

***Reductio* as Pattern and Journey in Bonaventure**

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THE PRODIGIOUS WORKS of St. Bonaventure span three decades and a variety of theological genres. Their generic and topical scope attests to the riches of their content even as such breadth also raises challenges in terms of their overall schematization. Bonaventure's writings are sometimes classed into magisterial works, spiritual works, and collations to correspond to stages of his life as a Franciscan, yet a system as loose as this can fail to appreciate critical ideas transecting his works.¹ A particularly consistent theme in Bonaventure's treatments of Christian life is the notion of a "journey" that plots the potential progress of a wayfarer toward union with God. Works such as the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* or the *De triplici via* connote the notion of journey with their very titles, and their exposition illustrates a progressively ascending movement of the wayfarer into union with God. The present study identifies an overarching conceptual pattern for Bonaventure's practice of theology and presentation of the Christian life that not only accounts for its structure and goals in the spiritual works but also anchors the pattern in his theological method, metaphysics and doctrine of God. To that end, it will argue that Bonaventure patterns his presentation of journey on the conception of *reductio*, a notion that drives arguments

¹ In the introduction to his *Bonaventure*, Ewert Cousins arranges Bonaventure's works into three chronological periods: scholastic treatises, spiritual writings, and lecture series. See *Bonaventure*, trans. E. Cousins (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978), 9.

throughout the corpus of his works. Having explicated his general definition and deployment of *reductio*, the study will clarify what is generally required for “reductive progress” into God with particular emphasis on the notion of exemplarity. It will then apply the theme of reduction to an investigation of Bonaventure’s spiritual works in order to illustrate that an enriched understanding of *reductio* provides thematic and structural integrity to these influential yet diverse treatises. In sum, the study claims that a full appreciation of *reductio* lends methodological and systematic coherence to Bonaventure’s overall theological system. *Reductio* links his metaphysics and doctrine of creation with his spiritual works and presentation of the Christian life, and it outlines a practical pattern for human action in the work of Christian sanctification.²

Theological Method and *Reductio*

References to *reductio* and its methodological importance are disseminated through much of Bonaventure’s thought. The diffusion arises from its integral place in Bonaventure’s theological method and metaphysics so that *reductio* informs the way in which one can know and demonstrate something to be true.³ The methodological role of *reductio* for proving theological arguments emerges, notably, in Bonaventure’s *Sentence Commentary* and *Breviloquium* where he uses it as a technique to prove any number of theological assertions. To that end, he draws on reductive arguments to demonstrate that certain points of doctrine

² Studies of *reductio*, especially as an overarching motif in Bonaventure’s theology, are limited. Ilia Delio addresses its force, particularly in the spiritual journey to union with God, in the final chapter of her book *Simply Bonaventure* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001), 158–72; the methodological technique of *reductio* is explicated in Guy Allard’s “La technique de la *Reductio* chez Bonaventure,” in *S. Bonaventura* 1274–1974, vol. 2, ed. Jacques Guy Bougerol (Rome: Collegio S. Bonaventura Grottaferrata, 1974), 395–416. The present study, however, seeks to expand significantly on the observations of Delio and Allard, and to argue, further, that the reductive motif unites and promotes a wider range of theological issues at stake in Bonaventure’s theological system and corpus of work.

³ Guy Bougerol outlines four points of general orientation to Bonaventure’s theology, and the first of these is the concept of *reductio*. Bougerol further includes the themes of “proportion,” “necessary reasons,” and “arguments from piety” as parts of Bonaventure’s overarching dialectical method; see his *Introduction to the Works of Bonaventure*, trans. Jose de Vinck (Patterson, NJ: Saint Anthony Guild Press, 1964), 75–81.

can be traced back to an authoritative source on which they depend for reliability.⁴ In the most basic sense, Bonaventure reduces hosts of theological ideas back to God as first principle, supreme good, and the substance by which all else exists. For example, in the Prologue to the *Breviloquium*, he writes:

Because theology is, indeed, discourse about God and about the First Principle, as the highest science and doctrine it should resolve everything in God as its first and supreme principle. That is why, in giving the reasons for everything contained in this little work or tract, I have attempted to derive each reason from the First Principle, in order to demonstrate that the truth of Sacred Scripture is from God, that it treats of God, is according to God, and has God as its end.⁵

As discourse about God, Bonaventure reduces all of his discrete theological propositions back to God as first principle who reveals God's self in Scripture. This technique is typified and reinforced in the *Breviloquium* by his consistent use of the phrase "*Ratio autem ad intelligentiam prae-dictorum haec est*," or "the reason for this should be understood as follows." The phrase often falls in the second paragraph of a given section in the *Breviloquium*, and it almost invariably indicates that Bonaventure will relate the foregoing assertion to God's nature as first principle. This same sense is underscored in the *proemium* to the *Sentence Commentary*

⁴ Bougerol explains: "In each case there is some reality which cannot subsist of itself and is not sufficient to itself, but which must be distinguished from the substance to which it is bound, because it is not this substance, and yet depends upon it" (*Introduction to the Works of Bonaventure*, 76).

⁵ Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, Prologue, 6.6. From *Works of Saint Bonaventure*, vol. IX, *Breviloquium*, trans. Dominic V. Monti, O.F.M. (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2005). In his introduction to the work, Monti notes a distinction originally posited by Jean Gerson having to do with the difference between inductive and deductive methods in Bonaventure's theology; addressing the method that drives the *Breviloquium*, Monti writes: "The *Breviloquium*, in contrast, is grounded in theological metaphysics. It begins with the mystery of the Trinity, and from there proceeds to "reduce" or "retrace" the various beliefs proposed in the Catholic tradition to the foundational mystery of the self-diffusive first principle in order to demonstrate how they all logically flow from it" (XXXXVII). He contrasts the *Breviloquium* with the "inductive" method found in the *Itinerarium*; no less reductive, the *Itinerarium* leads the reader from lesser forms of being to the primordial source.

where Bonaventure affirms that God is the reductive subject matter of theology; he concludes: "For the subject, to which all things are reduced as to their *principle*, is *God Himself*."⁶

One concrete example from his *Sentences Commentary*, taken from countless instances, is Bonaventure's assertion that divine predestination is eternal because it is an expression of the divine will, which is retraced to God as eternal and first principle.⁷ The practice of *reductio* thus provides Bonaventure with a methodological tool to substantiate his theological arguments, grounding them in the reliability of divine revelation and its particular affirmation of God as first principle.

Bonaventure's methodological deployment of *reductio* is on greatest display in his *De reductione artium ad theologiam* where he argues that the fundamental insights of every branch of secular knowledge reduce analogically to the fullness of knowledge contained in the Incarnate Word.⁸ For Bonaventure the eternal Word of the Father expresses the truth contained in the divine essence, providing mediated knowledge of the first principle and all that proceeds from it. This wisdom, expressed eternally in the Son, is further manifested in the economy through the Incarnation. Bonaventure argues: "Therefore all natural philosophy, by

⁶ *I Sent.*, Proem.1, resp; translations are the author's and taken from *Opera Omnia*, vol. 1 (Quaracchi: Editiones PP. Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas, 1882). Prior to reaching this conclusion, Bonaventure outlines a threefold way in which God is reductive subject; he writes: "It ought to be said, that the 'subject' in any science or doctrine is able to be accepted in a threefold way. In one way a 'subject' in a science is called [that] to which all things are reduced as to their *root principle*; in another way, [that] to which all things are reduced just as to their *integral whole*; in a third manner, [that] to which all things are reduced just as to their *universal whole*."

⁷ See *I Sent.*, 40.1.1, resp. Bonaventure writes: "Because, therefore, the *principle signified* is eternal, so predestination is something eternal. *Again*, because it imports the antecedent of the signified to the connoted, and the antecedent is eternal, for that reason predestination is something eternal and from eternity. And the reasons for this ought to be conceded."

⁸ The *De reductione* endeavors to show the reductive relationship of the subjects of classical education to theology; Zachary Hayes writes: "As a cognitive term, the word [*reductio*] refers to the way in which the human subject comes to know and understand the realities of the created order in the light of this metaphysical conviction . . . the journey of human cognition is best understood as one dimension of the way in which the human, spiritual journey is involved in creation's return to God." See Hayes's "Introduction," in *Works of Saint Bonaventure*, vol. I, *On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology*, trans. Zachary Hayes, O.F.M. (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1996), 1.

reason of the relation of proportion, presupposes the Word of God as begotten and incarnate, the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, that is, begotten in the beginning before all time, and incarnate in the fullness of time.”⁹ All the arts therefore reveal divine wisdom as expressed in creation and salvation through the Word, and when properly examined for their purpose and content, the arts lead the student back to the fullness of divine wisdom.¹⁰ Reduction accordingly serves as a cognitive exercise that illuminates the divine truth in all things, connecting all that can be known to God and God’s providential direction of the cosmos.¹¹ As it does so, the practice itself cultivates an affective dimension that progressively enkindles the practitioner’s desire for union with God. Bonaventure summarizes the *De reductione*’s project thus:

And so it is evident how the manifold wisdom of God, which is clearly revealed in sacred Scripture, lies hidden in all knowledge and in all nature. It is clear also how all divisions of knowledge are servants of theology, and it is for this reason that theology makes use of illustrations and terms pertaining to every branch of knowledge. It is likewise clear how wide the illuminative way may be, and how divine reality itself lies hidden within everything which is perceived or known. And this is the fruit of all sciences, that in all, faith may be strengthened, God may be honored, character may be formed, and

⁹ *De reductione*, 20.

¹⁰ Hayes writes: “This may be a helpful way to look at the argument of the *De reductione*. The divine wisdom lies hidden in every form of secular knowledge. We need but to find the key to discover and unfold the appropriate analogies to allow that which is hidden to shine forth. As a result, each of the arts and sciences is made to bear on: (1) the eternal generation of the Word and his humanity; (2) the Christian order of life; and (3) the union of the soul with God” (22).

¹¹ Hayes writes: “The general flow of the argument throughout the *De reductione* will be to highlight the analogical relations between the insights of the arts and these [three] concerns of the biblical tradition. In essence, this is the logic of the *reduction* (12). Bougerol adds: “This reduction is not merely a technique—it is the soul of the return to God; and since all knowledge depends on principles, and principles are born within us under the regulating and motivating action of divine ideas, the certitudes which seem most capable of being self-sufficient are necessarily linked, by means of first principles, with the eternal reasons and their divine foundation” (*Introduction to the Works of Bonaventure*, 76).

consolation may be derived from union of the Spouse with the beloved.¹²

Bonaventure's appreciation of *reductio* as providing a way to divine knowledge is not merely cognitive in the epistemological or methodological sense. He connects the practice of *reductio* in all branches of human knowledge to the doxological practice of glorifying God, and perhaps most importantly, to the progressive movement into a union between God as spouse and those who seek to know God. The *De reductione* sets that union in the language of charity where God unites God's self, as known, with human beings, as loved; Bonaventure describes it as "a union which takes place through charity: a charity without which all knowledge is vain because no one comes to the Son except through the Holy Spirit who teaches us *all the truth, who is blessed forever, Amen.*"¹³ If all things can be reliably known as extending from God as their fontal source, then *reductio* operates as an organizing theme for Christian theology that informs the sequence of its arguments, the proofs by which it demonstrates the fittingness of Christian belief and, ultimately, the movement of human beings into loving union with God.

Metaphysics and *Reductio*

The *De reductione*'s structural and methodological deployment of *reductio* is anchored in a metaphysics that promotes something more than a mere cognitive retracing of all knowledge to God. Indeed, Bonaventure insists that all that exists or has being can be retraced naturally to God as source of *esse*. This basic metaphysical conviction indicates that (1) all that exists comes forth from God who is the first principle of creation and so (2) returns to God as the consummation of its existence.¹⁴ It establishes a basic metaphysical pattern of *exitus-reditus* for the cosmos in general and for the direction of human action in particular. Within that pattern, *reductio* indicates a journey of *reditus* or return to God

¹² *De reductione*, 26.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Bonaventure addresses the principle of *exitus-reditus* explicitly in *I Sent.*, d. 36, p. 1, a. 3., q. 2, c. See also Christopher Cullen's discussion of metaphysics in his *Bonaventure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 61. He notes that Bonaventure likely adopted a general use of the *exitus-reditus* pattern from Alexander of Hales.

as source of existence. In his *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, Bonaventure undertakes one of his most integrated treatments of theology, and in the first collation, he famously writes: "Such is the metaphysical Center that leads us back, and this is the sum total of our metaphysics: concerned with emanation, exemplarity, and consummation, that is, illumination through spiritual radiations and return to the Supreme Being."¹⁵

In this succinct summary, Bonaventure introduces the basic and reductive framework of all that exists—created things come forth from God; they contain an interior likeness to their fontal source; and by way of progressive exemplarity—particularly through divine illumination—they are lead back to God as source of their existence.¹⁶ Wayne Hellman writes of Bonaventure's method: "The thrust of Bonaventure's theology concerns itself with the *reductio* (not as much with the *origo*). Salvation is nothing other than the ordering of all things back to their final end, God."¹⁷ Bonaventure's metaphysics therefore gives a distinctive form to the way in which *reductio* applies to human salvation and movement into union with God.

Bonaventure's affirmation of emanation, of the *exitus* of all that proceeds from God, emerges from his broader affirmation of God as *Sum-*

¹⁵ *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, I:17; all citations for the *Collationes in Hexaemeron* are taken from *Collations on the Six Days*, trans. Jose de Vinck (Patterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1970). Romano Guardini also summarizes the interplay of these themes, including illumination, by recounting the ways in which *reductio* unfolds for Bonaventure; he writes: "The forms of this *reduci* are very diverse: belief, grace, the many forms of the *actus hierarchici*, especially enlightenment and inspiration; the gifts and works of the Holy Spirit; the five principal cardinal virtues; the eternal rule, and the powers, which through God, illuminate the soul." Taken in translation from Wayne Hellman, *Divine and Created Order in Bonaventure's Theology*, trans. J. M. Hammond (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2001), 22.

¹⁶ Etienne Gilson affirms the threefold movement; he writes: "There are three metaphysical problems and three only: creation, exemplarism, and the return to God by way of illumination; the whole of metaphysics is contained in them, and the philosopher who solves them is the true metaphysician" (128). See *The Philosophy of Saint Bonaventure*, trans. Dom Illyd Trethowan (Paterson, NJ: Saint Anthony Guild Press, 1965). Delio argues that the intellectual notion of *reductio* informs God's will for human beings and their path to union with God. She writes: "The movement of *reductio* is integral to the spiritual journey which is based on the notion of the human person as image of God. As image, the human person is God-oriented and cannot find rest anywhere except in God" (*Simply Bonaventure*, 160).

¹⁷ Hellman, *Divine and Created Order*, 20. See his chapter "Basic Concepts in Bonaventure's Understanding of Order," 9–30.

Summum Bonum and source of all that exists.¹⁸ For Bonaventure, God shares divine goodness naturally; his conception of God is one of dynamic fecundity in which the Trinity itself reflects God as diffusive goodness. Working from the notion of God as first principle, Bonaventure reasons that the Father is the fontal source of all being, including the interior life of the Trinity. In his discussion of the divine persons, he assigns the quality of *innascibilitas* to the Father, which implies not only that the Father is without generation or origin but also that his original primacy is the fountain of all that exists.¹⁹ Within the Godhead, the Father generates the Son and spirates the Holy Spirit in a perfect act of self-diffusion; the Trinity, *in se*, is a self-diffusing font of being.²⁰ Grounding God's

¹⁸ Joseph Walsh's "The Principle of 'Bonum Diffusivum sui' in St. Bonaventure: Meaning and Importance" (dissertation, Fordham University, 1958) provides a comprehensive treatment of this topic. Bonaventure makes this point with his identification of God's triune life as *Summum Bonum* in the *Itinerarium*, 6. As the wayfarer reaches the summit of contemplative progress where she can conceive of God as *Summum Bonum*, Bonaventure writes: "For the good is said to be self-diffusive. But the greatest self-diffusion cannot exist unless it is actual and intrinsic, substantial and hypostatic, natural and voluntary, free and necessary, lacking nothing and perfect . . . and this is the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit—unless these were present, it would by no means be the highest good because it would not diffuse itself in the highest degree" (VI.2). All citations for the *Itinerarium* are taken from *Bonaventure*, trans. Ewert Cousins (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978); 51–116; references refer to internal chapters and paragraph numbers.

¹⁹ In *I Sent.*, d. 27, p. 1, a. 1., q. 2, Bonaventure explores the question of whether generation is the reason for paternity or the opposite, and in ad. 3, he writes: "For the Innascible is called the Father, because he is *not from another*; and to not be from another is to be first, and primacy is a noble *position*. For [being] first by reason of [primacy] to that extent is called a noble position and a condition, because, as will be seen, the positing of a second follows the positing of a first. Whence, because [he is] first, it follows that he is the beginning; and for that reason, whether in act or in habit, he is the beginning. Because, therefore the *reason of primacy* in some genus is the reason of [being] the beginning, for that reason, because the Father has primacy in respect to emanation, generation and procession, he generates and spirates." Bonaventure adds: "Because what moves one to say this, is first the ancient position of the great *doctors*, who said, that the innascibility in the Father is called the *font of plenitude*. But the font of plenitude consists in producing. But it is the case that the font of plenitude is said to be in Him not for this reason, because he produces a creature, because this fits with the three [divine persons]; nor for this reason, because he produces the Holy Spirit, because this fits with the Son: therefore the font of plenitude in the Father posits the generation in the same one."

²⁰ Ewert Cousins writes: "The Trinitarian processions, then, are seen as the expression of the Father's fecundity. In this perspective, Bonaventure developed a highly elab-

self-diffusion in the Trinity has profound implications for Bonaventure's metaphysics and doctrine of creation. Ewert Cousins writes:

[God's] transcendence consists precisely in his dynamic self-communication, but this self-communication is realized fully only at the heart of the divinity itself. His is a fecundity that breaks the bounds of all limitations and realizes itself adequately only in the generation of the Word and the spiration of the Holy Spirit. Thus God's fecundity does not have to be fitted on the Procrustean bed of creation. At the same time, his transcendent fecundity is the wellspring of creation and of his immanence in the world.²¹

The diffusion of God's being in the cosmos is not a necessary overflowing of the Godhead that an undernourished doctrine of emanation may suggest. Rather, the divine nature, originating in the Father and communicating itself perfectly in the Trinity, is the source of a wholly gratuitous and utterly fitting communication in the economy. All that exists freely originates in the innascible Father, and the *reditus* of creation will follow a similar arc of reduction to the Father.

The Word occupies a distinctive place as the wisdom of the Father in Bonaventure's doctrine of a dynamic and self-diffusing Trinity. As begotten, the Son expresses the *rationes aeternae* of the Father, and containing these fecund reasons, he not only reflects the wisdom of the Trinity *ad intra* but also communicates it *ad extra* in the divine act of creation.²² All that comes forth from God through the Word shares a fundamental likeness to its creator, and as such, created things reflect back to the Son and, so, to the Father; they illumine a way to God.²³ Cousins writes:

orated doctrine of the generation of the Son, as Image and Word of the Father. . . . Hence the mystery of the Trinity is seen precisely as the mystery of the divine fecundity rooted in the Father as source." See Cousins's *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1978), 51–52.

²¹ Ibid., 55.

²² Leonard J. Bowman offers a helpful introduction to this point in his "The Cosmic Exemplarism of Bonaventure," *Journal of Religion* 55 (1975): 181–98.

²³ Cousins suggests the following: "When the Father generates the Son, he produces in the Son the archetypes or *rationes aeternae* of all he can create. When God decrees to create *ad extra* in space and time, this creative energy flows from the Trinitarian

“Thus the Son is the link between the divinity and creation; for all of created reality is the expression of him and refers back to him, by way of exemplarism, that is by way of being grounded in him as in its eternal Exemplar.”²⁴ Alongside the doctrine of creation or emanation through the Word, Bonaventure integrates an Augustinian sense of the Platonic ideas as eternal forms in the divine mind, and as such, the divine mind is the formal exemplar of all that emanates from it, including created things.²⁵ In the *Collations in Hexaemeron*, Bonaventure writes: “Our intent, then, is to show that in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and that He Himself is the center point of all understanding.”²⁶ As eternal and incarnate Word, the Son expresses the content of divine knowledge and wisdom, himself becoming the hermeneutic for all understanding. In the *Lignum vitae*, Bonaventure speaks of Jesus as an “Inscribed Book” who, when properly read, leads back to union with the Father. He writes:

And this wisdom is written in Christ Jesus as in the book of life, in which God the Father has *hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* (Col 2:3). Therefore, the only-begotten Son of God, as the uncreated Word, is the book of wisdom and the light that is full of living eternal principles in the mind of the supreme Craftsman, as the inspired Word in the angelic intellects and the blessed, as the incarnate Word in rational minds united with the flesh. Thus throughout the entire kingdom *the*

fecundity and expresses itself according to the archetypes in the Son” (*Bonaventure*, 26). Zachary Hayes adds: “Here it is Bonaventure’s view that the divine mystery is within itself as a mystery of self-communicative love, and all that can come to be should the divine determine to communicate itself externally. Thus, internally and in terms of logical denotation, there is but one divine Word. But in terms of logical connotation, that single Word expresses the plurality of creatures in the cosmos external to God” (7).

²⁴ Cousins, *Bonaventure*, 26. In *Collationes in Hexaemeron* I:13, Bonaventure underscores this point when he writes: “From all eternity the Father begets a Son similar to Himself and expresses Himself and a likeness similar to Himself, and in so doing He expresses what He can do, and most of all, what He wills to do, and He expresses everything in Him, that is, in the Son or in that very Center, which so to speak is His Art.”

²⁵ See Cullen, *Bonaventure*, 72, for a treatment of Bonaventure’s appreciation of Augustine and the positing of forms in the mind of God.

²⁶ *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, I:11.

manifold wisdom of God (Eph 3:10) shines forth from him and in him, as in a mirror containing the beauty of all forms and lights as in a book in which all things are written according to the deep secrets of God.²⁷

Bonaventure presents the Son as inspired and incarnate Word who expresses the eternal reasons—as deep secrets—of the Father for human-kind. Moreover, the Son illumines or gives light to human understanding so that it may know divine wisdom.

Exemplarity and *Reductio*

The presentation of Jesus as a book, or *liber*, is noteworthy. Inasmuch as creation reflects the Word in a variety of ways, it offers sources for reduction in the general return of all things into God.²⁸ Bonaventure tellingly refers to these ways of reduction as “books,” noting particularly the books of Scripture, nature, the soul, and Jesus himself.²⁹ Early in the *Breviloquium*, Bonaventure makes an important reference to books and reduction; he writes: “From all we have said, we may gather that the created world is a kind of book reflecting, representing, and describing its Maker, the Trinity, at three different levels of expression: as a vestige, as an image, and as a likeness. . . . Through these successive levels, comparable to steps, the human intellect is designed to ascend gradually to the

²⁷ *Lignum vitae*, 46. All quotations for the *Lignum vitae* are taken from “The Tree of Life,” in *Bonaventure*, ed. Ewert Cousins (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978); citations refer to internal paragraph numbers.

²⁸ See parallel language in *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, II:12.

²⁹ George Tavad provides a helpful overview of the way in which Bonaventure thinks of “books” as means of reduction into God. He writes: “One of the viewpoints from which St. Bonaventure envisages many of his ideas is symbolically expressed in the word *liber*. The metaphor of the ‘book’ is indeed [sic] too frequent not to cover a typically Bonaventurian conception: man attains to God through reading Him in a book.” See *Transiency and Permanence: The Nature of Theology According to St. Bonaventure* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1974), 31. Tavad unpacks the books of Scripture, creation, and the soul in part one of his book. Concerning the book of Scripture, Thomas Herbst provides a strong example of the convergence of Christ, Scripture, and exemplarism in his essay “The Passion as Paradoxical Exemplarism in Bonaventure’s Commentary on the Gospel of John,” *Antonianum* 78 (2003): 209–48.

supreme Principle, which is God.”³⁰ Bonaventure adopts and regularly deploys the language of “vestige, image, and similitude” to describe the ways in which all things bear likeness to God. The books of Scripture, Christ, nature, or the soul illumine the wayfarer’s mind with knowledge of these vestiges, images, and similitudes, which, in turn, draw her back to God. Successful reading not only illumines but also promotes an exemplarity by which the reader can grow in resemblance to the Trinity through the Son. This positive affirmation of the cosmos’s character ties into Bonaventure’s deep Franciscan identity, which also appreciates the presence and doxological character of the Trinity’s *vestigia* in created things.³¹ This strong sense of the divine wisdom, revealed in Christ and present in the various books of Christian reflection, sets the stage for the way in which *reductio* as journey leads all things into one in God.

Bonaventure’s doctrine of exemplarity registers value in the created natures of things precisely as expressions of the Word. He builds on the language of exemplarity set out in the *Breviloquium* in the *Itinerarium*; he writes: “In relation to our position in creation, the universe is a ladder by which we can ascend into God. Some created things are vestiges, others images; some are material, others spiritual; some are temporal, others everlasting; some are outside us, others within us. This means *to be led [deduci] in the path of God*.”³² As intelligent natures, human beings begin as images, and through their *reductio* into God, they become similitudes or very close likenesses to God. Hellman suggests that Bonaventure’s exemplarism unfolds in both a “horizontal” and “vertical” relationship with God; he writes:

Each created nature is arranged in its inner constitution according to the exemplar of the horizontal order in the inner-Trinitarian

³⁰ Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, II.12.1. Similar language is deployed in I *Sent.*, 3.1.2 and 2.1.1., ad 5; II *Sent.*, 16.2.3; *Collationes in Hexaemeron* 2.20–27 and 3.3–9; and the *Itinerarium* 1.2.

³¹ Francis’s appreciation of God’s presence in and through nature in writings such as the “Canticle of the Sun” set the tone for Bonaventure’s work. These same prepositions, “in” and “through,” are the methodological ordering of the *Itinerarium*, which traces God’s presence in and through vestiges and images of God. See Delio’s study “The Canticle of Brother Sun: A Song of Christ Mysticism,” *Franciscan Studies* 52 (1992): 1–22.

³² Bonaventure, *Itinerarium*, I:2.

ian life of the one God. . . . The *reductio* of the human person to God (vertical order) is thereby effected by a conformity (*conformitas*), which is the horizontal order, not in the faintness of the *vestigium* or *imago*, but in the stronger way of *similitudo*.³³

Human beings return or journey reductively into God in vertical ascent, but this unfolds through the ongoing and horizontal examination of God's presence in the created order and through grace. The horizontal order promotes increasing exemplarity, which aims at *similitudinem*, making full union with God possible. At the root of Bonaventure's doctrine of exemplarity, then, human beings are *capax Dei*, and action ordered to a person's return to God increasingly likens her to the Exemplar. The interior and immanent life of the Trinity, revealed most fully in Jesus, is the archetype for reductive human action, and Bonaventure's emphasis on exemplarity measures the progress of the journey. Made in the image of the Trinity through the eternal Word, human beings obtain the likeness of similitudes through the infusion of grace and corresponding human action. The outcome of reductive illumination, experienced through exemplarity, is a hierarchized soul that is increasingly conformed to Christ crucified so that final union is possible.

When addressing the specific *reductio* of human beings to God, Bonaventure consistently acknowledges the obstacle of sin and its injurious effects on the *imago Dei* in human nature. Christ's Incarnation and passion make a restoration possible, and so for Bonaventure, Christ's saving work lies at the center of the return of creation to God. Access to the saving effects of Christ's work, however, is gained through grace. Bonaventure writes: "It thus follows that [Jesus] restores us by enduring the penalty on our behalf in his assumed nature, and by infusing re-creating grace that binds us to its source, making us members of Christ."³⁴ Christ's *acta* and *passa* make salvation possible, and its effects are communicated through the infusion of sanctifying grace. Grace, including its expression in the sacraments, is therefore fundamentally restorative

³³ Hellman, *Divine and Created Order*, 26.

³⁴ Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, V.3.3; see also 2 *Sent.*, 26.4, where Bonaventure identifies grace as the proximate principle of restoration from sin and the incarnate Word as its remote cause.

of human nature, healing it and enabling its increasing similitude to the exemplar image.³⁵

Bonaventure divides the *Breviloquium* into seven parts with “On the Incarnation of the Word” falling at the exact center (part four); “On The Grace of the Holy Spirit” follows in part five and outlines the way of return in light of Christ’s saving act. In the first section of part five, Bonaventure defines sanctifying grace (*gratia gratum faciens*) as that which conforms the soul in increasing likeness to God.³⁶ He writes:

If then, the rational spirit is to become worthy of eternal happiness, it must partake of this God-conforming influence. This influence that renders the soul dei-form comes from God, conforms us to God, and leads us to God as our end. It therefore restores the image of our mind to likeness with the blessed Trinity—not only in terms of its order of origin, but also in terms of its rectitude of choice and of its rest in enjoying [God].³⁷

Grace generally conforms the recipient’s *imago* to the exemplar. *Reductio* taken as the return of human beings to God thus depends on sanctifying grace as integral to its progress. Bonaventure additionally insists that the provision and effectiveness of grace is possible only through the free cooperation of the recipient, and so grace reducing the wayfarer to God depends on free, meritorious action.³⁸ He writes: “But once we possess this [sanctifying] grace, it merits its own increase if we make good use of it here below, and this merit is a just claim [*de digno*]. . . . Furthermore, our free choice is a source [of the increase of grace] by

³⁵ For a treatment of Bonaventure on the sacraments, see Paula Jean Miller’s *Marriage: The Sacrament of Divine-Human Communion* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Herald Press, 1996), 36–76, for its discussion of “The Sacramental Theory of St. Bonaventure.”

³⁶ Bonaventure writes: “Finally, grace is a gift that purifies, illumines, and perfects the soul; that vivifies, reforms, and strengthens it, that elevates it, likens it, and joins it to God, and thereby makes it acceptable to God. This is a gift of such kind that it is rightly and properly called ‘the grace that makes pleasing’ (*gratia gratum faciens*)” (*Breviloquium*, V:13).

³⁷ *Breviloquium*, V:13.

³⁸ For a full treatment of Bonaventure on grace and its relation to merit, see my dissertation, “‘Be Glad and Rejoice for Your Reward Is Very Great in Heaven’: ‘Reward’ in the Theology of Aquinas and Bonaventure” (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2008), particularly chapter 4, “Bonaventure and Reward in the Systematic Works.”

virtue of its cooperating and meriting, to the extent that the free will cooperates with grace and makes what belongs to grace its own.”³⁹ The human action that prevenes and follows grace is critical to progress. Bonaventure thus conceives of the *reductio* in salvation as a dynamic cooperation between God and human beings, which results in the increasing conformity or similitude of the human person to God through the Word. Grace and human action are the tools by which Bonaventure’s doctrine of exemplarity is unfolded in the economy. They make reading the books of nature, the soul, Scripture, and Christ possible, and insofar as these concepts underlie reductive progress, it opens an interpretive path to Bonaventure’s spiritual works.

Reductio in the Spiritual Works

Bonaventure’s *mystical opuscula* comprise a variety of his most widely circulated and enduring works. This loose genre includes texts produced during his tenure as minister general of the Friars Minor (1257–74), especially from its early years as he endeavored to stabilize and focus the order’s identity.⁴⁰ The diversity of these works, even as a subset of Bonaventure’s larger corpus, is remarkable. While they generally commend a contemplative journey as a means of approaching union with God, the subject matter of these models varies widely.⁴¹ They encompass a variety of *libri* including, loosely, the soul/nature (*De triplici via*, *Solil-*

³⁹ *Breviloquium*, V.2.4. Bonaventure’s affirmation of merit here is very strong; he makes the notable claim that, when the free will properly uses sanctifying grace, the person can make a “condign” claim to divine rewards. Bonaventure qualifies this claim with greater precision in the *Sentence Commentary*, where he stipulates that the condignity of merit arises not merely from the movement of the free will but also the power of the grace given by God and the manner of the meritorious work itself; see II *Sent.*, 26.2.3, resp.

⁴⁰ Bonaventure’s election as Minister General unfolds in the midst of controversy concerning his predecessor, John of Parma, who may have been pressured to resign for his support of the spiritual wing of the order and its interpretation of Joachimite ideas. See Rosalind B. Brooke’s “St. Bonaventure as Minister General,” in S. *Bonaventura Francescano*, ed. Cesare Vasoli et al. (Todi, Italy: Centro di Studi sulla Spiritualità Medievale, 1974), 75–105.

⁴¹ Works belonging to this category include: *Soliloquium de quatuor mentalibus* (1259), *De triplici via* (1259), *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* (1259), *Lignum vitae* (1260), *Legenda maior* (1263), *De perfectione vitae ad sorores* (1259), *De sex alis Seraphim*, and *Vitis mystica*. Some scholarly differences remain as to the precise dating of these works.

oquium, and *Itinerarium*), Jesus/Scripture (*Lignum vitae* and *Vitis mystica*), and St. Francis of Assisi (*Legenda maior*). When expositied through the lens of *reductio* as elucidated in Bonaventure's theological method, metaphysics, and doctrine of exemplarity, the journeys of these works gain not only greater theological significance but also overall coherence as complementary tools for *reditus ad Deum*. Appreciating the reductive quality of these works assists in (1) synthesizing their seemingly disparate contents and in (2) aligning their emphases on grace and human action with Bonaventure's larger vision of God's nature and the telos of creation. To that end, an examination of the *Itinerarium*, *Lignum vitae*, and *Legenda maior* on these points will demonstrate the thematic value of *reductio* for reading the spiritual works.

Bonaventure writes the *Itinerarium*, *Lignum vitae*, and *Legenda* in the early years of his generalate, and in their distinctive ways, all three works promote the spiritual identity of the Franciscan Order under Bonaventure, giving concrete expression to the way in which the friars practice a life aimed at union with God. The three works were broadly popular, enjoying wide manuscript dissemination, yet their subject matter differs in striking ways.⁴² The *Itinerarium* uses the imagery of the six-winged seraph that appeared before Francis on Mount La Verna to structure an inductive journey using the material world, including the soul, to ultimately approach divine nature and reach the *transitus*. The *Lignum vitae* aims at a similar passing over, but it approaches that end through the *acta* and *passa* of Jesus who is the Tree of Life; exemplarity is cultivated by a direct meditation on Jesus's life.⁴³ Bonaventure writes the *Legenda* under different auspices than the *Itinerarium* and

⁴² *Legenda maior*, approved in 1266, is the most disseminated work of Bonaventure because its approbation included an order that every friary should receive a copy; more than four hundred manuscripts exist. The Quaracchi edition of the *Lignum vitae* (VIII:xli-1) lists 175 extant manuscripts in its introduction to the text. Arthur Holder reports that at least 138 extant manuscripts exist for the *Itinerarium*, with at least ninety-five coming before the end of the fourteenth century; see *Christian Spirituality and the Classics* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 118.

⁴³ Bonaventure states: "To enkindle in us this affection, to shape this understanding and to imprint this memory [of Jesus crucified], I have endeavored to gather this bundle of myrrh from the forest of the holy Gospel, which treats at length the life, passion, and glorification of Jesus Christ" (*Lignum vitae*, Prologue: 2). See parallels for the theological ordering of Scripture in *Breviloquium*, Prologue: V. Moreover, Bonaventure uses the same "Tree of Life" language for Christ in the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, I:17.

Lignum vitae; the 1260 General Chapter of Narbonne commissioned him to write an official *vita* of Francis for use by the order. Even as the text is biographical, it nevertheless presents Francis's life as an ascending journey leading to his reception of the stigmata and final passing over into life with God. Using the language of purgation, illumination, and perfection, Bonaventure exemplifies Francis's *vita* as a journey that hierarchizes his person and disposes him for passing over into God.⁴⁴ The three works employ diverse subjects on which to pattern a journey to union with God. *Prima facie*, their content raises questions about the proper object for contemplation and the direction of human action in its return to God. A closer consideration of their prologues, order of human action, and presentation of union with God reflects deep coherence arising out of Bonaventure's larger metaphysics and doctrine of *reductio*.

The prologues of the *Itinerarium*, *Lignum vitae*, and *Legenda* share deep commonalities concerning the goal and direction of human life. Perhaps most importantly, all three works commend themselves as journeys moving toward a goal or terminus. The wayfarer begins in a particular place or state, and by following the guidelines of the works, he may arrive at a new and desired end.⁴⁵ Bonaventure presents this end as peaceful

⁴⁴ The *Legenda maior* consists of fifteen total chapters. The first four chronologically outline the early stages of his biography, and the final two instruct the reader on his death and canonization. Chapters 5–13 break from the chronology and present Bonaventure's life following the threefold order of his purgation (chaps. 5–7), illumination (chaps. 8–10), and perfection (chaps. 11–13). Concerning this organization, Bonaventure writes: "To avoid confusion, I did not always weave the story together in chronological order. Rather, I strove to maintain a more thematic order, relating the same events that happened at different times, and to different themes events that happened at the same time, as seemed appropriate" (Prologue: 4).

⁴⁵ Several good treatments of the nature of "journey" in the *Itinerarium* are available; they include Ambrose Nguyen Van Si's "The Journey-Symbols in St. Bonaventure's *Itinerarium*," *Greyfriars Review* 9 (1995): 309–30; Ewert Cousin's "Bonaventure and Dante: The Role of Christ in the Spiritual Journey," in *Itinerarium: The Idea of Journey*, ed. Leonard J. Bowman (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1983), 113–31; and Bernard McGinn's *Ascension and Introversion in the "Itinerarium Mentis in Deum"*, in *S. Bonaventura 1274–1974*, cit., III, 535–52. George Tavad's *Transiency and Permanence*, particularly chapter 12, "Transitus," 229–47, also deals with the notion of journey but not as an explicit topic or as limited to the *Itinerarium*. Studies of the *Lignum vitae* are scarce; see Richard S. Martignetti's *Saint Bonaventure's Tree of Life: Theology of the Mystical Journey* (Grottaferrata: Frati Editori di Quaracchi, 2004) as a potential source. Important studies of the *Leg-*

union with God. The end is gained reductively through (1) a reordering of the wayfarer's nature to the divine archetype and (2) a transitus through the crucified Christ. These progressive steps necessarily precede union, which Bonaventure describes as peace or rest in the heavenly homeland. He describes the steps and goal in the *Itinerarium's* prologue:

The six wings of the Seraph can rightly be taken to symbolize the six levels of illumination by which, as if by steps or stages, the soul can pass over to peace through ecstatic elevations of Christian wisdom. There is no other path but through the burning love of the Crucified, a love which so transformed Paul into Christ when he "was carried up to the third heaven" (2 Cor 12:2) that he could say: "With Christ I am nailed to the cross. I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20).⁴⁶

Paul's words in Galatians are the very words with which Bonaventure begins the *Lignum vitae*. He writes: "The true worshipper of God and disciple of Christ, who desires to conform to the Savior of all men crucified for him, should, above all, strive with an earnest endeavor of soul to carry about continuously both in his soul and flesh the Cross of Christ until he can truly feel in himself what the Apostle said above."⁴⁷ These works call the wayfarer into increasing conformity with the eternal and incarnate archetype so that final conformity with Christ crucified—cruciformity—

enda maior include Cousins's "Francis of Assisi and Bonaventure: Mysticism and Theological Interpretation," in *The Other Side of God*, ed. Peter L. Berger (New York: Anchor Press, 1981), 74–103, and his "St. Bonaventure's Life of Francis and the Monastic Archetype," in *Blessed Simplicity*, ed. Ewert Cousins et al. (New York: Seabury, 1982), 135–41. More recently, Rosalind Brooke offers a helpful and contextualized treatment of Bonaventure's presentation and deployment of Francis in her *Images of Francis: Responses to Sainthood in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 231–68.

⁴⁶ *Itinerarium*, Prologue: 3.

⁴⁷ *Lignum vitae*, Prologue: 1. For useful study on the role of the Cross in Bonaventure's spiritual writing, see Elizabeth Dreyer's "A Condescending God: Bonaventure's Theology of the Cross," in *The Cross in the Christian Tradition from Paul to Bonaventure*, ed. Elizabeth A. Dreyer (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2000), 192–210. See also Thomas A. Nairn's "'Fixed with Christ to the Cross': Dying in the Franciscan Tradition," in *Dying as a Franciscan: Approaching Our Transitus to Eternal Life, Accompanying Others on the Way to Theirs*, ed. Daria Mitchell (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2011), 15–29.

marks the perfection of human nature and the *regressus* into final union. The incarnate Word reflects the door of return in reductive symmetry with the eternal Word through whom all things went out from God.

In all the spiritual works, and especially in the *Legenda*, Francis looms as an exemplar of cruciformity, having received the stigmata as the culmination of his perfection. In the *Legenda's* prologue, Bonaventure presents Francis as the perfectly conformed and ordered individual; he writes: "Like a hierarchic man, [Francis] was lifted up in a *fiery chariot*, as will be seen quite clearly in the course of his life; therefore it can be reasonably proved that he came *in the spirit and power of Elijah*."⁴⁸ Francis's person, like that of Elijah who ascends to God, is hierarchized so that he is disposed for union with God by increasing similitude with the first principle. In each prologue, then, union with God stands as the terminus of the journey, and that end shapes the means by which it is reached. When the reader comes to the last chapter of each work, passing over is possible through having a certain exemplary likeness to Christ, a cruciformity that approaches similitude with Christ. Moreover, the end itself is a reductive one in which the wayfarer is drawn back into God from whom he emerged in the act of creation.

The disparate subject matter of the journeys could indeed suggest three unrelated pathways to union, yet the earlier discussion of *reductio* helps to demonstrate deep, structural integrity among the three works. Uniformity in diversity is possible because of Bonaventure's larger conception of metaphysics and corresponding doctrine of creation. In the prologue to the *Itinerarium*, Bonaventure offers a glimpse into his thinking about the structure and inspiration for the work; he writes: "While I was there [on Mount La Verna] reflecting on various ways by which the soul ascends into God, there came to mind, among other things, the miracle which had occurred to blessed Francis in this very place: the vision of a winged Seraph in the form of the Crucified."⁴⁹ While Bonaventure importantly presents Francis's reception of the stigmata as inspiration for the structure of the *Itinerarium*, it is his reference to the "various ways" (*aliquas*) of ascent that is intriguing. Contemplative ascent must

⁴⁸ *Legenda maior*, Prologue: 1. All citations for the *Legenda maior* are taken from Bonaventure, trans. Ewert Cousins (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978), 51–116; references refer to internal chapters and paragraph numbers.

⁴⁹ *Itinerarium*, Prologue: 3.

aim at reductive union, but the subject matter itself can differ; Francis's personal journey to the reception of the stigmata, while archetypal, is one way "among other things" (*inter alia*) that could structure an ascent. Francis is one *liber* among others such that, while the *Itinerarium* takes inspiration from his experience of the stigmata, it actually uses the book of nature for its material. No explicit details from Francis's life or admonitions are included as instructions for the journey; those are found in the *Legenda maior*. The books of nature, Francis, or Scripture are acceptable subjects for contemplation and action as long as they reductively reorder the wayfarer's nature and conform her to the crucified Christ.⁵⁰ Bonaventure anchors the acceptability of different books in his certainty that all created and revealed knowledge emanates from the Word as metaphysical principle for all that exists. Just as Bonaventure argues in the *De reductione*, all branches of knowledge lead back to that which is reliably expressed by Christ in Scripture. Armed with a firm sense of reduction, one can see that the three journeys draw the wayfarer back to God through Christ because the subject matter conveys the eternal reasons expressed in the incarnate Word. Bonaventure's overarching doctrine of reductive metaphysics thus grounds and organizes the various ways by which the soul may move into God.

If the *mystical opuscula* measure progress by increasing conformity to Christ, then Bonaventure's doctrine of exemplarity drives the conception of progress toward union. Generally speaking, the wayfarer ought to bear in his body and soul the marks of Christ crucified. The works under consideration all outline a practical program for successful conformity: (1) the wayfarer must fundamentally orient his desire or *affectus* toward the goal of union with God; (2) this *affectus* must be healed and fortified by God's action through grace; and (3) the graced wayfarer must freely cooperate in his growing conformity through corresponding good works. These steps cohere with Bonaventure's larger conceptions of exemplarity and illumination as the reductive means by which created things are consummated in God. The steps also take seriously

⁵⁰ *Lignum vitae* affirms Christ's cosmic exemplarity and source of *exitus-reditus*; Bonaventure writes: "As all things are produced through the Word eternally spoken, so all things are restored, advanced and completed through the Word united to the flesh. Therefore he is truly and properly called Jesus, *because there is no other name under heaven given to men by which one can obtain salvation*" (48).

the fallen state of human nature. They insist on a reordering of desire and increasing rectitude of the wayfarer's nature, which is accomplished through grace and reciprocal human action. The *Itinerarium* soberly acknowledges and outlines the chief effects of sin; Bonaventure writes:

Yet the reason [for ignorance of God as First Principle] is close at hand: for the human mind, distracted by cares, does not enter into itself through memory, clouded by sense images, it does not turn back (*redit*) to itself through intelligence; allured away by concupiscence, it does not turn back (*revertitur*) to itself through desire for inner sweetness and spiritual joy. Thus lying totally in these things of sense, it cannot reenter (*reintrare*) into itself as into the image of God.⁵¹

The fall has wrought disorder in the soul's powers of memory, intellect, and will so that sinners are irrationally drawn to lower sense objects and driven by concupiscence; in this condition, they cannot regain their image reflection of the Trinity. The spiritual works thus demand a reorientation of desire. Considering Jesus's denial by Peter, the *Lignum vitae* addresses the wayfarer: "O whoever you are, who at the word of an insistent servant, that is your flesh, by will or act have shamelessly denied Christ, who suffered for you, remember the passion of your beloved Master and go out with Peter to weep most bitterly over yourself."⁵² Using a different medium, Bonaventure nevertheless acknowledges the same problem; sinners must reorient their wills away from sense objects (slavery to the flesh) toward God as proper object of affection. As a hierarchized man, Francis illustrates progressively perfected desire: "Realizing that while he was *in the body*, he was *exiled from the Lord*, since he was made totally insensible to earthly desires through *love of Christ*, the servant of Christ Francis strove to keep his spirit in the presence of God, *by praying without ceasing*."⁵³ Misdirected and private desires deform the proper hierarchy of the human soul as image of the Trinity, yet Francis's love of Jesus exemplifies the way forward.

⁵¹ *Itinerarium*, IV:1.

⁵² *Lignum vitae*, 21.

⁵³ *Legenda*, X:1.

Aware of the deleterious effects of sin, Bonaventure understands that the wayfarer needs help to rise from sin. Even rightly ordered *affectus* requires exterior direction.⁵⁴ Grace constitutes the remedial help by which God initiates the reorientation and hierarchization of the soul. When speaking of Francis's conversion, Bonaventure asserts priority and emphasis on grace in explaining the origin of Francis's transformation in virtue; he writes: "First endowed with the gifts of divine grace, he was then enriched by the merit of unshakeable virtue."⁵⁵ Grace illumines the mind with greater knowledge of God as end, and it strengthens the soul with infused virtue so that the recipient not only knows but wills actions that lead to the proper end. Citing the theological virtues as the principle effects of grace, the *Itinerarium* stresses their power to conform the recipient; Bonaventure writes: "When this is achieved, our spirit is made hierarchical in order to mount upward, according to its conformity to the heavenly Jerusalem which no man enters unless it first descend into his heart through grace."⁵⁶ An important way in which grace informs the soul is by restoring its power to properly read sensible signs as pointing toward God through growth in virtue; in all three works, grace cultivates desire and order so that the wayfarer can read the *liber* under discussion and continue the *reductio*.⁵⁷

Consistent with the act of creation and a return through exemplarity, human beings must freely cooperate in their return to God. Without free

⁵⁴ Bonaventure recognizes not only the importance of desire but its "enkindling" by God through prevenient inspiration or illumination; he writes: "For no one is in any way disposed for divine contemplation that leads to mystical ecstasy unless like Daniel he is a *man of desires* (Dan. 9:23). Such desires are enkindled in us in two ways: by an outcry of prayer that makes us *call aloud in the groaning of our heart* (Ps. 37:9) and by the flash of insight by which the mind turns most directly and intently towards the rays of light" (*Itinerarium*, Prologue: 3).

⁵⁵ *Legenda*, Prologue: 1; see further reference to grace at II:1.

⁵⁶ *Itinerarium*, IV:4.

⁵⁷ While grace is available through a variety of instruments, Bonaventure insists that Christ's Incarnation institutes the sacraments as reliable means of healing and orientation to God. Reflecting on Christ pierced by the centurion's lance, he writes: "While blood mixed with water flowed, the price of our salvation was poured forth, which gushing from the secret fountain of the heart gave power to the sacraments of the Church to convey the life of grace and to become for those already living in Christ a draught of the fountain of living water springing up into eternal life" (*Lignum vitae*, 30).

choice, no natural exemplarity exists between the image and archetypal principle. The spiritual works affirm meritorious human action through an emphasis on desire and ascent, yet the journeys themselves convey distinctive actions that culminate in the *transitus*. The *Lignum vitae* often prescribes imitation of Jesus or other characters in the biblical narrative as constitutive of successful return.⁵⁸ Bonaventure presents human cooperation as an opportunity to practice increasingly radical conformity of will and action, so that the wayfarer may say with Paul, “with Christ I am nailed to the cross.” This growing similitude parallels an increasing and graced capacity to properly read and follow the signs found in the different *libri* so that, by his properly hierarchized nature, the wayfarer desires and effects a return to God in the manner by which God has created him.

Progress toward similitude further prepares the wayfarer for judgment. Bonaventure argues that Jesus will return as both “truthful witness” and “wrathful judge,” opening the book of consciences and recalling everyone’s deeds; he exhorts his readers: “There is, then, a great necessity imposed upon us to be good, since all our actions are within view of the all-seeing judge.”⁵⁹ The *Legenda* carries the same commendation to good works, but it instantiates it in the example of Francis. Bonaventure suggests that Francis cooperates with virtues such as austerity, humility, and poverty, thereby becoming a progressively conformed wayfarer who was “a resplendent mirror of all holiness.”⁶⁰ Reduction into God, then, is not merely a passive return of the wayfarer to God through the intermediate work of the Incarnation and saving action of Jesus. Rather, illumined and

⁵⁸ See, for example, Jesus’s embrace of Judas in the Garden of Gethsemane; Bonaventure writes: “This meekness was given as an example to mortal men, so that when exasperated by a friend, our human weakness would no longer say: *If my enemy had reviled me, I could have borne it*, because here was a man, another self, who seemed to be a companion and friend who ate the bread of Christ” (17). *Imitatio Christi* is by no means the only action commended in the text; prayer, contrition, imitation of other characters in the narrative, praise, and thanksgiving are also frequent themes.

⁵⁹ *Lignum vitae*, 41. Bonaventure quotes from Boethius’s *De consolatione philosophiae*, V, prosa 6.

⁶⁰ Bonaventure writes: “In his own estimation he was nothing but a sinner, although in truth he was a resplendent mirror of all holiness. He strove to build himself up upon this virtue *like an architect laying the foundations* for he had learned this from Christ” (*Legenda*, VI:1). Cousins labels the presentation of Francis’s “condescension” through virtue into contrast with his “ascension” through grace as a notable “coincidence of opposites” (*Bonaventure and the Coincidence*, 193–95).

reformed by grace, the wayfarer grows in similitude to the Trinity through the natural and meritorious exercise of the free will. As the will conforms in desire and discrete acts to the incarnate Word, it reductively reflects the interior life of the Trinity expressed particularly in the eternal Word who is the wholly free and principle agent of all that is good in the economy. The mystical works thus aim at reductive conformity as the proper disposition and anticipation for the *transitus* into God, yet this rests on a metaphysics and doctrine of exemplarity shaped by *reductio*. Seeing the reductive shape of the journey, as normed by these commitments, helps the wayfarer to interpret the distinctive states of conformity and perfection in the *Itinerarium*, *Lignum vitae*, and *Legenda* so that she can achieve their ends even if she does not perfectly resemble Francis or Christ crucified.

Conclusion

Having examined Bonaventure's use of *reductio* as a pattern for the journey of Christian life, three points inform an overall conclusion. First, Bonaventure's use of the *reductio* provides systematic integration among various points in his teachings. The common reductive arc that informs his theological method and metaphysics also sets the terms for his doctrines of exemplarity, divine illumination, grace, sacraments, and merit. It frames, for example, the purpose of divine illumination as God's reform of the image so that it may more perfectly reflect God's triune life. Similarly, it links Bonaventure's strong emphasis on the sacraments as signs and sources of remedial grace with the larger thematic of drawing all things back into God through the Word. Bonaventure's consistent emphasis on the Word's roles in creation and salvation also highlights that his doctrines of God and Christology cohere with other topics under the frame of *reductio*. Inasmuch as the immanent life of the Trinity is perfectly diffusive and reflective of its own dynamic life, so must all things created through the Word bear that same likeness. For Bonaventure, then, the classic loci of theology find important thematic unity in the movement of *reductio*, which originates in the Trinity and informs the cosmos. A corollary of this conclusion is that the atomization of Bonaventure's theology, particularly apart from the concept of *reductio*, threatens to impoverish expositions of topics like exemplarity, grace, or even contemplation.

A second conclusion recognizes that Bonaventure's use of the *re-*

ductio enhances a more basic pattern of *exitus-reditus* found in contemporaneous conceptions of creation and salvation. Bonaventure presents reduction into God as something more than merely an inevitable retraction of all things into God. The *reditus* is informed by a dynamic doctrine of exemplarity that sees the object returning to God as one being refined in its reflection of the Trinity. As the spiritual works suggest, *reductio* occurs through the reorientation of intellect and will through proper *affectus*, and moreover, progress depends on free cooperation. The wayfarer must read the signs and choose to grow in conformity with the incarnate Word. This conformity, parsed as “cruciformity,” is not a low-flying imitation of Jesus’s *acta* and *passa*; it is a radical configuration of soul and body to the triune God. The *reditus* implied in Bonaventure’s work thus suggests an active conforming of the person to the Trinitarian life expressed by the Word. The hierarchized soul is a similitude of the Trinity who reflects the *innascibilitas* of the Father, the creative agency and wisdom of the Son, and the perfective love of the Holy Spirit. The freedom of will ordered toward meritorious action, which is commended in the spiritual works, thus mirrors, at its foundation, the free and loving action of the divine persons in communion who together express the divine *Summum Bonum*. The *Collationes in Hexaemeron* convey this commitment in its last complete collation: “It has been explained how the soul is hierarchized in relation to the light of the Sun, in that this Sun is alive, shining, and warm. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are the origin of all illuminations or irradiation by reason of excellence, influence, and pre-eminence; and in that the soul is assimilated to the Sun through conformity and by reason of the fullness of the hierarchical disposition, and because of a threefold aspect.”⁶¹ Reductive perfection is not simply a completing of the work begun in creation; rather, *reditus* refracted through Bonaventure’s use of *reductio* sees human beings returned into union with and through the Trinity.

Finally, as the discussion of the *Itinerarium*, *Lignum vitae*, and *Legenda maior* suggests, the pattern of *reductio* yields essential thematic unity among Bonaventure’s writings. Works such as the *Breviloquium* and the *De reductione* explicitly acknowledge the reductive pattern of knowledge anchored in revelation through the eternal Word, and this

⁶¹ *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, XXIII:1.

commitment links what seem to be a large systematic work and a singular treatise on the arts in a common enterprise. What is more striking is that the divisions between Bonaventure's magisterial works, spiritual works, and collations lose something of their sharp distinction. While Bonaventure often addresses himself to specific questions or topics in his works, they share, in varying ways, the common hermeneutical conviction that, to understand God is to understand that all reality is being retraced into the triune God. Moreover, all knowledge is revealed by God through the Word toward that very end. These convictions begin to provide overall coherence and direction to the entire Bonaventurian corpus. The diverse content, for example, of the spiritual works can be more fully mapped onto the magisterial works; they constitute *libri* that illumine concrete ways of return, yet as they do so, they convey the theological insights of the magisterial works. The potentially confounding differences among the *mystical opuscula* are similarly relaxed when mapped on the pattern of *reductio* so that Francis's journey shares constitutive characteristics with a reading of Jesus's origin, passion and glorification. There is potential, here, for systematization of Bonaventure's works in important ways. His sermons, disputed questions, and biblical commentaries may be read for their reductive dimensions as well. With that in mind, for the student of Bonaventure, a renewed attention to *reductio* thus offers another potential tool in the retrieval and use of Bonaventure's theology. 