

BONAVENTURE CONTRA MUNDUM? THE CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL TRADITION REVISITED

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Conventional Catholic interpretations of Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure often pose them as dialectical opposites representing two distinct theological traditions. This article calls these interpretations into question, and, after offering an alternative sketch of each thinker's theological accomplishment, argues for a Catholic theology of history and tradition that can admit plurality without resorting to binary opposition.

THE RECEPTION OF VATICAN II in the Catholic Church, as numerous recent publications have shown, is still a matter of significant dispute.¹ Two books published in 2008 were sometimes reviewed together because they clearly illustrated the issues at stake in this question. John O'Malley's *What Happened at Vatican II* focused on the council as a watershed event,² a turning point in Catholic history, wherein the church came out from behind the battlements of its anti-Modernist fortress and turned its face toward the modern world. For O'Malley, this fundamental change in orientation is the most significant dimension of the council, and it becomes for him the basic lens through which the council documents have to be read. The other book, *Vatican II: Renewal within Tradition*,³

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¹ See, e.g., Massimo Faggioli, *Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning* (New York: Paulist, 2012).

² John W. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap of Harvard University, 2008). For an extended discussion of Vatican II as "event," see David G. Schultenover, ed., *Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?* (New York: Continuum, 2007).

³ Matthew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering, *Vatican II: Renewal within Tradition* (New York: Oxford University, 2008). For one controversial review of both texts, see Richard John Neuhaus, "What Really Happened at Vatican II," *First Things* 186 (October 2008) 23–27.

edited by Matthew Lamb and Matthew Levering, offers a different perspective, as its subtitle indicates. It argues for a “hermeneutics of reform within continuity,” most pointedly in the address of Benedict XVI marking the council’s 40th anniversary. The book offers studies of each of the significant council documents in light of the church’s wider tradition. The coincidence of these two books and the commentary surrounding them illuminate fault lines that have characterized Catholic theological culture since the council and perhaps even before it. These lines have been drawn, with arguable utility, in various ways: *Lumen gentium* Catholics vs. *Gaudium et spes* Catholics; *Communio* vs. *Concilium*; conservative vs. liberal, Augustinian vs. Thomist. A specific variant of the last designation, namely, Bonaventure vs. Aquinas, gained new life with the election of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger as Pope Benedict XVI. In this case, Bonaventure is taken to be the last lion of the “Augustinian synthesis,” resistant to Aquinas’s integration of Aristotelian philosophy into Christian thought. In this reading Bonaventure becomes a kind of archetype for the conservative Augustinian theological impulse, and Aquinas represents a more progressive, open, liberal counterarchetype.

In what follows I suggest that (a) such a reading of Aquinas and Bonaventure has seeped into the basic education that many Catholic theologians receive and stands as a cipher for significant theological disagreements in the present, but that (b) such a reading is not really tenable in light of recent scholarly developments in the approach to both of these doctors of the church. To read Bonaventure and Aquinas as type and antitype is to obscure some of the fundamental convergences and, indeed, some of the sharper distinctions between the two doctors. I contend that (c) what is at stake is more than a rehabilitation of Bonaventure or a more accurate picture of two contemporaries. Rather, a construal of Catholic theological history, even in a broadly heuristic sense, as a struggle or an oscillation between binary and contradictory positions or tendencies (e.g., between “liberal” and “conservative” forces) reflects and reinforces a thin and impoverished theology of tradition. In fact, any historical theology or ecclesiology, past or present, will fail to be fully Catholic to the degree that it depends upon such polar oppositions.

BONAVENTURE, AQUINAS, AND POST-VATICAN II THEOLOGY

It may be that Bonaventure has always been read in light of Aquinas. Since, after his death, Bonaventure’s theological project was quickly supplanted in the Franciscan schools by that of John Duns Scotus, in the late Middle Ages, Bonaventure was remembered more as the Franciscans’ minister general than as a theologian. When interest in his theology revived in the 15th century, the Thomist school of thought was well established;

so it is no surprise that Bonaventure's thought was set up in opposition to Aquinas's, as well as to the nominalist, Albertist, and Scotist schools that filled the universities and *studia* of the later Middle Ages. But in the decree *Triumphantis Jerusalem*, by which Pope Sixtus V declared Bonaventure a doctor of the church, the two mendicant fathers are seen as "the two olive trees and two candlesticks (Apoc. 11:4) lighting the house of God, who both with the fat of charity and the light of science entirely illumine the whole Church."⁴ More recently, in the wake of Leo XIII's bull *Aeterni Patris* (1879), the terms of opposition, as we now recognize them, were set in place. In the bull, Leo expressed his deep concern that modern philosophy had taken a dangerous turn. To resist modern philosophy, the church needed to call upon its traditional resources to forge its own philosophical synthesis, and the preeminent model for this work was to be found in Aquinas. Bonaventure and Albert the Great are also mentioned with approval, but Leo placed Aquinas as "chief and master of all towers."⁵ Given the expressed concern to develop a vibrant Catholic philosophy, Aquinas presented a richer, because more comprehensive and philosophically accessible, alternative.

It is fair to say that *Aeterni Patris*'s endorsements led to a period of flourishing for the study of both Bonaventure and Aquinas, yielding, among other things, the Leonine edition of Aquinas's works⁶ and the Quarrachi edition of Bonaventure's works.⁷ But in the wake of the encyclical, Bonaventure studies were haunted by what came to be known as the "Bonaventurean question," that is, whether Bonaventure possessed a "Christian philosophy" distinct from his theology, a concern one can find expressed consistently in the *scholia* to the Quarrachi editions.⁸ Etienne Gilson was perhaps the first to distinguish between the two masters in terms of the difference between theological science and mysticism. Bonaventure, he believed, offered a "metaphysics of mysticism" that, although it might fail to match the rigor of Aquinas, still held an important place in the tradition. This interpretation has established a powerful hermeneutical trajectory that can affirm the accomplishments of both

⁴ Sixtus V, *Triumphantis Hierusalem* no. 13, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Sixtus05/Triumph.htm>. All URLs referenced herein were accessed January 9, 2013.

⁵ Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris* no. 17, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_04081879_aeterni-patris_en.html.

⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Sancti Thomae de Aquino opera omnia, iussu Leonis XIII P.M. edita* (Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1989-).

⁷ Bonaventure, *Doctoris seraphici S. Bonaventurae . . . Opera omnia, iussu et auctoritate R.P. Bernardini a Portu Romatino; edita studio et cura PP. Collegii a S. Bonaventura . . .*, 11 vols. (Quarrachi: College of St. Bonaventure, 1882-1909).

⁸ See Gregory LaNave, *Through Holiness to Wisdom: The Nature of Theology according to St. Bonaventure* (Rome: Istituto Storico di Cappuccini, 2005) chap. 1.

Bonaventure and Aquinas, but it does so by an all-too-modern system of separations: mysticism/theological science; piety/reason; and, by implication or application, private/public.⁹

To these can be added another classic heuristic distinction, traceable as well to Etienne Gilson: in a later edition of the classic *Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, he suggested that the *Collations on the Six Days of Creation*, Bonaventure's last published work, amounted to a *bataille d'Hexaëmeron*, the Franciscan's last battle against the encroaching forces of Aristotelian science.¹⁰ It is this picture of Bonaventure—prince of mystics, Augustinian opponent to Aristotelian science, the last lion of a fading vision of theology—that has settled into the consciousness of most Catholic theologians trained in the 20th century. And with this characterization comes a certain *mise en scène*: Bonaventure and Aquinas, the two leading lights of their generation, are confronted with new ideas on the frontiers of philosophical knowledge. Bonaventure, the “conservative,” resists these innovations and tries to tear them down; Aquinas, the “progressive,” more open to the world, embraces them. It is important to note that Gilson does not intend in any way to disparage Bonaventure's contributions to the Catholic tradition. Indeed, his book is classic precisely because of its generous and compelling account of the roots of Bonaventure's theology in a vivid apprehension of divine mystery. Nonetheless, Gilson's interpretation, aiming to highlight Bonaventure's distinctive contribution, takes on a life of its own. This narrative becomes a kind of parable of theological method for several generations of Catholic scholars.¹¹

⁹ Ewert Cousins's influential *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1978) is perhaps best understood as a response to this “system of separations,” as is Zachary Hayes's *The Hidden Center: Spirituality and Speculative Christology in St. Bonaventure* (New York, Paulist, 1981; repr., St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2000).

¹⁰ Etienne Gilson, *La philosophie de St. Bonaventure*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Vrin, 1943) 15.

¹¹ Bonaventure scholars have developed a counternarrative to this progressive Thomism, but it suffers for replicating the same binaries even as it reverses their value. In this account, Aquinas “chose the abstract logic of the schools and laid aside symbolism and mysticism,” which led to a “selective” choice of authorities (Ewert Cousins, *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* 2–3). One specific locus of critique is Aquinas's trinitarian theology: “Aquinas's doctrine of God placed a firm emphasis on God's *esse* over and above God as a Trinity of divine persons. For Aquinas, God is absolute being and as absolute being, the final cause of all that exists. While he sought to maintain the divine transcendent essence of God vis-à-vis the created world, such distinction obscured the Christian doctrine of God as Trinity in its relation to creation” (Ilia Delio, “Does God ‘Act’ in Creation? A Bonaventurian Response,” *Heythrop Journal* 44 (2003) 328–44, at 330. This analysis serves as contrastive preface to a discussion of

In an influential 1989 article in *Theological Studies*, David Tracy gave this reading of theological history some methodological apparatus,¹² even as he issued some personal caveats. For Tracy, the accomplishment of Aquinas is in working out a systematic “correlational” model of theology with the ascendant Aristotelian philosophical culture of his age. Bonaventure’s theology, by contrast, stays within the limits of the tradition.¹³ “Bonaventure,” says Tracy, “is interpreted by Balthasar and Ratzinger (but not by others, including myself) as envisioning that Catholic theology, above all, needs to clarify and affirm its own unique identity *as such* and not in correlation with the ever-shifting and dangerous contours of the contemporary situation.”¹⁴ For Tracy, this intramural, intra-textual inclination is a persistent form of “anti-correlational” Christian theology, to which he is not inclined. Tracy does not develop here an alternative account of Bonaventure’s theology itself; the reader is left with the impression that Bonaventure is, at the very least, prone to such “anti-correlational” readings in a way that Aquinas is not.¹⁵

Joseph Komonchak, in two articles in the 1990s,¹⁶ and most recently after Benedict’s election in 2005, applied elements of this standard church

Bonaventure’s dynamic trinitarian metaphysics of love or the Good. Delio’s critique of Aquinas and the subsequent analysis of Bonaventure’s doctrine represent substantial arguments indeed. But for my purposes, I must note that the terms for debate have essentially been set up: To praise Bonaventure, he must be contrasted with Aquinas. There are recent notable exceptions among younger prominent Bonaventure scholars: e.g., Christopher M. Cullen, *Bonaventure* (New York: Oxford University, 2007); and LaNave, *Through Holiness to Wisdom*.

¹² David Tracy, “The Uneasy Alliance Reconceived: Catholic Theological Method, Modernity, and Postmodernity,” *Theological Studies* 50 (1989) 548–70.

¹³ Tracy points out that he does not necessarily share this reading of Bonaventure; only that such a noncorrelational reading is followed by Ratzinger et al. He points to Cousins, *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* as a more congenial alternative reading.

¹⁴ Tracy, “Uneasy Alliance” 554.

¹⁵ For a similar, more recent perspective see Thomas F. O’Meara, *Thomas Aquinas, Theologian* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1997) 26–27: “The advocacy of Aristotelianism by Albert and Aquinas in the thirteenth century was not simply a debate over logic or metaphysics but marked a turning point in the history of Christianity and Western civilization. For the third time, after Origen in the third century and Augustine in the fifth, the Christian faith perceived that it could employ (but not be absorbed by) the ideas of a new age, culture, and science. The struggle of the thirteenth century swirled around Aristotle, because he brought a spirit of criticism over against piety, a realism in the structure of the human personality over against the reduction of faith or grace to signs or stories.”

¹⁶ Joseph Komonchak, “Vatican II and the Encounter between Catholicism and Liberalism,” in *Catholicism and Liberalism: Contributions to American Public Philosophy*, ed. R. Bruce Douglass and David Hollenbach (New York:

history that many of us were taught and applied it to some of the leading theological lights of the council. He notes that those often characterized as the more progressive theological figures of the council (Rahner, Schillebeeckx, e.g.) had studied Aquinas in their graduate work, while figures often characterized as “conservatives” (Balthasar and Ratzinger, e.g.) tended to have studied Augustine and Bonaventure. Komonchak infers from this that there is something inherently conservative about the drift of thought in Augustine and Bonaventure, or at least in them as read by these 20th-century figures.¹⁷

When Ratzinger was elected pope, Komonchak revisited this thesis in an article in *Commonweal*,¹⁸ where he is less reserved than Tracy in his judgment of Bonaventure. In this he relies upon Ratzinger’s own reading of Bonaventure in his classic work, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure* (1971). Like most modern readers after Gilson, Ratzinger found in Bonaventure’s *Collationes in hexaëmeron* a kind of polemic against the infiltration of Aristotelian science into Christian thought. Ratzinger’s last chapter paints a picture of Bonaventure’s thought in even darker apocalyptic hues. In Ratzinger’s view, Bonaventure worried that the rise of Aristotelian philosophy signaled the final conflict in the dawning apocalyptic end. Komonchak worries that the “Bonaventuran theological vision”—“anti-philosophical, anti-intellectual, and indiscriminate enough to include in its condemnations the effort of Aquinas to engage critically the Aristotelian vision”—has found new life in “the basic attitude the new pope has himself adopted in the face of the great changes in the post-Vatican II Church.”¹⁹ Komonchak’s only hope for the church under Benedict XVI is that the pope will listen to others “of different minds and different approaches . . . within the household of faith.”²⁰

Cambridge University, 1994) 76–99; Komonchak, “Das II. Vatikanum und die Auseinandersetzung zwischen Katholizismus und Liberalismus,” in *Vatikanum II und Modernisierung: Historische, theologische, und soziologische Perspektiven*, ed. Franz-Xavier Kaufmann and Arnold Zingerle (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1996) 147–69.

¹⁷ One might wonder how this hypothesis fares when one considers that figures like Ratzinger and Balthasar turn to the Fathers and Bonaventure precisely as an alternative to what they perceive to be the staid conservative formalism of the regnant neo-Thomism of their day. The great number of “conservative” theses written under the supervision of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, the neo-Thomist gatekeeper of the Vatican graduate education, suggests that the correlation of “conservatives” with Bonaventure and Augustine may be spurious. See Fergus Kerr, *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007) chap. 1.

¹⁸ Joseph Komonchak, “The Church in Crisis: Pope Benedict’s Theological Vision,” *Commonweal* 132 (June 3, 2005) 11–14, at 13–14.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 13.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 14.

**A RICHER CONTEXT: “NEW THINGS”
ON THE INTELLECTUAL HORIZON IN THE 13TH CENTURY**

This narrative and all its various inferences about contemporary theology and church polity are dependent upon a certain reading of Aquinas and Bonaventure and, more specifically, upon a reading of their two great unfinished works, Aquinas’s *Summa theologiae* and Bonaventure’s *Collationes in hexaëmeron*. In many accounts, Aquinas’s *Summa theologiae*, left unfinished at his death, represents the birth of a truly systematic and correlational theology that embraces Aristotle and integrates theology and philosophy. For readers like Tracy and Komonchak, the *Summa theologiae* is an exemplar of critical correlational theological method, of “any attempt to correlate systematically a Catholic self-understanding with that of . . . the new Aristotelianism (the modernity) of that period.”²¹ Bonaventure’s *Collationes in hexaëmeron*, as I have indicated, has been seen in quite a contrary light, as the aging Bonaventure’s last polemical salvo against the impending threat of Aristotelian thought, “anti-intellectual,” “anti-philosophical,” and “anti-correlational.” The differences between the two thinkers, by this account, could not be clearer: when faced with new ideas, Aquinas appears to open, engage, and synthesize, whereas Bonaventure appears to close, confront, and divide. But such a contrast may fail to describe the historical context around these works accurately and, as a result, may misconstrue the texts upon which the contrast is based.

The 13th century was a volatile time for theological study. The first three quarters of the century were overshadowed by questions about the reception of Aristotle, from the initial condemnations in 1210 that forbade public teaching of Aristotle’s physics to the epoch-shifting condemnations of 1270 and 1277 of many Aristotelian or pseudo-Aristotelian teachings under the authority of Bishop Stephen Tempier of Paris. If this was the major theme, several significant contrapuntal tones added to the complexity of reactions. First, the texts of Aristotle were not the only new teachings on the horizon; major sources of Neoplatonism, such as the Greek patristic Fathers, the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus, and the Proclean *Liber de causis* had a similar, if shorter, impact, even provoking a list of errors condemned at the University of Paris in 1241. At the same time, the mendicant orders, established in chairs in the faculty of the University of Paris, still encountered resistance and even attack by the secular masters of the University. Indeed, both Aquinas and Bonaventure were prevented from taking their chairs on the faculty until a letter from the pope compelled their acceptance. Still antagonistic, the secular masters mounted at least two more major assaults on the new mendicant

²¹ Tracy, “Uneasy Alliance” 555.

communities, led first by William of St. Amour in 1254, then by Gerard of Abbeville in 1267. Both Aquinas and Bonaventure were called upon to defend the mendicant way of life. At the same time, across campus in Paris's School of Arts, the masters there had begun to develop out of Aristotle's philosophy what we might call a natural humanism, or what Alain de Libera has called a "lay philosophical asceticism" that seemed to opt for a vision of the good life outside the sacramental and ecclesial economy of grace.

In this complex mix of intellectual and social pressures, all the masters—Dominican, Franciscan, Augustinian, secular—devoted themselves to evaluating, appropriating, integrating, or rejecting various dimensions of each of these *res novae*. Given the complexity, it becomes very difficult to distinguish anything like a "correlational vs. non-correlational" dialectical divide. All the masters were by necessity "correlational" in some attenuated fashion, and they also rejected some of these novel ideas or practices as incompatible with Christian faith. Bonaventure sought in his doctrine of illumination, for example, to integrate Aristotle's teaching on sensible cognition with Augustine's sense of the intimate communion of God with the mind. When treating the nature of the beatific vision, Bonaventure seems to have tended toward a more Greek, Pseudo-Dionysian apophaticism—of the sort that had been condemned in 1241—whereas Aquinas embraced a more Augustinian sense. Aquinas famously felt compelled to defend the Christian faith against the Averroist interpretation of Aristotle proposed in the 1260s by Siger of Brabant in his treatise *De unitate intellectus*. And of course both Aquinas and Bonaventure were themselves considered dangerous innovators as members of these new mendicant orders that had disrupted the conservative tranquility of the ecclesial order. To force so complex an intellectual and social scene into dyadic oppositional terms is to obscure both the real convergences and the real differences between these great mendicant masters. With this rich complexity in mind, I now turn to the great last works of Aquinas and Bonaventure to discern both their convergences and their differences in better light.

REVISITING THE SOURCES (1): AQUINAS AND THE *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE*

In his prologue to the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas argues that theology students have often been impaired in their education by "the multiplication of useless questions, articles, and arguments," because "the things they need to know are not taught according to the order of the subject matter, but according as the plan of the book [of Scripture] might require," and "because frequent repetition brought weariness and confusion to the

minds of the hearers.”²² That is, Aquinas’s intent in the *Summa* is explicitly pedagogical, concerned with reforming theological education. The fundamental Aristotelian innovation in the composition of the *Summa* is its form: following Aristotle’s definition of *scientia* as a body of knowledge defined by its object, Aquinas constructs a leaner, more efficient display of theological *scientia*, constrained and ordered by “the order of the subject matter,” i.e., “God and everything insofar as it is related to God” (*ST* 1, q. 1, a. 7c) The apparent purpose, then, of the *Summa* is to present “whatever belongs to the Christian religion” (*ST Prol.*) in an integral and coherent form.²³

The work of Leonard Boyle and Jean-Pierre Torrell has helped excavate the setting of the *Summa*’s composition in more detail.²⁴ Aquinas began to compose the *Summa* during his stay in Rome, beginning in 1265. In the years just prior, he had been a *lector* in the Dominican priory in Orvieto. His responsibilities in that position would have included the instruction of the *fratres communes*, those friars who had not been among the top ten percent selected for study in the *studia*. The “textbooks” for these friars were any of several manuals of moral theology composed by Hugh of St. Cher, Raymond of Peñafort, or Vincent of Beauvais. These manuals lacked internal coherence, treating individual sins or sacraments *seriatim*. More importantly, they treated these individual cases without any reference or relation to the fundamental dogmatic theology that must lie at their roots. Torrell and Boyle have argued that Aquinas’s appointment to Rome established him in a *studium personale*, “an experiment so that Aquinas could freely apply there a study program of his own choosing.”²⁵ Seen in this light, Aquinas’s *Summa* emerges as an experimental model for theological education, one that would bring

²² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae, Prol.* All subsequent citations from the *Summa* will be cited parenthetically. The translations, unless otherwise noted, are from *Summa theologica*, 5 vols., trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981).

²³ Discussion of the structure and purpose of Aquinas’s *Summa* is well-trod turf and well covered by Leonard Boyle and Jean-Pierre Torrell, but it has not yet been received by a wide theological readership. My analysis here follows Boyle and Torrell closely but goes beyond them by placing the *Summa* alongside my longer treatment of Bonaventure—longer because his *corpus* is less well known.

²⁴ See Leonard Boyle, O.P., “Notes on the Education of the *Fratres Communes* in the Dominican Order in the Thirteenth Century,” in *Xenia mediū aevi historiam illustrantia oblata Thomae Käppeli, O.P.*, 2 vols., ed. Raymond Creytens and Pius Künzle, (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura) 1:249–67; Boyle, *The Setting of the Summa Theologia* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1982); Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1, *The Person and His Work*, trans. Robert Royal (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1996).

²⁵ Torrell, *Aquinas* 1:144.

doctrinal weight to moral and pastoral theology “in the field” or, in Torrell’s words, “to fill in the most conspicuous gaps by giving moral theology the dogmatic basis it had been lacking.”²⁶ To accomplish this, Aquinas could not simply bring the intricate and cumbersome infrastructure of the traditional Parisian curriculum—of Sentence commentaries and biblical *lectiones*, the “multiplication of useless questions, articles, and arguments”—but he needed to find a leaner, more integrated format through which to infuse moral and pastoral formation with its essential doctrinal foundation. In a sense, Aquinas sought to bring Paris to Rome (or Orvieto) and the fruits of his labors are found in a new formal model of theological reflection, the *Summa theologiae*.²⁷

Aristotelian science is, then, the *formal key* rather than the *cultural correlate* of Aquinas’s theological reflection. “Aristotelianism” could not be said to constellate into a clearly coherent (and alternative or parallel) form of thought with which Aquinas could correlate Christian doctrine; as I have noted, Aristotle had been a vibrant part of theological reflection for nearly a century, and some of the most important arguments in the time of Aquinas and Bonaventure revolved around the question of what authentic Aristotelian thought was. For the *Summa*, then, Aquinas sought to make use of the instrumental precision of Aristotelian *scientia* to demonstrate the real relationships between fundamental truths of the Christian faith within the broad scope of human knowledge, that is, of “all things insofar as they are ordered to God” (*ST* 1, q. 1, a. 7).

Aquinas spells out this relationship in several articles of *ST* 1, q. 1. Inquiring whether *sacra doctrina* is wisdom, he replies:

This doctrine is wisdom above all human wisdom, not merely in one order, but absolutely. For since it is part of a wise man to arrange and to judge, and since lesser matters should be judged in light of some higher principle, he is said to be wise in any one order who considers the highest principle in that order. . . . Hence wisdom is said to be the knowledge of divine things, as Augustine says. But *sacra doctrina* essentially treats of God viewed as the highest cause (*ST* 1, q. 1, a. 6).

For Aquinas, *sacra doctrina* aims “to arrange and to judge” according to the highest principle. In short, as he says, *sacra doctrina* is the science of “God primarily, and of creatures only insofar as they are referable to God as their beginning or end” (*ST* 1, q. 1, a. 3, resp. 1). As *scientia*, *sacra doctrina* is defined by its object, and its object must be identical to the object of its principles, so that “God is in very truth the object of

²⁶ Ibid. 144–45. Torrell is following the seminal work of Leonard E. Boyle, *The Setting of the Summa Theologiae of Saint Thomas* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1982).

²⁷ I am grateful to Michael Waddell for many conversations about the nature and purpose of the *Summa*. Any failure to capture the full sense of this insight are my own.

this science” just as God is the object of the principles of *sacra doctrina*, the articles of faith (*ST* 1, q. 1, a. 7). Aquinas contrasts this properly *scientific* definition with those of teachers who,

looking to what is treated of in this science, and not to the aspect under which it is treated [i.e., as things related to the proper object, God], have asserted the object of this science to be something other than God—that is, either things and signs [Peter Lombard], or the works of salvation [Hugh of St. Victor, Bonaventure], or the whole Christ, as the head and members [the *Glossa Ordinaria*, Robert of Melun, Gilbert of Poitiers, etc.]. Of all these things, in truth, we treat in this science, but so far as they have reference to God (*ST* 1, q. 1, a. 1).

Aquinas’s relentlessly theocentric definition of *sacra doctrina* already suggests what he will do with the entire structure of the *Summa*. By keeping this laser-like focus on the ordering principle of science, he eliminates the “useless questions, articles and arguments” to invite his students into the wisdom that “orders and judges.” The *Summa* is less textbook than *exemplum*, a “single and continuous line of inquiry,” as Lydia Schumacher and Mark Jordan have noted, “designed to train . . . the Dominican scholar . . . to turn every intellectual resource and circumstance into an opportunity to know and make known the greatness of God, that is, to achieve wisdom.”²⁸

For Aquinas, this work may entail the instrumental usage of philosophical sciences, but “not as though it stood in need of them, but only in order to make its teaching clearer . . . as handmaidens: even so the master sciences make use of the sciences that supply their materials, as political [science makes use] of military science” (*ST* 1, q. 1, a. 5, ad 2). *Sacra doctrina* does not aim to “correlate” the articles of faith to Aquinas’s Aristotelian “modernity” any more than Lincoln sought to “correlate” the object of his presidency—the preservation of the Union—to Meade’s strategy at Gettysburg; in both cases, the latter is ordered to the former, not vice versa. Aristotelian philosophical doctrines (and Neoplatonist philosophy too) are useful only because our intelligence “is more easily led by what is known through natural reason to that which is above reason” (*ST* 1, q. 1, a. 5, ad 2).

One can see this principle at work when Aquinas undertakes the substantial work of textual commentary, not only on the Aristotelian corpus but also on other classical philosophical texts, freshly translated from the Greek by William of Moerbeke in the 1260s and 1270s—just when Aquinas

²⁸ Lydia Schumacher, *Divine Illumination: The History and Future of Augustine’s Theory of Knowledge* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011) 158, citing Mark D. Jordan, “The *Summa*’s Reform of Moral Teaching—and Its Failures,” in *Contemplating Aquinas: On the Varieties of Interpretation*, ed. Fergus Kerr, O.P. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2007) 41–54.

was at work on the *Summa*.²⁹ Aquinas's close study of Aristotle was part of a larger comprehensive project of commentary on ancient philosophy. Through it, he was able better to distinguish between Aristotle's thought and the later thought of Averroes, the Arabic commentator on Aristotle so eagerly taken up by the masters in the Faculty of Arts. Indeed, Aquinas used this knowledge to undermine the "Averroist" arguments, e.g., on the unicity of the intellect, through both philosophical and historical critique.³⁰ When insights gleaned from this philosophical work are taken up into the *Summa*, they tend to be in the service of bringing comprehensiveness, clarity, and simplicity to the process of human knowing. Aquinas's goal is clear: the *Summa* aims to prepare young preachers to order and understand God and all things insofar as they relate to God.

REVISITING THE SOURCES (2): BONAVENTURE AND THE PARIS COLLATIONS

If we can think of Aquinas bringing Paris to Rome in the form of the *Summa*, we might think of Bonaventure bringing Assisi to Paris, with concerns not unrelated to those of his former colleague. In the same years that Aquinas continued to develop his *Summa* (1257–1274), Bonaventure undertook a series of works that sought to address fundamental deficiencies in theological education. As the Franciscans' minister general, he was no longer a master in the *studium*; he addressed his efforts in the form of lectures or evening sermons to the brothers in studies in Paris, beginning in 1267 with the *Collations on the Ten Commandments*. These were followed in 1268 by his *Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit* and culminated in the masterwork of the three, the *Collations on the Six Days of Creation*, delivered in 1273 and left incomplete when Bonaventure was summoned by the Holy See to receive the red hat as cardinal archbishop of Albano and prepare for the Second Council of Lyon. Bonaventure died at the council in July 1274 without finishing the series or editing the transcripts.

The setting of these series of *collationes* over the course of seven years is significant. Although Bonaventure was no longer a master on the

²⁹ Whether William undertook these translations at Aquinas's personal request is a matter of dispute.

³⁰ Indeed, one might argue that this work of commentary, far from demonstrating an impulse to "correlational" thinking, suggests instead an "anti-correlational" historical undermining of the emergent Averroism in the Faculty of Arts. But this, I think, just shows the limits of the utility of the term "correlational." See Wayne J. Hankey, "Why Philosophy Abides for Aquinas," *Heythrop Journal* 42 (2001) 329–48, for a fascinating and detailed discussion of Aquinas's commentaries on ancient philosophy.

faculty, he was preaching to a Parisian community. That is, he was addressing students at the heart and center of Scholastic intellectual life, and he was addressing them in his capacity as their pastoral minister. His point in the first series of lectures seems to be to warn his friars of the dangerous implications of some ideas that are in the Parisian air:

Errors in philosophy come from improper philosophical investigations, such as to say that the world is eternal and that there is only one intellect in all things. . . . All incorrect evaluations of creatures come either from a sense of high-mindedness, or from the desire for sufficiency, or from pleasure. The first way is the idolatry of the proud, the second way is the idolatry of the greedy, and the third way is the idolatry of the lascivious.³¹

Bonaventure suggests here that there might be some subtle—or not-so-subtle—relationship between philosophical, doctrinal, and moral deviance at the University of Paris, a notion that David Piché and Alain de Libera find in the later Parisian condemnations of 1277 by Bishop Stephen Tempier, and one that de Libera himself celebrates. In his *Penser au Moyen Âge*, de Libera argues that doctrinal worries about “Latin Averroists” in the school of arts might reflect, at a deeper level, critical concerns about an emergent alternative intellectual culture, a “lay philosophical asceticism” that actively rejected traditional Christian perspectives on God, the cosmos, and the moral life in favor of a kind of holistic Aristotelian naturalism.³² In this light, the *Collations on the Ten Commandments* represents a sharp pastoral intervention, interjecting tradition-centered moral discourse into the friars’ Scholastic theological training. But this moral discourse is not simply poured on top of theological study; instead, Bonaventure argues in this first series of lectures for an integral understanding of dogmatic and moral theology, of “knowledge of the Creator and the Redeemer,” for proper understanding and observance of the Ten Commandments. In other words, theology is central to the moral life, and moral life is easy to get wrong without it.

To say that the world is eternal is to contradict all of Sacred Scripture and to say that the Son of God did not become incarnate. To say that there is only one intellect in all things is to say that there is no truth of faith, no salvation of souls, and no observance of the commandments. And this is to say that the most evil person is saved and the best person is damned.³³

³¹ Bonaventure, *Collationes de decem praeceptis*, in *Opera omnia* 5:Coll. II.25, 29. I am using the English translation, *Collations on the Ten Commandments*, trans. Paul J. Spaeth (St. Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute, 1995), henceforth CTC.

³² David Piché with Claude Lafleur, *La condamnation parisienne de 1277: Nouvelle édition du texte latin* (Paris: Vrin, 1999); Alain de Libera, *Penser au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Seuil, 1991).

³³ CTC II.25.

The *Collations on the Ten Commandments* are the most polemical of Bonaventure's conferences, and thus they show us Bonaventure at his most adversarial. But the context suggests that this approach may reflect practical pastoral judgment as much as or more than overall theological temperament. These aggressive lectures are Bonaventure's first intervention, and they bear all the marks of the prophetic "hard saying," but they are often followed by softer words of consolation.

These words of consolation are found in the second series of lectures, the *Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*.³⁴ In this series, Bonaventure aims to describe the shape of a grace-filled life, born out in the gifts of the Spirit. He intends these lectures to complement the first series, just as grace complements and fulfills the Law.

What John 1:17 says is true: "The Law was given through Moses, but grace and truth have come through Christ." Two things are necessary for salvation; namely, knowledge of the truth and practice of virtue. Knowledge of the truth can be found through the Law. But the practice of virtue comes about through grace. . . . I have spoken to you at another time about the Law of the Decalogue, and now I will speak to you about grace.³⁵

On each Sunday of Lent, 1268, Bonaventure delivered his conferences on grace, treating the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit as the signs of the "grace that strengthens" the natural capacities of human persons to find their rest in God, beginning with fear of the Lord and culminating in the wisdom "from above." This series of lectures forms a fitting complement to his first series; its tone is more irenic than in the first series, but together they paint a vivid portrait of the Christian life—a life of moral virtue made possible by grace and ordered to the love of God in Christ.

Five years lie between the *Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit* and the *Collations on the Six Days of Creation*, but Bonaventure gives some indication that he intends to pick up where he left off. The *Collations on the Six Days* opens with a consideration of wisdom and understanding, topics that, he acknowledges, he has touched upon before: "Whatever is said of wisdom must be said of understanding, of which it was explained in the *Collations on the Gifts* that it is the rule of moral definition, the door to learned thought, and the key to heavenly contemplation. And such understanding is indeed a gift."³⁶ But both in

³⁴ Bonaventure, *Collationes de septem donis Spiritus Sancti*, in *Opera omnia* 5:455–503.

³⁵ Bonaventure, *Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (hereafter CSG), trans. and intro. Zachary Hayes, O.F.M., notes Robert J. Karris, O.F.M. (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2008) I.2, 29–30.

³⁶ Bonaventure, *Collationes in hexaëmeron*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 5 (hereafter *Hex*). Where possible, I use *Collations on the Six Days*, trans. José de Vinck

the choice of scriptural locus and in the structure of the collations themselves, Bonaventure indicates that he is doing something new with this last set of lectures. In choosing the *Collationes in hexaëmeron*, he explores the architecture of creation itself, the fundamental order of the universe, to unfold a fundamental theological epistemology. Each “day” of the Hexaëmeron represents a level of vision, ascending progressively from the vision of natural understanding to that of faith, Scripture, contemplation, prophecy, and finally rapture. Within this structure, Bonaventure folds rigorous Scholastic distinctions in among the tropes and symbolic resonances of monastic spiritual exegesis, covering so wide an array of theological questions that Bernard McGinn has rightly called the *Collations on the Six Days* “a masterpiece of symbolic and mystical theology.”³⁷

What makes this work a masterpiece is precisely its integration of “Scholastic” and “monastic,” of technical and spiritual theology. In fact, the scriptural topos and rhetorical form of the work suggest that Bonaventure is crafting a new theological form, inscribing the technical precision of Scholastic method into a broader moral and mystical theological itinerary.³⁸ “A beginning must be made from understanding in order to reach wisdom,” Bonaventure tells his audience:

Unless one is trained in the gift of understanding, he cannot proceed to drink of wisdom . . . [and] the gift of understanding is solid food, like bread that, as Blessed Francis used to say, is obtained through much labor. First the seed is sown, then it grows, then the grain is collected, then brought to the mill, then baked. . . . And so it is with the gift of understanding: to prepare understanding is a difficult task in itself.³⁹

(Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild, 1970), but it is a bit idiosyncratic, so I occasionally use my own translation from the critical Latin edition, *Collationes in Hexaëmeron et Bonaventuriana quaedam selecta* . . . , ed. Ferdinand Delorme, O.F.M. (Florence: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1934), citing it as *Hex* (D). A more reliable translation by Jay M. Hammond will soon be released by the Franciscan Institute of St. Bonaventure University, and a volume of selections from the *Collations on the Six Days* is in preparation by Kevin L. Hughes for the Radical Traditions series from Eerdmans.

³⁷ Bernard McGinn, *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism*, vol. 3, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism—1200–1350* (New York: Crossroad, 1998) 97.

³⁸ See Kevin L. Hughes, “St. Bonaventure’s *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*: Fractured Sermons and Protreptic Discourse,” *Franciscan Studies* 63 (2005) 107–30.

³⁹ *Hex* III.1 “Nisi enim homo exerceatur in dono intellectus, non proficit in potu sapientiae. . . . Donum intellectus est solidus cibus, ut panis, qui ut dicebat beatus Franciscus, multis laboribus habetur. Primos semen seminatur, deinde crescit, deinde colligitur, deinde ad molendium portatur, deinde coquitur, et multa talia. Et sic de dono intellectus; intellectum comparare difficile est per se.”

The *Collationes in hexaëmeron* offer a theology of history, an anthropology, a masterful exegetical “summa” of the order of knowledge, but above all these, collectively they are an exhortation to a form of life, a Franciscan form of holy scholarship, attempting to keep Scholastic rationality intimately connected with the logic of Scripture. For Bonaventure, such a logic is hardly narrow or restricting; to the contrary, this scriptural window allows him to see all things, in their radical plurality in their deepest identity as created in and through the Word. “Our intent,” he announces in his first conference, “is to show that in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and that he himself is the central point of all understanding.” This is both a spiritual and an intellectual discipline, and the *Collations* are Bonaventure’s offering of an exemplary occasion to practice those disciplines, to trace the lines of the Scholastic reasoning within each collation, all the while following the general movement into deeper and deeper vision, into the scriptural logic of Genesis 1 and the full flowering of human wisdom.

To be sure, Bonaventure expresses concerns about Aristotelian thought. Several collations devoted to philosophical understanding give us his critique of several Aristotelian doctrines very much in the air in the late 13th century: the eternity of the world, the unicity of the agent intellect, and the natural happiness of the human person in this life. For Bonaventure, these errors show Aristotle’s limitations. In the absence of revelation of God as Creator, he had only nature to consider. Similarly, in the absence of Christian teaching on divine judgment and eternal life, Aristotle had no sure guide, and so, Bonaventure notes, he does not seem interested in a happiness beyond death. On the unicity of the agent intellect, Bonaventure wonders whether Aristotle actually taught this—a suspicion that would be confirmed by Aquinas’s commentaries—but he does point out the differences between Aristotelian immanent understanding and the Platonic tradition’s insight into exemplary ideas, something that, he thinks, leads Aristotle astray.

This last distinction points to the real concerns that underlie Bonaventure’s cautious approach to Aristotle—or, at least, to the way Aristotle was being taught and appropriated by the Parisian scholars around him. The critique is more than metaphysical and yet less than total: Bonaventure scholars have long pointed to the strong presence of Aristotle in Bonaventure’s metaphysical theories of individuation and cognition, to name just a few, demonstrating that Bonaventure was not taking up arms against Aristotelian thought *tout court*. His concerns are more directly addressed to the dangers in treating scientific knowledge of natural things as ends in themselves. He argues that things are known most truly, most deeply, in their connection to their exemplars in Christ. He contends that wisdom consists precisely in “passing over” from knowledge of things in themselves to knowledge of them in Christ.

If we want to pass over [to the Wisdom of God], we must be the sons of Israel who passed over from Egypt, but the Egyptians did not pass over; they were drowned. Those alone come over who focus their whole attention on how to pass from vanity to the country of truth. Adam passed over from truth to vanity. . . . This passing over is the cause of every evil.⁴⁰

To the contrary, he says, "It is fitting to pass over from all things into the truth, so that there be no other pleasure than in God." Rightly conceived, all understanding and all pleasure are transitive—translucent, permeable by the light of wisdom itself. Vanity, on the other hand, is falling in love with surfaces. "Of course, everyone wants to be wise and knowledgeable, but it happens to them as it happened to the woman: 'She saw that the tree was beautiful and sweet to the taste' [Gen. 2:9]. They see the beauty of the knowledge of passing things and, so smitten, they linger, they taste, and they are beguiled."⁴¹ To linger in the knowledge of passing things is to end prematurely, to turn off the path and be beguiled. It is to substitute vain curiosity for true knowledge, and, Bonaventure says, "Curiosity is the first vice—through it Lucifer fell, and Adam fell, and today many still fall to ruin in this way."⁴²

To speak of curiosity in this way would seem to mark Bonaventure as a true "conservative," "stand[ing] athwart history, yelling Stop"—in William F. Buckley's notorious definition.⁴³ But it is important to note that Bonaventure's counsel is not to refuse to inquire, not at all to stop; instead, he urges his audience to pursue inquiry all the way to its end. To be "curious," in Bonaventure's sense, is to stop short of asking the deepest question—how do we see this *scientia* in its relation to its trinitarian source? If there is a "danger" in *scientia*, it is that "people spread out so much through the consideration of their own knowledge that later they are unable to return to the house of Scripture but enter the house of Daedalus [the labyrinth] and cannot get out."⁴⁴ To know things in abstraction from their source and exemplar in God is to be lost in the numerous cul-de-sacs of surface knowledge, without a map or a thread as a guide.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ *Hex* 19.1.

⁴¹ *Hex* (D) Vis. 3, Coll. 7.3.

⁴² *Hex* (D) Vis. 3, Coll. 7.4, "Bernardus: 'primum vitium est curiositas,' per quod Lucifer cecedit et Adam et hodie multi corruunt" (*De gradibus humilitatis et superbiae* 10.28, 30–31 [Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 182.957–59]).

⁴³ William F. Buckley Jr., "Publisher's Statement," *National Review*, November 19, 1955, p. 5.

⁴⁴ *Hex* 17.25.

⁴⁵ On the relationship between the metaphysics of exemplarity and the moral life according to Bonaventure, see the classic study by Kent Emery Jr., "Reading the World Rightly and Squarely: Bonaventure's Doctrine of the Cardinal Virtues," *Traditio* 39 (1983) 183–218.

On the other hand, such a perspective on curiosity may appear to be impatient with natural physical and metaphysical inquiry, cutting too quickly to the theological,⁴⁶ but Bonaventure clearly invites a deep and searching inquiry into the nature of things, each in their respective light, and in this way he is deeply Aristotelian. He devotes his attention in the first “day” of vision, of the light of understanding imparted by nature, to the six “hidden differences of quiddities”—substance and accident, universal and particular, potency and act, one and many, simple and composite, cause and caused. After discussing each division, he sums up their place in knowing: “These, therefore, are the foundations of faith, *which examines all things*.”⁴⁷ The authority of Aristotle is not ultimate; Bonaventure clearly turns to Plato rather than to Aristotle for a notion of exemplary ideas that, to his mind, is more compatible with Christian convictions about creation in and through the Word.

But Bonaventure’s concern is still more than metaphysical, as he points out in the later *Collations*. “Passing from knowing to wisdom is not assured; a means must be placed in between, i.e., holiness.”⁴⁸ Once again, Bonaventure returns to his central theme for his Franciscan audience: study is never undertaken simply for its own sake; it is part of a form of life, an engaged and integrated life of knowledge and piety, that boldly reaches out to know all things (*universitas*) precisely because it is rooted in the “spirit of prayer and devotion” counseled from the beginning by their father Francis.⁴⁹ Taken in this light, the *Collationes in Hexaëmeron* are Bonaventure’s evangelical invitation to go beyond the limits of the ontology, science, and way of life proposed by the so-called “Latin Averroists,” that is, de Libera’s “lay philosophical ascetics” in the Parisian school of arts.

⁴⁶ These are the very sorts of concerns raised by Thomas Joseph White, O.P., *Wisdom in the Face of Modernity: A Study in Thomistic Natural Theology* (Naples, FL: Sapientia, 2009).

⁴⁷ *Hex 4.13*: “Haec igitur sunt fundamenta fidei, quae omnia examinat” (emphasis added). De Vinck’s translation appears to be in error here. He renders the passage as: “These, then, are the foundations of faith which every man should examine” (De Vinck 66). This changes the sense of the passage. The literal rendering I have given is more in keeping with the second *reportatio* in *Hex (D) Vis. 1, Coll.1*.

⁴⁸ *Hex 19.3*.

⁴⁹ Francis of Assisi, “Letter to Brother Anthony of Padua,” *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, vol. 1, *The Saint*, ed. Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1999) 107. The entire text of the letter reads: “Brother Francis sends greetings to Brother Anthony, my Bishop. I am pleased that you teach sacred theology to the brothers providing that, as is contained in the Rule, you ‘do not extinguish the Spirit of prayer and devotion’ during study of this kind.”

In this way, Bonaventure articulates a vision equally radical to that proposed by the school of arts—that the life of holy mendicancy provides a better context for study than the natural philosophical life the masters in the school of arts offered. Even as the mendicant life was under attack from secular masters like Gerard of Abbeville, Bonaventure proposes precisely this radical new form of life not only as compatible with study in Paris but as distinctively suited to navigate its paths. Indeed, the simplicity of poverty and the freedom from attachment may be the best protection one could find to the lure of curiosity. Bonaventure’s proposal is far from “conservative”; in fact, it is remarkably ambitious. To borrow a phrase from Ignatius Loyola, Bonaventure argues for an integrated form of life and study that is itself the key to “seeking God in all things.”

AQUINAS CONTRA BONAVENTURE?

The argument thus far is that the late works of Aquinas and Bonaventure of Bagnoregio are composed with a similar sense of urgency and need. While Aquinas in the *Summa theologiae* is crafting a new theological model for *incipientes*, “beginners” or “newcomers,” the *fratres communes*, Bonaventure in his series of *Collationes* is critiquing the excesses and temptations to error among the Franciscan intellectual elite. Aquinas, in his responsibility as teacher, seeks to infuse a kind of Parisian intellectual rigor into the moral and pastoral formation of his “common friars”; Bonaventure, in his responsibility as pastor and minister, seeks to breathe the evangelical fire of his predecessor and spiritual father Francis into the sophisticated intellectual technicians of Paris. These quite different rhetorical occasions help explain the differences between the two masterworks, but they point as well to a deeper convergence: Both Bonaventure and Aquinas perceive certain clear inadequacies in the prevalent modes of theological education; both seek to integrate the pastoral and spiritual vocations of their mendicant brethren with the careful disciplines of philosophical-theological study. Above I have noted Schumacher and Jordan’s claim that the *Summa* is a “single and continuous line of inquiry designed to train . . . the Dominican scholar . . . to turn every intellectual resource and circumstance into an opportunity to know and make known the greatness of God, that is, to achieve wisdom.”⁵⁰ Bonaventure’s *Collationes in Hexaëmeron* clearly intends something quite similar for his Franciscan audience. Aquinas’s innovations in the *Summa* are in service of the economy of this “line of

⁵⁰ Schumacher, *Divine Illumination* 158, citing Jordan, “The *Summa*’s Reform of Moral Teaching” 41–54.

inquiry”; it is for this reason that he eliminates “the multiplication of useless questions, articles, and arguments.” Bonaventure structures his work not according to the line of inquiry but according to the transformation and elevation of the inquirer, and so it makes sense that it is a kind of hybrid form, aiming to integrate the intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions of that transformation.⁵¹ Each work attempts a comprehensive revision of the nature of theological education, and each is ordered to “know and make known the greatness of God” and “to achieve wisdom.”

Such an interpretation of these works suggests a much more nuanced understanding of the theological options we find in Aquinas and Bonaventure. Rather than thinking of Bonaventure as conservative and Aquinas as progressive, we might better conceive of the two sharing a sense of theological need for a different kind of book, a different kind of theological form. Both Aquinas and Bonaventure perceive the Scholastic theological practice of the late-13th century as a form of reasoning in need of repair. Faced with a tense and difficult intellectual climate, both scholars seek to repair and renew theological study with comprehensive efforts to integrate theological knowledge in useful and fruitful ways, and the fruits of their labors are the *Summa theologiae* and the *Collationes in hexaëmeron*. That so great a convergence in intent would generate such formally distinctive texts helps sharpen our sense of the true and proper differences between the two mendicant masters without reducing these differences to fundamental opposition.

We can begin to discern these proper differences in each master’s notion of the nature of theological study itself. Aquinas and Bonaventure agree that theology/*sacra doctrina* is a “mixed” science, part speculative and part practical, but Aquinas argues that a science is best determined by its object. Since its object is God, theology must be more truly called a speculative science, the proper end of which is speculative (or, perhaps more accurately translated into contemporary English usage, “contemplative”) knowledge of God. Bonaventure, on the other hand, argues that theology exists most fundamentally “to make us good,” that is, to order us properly to our end, and thus is more truly called a practical science. Notice how much the two thinkers share: Both agree that theology is a science ordered to God as its end, and both agree that it is a mixed

⁵¹ In the *Breviloquium*, his most “systematic” text, Bonaventure argues that, as Scripture has multiple forms, including “narration, precept, prohibition, exhortation, instruction, threat, promise, supplication, and praise,” so its study and exposition “should be understood and expounded in a similar way” (*Brev. prol.* 5.1; 6.1 [*Breviloquium*, trans. Dominic Monti {St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2005} 17, 19]).

science. Where they really differ is in their technical sense of the best definition of a “science,” that is, as defined either by its *object*, God, or by its *purpose*, to order us to God. Nonetheless, such a nuanced difference may shed light on the difference between the two. It makes sense that, when called upon to craft a new theological form, Aquinas designs a model on the order of a speculative science: an ordered arrangement of questions, distinctions, and conclusions aiming at proper contemplation of its object, God, in and through all other things known as ordered to God.

Aquinas focuses on the ordered relationship of all created things to their source and end in God, what we might call a *logic of ordered relation*. Bonaventure, on the other hand, takes as his model the practical dimension of Scholastic reflection, *praedicatio*—a model that moves its audience to be good. Within the structure of these conferences, Bonaventure focuses on the transformation and elevation of human ways of knowing, leading his audience stepwise from natural understanding to faith, from faith to scriptural understanding, and from scriptural understanding to contemplation, in what we might call a *logic of transformed perception*. That is, each doctor gives a comprehensive presentation of the nature of theological study ordered by the end of theology as a science, as each understands that science. And yet both Aquinas and Bonaventure, in their form of presentation, show clear intimations of the “mixed” character of theological science: For Bonaventure, the “six days” of transformed vision are properly understood as ordered to their exemplarity in the Word and so have a speculative unity; for Aquinas, the very tightness of his conceptual structure generates a kind of dynamism that not only informs but also directs the student to the heights of contemplation of God.⁵² In this light, we can see these two great works as complementary, not contradictory, proposals, or two treatment-plans, as it were, for a damaged theological practice.

If this is true, then some of our habitual contrasts between Aquinas and Bonaventure are difficult to maintain. Neither model is in principle more “correlational” than the other. Neither is, in fundamental approach, more “Augustinian” than the other.⁵³ Neither is more “progressive” or “conservative” than the other. These contrasts are of little use in interpreting the two doctors; indeed, they have sometimes allowed scholars to draw conclusions against the evidence. For example, those who hold that Aquinas, as more “incarnational,” has a higher estimation of

⁵² See A. N. Williams, “Argument to Bliss: The Epistemology of the *Summa Theologiae*,” *Modern Theology* 20 (2004) 505–26.

⁵³ On the relationship between Augustine and Aquinas, see *Aquinas the Augustinian*, ed. Michael Dauphinais, Barry David, and Matthew Levering (Washington: Catholic University of America, 2007).

“natural knowledge” than Bonaventure will have to contend with the fact that Bonaventure believes that humans can, by natural knowledge, know something of what God is as Trinity, even if only vestigially. That is, for Bonaventure, there is a discernible prodigality in the trinitarian patterns one finds in the natural order of things, a vestigial knowledge of the Trinity in our natural knowledge, while on this question Aquinas is far more reticent.

Of course, there are differences between Aquinas and Bonaventure. The different understanding of the nature of theological *scientia* mentioned above is itself important and significant, and it also suggests a deeper difference in the habits of mind of each thinker. Aquinas’s description of *sacra doctrina* focuses first on the knowledge we can have of discrete and particular substances; it then orders these parts to their shared origin and end in God. This affinity for Aristotelian substance allows Aquinas to be sure-footed in his intellectual itinerary to God. Particular substances are grasped and known in their particularity, and their relation to God is known in and through that particularity.⁵⁴ Such an approach allows for the deep understanding of and appreciation for created goods *as created* and protects against their reduction or collapse into God.⁵⁵

Bonaventure’s attention, on the other hand, is focused primarily on the deepening perception of divine presence in and through creation. Bonaventure does not follow the Aristotelian maxim, “nothing is in the intellect that is not first in the senses.” Rather, as one comes to know sensibles through an Aristotelian process of abstraction, this knowing coincides with the subject’s knowing or “contuiting” God as the exemplar of all created things. This coincidence stands at the very center of his intellectual project. In both the *Collations in hexaëmeron* and his earlier masterwork, the *Journey of the Mind into God*, Bonaventure organizes the work according to the growing capacity of the soul to perceive God in creation: for example, in the *Collationes*, (1) by natural capacity, (2) by faith, (3) through Scripture, (4) through contemplation, and beyond; or in the *Journey*, (1) in and (2) through the created world as vestiges of God, within the soul as image (3) and likeness

⁵⁴ In Wayne Hankey’s view, this is the most significant difference between Aquinas and Bonaventure. Aquinas follows the Proclean tradition with, finally, a lower epistemology: “Nothing in the intellect that is not first in the senses.”

⁵⁵ On Aquinas’s transformation of Platonic metaphysics of participation, see David C. Schindler, “What’s the Difference? On the Metaphysics of Participation in a Christian Context,” *Saint Anselm Journal* 3.1 (Fall 2005) 1–27. In this view, Aristotelian terms allow Aquinas the tools for a proper Christian corrective to the tendency in the Platonic tradition to reduce material reality to a shadow of the forms.

(4) of God, and above the soul through the contemplation of God's name as Being (5) and as the Good (6) and beyond in embrace of the Crucified (7). For Bonaventure, as I have shown, the greatest danger to wisdom is the failure to *transit*, to pass over, "from all things into truth, so that there be no other pleasure but in God."⁵⁶ Bonaventure attends to created realities first as *signs* of the creator and only then as *substances*; his is what Christopher Cullen has called a "semiotic metaphysics."⁵⁷ Bonaventure aims to attune his audience to the presence of God radiating out in all created reality and corrects the Aristotelian tendency—manifestly apparent in the "lay philosophical asceticism" in the School of Arts—to forget this depth dimension of created reality, rooted in divine gift.

Such a difference need not amount to opposition or contradiction. Rather, we might think of it as a relationship of complementarity, not only in the vague sense of some genial difference, but in terms something like wave-particle duality in theoretical physics. Light displays the characteristics of both a wave and a particle. Studying the wave qualities of light allows one to describe phenomena such as interference and diffraction. Attention to the particle qualities of light illuminates phenomena such as reflection and refraction. These two approaches are complementary in the sense that neither is reducible to the other, but both are necessary to give an adequate account of the phenomenon.⁵⁸ In a similar way, we might imagine Aquinas's focus on substance first as illuminating the fully particular nature of created things, while Bonaventure's focus on exemplarity displays all creation's intimate relation to divine life. Aquinas's approach allows one to focus on the distinction of created things from their creator; Bonaventure's approach allows one to discern the presence of God in and through created things.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ *Hex* 19.1. See above, n. 42.

⁵⁷ Christopher Cullen, S.J., "The Semiotic Metaphysics of Saint Bonaventure," (PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 2000).

⁵⁸ "Consequently, evidence obtained under different experimental conditions cannot be comprehended within a single picture, but must be regarded as *complementary* in the sense that only the totality of the phenomena exhausts the possible information about the objects" (Niels Bohr, "Discussions with Einstein on Epistemological Problems in Atomic Physics," *Atomic Physics and Human Knowledge* [New York: Science Editions, 1961] 39–40). For further discussion of complementarity, see Niels Bohr, *The Philosophical Writings of Niels Bohr*, 4 vols.; vol. 4, *Causality and Complementarity: Supplementary papers*, ed. Jan Faye and Henry J. Folse (Woodbridge, CT: Ox Bow, 1998).

⁵⁹ Other differences could be noted: It is beyond dispute that Bonaventure rejects the Aristotelian idea of the eternity of the world philosophically, while

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If such a model of complementarity is true, then it may be that Aquinas and Bonaventure, far from needing us to rehabilitate them, can help us repair our own modern modes of theological reasoning, themselves much in need of healing. Like many modern disciplines, theology has fractured into a multiplicity of subdisciplines and research specializations, and, despite the laudable optimism of Bernard Lonergan,⁶⁰ this multiplication has led on the whole to isolation more than to collaboration. Even as the Catholic tradition welcomes the insights of modern biblical scholarship, it strains to make this endorsement cohere with its stance toward traditional creeds and theological authorities.⁶¹ While resistance to this modern intellectual division of labor has gained momentum in American postliberal theology, in the meteoric arrival of Radical Orthodoxy, in the interreligious Scriptural Reasoning movement, and in British theologians such as Sarah Coakley and Rowan Williams, among others, recent years have also witnessed the recrudescence of a hypermodern propositional neo-Scholasticism.⁶² Theological reasoning is fractured and in need of repair; to discern how to repair it requires a bit of archeology on our own modes of reflection.

In the concluding chapter of his *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, Lewis Ayres has described the way contemporary theological appropriations of pre-modern theological sources have been shaped, for Protestants and

Aquinas believes it to be philosophically reasonable and so dismisses it on the authority of faith alone. I would suggest that Bonaventure's rejection of it has less to do with the fact that it was Aristotle's idea than with Bonaventure's own understanding of the structure of time and history. To consider the incarnation as an event in history requires, for Bonaventure, an understanding of time as ordered according to beginning, middle, and end. For a suggestive reading of Aquinas and Bonaventure on the nature of history, see Bernard McGinn, "The Abbot and the Doctors: Scholastic Reactions to the Radical Eschatology of Joachim of Fiore," *Church History* 40 (1971) 31–47. In this light, Bonaventure may be far more "progressive" than Aquinas, which only shows the essential emptiness of the category.

⁶⁰ See Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1990). This work attempts to demonstrate the possibility of integrating subdisciplines.

⁶¹ On this see Lewis Ayres and Stephen E. Fowl, "(Mis)reading the Face of God: The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," *Theological Studies* 60 (1999) 513–28.

⁶² See, e.g., Steven Long, *Natura Pura: On the Recovery of Nature in the Doctrine of Grace* (New York: Fordham University, 2010); and Aidan Nichols, O.P., *Reason with Piety: Garrigou-Lagrange in the Service of Catholic Thought* (Naples, FL: Sapientia, 2008). On the distinctive modernity of such impulses, see Kerr, *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians* chap. 1.

Catholics alike, by a distinctly post-Kantian and idealist framework of knowledge. In the 19th century, theological study was divided into four distinct fields: biblical studies, historical theology, systematic theology, and pastoral theology, each developing into distinct professional specializations. Biblical studies and historical theology are historical and text-critical professions, the job of which is to unearth the past to provide data for the systematic theologian to synthesize with contemporary language and concerns into “usable” material for the present day, demonstrating the post-Enlightenment conviction that “narration of the past must always be propaedeutic to the establishment of Christian thought on some other grounds than the authority of the past.”⁶³ In this model, systematic theology is the only properly *theological* specialization, and it is defined per se as correlational.

In the same stroke, the scientific and text-critical sciences of biblical studies and historical theology seem to render implausible the very forms of reasoning through Scripture and tradition that lay at the heart of Bonaventure’s and Aquinas’s work. If the presumptive point of departure in biblical and historical studies is the assumption that contextualization effectively balkanizes the sources of Scripture and tradition into units isolated from each other by the buffer of each text’s historical context, then we can have no shared engagement with either figure, whose thought depends intrinsically on, say, the theological unity of the Bible and the authority of the Church Fathers. In this way, the fruits of the theological labor of an Aquinas or a Bonaventure are sundered from their own theological reasoning, and their conclusions must therefore be construed and justified by modern theologians according to some other extrinsic criteria. Perhaps it is not surprising that the criteria that present themselves ready to hand bear the imprint of the same sort of idealist historicizing dialectics that shaped modern theological reasoning in the wake of Kant and Hegel. Aquinas and Bonaventure become instances—peculiarly brilliant instances, to be sure—of the working out of the dialectics of progress vs. conservatism, of immanence vs. transcendence, or of reason vs. piety. Pressed into this post-Enlightenment mold, Aquinas and Bonaventure are rendered less able to challenge or to repair our own theological reasoning. We have chained them to it.

Released from the dyadic double bind, Aquinas and Bonaventure present us with strategic alternative models of repair, the implications of which I have only sketched. Aquinas’s *Summa theologiae* suggests that a moment of theological crisis might be approached by the reduction of

⁶³ Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (New York: Oxford University, 2004) 384–429.

“useless questions, articles and arguments” through the application of a dynamic integrating form that unites what seems divided in the service of contemplation. Aquinas’s integration of the *quaestio disputata* structure into the work suggests that simplicity and integration must not sacrifice rigorous reflexive and dialectical critique.⁶⁴ Indeed, the inclusion of several objections, borrowed from a deep reading of the tradition, suggests already that good theological questions are irreducible to binary divisions. As such, the *Summa* already is a model for theological reasoning that is attentive to the broad horizon of created substances in their particular natures, oriented to Scripture and tradition, sensitive to the complex witness of diverse theological opinions, but not timid in its efforts to seek the truth by adjudicating between these opinions.

In tandem, Bonaventure’s *Collationes in hexaëmeron* proposes a reinscribed theological reasoning within the architectonics of Scripture, summoning all our study to see deeper into the christological root of all understanding, the Word at the heart of all our words. It reminds us that the fundamental nature of creatures is ordered to receptivity and relation, such that even our struggle to know is itself first a gift we receive. Even more, Bonaventure’s model urges us to attend to the intimate relationship between forms of life and forms of thought, and Bonaventure offers us, as he offered his Franciscan audience, an exemplary performance of theological understanding aiming to move “from understanding through holiness to wisdom.”⁶⁵

Each “summa,” then, offers a particular and partial corrective to a damaged theological practice, and, in hindsight, we can recognize that each master had discerned rising problems within the practice that came into clearer view after their deaths. Theological education in the schools lost much of the dialectical and investigative character Aquinas had worked so creatively to preserve. Similarly, it gradually began to lose its vital connection to scriptural exegesis and the life of prayer, despite Bonaventure’s efforts to the contrary. When taken together in a complementary mode, these two masters’ “summas” remind us of the communal character of the Catholic tradition, a tradition that depends on plural and complementary insights to discern, explore, and protect adherence to faith in the one true God.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ See, e.g., Williams, “Argument to Bliss.”

⁶⁵ *Hex* 19.3.

⁶⁶ I have learned from Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, in his movement away from simple binary “pro-Nicene” / “anti-Nicene” divisions to a broader account of multiple overlapping but nonidentical theologies. Something like this historiographical orientation would benefit our understanding of medieval theology as well.

In an irenic mode, Catholic novelist Shusaku Endo confessed that he remained Catholic because of his unshakeable conviction that “Catholicism is not a solo, but a symphony.” “If I have trust in Catholicism,” says Endo, “it is because I find in it much more possibility than any other religion for presenting the full symphony of humanity.”⁶⁷ If this symphonic vision of truth bears any force, it means that we must use a logic other than the logic of contradictories to describe that symphony, and so it means that the historical record cannot simply be of “progressives” and “conservatives,” whether in the 13th century or in the wake of Vatican II. In fact, it is a full hermeneutics of “tradition” and not just “history,” of the *communio sanctorum*, both the “communion of saints” and the “sharing in holy things,” that summons us to read and think according to a logic of communion, wherein particular figures and texts bear within them distinctive and irreducible insights that, together, lead the faithful into wisdom.⁶⁸ In other words, a fully Catholic vision of our historical tradition may not only permit but even require the witness of both Aquinas and Bonaventure (and more!) to speak, and we are thus bound to strive for models of complementary relation that may allow such contrary positions to engage, to seek the truth of things, without pressing them prematurely into binary contradictories. In other words, we are bound to strive for a theology of tradition that is truly Catholic.

⁶⁷ Interview (trans. F. Mathy) given to the magazine *Kumo*, quoted in William Johnston’s preface to Shusaku Endo, *Silence*, trans. William Johnston (Malboro, NJ: Taplinger, 1980) xvi.

⁶⁸ I hasten to add that this is not an innovation or a hypothetical construction, but a method that can be found, implicitly or explicitly, already in some scholars in the modern age. Newman’s “illative sense” (see his *Grammar of Assent* [New York: Cambridge University, 2008]), for example, offers a suggestive model of the *habitus* of the kind of reasoning that comes to real assent in and through a series of converging but not definitive judgments; and his *An Essay on the Development of Doctrine* (1845; new ed. 1878) gives a solid historical model. A similar sensibility informs the theology of Rowan Williams—see his *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001) and *Why Study the Past?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005)—and might be said to describe the theological method of Henri de Lubac (e.g., *Catholicism* [San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988]; *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages; Historical Survey*, trans. Gemma Simmonds with Richard Price and Christopher Stephens, ed. Laurence Paul Hemming and Susan Frank Parsons [London: SCM, 2006]; and *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, 3 vols., trans. Marc Sebanc and E. M. Macierowski [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998–2009]).

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