

The Returning Resurrection of St. Francis of Assisi

Warren Lewis
November 29, 2013

Brief Outline of the Life of St. Francis of Assisi

1181/82—born Giovanni di Pietro di Bernadone; nicknamed “Francesco” by his father, Pietro di Bernadone, a wealthy silk merchant of Assisi.

Lived the high life of a rich man’s son, played at poetizing in the Courtly Love tradition, went to war (1204), was captured, was called back to Assisi by a vision. Begging with the poor at (old) St. Peter’s Church in Rome moved him to a life of evangelical poverty.

1210—Francis and his followers were authorized as a religious society, the Order of Friars Minor, by Pope Innocent III (1198-1216). Thereafter, Francis founded the Order of Poor Clares (for women), and, later, the Order of Brothers and Sisters of Penance (so-called “the Third Order,” for ordinary people). Lived a life of Christ-like poverty, experienced many miracles, guided the rapid expansion of the OFM until 1223.

1219—walked through the battle lines of the 5th Crusade to an audience with Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil (1180-1238), preached the gospel to him, and proposed the “trial by fire.” [In 1229, al-Kamil and Emperor Frederic II peacefully negotiated the only treaty between the Muslims and Christians, ceding Jerusalem, Bethlehem, *et al.*]

1223—instituted the first “living” Nativity Scene at Christmas.

1224—became the first stigmatic on Mt. Alverna when he experienced a vision of the seraphic Christ and received the wounds of the Crucified in his body.

1226—died on 3 October.

1228—canonized on 16 July; patron of animals, the environment, and (with Catherine of Siena) of Italy. Feast Day, 4 October.

Brief Outline of the Life of Peter John Olivi

ca. 1248—born Petrus Iohannis Olivi (Peter, [son of] John Olivi) in Sérignan (near Narbonne), Languedoc.

1260—a boy of twelve, became a Franciscan Friar; schooled first in Béziers, then in Montpellier in Franciscan houses of study; grew up under the influence of the thought of Joachim of Fiore (1135-1202).

ca. 1264/1266-ca. 1273—Olivi studied at the University of Paris in the *studium generale* of the OFM; worked for Bonaventure as a “graduate assistant” studying the effects of Averroistic Aristotelianism in the teaching of Parisian professors.

1274-1279—lectured in Montpellier and in Narbonne on scripture and on theology; wrote extensively about Franciscan poverty.

1279—collaborated with a group of Franciscans who assisted Pope Nicholas III (1277-1280) in drafting the promulgation of *Exiit qui seminatur* (24 August), the official definition of Franciscan poverty.

1279-1282—lectured at Narbonne and Montpellier; commented extensively on scripture.

1282-1286—engaged in a protracted quarrel with Friar Arnaud Gaillard; required to defend himself to re-establish his credibility within the OFM.

1287-1289—fully rehabilitated, lectured at Sta. Croce, the OFM *studium* in Firenze.

1289-1293—lectured at Montpellier.

1293-1298—lectured in Narbonne.

1297—wrote *Lectura super Apocalypsim (LSA)*.

14 March, 1298—died in Narbonne, venerated by Franciscan Spirituals, Beguines, and others as “St.

Peter?"; miracles occurred at his grave until it was destroyed by the OFM and Inquisition.

1310, 1318, 1328—Olivi's books were burned, his followers persecuted and burned at the stake, including Marguerite Porete, Na Prou Boneta, and other Beguines, and Spiritual Franciscans.

1312—Council of Vienne, condemnation of four inconsequential ideas of Olivi.

8 February, 1326—Pope John XXII anathematized Olivi and condemned his *LSA* and his commentary on *Matthew*.

Pope Francis and Saint Francis

The new Pope Francis told journalists (16 March 2013) that he chose to be called after St. Francis of Assisi, "the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation," the same created world "with which we don't have such a good relationship.... (St. Francis) "brought to Christianity an idea of poverty against the luxury, pride, vanity of the civil and ecclesiastical powers of the time. He changed history.... How I would like a poor Church, and for the poor." (*Catholic News Service*) Pope Francis used the occasion of the Feast Day of St. Francis (4 October 2013) "to retrace the footsteps of a holy man widely respected even among people of other faiths. The pope visited the site [the Church of San Damiano]—now a shrine—where the saint is said to have heard the voice of Jesus and been converted." (*The New York Times*)

The Eschatological Logic of Olivi's Christology of St. Francis

According to Olivi:

1. The *Book of Revelation* teaches that the history of the church can be divided into seven stages in *concordia* (Joachim's principal hermeneutical rule) with the many sevens to be found in the OT, NT, and church history.
2. Francis of Assisi, born at the end of the fifth stage, restored the first-stage evangelical perfection of Christ and the apostles, thereby inaugurating the sixth stage. In so doing, Francis was the "second advent of Christ in spirit."
3. Evangelical perfection re-revealed in Francis is being opposed by the "mystical antichrist" (the evil effects of pagan and Muslim philosophy [Averroistic Aristotelianism] in the Church) and the carnality and heresy of the Babylonian Church (the Church of Rome), and "the elect" (God's chosen people of the sixth and seventh stages according to evangelical perfection) and "the 144,000 followers of the Lamb" (faithful descendents of the Twelve Tribes of Israel) would be persecuted horribly by the "great" or "public antichrist" (Islam and its militant allies).
4. Nevertheless, Francis, himself the second-coming of Christ, would—like Christ—rise again (in some way) to rule the world through his Order and with the assistance of the "Order of St. Elijah" (my phrase, not Olivi's). Like a Pope or an Emperor or both, the spirit of Christ and Francis would cause "all Israel" (Rom 11:25-26) and the whole world to turn to the messiah during the seventh stage of the church/Third World Age of the Holy Spirit.
5. Peace and joy and the praise of God would prevail among the elect, even though the forces of evil outside the predestined realm of grace would rage against the Spiritual Church of all the elect. Eventually, Ultimate Evil (Gog and Magog) would rise against God's faithful people so terribly that Christ, at the End, would have to come in judgment to redeem the elect.

* excerpt from *Peter John Olivi, Lectura super Apocalypsim, Warren Lewis, ed. (St. Bonaventure, New York: Franciscan Institute Publications, Latin edition, 2014; English translation, 2014): Prologue 164-167.*

164) What can be derived on the basis of the first comparative understanding, I briefly explain as follows: The root of these visions clearly demonstrates that their beginning was from the incarnate, the suffering, and the resurrected Christ. But the seventh and final members of these visions, and the seventh and final vision of the *Apocalypse*, clearly demonstrate that the end of the visions is, simply, life eternal to be revealed at the end of the world. According to this, a perfect participation in that life is to be enjoyed in this life a little while before the end of the world.

165) Now, the sixth member of these visions and the sixth vision of the *Apocalypse* make clear that in the sixth time of the church the unique perfection of the life and wisdom of Christ is to be revealed, and that the oldness of the former time is thus to be universally driven out, so that something of a new age or new church will then be seen to be formed in place of the old things already cast off, just as in the first advent of Christ, a new church was formed in place of the old, rejected synagogue.

166) And this is why a triple advent of Christ is presented in these visions: the first, namely, in flesh capable of suffering, redeeming the world and founding the church; the second, in the spirit of the evangelical life, reforming and perfecting the church that had already been founded at the first; the third, in judgment, glorifying the elect and bringing all things to completion. Even if it be granted that the second advent were taking place throughout the entire course of the church and in the glorification of the saints, nevertheless, it is rightly and appropriately attributed by antonomasia to the sixth time.[1]

*** excerpt from Olivi's LSA 7:9-17 at Rev 7:2, Seer John's vision of "...another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God..."**

9) The angel here is Francis, the renewer and supreme observer—after Christ and his mother—of the evangelical life and rule that are to be extended and made great in the sixth and seventh times.[2] **Ascending[3] from the rising of the sun** [Rev 7:2], that is, from that life which Christ, the sun of the world in his place, that is, in his first advent, imparted to us; then Christ in Francis caused the shadow to reascend the ten lines of the sundial of Ahaz,[4] to that morning in which Christ rose up.

10) He ascends “from the rising of the sun” also because the ascent of Francis to God was based upon and began from the Roman See, which among the five patriarchal churches is principally the see and city of the sun, that is, of Christ and his faith, concerning which Isaiah 19 typologically says: **In that day, there will be five cities in the land of Egypt**, and so forth: **One will be called “City of the Sun.”**[5]

11) He ascends “from the rising of the sun” also, that is, around the beginning of the solar day of the sixth and seventh opening or of the third general stage of the world.

12) Again, by the “angel” is understood the host of the disciples of Francis in the third and fourth beginnings of the sixth opening yet to take place and similarly to ascend from the sunrise. Francis's example and merit and powerful rule from heaven assists them in such a singular way that whatever good is accomplished through them may be ascribed rather to him than to them.

13) Now, I have heard something consonant with this text of scripture from a spiritual man[6] who is most worthy of belief and who was indeed a close friend of Brother Leo, the confessor and associate of blessed Francis. I neither assert nor do I know nor do I propose that it ought to be asserted, namely, that this man perceived—as much through the words of Friar Leo as through a proper revelation made to this man himself—that Francis, under that pressure of the Babylonian temptation in which his stage of the church and **Rule** would be crucified, as if in the very likeness of Christ, will rise again glorious.[7] Thus, just as in life and in the stigmata of the cross Francis was singularly made like Christ, so also he might be made like Christ in a resurrection necessary then to confirm and prepare Francis's disciples, just as Christ's resurrection was necessary to confirm the apostles and shape them for the foundation and government of the future church.

14) So that, moreover, the degree of dignity involved may be kept, and Francis's resurrection may remain distinct from the resurrection of Christ and of his mother, Christ rose straightway after three days, and his mother is said by some, who are in no way to be despised, to have risen after forty days.[8] Francis, on the other hand, will be raised after the whole time of his Order, even up to its own crucifixion, when it is made one with the cross of Christ, even as was prefigured in the stigmata of Francis.

15) This is discordant neither with what is said below in chapter 11 about the two witnesses who will be killed by the beast, that they will rise again after three and one-half days [Rev 11:11], nor with what is said in Daniel 11, where it talks about the conversion of all Israel after the fall of the antichrist: **In that time, Michael, the great prince, shall arise, and all your people shall be saved**, and so forth, and **many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awaken**, and so forth.[9]

16) Again, Joachim says in book four of the **Concordia**, where he works on the forty-second generation, that after its tribulation, “a universal pontiff of New Jerusalem will ascend like a new leader of Babylon, in whose type it is written in the Apocalypse: **I saw an angel ascending**, and so forth [Rev 7:1]. He ascends, moreover, not by measured footsteps but because complete freedom is given to him to renew the Christian religion and to preach the Word, because the Lord of hosts is already beginning to rule over the entire earth.”[10]

17) There follows: **Having the seal of the living God** [Rev 7:2], namely, as much in the stigmata impressed upon him by Christ as in his whole life, both internal and external, and in the church-historical stage of the profession of evangelical life, the **concordia** of the time, and the office in which he is singularly made like Christ and sealed with his likeness.

[1] Olivi's doctrine of the three advents is found in *LSA* Prologue 140, 164-167, 184, 263-267; 2:78; 3:14, 42; 7:8-11.

[2] see *LSA* 6:81, 10:1-18 for Olivi's identification of Francis with Apocalyptic angels as inspired by Bonaventure.

[3] Neither the Vulgate nor any of Olivi's resources read "ascending" here in the grammatical form in which Olivi wrote it. The identification of Francis with the angel of Rev 7:2 according to this favorite Bonaventuran-Franciscan proof-text must have been oft quoted colloquially and out of its specific grammatical context. The phrase came as a matter of habit to Olivi's mind to refer to Francis as "the angel ascending from the rising of the sun."

[4] 2 Kings 20:8-11.

[5] Isa 19:18; see Olivi, *Postilla in Isaiam*, in David Flood and Gedeon Gál, eds., *Peter of John Olivi on the Bible* (St. Bonaventure, New York: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1997): 297-298, in which Olivi interpreted the prophecy of the "City of the Sun" (Heliopolis) as referring to the capital city of the whole church of the gentiles, *i.e.*, Rome, where the "principal see of Christ" was located, followed by the other four cities of the Christian patriarchal pentarchy: Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem.

[6] The "spiritual man" cited in this paragraph, and referred to again in *LSA* 7:24 (and see *LSA* 6:81; 13:75), was Conrad of Offida, a person who held credibility for Olivi partly because of Conrad's association with Friar Leo, partly because of Conrad's charismatic spirituality. Olivi had met Conrad in Florence while Olivi was a *lector Ordinis* at Santa Croce; later, Olivi had addressed his 1295 letter to Conrad concerning the abdication of Pope Coelestine V. Angelo Clareno would later write: "Brothers John of Parma and Peter John [Olivi] held him [Conrad] in so much reverence that when he was present they would rather listen to him than speak themselves." Angelo Clareno, *A Chronicle or History of the Seven Tribulations of the Order of Brothers Minor*, David Burr and E. Randolph Daniel, trans. (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2005): 159. Thus Olivi here independently handed on the Leo/Conrad oral tradition of speculation about Francis's resurrection that would be suppressed in official *lives of the Saint* published by the Order but fostered and reinterpreted by Spirituals in their writings.

[7] Literary echoes of the Leo/Conrad oral tradition are found not only here in the *LSA* but also in at least the two following documents:

Ubertino da Casale, *Arbor Vitae Crucifixae Iesu*, book V chp. iv (of which no critical edition has yet been published, but see the reprint by Bottega d'Erasmus, 1961, of the 1485 Venice edition, p. 220), cited by Paul Sabatier, "Description du MS. 1/25 du Couvent de S. Isidore des Irlandais, à Rome" and "Verba Fr. Conradi. Extrait du MS. 1/25 de S. Isidore" in A.G. Little, P. Mandonnet, P. Sabatier, eds., *Opuscules de critique historique* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1903): vol. 1, pp. 378-379, under the heading: "That Saint Francis Will Rise Again before the Resurrection." Sabatier then quoted parts of *LSA* 7:9, 13-14, the speculation concerning the resurrection of Francis that was condemned as "false, fatuous, and rash" by the theological commission appointed by Pope John XXII (*Littera Magistrorum in Theologia*, S. Baluzius and J. Mansi, eds., *Miscellanea Sacra* (4 vols). Lucca, 1761-1764: vol. II, 258-270). Sabatier associated this text from Olivi with cap. 6 of the *Verba fratris Conradi, op. cit.*, p. 378, and Brother Leo's oral tradition.

Another, nearly identical written version of the Leo/Conrad speculation on Francis's resurrection is found in *Speculum Vitae Beati Francisci et Sociorum Eius (Venetiis [expensis domini Jordani de Dinslaken] per Simonem de Luere. 30 Januarii, 1504)*: 181b-182a. Compiled presumably by Fabianus de Ingal (+ 1474), this document, redacted late in the Spiritual/Conventual controversy, was drawn from many Franciscan sources, and in this case of the Leo/Conrad speculation, not from the oral tradition but, rather, from the *Verba Fratris Conradi*. Paul Sabatier described the *Speculum* in "Le *Speculum Vitae*," *etc.*, in A.G. Little, P. Mandonnet, P. Sabatier, eds., *Opuscules de critique historique* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1903): vol. 1, pp. 299-357; the statement from Ubertino is on p. 346. In general on the *Speculum Vitae*, see Jerome Goyens, "Les Editions du 'Speculum vitae b. Francisci' parues en 1620 et 1623," *AFH* 20 (1927): 116-131; Michael Bihl, "L'Édition du *Speculum vitae b. Francisci* parue a Győr en 1752 et l'Origine Hongroise du *Speculum vitae*," *AFH* 20 (1927): 132-161.

[8] The angel in a vision received by Elizabeth of Schönau announced to her that the resurrection of Mary, mother of Jesus, took place 40 days after her death. See F. W. E. Roth, ed., *Die Visionen der hl. Elisabeth...von Schönau* (Brünn: Raigerner Benedictiner Buchdruckerei, 1884): *Liber visionum secundus*: xxxi-xxxii (pp. 53-55) *Visio Elisabeth quam vidit de resurrectione beate virginis matris domini*; and Anne L. Clark, *Elisabeth of Schönau: The Complete Works* (New York & Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2000): 209-211.

Speculation on the question of the resurrection of Mary peaked during the High Middle Ages, different speculators coming to various conclusions. Vincent of Beauvais, with whose *Speculum Historiale* Olivi seems to have been familiar, placed Mary's resurrection two years after the ascension of Christ. See Vincent, *Spec. Hist.*, cap. LXXV, p. 248b. Olivi preferred Elizabeth's revelatory approach to Vincent's speculative one.

[9] Dan 12:1-2.

[10] Joachim, *Concordia* 4.31 (f. 56rb); Patschovsky, Ed. 56rb, c. 31; Daniel 402. Olivi cited Joachim accurately; but, within Olivi's own framework, an equation of the "new leader of Babylon" with the "universal Pope of New Jerusalem" is unexpected, unless one follows Olivi's logic thoroughly. Ordinarily in Joachim's thinking, the prevailing mode of future, regnant Christendom was to be monastic, not so much papal or imperial. In Joachite thinking, however, some heirs of Joachim opted for imperial speculations of the Frederick type, and others opted for papal speculations of the *papa angelicus* type: In post-Joachim speculation, the *novus dux* would be a political figure, e.g., "the last emperor," and the *papa angelicus* would be a religious figure who would arise to restore the church, a view that could maintain the typical 13th-century norm of the "two swords" theory, a separation of religious (spiritual) and political (temporal) authority. See Bernard McGinn, "Angel Pope and Papal Antichrist," in *Church History* 4/2 (1978): 155-173.

In the *Concordia*, however, Joachim himself went on to make his meaning clear; and Olivi cited part—but not all—of that argument here at *LSA* 7:16. Joachim was referring to the second coming of Christ himself, in person, the risen Lord and the eschatological Judge who sorts out the elect from the reprobate, not through a gradual political-ecclesiastical process but to the time of complete liberty under the rule of the Lord of Hosts, the Sabbath rest of the Third Age: "...on the Sabbath when a time of great rejoicing follows and in which the Lord of Hosts shall reign over all the earth." It would be a time when God himself would be in charge: "...free from war, free of temptation, free of care and fear because God will bless that time and sanctify it, a time in which he will cease from his universal work that he shall have brought to pass." It would be a time at the end of the world, after the persecution by Gog, when all things had been perfected, after the "first resurrection," when the Lord Jesus was seated in his majesty "at the end of the world, after the persecution that was perpetrated by Gog, when all things will already be complete, everything finished just before the resurrection of the dead when the Lord Jesus will take his seat in the throne of his majesty, ready to separate his elect from the multitude of the reprobate, so that those who are filled with the Holy Spirit may go into life eternal, and the impious may likewise go into the eternal fire." (Joachim, *Concordia* 4.31-32 f. 56rb-va; Patschovsky, Ed. 56rb-va, c. 31-32; Daniel 402-404.) Among the Joachites, some were papalists, some were imperialists, but Olivi coopted Joachim's idea Franciscatologically: Because Francis, according to Olivi, had been the Second Coming of Christ, the Saint fulfilled Joachim's ideal better than any Pope or Emperor could do.

In another sense, because the Apocalyptic Francis-Christ, flying like an angel across the heavens (Rev 7:2) would exercise world-wide rule "like" (*quasi*) a new ruler of Babylon and a universal Pope of New Jerusalem, Olivi's concept of Francis as the "second advent of Christ in the Spirit" allowed him both to reconceive and satisfy Joachim's suggestion of someone "like" a Pope or Emperor, as well as to transcend it. Like many a disappointed Joachite Franciscan before him, Olivi had learned not to place his hope in promised earthly emperors and other big men who come riding on white horses (see *LSA* 13:75 n. 106). This combination of the political and religious offices in the single person of the glorified Francis, however, seemed consistent with, and parallel to, the proclamation of the *Apocalypse* that the risen and coming Lord Christ would rule the world with a rod of iron as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev 19:6, 15-16). Within the context of the following paragraphs of *LSA* 7, and again in *LSA* 14 and following, Olivi began to spell out his muscular version of the worldwide theocratic rule of Christ under the spirit of the Poor Man of Assisi: The spiritual power of the angel of Rev 7:2 would have this-worldly, political and ecclesiastical implications during the seventh status/Third Age.