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Randall B. Smith

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Finding the Roots of Bonaventure's Literary Style in Medieval Preaching

RANDALL B. SMITH
University of St. Thomas
Houston, TX

IT HAS BEEN CLAIMED THAT, after his elevation to the position of Minister General of the Franciscan Order, Bonaventure developed a mode of expression "wholly alien to the language of the schools."[1] Indeed, the noted Bonaventure scholar Jacques-Guy Bougerol, in his *Introduction to the Works of Bonaventure*, still a standard reference work, declares that, as Minister General, Bonaventure set himself "free from the patterns of the Schools, that is free to develop a form for his thought more concordant with his vision."[2] There is certainly no denying Bonaventure's creativity, and works such as the *De reductione artium ad theologiam*, the *Breviloquium*, and his *Collationes* on the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and on the six days of creation certainly do not resemble the kind of standard "disputed question" format that one finds in Thomas Aquinas's *Summa theologiae* [*ST*].[3]

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[1] Kent Emery, "Reading the World Rightly and Squarely: Bonaventure's Doctrine of the Cardinal Virtues," *Traditio* 39 (1983): 183–218. I think Prof. Emery is quite right about Bonaventure's doctrine of the cardinal virtues. Where I think he is mistaken is in this off-hand comment about Bonaventure developing a mode of expression "wholly alien to the language of the schools"—a comment that I take it has little or no bearing on the substance of the rest of his article.

[2] Jacques-Guy Bougerol, *Introduction to the Works of Bonaventure*, trans. José de Vinck (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1964), 123. A revised French edition of the work (Paris: J. Vrin) appeared in 1988, but it was never translated into English.

[3] On the likely origins of the text we have come to know as the *De reductione artium ad theologiam*, see Joshua C. Benson, "Identifying the Literary Genre of the *De reductione artium ad theologiam*: Bonaventure's Inaugural Lecture at Paris," *Fran-*

And yet, the "disputed question," as important as it was to the education and work of any thirteenth century medieval master, was not the only rhetorical form that characterized the schools. The third duty of the medieval master, along with *lectio* and *disputatio*, was *praedicatio*, "preaching." This famous threefold list of the master's duties can be traced back to a comment in the *Verbum abbreviatum*, a late twelfth century work by Peter Cantor (d. 1197), who declared that "the training [*exercitum*] of sacred Scripture consists in these three: lecture, disputation, and preaching."[4] Peter goes on to compare the relationship between the three to the parts of a building: *lectio* is the foundation, *disputatio* the walls, and *praedicatio* the roof. Preaching, in other words, was considered the "summit" toward which the other two were to be directed and for which they were thought to be foundational.

I do not wish to argue here whether or to what degree Bonaventure's advanced style still owed much to his training in *lectio* and *disputatio* or whether or to what extent we can still discern vestiges of them in the later works. For the purposes of this article, I want to turn our attention elsewhere—to the profound influence Bonaventure's training in Scholastic preaching had on him throughout his career.

The form of preaching popularized at the University of Paris that became standard across Western Europe during the course of the thirteenth century was known as the *sermo modernus* (the "modern sermon").[5] This style of preaching, based upon the division and development of a single Bible verse, was the form thirteenth-century medieval masters used in all their sermons, and it was the form they used in all their early

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ciscan Studies 67 (2009): 149–78. The only difference between this text, Bonaventure's *resumptio* address, which made up the final part of his inaugural ceremonies as a master of the sacred page at Paris, and the text we have come to know as the *De reductione artium ad theologiam* is the first paragraph.

[4] Peter Cantor, *Verbum abbreviatum* 1: "In tribus igitur consistit exercitum sacrae scripturae: circa lectionem, disputationem et praedicationem . . ." (ed. Monique Boutry in *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaeualis* 196 [Turnhout: Brepols, 2004]).

[5] Michèle Mulcahey, for example, notes that John of Wales, a Franciscan master at Paris around 1270, wrote in his *De arte praedicandi* that the older style of homily "did not sit particularly well with modern listeners, who liked to see the clear articulation of a sermon developed from a scriptural *thema*," as was Thomas's practice. Indeed, by 1290, the Italian Dominican Fra Giacomo da Fusignano, prior of Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome, would write that the older style was suitable only for preaching to the ignorant. See Michèle Mulcahey, *First the Bow Is Bent in Study: Dominican Education Before 1350* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1998), 403n10.

prologues, whether to their biblical commentaries or to their commentaries on the books of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*.[6] It was the form they used when they delivered what was known as their *principium in aula* and *resumptio* addresses during their inception as masters of sacred doctrine. And it seems also to have been the form used when they delivered the first lecture each term (also known as a *principium*), in which they lectured on a book of the Bible.[7] When those lectures were sent to the stationer and published, that first lecture, the *principium*, would serve as what we would call the "prologue" of the book. The *sermo modernus* style was thus a constant presence in the life of a bachelor of sacred doctrine during his studies at the University of Paris, both as a bachelor *biblicus* and later as a bachelor *sententiarum*. It was a "form" that had become so commonly accepted at Paris by the middle of the thirteenth century that it seems to have been treated as a formal requirement.

So, for example, all of Thomas Aquinas's earliest prologues, even the prologue to his *Commentary on Boethius's De Trinitate*, were written in this style. Later, after Thomas left Paris, he stopped adhering to its formal requirements as stringently in his prologues, although he used it in all his extant sermons. When he returned to Paris years later for his "second Parisian regency" and lectured on the Gospel of John, he reverted to the formal requirements of the *sermo modernus* style, suggesting that, although this formal style was not always required at Orvieto or in Rome, it was expected, perhaps even required, when a master of sacred doctrine was commencing a series of *lectiones* at Paris.

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[6] I will provide a description of the basic elements of the "modern sermon" below. For more on thirteenth-century sermons, see: Gillian Rosemary Evans, "Introduction," in Alan of Lille, *The Arts of Preaching*, trans. G. R. Evans (Collegville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1982), 5–6; Nicole Bériou, *L'avènement des maîtres de la Parole: La Prédication à Paris au XIIIe siècle* (Paris: Institute d'Études Augustiniennes, 1998), 1:134–69; David d'Avray, *Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris before 1300* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1985), 163–80; James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of the Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001), 269–355; Étienne Gilson, "Michel Menot et la Technique du Sermon Medieval," in *Les Idées et les Lettres* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1932), 93–154; and Randall Smith, *Reading the Sermons of Thomas Aquinas: A Beginner's Guide* (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic, 2016), esp. ch. 2.

[7] See Mariken Teeuwen, *The Vocabulary of Intellectual Life in the Middle* Age (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), esp. 315: "The term *principium* is generally used, in the context of the medieval university, for the inaugural lecture of a course. In the context of a student's career an inaugural lecture of this kind marked the transitions from one phase to another, and was, usually, a solemn and public occasion. Bachelors of Theology, who were first allowed to teach on the Bible and then on Peter of Lombard's *Sententiae*, held *principia* or inaugural lectures on each of these occasions, in which they eulogized the texts and gave short analyses or introductions."

Where Thomas had become adept over time at using the "modern sermon" style—one can compare his rudimentary early efforts as a bachelor *biblicus* in the prologues to his "cursory" commentaries on Jeremiah and Lamentations with the later, more complex prologues to his commentaries on John or the epistles of Paul—Bonaventure, by contrast, was a master at its use even as a bachelor. For evidence, one need only examine the amazing prologue to his early *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*. Although the text of this commentary may have undergone revision between its first version and the final one found in the Quaracchi edition, according to an early chronicler (Salimbene) and a recent scholar (Jay M. Hammond), Bonaventure most likely undertook the first version of the work in 1248 while he was a *lector biblicus* in the Franciscan *studium* at Paris and not yet a master at the University.[8] Everyone seems agreed that the text shows remarkable proficiency. Indeed, one Bonaventure scholar, Theodore Crowley, has argued that "a mere *baccalarius biblicus*" could not have produced the *Commentary on Luke*: "The Commentary in its present state is undoubtedly the work of a master and not a beginner."[9] Jay Hammond's suggestion seems most reasonable, that Bonaventure composed the earliest version while he was still a *lector biblicus*, a position above a *cursor biblicus* (who could give only a cursory reading of the text) but below a *magister*, the position needed to "determine" a question arising within the text. Either way, the sophistication of this early prologue is remarkable.

It is worth recalling that, unlike Thomas, who came to Paris after his early training at Naples, Bonaventure had been studying at the University Paris for nearly twenty years before his inception in 1253, having entered as a layman to study the arts in 1235 at fourteen years of age.[10] Bonaventure's works, even from early on, show evidence of a superb literary education. Thomas Aquinas, by contrast, though a clear and penetrating thinker, rarely showed the literary skills we see in evidence in Bonaventure's works.

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[8] See Jay M. Hammond, "Dating Bonaventure's Inception as Regent Master," *Franciscan Studies* 67 (2009): 179–226, esp. 186–90. See also J. Guy Bougerol, *Introduction to the Works of Bonaventure*, trans. José de Vinck (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1964), 94–95: "Brother Salimbene tells us, in his *Chronicle*, that 'Brother John of Parma gave formal license to Brother Bonaventure of Bagnorea to 'read' in Paris, which was not done heretofore as he was a bachelor not yet installed in his Chair: and so he 'read' a very beautiful and perfect commentary on the whole Gospel of Saint Luke: this was in 1248."

[9] Theodore Crowley, "St. Bonaventure Chronology Reappraisal," *Franziskanische Studien* 56 (1974): 320; quoted from Hammond, "Dating Bonaventure's Inception," 189.

[10] In all cases, I have followed the dating from Hammond's "Dating Bonaventure's Inception," which is scrupulously researched and argued.

Perhaps one example will be helpful. According to the canons of the *sermo modernus* style, the preacher was supposed to maintain a strict parallelism among items listed in a subdivision. So, for example, in Thomas's *principium in aula* sermon, *Rigans montes*, he associates the word "mountains" with the dignity required of the teachers of sacred doctrine and then claims that a threefold dignity is required of masters: first, "because of the height of the mountains" (*propter montium altitudinem*)—that is, the teachers are to keep their minds set on things above; second, "because of the splendor [of the mountains]" (*propter splendorem*)—that is, as the mountains are the first things to receive the light of the sun, so too masters should be illuminated from above; and third, "because of the defense of the mountains" (*propter montium munitionem*)—that is, the masters are supposed to defend the Church with good arguments the way mountains shield towns from invasion by foreigners. Notice how Thomas has maintained, with one minor exception, the parallel clauses: the preposition *propter* with a genitive and an accusative.

When in the same *principum* address Thomas describes the condition required of the students, he says that listeners (*auditores*) should be like the earth: "low" in humility (*infimi per humilitatem*); "firm" in the rectitude of sense (*firmi per sensus rectitudinem*); and "fecund," so the words of wisdom they hear may bear fruit in them (*fecundi, ut percepta sapientiae verba in eis fructificent*). Notice that, in this example, Thomas does not maintain the parallelism among the phrases. The content is edifying, but according to the standards of the *sermo modernus* style, his prologue lacks polish and precision.

Bonaventure never makes this mistake; he never fails to make his clauses match, even though they are often quite complicated. For example, in his own *principium in aula*, Bonaventure divides his opening thema verse from Wisdom 7:21: "Omnium artifex docuit me sapientia" ("The maker of all things taught me wisdom").[11] He says that these words show "the fourfold cause" [of the Scriptures]: namely, "the excellence of the author from the sublimity of the principle" ("auctoris excellentiam ex sublimitate principia"); "the contents of the matter from the utility of the sign" ("materiae continentiam ex utilitate signi"); "the evidence of the form from the singularity of the mode" ("formae evidentiam ex singularitate modi"); and "the sufficiency of the end from the uncommon teachability of the good" ("finis sufficientiam ex docibilitate boni"). Note the complexity of the parallel constructions when compared with Thomas's. This is Bonaventure's style. Even from his earliest student days, Bonaventure was able to write complex parallel phrases like these.

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[11] Throughout, I have used the Latin text that can be found only in Joshua C. Benson, "Bonaventure's Inaugural Sermon at Paris: *Omnium Artifex Docuit Me Sapientia*: Introduction and Text," *Collectanea franciscana* 82 (2012): 517–62. All English translations of this text are my own.

It seems clear that many of Bonaventure's peers took his preaching to be a model of the *sermo modernus* style at its best. Curious readers can consult the wonderful translation by Timothy J. Johnson entitled *The Sunday Sermons of St. Bonaventure*, where they will find a sermon for each Sunday of the liturgical year. As Professor Johnson argues in the introduction to that volume, it is likely that this collection was put together precisely to serve as a manual of "model sermons" for younger preachers to learn from.[12]

What I hope to show in what follows is how Bonaventure used and adapted the *sermo modernus* style in his later theological works. For the purposes of this essay, I have chosen to focus attention on Bonaventure's *Collations on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, but a similar analysis of the structure and method of the text could be done for nearly all of Bonaventure's mature works. I will suggest that reading Bonaventure's texts through the interpretive lens of the thirteenth-century *sermo modernus* style of preaching can help us better appreciate and understand the structure of his works and the various methods he employs. After he became Minister General of the Franciscans, Bonaventure did not choose to write theological works in the style of the Scholastic "disputed question," but the "disputed question" was not the only style or form that characterized the university. The other, equally important form was the one that characterized preaching, and that form was in its own way as "formal" as the one that governed the writing of "disputed questions."

To argue, as I do below, that Bonaventure used and adapted the *sermo modernus* style that characterized the preaching and prologues at the University of Paris will take nothing away from our estimation of him as a creative—indeed, as I hope to show, a *poetic*—genius. But just as modern scholarship has shown more and more that Thomas Aquinas's genius was not in creating new insights *ex nihilo*, but in synthesizing and ordering all the widely divergent traditions passed down to him, so we should be able to grant that Bonaventure too did not create a style *ex nihilo*, nor one entirely foreign to the universities. Rather, his style would have been seen at the time as a recognizable adaptation of a "university" style, not of disputation, but of preaching, *principia*, and prologues.

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[12] *The Sunday Sermons of St. Bonaventure*, trans. Timothy J. Johnson, Works of St. Bonaventure 12 (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2008), 22–32. Unless otherwise noted, all citations of Bonaventure's sermons are taken from this volume.

In the first section below, I will describe the basic characteristics of the thirteenth-century *sermo modernus* style that masters such as Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure used when they were crafting their sermons and prologues. Some of that discussion will be necessarily general, employing examples from contemporary preaching manuals, but I will also include illustrative examples from Bonaventure's own sermons. The goal of this first part of the essay is to introduce readers to the methods of medieval preaching so that, in the latter section, I can show how he adapted these methods for use in other works. So as not to prolong this essay unnecessarily, I will be focusing attention on an illustrative section of just one of Bonaventure's later works: namely, the early sections of his *Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*. And yet it is important to note that this same sort of interpretive analysis I will be making of Bonaventure's style using the categories of medieval preaching could be made of nearly all of Bonaventure's later works, not only the *Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, but also the *Collations on the Ten Commandments* and the notoriously complicated *Collations on the Six Days of Creation*.

The Basic Elements of the Thirteenth-Century "Modern Sermon"

The *sermo modernus* style of preaching that arose in the early thirteenth century was a product of what has been called the "homiletic revolution of the thirteenth century."[13] Prior to Alan of Lille's 1199 work *De arte praedicatoria* (*On the Preacher's Art*), only three works could qualify as serious theories of preaching: St. Augustine's fourth century work *De doctrina christiana* (*On Christian Doctrine*); Pope St. Gregory the Great's sixth-century text the *Cura Pastoralis*, or "Pastoral Rule; and Guibert de Nogent's eleventh-century *Liber quo ordine sermo fieri debeat* (*A Book about the Way a Sermon Ought to be Written*).[14] Within the next twenty years after the publication of Alan of Lille's *De arte praedicatoria*, however, a whole new rhetoric of preaching spread across Europe and hundreds of theoretical manuals were written for aspiring preachers to learn from.[15] By the middle of the thirteenth century, this new style had been fully developed, complete with its own technical vocabulary and a stable pattern of organization.[16]

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[13] See Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 309–55. Much of the material in this section has been adapted from my *Reading the Sermons of Thomas Aquinas*, ch. 2. In that book, I showed how these basic principles found in the preaching manuals can illumine our understanding and appreciation of Aquinas's sermons. Here, I am attempting to show how the same principles can illumine our understanding and appreciation not only of Bonaventure's sermons, but also of many of his other theological works.

[14] Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 309; for a nice overview of these works and

Thomas Waleys, an Oxford Dominican looking back from the perspective of the early fourteenth century on the fruits of these thirteenth-century developments, wrote a widely circulated tract entitled *De modo componendi sermones* (*On the Manner of Composing Sermons*). The difference between the "modern" sermons of the thirteenth century and the "ancient" sermons of the Church Fathers, said Waleys, was that, whereas the "ancient" sermon consisted of a verse-by-verse commentary on the entire Gospel reading for the day, the "modern" sermon was built around a *thema* or single Bible verse. University of Toronto scholar of early Dominican life Michèle Mulcahey notes that "the theme [that is, the *thema*] of a *sermon modernus* was often likened by the authors of preaching manuals to the root of a tree which was the sermon, or similarly it was the trunk from which sprung the various branches."[17]

"Although a brief *thema* is used when preaching to clerics," says Waleys, "nevertheless, in some parts, for example in Italy, commonly, when preaching not to clerics but to the people, a brief *thema* is not used; rather the whole Gospel which is read in the Mass is taken for the *thema*, and the whole is expounded upon, and many beautiful and devout things are said." Waleys considered the older style, the style of the early Fathers of the Church, still the best for preaching to the laity, declaring: "And, in my judgment, this manner of preaching to the people is not only easier for

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their influence on preaching, see 269–308.

[15] For an invaluable introduction to the various preaching aids that became available, see d'Avray, *Preaching of the Friar*, esp. 14–28 and 163–203.

[16] Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 309–10. For excellent surveys of the development of the style, see: Bériou, *L'avènement*, 1:133–214; Richard Rouse and Mary Rouse, *Preachers, Florilegia and Sermons: Studies on the Manipulus florum of Thomas of Ireland* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1979), ch. 3 ("The Evolution of Sermon Form in the Thirteenth Century"), esp. 65–87; and Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 311–55.

[17] See Mulcahey, *First the Bow Is Bent in Study*, 404–5, quoting a passage from the manuscript in Anger, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 1582, fol. 132: "Unde, quia thema est quasi radix totius sermonis et per ipsum fundamentum totius aedificii fabrica consurgit." For more on the *thema*, see Thomas-M Charland, *Artes praedicandi: contribution à l'histoire de la rhétorique au moyen âge* (Paris: Institute d'Études Médiévales, 1936), 111–24.

the preacher, but also more useful for the listener among all the modes of preaching. And such was the ancient manner of preaching of the saints, as is clear in their homilies." Waleys decried those who preach to the uneducated in the manner appropriate to clerics. "When they fill their sermons with such theological subtleties," says Waleys, they make it all but impossible that "multiple errors" and "unfitting phantasies" (*phantasiae ineptae*) will not arise in the minds of their listeners. Waleys thought it "better simply not to preach to the people at all than to preach to them in this way." [18]

Waleys appears to have been swimming against the tide, however, for as Mulcahey points out, the Franciscan master John of Wales wrote in his 1270 treatise *De arte praedicandi* (*On the Art of Preaching*) that the older *sermo antiquus* homily of the sort Waleys favored "did not sit particularly well with modern listeners, who liked to see the clear articulation of a sermon developed from a scriptural theme" (i.e., *thema*). So too in 1290 the Italian Dominican Fra Giacomo da Fusignano, prior of Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome, wrote that the older style was suitable only for preaching to the ignorant. To other, more intelligent and literate listeners, this sort of exposition was, he thought, unnecessary. The sermon "more common to modern preachers" ("modernis praedicatoribus communior"), writes Fra Giacomo, was one in which a theme (*thema*) was divided into various parts.[19]

The *thema* served as a mnemonic device that provided the structure for the topics covered in the sermon. When the sermon was preached, the *thema* verse also served as a mnemonic device to help the listeners identify their place within the progress of the whole and then recall the contents of the sermon after it was finished. To recall the contents of the sermon, one merely had to bring to mind the opening *thema* verse, and each word would suggest the topics the preacher had associated with it.[20]

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[18] See Thomas Waleys, *De modo componendi sermones*, in Charland, *Artes praedicandi*, 344.

[19] See Mulcahey, *First the Bow Is Bent*, 403n10, quoting Bologna, Collegio di Spagna, MS Lib. sacr. 50, no. 2, fol. 124r: "Est autem hoc satis populo rudi utilis. Ceteris literatis et intelligentibus auditoribus populariis exposicio non est necessaria."

[20] For a discussion of the difference between "memory" and "recollection" and their importance for appreciating the *sermo modernus* style, see my *Reading the Sermons of Thomas Aquinas*, 11–19. For a fuller treatment of the arts of memory in the Middle Ages, see Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990). See also d'Avray, *Preaching of the Friars*,193–94, who, in response to the objection that university preaching would have been quite different from popular preaching, mentions in

After a brief prologue called a *prothema*, the medieval preacher would restate his opening *thema* and make a *divisio* of the verse into several parts, each of which was associated with a separate section of the sermon. So, for example, in the *principium* he delivered at his inception as master, Bonaventure took as his opening *thema* a verse from Wisdom 7:1, *Omnium artifex docuit me sapientia* ("The creator of all things has taught me wisdom"), which he divided into these four parts:

1. *artifex* ("the maker")
2. *omnium* ("of all things")
3. *sapientia* ("wisdom")
4. *docuit me* ("he has taught me")

Bonaventure then divided each of these four into four more subdivisions. Although there are obviously many ways to divide a single sentence, medieval preaching manuals provided elaborate rules about how these divisions were to be done.[21]

After the medieval preacher had made his basic division of the *thema*, he then had to develop or "dilate" each. *Dilatatio* is sometimes translated "amplify," but I prefer to stay closer to the Latin original. To those unaccustomed to the style, a preacher's "dilation" of a word or group of words will often seem motivated by nothing more than an oblique association of words. But as we will see, there were in fact many creative ways of dilating upon a word or a group of words recommended by the preaching manuals of the day.

This style of preaching, which was based on developing content from the divided words of an opening biblical verse, will seem odd, perhaps even a bit off-putting, to many of us today. But it was clearly not considered odd or off-putting to listeners in Bonaventure's time. As Waleys' complaints about it quoted above suggest, the style was preferred by most "modern" listeners.

I will not delve here into the complex debate about whether this style of preaching could possibly have been popular among the less educated

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passing: "A schematic framework of rhythmic divisions and subdivisions would be easy to fix in the mind. Guibert de Tournai, discussing the *original principium* of division (in his huge work called *Erudimentum doctrine*), states that its purpose is to avoid confusion and help the memory (*ut cesset confusion et adiuvetur memoria*). This could have been true for popular [preaching] as well as for learning preaching."

[21] For more on the various methods of *divisio*, see my *Reading the Sermons of Thomas Aquinas*, 49–112.

congregations in the rural countryside or whether it characterized university preaching alone. To these questions, I can only supply the judgment that David d'Avray offers: "So far as sermon form or technique is concerned, [the thesis that university preaching and popular preaching are fundamentally different] is not the conclusion of recent writers."[22] So too Richard and Mary Rouse assure their readers that "the type of sermon evolved at the University of Paris through the course of the thirteenth century was an admirable instrument for routine preaching to laymen."[23] Whether or not further scholarship brings this conclusion into question is largely immaterial to our current concerns, since most of the material we will be examining was preached to an audience made up mostly of Franciscan friars at the Franciscan house of studies in Paris, many of whom would have been students at the university.

The Thema *Verse: Finding Words to Fit the Occasion*

As we have seen, the division and development of an opening *thema* verse was the hallmark of the *sermo modernus* style. What modern readers of medieval sermons must understand, however, is that medieval preachers did not preach on their biblical *thema* verse in the sense of doing exegesis. Rather, the *thema* verse was used as a mnemonic device, a memory aid, to give structure to the sermon. Each word or group of words from the *thema* verse suggested a different section of the sermon. Thus, when the preacher was selecting a potential *thema* verse, he had to consider how the words of a particular verse might suggest or be associated with the points he wanted to make.

On many occasions, a medieval preacher was required to select his *thema* verse from among the liturgical readings for the day. On special feast days, such as All Saints or on the feast of a particular saint, they sometimes allowed themselves to select a verse from elsewhere in the Scriptures. When a medieval master needed to write a *principia* address for a course in which he lectured on a book of the Bible, he had to find a passage that fit his needs, and it was rare that he chose a verse from the biblical book he was commenting upon. More often, he took something from the Old Testament.

The *Forma praedicandi*, an early-fourteenth-century preaching manual written by Englishman Robert of Basevorn, provides this example. Let us say that the sermon was to commemorate the feast day of one of the doctors of the Church, the preacher might choose as his *thema* the verse from Proverbs 14:35 ("The intelligent minister is acceptable to the king") and divide it as follows: "intelligent" might be associated with his *mental perfection*; "minister" might be taken to refer to his *spiritual humility*; and "acceptable to the king" might be associated with his *brotherly kindness*. What one must *not* do, however, is to select words for the *divisio* which were too similar to the words in the *thema*. So, for example, it would *not* be right to divide the *thema* above such that "intelligent" is associated with the saint's *intellectual perfection*, "minister" is associated with *ministerial humility*, and "acceptable to the king" is associated with *fraternal acceptance*. To repeat the words in this way, claims Robert, would show a lack of artfulness and also drain the words of the *divisio* of their force and communicative power.[24]

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[22] D'Avray, *Preaching of the Friars*, 193.

[23] Rouse and Rouse, *Preachers*, 84.

After choosing an appropriate *thema*, the medieval preacher's next task was to make a suitable "division" (*divisio*) of the verse and a "dilation" (*dilatatio*) of each of the parts. The preaching manuals of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries identified several possible ways of carrying out each. The lists varied somewhat, but the methods were basically the same.[25]

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[24] Robert of Basevorn's early-fourteenth-century preaching manual, the *Forma praedicandi*, can be found in the Latin original in Charland, *Artes Praedicandi*, 233–323, and in English translation in Robert of Basevorn, *The Form of Preaching*, trans. Leopold Krul, O.S.B., in *Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts*, ed. James J. Murphy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).

[25] In what follows, I will be reporting the rules of preaching contained in Robert of Basevorn's *Forma praedicandi*, especially ch. 33, and in another late-thirteenth- or early-fourteenth-century manual known as the *Ars concionandi*, especially section 1. The *Ars concionandi* has a complicated textual history, to which I devote a long footnote in *Reading the Sermons of Aquinas* (44n30), for readers interested. Suffice it to say for the moment that the Latin original appears in the preface to volume 9 of the Quaracchi edition of the *Opera Omnia* of St. Bonaventure (Ad Claras Aquas [Quaracchi]: Collegii s. Bonaventurae, 1882–1901; hereafter "Quaracchi edition"), from which all Latin quotations in this article will be taken. But, for reasons too complicated to get into here, the editors of the Quaracchi edition actually considered it as being of dubious authenticity—that is to say, *not* written by Bonaventure. The situation is complicated by the fact that the sole English translation of the text can be found in a dissertation by Harry Charles Hazel entitled "A Translation, with Commentary, of the Bonaventuran '*Ars Concionandi*'" (Washington State University, 1972), from which all English translations of the work will be taken. Prof. Hazel believed the treatise was written by Bonaventure. I have no final opinion on the matter, and although one might wish we could attribute this treatise to Bonaventure, there are reasons to believe he was not the author. This is not crucial for our purposes, however, since I am not proposing that either of these works had a direct influence on either Thomas or Bonaventure. I put them forward merely as representing the status of the craft during the period under consideration. Interested readers might also fruitfully compare the

The Divisio: *An Ordered Structure of Parts to the Whole*

According to Robert of Basevorn's *Forma praedicandi*, essential to a good *divisio* was that the preacher make clear how the parts were ordered to the whole. It was also essential that the division should be exhaustive and complete.[26] Consider, for example, says Robert, this *thema* verse from Proverbs 14:35, "the intelligent minister is acceptable to the king." According to Robert, the preacher might begin by dividing it into three parts:

the intelligent // minister // is acceptable to the king

He could then associate the first word, "intelligent," with "the splendor of truth by which God is celebrated in the power of one's vision." With the next, "minister," he might associate "the course of purity by which one lives with affection." Finally we are left with the words "is acceptable to the king." What does one do with them? According to Robert, the preacher might speak of "hope for the sweetness of charity" and the purity of life by which one hopes to become "acceptable to the king."

Notice that, in this *divisio*, the powers of vision and feeling—that is,

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"Thomistic" tract on preaching translated by Harry Caplan and published as "A Late Medieval Tractate on Preaching" in *Studies in Rhetoric and Public Speaking in Honor of James Albert Winans*, ed. A. M. Drummond (New York: Century, 1925), 61–90, with the two "Franciscan" tracts I will be drawing upon below. Both the Caplan "Thomistic" tract and Robert of Basevorn's text are from the early fourteenth century, while the *Ars concionandi* is likely earlier—from sometime in the late thirteenth century. All three contain basically the same rules and advice.

[26] In this regard, the reader might fruitfully compare the medieval method of *divisio* employed in the *sermo modernus* style of preaching with the method of *divisio* commonly used in the exegesis of texts. A useful article on the topic is John F. Boyle's "The Theological Character of the Scholastic 'Division of the Text' with Particular Reference to the Commentaries of Saint Thomas Aquinas," in *With Reverence for the Word: Medieval Scriptural Exegesis in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. J. D. McAuliffe, B. D. Walfish, and J. W. Goering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 276–83. As Boyle points out, a Scholastic "division of the text" always involved the articulation of a "theme that provides a conceptual unity to the text" and always "begins with the whole and then continues through progressive subdivisions, every verse stand[ing] in an articulated relation not only with the whole but ultimately with every other part, division, and verse of the text" (276). "For the scholastic division of the text to work," he adds, "the unity must be an intrinsic conceptual unity; there must be a unifying idea in the light of which the whole can be seen and, still more important, each part can be understood" (277). In other words, the parts must fit together correctly and the whole they come together to form must be *complete*: an apt description of what a good *divisio* of the *thema* in a sermon was supposed to do.

reason and will—are the two basic parts of a whole: the soul. The preacher might have used the same *thema* to point out that it is *faith* that disposes us to the knowledge of truth, *hope* that adds certitude to the life of purity, and *charity* that is the reward of the king that brings us to our ultimate end with him in heaven. What is crucial in either case is that the preacher make his *divisio* in such a way that the parts "fit" into a structured "whole" and that the list of parts is complete. If the preacher had mentioned only faith and hope, the congregation would ask, "where is charity?" Similarly, one could make a *divisio* according to the three sides of a triangle or according to the four corners of the earth—north, south, east, and west—but what one *should not* do is mention only two sides of a triangle or only three directions: north, south, and east.

After deciding upon an appropriate *divisio*, the preacher was supposed to "declare" it. The rules for "declaring" these parts were not entirely different from the rules governing "parallelism" in English grammar today. Most readers will know that it is appropriate in English to say, "he likes running, hiking, and swimming," but *not*, "he likes running, hiking, and *to swim*." Nor is it acceptable to say, "he likes to run, to hike, and swimming." The individual words or phrases in the list must be "parallel" in their construction.

So too, in the "declaration of parts," a medieval preacher had to formulate each of the parts according to an acceptable pattern of parallel verbal constructions. A common way of achieving this parallelism was to set up a pattern based on employing similar constructions using one of the parts of speech: adjectives, verbs, adverbs, nouns, participles, or prepositions. According to Robert of Basevorn, pronouns, conjunctions, and interjections rarely worked well. This is not the place to go into a detailed discussion of each of these methods, but I will list three illustrative examples.

One way of "declaring the parts" of the *divisio*, for example, was to use a series of adjectives or adjectival phrases, such as (to use Robert of Basevorn's example) if the preacher said: "In these words we are taught, first, *honorable excellence*; second, *compensative patience*; and third, *ineffable friendship*." Using a noun modified by a descriptive adjective was recommended and seems to have been common: not just *excellence*, but *honorable excellence*; not just *patience*, but *compensative patience*, and so on.

St. Bonaventure was especially adept at crafting these parallel constructions. In Sermon 29, for the second Sunday after Pentecost, for example, for which the *thema* verse was taken from Luke 14:16—"A certain man made a great supper and invited many"—Bonaventure says that "Our Lord . . . commends three things in the proposed verse, which render any supper complete and perfect: first the excellence of the singular dignity; second, the affluence of abundant bounty; third, the benevolence of welcoming cordiality."[27] Note the three characteristics of the supper are not merely its "dignity," its "bounty," and its "cordiality," nor merely its "excellence," its "affluence," or its "benevolence"; in Bonaventure's works, one will almost always find more complex phrases such as "the excellence of the singular dignity," "the affluence of abundant bounty," and "the benevolence of welcoming cordiality."

In subsequent subdivisions, the parts can get even more complex. In this sermon, Bonaventure sets up a threefold subdivision of the third part, "the benevolence of welcoming cordiality." Here is the way Bonaventure formulates the three parts of that sub-division:

> Our Lord, by reason of his cordiality and benevolence, did not wish to be alone at the supper, but instead *called many* from various nations. For first, he urgently calls without ceasing by instructing through teachings and examples [*instanter sine desitione instruendo per documenta et exampla*]; second, freely without recompense by attracting through benefits and promises [*gratis sine recompensatione alliciendo per beneficia et promissa*]; and third, generally without exception by threatening through eternal punishments [*generaliter sine acceptione comminando per aeterna supplicia*].[28]

Note the long Latin phrases, each of which remains strictly parallel.

So too, when he chose the opening *thema* for his *principium in aula* address from Wisdom 7:1 (*Omnium artifex docuit me sapientia* ["The creator of all things has taught me wisdom"]), Bonaventure divided it, as I mentioned above, into four parts: *artifex* ("the maker"), *omnium* ("of all things"), *sapientia* ("wisdom"), and *docuit me* ("he has taught me"). In his "declaration of the parts," he associates each of these parts with one of the four Aristotelian "causes": (1) the efficient cause or author, (2) the material cause or subject matter, (3) the formal cause or manner of proceeding, and (4) the final cause or purpose of the work. These make up the four parts of his "declaration of parts." When we praise the Scriptures, says Bonaventure, we can praise: (1) "the excellence of the author due to the sublimity of the principle (*auctoris excellentiam ex sublimitate principiae*)—namely,

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[27] Bonaventure, Sermon 29, no. 1. All English translations from Bonaventure's sermons are taken from Johnson's translations in *The Sunday Sermons*. The Latin texts are taken from *Sancti Bonaventura Sermones dominicales*, ed. Jacques-Guy Bougerol (Grottaferrata, IT: Collegio S. Bonaventura, 1977).

[28] Bonaventure, Sermon 29, no. 1.

God; (2) "the contents of the material from the utility of the sign" (*materiae continentiam ex utilitate signi*)—that is, that it covers everything; (3) "the evidence of the form from the singularity of the mode" (*formae evidentiam ex singularitate modi*)—that it is like no other book; and (4) "the sufficiency of the end from the uncommon teachability of the good" (*finis sufficientiam ex docibilitate boni*)—that it brings humans to their ultimate end and good more readily and effectively than any other book. Read each of those phrases in Latin, and you will find that they scan with the same poetic meter.

For a more dramatic example, see the list of "middles" or *media* that Bonaventure associates with the "days" of creation in his *Collations on the Six Days* (although, obviously, both the biblical account and Bonaventure include the seventh day, the day of rest):

1. "Primum medium est essentiae aeternali generatione primarium."
2. "Secundum medium est naturae virtuali diffusione pervalidum."
3. "Tertium medium est distantiae centrali positione profundum."
4. "Quartum medium est doctrinae rationali manifestatione praeclarum."
5. "Quintum medium est modestiae morali electione praecipuum."
6. "Sextum medium est iustitiae iudicali recompensatione perpulcrum seu praecelsum."
7. "Septimum medium est concordiae universali conciliatione pacatum."

Each clause is perfectly parallel with the others, scans metrically, and rhymes. This is one of the reasons that Bonaventure is so difficult to render into English prose. Translating his divisions and subdivisions is often more like translating poetry than prose. Indeed, the famous medieval scholar Étienne Gilson has remarked on "the constantly rhythmic nature and assonance of the divisions" in the *sermo modernus* style, adding: "In this respect, as in others happily more important, Saint Bonaventure is a master of the genre."[29]

Although the most common method of formulating the "declaration of parts" involved phrases using words all of one type, there were other methods. Take, for example, the *thema* we were considering above from Robert of Basevorn's *Forma praedicandi*: "The intelligent minister is acceptable to the king" (Proverbs 14:35). Different preachers could make the same threefold *divisio*—"minister," "intelligent," and "acceptable to the king"—but formulate the "declaration of the parts" differently. One way would be to use descriptive nouns: "minister" might be taken to refer to a person's *spiritual humility*; "intelligent" might be referred to his *mental perfection*; and "acceptable to the king" might be taken to refer to his *brotherly kindness*. Or one might use nouns with a modifying adjective or adjectival phrase: in which case, "minister" might refer to an *innocence of life*; "intelligent" might refer to the greater *knowledge following from this innocence*; and "acceptable to the king" might be taken as referring to the *gratifying satisfaction* that follows from both. But one might also formulate the *divisio* to answer questions such as who, what, when, and why. The preacher could say what kind of man a priest ought to be (namely, *intelligent)*, what he should do for others (*minister*), and whom he should please by this life and acts (he should be "acceptable to the king," meaning to Christ).

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[29] Gilson, "Michel Menot," 122.

Another common method involved using the properties or attributes of nouns. Robert of Basevorn's example of the method is designed for a sermon on the Trinity, for which the preacher might employ the following declaration of parts: "In the first [word or phrase from the *thema*], there is a likeness to the *wisdom* of the Son; by the second, we understand the *clemency* of the Holy Ghost; and by the third, the *power* of the Father. The relevant nouns in this example are "wisdom," "clemency," and "power." Notice that, by linking these three with the Son, the Holy Spirit, and the Father, the preacher has made a nice, complete series, which is what he is supposed to do.

According to Robert of Basevorn, the preacher should be attentive to the specific attributes and properties of the nouns he is using. If the preacher were using the opening *thema* "The intelligent minister is acceptable to the king," for example, he should note that the word in the verse is "intelligent," not "learned"; that it is a "minister," not "*magister*" (teacher); and that it says "*acceptable* to the king," not "rejected." If there were different words in the *thema* verse, this would necessitate a different declaration of parts.

Robert provides further examples based on a *thema* drawn from Ezra 32:7, "I will cover the sun with a cloud." One could set up a threefold *divisio* based on a metaphorical appropriation of the properties of the nouns in this way: "First, the sun shines alone with the gravity of law and judges; but later it comes under the cloud by the kindness of the Incarnation; and finally at the judgment it is covered with the equity of the sentence, because it does not respect the person [that is the status] of the man." Clearly, if the *thema* verse had used the image of the moon rather than the sun, or if the sun had not been said to be "covered with a cloud," but was shining hot in the middle of the day, or if the sun were not covered by a cloud but instead eclipsed by the moon, then the declaration of parts would have had to be different, and the new declaration could not have been associated with the law, the Incarnation, and the status of mankind in the same way.

Consider in this light Bonaventure's general prologue to his *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*. As the reader may recall, all such prologues were crafted in the *sermo modernus* style. On this occasion, Bonaventure chose as his opening *thema* a single verse from Job 28:11: "The depths of rivers he hath searched, and hidden things he hath brought forth to light" ("profunda quoque fluviorum scrutatus est et abscondita produxit in lucem").[30] He then made a fourfold *divisio* of the verse in order to associate each with one of the four Aristotelian causes: material, formal, final, and efficient.[31] The material cause he associates with the word *fluviorum* ("rivers"); the formal cause with the word *profunda* ("depths"); the final cause with the word *abscondita* ("hidden things"); and the efficient cause with the words *scrutatus est* ("he has searched") and *produxit in lucem* ("he has brought forth to light"). The image that suffuses the whole is of Peter Lombard, "the Magister," having searched out (*scrutatus est*) the depths (*profunda*) and the hidden things (*abscondita*) of the rivers—of which there are four, corresponding to the four books of the *Sentences*—in order to bring them forth into the light (*produxit in lucem*). In the body of the prologue, Bonaventure makes especially creative use of the subject matter and form of the four books of the *Sentences* by employing various senses of "depth" and "hidden."

Another way of crafting the "declaration of parts" was to use verbs, such as (to use Robert of Basevorn's examples): "The first perfects oneself as oneself; the second draws the love of others; and the third makes one happy with God." Another verbal series is: "The first commands the beginning by which there is a start; the middle by which there is progress; and the third, the end by which there is an exit."

A nice example of Bonaventure using a progression of verbs to create an opening *divisio* can be found in his Sermon 15 (*Ductus est Iesus*), where he divides the verse "Jesus was led into the desert by the Spirit so he might be tempted by the devil (Matt 4:1) into three parts: "Jesus was led by the Spirit," "into the desert," and "so he might be tempted by the devil." Christ wishes to instruct us by these three how to triumph over the devil, since like him, a person should, first, "be *directed* by the Holy Spirit," then "*remain* in a fortified place," so as to later "*sustain* the constant attack of the devil."

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[30] The Latin text of Bonaventure's prologue to his *Sentences Commentary* can be found in the Quaracchi edition of Bonaventure, 1:1–6.

[31] For a discussion of the origin and use of this "Aristotelian" prologue, see A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 5–6 and 28–29.

Another fascinating example can be found in a sermon Bonaventure delivered on Palm Sunday. On this occasion, he chose as his *thema* the first part of the verse in Song of Songs 3:11: "Go forth and see, daughter of Zion, King Solomon in the diadem with which his mother crowned him [in the day of his espousal in marriage and in the day of the joy of his heart]" ("egredimini et videte filiae Sion regem Salomonem in diademate quo coronavit eum mater sua in die disponsionis illius et in die laetitiae cordis eius").[32] As it was Palm Sunday and the congregation had processed out of the city and back before beginning the liturgy, Bonaventure begins by suggesting that this procession represents the fact that Christians must learn first to "leave behind the deformity of sin" ("a peccati deformitate exire"), then "know and see God in the clarity of their own conscience" ("in propria conscientiae Dei claritatem cognoscere et videre"), and finally "show Him the honor due to his majesty" ("debitum honorem eius maiestati exhibere"). Bonaventure associates these three "movements" of the congregation—first exteriorly in procession and second interiorly in their souls—with the three parts of his opening *thema* verse. For, the Holy Spirit bids Christians to forsake their deformity and be prepared to receive God's illumination in the words "Go forth, daughter of Zion." "Zion" here, says Bonaventure, can be interpreted as "mirror" and "signifies the pure soul prepared like a mirror to receive the divine reflection." Next, the text invites us to contemplate the royal beauty and to delight in it, when it adds, "and see King Solomon." Solomon here is taken to signify Christ. Finally, the verse professes that the soul must recognize his honor and grandeur so that it can be instructed, when it says, "in the diadem with which his mother has crowned Him." Each step leads naturally to the next, "for purity of conscience prepares one for the knowledge or vision of the beauty proper to divine wisdom, and contemplation of the eternal lights prepares one to honor divine majesty."

Note how Bonaventure has successfully woven together the three parts of the processional the congregation has just completed with the three parts of his opening *thema* verse that will define the three topics of his sermon. And yet, in the statement of his *divisio*, he has not repeated any of the words from the opening *thema* verse, which would be contrary to the rules. As in Sermon 15, Bonaventure has illustrated a spiritual transformation with a physical change of place—in this case, a physical change of place the congregation has undergone during the Palm Sunday procession, rather than the one Christ undertook into the desert.

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[32] Bonaventure, Sermon 20.

And yet, this was not the only way Bonaventure could have chosen to make his *divisio*. On page 120 of volume 9 of the Quaracchi edition of Bonaventure's works, we find another sermon based on this verse from Song of Songs 3:11, but on this occasion, Bonaventure used the entire verse rather than quoting it only in part. The entire verse in Song of Songs 3:11 reads: "Go forth and see, daughter of Zion, King Solomon in the diadem with which his mother crowned him in the day of his espousal and in the day of the joy of his heart" ("egredimini et videte filiae Sion regem Salomonem in diademate quo coronavit eum mater sua in die disponsionis illius et in die laetitiae cordis eius"). This sermon was preached not on Palm Sunday, but on the solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord. On this occasion, Bonaventure tells his listeners that these words are meant to "excite the souls of the faithful maximally [*maxime*] to meditate and consider, venerate and watch" for the coming of Christ. On this occasion, instead of making a threefold division, he divides the full verse in four parts. The first words of the verse suggest that Christ is "near or present to those expecting Him in hope" ("propinquam sive praesentem exspectantibus per spem") when it says, "Go forth daughter Zion," that is to say, "go forth" because your lover is near. The next words suggest that Christ is "high to those expecting Him in fear" ("excelsam venerantibus per timorem"), when it says, "and see the king Solomon." Christ is "brilliantly clear to those watching for Him in faith" ("praeclaram speculantibus per fidem"), which is suggested by the words "in the crown with which his mother crowned him" ("in diademate quo coronavit eum mater sua"). And he is "greatly rejoiced and delighted in by those desiring Him in love" ("laetabundam sive iucundam desiderantibus per amorem"), when it adds: "in the day of his espousal and in the day of the joy of his heart."

The artistry of making suitable divisions is one that Bonaventure used to good effect when he created subdivisions, and subdivisions of those subdivisions. But making suitable divisions was only the first part of the preacher's task. After he had divided his opening *thema* verse, his next task was to develop the ideas in each of the sections he had created. Medieval preaching manuals contained rules and advice on how this was to be done.

The Dilatatio*: Methods of "Unfolding" a Sermon*

The common term for this "developing" of content from the words of the *thema* verse was *dilatatio*. *Dilatatio* literally means "an expanding" (as in the English "dilation"), but it may help to think of it as an "unpacking" or "unfolding" of the semiotic possibilities inherent in the words of the *thema* verse.

Both the *Ars concionandi* and Robert of Basevorn's *Forma praedicandi* list eight methods of "dilating" a word or phrase from the opening *thema*.

1. By proposing a discussion based on a noun as it occurs in definitions or classifications (*proponendo orationem pro nomine, sicut fit in diffinitionibus seu quibuscumque notificationibus*).
2. By subdivisions of the original *divisio* (*per divisionem*).
3. By reasoning or argumentation (*ratiocinando vel argumentando*).
4. By "chaining" together concordant authorities (*per auctoritates concordantes*).
5. By setting up a series running from the positive through the comparative and arriving finally at the superlative in the manner of "good, better, best" (*ut ponendo superlativum curratur ad positivum et comparativum*).
6. By devising metaphors through the properties of a thing (*excogitando metaphoras per proprietetem rei*).
7. By expounding the *thema* in diverse ways accordingly to the literal, allegorical, tropological, and/or anagogical senses (*exponere thema diversimode: historice, allegorice, moraliter, anagogice*).
8. By a consideration of causes and their effects (*per causas et effectus*).

Since some of these phrases may be rather cryptic, leaving the reader still a bit vague, so allow me to illustrate with examples of each.

Method 1: Proposing a Discussion Based on a Noun as It Occurs in Definitions or Classifications

Let us say that the *thema* for the sermon is to be taken from Wisdom 10:10, which says that Wisdom "led the just man in the right paths, and showed him the reign of God, and gave him the knowledge of holy things." And let us say that the preacher divides this passage by saying that Wisdom does three things for the just man: first, she *led the just man in the right paths*; second, she *showed him the reign of God*; and third, she *gave him the knowledge of holy things*.

Our question now is how the preacher can "develop" or "dilate" each of these three. For our present purposes, let us focus on only the first of these three, in which Wisdom is said to have "led the just man in the right paths." According to the nearly identical instructions in both the *Ars concionandi* and Basevorn's *Forma praedicandi* (which henceforth I will simply refer to as "our manuals"), one could "dilate" this phrase, first, by defining the "just man" as "he who gives everyone his proper due." Then the preacher might further develop this thought by expounding upon how "giving everyone his proper due" applies first to God, second to one's neighbor, and finally to oneself.

Alternatively, the preacher might define "justice" and then develop the idea by expounding upon those things that are *contrary to* justice, such as vices of various sorts or surrender to the passions. Or he might discuss the virtues *related to* justice, such as prudence, temperance, and fortitude, suggesting that: *prudence* is "the ability to discern good things from evil"; *fortitude* is "the sustaining of difficulties because of love"; and *temperance* is "the firm command of sensual desires." The preacher would then introduce this discussion or conclude it using words such as these: "Therefore, prudence consists in *discerning*, fortitude in *enduring*, temperance in *checking illicit passions*, and justice in *giving to each one his proper due*."[33] Using this method, the preacher would have succeeded in taking one word from his *thema* verse—in this case, "just"—and turning it into a discussion not only about justice, but about all of the cardinal virtues. And given that the original context proposes that "Wisdom" is "leading the just man," the preacher might also declaim on the relationship between Wisdom and the virtues, or on how God's "Wisdom" is the Holy Spirit, then developing the relationship between the virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The possibilities are nearly endless—so much so that the *Ars concionandi* bids the aspiring preacher to notice "how an expansion can be made in the oration by using a noun, not only by indicating what is contained in the [word] itself, but also by indicating other things which can be drawn from it."[34]

And yet, medieval preachers were also warned that there were limits, that they "should not attempt to take up definitions or descriptions of everything indiscriminately."[35] How well a particular preacher may have observed those limits—that is, how "indiscriminate" he might appear to be in the definitions and descriptions he added to a particular sermon—will depend to a large degree upon each reader's taste and tolerance for such things. Readers who just want to "get to the point and be done with it" will likely find these "dilations" on various related topics annoying. Others, like me, who enjoy word games and word associations and seeing the connections between ideas, will find the method rather more delightful. Like any word game, however, the method can be confusing, and thus be a bit frustrating at first. Once you get the hang of it, though, the results can be not only intellectually satisfying, but great fun.

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[33] *Ars concionandi* 3.33.

[34] *Ars concionandi* 3.33.

[35] *Ars concionandi* 3.33.

Bonaventure was especially adept at the creation and use of complex metaphors. So, for example, for the prologue to the first book of his *Sentences* commentary, he chose as his *thema* the verse from Job 28:11: "The depths of rivers he hath searched, and hidden things he hath brought forth to light" ("profunda quoque fluviorum scrutatus est et abscondita produxit in lucem").[36] In his dilation of this verse, Bonaventure associates the material cause of the Lombard's *Sentences* with the word *fluviorum* ("of rivers") and the four properties of a material river, which he identifies as: (1) perpetuity (*perennitatem*), since rivers are always flowing; (2) spaciousness (*spatiositatem*), which distinguishes a river from a brook or a stream; (3) circulation (*circulationem*), for as it says in Ecclesiastes 1:7, "All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea doth not overflow: unto the place from whence the rivers come, they return, to flow again"; and finally (4) cleansing (*emundationem*), for the waters cleanse the earth through which the river runs so that it is not polluted.

From these four properties of a material river, Bonaventure metaphorically discerns the four properties of what he calls a "spiritual river." This spiritual river is *perpetual* in that it involves an emanation of persons, and this emanation is without beginning or end. So too the first book of the *Sentences* deals with the emanation of persons in the Trinity. The second property of a material river is its *spaciousness*, and this Bonaventure associates with the subject matter of the second book of the *Sentences*: creation. The third property of a material river is its *circulation*, and just as the beginning of a circle is joined to its end, so in the Incarnation, the subject of the third book of the *Sentences*, the highest is joined to the lowest, God to man. The fourth property of a material river is *cleansing*. So too the fourth book of the Lombard's *Sentences* deals with the sacraments, which cleanse us "from the pollution of sin."

Method 2: Creating Subdivisions

After the original division of the opening biblical *thema*, a preacher would sometimes make further subdivisions within one or more of the "members" of his opening *divisio*. Bonaventure loved this method of dividing divisions into further subdivisions. As anyone who has had experience of the infinite orderliness and elasticity of his mind can attest, Bonaventure was quite capable of making all these divisions, subdivisions, and sub-subdivisions while mentally keeping track of each and every one of them.

I mentioned above that Bonaventure took as his *thema* verse for his

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[36] The Latin text of Bonaventure's prologue to his *Sentences* commentary can be found in the Quaracchi edition of Bonaventure, 1:1–6.

principium in aula address the verse in Wisdom 7:21: "Omnium artifex docuit me sapientia" ("Wisdom, the maker of all things, taught me"). On that occasion, he made a fourfold *divisio* of the *thema* in order to associate each part with one of the four Aristotelian causes.

1. *artifex* ("maker"): author, or efficient cause;
2. *omnium* ("of all things"): subject matter or material cause;
3. *sapientia* ("wisdom"): form;
4. *docuit me* ("taught me"): end.[37]

From this first fourfold division, we get two others. The excellence of the author, he says, is related to the sublimity of the principle ("auctoris excellentiam ex sublimitate principia"); the contents of the material is related to the utility of the sign ("materiae continentiam ex utilitate signi"); the evidence of the form is related to the uniqueness of the mode ("formae evidentiam ex singularitate modi"); and the sufficiency of the end is related to Scripture's superior ability to teach the good. The first of these, the sublimity of the principle, shows the "height" of the authority ("altitudinem auctoritatis") of Scripture; the fullness of the subject matter shows the "breadth of its generality" ("latitudinem generalitatis"); the evidence of the form shows the "certitude of its truth" ("certitudinem veritatis"); and the sufficiency of the end shows the "fullness of its utility" ("plenitudinem utilitatis").[38]

In each section, Bonaventure divides his original division into four subdivisions. A simple outline of the whole would look like this:

1. *artifex* ("maker"): author, or efficient cause
    - A. superiority of reason
    - B. priority of edition
    - C. majority of correction
    - D. stability of adhesion
2. *omnium* ("of all things"): subject matter, or material cause
    - 1. A. utility of comprehension
    - 2. B. totality of perfection
    - 3. C. principle of attribution

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[37] I will be referring to the *Principium* by the section numbers of the Latin text found in Benson, "Bonaventure's Inaugural Sermon at Paris."

[38] *Principium*, no. 2. The reader can see already the point I was making above: Bonaventure is absolutely precise and feels no need to spare the complexity when he formulates these parallel constructions.

        4. D. uniformity of consideration
    3. *sapientia* (wisdom): the form
        A. highest in principles
        B. most certain in sentences
        C. most profound in mysteries
        D. most plain in necessary things
    D) *docuit me* (teach me): the end
        A. cognition of the truth
        B. argumentation against falsity
        C. reproof of iniquity
        D. building up of charity.

Outlining the whole would require sub-subsections under each of the subsections. And this is one of Bonaventure's simpler compositions!

We might fruitfully compare the medieval method of division and subdivision employed in the *sermo modernus* style of preaching with the divisions and subdivisions commonly used in the exegesis of biblical texts. The method is similarly reminiscent of the divisions and subdivisions one finds in scholastic *summae* and disputed questions. D'Avray classifies all of these as expressions of what he calls "the subdividing mentality" of the Scholastics, of which sermons and disputed questions were two species of the same genus, and biblical commentaries a third.[39] Fr. d'Avray was not willing to conclude that "the habit of systematically dividing sermons should be traced back to scholastic influence."[40] Tracing lines of influence can indeed be tricky, and we have no reason to dive into those troubled waters. Perhaps it is safest to say merely that they the practices of preaching, commenting, and disputing—the three duties of a medieval master—all expressed a similar habit of mind. In Bonaventure's prologue to the *Sentences* and that of his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, the *sermo modernus* style section can be found together with a complex *divisio textus*, and even with several disputed questions.

Method 3: Argumentation

Gilson once wrote that "the place for disputes is the School, the place for the sermon is the church" ("la place des disputes est à l'École, celle du sermon est à l'Église").[41] In this, he was simply echoing a warning made by thirteenth-century preaching manuals that a sermon should not sound like a disputation: that is, it should not proceed by setting forth premises from which a conclusion is then deduced.[42] Clearly, such advice would have become necessary only once preachers had gained the education in logic on offer at universities such as those at Paris, Oxford, and others. And yet, to say that a sermon should not proceed in the manner of a disputation was not the same as saying that a sermon should not make use of arguments, since "argumentation" was universally recognized as a method of *dilatatio*.

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[39] See d'Avray, *Preaching of the Friars*, 176–79, esp. 176: "One feature which thirteenth-century mendicant sermons do share with the academic genres to which I would restrict the word 'scholastic' is the passion for dividing and sub-dividing."

[40] D'Avray, *Preaching of the Friars*, 178.

According to the *Ars concionandi*, the type of argument especially fitting for a sermon involved reasoning by opposing two contraries, one of which is approved and the other of which is made the subject of approach, "thereby demonstrating a type of cause." The *Ars concionandi* proposes this example: to argue that continence should be fostered, the preacher should speak about riotous living and show that it destroys the body, the soul, possessions, and reputation, whereas continence does the reverse. Therefore, one ought to "practice continence."

Scholastically trained preachers like Bonaventure resisted the temptation to turn the sermon into another version of a disputed question, but they also understood that simple arguments were not foreign to a good sermon, especially with university audiences accustomed to hearing arguments. And yet, although argumentation was not at all *foreign* to preaching in the thirteenth century, it was usually not the single most essential element. Nor were the arguments used in sermons usually of the same type as those in "disputed questions." Arguments in sermons were simpler, involving fewer steps, with more of the argumentative force depending upon the juxtaposition of contraries or the listing of costs suffered or benefits gained.

Method 4: Concordance of Texts or the "Chaining" of Authorities

Although medieval preachers occasionally used arguments in their sermons, they loved to quote Bible verses even more. A medieval sermon of the *sermo modernus* style would be noteworthy to any modern audience precisely because of its dual nature. On the one hand, it would sound extremely "Scholastic" because of its definitions, distinctions, and arguments. But it would also sound extraordinarily "biblical," given that one does not go more than a sentence or two without finding another biblical verse being quoted. As Mulcahey notes, "the use of [biblical] *auctoritates* by some preachers became so extensive that a whole sermon was sometimes virtually no more than an uninterrupted sequence of quotations." She further suggests: "The problem facing the preacher was how to connect all his *auctoritates* in a logical and pleasing fashion. The usual method was to build up 'chains' of authorities by concording them all either *verbaliter*, verbally, with a key word of the member under discussion, or *realiter*, that is, by means of analogous ideas, or both."[43] This practice, sometimes described as the "chaining" of authorities was, as Mulcahey notes, "a device universally employed by the preachers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries."[44]

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[41] Gilson, "Michel Menot," 134.

[42] Cf. *Ars concionandi* 3.40, where the author warns that certain precautions should be taken "lest preaching seem like a disputation" ("Ne praedicatio videatur esse disputatio, oportet, quod sic fiat, quasi non esset argumentatio, ut scilicet non praemittantur propositiones, et postea inferatur conclusio").

Like other medieval preachers, Bonaventure relished this method of "expanding" a sermon. And given his prodigious memory and wide knowledge of the Scriptures, he was adept at finding several Bible verses to support not only every argument, but nearly every passing remark. In Sermon 1, for example, in a discussion on why Christ was "desired" by the patriarchs and prophets, Bonaventure writes:

> First, he is the desired one because the splendor of original innocence delights the sight when viewed. No one was without actual or original sin except Christ alone, who is *more beautiful than the sons of men* (Ps 44:3), *the desire of the everlasting hills* (Gen 49:26), that is, of the angels and the holy fathers, *the spotless mirror of the majesty of God* (Wis 7:26) *more splendid than the sun* (Wis 7:29), in *whom the angels desire to gaze* (1 Peter 1:12) and truly he is symbolized by Solomon according to 1 Kings 10:24: *All the earth desired to see the face of Solomon*. In manifold fashion the figure represented by Solomon is the true Solomon, who is Christ. Augustine says as much in Book 17 of the *City of God*: "The things said of Solomon are really appropriate to Christ alone, since in Solomon the figure is veiled, but in Christ the truth is represented."[45]

Method 5: Setting Up a Series: Good, Better, Best

The short, one-sentence description of this method in Latin is harder to understand than the method itself. The rather complicated way the *Ars concionandi* describes the method is to say that the *dilatatio* is carried out

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[43] Mulcahey, *First the Bow Is Bent*, 410.

[44] Mulcahey, *First the Bow Is Bent*, 409.

[45] Bonaventure, Sermon 1, no. 8.

"through those words which have the same meaning and which agree in root, although they carry incidental differences," and therefore, "if a superlative has been proposed, one can proceed to the positive and comparative."[46] This is a complicated way of saying that the preacher should set up a series of "good, better, best."

The example the *Ars concionandi* gives is as follows. Suppose the division of the *thema* verse has left the preacher with this bit of the verse from Psalm 44:4, "Bind your sword around your thighs, strongest one." This verse can be dilated by suggesting that: those people *strongly* bound by the sword are those who are married; those even *stronger* are the continent; and the *strongest* are the virgins. Or take the passage from the Song of Songs 5:1 which reads, "I have drunk, dearest one." One might dilate this verse by suggesting that: those are *dear* who live in charity, although of an imperfect type; those are *dearer* who can endure adversity for the sake of Christ but with some annoyance; and those are *dearest* who laugh in the midst of their humiliations.[47]

Method 6: The Use of Metaphors

Dilating using the metaphorical meanings of terms is one of the most common techniques one finds in Bonaventure's sermons. There are about as many different ways of doing this as there are different ways of giving various metaphorical meanings to terms. We saw above in Bonaventure's prologue to his *Sentences* commentary that he associates the characteristics of a material river metaphorically with what he calls a "spiritual river." This spiritual river is *perpetual* in that it involves an emanation of persons in the Trinity.

So too, as we have seen above in Sermon 20, Bonaventure accepts the notion from medieval sources that "Zion" means "mirror," and so he interprets "Zion" in the verse *Go forth, daughter of Zion* as "mirror" and suggests that we can understand the verse as signifying metaphorically that the "pure soul" should be prepared like a clean mirror to receive the divine reflection.

And in one final example, in Sermon 2, dilating upon the *thema* verse from Luke 21:28—"When these things begin to come to pass, look up, and lift up your heads because your redemption is at hand"—Bonaventure tells his listeners that they should lift up their heads to see the signs that, as Luke's Gospel says, "will be in the sun, the moon, and the stars." But they should also be wary because "many people many people are reckless in viewing these signs due to a lack of knowledge."[48] For, when the disciples asked Jesus in Matthew 24:3 and 29 "what is the sign of your coming and the end of the world?" he responded, "Following the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give her light, and the stars will fall from the heavens." The obscuring of the rays from the sun, says Bonaventure, "represents the signs of deceitful miracles that subvert the true faith." For "just as the rays of the sun are obscured by clouds, so too, the ray of faith, darkened in the Christian deceived by these signs, will not give off the light of truth.[49]

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[46] *Ars concionandi* 3.42: "per ea eiusdam sunt cognitiones, quae scilicet conveniunt in radice, licet diversitatem habeant. Posito igitur superlativum, discurratur ad positivum et comparativum."

[47] *Ars concionandi* 3.42.

Some readers might find these "metaphorical" interpretations rather far-fetched; others will love them: the more creative, the better. Much depends upon whether the reader likes and admires various forms of word-play. Much the same can be said for Bonaventure's employment of the allegorical senses.

Method 7: A Fourfold Exposition according to the Historical, Allegorical, Moral, and/or Anagogical Senses of Scripture

It is sometimes mistakenly claimed that the allegorical, moral, and anagogical senses of Scripture were largely abandoned in the thirteenth century, having given way to a greater focus on literal sense of the Scriptures.[50] Although it is true that a new interest in and emphasis on the literal sense of the Scriptures arose in late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, we still find all four senses of Scripture in the preaching of the high Middle Ages as a means of "dilating" a term or phrase in the opening *thema*.

So, for example, Bonaventure makes a fascinating use of the three spiritual senses in Collation 7 of his *Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, in his discussion of the gift of counsel. This collation is the last one in a series of three collations—5, 6, and 7—all based on this passage from Proverbs 31:10–13:

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[48] Bonaventure, Sermon 2, no. 2.

[49] Bonaventure, Sermon 2, no. 4.

[50] There are others, of course, who assume that all the benighted medieval scholars used *nothing but* an allegorical approach to the Scriptures until the Protestant scholars of the sixteenth century or those of the nineteenth century (depending upon your viewpoint) finally restored biblical scholarship to an authentic dedication to the *literal* sense of the text. It was Beryl Smalley's somewhat lonely task to disabuse many twentieth-century biblical scholars of this mistaken notion in her classic *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1941; latest edition currently available from University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

> Who shall find a valiant woman [*mulierem fortem*]? Far and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he shall have no need of spoils. She will render him good, and not evil, all the days of her life. She hath sought wool and flax, and hath wrought by the counsel of her hands [*consilio manuum suarum*].

With this as his *thema* verse, Bonaventure is able to discourse upon the gifts of both fortitude ("Who shall find a valiant woman?") and counsel ("the counsel of her hands").

Thus in Collation 7, after distinguishing three types of "counsel"—according to the judgment of right reason, according to the command of good will, and according to the practice of virtue—Bonaventure turns directly in section 9 to the verse "She hath sought wool and flax, and hath wrought by the counsel of her hands." He explains: "Coarse clothing is made from wool. Finer clothing is made from flax. Warm clothing is made of wool. Lighter clothing is made from flax. Further, outer garments are made of wool. Undergarments are made of flax." These three properties will provide the basis for an allegorical, anagogical, and tropological understanding of the verse. Allegorically, says Bonaventure, "wool" and "linen" signify the Old and New Testaments—the Old Testament being more coarse or rough, like wool, and the New Testament being finer, like flax. In terms of anagogy, says Bonaventure: "Wool from which warm clothing is made signifies the revelation of prayer because prayer is like heat. On the other hand, flax from which softer clothing is made signifies delights." Tropologically, according to the moral sense, wool, from which outer garments are made, signifies external things, while flax, from which undergarments are made, signifies the inner experiences of just people.

What the reader should note in the sermons, however, is that Bonaventure employs the three spiritual senses as *one method among others* of "dilating" or "unfolding" a biblical verse. The spiritual senses have not been abandoned or forgotten—so, for example, Bonaventure will use the three spiritual senses to structure the entire second half of his *De reductione artium ad theologiam*—but they no longer serve as the foundations of preaching. The rules of *divisio* and *dilatatio* serve that purpose instead.

Method 8: The Consideration of Causes and Their Effects

The final method of *dilatatio* is the consideration of causes and their effects. In addition to being a creator of imaginative images, Bonaventure's skill in dialectic was second-to-none, and hence this method of "dilating" a point seems to have come naturally to him, and he uses it frequently. Indeed, he will often "chain" together a whole series of cause-and-effect relationships.

In Bonaventure's Sermon 1 (*Veniet desideratus*), based on the *thema* verse from Haggai 2:8—"The one desired by all the nations will come"—dilating upon the word *veniet* ("he will come"), Bonaventure notes: "If someone asks the principal reason and cause for God coming in the flesh, the best reason is the most excellent liberality of God by which, according to which, and because of which the Word became incarnate."[51] The *cause* of the Incarnation is God's liberality, which Bonaventure distinguishes as consisting of three types: first, that of a "most gracious mediator displaying the remedies of peace and harmony"; second, that of a "most truthful doctor offering proofs of piety and justice; and third, that "of a most humble king, demonstrating examples of humility and subjection, that is, of poverty and indigence." Our response to God's liberality should be made accordingly: we should love him as a mediator, revere him as a doctor, and imitate him as a precursor. Distinguishing in this way allows Bonaventure in the following sections to develop each of these points in turn and thus "expand" his content.

In all the examples I have supplied, notice how these methods of *dilatatio* are frequently used in conjunction with one another. A cause-and-effect discussion is often built upon an "interpretation of names" or a guiding metaphor, and each of these will provide opportunities for a concordance of texts and the "chaining" of biblical authorities. The methods of *dilatatio* overlap and intersect with one another as the author develops the content of the sermon. I suggest that none of this is just for play—although it is playful. These methods of *dilatatio* are the means by which a medieval preacher can, if he is capable, craft an intellectually sophisticated sermon with a serious theological point in such a way that it will be both compelling and memorable to his audience.

A quick glance at any passage from Bonaventure's works will reveal that making theological points using the methods outlined above simply *is* Bonaventure's style. Even when he is not preaching per se in a liturgical context, Bonaventure still employs the arts of the *sermo modernus*.

The Sermo Modernus Style in Bonaventure's Later Work

I do not wish to claim too much for the *sermo modernus* style's influence on Bonaventure's work. The style is readily apparent in many of his early works; but not, for example, when he writes a "disputed question," in which case his style is very much determined by the nature of the genre. Even in a text like the *Itinerarium mentis ad Deum*, one of Bonaventure's most popular writings, although Bonaventure's training in *sermo modernus* style preaching undoubtedly had an influence on that text inasmuch as it trained him to deal creatively with biblical images such as the six-winged seraph, still and all, that text is not written in the style we have been investigating.

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[51] Bonaventure, Sermon 1, no. 3.

So the question naturally arises: Did Bonaventure observe the forms of his Parisian education when he was younger, either still in training or recently incepted, only to abandon them in later years after he had given up his master's chair at Paris and become Minister General of the Franciscan order? To address this question, we will examine two of Bonaventure's later writings: the *Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, a text scholars tell us was likely written in the year 1268, some eleven years after he left his chair at the university; and the *Collations on the Six Days of Creation*, delivered during Easter of 1273, probably the last text he worked on before his death in 1274. As I propose to show in what follows, my thesis is that, although Bonaventure employs the forms of the *sermo modernus* style he learned at Paris somewhat more loosely and more creatively than before, one can still discern their presence.

We might attribute some of this to the fact that, in these two collations, Bonaventure was addressing a group of young Franciscans who enrolled at the University of Paris. The *Itinerarium* was also written for his Franciscan brothers, and we do not see the same structured prologue or the same use of division and dilation that we saw in, say, the *Breviloquium*. And yet, when he wrote the *Itinerarium*, it is unlikely that Bonaventure thought of it as a "university" text. A "collation," by contrast, was a standard university genre, and when Bonaventure undertook to write these two collations, he observed many of the rules of construction we have been reviewing thus far in previous chapters, even though it was over a decade after his inception. As we will see, it would be wrong to assume that he left the forms of his university education behind him as he matured and became enmeshed in his duties as Minister General.

The Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*: Grace and the Moral Life*

The first thing to notice about the *Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit* is that the first collation—what the translator entitles "Conference 1"—serves much the same role as the prologues in his earlier works.[52]

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[52] For *Collationes de septem donis Spiritus Sancti* (hereafter, *Collat. de sept.*), I will quote from the English translation by Zachary Hayes in *Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, Works of St. Bonaventure 14 (St. Bonaventure, NY:

It introduces the work with an attempt to convince the listeners of the importance of the topic. As in Bonaventure's sermons and prologues, each collation begins with its own biblical *thema* verse. And although Bonaventure does not divide this opening biblical verse into several parts and structure his entire discussion around the parts of the *divisio*, most of the methods of developing the content are the same as those we identified in the thirteenth-century "modern sermon."

The first collation begins with this *thema* verse from 2 Corinthians 6:1: "We exhort you not to receive the grace of God in vain." After stating his *thema*, Bonaventure introduces another verse from Psalm 44:3 that serves as a kind of *prothema*: "Grace has poured out upon your lips. Therefore, God has blessed you forever."[53] This second text, says Bonaventure, refers to Christ, "who is the blessed one in whom all the peoples of the earth are blessed." Note the interesting shift: in a treatise on the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, he begins, properly enough, with *grace*. But immediately he traces that grace back to its ultimate source: not the Holy Spirit per se, but Christ. It is the grace of Christ that is imparted with the gifts. We move

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Franciscan Institute, 2010). The work is divided into "conferences," which are further divided into sections (so, *Collat. de sept.* 1.3 is "conference" 1, section 3). I will quote the Latin text from the version in vol. 5 of the Quarrachi edition. The reader should note, however, that new manuscripts of these *Collationes* have been discovered since the Quarrachi editors did their work, manuscripts that have generated some controversy as to the text we have known for over a century. For the details, see Jacqueline Hamesse, "New Perspectives for Critical Editions of Franciscan Texts of the Middle Ages," *Franciscan Studies* 56 (1998): 169–87, esp. 180 and 183 (for *Collat. de sept.*). For the key article on the most interesting new manuscript, see G. Ouy and C. Cenci, "Manoscritti assisani reperiti nella biblioteca pubblica di Leningrado e nel Seminario di Firenze," *Antonianum* 60 (1985): 335–42. Hamesse suggests in her article that "the *Collationes de septem donis Spiritus sancti* will be re-edited soon" and is to be published in the *Corpus Christianorum*, *Series Medievalis*. "The text that will published," reports Hamesse, "will be quite different from that in the Quaracchi edition." She does not say *when* that new edition is to be published. Her article appeared in 1998; it is now 2019, and to my knowledge, the edition has not yet appeared. It will be interesting for many reasons to see this edition when it comes out, but there will still be the necessary work of comparing the versions. And for the foreseeable future, the only version accessible to most readers will be the one translated by Zachary Hayes. When the new edition does arrive, I would hazard to guess that, although the wording may differ, the same literary and structural elements I have described here will remain essentially the same and the conclusion will be the same: Bonaventure writes in the *sermo modernus* style. I am grateful, however, to the anonymous reviewer of this article for informing me of the complexities in the manuscript tradition of which I was not otherwise aware.

[53] *Collat. de sept.* 1.1.

from an abstract consideration of *grace* right back to the person of Jesus Christ. To receive the gifts is to receive Christ.

In section 2, Bonaventure relates his current series of lectures on the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit with a group of collations he had done the year before on the Ten Commandments, as though they were two parts of a single pedagogical project. "Two things are necessary for salvation," he tells his audience, "namely knowledge of truth and practice of virtue."[54] Knowledge of truth comes through the Law, but the practice of virtue, he tells them, comes about through grace.

We might pause for a moment to compare this little passage with a similar theme we find in Thomas Aquinas's questions on the law. As I mentioned above in a discussion of Thomas's prologues in the *Summa theologia*, the prologue to *ST* I-II, q. 90, reads:

> We have now to consider the extrinsic principles of acts. Now the extrinsic principle inclining to evil is the devil, of whose temptations we have spoken in the First Part. But the extrinsic principle moving to good is God, Who both instructs us by means of His Law, and assists us by His Grace: wherefore in the first place we must speak of law; in the second place, of grace.

One will often find volumes with the title *Thomas Aquinas: Treatise on Law*, nearly all of them containing the material found in *ST* I-II, qq. 90–97. The problem is that, if we have been paying attention to Thomas's prologue, we know that the questions on *law* continue up to the questions on grace, and the questions on grace begin with *ST* I-II, q. 109. This suggests that Thomas's "treatise on law" continues from question 90 all the way to question 108 and includes the sections on the Old Law—that is to say, the Mosaic Law—and the New Law. Thus, for Thomas, as for Bonaventure, we are "instructed by means of the Law," but this instruction is not enough. We also need to be "assisted by God's grace."

In the *Summa theologiae*, Thomas describes "law" and "grace" as two remedies for human pride. Since man was proud of his knowledge, "as though his natural reason could suffice him for salvation," God left man to the guidance of his reason alone without the help of the written law. As a result, man fell "headlong into idolatry and the most shameful vices." So God gave him a written law, the Law of Moses, to serve "as a remedy for human ignorance, because 'by the Law is the knowledge of sin'" (Rom 3:20). But, after man had been instructed by the Law, says Thomas, his pride was convinced of his weakness, through his being unable to fulfil what he knew. Hence, as the Apostle concludes (Rom 8:3–4), "what the Law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sent His own Son . . . that the justification of the Law might be fulfilled in us."[55]

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[54] *Collat. de sept.* 1.2.

Bonaventure describes the relationship between "law" and "grace" using the image of a bird with the power to see the heavens but without the power in its wings to fly.

> The Law is related to grace as the power to know is related to the ability to do, and as a tool is related to the power of the one who uses it. It is as though a bird had the power to see the heavens, but did not have strength in its wings. It would not be able to fly and hence could not reach the heights. . . . So it is clear that the grace of God is far more excellent than the Law itself. I have spoken to you at another time about the Law of the Decalogue, and now I will speak to you about grace. Grace is more necessary for us than the Law.[56]

As a feature of the "protreptic" dimension of this early collation, Bonaventure is telling his audience, in effect: "If you thought my *Collations on the Ten Commandments* last year were worthwhile, these collations on the Gifts of the Spirit are even more important, precisely because they are the necessary complement to those previous lectures."

Both Thomas and Bonaventure share the notion that the Law instructs us in the truth we could and should know by reason alone, but often do not because our reason and will have been damaged by sin, and that, even once we are taught by the Law, the full realization of the moral life and the perfection of the virtues depends upon the gift of God's grace. As we have seen, however, each master expresses this view in his own characteristic fashion.

At the conclusion of this brief introductory section, Bonaventure finishes with a feature characteristic of sermons with a *prothema*: he ends with a prayer that God may give him the grace to speak well on the topic he has proposed. In his sermons, these prayers concluding the *prothema* section can sometimes be very long. So, for example, in Sermon 5, Bonaventure concludes his *prothema* this way:

> Before all else it is necessary to ask God with a prayer, so that with his word of grace and piety, he wash the net, that is, our sermon and

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[55] See esp. *ST* I-II, q. 98, a. 6.

[56] *Collat. de sept.* 1.2.

> ennoble it with the clarity of truth by removing the obscurity of error, with the delight of rest by removing the gravity of labor, and with the usefulness of charity by removing the unfruitfulness of the works, so that with clear understanding, delighted affections, and beneficial works, we might be able to say some things to the praise and glory, etc.

So too, early on in Collation 1, before he restates his opening *thema* verse from 2 Corinthians 6:1, Bonaventure asks the Lord's blessing:

> So to begin, we shall ask the Lord that our words may serve the cause of grace and that the intention of our mind, if it finds favor with the Lord, may find powerful expression in words so that we might be able to say something that will be for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.[57]

Prayers of this sort, imploring God's help to speak worthily, were an essential part of academic sermons of the day. And yet, even a supremely devotional a text such as the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* does not have an opening prayer of this sort. It presence here suggests strongly that the genre Bonaventure sees himself writing is related to the sermon.

Restatement of the Thema *Verse, Division, and Subdivisions*

In a sermon, after the *prothema*, we would expect a restatement of the *thema* verse. And sure enough, at the beginning of section 3, we find the opening biblical verse from 2 Corinthians 6:1 repeated: "We exhort you not to receive the grace of God in vain." Bonaventure comments: "In this brief text, the apostle Paul encourages us to be receptive to divine grace, and once we have received that grace that we preserve it, and as we preserve it, that we seek to guard it and let it increase."[58] There are three categories here: receiving, preserving, and increasing. It may be a bit of a stretch to say that Paul includes all three of these in this single verse from 2 Corinthians 6:1. If this had been a full-fledged sermon, Bonaventure's next step would have been to divide up this *thema* verse in such a way as to associate each of the parts with the topics he intended to discuss. He might, for example, have associated "receiving" with the word "receive"; "preserving" with "we exhort you"; and "increasing" with the words "not in vain."

Instead, he makes a quick transition from receiving (*suscipiendam*), preserving (*custodiendam*), and increasing (*multiplicandam*) grace to a consideration of its origin (*ortus*), use (*usus*), and fruit (*fructus*). This transition is a bit shocking and not immediately obvious. Verbally, he merely says this: "Therefore, he [St. Paul] urges us to be prompt in receiving, in preserving, and in increasing the grace of God. Three points come to mind that we must consider if this exhortation is to be realized in us. First, what is the origin of this grace; second, what is its use; and third, what is its fruit."[59] For many readers, these three—origin, use, and fruit—may have not have been the first three words that came to mind. But to be fair, I suppose we might say that we are enabled to *receive* grace when we know its origin, just as we are enabled to get water when we know where to get it. And we can better *preserve* it if we know its proper use; otherwise we might squander it. And finally, we can better *increase* it if we know the fruit it is supposed to bring us; otherwise we might mistake its proper fruit for, say, power or wealth, and not be as receptive to its increase.

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[57] *Collat. de sept.* 1.2.

[58] *Collat. de sept.* 1.3.

Here again, had this been a sermon of the strict *sermo modernus* style, Bonaventure might have associated the *origin* of grace with the words "grace of God," its *use* with the word "receive," and its *fruit* either with "exhort" or "not in vain" or both. And yet, although Bonaventure does not make the standard divisions and associations here that were characteristic of the *sermo modernus* style, he does employ the same style of threefold division and subdivision that was common practice in his earlier works.

We have already seen him create the first threefold *divisio* by distinguishing the origin, use, and fruit of grace. In what follows, he will take each of these and dilate it by first making a further threefold subdivision. So, for example, the *origin* of grace he traces back, unsurprisingly, to Christ, the Word of God, but then makes a threefold subdivision, distinguishing (1) the incarnate Word (*Verbum incarnatum*), (2) the crucified Word (*Verbum crucifixum*), and (3) the inspired Word (*Verbum inspiratum*).[60]

Under the heading of the *use* of grace, he distinguishes three components: (1) faithfulness with respect to God (*fidelis respectu Dei*); (2) strength in relation to oneself (*virilis in se*); and (c) generosity in relation to one's neighbor (*liberalis in proximum*).[61]

Under the "fruits" of grace, he lists: (1) the remission of guilt (*remissio culpae*); (2) the fullness of justice (*plenitudo iustitiae*); and (3) the endurance of the happy life (*perpetuatio vitae beatae*) (section 13). Note in each list the *sermo modernus* style subdivisions and parallelism. It may have been eleven years since Bonaventure's inception, but he had not lost his touch. Apart from choosing not to tie his discussion more firmly to the opening *thema* verse, this is precisely how Bonaventure created content in his sermons, prologues, and early writings: by *divisio* and *dilatatio*. He begins with a threefold division, which becomes, with a threefold subdivision of each, nine headings in which to develop content with comments and "chained" biblical texts. By devoting one or two sections to each subdivision, he is able to fill sections 5 through 16 with his discussion of these nine categories.

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[59] *Collat. de sept.* 1.3.

[60] *Collat. de sept.* 1.5.

[61] *Collat. de sept.* 1.9.

In section 17, then, he formulates another *divisio* to help him transition from his discussion of the origin, use, and fruit of grace (with its series of "threes") to the sevenfold division he needs to discuss the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Corresponding to the three "fruits" of grace—the remission of guilt, the fullness of justice, and the endurance of a happy life—Bonaventure identifies three types of grace: the "remission of guilt" is the result of "a grace that heals" (*gratia curans*); the "fullness of justice" is the result of "a grace that strengthens" (*gratia corroborans*); and "the endurance of the happy life" is the result of "a grace that brings to completion" (*gratia consummans*).[62]

"Healing grace" (*gratia currans*) is given in the seven sacraments. "Strengthening grace" (*gratia corroborans*) is associated with the seven virtues—the four cardinal and three theological—and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. And "consummating grace" (*gratia consummans*), the grace that brings to completion, is associated in this life with the seven beatitudes mentioned in Matthew 5:3–11 and in the next life with seven endowments, three of which relate to the soul—vision (the fulfillment of faith), enjoyment (the fulfillment of hope), and possession (the fulfillment of charity)—and four that overflow into the body from the joy of the soul: clarity, subtlety, agility, and impassibility. With this, Bonaventure has transitioned nicely from his series of "threes" to a series of "sevens," and from his discussion in the earlier sections on grace to his discussion of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit in the coming sections.

Consider the challenge Bonaventure was likely facing. He was addressing a group of brothers over whom he had charge, many of whom were being educated at the University of Paris and influenced by the intellectual disputes that occurred there. By the year this series of collations was being composed, zeal for the works of Aristotle was rampant at Paris, especially among masters in the arts faculty. For devotees of Aristotle's *Ethics*, the virtues would have been a prominent topic. It would have been Bonaventure's task to remind his audience of the human need for grace, without which we are not able to overcome our sinful human nature, become just, or reach our ultimate end, which is attained only in union with God in heaven, not merely in exercising the political virtues or in a life of contemplation.

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[62] *Collat. de sept.* 1.17.

Kevin Hughes, among others, has argued that Bonaventure's later *Collations on the Six Days* served as a protreptic discourse, as an exhortation to a particular form of wisdom and a related way of life.[63] I would argue that this first collation, the "prologue" to Bonaventure's *Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, serves the same purpose: it calls upon its audience to embrace a Christian wisdom about the world and a biblically based understanding of human nature and human flourishing. Its message is that, although Aristotle can teach much that is valuable about the virtues and the moral life, without grace, we humans are like birds that can see the sky but have no power in our wings to rise upward.

Structure of the Remaining Collations

A *collatio* was understood to be a certain kind of sermon: not one delivered in the context of a liturgical service, such as Mass or vespers, but a sermon nonetheless. Some modern translators translate the word *collatio* with the odd hybrid "sermon-conference." Strictly speaking, *collatio* is Latin for "bringing together." But this tells us nothing about *why* the friars were coming together. "Sermon-conference" communicates that its style was that of a sermon, but not a sermon delivered in a liturgical context. Since it is a sermon, one of the keys to reading it and remembering its content is to note the characteristic *sermo modernus* structure. Allow me to illustrate with Collations 2 and 3.

Collation 2 begins with the verse from Psalm 33:12: "Come, children, listen to me. I will teach you the fear of the Lord."[64] This verse serves as the *thema* for the entire collation. Bonaventure does not make a *divisio* of the words and then order each section according to those divisions, but as he did with the verse from 2 Corinthians 6:1 in Collation 1, he opens with this verse and restates it after an introductory *prothema* section.

The *prothema* verse in introduced immediately after the *thema*: "Listen in silence, and good grace will come to you because of your reverence" (Sirach 32:9). The wording of this passage allows Bonaventure to distinguish "good grace" from "evil graces." "Evil grace," like beauty, can make one vain. "Good grace" makes a person good. This is the sort of grace that, says Bonaventure, he described in the previous collation in terms of its origin, use, and fruit. This comment allows him to review the basic points he made in the previous collation, after which he brings his *prothema* to a conclusion with a prayer for success in speaking about the seven gifts.[65]

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[63] Kevin Hughes, "St. Bonaventure's *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*: Fractured Sermons and Protreptic Discourse," *Franciscan Studies* 63 (2005): 107–29.

[64] *Collat. de sept.* 2.1.

In section 2, he introduces the seven gifts by quoting the passage from Isaiah 11:2–3 where they appear: "The Spirit of the Lord will rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and piety, and the spirit of the fear of the Lord will fill him." These seven gifts help to counter the seven deadly sins—pride, envy, anger, sloth, avarice, gluttony, and dissipation—and help foster the seven virtues mentioned in the Beatitudes: voluntary poverty, mildness, mourning, hunger for justice, mercy, purity of heart, and peace. According to Bonaventure's account, the gift of fear destroys pride and introduces the good of poverty. The gift of piety destroys envy and introduces gentleness and meekness of spirit. The gift of knowledge destroys anger and introduces the gift of mourning. The gift of fortitude destroys sloth and introduces the hunger for justice. The gift of counsel destroys avarice and introduces mercy. The gift of understanding destroys gluttony and introduces purity of heart. The gift of wisdom destroys voluptuousness and brings in peace. "Thus, through the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit all evil is destroyed and every form of good is introduced."[66]

After suggesting that these seven gifts can be gotten only from "the Father of Lights" and that, to obtain them, we must ask in prayer, and after a rather unconvincing attempt to associate each of the seven gifts with a separate section of the Lord's Prayer (section 4), Bonaventure returns to his opening *thema* verse—"Come, children, listen to me. I will teach you the fear of the Lord"—thereby signaling to his audience that he is returning to the primary topic of the second collation: namely, the fear of the Lord.[67]

Bonaventure writes: "It seems to me that fear of the Lord is a very beautiful tree planted in the heart of the holy person and watered continuously by God. And when that tree has grown to its fullness, that person is worthy of eternal glory."[68] This is a lovely image, but it also sets up the divisions Bonaventure wishes to make next, in which he says he will describe "the root of the tree and its branches together with its fruit." What this means in practice is that he will describe the *origin* of the fear of the Lord

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[65] *Collat. de sept.* 2.1.

[66] *Collat. de sept.* 2.3.

[67] *Collat. de sept.* 2.6.

[68] *Collat. de sept.* 2.6.

(its root), its *value* (the branches), and its *perfection* (the fruit). This is his standard threefold *divisio*. Indeed, with one minor exception, he will fill out the rest of the collation with repeated use of threefold subdivisions.

The first of these threefold subdivisions arises in conjunction with *origin* of the fear of the Lord. According to Bonaventure, it arises from: (1) a consideration of the sublime quality of the divine power *(ex consideratione divinae potentiae*); (2) a consideration of God's all-seeing wisdom (*ex consideratione perspicacitatis divinae sapientiae*); and (3) a consideration of the severity of the divine punishment (*ex consideratione severitatis divinae vindictae*). Under the last of these, "severity of divine punishment," he identifies seven judgments of God: six in the present life, the seventh in death. They are bondage, blindness, obstinacy, abandonment, scattering, despair, and condemnation.[69]

The *value* of the fear of the Lord is that it: (1) helps us to obtain the influence of divine grace (*ad impetrandam divinae gratiae influentiam*); (2) introduces us to the rightness of divine justice (*ad introducendam divinae iustitae rectitudinem*); and (3) helps us to obtain the enlightenment of divine wisdom (*ad obtinendam divinae sapientiae illustrationem*).[70] Its *perfection* consists in: (1) perfect holiness or cleansing of conscience (*in perfecta conscientiae sanctificatione et emundatione*); (2) full readiness of obedience (*in perfecta obedientiae promptitudine*); and (3) the perfect firmness of trust (*in perfecta fiduciae firmitate*).[71] Note the perfect three-by-three sets of divisions and subdivisions and the parallel Latin phrasing, both characteristic of the *sermo modernus* style.

Much the same structure governs the third collation, on the gift of piety. It begins with a *thema* verse from 1 Timothy 4:7–8: "Train yourself in piety. For while bodily exercise is valuable in a limited way, piety is valuable in all ways since it has the promise of the present life as well as for the life that is to come."[72] Interestingly, there is no *prothema* verse in this collation. This is not entirely surprising if one has read Bonaventure's collection of Sunday sermons, for there too he will sometimes include a *prothema*, sometimes not. In this instance, the *thema* verse provides him with what he needs both for his introduction and for the body of the collation. In the introduction, he develops the notion of training oneself in piety and its juxtaposition with "body exercise" that is "valuable" only "in a limited way to insist on the greater importance of spiritual exercise over bodily exercise. After the usual prayer, he repeats his *thema* verse at the beginning of section 2, just the same as in collations where he interposes a *prothema*.

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[69] *Collat. de sept.* 2.10–12. To clarify, Bonaventure is *not* saying here that physical "bondage" and "blindness" are divine punishments. The "bondage" is the bondage to sin that chains a person's inclinations toward evil so that they have difficulty doing good. And the "blindness" is the blindness of sin, which causes the mind to become "so darkened that it considers sin to be nothing of importance."

[70] *Collat. de sept.* 2.14.

[71] *Collat. de sept.* 2.19.

[72] *Collat. de sept.* 3.1.

The words of the *thema* verse here suggests three things to Bonaventure: (1) the exercise of piety (*pietatis exercitium*); (2) the reward of piety (*pietatis emolumentum*); and (3) the original source of piety (*pietatis originale principium*).[73]

The *exercise* of piety consists of three acts: (1) the reverence of divine worship (*reverentiae venerationis divinae*); (2) the guarding of interior holiness (*custodia sanctificationis intrinsecae*); and (3) the superabundance of interior compassion (*superaffluentia miserationis internae*).[74]

The *original source* of piety is: (1) the uncreated Trinity (*a Trinitate increate*); (2) the incarnate Wisdom (*a Sapientiae incarnata*); and (3) Holy Mother Church, sanctified by the Spirit (*a sancta Ecclesia per Spiritum sanctificata*).[75] As is his custom, Bonaventure spends a section dilating each of these.

After two sections spent exhorting his listeners to spread the oil of piety among their neighbors (section 14) and exhorting bishops in a particular way to be models of piety (section 15), Bonaventure comes finally to the *usefulness* of piety, which he says in useful for: (1) coming to learn the truth (*ad vera cognoscenda*); (2) avoiding all that is evil (*ad omnia mala declinanda*); and (3) the pursuit of all that is good (*ad omnia bona consequenda*).[76]

There is no need to carry on in this vein for every collation. I trust the reader has gotten the general picture by now. These collations read like sermons. They do not observe all the requirements of the *sermo modernus* style, but the influences are patent. They all begin with a *thema* verse that helps set up the discussion that follows, even though Bonaventure does not make a *divisio* of its words and order the rest of his comments around this original *divisio*. He does, however, fill content by making numerous divisions and subdivisions, usually in patterns of three, and by always using parallel constructions in Latin.[77] And, as I have emphasized before, these parallel constructions in English cannot always be rendered into parallel constructions in English, and thus the collations lose their poetic quality in translation.

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[73] *Collat. de sept.* 3.2.

[74] *Collat. de sept.* 3.3.

[75] *Collat. de sept.* 3.10.

[76] *Collat. de sept.* 3.16.

[77] For a nice guide to the basic threefold divisions in each of the collations, see the fine introduction by Robert Karris to his English translation of the *Collations on*

Recognizing that these collations are written in this modified *sermo modernus* style is not merely about showing that Bonaventure's training in preaching influenced his writing throughout his career. More importantly, I want to suggest that, once readers have accustomed themselves to the way the *sermo modernus* style works, this can help them navigate through what might otherwise be confusing bits of text. It will sometimes happen, for example, that one will finish a section that is third in a list and find that the next section begins "second." If one has not been keeping track of the overall structure, it is easy to imagine there has been a mistake. How can the author move from "third" to "second"? The answer is that the "third" section is the third member of a subdivision, and the "second" is the second member of the original division. Keeping track of the divisions and subdivisions helps turn what can become a confusing jumble into a meaningfully ordered set of parts within a whole.

Bonaventure's manner of composing these collations, rather than being "totally alien" to the schools, was rather, in my view, a creative development of the *sermo modernus* style of preaching—a style of composition that also characterized all university *principia*. Understanding the characteristic methods of the style these sermons and having greater experience with them can be a great help to readers as they try to make their way through complex texts such as Bonaventure's later collations, in terms of both structure and argument. Bonaventure will often signal a change from one section to the next with a change in *thema* verse. So too, arguments that might seem odd for those accustomed to thinking of "Scholastic" texts solely in terms of dialectical arguments will better understand Bonaventure's methods of arguing if they understand them as developments of the various methods of *dilatatio*: discussions based on the properties or classifications of a term, especially ones found in a biblical text; the "chaining" together of several biblical texts to make a point; devising metaphors from the properties of something; consideration of causes and effects; and a judicious use of the figurative senses. Not only does Bonaventure make good use of all of these common methods of "dilating" a sermon in his other works, but it is the judicious and plentiful combination of *all of them* coming one after another that makes his texts much less like a thir-

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the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially the diagram on p. 17, where he outlines the basic threefold structure of "origin, "use," and "fruit" Bonaventure employs with each of the seven gifts.

teenth-century disputed question and much more like a thirteenth-century "modern sermon."

There was no need for Bonaventure to "free" himself from the patterns of the schools to "develop a form for his thought more concordant with his vision," as Jacques Bougerol has suggested.[78] A "pattern of the schools" existed that was "concordant with his vision" precisely because it helped shaped his vision over the more than twenty years he spent in study at the University of Paris, a pattern in whose use he had become expert and that he was able to adapt and employ across a wide range of theological works: the patterns and methods of the thirteenth-century *sermo modernus* style of preaching.[79] N&V

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[78] Bougerol, *Introduction*, 123.

[79] See also Randall Smith, *Aquinas, Bonaventure, and the Scholastic Culture of Medieval Paris: Preaching, Prologues, and Biblical Commentary* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).