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On *Sanctitatis nova signa*: A provisional case against Celano's authorship

Jose Isidro Belleza

Abstract

This paper advances a provisional case denying the attribution of the medieval liturgical sequence *Sanctitatis nova signa*, written in honor of Saint Francis of Assisi, to Thomas of Celano (died c. 1260), who is best known for writing the earliest biography of the saint. The Conventual Franciscan friar and bishop, Pietro Ridolfi, provides the oldest extant attribution of this sequence to Celano. Luke Wadding (died 1657) echoes this point in his *Annales Minorum*; several recent critical editions of early Franciscan texts, as well as countless secondary sources, cite Wadding for the attribution to Celano. This identification remains problematic, not only due to the lateness of the Ridolfi-Wadding claim; the sequence's use of Dionysian mystical motifs and details unique to Bonaventure's *Legenda Major* (completed 1262) should exclude the possibility of Celano's authorship. Consequently this study tentatively dates the sequence to the latter part of the thirteenth century. Unlike the earlier sequences for Saint Francis attributed to Pope Gregory IX (died 1241) and Thomas of Capua (died 1243), *Sanctitatis* depicts Francis as a model Dionysian mystic. This mystical exemplarity becomes the image of unity advanced by the Franciscans to heal the internal crises plaguing the order in the later thirteenth century.

Keywords

Sanctitatis nova signa, sequence, Franciscans, Dionysius the Areopagite, Thomas of Celano

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Introduction

In the editions of both Dominican[1] and Franciscan[2] liturgical books in force prior to the Second Vatican Council, the Mass for the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi included a sequence with the incipit *Sanctitatis nova signa*. Composed in the *zagialesca* form made especially popular by Adam of Saint-Victor and increasingly utilized for high medieval liturgical *prosae* or sequences (e.g., Thomas Aquinas's *Lauda Sion Salvatorem*),[3] its text extols the stigmatic Francis and poetically narrates his reception of the wounds on Mount Alverna. While the exceptional poetic quality of the sequence is evident, its adoption into more recent editions of mendicant missals over and against other medieval sequences for Saint Francis[4] is a curious historical detail. While we cannot here engage in a full textual and historical comparison of all

[1] *Missale S. Ordinis Praedicatorum, auctoritate apostolica approbatum et reverendissimi Patris Fr. Martini Stanislai Gillet eiusdem Ordinis Magistri Generalis jussu editum* (Rome: Santa Sabina, 1939), pp. 580-1.

[2] See two settings of *Sanctitatis* in *Graduale Romano-Seraphicum, continens missas proprias Ordinis Fratrum Minorum, ad normam Gradualis Editionis Vaticanae, editum sollicitudini R.mi P. Bernardi Klumper, totius Ordinis FF. Minorum Ministri Generalis* (Paris-Tournai-Rome: Typis Societatis S. Ioannis Evangelistae, 1924), pp. 124-127 and 128-131; also *Missae propriae Ordinis Fratrum Minorum ad normam Gradualis Editionis Vaticanae, editum sollicitudine R.mi P. Pacifici Perantoni totius Ordinis FF. Minorum Ministri Generalis, editio IV* (Paris-Tornai-Rome: Typis Societatis S. Ioannis Evangelistae, 1951), pp. 136-149, 140-143.

[3] The *zagialesca* form consists of a rhyme scheme based on the following model: AAB CCB (e.g., most of Thomas Aquinas's *Lauda Sion*). The lines of consecutive rhymes can be multiplied (e.g., *Sanctitatis nova signa* retains a stable AAAB CCCB structure; the final stanzas of *Lauda Sion* are AAAAB CCCCB), while the nonconsecutive rhyme signified by 'B' unifies the two halves of each strophe. This form is favored by Adam of Saint-Victor; through him, the *strofa zagialesca* is diffused through later Latin liturgies. For this form's history (including its Hispano-Semitic roots traced to Avicebron, see Aurelio Roncaglia, 'Sequenza adamiana e strofa zagialesca', *La Sequenza Medievale: Atti del Convengno Internazionale, Milano, 7-8 Aprile 1984*, ed. Agostino Ziino (Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 1992), pp. 141-54; idem., '*Laisat estar lo gazel*. Contributo alla discussione sui rapporti fra lo zagial e la lirica romanza', *Cultura Neolatina* 9 (1949), pp. 66-99; idem., 'La lirica arabo-ispanica e il sorgere della lirica romanza fuori dalla penisola iberica', *Atti del Convegno Internazionale: Oriente e Occidente nel medio evo. Roma, 27 maggio-1 giugno 1946* (Roma: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1947), pp. 321-360; idem, 'Da Avicebron a Iacopone', *Le laudi drammatiche umbre dalle origni. Atti del V Convegno di studio del Centro di studi sul teatro medioevale e rinascimentale, Viterbo, 22-25 Maggio 1980* (Viterbo: Union Printing, 1981), pp. 81-103; idem, 'Gli arabi e le origini della lirica neolatina', *Ulisse* 14 (1977), pp. 72-81; José Maria Millás y Vallicrosa, *Selomò ibn Gabirol como poeta e filòsofo* (Madrid-Barcelona: Instituto Arias Montano, 1945).

[4] Volume 10 of *Analecta Franciscana* lists four early sequences for Saint Francis: *Laetabundus* (attributed to Thomas of Capua), *Caput Draconis* (Gregory IX), *Sanctitatis nova signa* (attributed to Celano), and *Fregit victor* (attributed to Celano). See *Analecta Franciscana: sive chronica aliaque varia documenta ad historiam Fratrum Minorum. Tomus X.* (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1941), pp. 397-404; hereafter abbreviated as '*AF* 10'. For poetic English translations see Regis J. Armstrong, et al., eds., *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents. The Saint. Volume 1* (New York: New City Press, 2002), pp. 353-60; this

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these sequences, perhaps the attribution of *Sanctitatis* to the authorial hand of Thomas of Celano (died c. 1260), Francis's first biographer, helped to 'canonize' this sequence over the others.

However, this attribution remains problematic. The oldest extant source attributing *Sanctitatis* to Celano is found in the *History of the Seraphic Order* of the Conventual friar and bishop Pietro Ridolfi (published 1586).[5] The famous *Annales Minorum* of the Irish Franciscan historian, Luke Wadding, (died 1657) repeats the attribution.[6] Such a late attribution cannot but remain unsatisfactory; nevertheless, the editors of future critical editions of early Franciscan sources, from Volume Ten of *Analecta Franciscana* to Volume 1 of the *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents* series, not to mention countless secondary works, are content to simply note the attribution to Celano by deferring to Wadding, even if the *Analecta* editors take a slightly cautious tone ('*attribuitur Fr. Thomae Celanensis*').[7] Compounding the problem is that, in the few extant manuscript sources, none date from before the fourteenth century and none show any indication of authorship.[8] Barring the resurgence of hitherto undiscovered manuscripts proving otherwise, the exact authorship of this beautiful sequence seems destined to remain a mystery.

In the forthcoming pages, I intend to advance a provisional, text-based case against the attribution of *Sanctitatis* to Celano in four steps. First, a biographical sketch of Celano will help to situate our question

volume is hereafter abbreviated '*FAED* 1'. Citations of the works of Bonaventure refer to the Quaracchi *Opera Omnia* volume and page number, separated by a colon.

[5] Pietro Ridolfi (Petrus Rodolphus Tossinianensis), *Historiarum seraphica Religionis libri tres seriem temporum continentes, quibus brevi explicantur fundamenta, universique ordinis amplifi catio, gradus, et instituta; nec non viri scientia, virtutibus, et fama praeclari*, vol. 3 (Venice: Franciscus de Franciscis: 1586), folio 334: 'Thomas de Cellano provinciae Pennensis edidit duas sequentias, quarum principia sunt unius, *Fregit victor virtualis*: alterius vero, *Sanctitatis nova signa*. Hic etiam conscripsit librum de vita et miraculis B. Francisci, quem approbavit Gregorius IX…'

[6] Luke Wadding, *Annales Minorum: in quibus res omnes trium ordinum a S. Francisco institutorum ex fidem ponderosius afferuntur, calumniae refelluntur, praeclara quaeque monumenta ab oblivione vendicantur*, vol. 1 (Paris: Claudius Landry, 1625), an. 1228, n. 78: 'Sequentia illam olim celebrem, quae nunc excidit, *Sanctitatis nova signa* cecinit frater Thomas de Celano, cuius et illa sollemnis morturorum *Dies irae dies illa* opus est, licet alii eam tribuere velint fratri Matthaeo Aquaspartano, cardinali ex minoritis assumpto'. The attribution of *Dies irae* to Celano is no longer taken seriously; see Steven Botterill, 'Dies Irae', in *Medieval Italy: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Christopher Kleinhenz (New York-London: Routledge, 2004), p. 295, who gives the poem a Benedictine origin. Kees Vellecoop, *Dies irae, dies illa. Studien zur Fruhgeschichte einer Sequenz* (Bilthoven: Creyghton, 1978), likewise doubts Wadding's unproved assertion.

[7] See footnote 4 above for references to *AF* 10 and *FAED* 1.

[8] *AF* 10, pp. 398, lists only three extant manuscripts, all dating from the fourteenth century: Assisi Codex 330, a Franciscan *graduale* at the Portiuncola with the incipit '*Felix*', and a Franciscan *graduale* from Siena (Senensis XV.1). To my knowledge no other manuscripts have been found.

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historically. Second, an *excursus* on the medieval reception of Dionysius the Areopagite will set the stage for later arguments based on the sequence's text. Third, analysis of certain textual features will suggest that the sequence is more indebted to Bonaventure's *Legenda Major* rather than the biographies of Celano. Fourth, a general historical synthesis drawing on the preceding sections will highlight the improbability of Celano's authorship. By way of conclusion, I will then offer some modest suggestions as to the significance of this liturgical text not as an exponent of the Franciscan 'first generation' but as a response to the concrete context of the order in the late thirteenth-early fourteenth centuries.

Thomas of Celano: A brief sketch

Born around 1185–1190, Thomas of Celano was probably educated at Rome, Bologna, or Monte Cassino; this latter hypothesis is based on his apparent familiarity with the monastic tradition as diffused in Italy.[9] Entering the Order of Friars Minor in 1215, Celano certainly knew Francis firsthand, as later evinced in some excerpts from his biographies of Francis.[10] In 1221 he took part in a mission to German-speaking lands, becoming *custos* at Worms, Speyer, and Cologne.[11] The exact timing of his return to Italy is uncertain, but he was almost certainly in Assisi for the 1228 canonization of Francis, and may have even been present at Francis's death in 1226.[12] Ordered by Pope Gregory IX to compose an official biography of the saint, Celano completed his *Life of Saint Francis* (today commonly known as '*Celano 1*'), by 1229.[13] It enjoyed an initial widespread success and was essential in diffusing the cult of Francis in the years immediately following the canonization.

By 1230, Celano completed a second work, the *Legend for Use in Choir*. As the title indicates, this work was intended as a compilation of readings used for the communal recitation of the Office in Franciscan communities. Written at the request of Brother Benedict of Arezzo, Provincial Minister for Romania and Greece, it takes excerpts from *Celano 1* and divides them into maututinal lessons to be read during the Octave of the Feast of Saint Francis.[14] In 1245, at the request of

[9] *FAED* 1, p. 171.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., pp. 172-3. See the Latin text in *AF* 10, pp. 3-115; for the English translation see *FAED* 1, pp. 180-308.

[14] Ibid., 172, cf. *Legend for Use in Choir*, c. 1, in *FAED* 1, pp. 319-26); see also Michael Bihl, 'De S. Francisci *Legenda ad usum chori* auctore Fr. Thoma celanensi, iuxta novum codicem senensem', *Archivium Franciscanum Historicum* 26 (1993), pp. 343-89.

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the Minister General Crescentius of Jesi pursuant to the 1244 General Chapter at Genoa, Celano was once again requested to compile stories circulating about Francis into a new biography. This new work, *The Desire and Remembrance of a Soul* (also known as '*Celano 2*'), did not enjoy the same success as *Celano 1*. The exact reasons for its general rejection across the order has been discussed elsewhere,[15] but this text remains notable for the correction of some innacuracies found in the first biography as well as the addition of new stories drawn from *Anonymous of Perugia* and the *Legend of the Three Companions*.[16] A final work, the *Treatise on the Miracles of Saint Francis*, written at the request of the Minister General John of Parma, was written between 1250 and 1252.[17] For purposes of this article, I abstain from considering this final text. The newly discovered *Vita Brevior*, also called '*Celano 3*' but written between 1238 and 1239 (at the close of Elias of Cortona's generalate), likewise does not affect this study.[18]

In this brief overview of Celano's life and works, two details are worth noting. First, while we have ample documentation of his major periods of activity as well as his works, we have no evidence that any poetic project was ever assigned to him or written by him. Second: his significant activities take place only in Italy or Germany. No source ever places him in France, much less in Paris. It is thus clear that Celano is not to be numbered among the great Franciscan scholastics of his era, all of whom were schooled at the University of Paris (e.g., Alexander of Hales, John of La Rochelle, and Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, among others). While this observation may *prima facie* appear strange at this point, it will be important as we consider the importance of Paris for the diffusion of Dionysian motifs in the West—motifs which are clearly present in *Sanctitatis nova signa*.

[15] Augustine Thompson, *Francis of Assisi: A New Biography* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), p. 168: 'Celano was never able to synthesize the confusing and contradictory material at his disposal; it is no surprise that [*Celano 2*] was a failure', cf. Jacques Dalarun, *La malavventura di Francesco: Per uno storico delle leggende francescane* (Milan: Edizione Francescana, 1996), p. 219.

[16] See *FAED* 1, p. 199, note 12; and Regis J. Armstrong et al., eds., *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents. The Founder. Volume 2* (New York: New City Press, 2002), p. 17; this volume is hereafter abbreviated '*FAED* 2'.

[17] *FAED* 2, p. 397.

[18] The critical edition of *Celano 3* is available in Jacques Dalarun, 'Thome Celanensis Vita beati patris nostri Francisci (Vita brevior). Présentation et édition critique', *Analecta Bollandiana* 133 (2015), pp. 23-86; see also idem, 'The New Francis in the Rediscovered Life (*Vita brevior*) of Thomas of Celano', in *'Ordo et Sanctitas': The Franciscan Spiritual Journey in Theology and Hagiography*, eds. Michael Cusato, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 32-46. For the more accurate dating of 1238-9, *pace* Dalarun's broader window of 1232-9, see Aleksander Horowski, 'Intorno alla *Vita ritrovata* di san Francesco edita da Jacques Dalarun', in *Collectanea Franciscana* 86 (2016) , pp. 271-84.

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Excursus: High medieval reception of Dionysius

While the texts of Dionysius the Areopagite were present in the West from the ninth century through the difficult and idiosyncratic Latin translation of Abbot Hilduin of Saint-Denis (840) and a slightly better translation by John Scotus Eriugena (862), its study was rather restricted to monasteries. While an even more accessible translation by John Sarrazin (1167) helped to open the Areopagite's corpus to an even wider audience,[19] their interpretation remained the province of literate clerics. By the thirteenth century, however, two developments at Paris converged to catalyze the diffusion of Dionysian themes far beyond priestly centers of learning: (1) the rise of the mendicant orders, to include their presence at the University of Paris, and (2) the compilation of the Parisian *Corpus Dionysiacum* (hereafter '*PCD*').

The Franciscan and Dominican orders, with their missionary impulse and activity of popular preaching, would serve as a bridge between the refined University speculations on Dionysian theology, on the one hand, and the promotion of a more diffused mystical consciousness in the Church at large, on the other hand. To make the obscure works of this presumed author of the apostolic era more legible, however, a development in critical Dionysian scholarship was necessary, and the compilation of the *PCD* served this end. This anthology, which became a veritable 'handbook of theology'[20] at the University of Paris, contained the following: (1) Abbot Hilduin's preface to his translation of Dionysius; (2) letters to King Charles the Bald from Anastasius Bibliothecarius (fl. 858–878) and Eriugena on their works on Dionysius; (3) Eriugena's translation; (4) a Latin interlinear gloss by Anastasius and other anonymous authors; (5) the so-called 'Parisian scholia', or another commentary in a distinct hand inserted into the body of the text, also containing citations from the *Periphyseon* of Maximus the Confessor; (6) Sarrazin's translation; (7) commentaries on *Celestial Hierarchy* by Sarrazin, Gallus, and Hugh of Saint-Victor, and (8) the *Extractio* ('paraphrase') of Thomas Gallus on all the works of Dionysius.[21] The final compilation of this 'textbook' can be dated no earlier than 1238, the year in which the latest of these works (Gallus's *Extractio*) was completed.[22] The addition of these other commentatorial texts and glosses into a single volume provided Parisian scholars—now including the nascent 'schools' of the Dominicans and

[19] Bernhard Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union with God: Dionysian Mysticism in Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas* (Washington: CUA Press, 2015), p. 32.

[20] Ibid., p. 32.

[21] Blankenhorn, *Mystery of Union*, pp. 38-40; Hyacinthe Dondaine, *Le Corpus Dionysien de L'Université de Paris au XIII Siècle* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1953), pp. 11-21.

[22] Blankenhorn, *Mystery of Union*, p. 32.

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Franciscans—with a valuable new resource to help navigate the Areopagite's difficult doctrines.

Focused mendicant commentary on the Dionysian corpus is found first in the *Summa Halensis* (written 1236–1245), the manual of theology begun under the direction of Alexander of Hales (died 1245), with the participation of other Franciscans, principally John of La Rochelle (died 1245).[23] Bonaventure (died 1274), already a student at Paris when he entered the Franciscans in 1243 and who studied under Alexander and John, continued the work of appropriating Dionysius as a revered authority for the Minorite school. On the Dominican side, Albert the Great (who became a Parisian Master of Theology in 1245), would eventually comment on all the works of Dionysius. His student, Thomas Aquinas (died 1274), began studies under Albert in Paris, until both left for Cologne in 1248 to establish a new *studium generale*; these two friars perhaps represent the vanguard of Dionysian transmission across the Rhine. When Thomas returned to Paris in 1252 to study for the grade of Master of Theology, he arrived fortified with notes on Albert's entire course on Dionysius.[24]

A slow reception of the *PCD* in the early 1240s is seen among the Franciscans. For example, Odo Rigaud (died 1275), future Archbishop of Rouen, who entered the Friars Minor at Paris in 1236 and completed his *Sentences* commentary by 1242, often reverts to Eriugena's translation against Sarrazin's, while the earlier texts of the *Summa Halensis* (before 1245) likewise give priority to Eriugena.[25] Extracts of the Parisian scholia written in Aquinas's hand onto manuscripts used by Albert in Cologne show that, by the time the two moved to Germany in 1248, the *PCD* was already accessible in Paris and transmitted over the Rhine, perhaps by Aquinas and Albert themselves.[26] 1248 is also significant for another reason: it is the same year in which Bonaventure completed introductory theological studies at the Franciscan school in Paris, in preparation for the successive roles of *baccalaureus biblicus* (until 1251), *baccalaureus sententiarum* (until 1253), and Master of Theology the following year.[27] By the time Aquinas returned to Paris in 1252 to study for the Mastership, the Dominican priory of Saint Jacques in Paris likely possessed a full copy of the *PCD*.[28] The slower Dionysian reception of the 1240's thus seems to accelerate significantly in the 1250's. According to this timeline, Aquinas and Bonaventure may well be among the first—if not *the* first—members of their

[23] Lydia Schumacher, *Early Franciscan Theology: Between Authority and Innovation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 2-9.

[24] Blankenhorn, *Mystery of Union*, pp. 215.

[25] Dondaine, *Corpus Dionysien*, pp. 110-2.

[26] Blankenhorn, *Mystery of Union*, pp. 32-3.

[27] Jay M. Hammond, 'Dating Bonaventure's Inception as Regent Master', *Franciscan Studies* 67 (2009), pp. 179-226.

[28] Dondaine, *Corpus Dionysien*, pp. 15-6.

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respective orders to earn the grade of Master of Theology at Paris in a time when the full *PCD* was available.

The foregoing historical detour strongly suggests that, unlike Alexander of Hales, John of La Rochelle, Odo Rigaud, and Bonaventure, Thomas of Celano is not involved in the rigorous scholarly work at Paris related to the assimilation of Dionysian themes into the life of the Franciscan order. Both *Celano 1* (1229) and the *Legend for Use in Choir* (1230) are written well before even the earliest possible date for the *PCD*'s availability (1238). *Celano* 2 is contemporaneous with the final parts of the *Summa Halensis*, but the geographical separation between Umbria and Paris makes any mutual influence between the two unlikely. Moreover, the slow reception of Dionysius among the Franciscans at Paris through the 1240's further mitigates the possibility that Celano (who never seems to have left Italy after 1228) would have had access to any systematic Dionysian sources to influence the composition of either *Celano 2* or the *Treatise on the Miracles*. This 'distance' both physical and thematic between Celano and his more scholastic brethren will remain a crucial background point when considering the text of *Sanctitatis nova signa*.

Textual arguments

In this focused textual analysis of the sequence, we begin with stanzas 11 and 12.

Tunc ab alto vir hierarcha	Then, the hierarch from above,
Venit, ecce Rex monarcha,	behold the monarch King comes!
Pavet iste patriarcha,	The patriarch [Francis] shook with fear
Visione territus.	terrified by this sight.
Defert ille signa Christi,	He carried the signs of Christ,
Cicatrices confert isti,	[Christ] bestowed wounds on [Francis],
Dum miratur corde tristi	while silently, with mournful heart,
Passionem tacitus.	he gazed upon the Passion.[29]

Describing the conferral of the stigmata upon Francis, the sequence's author notably uses the term 'hierarch'—a Dionysian neologism referring to both Christ and the Christian bishop.[30] Notably, 'hierarch' and its variants are absent from all of Celano's known works—*opera* which are nevertheless not devoid of varied poetic diction. Interestingly, the *Life of Francis of Assisi* by the Franciscan, Julian of Speyer (completed

[29] *AF* 10, p. 402; English translation mine.

[30] Vladimir Kharlamov, *The Beauty of the Unity and Harmony of the Whole: The Concept of 'Theosis' in the Theology of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2009), p. 69; William Riordan, *Divine Light: The Theology of Denys the Areopagite* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2008), p. 23; Eric Perl, *Theophany: The Neoplatonic Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite* (Albany: State of New York Press, 2007), p. 65.

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by 1235, prior to the earliest date for either the *Summa Halensis* or the *PCD*), also fails to refer to a 'hierarch'. By contrast, *hierarcha* and its related forms are present throughout Bonaventure's corpus.[31] While the presence of this single word in the sequence may at first glance seem too small by itself to definitively refute Celano's authorship, the contrast between the strong Dionysian influence in Bonaventure's works (including the *Legenda Major*), on one hand, and Celano's non-involvement in Dionysian studies at Paris, on the other, lends probable support to the notion that the author of *Sanctitatis* was at least more exposed to the Areopagite than Celano. In light of this, the use of 'hierarch' in the sequence is more likely a sign of a later Dionysian reception to which Celano never had access.

Moreover, the sequence takes for granted that the seraphic figure who appeared to Francis was both Christ himself as well as the agent of stigmatization. Bonaventure is the first chronicler to make this identification explicit,[32] while Celano simply refers to the seraph,[33] as does Julian's text.[34] This crucial detail further points to a stronger Bonaventurean influence in *Sanctitatis*, a hypothesis strengthened after considering stanzas 14 and 15.

Verba miscens, arcanorum	Exchanging words, many things, old
Multa clarent futurorum,	and future, became clear.
Videt sanctus vim dictorum	The saint saw the meaning of those words
Mystico spiramine.	by mystical inspiration.
Patent statim miri clavi	Then wondrous nails appeared,
Foris nigri, intus flavi:	Black without, fiery-golden within:
Pungit dolor, poena gravi	pain struck him as a great punishment,
Cruciant aculei.	the blades excruciating.[35]

[31] Throughout his works, Bonaventure uses the term *hierarcha* to refer principally to Christ, and secondarily to bishops (especially the Roman Pontiff). In reference to Christ, see *Itinerarium* 4.5-6 (Quaracchi 5:307); *Hexaemeron* III.12-14, 18-19 (Quaracchi 5:345-346); *Hexaemeron* XVIII.12 (Quaracchi 5:416); in reference to the Pope, see *De Perfectione Evangelica*, q. 2, a. 2 (Quaracchi 5:155); *Breviloquium* VI, c. 12 (Quaracchi 5:279); in reference to bishops, see *De Donis Spiritus Sancti* IV, n. 17 (Quaracchi 5:477). This is distinct from his phrase *vir hierarchicus*, which refers to one possessing an *anima hierarchizata* having undergone the triple Dionysian transformation of purgation, illumination, and perfection; the foremost of such *viri hierarchici* is Francis of Assisi. See *Itinerarium* 4.4 (Quaracchi 5:307); *Hexaemeron* XX.23 (Quaracchi 5:429); XXII.24, 42 (Quaracchi 5:441, 444); XXIII, *passim* (Quaracchi 5:444-449); *Legenda Major*, Prol. 1 (Quaracchi 7:460). Cf. Katherine Wrisley Shelby, 'The *Vir Hierarchicus*: St. Bonaventure's Theology of Grace' (PhD Dissertation, Boston College, 2017) and idem, 'The *Vir Hierarchicus* and the Goal of Theology According to St. Bonaventure', in *Saint Bonaventure. Friar, Teacher, Minister, Bishop*, eds. Timothy J. Johnson, et al., (St. Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2017), pp. 159-71.

[32] Bonaventure, *Legenda Major*, c. 13, n. 94, in *AF* 10, pp. 615; English from *FAED* 2, p. 633.

[33] Celano, *The Life of Saint Francis*, bk. II, c. 3, n. 94, in *AF* 10, p. 615.

[34] Speyer, *The Life of Saint Francis*, c. 11, n. 61.

[35] *AF* 10, p. 402; English translation mine.

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Stanza 14 relates that, while receiving the stigmata, Francis entered into a kind of mystical conversation with Christ, wherein the meaning of past and future events were made known to him. Bonaventure's *Legenda Major* includes this very point;[36] by contrast, this notion of mystical understanding is absent from *Celano 1*'s presentation of the stigmata narrative, while the second *vita* and the *Treatise on Miracles* leave this episode out entirely. Instead, Celano's Francis is left wondering about the meaning of this strange seraphic figure, whom the text does not identify as Christ.[37] Stanza 15 then describes the wounds in colorful detail. The following comparison between *Celano 1* and the *Legenda Major* will show, despite their broad similarity, some points of divergence helpful for interpreting *Sanctitatis*.

Celano 1:
Signs of the nails began to appear on his hands and feet, just as he had seen them a little while earlier on the crucified man hovering over him. His hands and feet seemed to be pierced through the middle by nails, with the heads of the nails appearing on the inner part of his hands and on the upper part of his feet, and their points protruding on opposite sides. Those marks on the inside of his hands were round, but rather oblong on the outside; and small pieces of flesh were visible like the points of nails, bent over and flattened, extending beyond the flesh around them. On his feet, the marks of nails were stamped in the same way and raised above the surrounding flesh. His right side was marked with an oblong scar, as if pierced with a lance, and this often dripped blood, so that his tunic and undergarments were frequently stained with his holy blood.[38]

Legenda Major:
For *immediately* [*statim namque*] the marks of nails began to appear in his hands and feet just as he had seen a little before in the figure of the man crucified. His hands and feet seemed to be pierced through the center by nails, with the heads of the nails appearing on the inner side of the hands and the upper side of the feet and their points on the opposite sides. The heads of the nails in his hands and his feet were round and *black* [*nigra*]; their points were oblong and bent as if driven back with a hammer, and they emerged from the flesh and stuck out beyond it. Also his right side, as if pierced with a lance, was marked with a red wound from which his sacred blood often flowed, moistening his tunic and underwear.[39]

[36] Bonaventure, *Legenda Major*, c. 13, n. 94, in *AF* 10, pp. 615; English from *FAED* 2, p. 633.

[37] Celano, *The Life of Saint Francis*, bk. II, c. 3, n. 94, in *AF* 10, p. 615; English translation from *FAED* 1, pp. 264. This is also a point which would call into question the attribution of *Fregit victor virtualis* to Celano.

[38] Celano, *The Life of Saint Francis*, bk. II, c. 3, n. 95, in *AF* 10, pp. 72-3; English translation from *FAED* 1, p. 264.

[39] Bonaventure, *Legenda Major*, c. 13, n. 95, in *AF* 10, pp. 616; English from *FAED* 2, p. 633.

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While Bonaventure closely follows *Celano 1* (as he does for much of the *Legenda Major*)[40], he nevertheless interpolates certain details, such as the *immediate* nature of the wounds' appearance, as well as and the black color of the nails. Thus the lines 'Patent statim miri clavi | foris nigri, intus flavi' strongly suggests the sequence's direct dependence on the *Legenda Major*, not Celano's account.

As other works have amply demonstrated, Bonaventure's Francis is a Dionysian mystic *par excellence*.[41] In his *Journey of the Mind to God*, Bonaventure characterizes mystical union by the progressive relinquishing of material and fleshly attachments, the cessation of all intellectual activity, and the passing (*transitus*) of all affective desire into *excessus mentis*.[42] The Mosaic ascent of Sinai in Dionysius's *Mystical Theology* provides Bonaventure the perfect opportunity to draw a parallel with Francis's own pilgrimage to Mount Alverna, at whose peak the Poverello receives an unprecedented sign of divine union in the form of the wounds of Christ. This final 'passing' from the limits of intellectual cognition to purely passive affective love for God is described precisely as a kind of death, a *transitus* into the dark Dionysian cloud at the summit of mystical ascent.[43] In this light, I propose that the central stanzas of *Sanctitatis* can be understood as a narrative which tracks onto Bonaventure's construal of Dionysian mysticism.

After the first four stanzas which extol the virtues of Francis and his order, the poem then traces Francis's progression toward the stigmata. Stanzas 5 and 6 describe his adoption of poverty and rejection of material goods; the reference to his barefootedness (*calceus abiicitur*) immediately recalls Moses's first meeting with God. Stanza 7 describes his interior sorrow over his former worldly life; stanza 8 describes his solitary prayer on Alverna's summit (*montis antro sequestratus*) where his mind is finally calmed (*mente serenatus*), perhaps referring to the silencing of the intellect prior to the final mystical *transitus*; stanza 9 narrates how Francis was then raised to higher things (*ad divina sursum vectus*); stanza 10 notes that, after 'yielding his flesh' Francis was thereby 'transformed in appearance' (*carnem frenat… transformatam*

[40] See *FAED* 2, p. 21: 'Even a cursory glance at *The Major Legend* reveals how faithful Bonaventure was to his mandate to compile one good legend from all the existing ones. The largest number of episodes contained in the first fifteen chapters of *The Major Legend* come from *The Life of Saint Francis* by Thomas of Celano, refined by the writings of Julian of Speyer, and from *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul*'.

[41] For a thoroughgoing development of this theme, see Robert Glenn Davis, *The Weight of Love: Affect, Ecstasy, and Union in the Theology of Bonaventure* (New York: Fordham, 2017). See also Wrisley Shelby, 'The *Vir Hierarchicus*'.

[42] Davis, *Weight of Love*, pp. 88-106; ibid., p. 161, note 3: 'The *Itinerarium* is, in a sense, an exegesis of Francis's Seraphic vision at Mount La Verna and of the stigmata he received under that vision'.

[43] Bonaventure, *Journey of the Mind to God*, 7.4 (Quaracchi 5:312); *Legenda Major*, c. 14. See also Davis, *Weight of Love*, 114-24.

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in figura), echoing the Transfiguration of Christ; stanzas 11 through 13 speak of Christ conferring the stigmata, signifying Francis's conformity into Christ's death; finally, stanza 14, at the climax of the poetic narrative, speaks of the infusion of prophetic knowledge 'by mystical inspiration' (*mystico spiramine*). Stanzas 15 and 16 simply give further descriptions of the wounds, while the remaining four stanzas address Francis directly, praising him and begging his intercession, as is conventional for the conclusion of high medieval sequences for saints' feasts.[44] In sum, it is only after Francis has thrown off his material affixations, silenced his own intellect, given up his flesh to the point of a quasi-death, and been radically conformed to the Passion that he, at the summit of ascent, receives a mystical inspiration from the supreme hierarch, who is Christ himself.

The uniquely Dionysian character of this poetic narrative can perhaps be highlighted by way of contrast with the other early sequences written for Francis. *Laetabundus*, attributed to Cardinal Thomas of Capua, is a contrafaction of the famous Christmas sequence.[45] Constrained by the close, almost parodic imitation of its model, this sequence loosely gestures to various events in Francis's life. *Caput Draconis*, attributed to Pope Gregory IX, depicts not a *Franciscus mysticus* but a *Franciscus dux*.[46] Its incipit refers to Joachim of Fiore's fourteenth diagram in the *Liber Figurarum*—the famous figure of the seven headed dragon (cf. Revelation 7:2, 12:3, et al.)—whose heads are reinterpreted by the Calabrian abbot to signify a series of prominent persecutors of the Church. In this sequence, Francis is the angel of the sixth seal heralding the final battle of the apocalypse, leading a triple-ranked formation (representing the three Franciscan 'orders') against the armies of Satan. Finally, the sequence *Fregit victor virtualis*, a contrafaction of the Easter sequence, *Surgit Christus cum tropaeo* (itself an extended contrafaction of the older Easter sequence, *Victimae Paschali laudes*),[47] refashions the paschal poems; whereas *Surgit* and *Victimae* ask Mary Magdalene what she saw at the tomb, *Fregit victor* asks Francis what he saw while gazing on the seraphic Christ.[48] These sequences neither manifest the narrative elegance nor the masterful technical regularity of *Sanctitatis*. More importantly, none of the three—exhibit a clear sense of the Bonaventurean-Dionysian mysticism which is so evident in our principal sequence. In other words, the

[44] Margot Fassler, *Gothic Song: Victorine Sequences and Augustinian Reform in Twelfth-Century Paris* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), pp. 65-7.

[45] *AF* 10, p. 400-1 and *FAED* 1, pp. 353-4.

[46] *AF* 10, p. 401 and *FAED* 1, p. 355.

[47] See the editors of *Analecta Franciscana* on *Fregit victor*: 'Huius prosae auctor, vix ante saeculum XIV, schema et structuram Sequentiae de B. Maria cum Christo afflicto compatiente et cum ipso gloriose resurgente collaetante: *Surgit Christus cum tropaeo*… stricte imitatus est' (*AF* 10, p. 403).

[48] *AF* 10, pp. 403-4 and *FAED* 1, p. 358-60.

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influence of Dionysianism is a distinctive characteristic of *Sanctitatis nova signa*. By contrast, the sequences attributed to Gregory IX (died 1241) and Thomas of Capua (died 1243), likely written in Italy the 1230's and well before the full flowering of the Parisian Dionysian 'renaissance', represent a geographic, historical, and intellectual context closer to *Celano 1*.

General historical points

We can now begin to synthesize the foregoing insights into a few historical comments. The early Franciscans using the works of Dionysius are Parisian Masters of Theology (Alexander of Hales, John of La Rochelle, Bonaventure, etc.). Celano, by contrast, was neither at Paris nor a university master;[49] his entrance into the Friars Minor preceded the development of schools within the order, and thus it is even more unlikely that he would have engaged the works of Dionysius in any concerted way.

Next, the undisputed works of Celano (the three *vitae* and the *Legend for Use in Choir*) are positively attributed to him not least because we also know who asked him to compose these works. Benedict of Arezzo, Crescentius of Jesi, and John of Parma all occupied senior leadership positions within the order, while the commissioner of *Celano 1* was none other than the former Cardinal-protector of the Franciscans and reigning Roman Pontiff (Gregory IX). In other words, Celano only writes when commanded. Were he ordered to write another liturgical text, we would likely have manuscripts confirming both Celano's authorship and the identity of the commissioner, as we have with the *vitae*. But the extant manuscripts containing *Sanctitatis*, dating only from the fourteenth century, leave the sequence anonymous; thus the earliest assertion of Celano's authorship seems to be Ridolfi's sixteenth century conjecture.

Conclusions

Based on the foregoing historical and textual examination of *Sanctitatis nova signa*, I propose that the attribution of this sequence to Thomas of Celano should be rejected. Some details of Francis's reception of the stigmata are narrated in Bonaventure's *Legenda Major* but not in the biographies of Celano. Moreover, *Sanctitatis* is a text clearly marked by an advanced stage of Dionysian reception in Latin theology; the description of Christ as a 'hierarch' and the progression of Francis's

[49] *FAED* 1, pp. 171-2.

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mystical ascent as narrated in the poem echoes themes in Bonaventure's *Journey of the Mind to God*. On the basis of the poem's strong Bonaventurean savor, we therefore tentatively suggest a *terminus ante quem non* of 1262, the year in which Bonaventure would have completed the *Legenda Major*.

If the *Legenda Major* is indeed a principal source for *Sanctitatis*, then the sequence must have been written in a time when all previous biographies of Francis—including those by Celano and Speyer—should have been suppressed pursuant to the order of the 1260 General Chapter at Narbonne. Based on the dispersed geographical collocation of the few extant manuscripts of *Celano 1*,[50] especially when compared with the extant manuscripts of the *Legenda Major*,[51] we have every reason to believe that the destruction of the older *vitae* was widely enforced. Thus the sequence must be the product of a Bonaventurean or post-Bonaventurean generation, and ought not be read as a text intended to promote the new *cultus* of the Poverello, but perhaps addresses concerns relating to the life of the order in the late thirteenth century.

At this point I hope the reader will permit an even more speculative suggestion. One of the principal problems facing the Franciscan order from Bonaventure's generalate and into the fourteenth century was the increasing rift between the Conventuals and Spirituals over apostolic poverty. Through his *Legendae*, the Seraphic Doctor seems for a time to have placated the brewing conflict. In a passage worth quoting at length, Damien Vorreux contextualizes the composition of the *Legenda Major* against the background of intra-ordinal disputes over poverty.

> [Bonaventure's] primary concern was to present in a very forceful way the pacifying activity of Francis, restoring peace to communities or to cities, adopting as his formula of greeting: 'May the Lord give you peace.' From that time on, it became manifestly illogical to carry on quarrels in the name of an ideal that excluded all quarrels.
>
> But once this spiritual position was solidly assured, he still had to use diplomacy to appease the unrest that followed… His *Legend*, without being tendentious, …bears witness to a certain flexibility. Despite all the grievences that he could have nurtured against the somewhat 'restless' movement of the Spirituals, St. Bonaventure kept his admiration for 'persons'… In brief, 'where we accuse him of having tried to

[50] *AF* 10, p. 2. Fourteen codices were consulted by the *Analecta* editors, of which only three are from Italian locales (one from the Franciscan house at Falerone in the March of Ancona, one from Ivrea in Piedmont, and one fragmentary manuscript from Assisi). The rest come from such diverse places such as Barcelona (used as the base text of the critical edition), York, Heidelberg, London, Montpellier, Osek, Oxford, Paris, Würzburg, Longpont, and Notre-Dame de Jouy.

[51] *AF* 10, p. 556. Of the sixteen codices consulted by the *Analecta* editors, fourteen are from central Italy (Assisi, Rome, Florence, Alverna, or Cortona); one is found in Pavia, and one in Westphalia.

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> suppress historical documents, *he* had in mind the suppression of errors of the moral and religious order.'
>
> As for the seculars, their pacification required other methods. They took exception to the sanctity and even to the possibility of the Franciscan ideal; they were shown that the founder had lived it, that it had been approved by Christ, for the approbation of the Church had not removed all their doubts. The entire argumentation rested on the fact of the stigmata. The first thing was to 'prove' this fact historically… The most solid and the most precise [testimonies] were retained. It was especially a question 'of interpreting' the miracle exegetically and spiritually for the consumption of an audience fed on good scholastic philosophy which demanded, before a fact was admitted, that it know its meaning. The interpretation adopted was that of the spiritual conformity of Francis with Christ, since Christ had granted him bodily conformity. The basic scriptural text was the passage from the Apocalypse (chap. 7) where we see the second 'angel rising where the sun rises, carrying the seal of the living God.' […] It is to St. Bonaventure that credit is due for having purified the 'politics' by putting it back in its one and only viable climate: mysticism.[52]

Unfortunately, Bonaventure's efforts to keep the order unified did not survive his death, but his depiction of the Poverello as a mystic on the Dionysian model remained a shared motif among the Franciscan factions.[53] And if the Francis of *Sanctitatis* is a Dionysian Francis, then the text is almost certainly a post-Celano product, marked by a period in which the various factions still extolled Francis as a man who, on the peak of Alverna, reached the summit of Dionysian mystical union. Even if we cannot go so far as to attribute this sequence to Bonaventure himself, we can at this point make some connections between this new provisional dating of *Sanctitatis* after 1262 and the intra-ordinal difficulties over which Bonaventure presided. For while *Sanctitatis* does not manifest the explicitly martial imagery of the earlier sequence *Caput draconis*, there remains some reference to a conflict in the final intercessory part.

[52] Damien Vorreux, 'Introduction to Bonaventure', in *Writings and Early Biographies: English Omnibus of Sources for the Life of St. Francis*, ed. Marion Habig, tr. Raphael Brown, et al. (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1981), pp. 619-20; cf. Etienne Gilson, *The Philosophy of Saint Bonaventure*, tr. I. Trethowan and F.J. Sheed (New York: F.J. Sheed, 1938), p. 23; Etienne Bihel, 'Sanctus Franciscus fuitne Angelus sexti sigilli?' *Antonianum* 2 (1927), pp. 59-90; and Stanislao da Campagnola, *L'angelo del sesto sigillo e l'alter Christus. Genesi e sviluppo di due temi francescani nei secoli XIII-XIV* (Rome: Antonianum, 1971).

[53] For example, the Spiritual Franciscan poet Iacopone da Todi (died 1306) still 'slavishly follows' Bonaventure's *Legenda Major* in his poems praising Francis, indicating the authority of the Bonaventurean *vitae* across the factions; cf. Alvaro Cacciotti, *Amor sacro e amor profano in Iacopone da Todi* (Rome: Antonianum, 1989), pp. 54-7; Cacciotti repeats his assessment of Iacopone's slavish adherence to the Bonaventurean *legendae* at p. 110.

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Nos, Francisce, tueamur,	May we be guarded by you, O Francis,
In adversis protegamur,	and protected in our trials
Ut mercede perfruamur	that we may be brought to our prize
In caelesti gloria.	in heavenly glory.[54]

There are many possible candidates for what concrete enemies are meant in this stanza. Could it refer to anti-mendicant party of secular clergy, against whom both Bonaventure and Aquinas engaged in bitter public polemics? Could it refer to the so-called 'Latin Averroists' or 'radical Aristotelians' at Paris, whose exaltation of natural reason seemed to denigrate the faith in the eyes of many Franciscans like Bonaventure? Could it refer to agitators within the Franciscan order itself, whose interpretation of apostolic poverty threatened to tear the friars apart? Could the 'adversaries' simply stand for '*the* Adversary', that is, the power of Satan against whom all Christians are called to resist? Or could it be some combination of all these options?

Perhaps we never answer these questions definitively on the basis of the sequence text alone, but the host of problems facing the Franciscans in the latter half of the thirteenth century certainly evince a renewed need within the order to rally around the memory of their holy founder. *Sanctitatis nova signa* is perhaps best understood a liturgical composition responding to this imperative. With the unity of the order at stake, the sequence exhorts the friars to heed the example of the Dionysian Francis, whose total conformity to the Crucified merited the conferral of these 'new signs of sanctity' from the supreme Hierarch himself. The brothers, then, ought to beg Francis's intercession in the face of all the enemies and trials plaguing the integrity of the order. Thus, by conformity to the founder, as the sequence says, may the unified flock of Friars Minor follow their holy father Francis into eternal joy: 'Consequatur *grex* Minorum | sempiterna gaudia'.

Jose Isidro Belleza
Faculty of Divinity,
University of Cambridge

jib35@cam.ac.uk

[54] *AF* 10, p. 403; English translation mine.

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