Francis of Assisi & the Mendicants

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1. FRANCIS OF ASSISI: TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

Few figures have captured the Christian imagination as powerfully as the early 13th-century charismatic reformer Francis of Assisi (d. 1224). His radical commitment to poverty transformed how Christians saw Jesus and offered a relentless challenge to the power and riches of the medieval church.

**Texts**

The search for the historical Francis is ever bit as complicated as the search for the historical Jesus. The volume of medieval *Lives* of Francis of Assisi is staggering, running thousands of pages. The monumental collection of the lives of Francis is *Fontes Franciscani*, ed. Enrico Menestò and Stefano Brufani (Assisi: Edizioni Porziuncola, 1995). This gathers the best Latin text of Francis's medieval biographers, including Thomas of Celano, Julian of Speyer, Bonaventure, as well as the famous *Legend of the Three Companions*. Much insight has come from the recovery of the surviving works of Francis himself. For a critical edition of the surviving Latin and Italian texts by Francis, see Kajetan Esser, *Die Opuscula des hl. Franziskus von Assisi*, Neue textkritische Edition, Zweite, erweiterte und verbesserte Ausgabe besorgt von Engelbert Grau (Rome: Grottaferrata, 1989).
Translations

Regis J. Armstrong, J. Wayne Hellmann, & William J. Short, 4 vol., *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*. (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1999-2001). This series is a remarkable achievement. It includes the complete translation of all the early lives of Francis and all the essential documents of the early Franciscan and movement. Solid translations and valuable notes. This replaces the older *Omnibus* edition (ed. Marion Habig, see below).

- Vol. 1: *The Saint* (1999). This contains the three works by Thomas of Celano as well as all the surviving writings of Francis himself.
- Vol. 2: *The Founder* (2000). This contains two of the most crucial lives of Francis: Bonaventure’s *Legenda* and the *Legend of the Three Companions*.
- Vol. 3: *The Prophet* (2001). This includes the popular *Fioretti*, or *Little Flowers of St. Francis*.


2. FRANCIS OF ASSISI: STUDIES

Lawrence S. Cunningham, *Francis of Assisi: Performing the Gospel Life* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2004). This study offers an excellent introduction to the life, times, and teaching of Francis of Assisi. Cunningham writes for a broad audience and teaches readers how to approach things with a critical eye, how to cut through the sentimentality that often clouds the radicalism and challenge of Francis’ life and message. He concludes with a helpful essay on recent studies on Francis and the Franciscans.


Arnaldo Fortini, *Francis of Assisi*, trans. Helen Moak (New York: Crossroad, 1980). Translation of 1959 work; thorough, but rather hagiographic. Fortini was the former mayor of Assisi and spent years combing the city archives.


3. BONAVENTURE: TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

Texts

For a critical edition of Bonaventure’s Latin works, see *octoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae opera omnia*, 10 vol. (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1882-1902). Bonaventure’s vast corpus of theological writings are slowly being translated (or re-translated); see George Marcil and Zachary Hayes, eds., *Works of Saint Bonaventure* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1978–). An older 5-volume translation by José de Vinck, *The Works of Bonaventure*
Bibliographies for Theology, compiled by William Harmless, S.J.

(Patterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1960-1970), is still useful; it offers a complete translation of Bonaventure’s final work, the *Collations on the Six Days* (*Collationes in Hexaemeron*).

**Translations**

Bonaventure, *The Soul’s Journey into God, The Tree of Life, The Life of St. Francis*, trans. Ewert Cousins, *Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978). Bonaventure’s mystical masterpiece is the *Mind’s Journey into God* (*Itinerarium mentis in Deum*). The theme of the ascent of the inner person to God is an ancient one—but Bonaventure brings the Franciscan depth and warmth of feeling to this age-old theme. This volume also includes Bonaventure’s classic *Life of Francis*.


**4. BONAVENTURE: STUDIES**

Zachary Hayes, “Bonaventure: Mystery of the Triune God,” in Kenan Osborne, ed., *The History of Franciscan Theology* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1994). Bonaventure (d.1274) was superior general of the Franciscans, a superb scholastic theologian, and a mystical writer of the first order. While there are several fine introductions to Bonaventure’s theology, this one carefully balances precision, lucidity, and brevity. The volume as a whole offers an excellent overview of the Franciscan contribution to medieval theology and devotes other chapters to Alexander of Hales, Duns Scotus, and Ockham.


5. THE FRANCISCAN ORDER: STUDIES

John Moorman, *History of the Franciscan Order: From its Origins to the Year 1517* (1965; Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1988). The first 100 pages of this offers a helpful portrait of Francis of Assisi. It also has a discussion of one of the most interesting episodes in Church history: the fight between the Papacy and the Franciscan Spirituals.


6. DOMINIC & THE DOMINICANS: TEXTS & STUDIES

Texts & Translations

Simon Tugwell, ed., *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings*, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1982). It has key documents from and about not only Dominic but his great co-worker and successor, Jordan of Saxony. The bulk of the text is Humbert of Romans' great work, *Treatise on the Formation of Preachers*, which better than anything else defines Dominican spirituality. The introductory essay by Tugwell is superb.


Studies


7. POPULAR MEDIEVAL SPIRITUALITY


