Franciscan studies in contemplative theology

Today at mass Sunday 6/24/07 I heard a sermon by a stodgy priest of the old school by the name of Msgr. Bracken. This priest came out of his usual foreboding approach to scripture to come up with a question that the ages tried to answer. Where is Christ? He answered this by explaining how a seminary priest quizzed his novitiates this question and they naturally said God is everywhere. Correcting them he said God is wherever you look for him.

Augustine said when we delve into the mystery of the human person; we enter in some way into the mystery of God. This is based on the Genesis quote that we are all created in God’s image. Augustine makes a left turn on this subject and invites us to look in the mirror of our psyche and find God there.

Psuedo-Dionysius is the Eastern philosophy that is essentially platonic in origin although it was written by a Syrian at the time of the apostles. In neo-platonic theory all reality flows from an original source called ‘the one’. In the Christian framework ‘the one’ is the God in the book of Genesis. This framework or what’s called ‘Hierarchy’ gets it definition from the Greek word Hieros (Sacred) and Arche (Source of Principle). The principle gives life its proper destiny; which is to return to God. In a way I am Pseudo-Dionysius when in my gospel group I compliment God as being all good and all goodness flows from you. In Pseudo-Dionysius thought God overflows with goodness.

The School of St. Victor or an abbey in a bank of the Seine says you can’t represent invisible things with things that are not visible. You must represent them with something visible such as a sign or symbol. A symbol is more desirable than a sign. If you have a sign that is an arrow; you know by the direction of the arrow where to go. However if you have a symbol like the Ocean representing God you have food for thought. The Ocean as God leads us to a deeper appreciation to the depths of our own being…The unfolding mystery of God inside ourselves.

I have to interject here; all of the influences on St. Bonaventure the topic I picked for my Retreat suggest that God is in us. I’m willing to say yes if I am his creation but the general bent of Jesus ministry was to take us out of our own complacency and unite, not exist; but unite with the risen Lord. If he is the way then we better find the way outside of us.

I know also the Augustines, Neo-Platonics and the Victorines never intended to bury Christian scholarship because all of the movements generated after them have propelled the Church out into the world.

Christians even Christian activists say that we have to embrace ‘God Eternal’ as our own possession but I think Christ said it best when he discussed what happened to food when it was eaten by men. And what lurked in the hearts of men.

Mark 7:

7:14 Then[18](mk:@MSITStore:C:\Program%20Files\NET%20Bible%20First%20Edition\netbible.chm::/mar7_notes.htm#note18) he called the crowd again and said to them, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand. 7:15 There is nothing outside of a person that can defile him by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles him.”[19](mk:@MSITStore:C:\Program%20Files\NET%20Bible%20First%20Edition\netbible.chm::/mar7_notes.htm#note19)

7:17 Now[20](mk:@MSITStore:C:\Program%20Files\NET%20Bible%20First%20Edition\netbible.chm::/mar7_notes.htm#note20) when Jesus[21](mk:@MSITStore:C:\Program%20Files\NET%20Bible%20First%20Edition\netbible.chm::/mar7_notes.htm#note21) had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about the parable. 7:18 He said to them, “Are you so foolish? Don’t you understand that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him? 7:19 For it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and then goes out into the sewer.”[22](mk:@MSITStore:C:\Program%20Files\NET%20Bible%20First%20Edition\netbible.chm::/mar7_notes.htm#note22) (This means all foods are clean.)[23](mk:@MSITStore:C:\Program%20Files\NET%20Bible%20First%20Edition\netbible.chm::/mar7_notes.htm#note23) 7:20 He said, “What comes out of a person defiles him. 7:21 For from within, out of the human heart, come evil ideas, sexual immorality, theft, murder, 7:22 adultery, greed, evil, deceit, debauchery, envy, slander, pride, and folly. 7:23 All these evils come from within and defile a person.”

Bracken was right on the Mark when he said you must find Christ wherever you look for him. Without being formulaic I must in Aramaic ‘cast out {set a trap}’ or pray to find God. My inner sanctum is a nest of Vipers; I can only find God out there.