongues of Europe were in many cases finding their earliest written expression' (ME, 6) -monastic genres, sermons, treatises, little books, letters, hagiography (ME, 9) -visions (ME, 10) -mysticism (ME, 10)
13. Thought Processes	-'Theology studies in relation to monastic experience, a life of faith led in the monastery where religious thought and spiritual life, the pursuit of truth and the quest for perfection must go hand in hand and permeate each other' (I.OI., 245) -oriented toward tradition (I.OI., 248)	-orientation toward the pursuit of problems and new solutions (I.OI., 248) -scholastics 'compared themselves with dwarfs perched on the shoulders of giants : smaller than their predecessors they nevertheless see farther ahead' (I.OI., 248-9)	-new theological and linguistic methods -language of the annihilation of the human to the will of God in order to produce union with God in this life (ME, 12-14) -'use of ocean and abyss, especially the mutual abyss through which God and the soul realize their final indistinction' (ME, 14)
14. Type of education in schools	-preparation for <i>lectio divina</i> , and, therefore, contemplative in tendency (ROT, 81)	-know what is necessary for the celebration of the cult, administration of the sacraments, especially penance, and	Example, rather than instruction → broader and freer type of learner (FAS, 15)

	- school for the service of God (I.OI., 240)	preaching (I.OI., 239) -necessary not for his sanctification but for those in his care (I.OI., 239)	
15. Phrase attached to this theology	'I believe that I may experience' ( <i>credo ut experiar</i> ) → personal experience of God (I.OI., 213)	'I believe that I may understand' → ( <i>credo ut intelligam</i> ) (I.OI., 213)	'I believe that I may understand and may experience' (ME, 9)
16. Definition	NA	Scholastics at the beginning of the fourteenth century were 'scientifically organized and in the academically professional mode of seeking the understanding of faith' (FOM, 3)	NA
17. Emergence	-rural monastic tradition fading after the 'triumph of scholasticism' (FOM, 3) -apostolic life → communal life in the monastery (FOM, 6) -'dominated by the motif of withdrawal from the world in order to join a spiritual elite' (FOM, 12)	Development of advanced education and organization	-new literacy of the thirteenth century (FOM, 4) -movements to follow the apostolic life in terms of preaching → evangelical life (FOM, 5-6)
18. Visions	NA	NA	-vision and mystical experiences : 'a special consciousness of the presence of God that by definition exceeds description and results in a transformation of the subject who receives it' (FOM, 26f) -'deep dependence on the rich inheritance of the received teaching about <i>contemplatio</i> (FOM, 26) -'no inner division between <i>experiential</i> and <i>theological</i> aspects of Christian mystical tradition' (FOM, 26) -'it is not so much the fact that someone makes claims to visionary experience as it is the kind of vision presented, the purpose for which it is given, and the effect it has on the recipient that will determine whether or not any particular vision may be described as mystical' (FOM, 27) -received authority <i>ex beneficio</i> → from grace (FOM, 22)

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