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## “The path to God”.

### Francisco de Herrera the Elder’s wall paintings in the Franciscan Church of St. Bonaventure in Seville<sup>1</sup>

During the years 1626–1627, a cycle of paintings was executed on the walls of the Franciscan church of St. Bonaventure in Seville by Francisco de Herrera the Elder, who was the most popular painter in the city at that time.<sup>2</sup> The cycle was dedicated to the history and spirituality of the Franciscan Order, complemented by emblems referring to the theological works of the patron saint of the church. These paintings became the backbone of an interesting iconographic programme, with a strong theological-pedagogical message which was created for the young monks who were being instructed at the monastery there.

Founded in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, thanks to support from St. Ferdinand III, the *Casa Grande de San Francisco* monastery belonged to the Franciscan Observants from 1450. At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century they decided to open their own theological college in the capital of Andalusia for the education of all members of the order in that province. During the rule of provincial superior

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<sup>1</sup> Transl. by Nicholas Hodge.

<sup>2</sup> On the subject of Francisco de Herrera the Elder, see: A. Martínez Ripoll, *Francisco Herrera el Viejo*, Sevilla 1978; I. Gutiérrez Pastor, *Herrera. Francisco de Herrera*, [in:] *The dictionary of art*, vol. 14, ed. J. Turner, London–New York 1996, p. 469–470; E. Valdivieso, *Historia de la pintura sevillana. Siglos XIII al XX*, ed. 3, Sevilla 2002, p. 164–172; E. Valdivieso, *Pintura barroca sevillana*, Sevilla 2003, p. 228–250; *De Herrera a Velázquez. El primer naturalismo en Sevilla*, ed. A. E. Pérez Sánchez, B. Navarrete Prieto, Sevilla, Fundación Focus-Abengoa, 2005–2006, Bilbao, Museo de Bellas Artes 2006 [exhibition catalogue], Sevilla–Bilbao 2005; A. Witko, *Sewilskie malarstwo siedemnastego wieku. Od wizji mistycznych do martwych natur*, Kraków 2013, p. 573–574; A. Witko, *Francisco de Herrera Starszy. Niepokorny mistrz Velázquez*, [in:] *Initium sapientiae humilitas. Studia ofiarowane Profesorowi Jakubowi Pokorze z okazji 70. urodzin*, red. M. M. Olszewska, A. Skrodzka, A. S. Czyż, Warszawa 2015, p. 242–250.

Luis de Rebolledo, a college of the Holy Scriptures and theology was founded in 1603, thanks to material support provided by Isabel de Siria, widow of Andrés Casuche. As of 1633, this was the only theological college for the Franciscan Order across all Spain. The great benefactors of this college were the family of Tomás Mañara de Leca y Colona and his wife Jerónima Vicentelo, parents of the famed *Almoner of Seville* – Miguel Mañara, author of the ideological concepts of the exceptional iconographic programme in Seville's *La Caridad*, friend of Juan de Valdés Leal and Bartolomé Esteban Murillo.<sup>3</sup>

From the year 1622, work on the *Fabrica ecclesiae* was led by the architect Diego López Bueno. Following completion in 1626, master masons Juan Bernardo de Velasco and Juan de Segarra undertook the execution of the stucco decoration, according to designs by Francisco de Herrera the Elder, which was completed in December 1627. At the same time, Herrera executed paintings on the vault of the church, which was originally a three-nave edifice, with a barrel vault with lunettes, surmounted by a dome on pendentives over the crossing (fig. 1).<sup>4</sup>

The rich and diverse iconographic programme of the Franciscan church of St. Bonaventure is attributed to two members of the Order of the Friars Minor: Luis de Rebolledo and Damián de Lugones. The former served as the definitor general of Andalucía's ecclesiastical province, as well as provincial superior. Francisco Pacheco described him in his famed work *Libro de descripción de verdaderos retratos*,<sup>5</sup> in which he paid tribute to his exceptional spiritual and intellectual merits. As a Franciscan scholar, he was the author of such works as *Libro de la Regla y Constituciones generales de la Orden de N. P. San Francisco* (Seville 1607–1610), and also the two-volume *Crónica de nuestro seráfico Padre San Francisco y su apostólica Orden* (vol. 1, Seville 1598, Alcalá 1609; vol. 2, Seville 1603, Lisbon 1615), a work in which we find a range of themes related to the iconographic programme of the Franciscan church. Following Rebolledo's death, supervision

<sup>3</sup> A. Martínez Ripoll, *Francisco Herrera...*, op. cit., p. 85–86; A. Martínez Ripoll, *La iglesia del colegio de San Buenaventura. Estilo e iconografía*, ed. 2, Sevilla 1996, p. 9–12; O. Delenda, B. Navarrete Prieto, *El conjunto de San Buenaventura de Sevilla como exponente del naturalismo*, [in:] *De Herrera a Velázquez...*, op. cit., p. 99–100; *Kultura artystyczna siedemnastowiecznej Sewilli a don Miguel Mañara i jego dzieło*, red. A. Witko, Kraków 2010, *passim*.

<sup>4</sup> The Franciscan monastery was demolished in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the nave of the church on the side of the Gospel was also dismantled. The nave on the side of the Epistle was likewise significantly rebuilt. A. Martínez Ripoll, *La iglesia del colegio...*, op. cit., p. 13–17; O. Delenda, A. Ros de Barbero, *Francisco de Zurbarán*, vol. 2: *Los conjuntos y el obrador*, Madrid 2010, p. 61–62.

<sup>5</sup> F. Pacheco, *Libro de descripción de verdaderos retratos de ilustres y memorables varones*, ed. P. M. Piñero Ramírez, R. Reyes Cano, Sevilla 1985, p. 115–121.

of the church's decoration was assumed by Damián de Lugones, another great Franciscan scholar and an outstanding expert on Christian iconography,<sup>6</sup> author of such works as *Historia de lo que ha sucedido en la Orden de San Francisco de la Observancia* (Milán 1614) and *De la solemníssima fiesta que se hizo en el convento de San Francisco de Sevilla el año de 1615 en honra de la Inmaculada Concepción de Nuestra Señora* (Málaga 1616).<sup>7</sup>

The decoration of the Seville church of St. Bonaventure adjacent to the college of theology and the Holy Scriptures was intended to play an important didactic role for the Franciscan students, emphasizing the principal Franciscan themes, and setting them on strong theological foundations. Francisco de Herrera the Elder executed the wall paintings in the church between May 1626 and December 1627. At the peak of the dome he depicted the soaring Dove of the Holy Spirit, which thus takes all of the faithful under its protection, and above all those praying in this very church. St. Bonaventure, the patron saint of the church, wrote about this power of the Holy Spirit in his work entitled *Collationes de septem donis Spiritus Sancti* (*The Collations of the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*), denoting the sanctity, which is the recognition of truth, emerging from the gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>8</sup> This divine power was especially experienced by the Franciscan saints, the depictions of whom can be found in the dome (fig. 2). They were: Bonaventure (1221–1274), patron saint of this particular house of worship, dressed in cardinal's attire, with a *modello* of the church, as the co-founder of the order; and then, moving clockwise: Antony of Padua (1195–1231), the first Franciscan theologian, a preacher and mystic, portrayed at the moment of his vision of the Christ Child (fig. 3); John of Capistrano (1386–1456), the outstanding orator and missionary, a fearless soldier of the purity of the faith; Louis of Toulouse (1274–1297), a great ascetic, who forsook the throne of Naples, who is shown with discarded bishops' insignia; Peter of Alcantara (1499–1562), mystic and reformer of the order in Spain, James of the Marches (1391–1476), preacher, reformer, close associate of John of Capistrano; Bernardine of Siena (1380–1444), reviver of the

<sup>6</sup> F. Pacheco, *El arte de la pintura, su antigüedad y su grandeza*, ed. B. Bassegoda i Hugas, ed. 2, Madrid 2001, p. 322, 326–327, 734, 742–747 [ed. 1: Sevilla 1649].

<sup>7</sup> A. Martínez Ripoll, *Francisco Herrera...*, op. cit., p. 87; A. Martínez Ripoll, *La iglesia del colegio...*, op. cit., p. 18–24; O. Delenda, B. Navarrete Prieto, *El conjunto de San Buenaventura...*, op. cit., p. 100–101; O. Delenda, A. Ros de Barbero, *Francisco de Zurbarán...*, op. cit., p. 62–65.

<sup>8</sup> S. Bonaventura, *Opera omnia*, vol. 5, Quaracchi 1891, p. 473–479. I would like to warmly thank the Reverend scholars: Professor Zdzisław Gogola OFMConv, Dr. Piotr Kwiatek OFMCap. and Dr. Andrzej Zajac OFMConv for their assistance in reaching unique works of St. Bonaventure, as well as for their inspiring comments on his doctrines.

Franciscan life and an apostle of devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus, represented with the hierogram *IHS* on his chest and with a discarded bishop's mitre; and Francis of Assisi (1182–1226), founder of the order, depicted in ecstasy. All of the Franciscan saints painted in the dome are accompanied by their own attributes, but they were likewise all provided with appropriate scholarly attributes: books and quills, thereby emphasizing the important intellectual message. Their wisdom, which flowed from their immediate proximity to the Holy Spirit, as depicted in the upper portion of the dome, increased the glory of sanctity. In addition, coats of arms of the patrons and benefactors of the college are to be found in the four ovals in the pendentives of the dome of the Franciscan church, thus honouring Tomás Mañara de Leca y Colona and his wife Jerónima Vicentelo.<sup>9</sup>

The divine power of the Holy Spirit was also experienced by outstanding representatives of the Franciscan Order, depicted by Herrera the Elder on the vault of the nave as witnesses of the extraordinary history of the order, and its superb intellectual traditions (fig. 4). There one finds depictions of ten outstanding Franciscan theologians and writers, with two in each bay: Alexander of Hales (1185–1245), founder of the Franciscan school of theology, the first lecturer of the Seraphic Order at the Sorbonne in Paris, the master of St. Bonaventure; John Duns Scotus (1266–1308), a great theologian, apologist of the Immaculate Conception, Richard of Middleton (1249–1302), an outstanding theologian of the Christian current that was under the pronounced influence of Aristotelianism, Francis of Mayrone (1280–1327), one of the first pupils of Duns Scotus (fig. 5); John Major (1470–1540), distinguished scholar, William Ockham (1285–1349), Franciscan thinker, creator of the *via moderna* movement, Pierre Auriol (1280–1322), Franciscan savant, known as *Doctor facundus*; Francisco Lycheto (?–1520), a Renaissance Scotist; Nicholas of Lyra (c. 1270–1349), an illustrious exegete; and Franciscus Titelmans (1502–1537), a biblicist and committed adversary of the Reformation.<sup>10</sup>

Depictions of these distinguished Franciscan scholars show the intellectual legacy of the order. In *Collationes in Hexaëmeron* (*Collatio xxii*), St. Bonaventure stated: “Those that teach us, should reveal the knowledge by which the Church progresses, whether that be theological knowledge, legal knowledge

<sup>9</sup> A. Martínez Ripoll, *Francisco Herrera...*, op. cit., p. 87; A. Martínez Ripoll, *La iglesia del colegio...*, op. cit., p. 35–37, 54–57; O. Delenda, B. Navarrete Prieto, *El conjunto de San Buenaventura...*, op. cit., p. 105–106.

<sup>10</sup> A. Martínez Ripoll, *La iglesia del colegio...*, op. cit., p. 57–62; O. Delenda, B. Navarrete Prieto, *El conjunto de San Buenaventura...*, op. cit., p. 106–108.

or philosophy.”<sup>11</sup> However, the inclusion of ten figures of outstanding Franciscan scholars on the vault of the nave had diverse meanings. On the one hand, it was certainly supposed to be an apotheosis of the Franciscan school of theology, hailing the exceptional breadth of research that had been undertaken, in a thorough and independent manner. The evocation of the radiant past could thus embody a clarion call to young students of theology and philosophy, an encouragement to carry out a far-reaching exploration of the world of learning, and to do so with beneficence and great enthusiasm. In such a manner, the young Franciscans were supposed to emulate their older brothers in the acquisition of wisdom. However, on the other hand, as Antonio Martínez Ripoll emphasized, the depiction of the intellectual elite of the order could be a pictorial reminder of the testament of St. Francis, who ordered: “All should honour and respect theologians and preachers, who provide us with spirituality and life.”<sup>12</sup>

Herrera painted five emblems concerned with morality in ovals on the vault of the nave, between the depictions of intellectuals of the Franciscan Order. They are modest in terms of iconography, but they have a deep symbolic meaning. They are closely entwined with the iconographic message of the church, addressed to the students of theology, under the patronage of the most distinguished Franciscan theologian, namely St. Bonaventure, the so-called Seraphic Doctor. This was simultaneously a call to the Brothers Minor to cultivate and develop a range of virtues that were necessary to realise their vocation in a fruitful manner.<sup>13</sup>

The first depiction, beginning at the chancel at the end of the main nave, shows an eagle rising towards the sun (fig. 6). On the banderole, there is an inscription: *NON PA[LLVI]T FVLGORE*, harking back to a fragment from the Book of the Wisdom of Sirach (Sir 43:3), referring to the sun: “At noon he burneth the earth, and who can abide his burning heat?” The sun is first and foremost a source of life, warmth and light, and on a symbolic level – divine illumination. In turn, the eagle is according to tradition the only bird that is capable of beholding the brightness of the sun from close by. Simultaneously, the eagle can be a symbol

<sup>11</sup> [St.] Bonawentura z Bagnoregio, *Konferencje o sześciu dniach stworzenia albo oświecenia Kościoła*. Wydanie synoptyczne tekstu oryginalnego redakcji A oraz B z przekładem polskim, red. i tłum. A. Horowski, Kraków 2008, p. 587.

<sup>12</sup> Cited in: A. Martínez Ripoll, *La iglesia del colegio...*, op. cit., p. 62.

<sup>13</sup> They were discussed in depth by Antonio Martínez Ripoll. Other scholars have likewise noted the very close correlation between these paintings and the writings of St. Bonaventure, see S. Sebastián, *Contrarreforma y barroco. Lecturas iconográficas e iconológicas*, ed. 2, Madrid 1989, p. 288–294; J. Fernández López, *Programas iconográficos de la pintura barroca sevillana del siglo XVII*, ed. 2, Sevilla 2002, p. 89–97.

of spiritual regeneration, because when the sun burns its feathers, it becomes a phoenix, while submerging itself in pure water, it seeks new strength, so as to regain its vitality. This emblem appears with the same meaning and in the same form in Juan de Borja's work *Empresas morales*, as *Vetustate relictæ*.<sup>14</sup> In Christian symbolism, the sun is a symbol of Christ, hence also the ascent towards Him, and like the flight of an eagle, it is carried out through the attainment of intellectual knowledge.<sup>15</sup>

This emblem closely corresponds in its assumption with the doctrine of St. Bonaventure of "intelligence that grows through contemplation", teaching that is principally to be found in his *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*. In *Collatio xx* we find a detailed lecture on the issue of illumination:

The illumined contemplation of the celestial monarchy can be likened to the light of the sun, for threefold reasons: owing to the brilliance of its special purity, owing to the brilliance of its illustrious clarity, and owing to the brilliance of the invigorating flame [...]. For the beam of the Sun serves to vivify, and not to burn, which occurs owing to a characteristic of an object. The Book of Ecclesiasticus (Sir 43:2-4) speaks of this energy [...]. I would like to say through this: when you see this sun, in which such a range of realities is foreshadowed, which are contained in it and radiate on the contemplating mind [...]. For that is perfect contemplation. And no one is able to explain those rays and blazes, which pour from the Sun into souls, which are in ecstasy of the mind [...]. It is also the case that this ray blinds, does not illuminate, but such a blinding, mainly created by the mind, is the highest level of this illumination in itself [...]. For just as stars are always in the heavens, so there is a need for the contemplative man to be stable, to endure in one place, not wavering, nor having wandering eyes, but the eyes of an eagle.<sup>16</sup>

We find similar contents in the next emblem. It depicts *The Eye of Divine Providence*, and below it *Manus Dei* emerging from the clouds, holding a sceptre, and under it a closed book (fig. 7). A banderole bears the citation: *ABSCONDITA IN LVCEM PRODVXIT*, which comes from the Book of Job (Job 28:11): "He bindeth the floods from overflowing; and the thing that is hid bringeth he forth to light."

<sup>14</sup> J. de Borja, *Empresas morales*, ed. C. Bravo-Villasante, Madrid 1981, p. 12-13.

<sup>15</sup> A. Martínez Ripoll, *Francisco Herrera...*, op. cit., p. 87-88; A. Martínez Ripoll, *La iglesia del colegio...*, op. cit., p. 37-40; also discussed in S. Sebastián, *Contrarreforma y barroco...*, op. cit., p. 290; J. Fernández López, *Programas iconográficos...*, op. cit., p. 92.

<sup>16</sup> [St.] Bonaventura z Bagnoregio, *Konferencje o sześciu dniach...*, op. cit., p. 525, 529, 531, 541.

We chiefly associate the symbolic meaning of the eye with intellectual perception. However, the depicted eye refers above all to Divine Providence, which oversees the work of creation. It prevails over and rules them, as is recalled by the hand and the sceptre, which are indeed above the clouds, hence emphasizing God’s omnipresence. The closed book, *The Book of Life*, contains fundamental truths, the mysteries of divine revelations, and answers to questions that trouble mankind.<sup>17</sup>

This elaborate emblem unifying several themes expresses its principal message in “intelligence that the Holy Scriptures teach.” We find a detailed discourse on this problem in the writings of St. Bonaventure, above all in the little known *Tractatus de plantatione Paradisi*<sup>18</sup> and also in *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*. Bonaventure clarifies in *Collatio II* that:

We learn wisdom through the mysteries of the Holy Scriptures, which should be believed in; through hope in what we can expect, through love, which we must cultivate [...]. This multitudinous wisdom results from the manifold mysteries of the Holy Scriptures, like the way in which many mirrors multiply the rays of the sun and flames [...]. And it is through the Holy Scriptures, that *we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord* (2 Cor 3:18); which is to say: from the brilliance of allegory to the brilliance of anagoge, and thence to the brilliance of tropology. This wisdom is gained in accordance with the measure of faith, *as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith* (Rom 12:3); for the greater the understanding that man attains, the wiser he becomes, a faith is attained through humility.<sup>19</sup>

The third emblem depicts a pomegranate that has been cut open, with the seeds visible inside, from which grow seven ears of corn (fig. 8). An inscription is discernible on the banderole: 7 SPICAE PVLVLANT IN CVLMO VNO, which

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<sup>17</sup> A. Martínez Ripoll, *Francisco Herrera...*, op. cit., p. 88; A. Martínez Ripoll, *La iglesia del colegio...*, op. cit., p. 40–43; see also S. Sebastián, *Contrarreforma y barroco...*, op. cit., p. 290–291; J. Fernández López, *Programas iconográficos...*, op. cit., p. 92.

<sup>18</sup> St. Bonaventure wrote in the first part of the tract: “Sicut in Christum pie intendentibus aspectus carnis, qui patebat, via erat ad agnitionem Divinitatis, quae latebat; sic ad intelligendam divinae sapientiae veritatem aenigmaticis ac mysticis figuris intelligentiae rationalis manuducitur oculus. Aliter enim nobis innotescere non potuit invisibilis Dei sapientia, nisi se his quae novimus visibilium rerum formis ad similitudinem conformaret et per eas nobis sua invisibilia, quae non novimus, significando exprimeret.” See: San Buenaventura, *Obras. Edición bilingüe*, vol. 3, Madrid 1947, p. 736.

<sup>19</sup> [St.] Bonawentura z Bagnoregio, *Konferencje o sześciu dniach...*, op. cit., p. 79, 83.

comes from the Book of Genesis (Genesis 41:5. 22): “And he slept and dreamed the second time: and, behold, seven ears of corn came up on one stalk, rank and good.” The pomegranate is equated with the united community of the church, but above all with divine grace. It is from there that the seven ears of corn grow, symbolising the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, and also the seven virtues: three theological and four cardinal. As José Fernández López suggests, they can also signify the seven stages of mystical contemplation, as described by Bonaventure: *Ignis, Unctio, Extasis, Contemplatio, Gustus, Amplexus, Requies*.<sup>20</sup>

The contents of this depiction correspond with St. Bonaventure’s famed tract *Breviloquium*. In chapters v–vi of part v of the work *De ramificatione gratiae in habitus virtutum* and *De ramificatione gratiae in habitus donorum*, he stresses that although there is only one grace that bestows and sanctifies souls, seven freely given virtues also exist that govern human life; of which three are theological: faith, hope, and love, as well as the four cardinal ones: prudence, temperance, fortitude and justice. These seven virtues, although diverse and connected with different activities, nevertheless retain a shared bond: they are identical among themselves in the same entity. Moreover, although many gifts of God’s grace are freely bestowed, which can in the common understanding be described as gifts from God, in the literal understanding the special gift from God is that of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, enumerated by the prophet Isaiah in allusion to the Messiah. The prophet said of him that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and fortitude, the Spirit of accomplishment and piety, bear down upon him, and fill him with the Spirit of the fear of God.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> A. Martínez Ripoll, *Francisco Herrera...*, op. cit., p. 88; A. Martínez Ripoll, *La iglesia del colegio...*, op. cit., p. 43–47; S. Sebastián, *Contrarreforma y barroco...*, op. cit., p. 291; J. Fernández López, *Programas iconográficos...*, op. cit., p. 91–92.

<sup>21</sup> “De ramificatione igitur gratiae in habitus *virtutum* haec tenenda sunt, quod cum una sit gratia gratificans animam, septem tamen sunt *virtutes gratuite*, quibus regitur vita humana: tres quidem theologicae, scilicet fides, spes et caritas; et quatuor cardinales, scilicet prudentia, temperantia, fortitudo et iustitia, quae uno modo est virtus *communis* et generalis, alio modo *specialis* et propria. Hae autem septem virtutes, licet sint *distinctae* et proprias excellentias habentes, sunt tamen *conexae* et aequales ad invicem in eodem; et licet sint *gratuite* per gratiam informatae, possunt tamen fieri *informes* per culpam [...]. De ramificatione autem gratiae in habitus *donorum* haec tenenda sunt, quod licet plurima sint dona gratiae gratis datae, et *generaliter* omnes habitus divinitus dati *dona* Dei non absurde dici possint; *specialiter* tamen et *appropriate* septem sunt dona spiritus sancti, quae enumerat et nominat Isaias, loquens de flore, qui processit de radice Iesse, id est Christo, de quo dicit, quod *requiescet super eum Spiritus Domini, spiritus sapientiae et intellectus, spiritus consilii et fortitudinis, spiritus scientiae et pietatis, et replebit eum spiritus timoris Domini*. In hac autem enumeratione descendendo procedit a summo et combinando, ut si-



The fourth emblem portrays a well with two basins, where water flows in four streams (fig. 9). Four birds drink the water. The banner bears the following caption: *AQVA SAPIENTIAE SALVTARIS POTAVIT*; a declaration that comes from the Book of the Wisdom of Sirach (Sir 15:3): “With the bread of understanding shall she feed him, and give him the water of wisdom to drink.” Here we encounter a clear allegorical meaning concerning three symbols: the well, the water and the birds. The well is in this instance a symbol of spiritual life. In its rich symbolism, water in the Old Testament signified above all a source of life, while in the New Testament it acquired a new meaning, alluding to the workings of the Holy Spirit and its cleansing power. Meanwhile, birds are intended to signify intermediaries between that which is earthly and that which is spiritual, although their meaning may also allude to the higher stages of spiritual life. A clear message thus emerges: it is essential to drink from the source of the water of life, in order to obtain true wisdom.<sup>22</sup>

In order to find the theological inspiration of this depiction, one should turn to the writings of St. Bonaventure, who elaborated an interesting question for us above all in *Collationes de septem donis Spiritus Sancti* and *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*. In the first of these works, specifically in *Collatio IV – De dono scientiae*, the Seraphic Doctor emphasizes that the Psalm of David states what a great teacher of wisdom God himself is. For it is known that he who wants to draw the purest water, must take it from the source and not from the stream. Thus, since it is God who is the great teacher and the giver of the gift, one should without hesitation strive towards this source, so as to experience illumination.<sup>23</sup> In the second cycle of the collations (*Collatio III* and *XIX*), the Saint stresses:

Speaking of wisdom, one should speak of understanding. We spoke about this in *The Collations on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, noting that it is a principle of moral judgments, a gateway to reflection and the key to celestial contemplation. And this last understanding is a gift in the strict sense of the term. It is necessary to start with under-

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mul ostendatur donorum *distinctio, connexio, origo et ordo*.” See: S. Bonaventura, *Opera omnia...*, op. cit., p. 256–260.

<sup>22</sup> A. Martínez Ripoll, *Francisco Herrera...*, op. cit., p. 88; A. Martínez Ripoll, *La iglesia del colegio...*, op. cit., p. 47–50; see also S. Sebastián, *Contrarreforma y barroco...*, op. cit., p. 291; J. Fernández López, *Programas iconográficos...*, op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>23</sup> “Psalmus David dicit, quod magnus doctor scientiarum Deus est. Scitis, si aliquis habet haurire aquam, libentius haurit eam ab originali suo principio quam a rivulo. Ideo, si Dominus est doctor magnus et donator doni, de quo intendimus loqui; oportet quod recurramus ad fontem illum ad illuminationem consequendam.” See: S. Bonaventura, *Opera omnia...*, op. cit., p. 473.

standing, so as to attain wisdom. *With the bread of understanding shall she feed him, and give him the water of wisdom to drink* (Sir 15:3). It is necessary to start with feeding, and not with drinking. For if a man is not seasoned in the gift of understanding, he will not partake of the beverage of wisdom, which pours its streams into the soul, which it is itself fed thereby, and it becomes *in him a well of water springing up into eternal life* (John 4:14) [...]. Therefore, he who desires to obtain knowledge, let him seek at the source, namely in the Holy Scriptures, for philosophers have no knowledge about the granting of forgiveness for sins. And there is no such knowledge in the Summae of the Masters, for they drew from the writings of the holy Fathers, and these writings drew from the Holy Scriptures. That is why Augustine holds that he himself and others can be mistaken, but that where there is deep faith, there can be no errors. And Dionysius states this in his work *The Divine Names*, saying that *it is not worth taking anything other than that which has been expressed to us through the Divine utterances* [...]. What sense is there in drinking turbid water? As Jeremiah says (2:18): *And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the turbid water? Rather drink the water that is beatific, that is the water of wisdom.*<sup>24</sup>

The final emblem has a depiction of a five-string lyre, surmounted by a crown and a palm leaf (fig. 10). The banderole bears the statement *INCIT ACORDATA CONCORDIA*, which has no biblical provenance, but which alludes to *Emblemat X* from the famed collection of Andrea Alciato.<sup>25</sup> One should associate the Seville depiction with the existential harmony of man, as pertaining to both he himself and others. The lyre's primary meaning is one of cosmic harmony. Nevertheless, in the Christian understanding, it can also denote spiritual unity. The lyre is often also an attribute of Temperance, and the surmounting crown denotes its highest level. The crown also stresses victory of the eschatological kind, likewise denoted by the presence of palm branches. This emblem can therefore be regarded as a call to the Brothers Minor for them to bring about harmony and unity, so as to ensure themselves eternal victory and the promise of the crown of glory. It is also worth noting that directly alongside this emblem is an image of the Franciscan exegete Nicholas of Lyra. In this instance we encounter a homonym, pertaining to both the name of the monk and the musical instrument. However, it seems that the basic linguistic similarity is not the only relevant factor. For the distinguished scholar Nicholas of Lyra postulated a departure from the literal sense in his exegesis, so as to carry out a profound and thorough reading of the Holy

<sup>24</sup> [St.] Bonawentura z Bagnoregio, *Konferencje o sześciu dniach...*, op. cit., p. 99, 505, 507, 513.

<sup>25</sup> A. Alciato, *Emblemas*, ed. S. Sebastián, ed. 2, Madrid 1993, p. 39–41.

Scriptures, a matter which St. Bonaventure also wrote about. Finally, it is interesting to note that there is a Latin proverb that pertains to the aforementioned Franciscan scholar, speaking of the harmony and concord between the exegetes and the theologians: *Nisi Lira lirasset / theologi non saltassent*.<sup>26</sup>

Among others, we find these contents in St. Bonaventure's small tract *Christus unus omnium magister* (*Christ the one Master of all*). The Seraphic Doctor stresses in this work (III, 26) that:

Although the divine love be praised and recommended through the words of many, as for example through the documents of the two Testaments, nevertheless by one Word alone is it breathed forth, who is indeed the *Pasture* and *Shepherd* of all. And for that reason all those words are from the same [Author] and tend unto the same [End]: and on this account they are said to be given significantly through the counsel of masters, that is, namely, of those perceiving them. And since all teachers of the Christian Law finally ought to hold to the bond of charity, for that reason they ought to agree in their judgments.<sup>27</sup>

An excerpt from *Collationes in Hexaëmeron* is likewise extremely interesting, and it is perhaps directly connected with the aforementioned emblem. St. Bonaventure speaks unequivocally in *Collatio XIX*:

A disciple of Christ must take up the Holy Scriptures, just as children first learn A, B, C, D and so forth, before then learning how to spell, and then to read, and then what part of a sentence means. Likewise, in the Holy Scriptures one needs first to penetrate the text, and always have it at hand, and one should understand *what is expressed by a noun*, not only in the manner of the Jew, who always pays heed to the literal sense. The entire scriptures are a form of zither, and the lower string does not create harmony alone, but together with others.<sup>28</sup>

The entire programme is complemented by four citations from the Bible, held by four angels in the stucco decoration of the transept. On the side of the Epistle, by the chancel, are the words *DOMINE / DILEXI / DECOREM / DOMVS / TVAE*

<sup>26</sup> C. Ripa, *Ikonologia*, tłum. I. Kania, Kraków 1998, p. 41–42; A. Martínez Ripoll, *Francisco Herrera...*, op. cit., p. 88–89; A. Martínez Ripoll, *La iglesia del colegio...*, op. cit., p. 50–53; see also S. Sebastián, *Contrarreforma y barroco...*, op. cit., p. 291–292; J. Fernández López, *Programas iconográficos...*, op. cit., p. 90–91.

<sup>27</sup> St. Bonawentura, *Pisma ascetyczno-mistyczne*, Warszawa 1984, p. 339.

<sup>28</sup> St. Bonawentura, *Konferencje o sześciu dniach...*, op. cit., p. 507.

Ps. 25, which come from the Book of Psalms: “Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth” (Psalms 26 [25]:8); and by the nave *VIDENS / DOMV[M] / NON HABEBAT / VLTRA SPritu[M] / 3 REG 10*, drawn from the First Book of Kings: “And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon’s wisdom, and the house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord; there was no more spirit in her” (1 Kings 10:4–5). On the side of the Gospel, by the chancel, we can read the citation *ECCE / REPLETA ERAT / GLORIA D[O]MIN[1] / DOMVS. Ez / 43*, the source of which is the Book of Ezekiel: “So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house” (Ez 43:5); and by the nave *ET VIDEVANT / DESCENDENTEM / GLORIAM DOMINI / SVPER DOMVVM / PA 7*, from the Second Book of Chronicles: “And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever” (2 Chr 7:3). These citations stress the sanctity of the House of God in a comprehensible and unequivocal manner, likewise defining what the church is, both as a community of the faithful, and also as a place to pray in. It is a place which has the special presence of God, a place for the celebration of the cult in His honour. This takes place in the mystery of the communion of saints, amidst those who have already attained the glory of sanctity, as evoked in the paintings of the dome, but also in keeping with the tradition of the Church, given form here in the figures of great Franciscan theologians and scholars. The glory of sanctity and wisdom of these Franciscan monks is the reflection of the glory of God, which envelops the entire house of worship<sup>29</sup>.

Martínez Ripoll described the iconographic programme of the Franciscan church in Seville as *The path of the soul to God*, alluding to the title of one of the most famous works of St. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*. It is however above all a journey to sanctity, which leads through the attainment of wisdom. St. Bonaventure wrote about this in his *Collationes de septem donis Spiritus Sancti*, where in *Collatio IV* he spoke of the perfection attained through acquisition of knowledge.<sup>30</sup> It is a journey from philosophical knowledge, through

<sup>29</sup> A. Martínez Ripoll, *La iglesia del colegio...*, op. cit., p. 62–63; S. Sebastián, *Contrarreforma y barroco...*, op. cit., p. 292–293.

<sup>30</sup> S. Bonaventura, *Opera omnia...*, op. cit., p. 473–479.

theology, to mystical contemplation, in which we find God and become one with Him. It is a scheme based on the doctrine of St. Bonaventure, whose explication is connected with specific elements of the architectural structure: one can equate the courtyard of the college with philosophical knowledge and the main nave with its images of great scholars of the order with theology. Likewise, the transept and the dome with its images of the Franciscan saints can be equated with mystical knowledge, and the chancel, which has the tabernacle with the Blessed Sacrament inside it, with the union with God.<sup>31</sup>

During the years 1628–1630, Francisco de Herrera the Elder and Francisco de Zurbarán complemented the initial programme with a collection of eight paintings that illustrated scenes from the life of St. Bonaventure.<sup>32</sup> The canvases painted by Herrera depict legendary and historical events from the Seraphic Doctor's childhood, as well as from his youth and early activity in the order: *The Apparition of St. Catherine of Alexandria before the family of St. Bonaventure*, *St. Bonaventure healed as a Child by St. Francis*, *St. Bonaventure takes up the Franciscan Habit* and *St. Bonaventure Receives Communion from an Angel*. Zurbarán's paintings illustrated occurrences from his principal monastic activity, showing events from Bonaventure's life as a doctor, general of the order and cardinal: *St. Bonaventure is Visited by St. Thomas Aquinas*, *St. Bonaventure in Conversation with an Angel*, *St. Bonaventure at the Council of Lyon* and *St. Bonaventure Lying in State*. If the naturalism of Herrera, then the most popular artist at large in Seville, seems somewhat banal, his work nevertheless certainly did influence the young Zurbarán. The Bonaventurian cycle of paintings established his status as an artist, espousing the current of Baroque naturalism, choosing its conservative strand, which found its echo in the archaic schemes and the strict respect for the dogmas and traditions of the Church. This brought Zurbarán a downright exceptional degree of popularity, particularly amongst the large number of orders in Andalusia, so much so that he became the most important Sevillian painter of the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. However, the element of the iconographic programme concerning the saint brought a significant novelty. From henceforth, not only symbols and emblems, but actual reality, namely the participation of the most outstanding Franciscan intellectual, paved the way to the attainment of sanctity, a path which takes in the acquisition of wisdom. The vocation of the monks

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<sup>31</sup> A. Martínez Ripoll, *La iglesia del colegio...*, op. cit., p. 64–65.

<sup>32</sup> A. Witko, *Francisca de Zurbarána i Francisca de Herrery St. cykl obrazów św. Bonawentury z sewilskiego kościoła Franciszkanów*, “*Pietas et Studium*” 5 (2014), p. 167–179.

of the college was thus to be about the acquisition of knowledge and wisdom, which constituted their path to sanctity.

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## Abstract

In 1626–1627 Francisco Herrera the Older, back then Seville’s most renowned painter, decorated the walls of the local Franciscan St. Bonaventure’s church with a number of wall paintings dedicated to Franciscan history and spirituality, complemented with emblems related to theological works of the temple’s patron-saint. The paintings became the basis of an interesting iconographic programme with a strong theological and pedagogical message, due to the presence of young monks educated in the monastery, attributed to two notable Friars Minor: Luis de Rebolledo and Damián de Lugones. The collection, based on the works by St. Bonaventure, presented first and foremost the path to sanctity by acquiring wisdom: from philosophical knowledge through theology to mystic contemplation, in which we learn about and unite with God.

## Keywords

Francisco Herrera the Elder, St. Bonaventure, Luis de Rebolledo, Damián de Lugones, wall paintings, emblems, sanctity, wisdom, philosophy, theology, mysticism, Seville

## Abstrakt

### **„Droga do Boga”. O zespole malowideł ściennych Francisca de Herrery St. z sewilskiego kościoła Franciszkanów pw. św. Bonawentury**

W latach 1626–1627 Francisco de Herrera St., najpopularniejszy wówczas malarz działający w Sewilli, pokrył ściany tamtejszego kościoła Franciszkanów pw. św. Bonawentury zbiorem malowideł poświęconych historii i duchowości franciszkańskiej, dopełnionych emblematami odnoszącymi się do twórczości teologicznej patrona świątyni. Malowidła te stanowiły podstawę ciekawego programu ikonograficznego o silnej wymowie teologiczno-pedagogicznej, ze względu na kształcących się w tamtejszym klasztorze młodych zakonników, a wiążanego z nazwiskami dwóch wybitnych Braci Mniejszych: Luisa de Rebolledo i Damiána de Lugones. Zbiór ten, bazując na pismach św. Bonawentury, ukazywał przede wszystkim drogę do świętości, wiodącą poprzez zdobywanie mądrości: od wiedzy filozoficznej, poprzez teologię, aż po kontemplację mistyczną, w której poznamy Boga i jednoczymy się z Nim.

## Słowa kluczowe

Francisco de Herrera St., św. Bonawentura, Luis de Rebolledo, Damián de Lugones, malowidła ścienne, emblematy, świętość, mądrość, filozofia, teologia, mistyka, Sewilla





1. Church of St. Bonaventure, Seville, 1622–1626, current state.  
Photo from the archive of the author



2. Francisco Herrera the Elder, painting in the dome,  
1626–1627, Church of St. Bonaventure, Seville.  
Phot. O. Delenda, B. Navarrete Prieto, *El conjunto de San  
Buenaventura de Sevilla como exponente del naturalismo*,  
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3. Francisco Herrera the Elder, *St. Anthony*, 1626–1627, Church of St. Bonaventure, Seville. Phot. A. Martínez Ripoll, *La iglesia del colegio de San Buenaventura. Estilo e iconografía*, ed. 2, Sevilla 1996, p. 141



4. Francisco Herrera the Elder, painting on the vault of the main nave, 1626–1627, Church of St. Bonaventure, Seville. Phot. O. Delenda, B. Navarrete Prieto, *El conjunto de San Buenaventura...*, op. cit., p. 108



5. Francisco Herrera the Elder, *François de Meyronnes*,  
1626–1627, Church of St. Bonaventure, Seville.  
Phot. A. Martínez Ripoll, *La iglesia del colegio...*, op. cit., p. 145



6. Francisco Herrera the Elder, *Non palluit fulgore*,  
1626–1627, Church of St. Bonaventure, Seville. Phot.  
A. Martínez Ripoll, *La iglesia del colegio...*, op. cit., p. 121



7. Francisco Herrera the Elder, *Abscondita in lucem produxit*,  
1626–1627, Church of St. Bonaventure, Seville.  
Phot. A. Martínez Ripoll, *La iglesia del colegio...*, op. cit., p. 125



8. Francisco Herrera the Elder, *7 spicae pulviant in culmo uno*,  
1626–1627, Church of St. Bonaventure, Seville.  
Phot. A. Martínez Ripoll, *La iglesia del colegio...*, op. cit., p. 129



9. Francisco Herrera the Elder, *Aqua Sapientiae Salutaris potavit*, 1626–1627, Church of St. Bonaventure, Seville. Phot. A. Martínez Ripoll, *La iglesia del colegio...*, op. cit., p. 133



10. Francisco Herrera the Elder, *Vincit acordata concordia*, 1626–1627, Church of St. Bonaventure, Seville. Phot. A. Martínez Ripoll, *La iglesia del colegio...*, op. cit., p. 137