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The Word in Which All Things Are Spoken: Augustine, Anselm, and Bonaventure on Christology and the Metaphysics of Exemplarity

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Abstract
The article reconsiders Anselm's "ontological argument" by contextualizing it within the conjunction of Neoplatonist exemplarist metaphysics and Christology in the Augustinian tradition of trinitarian theology. It explores tensions in Augustine's theological epistemology and incarnational theology over the relationship of illumination and grace in the knowledge of God. Anselm wrestles with this tension in *Monologion* and *Proslogion*, where considerations of divine self-expression and simplicity provide conceptual resources to address it. In Bonaventure's *Itinerarium*, Augustinian trinitarianism, Dionysian metaphysics, and the Anselmian "ontological" argument provide the structure for a Franciscan incarnational theology that reframes the Augustinian tension.

Keywords
Anselm, Augustine, Bonaventure, Christology, divine illumination, divine ideas, exemplarity, ontological argument, Trinity

Few texts have been as widely circulated, and as poorly served by that circulation, as chapters 2–4 of Anselm's *Proslogion*. This is not just a modern phenomenon. Not two centuries after Anselm wrote his treatise, it circulated around Paris, reduced to little more than a proposition apparently claiming the "self-evidence"

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of God's existence.[1] In recent decades, however, much work has been done to understand the argument within Anselm's greater purposes in *Proslogion*, noting especially that the treatise proceeds on the basis of *fides quaerens intellectum*.[2] In particular, scholars now regularly attend to the character of the entire text, which makes it clear that the *unum argumentum* functions within a broader Augustinian tradition of mystical ascent and contemplation, as its form as a prayer suggests.

While I affirm the significance and appropriateness of this recent revisionist literature, my intent here is to resituate *Proslogion*—and the "ontological argument"[3] in particular—in a history of reception in Latin trinitarian theology stretching from Augustine to Bonaventure, and to draw out a few of the metaphysical issues involved in that history. More specifically, I argue here that the ontological argument, read in context, reframes a set of metaphysical problems inherent to Augustinian trinitarianism and Christology, and helps provide the conceptual means for their transformation in the theology of Bonaventure. These problems emanate from the internal tensions within the so-called psychological analogy of Augustine's *De Trinitate*. These tensions concern Augustine's ability to express human knowledge of God in christological terms. Anselm provides a surprising way to reframe this problem in his definition of God as "that than which nothing greater can be thought." Bonaventure, in turn, draws on the ontological argument to couch his exemplarist metaphysics in Franciscan terms; that is, in terms of the Incarnation. Thus my interest here is less in the philosophical claims of the ontological argument—indeed the specifics of the argument among other "proofs" of the existence of God—and more in the broader theological and metaphysical innovations it helps facilitate.

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1. On the 13th-century reception of Anselm's *Proslogion*, see Ian Logan, *Reading Anselm's* Proslogion: *The History of Anselm's Argument and Its Significance Today* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009) 131–46. Anton Pegis notes that the reductionist treatment of Anselm's argument in the 13th century occurred in the context of "the meeting between the Augustinian and the Aristotelian world views" ("St. Anselm and the Argument of the 'Proslogion,'" *Mediaeval Studies* 28 [1966] 228–67, at 228). See also Pegis, "Four Medieval Ways to God," *Monist* 54 (1970) 317–58, which maps the development of proofs of God's existence in the face of medieval Latin Aristotelianism, examining Anselm, Bonaventure, Aquinas, and Henry of Ghent.
2. The obvious reference here is Karl Barth, *Anselm*: Fides Quaerens Intellectum; *Anselm's Proof of the Existence of God in the Context of His Theological Scheme*, trans. Ian W. Robertson (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1960). For a sampling of notable recent work, see Paul Gilbert, *Le* Proslogion *de S. Anselme: Silence de Dieu et joie de l'homme* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1990); Robert McMahon, *Understanding the Medieval Meditative Ascent: Augustine, Anselm, Boethius, and Dante* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 2006) 159–210. For an interpretation emphasizing aesthetics, see David S. Hogg, *Anselm of Canterbury: The Beauty of Theology* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004). For a structuralist analysis of *Proslogion* with similar intent, see John Overton, "Arguing Anselm's Argument," *Modern Theology* 17 (2001) 3–19.
3. For convenience, I use this term, however misleading, as shorthand for the *unum argumentum* of *Proslogion* 2–4.

There are immediate and obvious objections to this set of claims: *Proslogion* says very little about trinitarian theology or Christology. Its predecessor, *Monologion*, is far more concerned with the speculative problems of trinitarian thought. Moreover, while an extensive literature is devoted to the reception of the ontological argument in Bonaventure's theology, to say nothing of Aquinas's reading of it,[4] Bonaventure is not typically understood to have developed a Christology out of Anselm's *unum argumentum*. Nonetheless, I hope to demonstrate that christological and trinitarian concerns are at least tacit in Anselm's argument, and explicit in Bonaventure's adoption of it. Grasping this aspect of Anselm's argument first requires understanding the knot of ideas known as Augustine's "psychological analogy" in *De Trinitate*, and the way that set of metaphysical and theological ideas was inherited by the Middle Ages.[5] Augustine initiates a transposition of the Neoplatonic metaphysics of exemplarity into christological terms to express the relationship of the human soul and God, but in so doing, he bequeaths theological tensions to his medieval readers.

The Augustinian Problem: God and the Soul

Proslogion can be profitably read as a meditation on any number of Augustinian writings that circulate around Augustine's famous problem of knowing God and the soul. But given Anselm's own invocation of *De Trinitate* in the prologue to *Monologion*,[6] I want to frame the argument of this article around the paradoxes of book 8 of *De Trinitate*.[7] Book 8 is a kind of précis of the program of spiritual and contemplative

4. For a few examples, see Harold J. Johnson, "*Contra Anselmum* but *Contra Gentiles*: Aquinas's Rejection of the Ontological Argument," *Schede Medievali* 8 (1985) 18–27; Gregory F. LaNave, "Bonaventure's Arguments for the Existence of God and an 'Independent' *De Deo Uno*," *Thomist* 74 (2010) 57–84; Thomas R. Mathias, "Bonaventurian Ways to God through Reason," *Franciscan Studies* 36 (1976) 193–97; John P. Doyle, "Saint Bonaventure and the Ontological Argument," *Modern Schoolman* 52 (1974) 27–48; Harry R. Klocker, "Bonaventure's Refinement of the Ontological Argument," *Mediaevalia* 4 (1978) 209–23. Pegis, "Argument of the 'Proslogion'" 232–39, 261–67, gives a helpful analysis.
5. I use the term "psychological analogy" merely for the sake of simplicity. Elsewhere, I have argued at length that what Augustine is up to in *De Trinitate* concerns neither psychology nor analogy. See Travis E. Ables, *Incarnational Realism: Trinity and the Spirit in Augustine and Barth* (New York: Bloomsbury T. & T. Clark, 2013) 37–78.
6. "I ask that they first make a careful and thorough reading of the books *On the Trinity* of the aforementioned learned Augustine and then judge my little treatise on the basis of them," *Monologion*, prologue (trans. from *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*, ed. Brian Davies and G. R. Evans [New York: Oxford University, 1998]). The Latin original of *Monologion* and *Proslogion* is from *S. Anselmi Opera Omnia*, ed. F. S. Schmitt, vol. 1 (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1946) 1–122.
7. In "The Influence of Augustine's *De Trinitate* on Anselm's *Monologion*," Frederick Van Fleteren suggests that *Monologion's* argument concerning the highest good depends directly on *De Trinitate* 8.3.4–5; in *Saint Anselm—A Thinker for Yesterday and Today*, ed. Coloman Viola and Frederick Van Fleteren (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2002) 424 n.

ascent that characterizes the latter half of *De Trinitate*, a program signaled by Augustine's remark that he is going to proceed "in a more inward manner."[8] Most significantly for my purposes, book 8 explicitly meditates on the Augustinian metaphysics of participation, while at the same time framing these metaphysical concerns within the broader program of the treatise. In so doing, it treats trinitarian theology as a rational exercise of seeking understanding of the Pro-Nicene faith in order to purify the eye of the soul for contemplation.

That exercise emanates from a simple metaphysical problem: the way the Trinity is the exemplary Good toward which all acts of knowing are oriented, and is in fact the Good by which we recognize created goodness.[9] We know the goodness of created things because we have an idea or form of goodness already present in our mind, and this form, on reflection, finds its exemplary source in God. This relationship between the goodness of creation and the form of goodness in the mind is inherently moral, because goodness involves the will: we cling to the Good out of love of goodness, which means that our knowledge of God takes place in moral terms, requiring the purification of the soul so that we can love more deeply.[10] Moreover, the mind–Good relationship means that knowledge of God is deeply self-reflexive: to seek to know God involves seeking to know the soul, for we know God within, as the exemplar of the operations of our intellect and will. Thus we have the basic structure of an illuminationist epistemology: created beings derive their goodness from the divine exemplary Good, and our intellect knows goodness insofar as it grasps that relationship of participation. Augustine characterizes this intellectual operation as divine light illuminating the mind.[11]

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34. A similar reading is found in J. F. Worthen, "Augustine's *De Trinitate* and Anselm's *Proslogion*: 'Exercere Lectorem,'" in *Collectanea Augustiniana*, ed. Joseph T. Lienhard, Earl C. Muller, and Roland J. Teske (New York: Peter Lang, 1993) 517–29, at 519.

8. Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill (Brooklyn: New City, 1991) 8.1.
9. *Trinity* 8.3.4–5.
10. On this idea of spiritual exercise, see Pierre Hadot, "Spiritual Exercises," in *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson, trans. Michael Chase (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1995) 81–125; Martha Nussbaum, "Augustine and Dante on the Ascent of Love," in *The Augustinian Tradition*, ed. Gareth Matthews (Berkeley: University of California, 1999) 69–90.
11. There is considerable debate on the precise nature of Augustine's theory of illumination, not least because, as Steven P. Marrone remarks, the theory is actually "a cluster of theories about the way human intellect comes to the most perfect products of its natural operations, all incorporating the notion of an intervention by God" (Marrone, *The Light of Thy Countenance: Science and Knowledge of God in the Thirteenth Century*, 2 vols. [Boston: Brill, 2001] 1:20). Ronald Nash summarizes the three major interpretations of Augustinian illumination, in *The Light of the Mind: St. Augustine's Theory of Knowledge* (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1969) 94–101. Whatever else it might imply, for the non-Aristotelian Augustine and the neo-Augustinian Bonaventure, divine illumination must certainly mean divine intervention, as Marrone notes (against the Thomist understanding that the divine light is simply the causality of the agent intellect). My argument here does not turn

This twofold metaphysical framework of the hierarchy of participation and intellectual illumination will help us grasp the distinction between *Monologion* and *Proslogion*, so let me probe this Augustinian dynamic further in order to understand the precise problem Anselm inherits. Augustine's discussion of illumination in book 8 is basically an altered form of the paradox of learning that had preoccupied him since his study of the liberal disciplines in the early Cassiciacum dialogues. On Platonic grounds, learning is fundamentally recognition, on the simple premise that innate acquaintance with the eternal forms is the prior condition of our knowledge of anything: we only know what something is insofar as we recognize it, meaning a form of that thing in the mind must precede knowing it as such. Because this means that our intellect is always already dependent on our prior knowledge of the forms, ultimately, for Plato, the doctrine of anamnesis implies eternal recognition of the forms from a state of preexistence. Once Augustine rejects the preexistence of souls, he develops an alternative metaphor to anamnesis—illumination.[12] The act of the intellect does not depend on the soul's acquaintance with the forms from a preexistent state; instead, the intellect operates insofar as it participates in the source of all the forms, namely, the divine nature that created all things and is their exemplar. To know a created thing is to know its exemplary origin in the divine nature: the divine light illuminates the mind to understand a thing as, in some way, expressive of the divine Creator. But the cost of this move takes us back to the ethical problem just noted: even as illuminationism relocates[13] the operation of knowledge from the prior state of the soul (preexistence) to its ontological dependency upon God (illumination), the failure of the mind to know rightly now becomes a problem of self-alienation. In other words, if we do not know correctly, it is because the divine light is darkened by sin; the corruption of our will prevents the operation of our intellect.

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precisely on how illumination works in Augustine, though I find persuasive Nash's reading that Augustine holds together (not without tension) both a divine infusion of the ideas, and that the ideas are inherently present in the mind's operation, which is illuminated insofar as it is assisted by divine grace (*Light of the Mind* 102–24). My concern here has to do with the relationship of illumination and Christology, a much less examined area of Augustinian epistemology; though in regard to Bonaventure, see Therese Scarpelli, "Bonaventure's Christocentric Epistemology: Christ's Human Knowledge as the Epitome of Illumination in *De Scientia Christi*," *Franciscan Studies* 65 (2007) 63–86.

12. For a recent discussion, see Brian Dobbell, *Augustine's Intellectual Conversion: The Journey from Platonism to Christianity* (New York: Cambridge University, 2010) 37–40. See also Gerald O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind* (London: Duckworth, 1987) 199–207. R. E. Houser argues that Augustine's Neoplatonic "illumination argument" for the existence of God leads logically to the ontological argument in "Bonaventure's Three-Fold Way to God": in *Medieval Masters: Essays in Honor of Msgr. E. A. Synan*, ed. R. E. Houser (Houston: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1999) 91–145, at 94.
13. I am tempted to say that it "demythologizes" anamnesis; cf. Augustine's mockery of a literal understanding of anamnesis in *Trinity* 12.15.24.

The shift from recollection also opens up another problem: because illumination revolves around the idea that God is the condition of our knowledge itself, it is very difficult to explain why, at least in principle, we cannot know God fully. After all, the premise of illumination is that the mind is always already participating in God. There are obstacles, of course: the fact that our knowing takes place within the temporal flux of materiality in the *regio dissimilitudinis*;[14] the nature of our disordered desire that removes us from God; the ineffability of the divine essence whose light is so great that our strength fails to behold it. But it is not clear in Augustine whether these are problems of degree or of principle. Augustine is not Dionysius; he does not hold that the divine essence is by nature unknowable. Moreover, sin is a contingent (if inevitable) fact that does not negate our ontological dependence on and participation in God. Illumination seems suspect because of its suggestion that immediate human knowledge of God is possible[15]—or more precisely, because its ontological structure is in tension with Augustine's commitment to doctrinal concerns of sin and grace.

This tension is present in *De Trinitate*, the first book of which finds Augustine preoccupied with the paradox of Matthew 5:8: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."[16] The paradox is that, while we must be pure in heart to see (that is, know) God, only the knowledge of God purifies the heart in the first place. We cannot love what we do not know. Moreover, even as we are separated from God by our disordered love, our intellect is inadequate to understand God's ineffable essence. Thus the importance of the Catholic faith: trinitarian doctrine is the exercise of deepening the understanding of the ineffable God through faith in order to cling to God in love. But our "divergence of values"[17] (i.e., the selfish orientation of the will) prevents us: we are sinful creatures who do not love rightly and so are in a hopeless position without grace.

Augustine's illuminationist epistemology reveals how much he is indebted to his Neoplatonist inheritance, even as he transposes it into doctrinal categories.[18] The second half of *De Trinitate* is a program of spiritual ascent through faith seeking understanding, but this does not in itself radically rewrite Augustine's Neoplatonist roots.

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14. *Confessions* 7.10.16.
15. The much later problem of ontologism has its roots here. The qualification "in principle" is important: it seems certain that Augustine, after reading Paul in the years 394–395, had clearly rejected the possibility of immediate knowledge of God, but the metaphysical articulation of this realization lagged, because the very premise of his metaphysics is participation.
16. *Trinity* 1.8.17, 1.12.28. See esp. Michel Barnes, "The Visible Christ and the Invisible Trinity: Mt. 5:8 in Augustine's Trinitarian Theology of 400," *Modern Theology* 19 (2003) 329–55, who relates this passage to Augustine's anti-Homoian polemic.
17. *Trinity* 8.7.11.
18. For a concise overview articulating how Plotinus links Plato with Augustine and Bonaventure, see Van Fleteren, "The Ascent of the Soul in the Augustinian Tradition," in *Paradigms in Medieval Thought: Applications in Medieval Disciplines*, ed. Nancy van Deusen (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1991) 93–110.

Indeed, some of his modern readers who most strongly argue for the indebtedness of his trinitarianism to Neoplatonism point precisely to the *ascensus* of *De Trinitate.*[19] But the difference between Augustine's ascent and Plotinus's lies in the way Augustine introduces a new dynamic into the equation, one that is doctrinally driven: the ascent to God is a matter of participation in grace. We know and love God because the charity of the Spirit is poured out into our hearts—our love for God is so inflamed that we become participants in God's own self-knowledge. Contemporary interpreters call this Augustine's psychological analogy, but he talks about it in terms of the *imago Dei*.

The Incarnation is the key to the reformation of our act of knowledge. The divine light is the condition of our knowing, but there is a gap between the operation of knowledge and its term, God, both because of human sin and because of divine ineffability. Grace bridges this gap, and this "bridge" radically revises what it means for a human being to know at all. In grace, we know because we are "performing" the image of God; that is, we are participating in God's self-knowledge by both intellect and will, thereby enacting the self as the image of the trinitarian God. Explicating just how that is possible involves the complex dialectical ascent from *scientia* to *sapientia* that occupies most of the second half of *De Trinitate*. For my purposes, however, it is essential to see that Augustine thinks of the image of God, not as an *analogy* between our tripartite act of understanding and God's own subsistent act of understanding as Trinity, but rather as the reformation of our knowing and loving, such that God is not only their term but is in fact their operative agent.[20]

This reformation occurs insofar as we are united in love to Christ by the Spirit, by the infusion of the love of the Spirit (identical to grace) that purifies our heart. The role of the Incarnation in the reformation of our faculties is key: in the architectonic shape of *De Trinitate*, the Incarnation is the precise inversion of the mystic's ascent, which, as Augustine argues against the Neoplatonic philosophers, is inescapably marred by the pride of the human intellect.[21] Plotinian anagogy ascends from *scientia* to *sapientia*—from *knowledge* of temporal things to the *wisdom* of eternal things—but its operation is confounded by humanity's disordered attachment to earthly objects in greed, so the Incarnation inverts that ascent as participation Christ's descent: "Our knowledge therefore is Christ, and our wisdom is the same Christ. It is he who plants faith in us about temporal things, he who presents us with

19. For the standard interpretation, see Olivier du Roy, *L'intelligence de la foi en la Trinité selon saint Augustin: Genèse de sa théologie trinitaire jusqu'en 391* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1966). For replies, see Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (New York: Cambridge University, 2010); and Luigi Gioia, *The Theological Epistemology of Augustine's* De Trinitate (New York: Oxford University, 2008).

20. "When the mind truly recalls its Lord after receiving his Spirit, it perceives quite simply—for it learns this by a wholly intimate instruction from within—that it cannot rise except by his gracious doing" (*Trinity* 14.15.21). Note the relationship between the reception of the Spirit and grace, on the one hand, and the interior illumination by the divine in the mind, on the other.

21. Ibid. 13.19.24; see also 4.15.20.

the truth about eternal things."[22] The Incarnation has a remedial, pedagogical function by demonstrating the humility of Christ that subverts human epistemological presumption.[23]

But this incarnational theme highlights a tension, or at least a lacuna, in *De Trinitate*: the relationship between the *Verbum*, the Word, the self-speaking of the First Person of the Trinity, and the Platonic ideas or exemplars in which all created things participate. In other words, there is a discontinuity between the epistemological operations of divine illumination and grace. Augustine has two apparently incommensurable answers to the same problem (the knowledge of God) sitting side by side: on the one hand, illumination, though hindered by sin, makes our participation in God the very ontological condition of knowledge as such. On the other hand, the Incarnation is the appearance of the invisible God that enflames us with the love of the Spirit, uniting us to God in loving knowledge by faith. But what is the relationship between these two acts, given that their object, Christ the Word, is the same? In other texts, Augustine connects the two ideas by saying that the divine ideas are in the Word,[24] but this opens up a bigger question: If the eternal *Verbum* is in some form the expression of the divine light, how is participation in the divine light, the condition of all knowledge, related to knowledge of the Incarnation? Augustine goes to some length in *De Trinitate* to ensure that we take the Incarnation seriously as the revelation of the invisible Father in the consubstantial Son, stressing that the distinction between the eternal procession and the temporal mission of the Son is only an apparent one, a difference that appears to time-bound sojourners but has no reality in the divine life.[25] God is in history as God is in eternity.[26] What exactly does it mean for the *incarnate* Christ to have all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge within himself, assuming that the eternal Word and the incarnate Christ are the same reality? That is, does the Incarnation somehow express the eternal ideas? In what way could this make metaphysical sense?

This question of the relationship between the Incarnation and the eternal ideas, which Augustine left unresolved, demonstrates how the doctrinal force of his Christology is not fully integrated into the illuminationist epistemology and metaphysics of participation I have just sketched. It is this set of tensions that, I want to argue, is taken up by Anselm and Bonaventure and in the process is the occasion of significant philosophical and theological innovations.

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22. Ibid. 13.19.24.
23. See esp. ibid. 13.12.16–18.23.
24. E.g., *De civitate Dei* 11.10, 21; *De vera religione* 36.66; *De Genesi ad litteram* 6.10.17. While *De diversis quaestionibus* 46 (known as *De ideis*) makes clear that the ideas, or *rationes*, are in the mind of the Creator, Augustine does not mention the Word. For discussion of this question, see Theodore Kondoleon, "Divine Exemplarism in Augustine," *Augustinian Studies* 1 (1970) 181–95.
25. *Trinity* 4.20.28.
26. This is not an uncontroversial reading of Augustine in contemporary theology, Augustine's clarity on this point notwithstanding. See Ables, *Incarnational Realism* 17–36.

Anselm's *Unum Argumentum*

The Augustinian psychological analogy, I have just argued, functions at the overlap of trinitarian theology and anthropology. The problem, as I indicated, is that this overlap lies in the conjunction of two conceptual paradigms: a metaphysics of participation expressed through an epistemology of illumination alongside a theology of grace that understands the ascent to God as the love of the Spirit fired by purgative contemplation of the Incarnation. The obscure link between the two is Christology. The speculative problems lie not so much in correlating philosophical and theological registers—not to mention that the opposition between the two is not one that would occur to Augustine the way it would to moderns—but in the internal tensions incarnational Christology introduces into the equation. This is the set of issues, I want to argue, that Anselm takes up, at least tacitly. While he does not resolve them, his invention of the ontological argument provides a new theological formulation that allows Bonaventure to radically reframe the problematic. I now turn to the twin treatises *Monologion* and *Proslogion*, where we find in the progression from one to the other the seeds of Bonaventure's transformation.

One of the more vexed problems in the interpretation of Anselm is the difference between his *unum argumentum* of *Proslogion* and the "chain of many arguments"[27] of the earlier *Monologion*, in light of the fact that both of them concern themselves with the same object: the existence and nature of God. In fact, the treatises approach that object through entirely different strategies. I begin with *Monologion*, in which Anselm demonstrates the existence and nature of God for the benefit of those ignorant of the one supreme nature, proceeding a posteriori and using the same Platonist dialectic of participation we saw in Augustine: that is, the created good of any number of existents inhere within some ultimate good "through which all good things necessarily are good."[28] This *summum bonum* is the supreme greatness in which the gradation of being terminates and from which it emanates.[29]

For Anselm, this hierarchy of participation is grounded in the two key Neoplatonist attributes of the Supreme Good, simplicity and aseity. Both of these can be deduced from the existence of plurality in the world. The gradation of being diversifies as it emanates from the self-subsistent One, but the divine essence is simple. This leads Anselm to the question of the exemplars or ideas, the form of things in the Supreme Nature's reason through which they are created. As we have seen, the trinitarian articulation of the exemplars in terms of the Word is stated but underdeveloped in Augustine. For Anselm, on the other hand, this relationship is a major preoccupation. A significant

27. *Proslogion* preface.
28. *Monologion* 1. All translations from Anselm are from Davies and Evans, *Anselm of Canterbury*.
29. Pegis, "Four Medieval Ways to God" 322, notes that participation, hierarchy, and the maximum are the three notions at the center of Anselm's intellectual vision: participation enters into the hierarchy, and the maximum justifies it.

portion of *Monologion* is devoted to the Supreme Spirit's self-communication of the exemplars in Word and Spirit.[30]

So Anselm clarifies that the Word is the perfect self-expression of the Supreme Spirit, consubstantial with it and simple. The Word is not a likeness of created things, but the divine nature itself.[31] Thus, like the Supreme Nature, which in its aseity alone truly has existence, so the Word is "true and simple essence."[32] The gradation of beings, which imperfectly participate in the *summum magnum*, exist as they approximate the Word according to their degrees of life and rationality. The Supreme Nature's reason contains the plan from which things were made, and this reason is itself the expression of the Supreme Being—its "verbalization" or speech, *locutio*: "Whatever has been created by the spirit has been created through its verbalization."[33] Thus this *locutio* is the principle or prototype of all created existents because it contains their preexistent ideas. This would seem to imply, however, that there is plurality—preexistent *ideas*—in the Word, which, as divine, is simple.

So the relationship between the two Neoplatonic doctrines of divine simplicity and the exemplary causes of created beings in the divine Word raises the problem of mediating between simplicity and complexity.[34] Anselm stops short of full explanation, though, because his primary concern is to highlight the eternality and consubstantiality of the Word with the Supreme Spirit—*De Trinitate* is in the back of his mind throughout the treatise.[35] On the issue of the Word's mediating simplicity, Anselm is content to gesture at ineffability[36] before developing a generally Augustinian doctrine of trinitarian relations and deducing the traditional language of Son and Spirit in terms of relations of begetting and procession.[37]

In short, therefore, on the way to developing a trinitarian theology, *Monologion* takes up the themes I noted in *De Trinitate* 8—namely, the participation of created goods in the Supreme Good—and develops a metaphysics of the divine being on that basis, a metaphysics that sketches out the basics of a trinitarian theology oriented around the Word who is both the subsistent self-communication of God and the exemplar of all creation. But what *Monologion* is not so successful in capturing is the highly self-reflexive nature of Augustine's thought, the way that reflection on the good is simultaneously reflection on the mind that perceives the good, revealing in turn the way the mind is illuminated by the highest good itself in all its operations.[38] This

30. *Monologion* 29–64.
31. Ibid. 29–31.
32. Ibid. 31.
33. Ibid. 29.
34. "How can two such different things, creative and created essence, possibly be said by one Word?" (ibid. 34).
35. See ibid. prologue, where Anselm mentions his dependence on *De Trinitate*.
36. Ibid. 36.
37. Ibid. 39–64.
38. Although, see ibid. 67, where the mind is the "mirror" (*speculum*) of its Creator, whom it cannot see directly ("face to face," *facie ad faciem*). The Latin references Deut 5:4: "The Lord spoke with you face to face at the mountain, out of the fire" (NRSV).

connection between reflection on the good and self-reflection is the concern of the psychological analogy as the participation of human knowing in divine grace. And this is where *Proslogion* is so distinct from *Monologion*.

The difference between these two treatises does not simply lie in the elegance of *Proslogion*'s single argument. The whole orientation of the treatises differs. *Monologion* proceeds according to the dialectics of the hierarchy of participation, building toward an Augustinian idea of the divine essence as the *summum bonum. Proslogion* has a different theme: the intimate anthropological question of the epistemology of illumination, the way the human knowing of God—and indeed, human self-knowing—is caught up in the dynamic of the way the divine essence contains and expresses the exemplars of created goods in the *locutio*. Anselm's formulation of the ontological argument recaptures this Augustinian mutual implication of human and divine knowing, while also advancing the issues of simplicity and aseity noted above.

What *Proslogion* accounts for in a way that *Monologion* does not is the idea of God's nature as present to the human mind. As Pegis argues, the ontological argument does not infer from thought to existence (as is commonly argued), but the reverse: from the experience of being to the necessary structure of the intellect.[39] The key issue is that of aseity: God's being is underived; that is, God has being so necessarily as to be in some sense being itself. What makes the ontological argument simultaneously so intriguing and so bewildering is its insistence not simply that God is a necessary being, but that God's existence is necessary for thought. For Anselm (and any good Neoplatonist), the very idea of being is dependent on superlative being, that than which nothing greater can be thought.[40] It is a direct implication of an illuminationist epistemology—all our ideas are derived from their perfect exemplars in the divine mind, and as the divine expresses these exemplars in the *locutio*, it sheds an intellectual light in which those ideas are recognized for what they are.

As I noted, however, Augustine couches this knot of ideas in theological terms: far from being simply a bare intellectual operation, illumination ultimately has to do with the quality of our love. This Augustinian reflexivity of illumination is expressed in the contemplative posture of *Proslogion*, which is inseparable from its speculative exercise. In Anselm as in Augustine, rational argumentation purifies the mind for faith's adoration.[41] Contemplation is premised on the divine self-revealing, indeed its

39. Pegis, "The Argument of the 'Proslogion'" 259: it is "no mere inference from thought to existence or from essence to existence. It is an inference from the experience of being that leads to the peak of the dialectic as the point of departure for what the intellect must do in its name. . . . It translates the necessity of the dialectic of being set forth in the *Monologion* into a structure that is internal to thought and is at the source of the necessities of thought."

40. Pegis, again, highlights the importance of this nuance: the argument is not "that God exists," but "if God is thinkable, [God] exists" (ibid. 246).

41. So Worthen, who notes that a specific mental operation—conceiving God—functions for *Proslogion* the same way memory, understanding, and love contain the knowledge of the Trinity for Augustine. That is, "the reader's own performance of a mental event described in the 'script' becomes the fulcrum of theological understanding" ("Augustine's *De Trinitate* and Anselm's *Proslogion*" 521).

"importunacy,"[42] but contemplation's impulse derives from the frisson of knowing a God who is unknowable, and yet is the innermost reality of the mind's being: "I yearned for God and I was in my own way. . . . Teach me to seek you, and reveal yourself to me as I seek, because I can neither seek you if you do not teach me how, nor find you unless you reveal yourself."[43] This unknowability is the central problem driving *Proslogion*, a paradox residing at the heart of the coincidence of illuminationist epistemology and a theology of grace. The two themes we saw in Augustine, sin and ineffability, turn out to be inextricably linked in Anselm.[44]

For Anselm's contemplative first chapter, the problem of the knowledge of God is not simply a problem of the finite knowing the infinite (although it includes that), but the tragedy of the "universal lamentation of the children of Adam."[45] The ontological argument encapsulates the ethical drama resident within the metaphysics of knowing: How can we love what we do not know, indeed what seems by nature to be unknowable, but at the same time is the inescapable dynamic of all knowing? As Pegis puts it, Anselm's real problem is "the presence of God to Anselm's mind and yet [God's] very inaccessibility in that presence."[46] Anselm addresses this problem through a rhetorical strategy that backgrounds the more orderly participationist argumentation of *Monologion*, while it foregrounds the messy anthropological question of God and soul at the heart of the hierarchy of participation. *Proslogion* meditates on a series of divine attributes in inherent tension with one another, and intersperses those meditations with contemplative soliloquies where Anselm addresses his soul and searches out its continuing discontent. Throughout the twists of this dialectic, he continually returns to the issue of simplicity and ineffability.

In *Monologion*, the problem of simplicity arose in the context of the relationship of unity and multiplicity, but there Anselm was more intent on developing the christological implications of the relationship of the divine essence and the Word. In *Proslogion*, the issue of simplicity arises once again, but here it is translated into an anthropological register, allowing him to pose the stark aporia of simplicity as pointing to the theological dilemma of divine ineffability. The problem arises hard on the heels of the conclusion of the ontological argument in chapter 5—God is whatever it is better to be than not to be. But possessing maximal attributes entails contradictions: God must be omnipotent but also, because omnibenevolent, unable to do certain things. God must be supremely merciful but also supremely just and, moreover, beyond the vagaries of the passions (like mercy) and therefore impassible.[47]

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42. *Proslogion* preface.
43. Ibid. 1. The sense of "I was in my own way" might be better seen by this rendering: "I myself got in the way of satisfying my yearning for God."
44. This relationship is key to Worthen's argument; see "Augustine's *De Trinitate* and Anselm's *Proslogion*" 522–25.
45. *Proslogion* 1.
46. "The Argument of the 'Proslogion'" 247.
47. *Proslogion* 7–10. As Pegis puts it, "What we name by justice or essence in God is the pure divine unity. We are now in the presence of the problem of divine ineffability" ("Four Medieval Ways to God" 325).

These aporetic mysteries signify the immensity of God. The soul encounters the incomprehensibility of the divine light, inaccessible yet inescapable:

> Truly I do not see this light since it is too much for me; and yet whatever I see I see through it, just as an eye that is weak sees what it sees by the light of the sun which it cannot look at in the sun itself. . . . It is dazzled by its splendour, overcome by its fullness, overwhelmed by its immensity, confused by its extent.[48]

By posing questions like the relationship of mercy and justice, Anselm recasts the metaphysical question of knowledge as an ethical one: the fundamental problem in knowing God is not our conception of the divine being who is the *summum bonum* and who holds all created goods within that being. Rather, the mystery of the being of this *summum bonum* points to our distance from God *despite* the intimacy illumination affords.

We should note that when the Trinity appears in *Proslogion* (chap. 23), it does so in a rather obligatory fashion. Still, discussion of the Trinity provides a major rhetorical transition, as Anselm segues from the speculative unfolding of the divine attributes to the triumphant identification of "that than which nothing greater can be thought" with the God of the Christian faith, the Trinity. But he makes no major effort to connect trinitarian theology with the problems of exemplarity and simplicity, as he did in *Monologion*. Even as *Proslogion* reduces the metaphysics of participation to its essence, the illumined self and the God who is the necessary presupposition of that self, and highlights the way divine simplicity signifies the mystery of our distance from God, it does not attempt to link the God who is the superlative good of all things with God's self-expression in christological terms, as Augustine did in *De Trinitate*.[49] Still, we have all the ingredients for a remarkable synthesis of traditions sitting side by side in Anselm: on the one hand, an illuminationist epistemology developed into a description of the necessary nature of God, who is the sum of all goods and whose self-speaking is the origin of all goods, and whose perfection both overwhelms the mind and provides ecstatic joy; on the other hand, the development of faith seeking understanding as an exercise of piety and faith, trained in humility by the example of the Incarnation. But in Anselm's sharpest expression of the metaphysics of exemplarity, in *Proslogion*, Christology is nowhere to be found. So Anselm does not quite synthesize these themes in a way that builds on their tension in Augustine (at least in the way I have highlighted them).[50] That, I argue in the next section, takes two elements: a Franciscan Christology (itself based in part in the remarkable piety of Anselm's prayers) and a Dionysian metaphysics of the good.

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48. *Proslogion* 16.
49. On Anselm's metaphysics of the self and God, see Marilyn McCord Adams, "Romancing the Good: God and the Self according to St. Anselm of Canterbury," in *Augustinian Tradition* 91–109.
50. This is not to argue that he fails to do so, but that his intentions are elsewhere. One might very well argue that the "affective devotion" of his prayers and meditations would need to be taken into account to understand Anselm's theology of the Incarnation, something I hope to do in another context. See Anselm, *The Prayers and Meditations of Saint Anselm*, trans. Benedicta Ward (New York: Penguin, 1973).

Bonaventure: The Word in Which All Things Are Spoken

In concluding my sketch of the transformations of Augustine's illuminationist epistemology and metaphysical exemplarism, I come to Bonaventure's use of the ontological argument.[51] As with Anselm, my intention here is not to examine the argument itself, particularly the 13th-century debate as to whether the existence of God is *per se notum*, "self-evident," a phrase attributed to Bonaventure by Aquinas. Rather, I want to trace out the ontological argument's christological function in Bonaventure's broader theological program.

The exemplarism I adumbrated in Anselm's *Monologion* is at the very heart of Bonaventure's trinitarian theology: God is subsistent self-communication, the first moment of which is the generation of the Son, in whom the eternal ideas reside in the *Verbum* or self-expression.[52] God's first speaking is the Word, and in this sense that Word is the one "in which all things are spoken."[53] Bonaventure builds his metaphysics of exemplarism around this self-expression in a way that ties together Christology and illuminationist epistemology, because his means of expressing the idea of the self-speaking good in the *Verbum* is radically restructured through his Franciscan inheritance. As Hayes puts it, "for Bonaventure, the principal metaphysical question coincides with the Christological question."[54] The result is a distinctive synthesis of the Augustinian themes I examined at the beginning of this article.

The key is Bonaventure's reception and reworking of a metaphysics that was unavailable to Anselm: Dionysius's idea of the *bonum diffusivum sui*, the self-diffusive good. What Dionysius gives Bonaventure is a way of articulating Anselm's key insight in the ontological argument that combines it with the Augustinian metaphysical exemplarism of *Monologion.*[55] This Dionysian inflection of the ontological argument involves picking up from Augustine and Anselm just at the point where their

51. For Bonaventure's dependence on Anselm, see Jacques Bougerol, "Saint Bonaventure et Saint Anselme," *Antonianum* 47 (1972) 333–61, esp. 347–50 on "L'argument anselmien." For Bonaventure, I will primarily examine the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, ed. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M., and Zachary Hayes, O.F.M., rev. and exp. ed. (Saint Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2002).
52. See especially the seminal study of Zachary Hayes, O.F.M., *The Hidden Center: Spirituality and Speculative Christology in St. Bonaventure* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2000), to which my reading of Bonaventure is much indebted.
53. *Itinerarium* 6.2. See *Collationes in Hexaemeron* 11.13: "While the whole Trinity is light in the order of understanding, the Word naturally has the power of expressing" (*Collations on the Six Days*, trans. José de Vinck [Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild, 1970]). For a guide to the often bewildering complexity of the *Hexaemeron*, see Kevin Hughes, "St. Bonaventure's *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*: Fractured Sermons and Protreptic Discourse," *Franciscan Studies* 63 (2005) 107–29.
54. Hayes, *Hidden Center* 196.
55. For Bonaventure's clear debt to Augustine, see Van Fleteren, "Ascent of the Soul" 104–9; Van Fleteren highlights specific literary dependence between the *Itinerarium* and *De quantitate animae* and *De vera religione*, as well as, of course, *De Trinitate* (104–5).

exemplarism left off: the Augustinian-Anselmian *Verbum* is the self-expression of the good, but as we have seen, neither is clear how this *Verbum*, the exemplar of all creatures, is expressed christologically. Nor do they fully link this relationship to their illuminationist epistemology.

The first step is reworking the metaphysics of exemplarism to accommodate Anselm's theological insight in the ontological argument: the divine self-expression is a Word that is the necessity of all thought and being itself, and is an *importunate*, inescapable Word. As Bonaventure puts it in the *Hexaemeron*, the emanation of the Word from the Father is the intrinsic principle of every extrinsic expression of the eternal substance in any creature whatsoever: "There does not come forth something different unless there is also produced something substantially the same. . . . Scripture speaks of him who is the exemplar, by whom every creature lives in the eternal forms."[56] He tellingly calls this relationship the *speculum Augustini* (mirror of Augustine): the First Principle expresses itself perfectly in the Word, and this "perfect production" is the principle of a "perfect diffusion" of the divine nature. The latter point draws on the Anselmian formulation of the ontological argument: "Wherefore, by necessity, such diffusion in the fullness of its possibilities can exist only in something greater than which nothing can be conceived. . . . If the Father also did not diffuse Himself in the most final way, He would not be perfect."[57]

The Anselmian idea of "that than which nothing greater can be conceived," the core of the ontological argument, receives a christological articulation in this metaphysics of exemplarity. In the *Itinerarium*, likewise, the idea of the necessary being is claimed to be inherently trinitarian:

> See and take note that the highest good in an unqualified sense is that than which nothing better can be thought. And this is of such a sort that it cannot be thought of as not existing, since it is absolutely better to exist than not to exist. And this is a good of such a sort that it cannot be thought of unless it is thought of as three and one. For "the good is said to be self-diffusive." The supreme good, therefore, is supremely self-diffusive.[58]

The logic is this: that than which nothing greater can be conceived is, in Dionysian terms, the good beyond being. The good beyond being is self-diffusive in that it overflows in creation in its self-expression. Insofar as it is the Anselmian most perfect good, however, the self-diffusion of the maximally perfect being is implied in every imperfect expression of itself within creation. Moreover, since it self-diffuses, it must have a self-communication that is eternal and consubstantial, a self-expression greater than which can be thought:

> That diffusion in time which is seen in creation is a mere center-point in comparison to the immensity of the eternal goodness. From this, it is possible to think of another greater

56. *Collationes in Hexaemeron* 11.9; 12.7. This is a truth mirrored every time the rational creature forms a likeness of an object in cognition; see 11.21, 23 and *Itinerarium* 2.7.
57. *Collationes in Hexaemeron* 11.10.
58. *Itinerarium* 6.2.

> diffusion; namely, that sort of diffusion in which the one diffusing itself communicates the whole of its substance and nature to the other.[59]

This Dionysian grafting into the Augustinian tradition gives Bonaventure a clearer synthesis of trinitarian theology and metaphysical exemplarism. It will already be clear how swiftly Bonaventure's metaphysics leads to the procession of the First Person in the Trinity, a process that Anselm arrived at with some difficulty. But the Dionysian appropriation will also give him the tools to synthesize the Augustinian epistemology of illumination with an incarnational theology of grace. To see this, we need to briefly examine the contemplative progression of the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* to see how Bonaventure fills out the incarnational dimensions of his theology of perfect production by correlating the "good beyond being" with the person of the crucified Christ.

The *Itinerarium* is structured on the basic Augustinian principle of the footprints (*vestigia*) of God impressed within creation, from *City of God* 11. Bonaventure takes this to be programmatic for the ascent of the mystical vision of the soul: "It is in harmony with our created condition that the universe itself might serve as a ladder by which we can ascend into God,"[60] but in the same ethical permutation we saw in Augustine, he says, "The mirror of the external world . . . is of little significance unless the mirror of the mind is cleansed and polished."[61] The vision of God is available only insofar as the faculties of the mind, which already participate ontologically in the divine truth and light, are enflamed by the love of the Spirit and grace to contemplate the divine goodness. In each step of the ascent the mind gazes upon the traces of God available to the natural powers of reason, and is then illuminated by grace to understand the images of the Trinity in those same representations.[62]

For my purposes, the salient point in the progression of the *Itinerarium* is the christological reconfiguration Bonaventure gives the Neoplatonic ascent. The first hint of this emerges in the fourth step, in which the mind contemplates itself as the image of God reformed by grace. This occurs through the mediatorship of Christ: "No matter how enlightened one might be . . . one cannot enter into oneself to delight in the Lord except by means of the mediation of Christ who says: I am the door."[63] The Incarnation is the door that opens in to the contemplation of the Trinity, on seeing which the mind can only be assumed into the *excessus*, the "ravishment" or "transport" of the soul

59. Ibid.
60. Ibid. 1.2.
61. Ibid. prologue 4.
62. Each step of the ascent is organized by the distinction of the *traces* and the *image* of God, denoted by the prepositions *per* (through) and *in*: "With respect to the mirror of sensible things, it is possible that God might be contemplated not only *through* them, but also *in* them in so far as God is present in them by essence, power, and presence. And this way of reflecting is higher than the previous one" (ibid. 2.1, emphases original).
63. Ibid. 4.2, emphases removed.

beyond itself to unknowing union with God. This *excessus*, which is Bonaventure's equivalent of Dionysian unknowing, is a result of the pneumatological fire of love by which the mind is reformed by Christ: "When in love the soul embraces the incarnate Word, receiving delight from him and passing over to him in ecstatic love, it recovers its sense of taste and touch. . . . It consists more in the experience of affections than in rational considerations."[64]

This affective union with the divine that emerges in the fourth step shows how distinctively Franciscan the theology is that Bonaventure is crafting, one compelled to capture the experience of Francis and the still-gestating tradition of affective devotion to the suffering Christ.[65] The goal of contemplative vision in the ascent up the ladder of creation in the *Itinerarium* is not Dionysius's divine darkness, but the vision of the Incarnation and Passion itself—in the culmination of the sixth stage, "the First Principle is joined to the last, God with humanity . . . the human being, Jesus Christ."[66] In the final pages of the *Itinerarium*, Bonaventure introduces the startling claim that Divine Wisdom as such is not the exemplar of all creation, but rather the similitude of humanity made to the image of God in the Incarnation. In the face of Jesus Christ, the cosmos bends to stitch together the first principle with the last.[67] The Incarnation is not just the meaning and fulfillment of creation, but its very foundation and exemplar as well. In other words, the apophatic mystery is not Anselm's perplexity at the multiplicity of the exemplars within the simplicity of the divine essence, but the union of divinity and humanity in the hypostatic union—natures that are pinned together with the nails of the cross.

Just as exemplarism receives a christological transformation when run through Bonaventure's Franciscan paradigm, so also this christological recasting is the means by which Bonaventure addresses the problem of illuminationist epistemology. Both Augustine and Anselm end their attempt at the ascent back with themselves, stymied both by the epistemic problem of sin and the ontological divide of divine simplicity and ineffability. But Bonaventure's ascent eventuates with the crucified Christ, which reflects the impact of his Franciscan piety: "In the humility and poverty of the incarnate Word is the historical manifestation of the Son. . . . Humility, poverty, and love . . . constitute the very core of the religious-mystical return of creation to God."[68] The tradition of affective devotion is determinative for recasting the epistemological

64. Ibid. 4.3.
65. For the contemporary debate on affective devotion, the best works are Rachel Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800–1200* (New York: Columbia University, 2002); and Sarah McNamer, *Affective Devotion and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2010).
66. *Itinerarium* 6.5.
67. Ibid. 6.7.
68. Hayes, *Hidden Center* 142. The stakes in reimagining illumination, it should be noted, are political. See especially the role of the exemplarity of the incarnate Christ in the poverty controversy, as discussed in ibid. 130–35.

function of the divine light; emotional and imaginative meditation upon the life, sufferings, and death of Christ becomes in the Franciscan order the chief means of the imitation of Christ and reenactment of his life through loving attachment.[69] In the *Itinerarium*, the unknowability of God is not the aporia of mutually incommensurate attributes, as in Anselm, but mystical rapture, *excessus*, the love that surpasses knowledge in the paradox of the Incarnation and Crucifixion. It is an apophasis of the *imitatio Christi*. The unknowability of the divine nature is the mystery of the face of Christ, manifest in the person of Francis, whose "vision of the winged Seraph in the form of the Crucified"[70] was a result of his "most burning love of the Crucified."[71]

The vestiges of the Trinity in creation and in rational likenesses are a consequence of the generation of the Word from the Father. This perfect and proportionate self-communication is the first principle of the self-diffusion of good in creation, with whom it is united in Christ. The cross-pollination of the Anselmian ontological argument and the Dionysian idea of the *bonum diffusivum sui*, when read through the distinctively Franciscan focus on the Incarnation and Crucifixion, renders this link indissoluble. What is more, the metaphysics of Bonaventure's proposal points toward an even more radical conclusion: the Word is the exemplary cause of creation in his "most admirable union"[72] with human nature—that is, the Word as the *incarnate* Christ is the exemplar of creation. Thus one claim of Bonaventurean thought is that the incarnate Christ is the principle of all knowledge and the very heart of history and creation itself.

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69. See Bonaventure's meditative treatise *Lignum vitae* (*The Tree of Life*), available in translation in *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God, the Tree of Life, the Life of Saint Francis*, trans. Ewert Cousins (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1978) 117–75.
70. *Itinerarium* prologue 2.
71. Ibid. prologue 3.
72. Ibid. 6.4.