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# **MELANESIAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY**

*Journal of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools*

The *Melanesian Journal of Theology* aims to stimulate the writing of theology in Melanesia. It is an organ for the regular discussion of theological topics at scholarly level by staff and students of the member schools of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools (MATS), though contributions from non-members and non-Melanesians are welcome.

The *Melanesian Journal of Theology* is committed to the dialogue of Christian faith within Melanesian cultures. The Editorial Team will consider for publication all manuscripts of scholarly standard on matters of concern to Melanesian Christians and of general theological interest.

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# **PAYBACK: A GOSPEL RESPONSE, FROM A FRANCISCAN PERSPECTIVE**

**Ruben Martello**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The conversion of St Francis of Assisi provides an enduring narrative of grace and peace that can inspire us with the capacity of the gospel to transfigure a culture of retribution. Francis rejected his former way of life of military glory and revenge in order to pursue a life conformed to Christ and his gospel. Today, he is considered by many to be a famous herald of peace. Francis' response to the call of Christ changed him personally, and enabled him to transcend his own cultural mindset. Further, he was an inspiration and instrument of peace for many others during his own lifetime, and he continues to do so for many to this day. The life of St Francis enables an historical and theological appreciation of the gospel's power to break down barriers and transform society. Franciscan devotion to the particular individual, who is Christ, the crucified Saviour, manifests the universal call of the gospel to reconciliation between heaven and earth, and to peace between all creatures.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In this paper, I would like to present a gospel response to some aspects of the problem of payback, from a Franciscan perspective.<sup>1</sup> St Francis of

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<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Fr Joseph Vnuk OP (Catholic Theological College, Melbourne) and Anna M. Silvas (University of New England, Armidale) for their very helpful comments and suggestions on drafts of this paper.

Assisi (c.1182-1226) is widely held to have personified the gospel of peace in his life. That Francis was not always a man of peace makes him all the more relevant in a world of conflict. His conversion at the age of about 22 began in the middle of a military career, and in a world of rivalry and conflict that can plausibly be compared to the tribal fights that happen in PNG, especially here in the Highlands. His context was one of conflicts between city-states and between the noble and popular classes, but it was a culture of retribution none-the-less. I hope that St Francis of Assisi and his influence on the Christian world will shed light on pastoral issues faced here in the broader Melanesian cultural context, and in PNG in particular.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

St Francis often conjures up, in the popular imagination, an image of a carefree and joyful lover of creatures; a man who embraced voluntary poverty, and who was a great herald of peace – and so he was. Peace was his motto. He began all his sermons with the words, “The Lord give you peace”. He brought peace wherever he went. It is unfortunate that some of his outstanding qualities have been misrepresented or distorted, without historical or theological scruple, by the ideologues of another age. Franco Zeffirelli, in his 1972 film, *Brother Son, Sister Moon*, presented him as “a kind of medieval hippie, misunderstood, and then exploited by the ‘medieval church’ ”.<sup>2</sup> Others have presented him as a strict pacifist, a nature mystic, even a feminist. The real Francis, however, will be of more help to us in facing the problems of tribal violence.

How did this son of the wealthy cloth merchant, Pietro di Bernadone, who, as a youth, wanted nothing better than to join in victorious battles on behalf of his home-city, Assisi, and to surpass his own social and economic class by becoming a knight, come, instead, to espouse his “Lady Poverty”, and become a herald of peace? There are as many attempted answers to this question as there are biographies and studies of this unique saint. Christopher Ohan argues that the historical setting of Francesco Bernadone’s life “uncovers a uniquely-Christian remedy for a society locked

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<sup>2</sup> Augustine Thompson, *Francis of Assisi: A New Biography*, Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2012, p. ix.

in a climate of fear and change”.<sup>3</sup> The historical context, into which Francis was born, is the growth of urban life in Italy, and, therefore, challenges to feudalism, and clashes between the upper classes (*maiores*) and lower classes (*minores*, or *popolani*) of Assisi.<sup>4</sup> To top all this off was the constant strife between Pope-aligned (*Guelf*) Perugia and emperor-aligned (*Ghibeline*) Assisi. In the ongoing battles between Assisi and neighbouring Perugia, Ohan argues, Francis was not only looking for personal glory, he also desired to avenge his town’s honour, and assert its civic pride. “Assisi wanted revenge. The civic atmosphere was, therefore, one of retribution.”<sup>5</sup> Umbria was a region of bloodshed, violence, and terrorism in the 12th and 13th centuries. Arnaldo Fortini<sup>6</sup> recounts the battle that Assisi lost to Perugia, and which resulted in Francis’ capture, and prolonged incarceration – the beginning of his conversion experience:

The battle, with all its raw ferocity, and bloodthirsty pride, the sight of the dead, and the infinite grief, made in Francis’s warm and generous spirit a wound so deep that time never healed it. His happy-go-lucky youth was gone forever. Once again, life’s pain was more real to him than his fascinating dreams, his heroic enthusiasms, and hopes of glory, more real than stirring fanfares, waving banners, and flashing blades, more real, even than great courage.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Christopher Ohan, “A Christian Remedy in a Climate of Fear: Francesco Bernadone, the War with Perugia, and Conversion”, in *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 13-1 (Winter 2010), p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Rosalind B. Brooke, *The Image of St Francis: Responses to Sainthood in the Thirteenth Century*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 22-23.

<sup>5</sup> Ohan, “A Christian Remedy”, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> 1889-1970. Historian, lawyer, and former mayor of Assisi, who unearthed and publicised 13th-century civil records from the Assisi archives that shed new light on Francis and his historical context.

<sup>7</sup> Arnaldo Fortini, *Francis of Assisi*, Helen Moak, tran., New York NY: Crossroad, 1981, p. 155. Peace between Assisi and Perugia was not achieved until 1209, the year of the approval of the first Rule of St Francis by Pope Innocent III (p. 166). The peace may have been the factor that determined the rule’s coming into existence, according to Fortini. The battle Assisi lost to Perugia, in which Francis was captured in 1202, was a severe massacre: “It was the cruelest slaughter that the Perugini had up to that time inflicted on their enemies” (p.155). For an alternative view, see Adam L. Hoose, who downplays the

Should “payback” be characteristic of the way many Papua New Guineans customarily seek justice, in retaliation for crimes committed against one’s *wantoks*,<sup>8</sup> which finds expression in tribal fights. It can also be argued that something similar was taking place in the society in which St Francis of Assisi grew up. It was not only the task of the warriors to vindicate the rights of the citizens of Assisi. It also fell to municipal authorities, to the merchants (who were a new and flourishing element in the economy), and even to the religious and the clergy, to take up arms.<sup>9</sup>

With this medieval Italian background in mind, the notion that Christianity is primarily tied to Europe, and white Europeans, can cause us to forget important historical details – like Francis’ own background, which, in many ways, illustrates another form of payback. As Garry Trompf said in his study, *Melanesian Religion*, during their pre-contact times, the European people once lived with religious and cultural systems that were very comparable to those held by Melanesians. And, well before Europe was Christianised, Egypt, Ethiopia, Syria, Armenia, and India were places of ancient and traditional Christian civilisations.<sup>10</sup> In the European context, we cannot forget the slow progress of evangelisation amid a great diversity of pagan religious systems and cultures. Therefore, we cannot underestimate the influence that Francis of Assisi’s conversion to peace – in the middle of retributive violence – had on his own town of Assisi, and the Christianisation of Europe in general. I am suggesting that what has been may happen again.

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significance of Francis’ conversion, from a context of violence, though with the object of emphasising Francis as not a pacifist, and as one who did not oppose the Crusades: “Francis of Assisi’s Way of Peace?: His Conversion and Mission to Egypt”, in *The Catholic Historical Review* 96-3 (July 2010), pp. 449-469.

<sup>8</sup> See Shaun Larcom, “Payback Killings and the Transmission of Norms in the New Guinean Islands: Observing the Tip of the Iceberg?”, Department of Land Economy Working Paper, Cambridge UK: University of Cambridge, June 2013, <http://landecon.cam.ac.uk/pdf-files/cv-etc/shaun-larcom/tipoficebergDLWWP22June.pdf>, accessed April 26, 2014. Larcom’s study shows that payback has not decreased in urbanised areas of New Guinea. In fact, urbanisation seems to have increased the popularity of this cultural norm.

<sup>9</sup> Ohan, “A Christian Remedy”, p. 18. See also Laurence P. Prior, “Francis of Assisi and a Cosmic Spirituality”, in *Religion & Theology* 18-1/2 (2011), p. 179.

<sup>10</sup> Garry W. Trompf, *Melanesian Religion*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 262.

We cannot go into all the background of Francis' conversion here, but we can take up Ohan's proposition that the retributive actions of one town against another in medieval Italy helped bring about one of the most famous and profound instruments of peace. Fortini has led us to believe that, from this time on, Francis was a changed man. If Francis is seen as an important Christian symbol of peace – think about the gatherings of all the world's religions, and their representatives, in Assisi in 1986 and 2011 – it was not because he came from a peace-making culture. The contrast between the character of Francis and the times, through which he lived, could not be starker. There dawned in young Francesco the possibility of rising above the prevailing cultural mindset. It came to a crisis with the public divesting of his own clothes, in the presence of his father and the bishop, and his memorable saying, "From now on I do not call Pietro Bernadone my father, but 'Our Father, who art in Heaven' ".<sup>11</sup> His new way of life, following the poor, crucified Christ, demonstrated "a new form of behaviour that could provide a basis for converting society at large to a revolutionary form of Christian obedience and charity".<sup>12</sup>

In other words, Francis was once a "tribal" fighter, but, in embracing the gospel, he left this way of life behind. What's more is that this personal decision of his came to have a profound effect on his contemporaries. He attracted many other men around him, some of whom had fought with him in the same battles, to form a new religious order following a rule, which refused personal possessions and money, because these would have required arms to defend them. As well as the two Orders of *Friars Minor* and *Poor Ladies*, he set up a way of life for the common faithful, who were inspired to live after his example. These, too, were forbidden to take up arms. As well as giving up the sword, they were not to take public office, and the popes, on

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Thomas of Celano, *Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul*, Book I, chapter VII, in Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, William J. Short, eds, *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, vol II, New York NY: New City Press, 1999, p. 251.

<sup>12</sup> Ohan, "A Christian Remedy", p. 26.



various occasions, had to intervene to remind bishops and civil authorities, when they attempted to oppose these early Franciscan privileges.<sup>13</sup>

### THE APPLICATION OF THE GOSPEL FROM ONE CONTEXT TO ANOTHER

Up to this point, I have spoken about Francis' conversion from a life of military glory to follow Christ and live the gospel way of life. However, the question still remains: Why would a proud young Melanesian warrior – for whom payback and killing one's enemies is not just an obligation, but a point of *honour*, give this up to adopt a way of life compatible with the gospel of peace? For the tribal warrior, apart from the native, religious dimension of payback killings, payback is what proves him to be fearless, strong, and a man.<sup>14</sup> The concept is too deeply ingrained to pretend it can be resolved with platitudes. We could attempt to answer the question by asking another. How did Francis give up that which promised him a superior social identity – the desire to fight on behalf of Assisi, to become a knight in shining armour, and win his beautiful bride?

Francis had the gift of being able to communicate his new Christian identity. He did this, not by advocating a “political” rejection of warfare (or possessions, for that matter), but by allowing the light of the gospel to transform that, which had previously given meaning to his life, into a higher and better sense.<sup>15</sup> For example, he gave up fighting, but this did not prevent

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<sup>13</sup> See *The Third Order Rule*, promulgated by Nicholas IV (in 1221) in Marion A. Habig, ed., *St Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies: English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St Francis*, Chicago IL: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973, pp. 168-175 [chap. V, p.171], hereafter referred to as *Omnibus*; Maurice Carmody, *The Franciscan Story*, London UK: Athena Press, 2008, pp. 190-193.

<sup>14</sup> Garry W. Trompf, *Payback: The Logic of Retribution in Melanesian Religions*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 25.

<sup>15</sup> Garry Trompf rejected a merely political or secular solution to the problem of payback in Melanesian culture. His argument was that payback is a native *religious* phenomenon, and that the solution must, therefore, also be a religious one: “If this book reveals anything, it is that religion in various forms is the predominant force in Melanesian life, and that no genuine or long-term solutions will be arrived at if the datum is swept under the parliamentary carpets . . . and I doubt if any state of genuine peace will be possible, or any law-reform remain unimpeachable, or any community or national bonding durable, unless

him from expressing his new identity by means of the same metaphors. He was now fighting in the *Lord's* battles. He liked to find analogies between his spiritual quest and the ambitions and contrasting values of his culture.<sup>16</sup> The language of courtly love became his dedication to "Lady Poverty". The same thing happened with the combative instinct. The language of chivalry, and the heroic deeds of Arthur and Charlemagne, coloured the descriptions of his religious way of life. He called his friars, "knights of the round table". When human nature prides itself in being on close terms with earthly rulers and worldly superstars, or in seeking positions of power for its own sake, how much nobler is it to serve God, the King of kings.<sup>17</sup> A dream, which Francis had during his conversion period, is recounted by Thomas of Celano:

It seemed to Francis that his whole home was filled with the trappings of war, namely, saddles, shields, lances, and other things; rejoicing greatly, he wondered silently within himself what this should mean. For he was not accustomed to see such things in his home, but rather piles of cloth to be sold. When, accordingly, he was not a little astonished at this sudden turn of events, the answer was given him that all these arms would belong to him and to his soldiers.

Celano adds:

It is, indeed, quite fitting that mention be made of arms in the beginning, and it is quite opportune that arms should be offered to the soldier about to engage one strongly armed, that, like another David,

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peace, good order, and cooperativeness are embraced as religious commitments rather than political expediencies" (*Payback*, p. 460).

<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Douglas W. Young argues that conflict resolution in Papua New Guinea is best developed from the native peoples' own capacity to change their culture from within, using traditional practices, and only then to seek "cultural analogues or correlations from any 'outside' approach that seems helpful", see "Prescriptive and Elicitive Approaches to Conflict Resolution: Examples from Papua New Guinea", *Negotiation Journal* 14-3 (July 1998), pp. 211-220 [at p. 218].

<sup>17</sup> Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, p. 15.

he might free Israel from the long-standing reproach of its enemies in the *name of the Lord God of Hosts*.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, St Francis' solution to strife and vengeance was by offering something better in its place, that is, an exchange, or a conversion, demonstrating the radical embracing of the life offered by Christ in the gospels. Only this brings the true spiritual joy, which no experience of victory or revenge can ever provide.

Francis inspired peace, wherever it was needed, and he was able to do so even in the middle of one of his own darkest hours. While lying ill with malaria, which he had contracted during his time in Egypt, with the trachoma in his eyes, and suffering from malnutrition from his fasting on Mount La Verna, and surrounded by the vermin that plagued him, he composed his famous "Canticle of Brother Sun", the oldest great poem we possess in vernacular Italian. He did so, not only to cheer himself up, but also to edify his fellows. He said that, for every trial on earth, "there is a joy in heaven, for every bitterness, a divine consolation, for every enemy who injures us, a creature who loves us".<sup>19</sup> It was the intention of Francis that, when the friars preached, the sermon should be followed by singing this canticle. At the end of the song, they should address the people: "We are jongleurs [an itinerant minstrel] of God, and the only reward we want is to see you lead a truly penitential life". He added, "Who are, indeed, God's servants, if not jongleurs, who strive to move men's hearts in order to lead them to the joys of the spirit?"<sup>20</sup>

Francis rightly believed that this song could bring peace to the warring parties in a new conflict. And he composed some additional verses

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<sup>18</sup> Thomas of Celano, *First Life*, chapter II, in *Omnibus*, p. 233. Was St Francis a pacifist? I said above that St Francis has been construed as such. Some authors have depicted St Francis' meeting with the sultan Malik-al-Kamil in Egypt, during the 5th Crusade in 1219, as a rejection of the crusades, and warfare in general. This is based on his warning the Christian forces at Damietta against a particular battle, and his correct prophecy of their defeat. It would, however, require stretching the evidence to draw this conclusion. See Hoose, "Francis of Assisi's Way of Peace?", pp. 449-469.

<sup>19</sup> Fortini, *Francis of Assisi*, p. 565.

<sup>20</sup> *Legend of Perugia*, in *Omnibus*, no. 43, p. 1022.

specifically for the occasion. The traditional rivalry between Assisi and Perugia had been further complicated by factional violence between the knights and commoners of Perugia, and by the support the Podestá (mayor) of Assisi gave to the knights of Perugia. The bishop had excommunicated the mayor for supporting the Perugian nobles, and the mayor, in turn, forbade the citizens to engage in any kind of commerce with the church. Violent reprisals followed. To his dismay, on hearing that the relationship had turned bitterly sour between both his great admirers, the mayor and the Bishop of Assisi, Francis composed these two new verses, to be added to the Cantic of Brother Son:<sup>21</sup>

All praise be yours, my Lord, through those who grant pardon  
For love of you; through those who endure  
Sickness and trial

Happy those who endure in peace,  
By you, Most High, they will be crowned.<sup>22</sup>

It worked! Both the bishop and the mayor, who had been summoned by Francis to hear this sung by his brothers, were moved to bring an end to their struggle for domination. The mayor was the first to speak: “In truth, not only do I forgive the lord bishop, whom I ought to recognise as my master, but I would even pardon my brother’s and my own son’s murderer!” For the people, who witnessed this ending of so fierce a feud, it was no less than a new miracle wrought by Francis. Fortini explains that the bishop was conquered by the change of heart in the mayor, and he, in turn, spoke, “My

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<sup>21</sup> For the whole text of the cantic, see appendix. For the original vernacular, see Fortini, *Francis of Assisi*, pp. 566-568. In the *Legend of Perugia*, St Francis gives his reason for composing the cantic: “I wish to compose a new ‘Praises of the Lord’, for His creatures. These creatures minister to our needs every day; without them, we could not live; and, through them, the human race greatly offends the Creator. Every day, we fail to appreciate so great a blessing by not praising as we should the Creator and dispenser of these gifts”, p. 1021. For details on the civil battle between nobles and commoners, and the strained relationship between the bishop and the mayor, see Fortini, *Francis of Assisi*, pp. 569-580.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 577.

office demands humility of me. By nature, I am quick to anger. You must forgive me.”<sup>23</sup>

In the famous legend of the Wolf of Gubbio – whatever its historical value may be – the message and spirit of St Francis is captured. A wolf had terrorised the town of Gubbio, by devouring not only its cattle, but also its citizens. St Francis addressed the wolf in these words, “Brother Wolf, you deserve to be put to death, just like the worst robber and murderer. Consequently, everyone is right in crying out against you and complaining, and this whole town is your enemy. But, Brother Wolf, I want to make peace between you and them, so that they will not be harmed by you any more, and, after they have forgiven you all your past crimes, neither men nor dogs will pursue you any more.”<sup>24</sup> There was no sense in killing the wolf, even though it was responsible for the death of many of the townsfolk. There is no place in the believer for revenge. Francis urged the wolf to make a pact never to harm the people or animals, and the people were urged, in turn, to forgive, and to provide the wolf with food, so the wolf put his paw into Francis’ hand as a gesture of a pledge of peace with the citizens of Gubbio. Having brought peace, Francis took this opportunity to ensure that the root cause of human strife is eradicated in human hearts and souls: “So, dear people”, he said, “come back to the Lord, and do fitting penance, and God will free you from the wolf in this world, and from the devouring fire in the next world.”

### **ST FRANCIS, THE CRUCIFIED LORD AND CREATION**

Although not an intellectual, Francis is recognised within history and systematic theology to have given new impetus to a devotion to Christ, in his individual human nature. His devotion to the poverty and helplessness of the Christ Child gave the Western church its first nativity scene. He brought new light to what the church has always taught: the universal Saviour (Pantocrator), in whose divine Person the two natures of humanity and divinity are united, while remaining distinct, is a unique individual. Francis’ love for God manifested itself in his devotion to Jesus in the crib, and on the

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 580; *Legend of Perugia*, pp. 1023-1024.

<sup>24</sup> *Little Flowers of St Francis*, chap. 21, in *Omnibus*, p. 1349.

cross – those moments in time when divinity was especially disguised in a helpless humanity, in suffering, and in death. As Ilia Delio puts it, this “opened up a new perspective on the unique particularity of the person. [Francis] upset an intellectual tradition [Neoplatonic metaphysics, with its emphasis on abstract ideas, and the movement of the soul *away* from the material world towards the contemplation of God], which he hardly understood, and which he certainly had no intention of challenging”.<sup>25</sup> As the Franciscan doctor of the church, St Bonaventure of Bagnoreggio (1217-1274), who recapitulated Francis’ spirit into the academy, explained, the impassible and Omnipotent God “is joined with Him Who suffered supremely and died; the most perfect and immense is joined with that which is small; He who is both supremely one, and supremely pervasive, is joined to an individual that is composite and distinct from others, that is to say, the man Jesus Christ”.<sup>26</sup> This is the mystery that captivated Francis. The paradox did not disturb him; he was, rather, in awe of the Incarnation. For where there is difference, there is unity.<sup>27</sup> Francis’ single-minded and wholehearted love for Jesus, as the mediator between Almighty God and finite human nature, is at the source of his ability to see Christ at the centre of everything. In the light of the Incarnation, which is expressed in its most definitive and revelatory manner on the Cross, Francis saw the goodness of God present in every living creature, even in his enemies. Further, not only man, but also all creation, is drawn into the nature of the divine, through Christ’s assumption of humanity. He called a wolf his “brother”, and the moon his “sister”. Not only is the Incarnation the medium bridging God and

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<sup>25</sup> Ilia Delio, “From Metaphysics to Kataphysics: Bonaventure’s ‘Good’ Creation”, in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 64-2 (May 2011), p. 163. See also Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995, especially pp. 117-118, (Chapter 5: “Hierarchy Interiorised: Bonaventure’s *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*”).

<sup>26</sup> St Bonaventure, *The Journey of the Mind to God*, Stephen F. Brown, ed., Philotheus Boehner, tran., Indianapolis IN: Hackett Publishing, 1993, p. 35.

<sup>27</sup> Turner makes the point: “And, if our universe is such as to embrace all the possible varieties of creation, then there is much to be said for the view that it is not the ‘highest’ beings in our universe [i.e., angels] which are the most *representative* of it, but those beings, in whose nature is contained elements of all its variety and complexity. What one wants in a good meal is not a diet restricted to just one dish, even of caviar, but a menu of some variety, even if made up of many dishes, of which potato is one”, p. 124.

humanity, and restoring to humanity the likeness of God, lost at the fall, it extends out on the horizontal bar of the cross to embrace all humanity and creation itself into the Kingdom of God.

Through the terrible violence and cruelty of the cross comes the peace and salvation of the world, because the one who was crucified is divine love, who sought no vengeance, no payback. To quote St Francis of Assisi himself, "They are truly peacemakers, who are able to preserve their peace of mind and heart for love of our Lord Jesus Christ, despite all that they suffer in this world".<sup>28</sup> All the meaning and identity that tribal fights give to the people of Melanesia can be found at a much deeper level, and in a more lasting way, through the translation of these energies into following the Christ, who suffered the humiliation and defeat of the cross. Only it was not defeat. It was victory.

## **APPENDIX**

### **THE CANTICLE OF BROTHER SUN**

Francis of Assisi

Most high, all powerful, all good Lord! All praise is yours, all glory, all honour, and all blessing.

To you, alone, Most High, do they belong. No mortal lips are worthy to pronounce your name.

Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures, especially through my lord Brother Sun, who brings the day; and you give light through him. And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendour!  
Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.

Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars; in the heavens you have made them bright, precious and beautiful.

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<sup>28</sup> *Admonitions*, XV, in *Omnibus*, p. 83.

Be praised, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air,  
and clouds and storms, and all the weather, through which you give your  
creatures sustenance.

Be praised, My Lord, through Sister Water; she is very useful, and humble,  
and precious, and pure.

Be praised, my Lord, through Brother Fire, through whom you brighten the  
night. He is beautiful and cheerful, and powerful and strong.

Be praised, my Lord, through our sister Mother Earth,  
who feeds us and rules us, and produces various fruits with coloured flowers  
and herbs.

Be praised, my Lord, through those who forgive for love of you;  
through those who endure sickness and trial.

Happy those who endure in peace, for by you, Most High, they will be  
crowned.

Be praised, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death,  
from whose embrace no living person can escape.  
Woe to those who die in mortal sin! Happy those she finds doing your most  
holy will. The second death can do no harm to them.

Praise and bless my Lord, and give thanks, and serve him with great  
humility.

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