Introduction

"No work of St. Bonaventure is more widely known and more justly praised than the brief treatise called the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*. For clarity of expression, mastery of organization, and density of thought, the *Itinerarium* ranks as one of the purest gems of medieval theology."[1]

So wrote the University of Chicago's Bernard McGinn in an early article on the *Itinerarium*. In his later multi-volume series on the history of Western Christian mysticism, he would add: "Perhaps no other treatise of comparable size in the history of Western mysticism packs so much into one seamless whole."[2] It is perhaps no surprise, then, that when Professor McGinn assembled texts for his one-volume work *The Essential Writings of Christian Mysticism*, he included large sections of the *Itinerarium*.[3] So too, the great medieval historian of Christian philosophy Étienne Gilson would comment on the *Itinerarium* that it was the work of Bonaventure's "which contains the totality of his profound intuitions."[4]

It was in October of 1259 that the young minister general of the Franciscan Order, Giovanni di Fidanza, known by his religious name "Bonaventure," stopped off on his way to an upcoming General Chapter of the Franciscans to make a spiritual retreat. Elected only two years earlier in the midst of bitter disputes among his Franciscan brethren over the future direction of the Order and sensing that these conflicts would likely continue to unsettle their upcoming deliberations, Bonaventure chose as the place of his retreat the Francisca shrine on Mt. La Verna in central Italy, a place also known by its Roman name, Mt. Alverna.

[1] Bernard McGinn, "Ascension and Introversion in the *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*," in *S. Bonaventura 1274–1973*, vol. 3, *Philosophica* (Grottaferrata, Rome: Collegio S. Bonaventura, 1973), 535.

[2] Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism, 1200–1350*, vol. 3, *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 105.

[3] Bernard McGinn, *The Essential Writings of Christian Mysticism* (New York: Random House, 2006), 162–171.

[4] Étienne Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, trans. Illtyd Trethowan and F. J. Sheed (London: Sheed and Ward, 1940), 54.

Originally given to St. Francis by Count Orlando of Chiusi in 1213 as a place for spiritual retreat, by 1218 the chapel of Santa Maria degli Angeli had been built there for the friars. This was the place where St. Francis went in August of 1224 to keep a forty days fast in preparation for the Feast of St. Michael and where, on or about September 14 of that year, while deep in prayer, Francis received a mystical vision of Christ "under the appearance" of "a Seraph having six wings" from which he received "imprinted in his flesh" the stigmata or wounds of Christ.[5] And because of its deep connection to St. Francis himself, it was here, on Mt. Alverna, where Bonaventure stopped for his own spiritual retreat to commemorate Francis's feast day on October 4 of 1259.

While he was in prayer, reflecting on Francis's vision, Bonaventure says he conceived the plan for the *Itinerarium*: a six-stage mental and spiritual ascent or "journey" arranged in a series of three pairs, moving from the exterior world to the interior mind, and from the interior mind to things above the mind, culminating in a seventh stage of rest *in* God.[6] Bonaventure gave visual expression to this ascent by associating the six stages in three groups of two with the three pairs of wings of the Seraph St. Francis had seen in his vision years before. And yet, it was not in Bonaventure's character to settle on one image where four or five might serve just as well or better. Thus it would actually be more accurate to say that the six wings of the Seraph were merely the most prominent image among many Bonaventure used. He also compared his six-stage "journey" of the mind into God to (a) the six days of creation, culminating in the seventh day of rest; (b) the six steps said to have led up to Solomon's

[5] Here is the description from Bonaventure's *Life of Blessed Francis* (the *Legenda maior*): "On a certain morning about the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, while Francis was praying on the mountainside, he saw a Seraph having six wings, fiery as well as brilliant, descend from the grandeur of heaven. And when in swift flight, it had arrived at a spot in the air near the man of God, there appeared between the wings the likeness of a man crucified, with his hands and feet extended in the form of a cross and fastened to a cross. Two of the wings were raised above his head, two were extended for flight, and two covered his whole body. Seeing this, he was overwhelmed and his heart was flooded with a mixture of joy and sorrow. He rejoiced at the gracious way Christ looked upon him under the appearance of the Seraph, but the fact that He was fastened to a cross pierced his soul with a sword of compassionate sorrow" (cf. Luke 2:35). See *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, vol. 2, *The Founder*, ed. Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short (New York: New City Press, 2000), 632.

[6] See *Itinerarium*, prol., 2–3. Throughout this volume, I will be quoting from the English translation by Zachary Hayes, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, ed. Philotheus Boehner, Works of Saint Bonaventure, vol. 2 (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2002); hereafter, *Itinerarium*. Whenever the Latin text has been quoted, it too has been taken from the facing page of that same source.

throne; (c) the six days Moses spent in the midst of the cloud before God called Him to the top of Sinai; and (d) the six days after which Christ took the disciples up the mountain to be transfigured before them. Whichever image he was using, the goal was to communicate a clear, sixfold or sevenfold structure "whose basic outline, though not its details," as one prominent pair of Bonaventure scholars inform us, "could be understood by even the simplest friar."[7]

How much of the *Itinerarium* could be understood or appreciated by "the simplest friar" is not one I will try to answer here; it is, after all, a *very* sophisticated text and not what one would call "uncomplicated. But I think it is right to say that the goal of Bonaventure's "basic outline," especially the choice to associate the six stages of the ascent with the six wings of the Seraph, was to make the work more easily understood and remembered.

Bonaventure himself admits that the work is complex, telling his reader that "it is important that you not run through these reflections in a hurry, but that you take your time and ruminate over them very slowly" (*morosissime ruminandus*).[8] And as anyone who has read the *Itinerarium* knows, it cannot simply be read the way one would read one of *The Canterbury Tales* or Bernard's sermon *On Loving God*. The sections of the *Itinerarium* are notoriously dense and thus must be studied and pondered.

And yet, as St. Bonaventure also tells us in his prologue, he chose to divide the content into seven chapters with separate chapter headings precisely in order to facilitate "an easier understanding of the things said" (*ad faciliorem intelligentiam dicendorum*).[9] These divisions, if one attends to them carefully, allow readers to focus their study and attention on the complex material in each chapter, while not losing track of their position within the structure of the whole. The goal of the present work is to provide readers with the resources to help them sort through those complex details within each chapter more easily.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THIRTEENTH-CENTURY PREACHING

In several books and articles, I have argued for the importance of understanding thirteenth-century preaching and the distinctive features of the

[7] Tim Noone and R. E. Houser, "Saint Bonaventure," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Winter 2020 Edition), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/bonaventure/.

[8] *Itinerarium*, prol., 5. [9] Ibid.

sermo modernus style to help us appreciate more fully the style and structure of some of the major theological works of the thirteenth century. So, for example, in a recent book published by Cambridge University Press and in an article for the journal *Nova et Vetera*, I sought to show how St. Bonaventure employed medieval preaching techniques in his biblical commentaries and then, later, in his *Collations on the Ten Commandments*, *Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, and *Collations on the Hexaemeron* that he composed and delivered at Paris in the last several years of his life.[10]

Decades ago, in fact, the great historian of medieval thought, Étienne Gilson, noting "the constantly rhythmic nature and assonance of the divisions" in Bonaventure's sermons, remarked in passing in a footnote that, "The automation of the process is such that, even beyond his sermons properly speaking, saint Bonaventure employed it spontaneously."[11] To illustrate, Gilson cites this example from the *Collations on the Hexaemeron*, a text written late in Bonaventure's career, near the end of his life: "Therefore a threefold understanding is the key to contemplation: namely, an understanding of the uncreated Word, through which all things are produced; an understanding of the incarnate Word, through which all things are repaired; and an understanding of the inspired Word, through which all things are revealed."[12] This is an especially interesting example for our purposes because Bonaventure uses this same threefold distinction between the incarnate Word, the uncreated Word, and the inspired Word in the *Itinerarium* 4.3, but his use of it there is completely different. In the *Itinerarium*, he says: "The soul, therefore, believes in, hopes in, and loves Jesus Christ who is the Word incarnate, uncreated, and inspired [Verbum incarnatum, increatum et inspiratum]; that is, the way, the truth, and the

[10] See Randall B. Smith, *Reading the Sermons of Thomas Aquinas: A Beginner's Guide* (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Press, 2016), *Aquinas, Bonaventure, and the Scholastic Culture of Medieval Paris* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), and "Finding the Roots of Bonaventure's Literary Style in Medieval Preaching," *Nova et Vetera*, 17, 4 (2019): 1243–1286. I too have argued that we find elements of the *sermo modernus* style in Bonaventure's *Collationes in Hexaemeron*. See Smith, *Aquinas, Bonaventure*, 383–410.

[11] See Étienne Gilson, "Michel Menot et la technique du sermon medieval," *Revue d'histoire franciscaine*, 2 (1925): 324 n. 2, reprinted in Étienne Gilson, *Les Idées et les Lettres* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1932), 122 n. 2: "L'automatisme du procédé est tel que, mème en dehors de ses sermons proprement dits, saint Bonaventure l'emploie spontanément."

[12] Ibid.: "Clavis ergo contemplationis est intellectus triplex, scilicet intellectus Verbi increate, per quod omnia producuntur; intellectus Verbi incarnate, per quod omnia reparantur; intellectus Verbi inspirati, per quod omnia revelantur." Gilson's citation is to "*In Hexaemeron*, coll. III, 2; t. V, p. 343." I argued that we find elements of the *sermo modernus* style in Bonaventure's *Collations on the Hexaemeron* in greater detail in Smith, *Aquinas, Bonaventure*, 383–410.

life." Here we have a threefold division – faith, hope, and love – associated with a secondary threefold division – the incarnate Word, the uncreated Word, and the inspired Word – associated with a tertiary division: Jesus as the *way*, the *truth*, and the *life*. This is the kind of complex ordering of multiple relationships Bonaventure does in his sermons all the time. Thus, I think Gilson's judgment is quite right that Bonaventure's use of the methods of the *sermo modernus* style was "automatic" and "spontaneous" even outside of his sermons.

Other than this brief comment in a footnote in this early article, Gilson never explored in any depth how this insight might apply to the *Itinerarium*. Nor was I able to examine the *Itinerarium* in any detail in *Aquinas, Bonaventure and the Scholastic Culture of Medieval Paris*. Like Gilson, my focus there was on Bonaventure's later *collationes*, and by necessity, those treatments were somewhat cursory. What I hope to show in the present volume is how profound the influences of his training in the *sermo modernus* style were on Bonaventure when he wrote the *Itinerarium*. Reading the *Itinerarium* through the lens of the *sermo modernus* style will, therefore, I hope, help us to understand the text more fully and gain an even greater appreciation of its intricate beauty.

But first, we need say something more about the importance of preaching in the medieval university system since it too often is underappreciated. It was widely understood in the thirteenth century that the three duties of a medieval master of theology were: *lectio* (lecturing and commenting on the Scriptures), *disputatio* (disputation by means of "disputed questions"), and *praedicatio* (preaching).[13] The most famous statement of these three duties was made by Peter Cantor (aka Peter the Chanter, d. 1197) who, after listing these three duties of the master, compared them to the parts of a house:

> Reading [*lectio*] is, as it were, the foundation and basement for what follows, for through it the rest is achieved. Disputation [*diputatio*] is the wall in the building of study for nothing is fully understood or faithfully preached, if it is not first chewed by the tooth of disputation. Preaching [*praedicatio*], which is supported by the former, is the roof, sheltering the

[13] Peter Cantor, *Verbum abbreviatum* 1. Translated in Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 208. This entire chapter of Smalley's book on *lectio*, *disputatio*, and *praedicatio* provides invaluable background. For the Latin text, see *Verbum abbreviatum Petri Cantoris Parisiensis. Verbum adbreviatum. Textus conflatus*, ed. M. Boutry, Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaeualis, 196 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004).

> faithful from the heat and wind of temptation. We should preach after, not before, the reading of Holy Scripture and the investigation of doubtful matters by disputation.[14]

In the same text, Peter had affirmed that "the privilege by merit goes to the science of preaching" (*merito predicationis scientiam optinet privilegium*).[15]

In *Aquinas, Bonaventure, and the Scholastic Culture at Paris*, I argue that the education at the University of Paris in which Aquinas and Bonaventure were formed was designed to foster all three skills. So although we have come to associate the word "scholastic" with *disputatio*, this, I would argue, is too simplistic a view. What it meant to be a "scholastic" was that one would become adept at all three skills. With regard to preaching, the goal was to produce rhetorically capable and doctrinally sound preachers who would be able to preach intelligently and convincingly to the laity, especially to the newly educated, but often poorly catechized townspeople that were making up an increasingly important part of the Church, both as patrons of the Church – those who would finance, for example, the construction of new Gothic churches of surpassing beauty – and as those who increasingly had to be depended on to apply Gospel principles and moral values in the political and economic affairs of their towns and surrounding communities. Hence, in addition to *dispuatatio*, which had an undisputed importance in the medieval university, it was also important for bachelors and masters at Paris to develop skill in both *lectio* and *praedicatio*. I argue in *Aquinas, Bonaventure, and the Scholastic Culture at Paris* that the skills and habits of mind scholastic authors developed to be able to master the new "modern sermon" or *sermo modernus* style that had arisen and been refined over the course of the thirteenth century had an important influence on all the subsequent works these authors wrote. I review some of the arguments in support of this conclusion in Chapter 1.

The call for reform initiated by the Fourth Lateran Council was met in large part (but not entirely) by members of the new mendicant religious orders, the Franciscans and Dominicans, who were, unlike the members of the Benedictine orders, not tied to a particular monastery and thus for whom it was easier to move about from town to town preaching – as St. Francis famously had done. And yet, as salutary an influence St. Francis had had on the Church, there were other wandering, missionary

[14] Ibid., 6 [15] Ibid., 1.

preachers who had become popular delivering highly energetic, "spiritualized" sermons across Europe whose doctrinal orthodoxy was not infrequently questionable or seriously heretical. The goal would be to rouse the crowd, not necessarily teach the truths of the faith, and this could be a recipe for spiritual and communal disaster. An energized mob whose energies are directed at a falsehood can do real damage both to themselves and to others. So the call for reform by the Fourth Lateran was not only for more preaching to the laity, but also more and better, more doctrinally sound, preaching.

The challenge of preaching to the newly educated laity in the burgeoning towns and cities of Europe was this: the old style of lengthy verse-by-verse commentary was increasingly becoming less popular. Wonderful commentaries like Bernard of Clairvaux's *Sermons on the Song of Songs* were meant for monks with the time and patience to listen to long disquisitions about a single chapter of the Scriptures that might take weeks to develop. A wandering friar who visited a town to preach one or two homilies would not have enough time to develop a long verse-by-verse analysis of this sort. Instead, he had to deliver something that would fit nicely into a single oration, but would still be well organized, interesting, memorable, and clever. The "modern sermon" developed out of a single *thema* verse seemed to fit the bill nicely.

But the new form of *sermo modernus*-style preaching was not something that could be done without advanced training, both in the methods of the style, which were fairly sophisticated as we will see, and in the use of the preaching aids that were becoming increasingly available to help preachers prepare these more complex homilies. So too, the need for preaching that was not only rhetorically effective among the laity but also doctrinally sound spurred the demand for more and better theological education – a demand that was met, I argue, and perhaps could only be met, but the new medieval universities.

As is still true today, scholars at universities are bound by certain *forms*: articles must adhere to certain standards of form and style. Indeed, there are now large volumes full of rules governing the proper style in which articles are to be done for each of the major disciplines; often, journals have their own "style sheet." So too, the thirteenth-century university had its own characteristic, required *forms*. Disputations were to be carried out in a particular way. *Lectiones* on the Bible were to be delivered in a particular style. So too, introductory lectures and prologues to works had to be written in a particular form, and that form was to be in accord with the tenets of *sermo modernus*-style preaching. This was one way universities

strove to prepare well-trained, doctrinally sound preachers – and teachers to train other preachers – for service across Europe.[16]

Bonaventure is an especially interesting person to study in this regard. Although he learned the forms and became a master of the *sermo modernus* style while at Paris, he became master general of the Franciscan Order shortly after his inception as a regent master at the University of Paris. Consequently, Bonaventure did not have the same sort of scholastic career as did many of the Franciscan masters with whom he had studied, such as Alexander of Hales and John of La Rochelle. As a result, Bonaventure was not as tied to the formal requirements of the university and the academic order that bound the other Franciscan masters at Paris. Some scholars have gone so far as to claim that Bonaventure was finally able to free himself from the "fetters" of his scholastic training at Paris when he wrote the *Itinerarium*.

My view is somewhat different. Although not "bound" by those forms required of masters at the University of Paris, Bonaventure was well trained in them and understood their value. He also made his headquarters in Paris, so we might say that physically, intellectually, and spiritually, Bonaventure never really left Paris behind. In the chapters that follow, I will attempt to show that he did not leave the forms and skills of the university behind so much as make a creative use of them in new ways.[17]

Bonaventure's works are brilliant and have inspired generations of readers, but they can also be notoriously difficult to read. He loved connections and he saw them everywhere. But he saw so many connections that the resulting structure of his major works can be difficult to grasp, especially for readers unaccustomed to his style. What I have argued in the chapters of *Aquinas, Bonaventure and the Scholastic Culture of Medieval Paris* on the *collationes*, and what I will argue here, is that reading these

[16] This is the thesis I argue for in greater detail in *Aquinas, Bonaventure*.

[17] In all the books and articles in which I have argued for the benefits of a greater appreciation of the arts of medieval preaching, I have always tried to make clear that I have no wish to claim too much. I am not claiming that appreciating the arts of *sermo modernus*-style preaching is the single most important key to understanding medieval texts. I do not mean to demean or diminish the importance of *disputatio*, let alone *lectio* (although I have argued that medieval *lectio* is similarly derived from the methods of thirteenth-century *praedicatio* and its content was meant to give aspiring preachers material for *praedicatio*). But I have no wish deny the centrality and importance of *disputatio*. It is simply that much has already been written on the arts of *disputatio* – so much so that when people hear the word "scholasticism," they often associate it solely with *disputatio*, which is unfortunate – but since there has been so much written on *disputatio*, there has been no real need for me to repeat any of that discussion here. I am presuming the value and importance of *disputatio*, not denying it. I wish to add something to the scholar's toolkit, not detract from the invaluable scholarship that has already been done.

works with an eye to the methods of *sermo modernus*-style preaching can help us sort through what might otherwise seem to us a confusing jumble.

READING THE *ITINERARIUM* IN LIGHT OF THE THIRTEENTH-CENTURY *SERMO MODERNUS* STYLE OF PREACHING

This brings us back to the *Itinerarium*. Let me be clear from the start. I am *not* arguing that the *Itinerarium* is a sermon. My claim, rather, is simply that Bonaventure employed the forms and methods of *sermo modernus*-style preaching in the construction of the *Itinerarium* and, thus, understanding these forms and methods will help the reader appreciate the *Itinerarium* more fully.

I will discuss the elements of the thirteenth-century *sermo modernus* style in more detail in the chapters that follow, but in brief, three things were especially typical of thirteenth-century *sermo modernus*-style sermons: (1) the *thema*, a biblical verse, usually from the day's readings that the preacher would use to lend structure and order to the entire sermon; (2) the *divisio* of the *thema* into several parts; and (3) the *dilatatio* of each part created by this opening *divisio*. I will show that when we understand the sections of the *Itinerarium* as made up of divisions and dilations, the elegant structure of the text emerges more clearly.

Bonaventure rendered the overall structure of the text more memorable by associating each chapter with one of the six wings of the Seraph that St. Francis saw in a vision on Mt. Alverna and from which he received the stigmata, and one final chapter that he associates with the image of the crucified Christ Francis saw in the middle of the Seraph's wings. The divisions of this visual image function much like the divisions of the *thema* verse in a thirteenth-century *sermo modernus*-style sermon. The *Itinerarium* was not the first text in which Bonaventure associated its parts with the parts of a visual image. He did so earlier in *The Tree of Life* and in the general prologue to his *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*. It is not uncommon to suggest that Bonaventure learned this method reading some of the works of his favorite Victorine authors, especially Hugh and Richard of St. Victor. And there is much truth in this. But, as we will see, the specific way Bonaventure used his imagery is not quite like what one finds among the Victorines and owed much to his training in *sermo modernus*-style preaching. We will have more to say about using visual imagery as a structuring device in Chapter 5.

Although the six wings of the Seraph from St. Francis's vision on Mt. Alverna provide the structure for the *Itinerarium* as a whole, the structure within each chapter is made up of one or two divisions that serve as the basis of a series of dilations. Thus, once the reader sees and understands this structure, it helps make the text more easily recalled and remembered. So, for example, the complex discussions in chapters 1 and 2 of the *Itinerarium* become a lot more manageable when one realizes that the basic structure is built around dilations of two divisions:

Chapter 1: What can be known about the *power*, *wisdom*, and *benevolence* of God through His vestiges in the world by:

1. Three methods:
   a) Investigating rationally
   b) Believing faithfully
   c) Contemplating intellectually.
2. A consideration of the seven properties of creatures

Chapter 2: What can be known about the *essence*, *power*, and *presence* of God in His vestiges in the world by reflecting on:

1. Three powers:
   a) Apprehension
   b) Enjoyment
   c) Judgment
2. A consideration of the seven kinds of number.

Clearly, generations of readers have read and benefited from the *Itinerarium* without the help and guidance of this commentary or the benefit of my thesis about the relevance of medieval preaching methods. But to give a sense of why this analysis might be valuable, imagine trying to read the *Summa theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas without any knowledge of the formal characteristics of the medieval *disputatio*. Nearly all of us who assign undergraduates sections from Thomas's *Summa* will spend some time explaining how they work: objections, *sed contra*, *respondeo*, replies to objections. More advanced students who are assigned sections from, say, the *Summa Halensis* or any of the commentaries on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard will need to be told that the relatively simple structure of the *Summa theologiae* can get a great deal more complicated when they start reading these other texts. So too, with the *Itinerarium*: readers will find it much easier to read it and appreciate its particular elegance and genius when they understand the formal characteristics of thirteenth-century *sermo modernus*-style preaching.

What this study presumes, however, is that readers of this book will have a copy of Bonaventure's *Itinerarium* open beside them. While I certainly

hope to convince scholars of my thesis that Bonaventure wrote the *Itinerarium* by creatively employing the arts of the thirteenth-century *sermo modernus*-style preaching, this book will only have succeeded if it sends the reader back to the *Itinerarium* to read it more closely, with greater understanding, and a fuller appreciation of its special beauty and genius.

BONAVENTURE'S BACKGROUND: FRANCISCAN AND SCHOLASTIC

Although one can read and benefit from the *Itinerarium* apart from any knowledge about its author or the historical and cultural context within which it was written – plenty of people throughout history have – it often helps to understand and appreciate the text *more* if one knows a bit about its author and the circumstances of its production. Even readers who know that the author of the *Itinerarium* is a man named "Bonaventure," given that it is written on the cover of the book, will often not know much about him, such as the fact that his given name at birth was not "Bonaventure," but Giovanni. "Bonaventure," which was his chosen religious name, was, as we will see, a Franciscan friar who became master general of the Franciscan Order within a generation after the founding of the Order by St. Francis. And it is for this reason, among others, I am convinced we should read and understand the *Itinerarium* as a work deeply imbued with the Franciscan spirit.

And yet Bonaventure was also trained at the University of Paris, and the *Itinerarium* shows evidence of that training on every page. Most readers will discern this fact within the first few pages, so thoroughly is the text suffused with divisions and sub-divisions. The *Itinerarium* will thus seem to many readers to be thoroughly "scholastic." They are not wrong to draw this conclusion, but a potential problem arises with the connotation many people have attached to the term "scholastic," associating it solely with the arts of logic and disputation.

My own view is that, as a general principle, we need to reconsider the overly narrow perspective with which many readers understand "scholasticism." The "schoolmen" were not only trained in the arts of logic and disputation, although these were undeniably important. As I have argued at more length elsewhere and will try to show in a different way in the present volume, the thirteenth century saw a tremendous renaissance in preaching and training in the arts of preaching became an important, indeed essential, goal at the University of Paris and elsewhere.

Thus, one of the major goals of this book is to show how understanding the arts of thirteenth-century preaching can help illuminate our understanding of the *Itinerarium*. Much of the work of the second and third chapters of this book will be in service to the goal of showing how Bonaventure used and adapted the arts of preaching he learned and perfected as a student at Paris when, several years after he was incepted as a master, he wrote the *Itinerarium*.

Reconsidering the overly narrow perspective with which readers often view "scholasticism" solely or largely in terms of the arts of logic and disputation will also help us evaluate two contrasting opinions scholars have proposed concerning the style of the *Itinerarium*. The first critique is that the *Itinerarium* is more "scholastic" than "Franciscan," and that in this work and others – indeed, in the way he directed the Franciscan Order as its master general – Bonaventure departed from the spirit of holy simplicity with which St. Francis wished to imbue his Order and embraced instead an ideal of academic learning and intellectual sophistication that was alien to Francis's founding spirit of poverty, simplicity, and humility.[18]

The second critique, the polar opposite of the first, is that, in the *Itinerarium*, Bonaventure was finally able to "set himself free" from the "fetters" of his scholastic training and the "patterns of the schools" by developing a mode of expression "wholly alien to the language of the schools."[19] It is not always clear whether those who hold the second position – that Bonaventure set himself free from the "fetters" of scholasticism – agree or disagree with those who hold the first – that Bonaventure misled the Franciscans and departed from the Franciscan spirit of poverty and humility when he allowed and encouraged young friars to pursue academic degrees in

[18] See, for example, John Moorman's critique of Bonaventure's leadership in his influential 1940 book, *Sources for the Life of St. Francis of Assisi* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1940), 141. He claims that Bonaventure's ideal for the Order "was not the ideal for which Francis had lived and died" and so, writes Moorman, we can sympathize with Brother Giles's complaint: "Paris, Paris, thou has destroyed Assisi!" I consider Moorman's critique in more detail in the next chapter.

[19] So, for example, Kent Emery, in "Reading the World Rightly and Squarely: Bonaventure's Doctrine of the Cardinal Virtues," *Traditio*, 39 (1983): 183–218, claims that, after his elevation to the position of Minister General of the Franciscan Order, Bonaventure developed a mode of expression "wholly alien to the language of the schools." So too, noted Bonaventure scholar Jacques-Guy Bougerol, in his still-standard reference work, *Introduction to the Works of Bonaventure*, tr. José de Vinck (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1964), 123, says that, as Minister General, Bonaventure set himself "free from the patterns of the Schools, that is, free to develop a form for his thought more concordant with his vision." See also Boehner, ed., "Introduction to Bonaventure," in *Itinerarium*, 9, who claims that the virtue of the *Itinerarium* is that, in it, Bonaventure finally broke free of the "fetters" of his scholastic training.

institutions of higher learning, such as the University of Paris. Hypothetically, it would be possible, we might suppose, for someone to claim that, on the one hand, Bonaventure finally "freed" himself from the "fetters" of his scholastic training when he wrote the *Itinerarium*, while still judging the text to be contrary to the spirit of poverty and simplicity that were to be the hallmarks of Francis's Order. For those holding this view, the conclusion would seem to be that Bonaventure was neither especially "scholastic" nor an especially good Franciscan.

So, did Bonaventure finally set himself from the fetters of scholasticism in the *Itinerarium*? Or is the *Itinerarium* a prime example of Bonaventure's surrender of himself and the Franciscans along with him to the temptations of academic study at the University of Paris, violating the founding spirit of the great St. Francis, the *poverello*, "the little poor one"?

I wish to argue, very much to the contrary, that the *Itinerarium*, while exhibiting the richness of Bonaventure's training at Paris, remains profoundly Franciscan in inspiration and character. To get a sense of how this interesting combination of simplicity and sophistication came about, however, we need to know a bit more about Bonaventure's life and training. I attempt to provide some of that needed background in Chapter 1.

In addition, I will try to locate the *Itinerarium* in the context of contemporary Franciscan controversies, especially with the "Spirituals" – those who believed that the Order had lost some of its original spirit and purity by embracing higher education at places like the University of Paris. Bonaventure wrote the *Itinerarium* on Mt. Alverna where he had gone on a spiritual retreat to prepare for an upcoming general council of the Franciscans where he knew these disputes were likely to dominate. These disputes about Bonaventure's leadership of the Franciscans and his embrace of scholastic learning that roiled the Franciscans in Bonaventure's day have continued into our own time. How a modern commentator approaches the *Itinerarium* will often depend a great deal on the attitude that person takes toward Bonaventure's Franciscan character. Since I am setting out to comment on the *Itinerarium*, the reader deserves to know my attitude toward that question. As I hope to show in the next chapter, I take Bonaventure to be deeply imbued with the Franciscan spirit and a truly faithful son of St. Francis.

WHAT HAS PARIS TO DO WITH ASSISI?

Why would a mystic study in a university, especially subjects as rarefied as natural philosophy and metaphysics? We might wonder why a learned

university master would be interested in the way of the "poor little" beggar, St. Francis? Answer: Read the *Itinerarium*. In the early Church, the question that challenged the early Church fathers was the one posed by Tertullian: "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" (*Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis?*).[20] The challenge that faced Bonaventure as the minister general of the Franciscans was "What has Paris to do with Assisi?" Just as the early fathers of the Church struggled to explain why learning Greek philosophy was valuable for Christians dedicated to the Gospel of the simple carpenter Jesus of Nazareth, so too Bonaventure struggled to explain why scholastic learning would be valuable to "little brothers" dedicated to the life of the *poverello*, "simple poor man," Francis of Assisi. It is not without significance that Bonaventure took the example of the first dispute to answer the critics of his own time. In a letter Bonaventure wrote in 1254 or 1255 to an unknown master of arts in England who was questioning whether the Franciscans had lost their way, Bonaventure replied that, just as the simplicity of the early apostles blossomed into the magnificent learning of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, so too the simplicity of the early Franciscans has blossomed into the learned masters like Alexander of Hales and others at Paris. This development was not a scandal; it was the way of the Church herself.

> Let it not disturb you that in the beginning our brothers were simple and unlettered; rather, this very fact ought to strengthen your faith in the Order. For I confess before God that what made me love St. Francis's way of life so much was that it is exactly like the origin and the perfection of the Church itself, which began first with simple fishermen and afterwards developed to include the most illustrious and learned doctors. You find the same thing in the Order of St. Francis; in this way God reveals that it did not come about through human calculations but through Christ.[21]

This was Bonaventure's direct answer to the question. His other answer was the one he gave when he made a spiritual pilgrimage to the site where St. Francis had received his vision of the six-winged Seraph and the stigmata and, while there, renewing himself in the spirit of St. Francis, he

[20] Tertullian, *Prescription against Heretics* (*De praescriptione haereticorum*), ch. 7. For a nice overview of the text, with links to the Latin text and various translations, see www.tertullian.org/works/de_praescriptione_haereticorum.htm.

[21] The full text in English translation can be found in Dominic Monti, trans., "A Letter in Response to an Unknown Master," in *St. Bonaventure's Writings Concerning the Franciscan Order*, Works of Saint Bonaventure, vol. 5 (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1994), 37–56. The Latin text is in the Quaracchi edition, vol. 8, 331–336.

wrote based on that vision the sort of treatise that only a man trained in scholastic thought at a place like the University of Paris could write.

To the question whether a university master could write a profound work of mysticism and the ascent to the God who is beyond reason, Bonaventure's answer in the *Itinerarium* was a heartfelt yes. To the question whether a deeply spiritual work of mysticism could incorporate some of the most advanced philosophical and theological reflection of the day, Bonaventure's answer was a profoundly thoughtful yes.

To simplify something that is obviously more complex, I suggest that Bonaventure's goal was twofold. It was, first, to convince the simple, uneducated friars – those who might be wondering why followers of St. Francis, the patron saint of the simple life, would need to study for years for advanced degrees at places like the University of Paris – that study and learning can in fact lead to God. And second, he sought to convince the educated friars – those benefitting from a highly sophisticated education in the arts and philosophy at places like the University of Paris – that study and learning *should* lead to God. If we think of the *Itinerarium* as a work written for all Franciscans, whether educated or not, we might then expect sections that are more rhetorical than logical and other sections that contain serious logical arguments. And this is what we find.

Bonaventure's message to his Franciscan brethren was: we can be proper religious brothers outside the monastery. We can pursue learning at universities and go out into the world and preach. But we can also be, and first must be, top-notch students and masters. Because, if we accept, as we should, that all truth leads to the Father of Lights, and when we understand, as we should, that creation is fundamentally *incarnational* and *sacramental*, an instrument and embodiment of God's love, then we will realize that creation is meant to lead us back to its Creator. But it can only do so if we do not pretend that we are its master and that it exists to be subjected to our lust for domination. In this regard, Bonaventure was translating into the language and categories of his own time and culture the spirit of St. Francis, who took so much joy in nature as God's creation.

THE LOVE OF LEARNING AND THE DESIRE FOR GOD

But to make the ascent begins in humility, in humbling relinquishing our demands to be the lord of creation, subjecting it to our own will. One cannot really love nature as a "brother" or a "sister" (as St. Francis bids us to do) if that love is merely a mask for one's own self-aggrandizement and

will-to-power. True love must be selfless, and that is why it must begin in a self-emptying of the pretensions of control and mastery we so often bear with us as excess baggage. It is only when we deposit that heavy baggage in humility that we can begin our ascent in love to the Creator. For this reason, advanced study and humble poverty go together, not merely in the monastery or in the priory, but also out in the world, in the towns and cities, where the Franciscans would do their work preaching and teaching the laity. This was the message Bonaventure was delivering both with his text and with the model of his own humility in the search for the truth.

Bonaventure's message to us now is, let learning drive you upward. The six wings of the Seraph provide structure and order, but it also serves as a ladder on which we are to go up and down, and in this way, become like St. Francis and Christ. Learning and study can and should help us *see* ourselves and the world more clearly so that we ascend to a *true* mystic vision, not embracing superstition or false preaching that is not in accord with the Gospel. Rather, learning must be nourished by the yearning for God and by one's relationship with God in Christ. A student who embraces the life of Christ and the poverty of St. Francis should not be a second-rate student, but the most devoted to learning, precisely because in learning about the world, one is examining the handiwork of the Creator, and in examining the work of the Creator, one should be led to embrace Him as the lover embraced her beloved.

As I said at the outset of this work, the *Itinerarium* has been one of St. Bonaventure's most popular works over the centuries since its publication. And its appeal has been widespread. As someone who has taught it to students many times, I can say from personal experience that it appeals to young people – especially Christians, but not only them – even though they do not grasp the work fully. To the extent I am able to judge, I would say that they sense there is something going on in the *Itinerarium*; in it, they find evidence of a man with a first-rate mind at work who has mastered the philosophy of his day, but who also has a deep love for God and believes that everywhere one looks, everything one knows, should lead him to a deeper relationship with God. This has been throughout the century, and remains today, a powerful vision.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

It would be nice to imagine that readers would read one's book from cover to cover, beginning to end, devouring every word as a gem of wisdom. But

that's not the real world. There are some people who read scholarly books from beginning to end the way other people read novels, but they are increasingly rare. More often, even devoted scholars "read around" in a book for things that interest them. I appreciate that fact, so I have done what I can to make each chapter stand on its own. Footnotes, for example, begin over with every new chapter, and there is a bibliography of material cited at the end so readers will not have to search far for a reference. But I will also try to provide enough information here at the outset to give the reader some guidance to what section he or she might wish to "read around in" first. It will also give me a chance to explain the reasoning behind the ordering of the chapters.

The book is divided into two main sections. In Part I, I provide background and context to help readers understand and appreciate the *Itinerarium*. Then in Part II, I provide a running commentary of each of the three major sections of the *Itinerarium*.

Part I: Background and Context of the *Itinerarium*

In **Chapter 1**, "Bonaventure, the Franciscans, and the Homiletic Revolution of the Thirteenth Century," I provide some historical and cultural context of the *Itinerarium*. In this chapter, I argue for the cultural importance of what has been called the "homiletic revolution of the thirteenth century," especially in the education of students in sacred doctrine at the University of Paris. Since learning to preach using the *sermo modernus* style was an important part of Bonaventure's formation at Paris, and it was a skill in which he had become proficient, he made creative use of it when he wrote the *Itinerarium*. Gaining a better understanding of the style, therefore, can help us better appreciate and understand Bonaventure's text. I also make clear in this chapter why I believe Bonaventure is best understood as both a faithful Franciscan and a dedicated student of scholastic theology and that these two are not mutually exclusive in ways that are sometimes assumed.

In **Chapters 2 through 7**, I go through the "nuts-and-bolts" of the *sermo modernus* style of preaching to show how Bonaventure creatively adapted these methods to his purposes in the *Itinerarium*.

In *sermo modernus*-style sermons, the structure was based on what was usually a threefold or fourfold *divisio* of an opening *thema* verse. This primary division was usually subject to further sub-divisions. In the *Itinerarium*, Bonaventure associates the basic threefold structure of the

work – seeing "outside," seeing "inside," and seeing "above" – with the divisions of the verse from Job 85:11: "Lead me, O Lord, in your way / so that I might enter into your truth. / Let my heart rejoice that it may be in awe of your name." To be *led in the way* of the Lord, says Bonaventure, is to "move through the vestiges which are bodily and temporal outside us." To *enter into the truth of God* is to "enter into our mind which is the image of God." And to *rejoice* in the knowledge of God and *stand in awe of His name* is to "pass beyond to that which is . . . above us by raising our eyes to the First Principle."[22] In **Chapter 2**, "Recognizing Divisions as the Framework of the Text," I show how identifying the *divisiones* within each chapter helps to make the structure, content, and arguments of the *Itinerarium* clearer.

Since Bonaventure could not generate an entire treatise out of one Psalm verse, instead we find in each chapter of the *Itinerarium* a host of divisions and sub-divisions borrowed from earlier texts. Sometimes he borrowed divisions from his own earlier works, especially *his Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*. But in many cases, he borrowed divisions from other works, especially those of the Victorines and St. Augustine. In **Chapter 3**, "Where Did Bonaventure Get His Divisions?" I trace the sources of Bonaventure's subsidiary divisions within each section of the *Itinerarium* and show how tracing these divisions back to their sources can help the reader better understand what Bonaventure is trying to accomplish. I give special attention to the sources of Bonaventure's key distinction between "vestiges," "images," and "likenesses" of God and the distinction between "seeing through" and "seeing in."

In **Chapter 4**, "Bonaventure and the Nine Choirs of Angels," I examine one of the most condensed discussions in Bonaventure's text. In *Itinerarium* 4.4, Bonaventure says that our spirit must be "brought into conformity with the heavenly Jerusalem." But "no one enters that city," he adds, "unless that city has first descended into the person's heart by means of grace." How does that happen? Well, the heavenly Jerusalem "descends into the heart," according to Bonaventure, when "our spirit is adorned with nine orderly levels" – levels that correspond, as it turns out, to the nine choirs of angels. In this section, Bonaventure takes two major traditions regarding the nine choirs of angels – one that can be traced to the *Celestial Hierarchy of* Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and the other to a homily by Pope St. Gregory the Great – and condenses them into nine words and nine

[22] *Itinerarium*, 1.2.

short phrases. It requires some special effort, however, to untangle the complex source material underlying this amazingly condensed section. This chapter shows how remarkably concise Bonaventure could be using the methods he had learned for preaching.

After a preacher had made his threefold, fourfold, sevenfold, or ninefold division in a *sermo modernus*-style sermon, he then had to "dilate" each member of the division. In most cases, the division was chosen precisely because of the content the preacher wished to produce. There were specific methods that the preaching manuals of the day contained to teach prospective preachers how they might develop ("dilate") the divisions within their sermon. In **Chapter 5**, "*Dilatatio*: Methods of 'Unfolding' a Sermon," I show how Bonaventure used some of the common methods of *dilatatio* to expand the divisions he employs in the *Itinerarium* into the discursive content of his text.

Although, early on, Bonaventure associates the basic threefold division of the *Itinerarium* with a biblical *thema* verse from Psalm 85:11, the *Itinerarium* is more famous for its use of the image of the six wings of the Seraph angel St. Francis saw in a vision on Mt. Alverna as a structuring device. Incorporating visual imagery into a theological treatise was not uncommon in the Middle Ages. The Victorines were especially adept at the practice, and Bonaventure was clearly influenced by them. But the *way* Bonaventure used the parts of a visual image as a structuring device, much the way a *sermo modernus*-style preacher would use the parts of a *thema* verse as a structuring device, was something new. As I will show in **Chapter 6**, "Imagery as a Structuring Device," this skill was something Bonaventure learned during his training in writing *sermo modernus*-style prologues at the University of Paris. I provide several examples, but most prominently, I describe how Bonaventure used visual imagery to structure the amazingly complex and beautiful prologue to his *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*.

In **Chapter 7**, "Leading the Mind Back and Up to God: *The Reduction of the Arts to* Theology and the *Itinerarium*," I compare the hierarchial ascent of the mind Bonaventure sets out in the *Itinerarium* with Bonaventure's earlier attempt to show how all learning should lead back to God in the second of the two addresses he gave during his inception as regent master at the University of Paris, a text he revised shortly after becoming minister general which has come down to us as *The Reduction of the Arts of Theology*. A second benefit of making this comparison with Bonaventure's earlier text is that it provides an example of how Bonaventure felt free to shift imagery in the middle of a text. In *The*

Reduction of the Arts to Theology, he shifts from a structure based on four "lights" (below, above, inside, outside) to one based on the seven "days" of creation. In the final two chapters of the *Itinerarium*, he stops using his original image of the six wings of the Seraph and shifts instead to using the four wings of the Cherubim that surrounded the Ark of the Covenant.

Part II: Commentary

In the previous section, I set out to show how Bonaventure made creative use of the methods of *sermo modernus*-style preaching when he composed the *Itinerarium*. The goal of that analysis was to help the reader understand the structural characteristics of the *Itinerarium* more fully. What can seem like a confusing jumble upon a first reading will often be revealed, in light of contemporary thirteenth-century methods of preaching, to be part of an intricately beautiful structure.

In those chapters, it was necessary to skip around in Bonaventure's text, showing one method in one chapter and another method in another in order to reveal how Bonaventure employed these various methods in different places and different ways in the *Itinerarium*. This approach to the text did not permit me, however, to provide a coherent view of the whole. So, in this second section, I endeavor to provide an overview of the *Itinerarium*, chapter by chapter, from beginning to end.

In **Chapter 8**, I discuss the Preface and the first two chapters of the *Itinerarium* that correspond to the first pair of wings of the Seraph, those around his feet, representing the vision of God we can get by looking at his *vestiges* "outside" us in the sensible realm and by noticing how we perceive those sensible realities.

In **Chapter 9**, I discuss the next two chapters of the *Itinerarium* (chapters 3 and 4), those that correspond to the second pair of the Seraph's wings, those around the angel's body. These represent the vision of God we get from looking at the *image* we find of God "inside" us in our intellectual powers – those made possible by reason alone (such as memory, understanding, and will) and those infused by grace (such as faith, hope, and love).

In **Chapter 10**, I discuss the final three chapters of the *Itinerarium* (chapters 5–7). The first two correspond to the third pair of the Seraph's wings, those above his head, representing the vision of God we get looking "above" our minds to the transcendental properties "Being" (chapter 5) and "Goodness" (chapter 6). To make the contrasting points he wishes to make

about the unity and trinity of God, however, Bonaventure decides he must switch his imagery from the third pair of Seraph wings to the pair of wings on each of the two Cherubim that were said to surround the Ark of the Covenant in the Temple. After these two chapters, Bonaventure adds a short concluding chapter (chapter 7) that corresponds to the image of Christ crucified that St. Francis saw in center of the Seraph's wings. At this stage of the ascent, all intellectual effort must cease and those journeying who wish to ascend must simply rest in the mystery of God's love.

In **Chapter 11**, I provide some concluding remarks about what I hope readers will take away from this study of Bonaventure's *Itinerarium*.

By necessity, there will be much in these latter chapters that will resemble material found in other commentaries on the *Itinerarium*. We are, after all, commenting on the same text. Indeed, I hope the reader will consult several different commentaries. I have benefitted from reading other commentaries, and I have no doubt others interested in the *Itinerarium* would as well.

Different commentaries have different emphases, and one can gain insights from each. My goal, as I have made clear, has been to emphasize the additional insights we can get by reading the *Itinerarium* from the perspectives offered by understanding the methods of *sermo modernus*-style preaching.

I have no wish to minimize these other considerations and concerns, whether philosophical, theological, or historical. Nor do I wish to claim too much for medieval preaching. As I say repeatedly in my book on *Aquinas, Bonaventure, and the Scholastic Culture of Preaching* (Cambridge, 2021), in which I discuss in greater detail the importance of the culture of preaching in medieval theological education, *preaching* was merely *one* of three arts of the master of theology at the University of Paris, the others being *lectio* (reading and commenting on the Scriptures) and *disputatio*. Understanding how all three came together – perhaps uncomfortably at times – to form the warp and weave of medieval theological education will, I believe, give us a much better and more sophisticated understanding of what it really means to call a thinker "scholastic."

Readers who are interested in the arguments showing the relevance and importance of the methods of *sermo modernus*-style preaching will want to focus on the first seven chapters. Others, who are more interested in a guide to help them read and understand the structure and brilliance of the *Itinerarium* may want to bypass some of the "nuts-and-bolts" analysis in the first seven chapters and skip right to the commentary in Chapters 8–10.

These chapters are not solely dedicated, however, to showing the relevance of the *sermo modernus* style. There is much more to the *Itinerarium* than this. And these chapters are meant to serve as a commentary accessible to anyone, even those who have not read the earlier material.

There is also a bibliography of works cited at the end of the volume and a complete outline of the *Itinerarium* in Appendix 1 that may help readers find a particular place in the text that they are interested in or are having difficulty remembering. Regarding this outline, let me repeat again the appeal I made earlier. My hope is that readers of this book will have a copy of Bonaventure's *Itinerarium* open beside them as they read this book so that they can refer to it repeatedly.

While I hope by means of the arguments in this book to convince readers that Bonaventure wrote the *Itinerarium* by creatively employing the arts of the thirteenth-century *sermo modernus*-style preaching, that goal is ultimately secondary – more of a means than an end. The ultimate goal is to help readers understand the *Itinerarium* more thoroughly and appreciate its unique beauty more fully.