Yearning in the Dust: Bodily Aesthetics in the Soteriology of St. Bonaventure

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to construct a contemporary spirituality of bodily diminishment rooted in Bonaventure's theological synthesis, particularly his category of the aesthetic, which, the author argues, provides both a lens for understanding the experience of diminishment, and a way of harnessing it constructively in service of the self's soteriological journey.

Reading Bonaventure's Trinitarian metaphysics as the framework of his soteriology, this thesis begins by examining key Bonaventurean aesthetic concepts such as fruitfulness, light and proportion before asking how such concepts can illumine the body's participation in the self's journey to God—a journey which Bonaventure describes as a primarily noetic or spiritual ascent. Sin is introduced as a "greed" or possessive quality that fractures apart the body-soul self who was called to become whole and "beautiful" through the act of contemplation. This greed, it is shown, has left worldly corporeality (including the human body) abandoned to diminishment and death, an aesthetic harnessed and transfigured by Christ in the paschal mystery. There the "ugliness" of body-soul fragmentation ceases to be terminal, and instead becomes the new face and means of the Christ-formed self's "becoming." The new aesthetic possibilities opened up to fallen humanity through the paschal mystery are traced throughout Bonaventure's *Major Life of Francis*, and particularly the stigmata event, which this thesis reads as a profound revelation of Francis' own transfigured diminishment.

In addition to the *Major Life* (*Legenda maior*), central texts used for this constructive project include Bonaventure's *Collationes in hexaemeron* and *Lignum vitae.* In addition to soteriology and aesthetics, key theological concepts explored include Christology, the Trinity, anthropology, apophaticism, sin, death, glory, virtue and poverty.

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Abbreviations for the Works of Bonaventure

Brev.	*Breviloquium* Brief Theology
De don. Spir.	*Collationes de septem donis Spiritus Sancti* Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit
Hex.	*Collationes in hexaemeron* Collationes on the Six Days
In Jn.	*Commentarius in Evangelium Joannis* Commentary on the Gospel of John
In Lc.	*Commentarius in Evangelium Lucae* Commentary on the Gospel of Luke
I, II, III, IV Sent.	*Commentarius in I, II, III, IV librum Sententiarum* Commentary on the Sentences, books I, II, III, IV
De red. art.	*De reductione artium ad theolgiam* Reduction of the Arts to Theology
Trip. via	*De triplici via* The Threefold Way
Itin.	*Itinerarium mentis in Deum* Journey of the Mind to God
Leg. mai.	*Legenda maior* Major Life of Francis
Lig. vit.	*Lignum vitae* The Tree of Life
Myst. Trin.	*Questiones disputatae de mysterio trinitatis* Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity
Scien. Chr.	*Questiones disputatae de scientia Christi* Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ
Solil.	*Soliloquium de quatuor mentalibus exercitiis* Soliloquy on the Four Spiritual Exercises
Perf. vit. Sor.	*De perfectione vitae ad sorores* On the Perfection of Life for Sisters
De reg. Anim,	*De regimine animae* On the Governance of the Soul

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For Dadu

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Chapter One

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Yearning in the Dust: Soul, Sources, Summary

> Sometimes, Lord, one is tempted to say that if you wanted us to behave like the lilies of the field you might have given us an organization more like theirs. But that, I suppose, is just your grand experiment. Or no; not an experiment, for you have no need to find things out. Rather your grand enterprise. To make an organism which is also a spirit; to make that terrible oxymoron, a "spiritual animal." To take a poor primate, a beast with nerve-endings all over it, a creature with a stomach that wants to be filled, a breeding animal that wants its mate, and say, "Now get on with it. Become a god."
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> -C. S. Lewis[1]

1. The Soul of This Project

In his *Philosophy of St. Bonaventure,* Etienne Gilson proposes that Bonaventure *thought* that spiritual reality which Francis *felt*.[2] My own small offering—the thesis at hand— is an attempt to synthesize and apply Franciscan thinking and feeling to a very specific set of human hopes and anxieties. Bonaventure represents the height of a period during which Christian doctrine formed the clear structure of lived Christian spirituality. For this reason, Christology and Trinitarian theology frame much of my discussion in what follows, as these doctrines source the three-part metaphysic resting at the heart of Bonaventure's soteriological vision, which we will come back to again and again:[3] "Such is the metaphysical Center [Christ] that leads us back, and this is the sum total of our metaphysics: concerned with emanation, exemplarity, and consummation [return], that is, illumination through spiritual radiations and return to the Supreme Being… in this you will be a true metaphysician."[4] For Bonaventure, creation is on a journey mirroring the

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[1]C.S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 72.

[2]Etienne Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, trans. Dom Illtyd Trethowan and Frank J. Sheed (Paterson: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1965), 60.

[3]Ewert Cousins argues that Bonaventure's Christology and Trinitarian theology are the two "poles" around which his vision is structured. See "The Two Poles of Bonaventure's Thought," in *Sancta Bonaventura 1274-1974*, ed. Jacques-Guy Bougerol (Grottaferatta: Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1974), 4:154.

[4]*Hex*. 1.17. See Bonaventure, *Collations on the Six Days*, The Works of Bonaventure, v., trans. Jose de Vinck

dynamism of Trinitarian relation, but this journey can only be accomplished through union with the hypostatic Christ. In Bonaventure's metaphysical blueprint, the Word or Wisdom "emanates" from the Father (the "First Principle" or "Fontal Source"), is expressed as "Exemplar" of that First Principle and the actuality of every creaturely potentiality, and is consummated or "returns" to its Source again through the love that is the Holy Spirit.[5] Creatures participate in the Word's journey by coming to exist (emanating from the Father through the Word), by coming to be themselves more deeply (experiencing union with the Word who expresses each creature's truth), and by arriving at that full perfection appointed by God for each creature (returning to the First Principle in the Word through the Spirit). But creation is only able to complete this journey because the Word has taken on human nature. While the Christological and Trinitarian framework of Bonaventure's metaphysical circle has been explored movingly by many, few have applied it, theologically, to very *particular* aspects of the human condition, asking what it might look like for this or that worldly reality to be caught up, through participation with Christ, in Bonaventure's "return."[6]

(New York: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1970).

[5]Bonaventure uses a variety of names for God, a good discussion of which is offered by Zachary Hayes. While "Son" and "Image" are common names for the second person of the Trinity, used to convey trinitarian relation when used in conjunction with "Father," I will most often refer to the second Person as "Word" throughout this thesis, since, according to Hayes, this title "expresses the relation of the second Person both to the Father and to creation," and therefore reflects Bonaventure's own preferred way of referencing the second person. I will also use "Truth" and especially "Beauty" quite freely, for reasons which will soon become apparent. See Zachary Hayes, introduction to *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity,* by Bonaventure, trans. Zachary Hayes, ed. Zachary Hayes and George Marcil (St. Bonaventure: The Franciscan Institute, 1979), 48-51. For more on Bonaventure's use of names for God, see also Gregory LaNave, "Bonaventure," in *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity*, ed. Paul L Gavrilyuk and Sarah Coakley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 167, especially note 53. In chapter two of this thesis, we will see Bonaventure using "Wisdom" as a derivation of "Word" where he wishes to emphasize God's self-expression as the object and means of humanity's noetic journey. On Wisdom in this context, see especially Gregory La Nave, *Through Holiness to Wisdom: The Nature of Theology According to St. Bonaventure* (Rome: Istituto storico dei Cappuccini, 2005).

[6]For an excellent general introduction to Bonaventure's soteriological framework, see Zachary Hayes, *The Hidden Center: Spirituality and Speculative Christology in St. Bonaventure* (St. Bonaventure: The Franciscan Institute, 1992). Chapter seven of Hayes' book offers a brief literature review covering some of the earliest explorations of Bonaventure's soteriology. See also Charles Carpenter, *Theology as the Road to Holiness in Saint Bonaventure* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), and LaNave, *Through Holiness to Wisdom*. Elizabeth Dreyer argues that Bonaventure's spirituality of the passion can offer insights for addressing contemporary pastoral concerns, but the metaphysical, soteriological shape of Bonaventure's theology is not her primary concern. Ilia Delio comes closer to the aim of this present thesis by suggesting that human suffering can be taken up to God through union with Christ's passion in Bonaventure's synthesis, however her focus is not particularly on the human body or its aesthetics. See Elizabeth Dreyer, *The Cross in the Christian Tradition: From Paul to Bonaventure* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001)., and Ilia Delio, *Crucified Love: Bonaventure's Mysticism of the Crucified Christ* (Quincy: Franciscan Media, 1998).

The particular reality with which this thesis is concerned is the anxiety so many individuals feel in confrontation with human bodies—both their own and those of others they love: awkward bodies, diseased, abused, aging, and even dead bodies. Diminishing bodies appear reduced of meaning and vitality, as obstacles severing souls from what they once knew of themselves, distancing human beings from each other, from the beauty of the world, and perhaps most significantly, from the divine Word made manifest once and always in worldly corporeality. And so bodies possess, at least for some souls, a threatening unintelligibility. What I want to explore in what follows is how, through union with Christ's broken humanity, this unintelligibility may paradoxically point individuals toward their truthful End, making diminishment the very portal by which creation "returns" to God. This overarching objective can be broken down into three smaller aims. First and most simply, I want to examine the relationship existing between human bodies and souls in Bonaventure's thought in order to determine how body-soul hylomorphism functions in Bonaventures soteriology, and whether this system remains a helpful way of conceptualizing the self. Second, I wish to illumine how the body in particular might be said to participate in the journey to God, which Bonaventure describes primarily as an inward, noetic pilgrimage. While for Bonaventure the body clearly aids the soul's journey by collecting sensory data for it to contemplate, the terms of the body's own participation and redemption are not the primary concern of Bonaventure's speculative texts. In the *Itinerarium*, Bonaventure even emphasizes that the way to God is not through "an ascent of the body, but of the heart."[7] But in Bonaventure's long biography of Francis, written shortly after the *Itinerarium* and thought by some to function as a commentary on that earlier text, strategically placed and aesthetically striking presentations of the body suggest a holistic soteriology in which the body fully participates and in some ways even leads the soul in its pilgrimage to God. Exploring this development, I hope to demonstrate that although Christian theology has traditionally emphasized the body's "rebellion" against the soul when describing sin's destructive effect on the human person, it is also possible to emphasize the soul's "abandonment" of the body, a shift that has a number of theological and spiritual advantages. In this model, the journey to God requires the soul's tender

[7] *Itin*. 1.1. See Bonaventure, *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God, The Tree of Life, The Life of St. Francis,* The Classics of Western Spirituality, trans and ed. Ewert Cousins (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 59. Of course, Bonaventure is not saying here that the body does not participate in the journey to God. He is simply emphasizing the inwardness of this journey, and clarifying for his readers that his language of ascent should be taken metaphorically.

"recovery" of the body, which turns bodily diminishment into a paschal space, graced and open to the self's beatific wholeness.

My third goal, finally, is to communicate one possible solution to a pressing pastoral problem: that is, how to harness bodily diminishment for redemptive purposes without turning diminishment into a place of intrinsic meaning. Beginning in the twelfth century and blossoming in the fourteenth, the Christian West experienced a fresh wave of devotion to Christ's suffering humanity.[8] This brand of spirituality has sometimes been viewed suspiciously, as destructive and potentially dehumanizing, turning suffering into its own end.[9] This is a legitimate concern. By the end of this thesis, I hope to have demonstrated how Bonaventure's dense metaphysical system and theological aesthetics protects him against such charges. For Bonaventure, uniting human diminishment with Christ's own death enables diminishment to become a paradoxical face and door of the self's eschatological glory. As we shall see, this way of relating to diminishment not only affirms life as humanity's final place of rest, but it also provides women and men with a spirituality that takes suffering seriously. Worldly diminishment is not a "good" in and of itself, but it is also not an illusion to be circumnavigated on the road to eschatological bliss. It must be approached sincerely, passed through truthfully, and harnessed fruitfully by those journeying to God within the context of this world.

A number of qualities make Bonaventure's thought an ideal primary resource for what remains, at its heart, a constructive project. Most dominant is his profoundly developed theological aesthetics, which shapes Bonaventure's discussion on everything from the Trinity to body-soul integrity, to the structure of creaturely meaning, sin and death. This feature of Bonaventure's thought provides a clear and systematic lens through which to pursue the soteriological significance of bodily diminishment, and it will therefore be the main focus of my literature review below. Setting this in place will allow me to apply Bonaventure's aesthetics to my soteriological and anthropological questions as the thesis proceeds.

Other textual dynamics will further enrich my application of Bonaventure's

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[8]On this, see Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism: 1200-1350,* The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism, 3. (New York: Crossroad, 1998).

[9]This is especially true of contemporary incarnations of the old spirituality. Mother Teresa's religious order, the Missionaries of Charity, is a noteworthy example. For a scholarly critique of the Order and its spirituality, see Serge Larivée, Carole Sénéchal, and Geneviève Chénard, "Les côtés ténébreux de Mère Teresa," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*, 42, no. 3 (September 2013): 319-345**.**

aesthetics: Bonaventure's commitment to the Platonism he inherits through Augustine and the Victorines, and his indebtedness to the new wave of Aristotelian philosophy sweeping European universities during his lifetime, synthesize into a rich theory of knowledge that gives space for the body to participate in the soul's Neoplatonic ascent as never before.[10] This is expanded by the way in which Bonaventure marries mystical ascent with the passion mysticism I have already mentioned above. Even in the highly speculative *Itinerarium*, the locus of creaturely "return" is the suffering, crucified Christ who hangs suspended at the height of the soul's noetic journey. And this visceral image is what eventually appears to Francis in the *Legenda maior,* pressing its wounds into the sanctified body of the saint, thus providing concepts and images for the constructive development of a contemporary spirituality of bodily diminishment. It is for these reasons that I have chosen Bonaventure as my conversation partner for this project.

But this raises the question of where the boundary lies between Bonaventure's voice and my own. As my discussion develops, I will be careful to point out that Bonaventure is not always or immediately concerned with the same questions I myself am pursuing throughout this thesis. Occasionally, especially in chapter five, there is even a certain tension between my constructive voice and the relevant Bonaventurean texts. Part of my claim, then, is that there are two levels to Bonaventure' anthropology: On the one hand we see him using language typical of the Christian Platonic tradition, which sometimes falls into the trap of suggesting a less than favorable attitude toward embodiment. While in almost every case (as I will try to show) Bonaventure's problem is not with embodiment per se, but with "fallen" bodiliness, there are moments where this is not so obvious, or where one might wish Bonaventure went further than he does in affirming embodiment as integral to human nature and a very great good. (The qualification seen at the beginning of the *Itinerarium* and mentioned above is one example.) But there is, I think, a deeper structure to Bonaventure's thought that makes such an affirmation not only possible, but logically imperative, and it is from this deeper

[10]The question of whether Bonaventure was a "pure" Augustinian or some kind of eclectic Aristotelian divided Bonaventure scholarship for much of the twentieth century. The two key texts here are Etienne Gilson's *Philosophy of St. Bonaventure* cited above (reflecting the dominant position which sees Bonaventure as essentially Augustinian), and Fernand Van Steenbergen, *The Philosophical Movement in the Thirteenth Century* (London: Nelson, 1955), which argues that Bonaventure is basically Aristotelian. However, this polarizing way of categorizing scholastic theologians doesn't seem very helpful. While Bonaventure is highly critical of Aristotle toward the end of his life for reasons that will be discussed briefly in chapter two, it seems difficult to argue that Bonaventure is not, like Thomas Aquinas, deeply invested in both schools of thought.

structure that I will be developing the spirituality I have proposed.[11] It is as though the arrival of Aristotle and passion mysticism delivers new possibilities for thinking about the body that are not fully worked out in Bonaventure's texts, largely because his contemporaries are not asking the same sorts of questions or processing the kinds of experiences engaged by people of today. As we go along, then, my aim will be to show where Bonaventure "might" have taken his anthropology had there been need or desire for him to do so. I will also offer suggestions as to how "surface" texts that apparently diverge from Bonaventure's deeper logic might be harnessed in service of a Bonaventurean spirituality of diminishment.

Before turning to my literature review, a few comments are in order about my use of particular terms and also my use of capitalizations. As we proceed, I will often speak of the body's "meaningfulness" and "intelligibility." Wherever I describe a creature (or part of a creature) as "meaningful," I will be referencing its nearness to or distance from divine Truth and Meaning itself. Where I speak of a creature's "intelligibility," I will sometimes be reflecting on the beauty and logic of a creature's deepest, uncreated meaning behind the broken aesthetics of its worldly visibility, while at other times I will be questioning the extent to which a worldly creature even *can* correspond to this meaning. For example, the deepest meaning of a holy human person is found within the Word and is on one level simply "hidden" from view by the persistent brokenness of its worldly state. But on another level, the "worldly manifestation" of a particular creature is the only created reflection of that bit of uncreated Meaning there is. If a creature is broken in any way, then there is a sense in which it does not correspond to the inner logic of uncreated Beauty it is striving to represent. In this world a creature will therefore always be, to a certain extent, "unintelligible."[12]

"Worldly" is itself a word I will commonly use as an adjective, normally to

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[11] I wish to recognize Karen Kilby for helping me articulate this two-tiered logic in Bonaventure's attitude toward embodiment.

[12] An example of Bonaventure's use of this kind of language can be found in *De red. art.*4, where, quoting Augustine, Bonaventure explains that "God is the cause of Being, the principle of intelligibility (*rationes intelligendi*), and the order of human life." See Bonaventure, *On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology,* trans. Zachary Hayes (St. Bonaventure: The Franciscan Institute, 1996). I use it because I am claiming that there is, actually, something unintelligible—something that is a departure from meaning—in the body's brokenness. We could almost say that, for Bonaventure, the paschal journey is about "unintelligibility" becoming "hiddenness," but part of my argument is that for him, something about the self remains always broken (and not just hidden) within the context of this world. And so some ambiguity is reflected in my use of the term.

distinguish how a creature such as the human body appears or functions under the lasting terms of the Fall, which is often different from the deeper truth and beauty being worked out beneath its visible appearance. This will become clear in chapter three, after I have explored how, in Bonaventure's view, sin interrupts the natural flow and coherence of creaturely aesthetics.

For lack of a more suitable English word, one of the more challenging adjectives I will commonly use is "sensual." By this I do not mean pleasurable or sexual, but simply "pertaining to the senses," or "having to do with the body." Where appropriate, I will also occasionally use the word "sensible" with similar intent.

The word "diminishment," which I have already used freely, functions as a catchphrase for everything falling under the umbrella of death, fragmentation, disintegration, etc. "Fragmentation" and "disintegration" are themselves aesthetically-charged terms, the significance of which will become evident in chapters two and three.

Finally, in what follows I will very commonly refer to "beauty" with reference to both God and creatures, a description significant enough to warrant a longer explanation, following in section 2.3 below. "Beauty" is one of those words that will be frequently capitalized throughout this thesis, along with "Truth," "Source," "End," "Meaning," and various other nouns. When capitalized, these words will be functioning as names for God ("uncreated" as opposed to "created" beauty, truth, meaning, etc.).

2. Bonaventure's Theological Aesthetics

I begin my project, as promised, by briefly exploring the relevant background material and literature pertaining to Bonaventure's aesthetics. Ann Astell sets the stage with *Eating Beauty: The Eucharist and the Spiritual Arts of the Middle Ages,* which bemoans the lack of scholarship discerning any "mystical '*via pulchritudinis'* (way of beauty)" in Bonaventure's thought.[13] Astell cites Balthasar as the major exception, but Bonaventure is only one of several figures considered in Balthasar's *Theological Aesthetics,* and much of the saint's thought remains uncharted.

Despite this unfortunate void, many have at least acknowledged the significance of

[13] *Eating Beauty: The Eucharist and the Spiritual Arts of the Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006), 100.

beauty as a category in Bonaventure's thought.[14] I will now explore the most important of these voices for help along our search for Astell's "mystical way" of beauty—a way to guide us through those places of diminishment I have already described. I divide our tour into six parts before offering an outline of the entire thesis: First, I will consider the historical development of Bonaventure's aesthetic system, looking especially at the classical definition of beauty he inherits from Augustine. Second, I will offer a brief review of those modern interpreters of Bonaventure forming the immediate backdrop to my project. Third, I will consider the transcendental character of beauty and the theological significance of its place within Bonaventure's thought. In parts four and five respectively, I will look more closely at two twentieth century interpreters of Bonaventure's aesthetics: Sydney McAdams and, of course, Hans Urs von Balthasar. The insights and conclusions of these two men in particular provide the theological and metaphysical platform for my own constructive project in the chapters that follow. Finally, in part six I will attempt to articulate this platform, outlining how the shape of Bonaventure's aesthetics and the gifts of its richest interpreters will together direct my project toward its own conclusion.

2.1. Classic Definitions

Most treatments of Bonaventure's aesthetics begin with some exploration of how classical theories of beauty inform Bonaventure's unique thirteenth-century perspective on the subject. Bonaventure's most basic definition of beauty, borrowed from Augustine, is spelled out clearly in his *Itinerarium*: "Therefore proportion can be viewed in the likeness, insofar as it involves species or form, and then it is called beauty since '*beauty is nothing other than harmonious symmetry*,' or '*a certain arrangement of parts with pleasing color.*'"[15] Here Bonaventure is in the process of explaining how the "delight" experienced when pilgrim souls sense and comprehend other creatures testifies to the Trinity's hidden

[14] Astell points to Edgar de Bruyne and Sr. Emma Jane Marie Spargo as two particularly important voices, whom I will consider in due course.

[15] *Itin.* II.5 (emphasis mine). Most readers of Bonaventure's aesthetics point to Augustine's *De musica*, VI. 13:38, as the source of this definition. Umberto Eco also points to a letter written to Nebridius in Augustine, *Letters*, *vol. 1*, trans. Sister Wilfred Parsons (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1951), 6-11: "What is beauty of the body? A harmony of its parts with a certain pleasing colour." See Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages,* trans. Hugh Bredin (Yale: Yale University Press, 1978), 28. Ewert Cousins, meanwhile, cites *De civitate Dei* XXII. 19:2. See Bonaventure, *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God, The Tree of Life, The Life of St. Francis,* The Classics of Western Spirituality, trans. and ed. Ewert Cousins (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 71.

presence within those creatures. (For Bonaventure, the Trinity is itself the archetypal source and example of "beautiful" proportion, as we shall later see.) Proportion's delight is said to be experienced by the souls of creatures in three different ways: by the way in which an encountered creature corresponds to its uncreated "form" existing more truly in God (here the encountered creature is "proportionate" to its Creator), by the way in which a creature's proportion corresponds to the faculties of the knowing creature (which the known creature does not over or underwhelm), and by the proportion the encountered creature has to the physical needs of the knowing creature (e.g., a creature such as food or drink "satisfies" the needs of the knowing creature).[16] The first of these three "delights" is most important, and reveals how Bonaventure vests his received aesthetic categories with ontological significance even before we have examined their meaning and role within his soteriology. We shall return to the metaphysical dimension of beauty in due course.

Edgar de Bruyne and Umberto Eco offer the most helpful background as to the origins of the first set of ideas in Augustine's "classic statement" (those that pertain to proportion), both pointing to theories of mathematics and music which came down from a Pythagorean synthesis of pre-Socratic philosophy, in which the world was seen to be as a whole or "form" with many parts.[17] This entered the Christian tradition through Plato, for whom beauty rested in the radiance of the original forms shining "in pure light."[18] Thus two different types of proportionate beauty are highlighted in Augustine's definition: The first, beauty as "nothing other than harmonious symmetry," speaks of that "which is desirable for its own sake"—the allure of a thing "considered as a whole" within the harmony of all its parts. The second, beauty as "a certain arrangement of parts," refers to "that which is desirable by virtue of its relationship to something else"—those individual parts which are beautiful insofar as they bring completion to a greater whole.[19]

The second idea in Augustine's definition, beauty being that which has "pleasing color," takes its meaning, for Bonaventure, from his own metaphysics of light, which is influenced significantly by Pseudo-Dionysius, Alexander of Hales and, most likely

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[16] *Itin*. II.7.

[17] Umberto Eco, *On Beauty: A History of a Western Idea,* trans. Alastair McEwen (London: Secker & Warburg, 2004), 48. For a more detailed exploration of this inheritance, including an analysis of primary material from classical sources, see especially chapter three.

[18] Eco, *On Beauty*, 51. Here Eco is quoting *Phaedrus* XXX. He also draws from the *Timaeus* V.

[19] Edgar de Bruyne, *The Esthetics of the Middle Ages*, Eileen B Hennessy, trans. (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1969), 19-20.

Grossteste.[20] God, the uncreated and supremely desirable Light, sources all created objects of beauty. In those created things, color manifests when the created light of "diaphanous space" shines and awakens the light of opaque material objects.[21] But as Sydney McAdams points out, color for Bonaventure has more to do with the alluring nature of a thing's luminous intensity than with particular colors as we think of them, since created light is a sign of uncreated Light.[22] This will become important when I consider the qualities of glorified human bodies in chapters three, four, and five of this thesis.

Calling most of what I have so far described a "formalist" model of beauty ("based on the Augustinian formula of the *aequalitas numerosa*"), Edgar de Bruyne makes a distinct aesthetic category out of what many take to be the very heart of Bonaventure's thought (and which we have already seen Bonaventure describe as the first kind of proportion manifest within all delightful creatures). He calls it an "expressive" understanding of beauty, "based on Augustine's view of *imago."* For Bonaventure, in keeping with the long tradition of Christian Platonism preceding him, individual creatures are expressions of the divine Word, and thus for him the beauty of creatures rests in their correspondence to God's eternal knowing of them. This very basic line of Christian thought underpins much of what proceeds in my work, and features large in Balthasar's reading of Bonaventure, as we shall soon see. But rather than separating Bonaventure's aesthetics into different categories (the physical, "formalist" view versus the metaphysical "expressive" view), I will try to show how the first model is taken up by the second, which it uses to explore and express the deep mystery of creation's participation in uncreated Beauty. As a unity of three luminous Persons, Bonaventure sees the Trinity as the most perfect Source of proportion, and it is by coming to express this uncreated Beauty that men and women begin manifesting luminous proportion within themselves and in relationship to God.[23] How

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[20]For a helpful account of Dionysius' influence on Bonaventure's light metaphysics, see Sidney McAdams, "The Aesthetics of Light: A Critical Examination of St. Bonaventure's Doctrine of Light in View of His Aesthetics" (PhD diss., Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 1991), 46-47.

[21]As Umberto Eco explains this, "*Color* or *splendor* referred to light thought of as something reflected by the opaque bodies that it struck against. Strictly, *splendor* was the light of luminous bodies, *color* that of terrestrial. Visible colour was born of an encounter between two types of light—one in the opaque body, one irradiating through diaphranous space." See *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*, trans. Hugh Bredin (Yale University Press, 1986, 2002), 49-50. For Bonaventure, all creatures have light, since light is the first form given to creatures, preparing them to receive other forms as well.

[22]McAdams, "Aesthetics of Light," 134-135.

[23]Emma Spargo explains that for Bonavenutre the Trinity is the model of all creaturely beauty because it has "plurality" of persons and "equality" or union of essence. See *Category of the Aesthetic in the Philosophy of St. Bonaventure* (St. Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute, 1953), 39. Zachary Hayes explains how, for Bonaventure, the aesthetic category of proportion can be applied to the Trinity without turning the Trinity

Bonaventure envisions the human person's growing proportion or correspondence to its truth in the divine Word is the soteriological question and broad concern of this thesis. How individuals become "proportionate" within themselves is, I will propose in chapter three, the *way* in which Bonaventure sees proportion to God occurring. This is through the increasingly ordered proportion of body and soul, which allows human beings to uniquely participate in the generative work of the unified, proportionate Trinity.

2.2. General Survey of Sources

While most scholars point to Edgar de Bruyne and Sr. Emma Jane Marie Spargo as important interpreters of Bonaventure's aesthetics in the twentieth century, Sydney McAdams offers far and away the most comprehensive literature review available on the subject, covering almost all that has been published since the arrival of the critical Quaracchi text at the end of the nineteenth century.[24] I here rely heavily on McAdams to point out the scholarship upon which my own work immediately stands.[25] I intentionally

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into a harmony of "parts" that denies the doctrine of divine simplicity: "The expansive power of the good which is concentrated in the one, simple divine essence raises unity to multiplicity without multiplying the essence. It is precisely because of His supreme simplicity that God is supremely communicable. If God is most simple, He is most communicative and productive in proportion to His being. Therefore, simplicity includes a plurality of persons." See Zachary Hayes, introduction to *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity*, by Bonaventure (St. Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute, 1979).

[24]McAdams offers summaries of the following contributions to scholarship on Bonaventure's aesthetics: M. Künzle, "St. Bonaventura und die moderne Ästhetik," *Schweizerische Rundschau*, (1906-1907); E. Lutz, "Die Aesthetik Bonaventuras," in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters* (Münster: 1913); R. Boving, "Die Aesthetik Bonaventuras und das Problem der aesthetischen Einfühlung," *Franziskanische Studien,* VIII (1921); Etienne Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure* (New York:1938), published from the original, *La Philosophie de Saint Bonaventura* (Paris: 1924); Edgar de Bruyne, *Études d'esthétique medieval*, 3 vols. (Bruges: 1946); Henri Pouillon, La Beauté, propriété transcendentale chez lesscholastiques."; A. Zabbar, "Aesthetics in the Writings of St. Bonaventure," unpublished dissertation for the Gregorian University (Rome: 1952); Sister Emma Jane Marie Spargo, *The Category of the Aesthetic in the Philosophy of St. Bonaventure* (St. Bonaventure, New York: 1953); H. Urs von Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit, Eine theologische Aesthetik*, 3 parts in 7 vols. (Einsiedeln: 1961); English translation *The Glory of the Lord*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, 7 vols. (San Francisco: 1982); Rosario Assunto, Die Theorie des Schönen im Mittelalter (Köln:1963); K. Peter, Die Lehre von der Schönheit nach Bonaventure (Werl/Westf.: 1964); Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz, *History of Aesthetics*, I, 265; Owen Bennett, "The Concept of Beauty in the Doctrine of St. Bonaventure," Franciscan Educational Conference, XXXII (1951), 15-30; Cornelio Fabro, "Contemplazione mistica e intuizione artistica del Seraphicus," *Doctor Seraphicus,* IV (1962), 5-13; A.J. Wayne Hellman, *Ordo* (München: 1973); U.G. Leinsle, Res et Signum, Das Verstandis Zeichenhafter Wirklichkeit in der Theologie Bonaventureas (München: 1976); T.M. Tomasic, "A Central Neoplatonic Paradigm in Bonaventure's Thought: The Soul as an Optic," Miscellanea Francescana, LXXV (1975), 493-506; Cornelio Del Zotto, *La teologia dell'immagine in San Bonaventura* (Vicenza: 1977).

[25]Several other publications have emerged since McAdams' dissertation, including John Saward, "The Flesh Flowers Again: St. Bonaventure and the Aesthetics of the Resurrection," *Downside Review* 110 (1992).; Jan Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals* (Leiden/New York/Cologne: E. J. Brill,

leave out Balthasar and McAdams himself, as they will be considered more extensively in separate sections below.

It was Magnus Künzle who in 1906 first recognized the significance of the aesthetic category in Bonaventure, but not until Ephrem Lutz in 1913 was the theme of light ascribed a place within Bonaventure's aesthetic system. It was Lutz, also, who first articulated the transcendental nature of beauty for Bonaventure, indirectly initiating a debate regarding its place alongside the One, True, and Good, which we shall consider more closely in 2.3 below. In Lutz's view, "the concepts of light, form, being, and beauty are closely related, even interchangeable" within Bonaventure's metaphysics.[26]

Passing over the less immediately relevant Boving and Gilson, we move to Edgar de Bruyne, whose three-volume study of medieval aesthetics was a major contribution to the field.[27] His gift to Bonaventure studies lies in his survey of the saint's sources, particularly Alexander of Hales, who sees in light "the medium of expression through which beauty may be perceived, enjoyed and judged."[28] As we have already briefly seen, this emphasis on the role of sensual delight in the truthful perception of things is taken up powerfully by Bonaventure, especially in his *Itinerarium*. In McAdams' view, however, Bruyne fails to recognize the uniqueness of Bonaventure's own aesthetic vision, and thus Bonaventure is not given due attention in Bruyne's work.

Sister Emma J.M. Spargo marks a shift in the study of Bonaventurean aesthetics, already lamenting the lack of serious research on the topic fifty years before Ann Astell. Pointing to Bonaventure's rich vocabulary for the beautiful, Spargo predicts a day when Bonaventure—and his theological aesthetics—will enjoy much wider scholarly appeal.[29] While Spargo does not actually attempt a theology of Bonaventure's aesthetics, she offers a close analysis of the category throughout his works, thus articulating the boundaries and vocabulary within which such a theology might proceed. The three movements in her

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1996).; Laura Smit, "He Is All Delight: Aesthetic Knowing in the Thought of Bonaventure" (PhD diss., Boston University, 1998).; Thomas Jefferson McKenna, "Delight in the Cross: The Beautiful, the Agreeable, and the Good in St. Bonaventure's Spiritual Treatises" (PhD diss, Yale University, 2004.; Oleg Bychkov, "What Does Beauty have to do with the Trinity? From Augustine to Duns Scotus," *Franciscan Studies*, 66 (2008): 197-212. I will return to Saward, Aertsen, and Smit in due course.

[26]See McAdams, "Aesthetics of Light," 209.

[27]I worked from the single-volume English translation of Bruyne's cited above, relying on McAdams' summary of the three French volumes where needed.

[28]Bruyne, *Esthetics of the Middle Ages.*

[29]Along with several of McAdams' sources, Spargo counts P. Ephrem Longpre as a twentieth-century scholar who at least acknowledged the importance of aesthetics in Bonaventure's thought.

exposition of beauty (created corporeality, created spirituality, and uncreated spirituality) seems to have been adopted by Sidney McAdams in the helpful dissertation to which we shall shortly turn.

2.3. Beauty and the Transcendentals

The question of beauty's place within the transcendentals has generated considerable interest amongst Bonaventure scholars, most of whom affirm the transcendental nature of beauty for Bonaventure whether or not they think it deserves its own place alongside the One, the True and the Good.[30] Before considering the debate directly, let us look at two classic Bonaventurean statements on the subject, considering how and why Bonaventure structures his transcendentals the way he does.

Our first statement is taken from the chapter on the "Unity of the Divine Nature in Relation to Multiple Appropriations" in the *Breviloquium*. Here, Bonaventure writes that "oneness is appropriated to the Father, truth to the Son, and goodness to the Holy Spirit."[31] Bonaventure offers these three as the primary characteristics of the divine Persons, but several other triadic appropriations are also set forth, which Zachary Hayes has helpfully graphed in his introduction to Bonaventure's *Questiones disputatae de mysteria Trinitate*.[32] Bonaventure is keen to explain that Oneness, Truthfulness and Goodness, along with all other secondary attributes of the Persons, "are said to be appropriated, not because they are proper (to these persons), since they are always common (to them all), but because they lead to a better understanding and knowledge of what is proper, that is the three persons themselves."[33] All appropriations belong properly to all of the divine Persons, but a particular ordering helps us understand, theologically, how the Persons relate to one another and to creation. In the *Breviloquium*, Beauty is given clear status as one of the secondary appropriations of the Second Person. It is that which makes Truthfulness "true" (as we shall see), and therefore beauty is not used by Bonaventure in a way identical with the primary three. Bonaventure's triadic styling of the appropriations has deep significance,

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[30]Spargo collates the variety of different Latin terms Bonaventure uses to speak of the beautiful, including *pulcritudo, ars, proportio, imago, lux, ordo, delectatio*, and more. *Category of the Aesthetic*, ix.

[31] *Brev*. I.6.1

[32]See Zachary Hayes, introduction to *The Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity,* by Bonaventure, trans. Hayes (St. Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute, 1979).

[33]*Brev*. I.6.1. Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, Works of St. Bonaventure, vol. 9, trans. Dominic Monti (New York: Franciscan Institute, 2005).

as it says something important about the nature of God:

> The supremely one is supremely first because it is absolutely without beginning; the supremely true is supremely conforming and beautiful; the supremely good is supremely useful and profitable. From this follows the second series proposed by Hilary, according to which eternity is appropriated to the Father, since he is without beginning, but utterly first; splendor to the Likeness, that is, to the Word, which is supremely beautiful; utility to the Gift, that is, to the Holy Spirit, for it is supremely beneficent and communicative.[34]

There are three transcendentals because there are three Trinitarian Persons, and each appropriation is articulated so as to highlight the Trinitarian nature of reality not only at the transcendental level, but also in the creatures God instantiates, as Bonaventure seeks to show in the first and second stages of his *Itinerarium*. It is important to highlight that beauty, in the passage above, rests in the Son's likeness to the Father (splendor); Beauty is itself because of its ability to perfectly express the One. And the Spirit, for Bonaventure, perfects and completes this filial Beauty not only within the Godhead, but also, as we shall see in chapter five, within creation.

Our second "classic text" is found in an interesting section of the *Itinerarium*, the whole of which I quote here:

> The function of the intellective faculty consists in understanding the meaning of terms, propositions and inferences. Now, the intellect grasps the meaning of terms when it comprehends in a definition what a thing is. But definitions are constructed by using more universal terms; and these are defined by more universal terms until we come to the highest and most universal. Consequently, unless these latter are known, the less universal cannot be grasped in a definition. Unless we know what being per se is, we cannot fully know the definition of any particular substance. We cannot know being per se unless we also know its properties, which are: one, true, good.[35]

Here again Bonaventure points to the Trinitarian "shape" of Being as that phenomenon which alone helps us understand even the smallest reality's existence. ("Unless we know what being per se is, we cannot fully know the definition of any particular substance.")

If the transcendentals come in triads because reality is itself trinitarian, introducing

[34] *Brev*. I.6.3.
[35] *Itin*. III.3.

Beauty as a fourth alongside Oneness, Truthfulness and Goodness seems somewhat problematic. The proposal to do so arose in a 1940 article in which F.M. Heniquinet claimed Bonaventurean authorship for a newly discovered manuscript clearly holding Beauty as a fourth transcendental. Dom Henri Pouillon, Edgar de Bruyne, Emma Spargo, Karl Peter, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Umberto Eco, Sydney McAdams, Jan Aertson, Laura Smit and Ann Astell have all contributed to the debate on the place of beauty in light of this document, several of them accepting the document's authenticity (Heniquinet, Bruyne, Spargo and Eco), with others, writing more recently, strongly disputing it (Aertson and Smit).[36] Still others have simply affirmed the transcendental nature of Beauty without asserting whether or not it should actually be called a proper transcendental (Peter and Balthasar).[37] McAdams simply shrugs regarding the authenticity of the document and tacks beauty onto the end of the other three transcendentals, since it clearly has a transcendental function.[38] But this, it seems, neglects the reason why Bonaventure operates in triads not only when discussing the primary transcendentals, but all the other appropriations as well. As we shall soon see, it is Balthasar who best captures the Trinitarian structure of reality grounding Bonaventure's discussion of beauty. For him, the Son's beauty rests not just in his impressed likeness to the One, but in his power to express outward the whole of that Trinitarian reality already contained within the One.

2.4. Sydney McAdams

I now shift to a longer exploration of McAdams and Balthasar, whose readings of Bonaventure's aesthetics most immediately resonate with my own project. In a PhD dissertation completed through the Pontifical Gregorian University, Sydney McAdams weaves a compelling full-length synthesis of Bonaventure's theological aesthetics and

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[36]McAdams gives the most robust account of the manuscript's discovery, naming S. Gieben, D. Halcour, and B. Distelbrink as others who initially affirmed its authenticity. See "Aesthetics of Light," 108-110. Laura Smit demonstrates why claiming Bonaventurean authorship for the manuscript would suggest that Bonaventure did not read Dionysius until late in his career, and, drawing on Jan Aetson, argues that this is unlikely to be so. See Laura Smit, "He Is All Delight: Aesthetic Knowing in the Thought of Bonaventure." (PhD diss., Boston University, 1998). See also Jan Aertsen: *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals: The Case of Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

[37]Others, such as Ann Astell, have adopted Beauty as a fourth transcendental without commenting on the authenticity of the document. See *Eating Beauty*, 104. Zachary Hayes also doesn't mention the document, but neither does he misappropriate Bonaventure's use of the term "Beauty" (though he does, of course, rightly recognize that Bonaventure gives it a transcendental "quality").

[38]McAdams, "Aesthetics of Light," 176.

metaphysics of light. His dissertation is divided into three sections: First, he traces influences on Bonaventure's light metaphysics through Greek philosophy, the patristic period, Pseudo-Dionysius, John Damascene, medieval Arab and Jewish philosophy, the Victorines and Alexander of Hales. A brief section is given to Bonaventure's contemporary at Oxford, Robert Grosseteste, but McAdams concludes that Grosseteste did not significantly influence the metaphysical dimension of Bonaventure's light aesthetics, though there are interesting parallels between the two thinkers.[39]

Following this survey, McAdams argues that the relationship between creatures and uncreated Light in Bonaventure parallels his teaching on degrees of being: in the same way creatures mirror Being itself through various levels of participation, so do they mirror the uncreated plentitude of Light through varying degrees of emanated spiritual luminosity.[40] McAdams shows how this deep metaphysical parallelism arises from Bonaventure's teaching on the plurality of substantial forms, the first of which is light. McAdams concludes his first chapter with a three-point summary of Bonaventure's light metaphysics: First, within created, corporeal light a deeper principle of analogy is at work: created things point to their uncreated origin, for Bonaventure, through the light that is their primary form. Second, uncreated Light is what souls encounter through the three-fold way of mystical contemplation expounded in Bonaventure's *De triplici via*. Beholding God, for Bonaventure, is best thought of as a kind of seeing "in the light." Here we see glimmerings of a link between light and epistemology in McAdams—a relationship which is foundational for my project. Third, light is a lens through which Bonaventure explores the actualization of a creature's potentiality, so that uncreated Light, for Bonaventure, "is both means and goal in the attainment of the *visio beatifica.*"[41] This observation will become central in chapter two, where I attempt to trace the basic aesthetic principles of the soul's journey to God in Bonaventure's richest and most comprehensive theological text, the

[39]This is highly contestable, and most scholars agree that Grosseteste and other Oxford Franciscans, as well as Alexander of Hales, had a considerable influence on Bonaventure. See for example Zachary Hayes, introduction to *On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology*, by Bonaventure, trans. Bonaventure, 5-6.

[40]I'd like to acknowledge right at the start of this thesis the dangers implicit in the use of this kind of language and imagery. Maintaining the tradition that "light" has a transcendental role risks maintaining age-old racial prejudices, and this fact gives me a certain reservation with regards to my entire project, and especially with regards to the contents of chapters four and five, where Bonaventure's light aesthetics appear in dialogue with the body in major texts such as the *Lignum vitae* and *Legenda maior*. Wherever possible, I will try to emphasize the language of "luminosity" and "dimness" over "lightness" and "darkness," in an effort to lessen this danger, however much it remains.

[41]McAdams, "Aesthetics of Light," 97.

Collationes in hexaemeron.

McAdams' second chapter explores Bonaventure's aesthetics, which, he explains, has not been expressly tied to Bonaventure's metaphysics of light in previous scholarship. After providing his very thorough literature review, McAdams explores how beauty is encountered through the physical and spiritual senses, and how Bonaventure conceives the soul's journey from corporeal beauty, through spiritual beauty, into uncreated Beauty. Three points of summary also conclude this chapter: First, McAdams affirms the transcendental character of beauty without taking definite sides as to whether it constitutes a fourth, proper transcendental. Second, he contends that levels of beauty, like light, appear in creatures according to the nobility of their forms, and that rational creatures (men and women) are able to perceive this beauty through the door of the senses. Third, he concludes that the beauty of creatures has its origin in the second Person of the Trinity, to whom beautiful creatures lead and in whom "the source of Beauty Itself [the Father] may be contemplated."[42]

In his third and final chapter, McAdams explores the obvious links between light and beauty that emerge from the transcendental character of both, showing how light graces human encounters with created beauty on the journey to the God who is uncreated Light and Beauty. This relationship, McAdams claims, has only been "hinted at or stated matter-of-factly in many studies… It is our contention that they are so closely interwoven that light metaphysics is the foundation stone of the Bonaventurean aesthetic."[43] McAdams finishes his thesis by tracing the interaction of light and beauty throughout the seven stages of the *Itinerarium,* in which believers are invited to perceive God in and through the luminous beauty of vestigal creatures, in and through the human rational soul, and finally in uncreated Beauty itself. Here, movingly, McAdams casts the entire noetic journey he has followed into the radiant promise of seventh-day Sabbath rest:

> And so we have come full circle—from darkness which is truly obscure, through the six stages of illumination, to an enlightened *mens* which, in order to experience truly, must immerse itself in the superluminous darkness of the mystical experience, resting before the *visio beatifica*, the Fullness of Light, the most Beautiful Fulfillment of every desire, the God in whose beauty and manifestation we see Light Itself.[44]

[42]McAdams, "Aesthetics of Light," 150.
[43]McAdams, "Aesthetics of Light," 152.
[44]McAdams, "Aesthetics of Light," 203

At the heart of McAdams' thesis, it seems, is the claim that, for Bonaventure, creation is an intelligible revelation—that it is through one's fellow creatures that a soul may access the pure accessibility of uncreated Light, a Light so actual as to appear dark to creatures of potentiality.[45] Though McAdams does not explore the creative potential of this epistemic thread for aesthetically damaged vessels of divine intelligibility (broken bodies and souls), his conclusions provide useful leads for those who might wish to do so.

2.5. Hans Urs von Balthasar

If McAdams has provided the technical, textual rationale for linking light with aesthetics in Bonaventure's thought, Balthasar helps us see how the noetic implications of this union are grounded in Bonaventure's Christology and Trinitarian theology, and worked out ontologically in the process of human becoming (soteriology). I will here provide a full summary of Balthasar's chapter, as together with McAdams, Balthasar provides aesthetic insights that will be pursued textually and developed constructively throughout the main body of my thesis.

Section one of Balthasar's five-part chapter opens with a moving description of Bonaventure's "fundamental experience," which Balthasar describes as an "overpowering" by the impenetrable whole of revelation, which captivates and draws enraptured souls toward its strange, gratuitous beauty:

> In Bonaventure, there is something defeated from the very start; theology is… a tireless proposing of new ordering, counting, classifying, gathering the 'blossoming wilderness' into bouquets. But in the face of this, the last word remains the experience of being out-trumped, of wonder, and of being transported out of oneself…[46]

This experience is "crystalized" for Bonaventure, Balthasar writes, "in the central image of the stigmatization of St. Francis," where the beauty of crucified Wisdom appears suspended amidst the six wings of a burning seraph.[47] Balthasar discerns a number of

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[45]McAdams' closest direct expression of this claims that "if beauty is so ever-present [in all the creatures], it is present not abstractly, but as something which shows itself to be beautiful. It is light-reality which enables beauty to be manifested and to be affirmed as present in all that is created" "Aesthetics of Light," 160.

[46]Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Studies in Theological Style*, The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, II, trans. Andrew Louth, Francis McDonagh, and Brian McNeil (Edinburgh T&T Clark, 1984), 266.

[47]Balthasar wants to demonstrate that for Bonaventure, this knowledge of the Word is the only true

things at work in this encounter. First is the idea that Franciscan contemplation involves a "stripping away of all things, that is to say… [a] poverty" that leaves one honest and vulnerable in the face of divine revelation.[48] Second is the dynamic of expression and impression that comes to dominate Balthasar's reading of Bonaventure's aesthetics. For Bonaventure, the stigmata is "a sign of [Francis'] inward resemblance to the crucified, a sign that demands a bodily visibility." This "inner resemblance," Balthasar goes on, "was the work of the crucified God whose love sought to express itself" by impressing itself into the "soft wax" of Francis' own burning desire.[49] What Balthasar doesn't explore is whether Bonaventure's seraphic impression might somehow meet the vulnerability already latent in creaturely bodies. We might go further by asking whether the sign's "demand" for " bodily visibility" (a demand for expression in the whole human form) is in any way shaped by the diminishing nature of worldly human flesh. Bonaventurean depictions of the Crucified provoke the imagination with their rich allusions to nakedness, openness and exposure. We read of how "'Christ was drunk from love for his bride, and was exposed naked on the cross, [where] the evil Ham mocked him,'" and we are confronted by Christ's body "'spread out, that he may give himself totally… his side... open for you, that he may let you enter...'"[50] There is something deeply resonant in these passages with both the brokenness and the spiritual desire so many human beings sense within their own bodies. Can Bonaventure's paschal aesthetics suggest a pattern whereby the fallenness of human flesh might come to participate, hiddenly, in the redemptive quality of Christ's own move toward death? Balthasar's reading of the stigmata as impression of crucified Expression (the Word) suggests that the frailty of Francis' body has indeed come to share in divine Meaning through its union with the Crucified, even as all creation has been made intelligible, for Francis, through the spiritual ascent that warranted such bodily impression. Can the experience of brokenness and bodily dis-ease prompt human beings to offer themselves to God in similar ways? What further frailties might be exposed through this surrender, and how might they propel believers ever more deeply in the same direction?

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knowledge there is. Bonaventure "allows Thomas his Aristotelian, scientific future, and Augustine his Platonic, sapiential past, and keeps for himself only the stigmatized Francis, whose existence of the end-time in poverty is not yet (or only very imperfectly) attained by his Order." *Theological Style*, 277-278.

[48] *Theological Style*, 271. Balthasar's primary source here is Bonaventure's *Collationes in hexaemeron:* "Contemplation can occur only in the highest simplicity… and the highest simplicity can occur only in the highest poverty, and thus it is appropriate for this Order. The intention of blessed Francis was to attain the highest from of poverty" *Hex*. 20-30.

[49] Balthasar, *Theological Style*, 272-273.

[50] Balthasar, *Theological Style*, 275-276, quoting *Solil.* I.38.

In Balthasar's second section, "Trinity, Idea, *Reductio*," the theme of expression in Bonaventure is explored first as a dynamic within the Trinity itself, next as the Trinitarian-shaped ground of creaturely existence, and finally as the Trinitarian matrix guiding and perfecting expressed creation to its fullest truth. Balthasar begins with a detailed exposition of Bonaventure's Trinitarian theology, exploring the beauty of the Son as the perfectly expressed image of the Father within the immanent Trinity, and the Spirit as that generosity by and within which all divine expression occurs.[51] Balthasar's discussion opens windows on the mysterious origin and trajectory of creaturely expression, which "succeeds only when it is embraced by the self-utterance of the eternal light."[52] The Son as the "expression of the entire divine capacity" is thus the basis for the truthfulness of creatures, and the journey of salvation is a response to the lure of his superabundant beauty.[53]

Balthasar's reading of the Son does not differ substantially from anything traced by other interpreters of Bonaventure, but the arresting nature of his language, with the aesthetic categories he employs throughout his discussion, helps one appreciate the full significance of Bonaventure's doctrine. As "idea and source-idea… of all things," the Son

> realizes in himself also the content of perfect beauty. For since he is the perfect and expressive form of resemblance he is beautiful in comparison with him whom he expresses [the Father]. And since he possesses the content of knowledge, and that not of some one single thing but of the entirety of all that is, "he bears the beautiful world spiritually in himself, as the beautiful one" (Boethius), and he possesses beauty in relation to all beauty that is his image.[54]

Put in dialogue with Bonaventure's metaphysics, the classical understanding of beauty as perfect reproduction here takes on shimmering new contours, and we begin to see the deep relationship between Bruyne's "formalist" and "expressivist" models of beauty in Bonaventure's thought. Here also Balthasar dabbles with the theme of luminosity, linking it to a creature's "clarity" in relationship to God, which is rooted in the Son's transparency to the Father ("as Son he wishes to be nothing else than the image of the Father"), and in the Son's desire to impress this image into transparent creatures ("he transmits this image [as copy and as archetype] and thereby lays the foundation for every creaturely attitude before God. Such attitudes can be true in so far as they copy the attitude of the Son to the

[51]Balthasar, *Theological Style,* 287-289.
[52]Balthasar, *Theological Style*, 294. Balthasar here cites *I Sent.* d6 q3; d8 I, I qI ad 4.7; d39, I qI ad 4.
[53]Balthasar, *Theological Style*, 293.
[54]Balthasar, *Theological Style*, 299.

Father").[55] In Balthasar's reading of Bonaventure, the created order achieves "beauty" not through an exact resemblance (or proportion) to its divine exemplar (which would be impossible for creatures), but through a certain "harmony of order" in its parts, modeled on Dionysian hierarchy.[56] Here Balthasar shows Bonaventure drawing on the classic aesthetic paradigms we have already explored— this time through his understanding that an individual creature's beauty rests in its relationship to the greater whole, which together signifies the simple Beauty of God. Bonaventure expresses himself clearly on this point in book two of his *Commentaria in quatuor libros sententiarum*:

> In the archetypical world, there is the highest beauty, on the grounds of the absolute unity; but if there were unity in the world perceived by the senses, there would be no beauty, because neither order nor perfection would reign. If this world is to imitate the other in perfection and beauty, it must be multiple, so that the multiplicity may achieve what the unity cannot do.[57]

In Bonaventure's view, creatures of potentiality can never mirror God's particular way of being beautiful, as this would require them to share in the attributes of divine simplicity. Instead, in keeping with the Augustinian aesthetic inheritance we have already discussed above, Bonaventure seems to suggest that the whole of creation becomes beautiful through the growing harmonious proportion of its many parts. Thus, though Balthasar himself does not pursue this line very far, it seems possible to draw certain ecclesiological implications from Bonaventure's aesthetics, which I will discuss under 2.6.6. below.

Whereas Balthasar's second section explores expression as a descent from God to creation, Balthasar's third section, "First and Second Adam," considers this reality from the perspective of creatures before outlining a "synthesis of descending and ascending expression in the God-man" in whom humanity achieves the deepest fulfillment of creaturely becoming. Jesus Christ himself, Balthasar claims, is for Bonaventure "the crowning of [this long] historical process."[58] Balthasar demonstrates this by examining three recurring themes in Bonaventure's aesthetics: the meaning of the world, the vocation of the human creature, and the fulfillment of all things through the Incarnation. Grounding each of these is the pre-modern idea that human beings function as the "midpoint" of

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[55]Balthasar, *Theological Style*, 299. See also 294-295.
[56]Balthasar, *Theological Style*, 300.
[57]*II Sent.* V 2C dI II, I qI ad 3. Quoted by Balthasar in *Theological Style*, 300.
[58]Balthasar, *Theological Style*, 309. Balthasar points to *De red. art.* as the text revealing this theological trajectory most profoundly. I will work from this text near the beginning of my fourth chapter.

reality. Nonrational, corporeal creatures stand below human beings, in need of reconciliation with their authentic spiritual meaning, while the Word rests above, longing to bring corporeality into fullest expression through humanity's intercession. Humans are able to intercede between these two poles by virtue of their own complex natures: bodies enable them to sense the created order, and with their rational souls, humans are able to return this sensual goodness to its meaning in God.[59] Thus human beings are the place where everything created and uncreated meets in deep, unhindered communion through the self's perfect openness to God and God's creation.

But according to the tradition Bonaventure represents, humanity failed to perform this contemplative vocation by seizing and possessing other creatures, thus severing them from Truth and sentencing the entire world to a kind of meaninglessness and unintelligibility.[60] As Alexander Schmemann puts it, "The fall is not that we preferred world to God, distorted the balance between the spiritual and material, but that we made the world material, whereas we were to have transformed it into 'life in God,' filled with meaning and spirit."[61] This failure will be the focus of chapter three below, where I will show how Balthasar's reading of the tradition here represents a faithful interpretation of Bonaventure.

The fact that humanity's vocational failure occurs through the refusal of body and soul to work properly together has deep significance for my project. Balthasar seems to suggest that for Bonaventure, the soul's way of taking up or "informing" its body models how pure corporeality was to be taken up by the thinking and loving of the faithful.[62] Is it any wonder, then, that vocational failure (sin) effects a fracturing of the human self, of body and soul from one another in the strange event of death? What was once a model of proportion through the perfect ordering of physical and spiritual parts loses its beauty (dies) through the self's failure to beautify its fellow creatures. The struggle for meaning, then, seems to be acutely present in human bodies, which must still die on account of original sin even after they have recovered their proper function in relation to the soul.[63] But as I hope

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[59]Balthasar, *Theological Style,* 310.
[60]Balthasar, *Theological Style,* 310.
[61]Alexander Schmemann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973), 18.
[62]Balthasar, *Theological Style*, 312.
[63]According to Caroline Walker Bynum, Bonaventure is inconsistent when discussing the human soul's subsistence apart from the body. On the one hand, in death the soul needs and longs for the body. On the other hand, Bonaventure seems to imply that soul is capable of beatific enjoyment even before the body's resurrection. See *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York: Columbia

to demonstrate in future chapters, Bonaventure can teach us not only how to recover the body's meaning *despite* the "ugliness" of its move toward death, but *through* it. Interpreters of Bonaventure, including Balthasar, have long observed that by holding corporeality (body), human rationality (soul) and divinity (Word) together within himself, Christ completes the circle of emanation and return within his own person, thus enabling all individual members of his mystical body to also recover their creative vocation.[64] Balthasar explains that this completion is perfected in the cross; I will show how the "ugliness" of this perfection transfigures the ugliness of all who willingly participate in Christ's paschal mystery, enabling divine Beauty to shine forth with a strange new visibility.

The possibility of such a transfiguration in Christ is movingly traced by Bonaventure through a series of passages bridging the gap between Christ's temporal and eschatological body, depicted as Joseph's colorful cloak in the last two sections of the *Lignum vitae*. Though Balthasar does not reference these texts (nor have I seen them discussed directly by any scholars of Bonaventure), Balthasar does gesture magnificently to the aesthetic features of that future Kingdom— the harmonious proportion of the City and of the blessed who know and love its Lord. There Christ is revealed and described as the "light of the heavenly Jerusalem," the "many-colored Wisdom," and the "'blossoming again' of the fallen earthly flesh upwards to God."[65]

Balthasar's fourth section, "The Structure of Beauty," is a more detailed account of how the soul's participation in Beauty leads creation back to its expressive, Trinitarian Source. For Bonaventure, virtue is what polishes and cleans the interior self, making it like a mirror in which the whole universe is reflected and illumined by the unrestricted presence of uncreated Light.[66] Here we see the clear linkage of light, intelligibility and epistemology that is made manifest within virtuous souls. Only the virtuous can receive both the world and uncreated Light into itself; only in the virtuous can creation's truth be seen through the illuminating Word of the First Principle. This interior ability requires, Balthasar explains, the soul's own "renewed transparency to her being as an image of God."[67] The human

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University Press, 1995), 249-255.

[64]Balthasar, *Theological Style*, 328.

[65]See Balthasar *Theological Style*, 332-333. Balthasar is drawing from *S. fer.* 3 and *P. pascha* IX. 28If.; 286f.

[66]Balthasar, *Theological Style,* 338. Balthasar explains this further later: "Who is able to interpret beauty aright in its appearing? For Bonaventure, only the pure heart can do this, the heart that understands the love which reveals itself through beauty as love and is already prepared to respond with love: the potential sacrifice in the heart of the one who is addressed, touched, and inflamed answers to the gratuitousness of the beauty which offers itself as a gift" (349).

[67]Balthasar, *Theological Style,* 338.

being must become intelligible within herself, Balthasar seems to suggest, in order for the multiplicity of creation to find its interior union within the light of the Word.[68] Having fielded so much Bonaventurean language of proportion, hierarchy and number with reference to human creatures, Balthasar helpfully establishes that such categories say nothing about quantity in Bonaventure's aesthetics but exist, rather, to express the wholeness of the multiplicity—"the possibility for the totality of being in the world to reflect itself and express itself in the soul…" Beauty is appropriated to the soul when it becomes the closest created thing to "the original divine expression," a state which, among creatures, is only possible for human beings to achieve.[69] In Balthasar's view, this Trinitarian expression matures, for Bonaventure, as the senses of virtuous human beings are captured and enraptured by the revelatory beauty of other creatures.[70] Speaking specifically of the *Itinerarium*, Balthasar argues that Bonaventure's "only reason for undertaking the whole analysis [of sense perception and imagining in the soul] is to ground the experience of beauty through the senses in a relation of expression of the object to the subject, which in turn is a relation grounded in the eternal expression in God himself." This transcendent "delight" is experienced temporally through the creature who "enchants and casts a spell" by the force of its participation in wholeness of divine Expression.[71] Here the "mystery of light deepens," as "the creative power of revelation is broken up into the colors in their various illuminations, and into the forms, which ultimately are only various stamps of expression."[72] But if creaturely beauty is grounded in Trinitarian simplicity, and if the human practice of "making things beautiful" requires a deepening participation in divine Beauty, how can this occur when there is a fundamental disjointedness between the two "parts" of human wholeness (body and soul)? How can humanity's "contemplative vocation" possibly be taken up by death-bound men and women? How can the self express the wholeness of creation in the face of its own temporal fragmentation?

In his fifth and final section, "The Heart, the Cross and the Glory," Balthasar sets

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[68]Balthasar, *Theological Style,* 339. Balthasar here quotes *Hex*. 20.8: The Word "'writes his name in her—he who contains both the universe and all the spirits in himself. Thus wonderful light and a wonderful beauty reign in the contemplative soul. In the same manner, the universe, which is beautiful from its summit to its depths, from beginning to end, forms a mirror as it inscribes itself in the soul, and every spirit is a mirror, and thus there comes to be in the soul a marvelous multiplicity, a most sublime order, a sublime proportion.'"

[69]Balthasar, *Theological Style,* 344-345; 339.

[70]Balthasar, *Theological Style,* 341-342.

[71]Balthasar, *Theological Style*, 342-344.

[72]Balthasar, *Theological Style*, 346. Balthasar is here drawing on *Itin.* I.14.

forth the distinctly Franciscan character of Bonaventure's synthesis, which emphasizes the humility of God in his "act of descending into what is nothing in order to express himself" in the incarnation.[73] For Bonaventure, the cross is the deepest point of this outward movement, and the "kiss" "between the God who has become poor and the man who has become poor."[74] As most interpreters of Bonaventure agree (and as I will explain more fully in chapter five), creation's "poverty" is rooted for him in its fundamental ontological dependence. It seems to follow, then, that a truthful life is one stripped of any false or self-made wealth, so that the divine-human "kiss" of poverty becomes the most profound point of honesty between God and creature, and the place where each reality discloses and shares itself most authentically with the other. In Balthasar's view, expression therefore sources not only the original creative act, but also the ongoing creative event by which human beings come to express themselves in God's own self-expression—a movement revealing its deepest structure in the self-emptying mystery of the cross where God and creature meet in perfect love.[75] As "height of the imitation of God," then, Jesus' humility becomes the model for all creaturely participation in beauty.[76] Here Balthasar points to some very moving passages in the *Vitis mystica* describing bodily deformity as the place in which revelation's deepening presence begins to veil itself: "Who would look for beauty of form now in such a roughly-handled body? The most beloved Lord is stripped naked, so that you may be able to see the formlessness of the most pure body."[77] By quoting the *Vitis mystica*, Balthasar here tries to articulate a beauty that has shed all lesser forms of itself by giving itself completely in love, so that Christ's distorted form on the cross becomes the paradoxical new appearance of Beauty. This has unmistakable parallels with the *Itinerarium*, in which the cruciform figure of the sixth day becomes the apophatic face of Sabbath rest.[78] So, the *Vitis mystica* continues, "may we outwardly in our body become formless together with the formless Jesus, so that inwardly we may be formed anew together with the most beautiful Jesus."[79] Here the suggestion emerges that human selfhood, which includes bodiliness, can somehow share in the veiled meaning of Christ's cruciform presence, becoming a kind of hidden revelation. Unfortunately, authorship of the

[73]Balthasar, *Theological Style*, 353.
[74]Balthasar, *Theological Style*, 367.
[75]Balthasar, *Theological Style,* 353.
[76]Balthasar, *Theological Style,* 353.
[77]Balthasar, *Theological Style*, 354. Balthasar is quoting *Vitis mystica* 5.
[78]*Itin*. VII.6
[79]Balthasar, *Theological Style,* 354.

Vitis mystica has fallen into doubt since the publication of Balthasar's *Theological Aesthetics,* so I have chosen not to rely on this text in what proceeds.[80] But Balthasar's brief reflections on the *Vitis mystica* help us imagine how the shape of Bonaventure's thought might be used to interpret other searing images of bodily "formlessness" or diminishment within his works, the Christological grounds of which will be explored more deeply in chapter four (*Lignum vitae*), and the perfect creaturely imitation of which will be traced in chapter five (*Legenda maior*).[81]

2.6. Converging Themes

I will now organize the pertinent threads outlined above into six key themes, explaining how each will inform my overall project. The meaning and interrelation of these themes will be unpacked and explored through my constructive engagement with several of Bonaventure's most important texts in the chapters that follow.

2.6.1. Proportionate expression

In my discussion of Edgar de Bruyne above (2.1), I claimed that Balthasar can help readers of Bonaventure see how exemplarity and classical aesthetics (what Bruyne called Bonaventure's "expressive" and "formalist" inheritances) work together as an inseparable whole in the saint's thought, allowing creatures to become beautiful in an "expressivist" sense via the growth of their own aesthetic integrity (that is, by becoming beautiful in a "formalist" sense). The existence of three transcendentals, and their expression within the

[80] *Vitis mystica* was ascribed to Bernard of Clairvaux for several hundred years before being ascribed to Bonaventure in time for its inclusion in the Quaracchi critical text, compiled at the turn of the nineteenth century. His authorship of the text has in turn also fallen into doubt, and very recent texts on medieval devotional literature have started ascribing it to Bernard again. For more on this, see Ignatius Brady, "The Edition of the 'Opera Omnia' of St. Bonaventure," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 70 (1977): 352-376 and Pietro Maranesi, "The Opera Omnia of Saint Bonaventure: History and Present Situation," in *A Companion to Bonaventure,* ed. Hammond Jay M., et al. (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2014), 79. Saward's moving presentation of Bonaventure's aesthetics of the resurrection in *The Flesh Flowers Again* also relies on this disputed text to a certain extent.

[81] Balthasar dismisses the *Lignum vitae* as "too sentimental" for his own purposes in *Theologial Style*. Because it was written as a devotional aid for the imitation of Christ and reflects the soteriological momentum of Bonaventure's metaphysics (as I will argue in due course), and since my fifth chapter follows Francis as the most "successful imitator" of Christ, I have chosen to base most of my fourth chapter on this text as I consider how the unintelligible "ugliness" of broken human bodies can be opened up to Beauty through union with Christ in the paschal mystery.

Beauty appropriated to the Word, helps us see that as vestiges and images of the Trinity, human beings increasingly "come to life" by mirroring the trinitarian structure of Reality expressed by the Exemplar within their own created, harmonious proportion. This, I think, is especially clear in the second section of Balthasar's chapter on Bonaventure, where he shows how the divine Exemplar guides human beings into the fullness of self-expression. Just what it means for a human being to be "proportioned" after the Trinity, for Bonaventure, is an important question within the overall sequence of my thesis, and will be discussed in chapters two and three (though I already hint toward a claim under "vocation" below).

2.6.2. Light and Being

More than anyone else, Sydney McAdams demonstrates how Bonaventure links a particular creature's luminosity with its degree of being in relationship to Being itself, whom Bonaventure identifies as uncreated Light. And it is through one's ability to perceive this created light or beauty in others that the pilgrim soul accesses uncreated Light, since, as Balthasar explains, a particular creature's luminosity is its "clarity" in relationship to the Father. McAdams also helps us see the ways in which, following Pseudo-Dionysius, Bonaventure's mystical theology links light and epistemology. And he suggests (without exploring how) that a particular creature's growing luminosity parallels the fulfillment of its potentiality— an idea sitting nicely with Balthasar's explanation of how creatures come to express their Exemplar who, of course, expresses uncreated Light (the Father or "First Principle"). McAdams' contribution here will be invaluable when I consider the aesthetic imagery charging the *Lignum vitae* and *Legenda maior* in chapters four and five.

2.6.3. Vocation

Humanity's contemplative vocation is one of the most prominent and frequently noted features of Bonaventure's synthesis. But by exploring this theme from within the context of Bonaventure's broader theological aesthetics, Balthasar helps us imagine how vocational faithfulness not only beautifies known objects, but faithful knowers as well. Taking all this into consideration, I'd like to suggest that the link between faithfulness and beauty can also help us make sense of beauty's absence (what I'll simply call "ugliness" in chapter three)

in sin-broken human creatures. "Ugliness," I will propose, involves a corruption of human proportion that begins inwardly (through the rational soul's failure, as image of the Trinity, to contemplate things in accordance with their Exemplar), and is expressed outwardly in the estrangement of body and soul from one another. As bodily sensing and rational knowing fail to work properly together, the two parts separate, and the would-be knower "fades" toward death in a way that mirrors the dimming creation it has refused to beautify.[82] This is the fruit of sinful possessiveness, which breaks creatures apart from their truth by attempting to know them apart from the Beauty of divine Simplicity. The opposite of this possessiveness—a theme that will dominate in chapter two—is spiritual fruitfulness, which "knows" God truthfully, and thus brings all creatures (including the self) to light. Although humanity has indeed rejected its vocation, Balthasar demonstrates how, as the "crown" of humanity, Jesus Christ has redeemed and accomplished humanity's contemplative role by holding created spirituality and corporeality (human nature) together with uncreated spirituality (the divine nature) within his very person. By grace, human beings may now take up their vocation again under the headship of Christ, and may thereby achieve the beauty for which God always destined them. Although what I have said about "ugliness" being the fragmentation of body-soul proportion represents my own reading of Bonaventure, Balthasar's description of how vocational fruitfulness and beautiful becoming parallel each other provides the necessary backdrop for my reading.[83]

2.6.4. Hiddenness

Although Bonaventure's evangelical poverty has been explored from a variety of angles, most interpreters agree that for him, it is both a way of practicing the truth of one's ontological dependence and the best means of acquiring that humility from which all virtues grow. Bonaventurean poverty is practiced in imitation of God's humility made manifest in Jesus Christ, and as a way of mirroring Jesus' own free-hearted obedience to the Father's will. Throughout my thesis, I will demonstrate how the themes of revelation, hiddenness and distorted form we saw in Balthasar's reading of Bonaventure can be read as

[82]John Saward mentions this in his brief but moving article on the aesthetics of the resurrection. See Saward, "The Flesh Flowers Again."

[83]Saward makes a very similar suggestion, as I will discuss in chapter three, but his article is too brief to present the claim systematically

profound manifestations of Bonaventurean poverty. Balthasar himself makes the link when he explains creaturely poverty as the stripping away of all things in the face of revelation's forceful beauty, and when he describes the humility of the cross as a "kiss" of poverty between God and creatures, as we have already seen. Read through Balthasarian eyes, Bonaventurean poverty is most fundamentally an act of self-disclosure, of exposure or vulnerability on the part of God and human beings meeting one another in the figure of Christ. With this reading in mind, we might conclude that for Bonaventure, poverty practiced in imitation of Christ becomes the way by which creatures may begin participating in uncreated Beauty. But this fact in itself highlights Beauty's necessary hiddenness in our world, since it involves a downward mobility, the goodness of which cannot be discerned by ungraced eyes. The question I will ask in my fourth chapter is whether it is possible for the "ugliness" of fractured humanity to become a vessel of Beauty in this way, by conforming itself to the diminishing nature of Christ's cross. Bonaventure himself uses the term *deformis* (ugly) to describe Christ's appearance in his passion, and we see Christ's visage dimming the further he progresses in the poverty of hidden beauty throughout the *Lignum vitae*.[84] I will try to show how this bodily "impoverishment" becomes a noetic vehicle, manifesting within itself the concealed potential for human transfiguration.

2.6.5. Virtue

In the fourth section of his chapter on Bonaventure, Balthasar shows how virtue enables individuals to perceive things truly. Virtue alone is capable of perceiving that uncreated Light by which all things are known, and thus it is only by virtue that a person may fulfill her contemplative task. This is because virtue is a kind of self knowledge or inward illumination enabling all the parts of creation to find their unity within the spiritual vision of virtuous souls. The theme of virtue will appear in chapter two and will dominate in chapter five where I seek to discern Francis' growing beauty behind the visibility of his bodily diminishment.

[84] *Lig. vit.* 29. Bonaventure, "Lignum vitae," in *Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae Opera Omnia*, ed. PP. Collegii Sancti Bonaventurae, tome VIII, Quaracchi: Collegii Sancti Bonaventurae, 1882-1902), 68-87.

2.6.6. The Church

Though this theme is hinted at only fleetingly by Balthasar in the relevant sections of his *Theological Aesthetics*, he does argue that for Bonaventure, created, eschatological beauty consists in the ordered harmony of all the saints. For Bonaventure, as we shall see, the luminous proportion made manifest by Christ's mystical body in glory is mysteriously linked to the beauty of Christ's own worldly, human body. I will explore this theme more extensively in chapter four as a means of substantiating my claim that beauty animates the "poor" temporal dimness of Jesus on the cross, and as a way of exploring the beauty creation will one day enjoy through the intercession of human knowers.

3. Thesis Summary and Outline

Here, then, is the claim and overall sketch of my project: Sin has effected a "dim" ugliness or unintelligibility in human creatures, articulated by Bonaventure as the estrangement of body and soul from one another through the self's refusal to beautify creation. Even a body that has become meaningful again through the recovery of its rightful role within the whole body-soul self must die—a necessity dictating the terms of its sensual appearance in this world. The recovery of human beauty, for Bonaventure, requires the right perception of creation nurtured through the self's deepening poverty, which Bonaventure describes as an increasing transparency or clarity of the self in relationship to God. In this fruitful human nakedness, creatures are reconciled to their Creator even as the self's own spiritual and corporeal parts unite with increasingly harmonious luminosity. Herein lies the self's recovery of its own deep correspondence to the Beauty of God, as the journey described is only possible for human beings through the imitation of Christ in whom the self's brokenness is transfigured in the perfect poverty of the cross. But as we see modeled in the figure of Francis, the increasing luminosity of "impoverished" selves appears as an increase of darkness and obscurity. The climactic event of the stigmata and its full fruition in bodily death is actually the point of Francis' most unhindered luminous proportion, wherein creation has been brought to perfection through Francis' participation in Christ's own mysterious beauty. In Francis we see that the kind of knowledge enjoyed by Christ-formed human beings is an affective ecstasy involving body and soul, drawing the whole creation into communion with God, and thus restoring its meaning.

By making Beauty temporally available in the form of Christ's cruciform fragmentation, Bonaventure has provided readers with a way of transforming their own experiences of bodily brokenness into signs and vessels of uncreated Meaning. As Christ's opening on the cross was charged by the Beauty of the Father, so it is possible for diminishment be opened up and journeyed through toward God in trust and love. Bonaventure thus articulates a spirituality that is honest about the pain and confusion of this worldly life without turning "darkness" into its own end.

To demonstrate this claim, I have organized my thesis into the following chapters:

> 2. *Beauty in Expression* explores the metaphysical shape of Bonaventure's soteriology and the significant Christological and aesthetic dimensions grounding the soul's journey to God.
>
> 3. *The Broken Centre* attempts to locate the body in relationship to the soul's journey, and considers sin's fragmenting effect upon embodied, would-be knowers.
>
> 4. *When Truth is Ugly* considers how Jesus Christ transfigures the "ugliness" of creaturely fragmentation, reversing the terms of beauty's visibility in this world.
>
> 5. *Communion of the Poor* examines how this new aesthetic is lived forward by the figure of St. Francis of Assisi.

In chapters two and three, I will attempt to put a speculative framework in place that will inform my reading of the *Lignum vitae* and the *Legenda maior* in chapters four and five. Turning first to Bonaventure's most mature theological work, the *Collationes in hexaemeron*, chapter two will explore the metaphysical structure of human knowing by considering the aesthetic concepts and images used by Bonaventure to describe the soul's journey toward its beautiful End. The body's role in this journey is not of primary concern to Bonaventure in the *Hexaemeron*, and will therefore not be discussed directly in my close reading of the text. Chapter three will consider how the human body participates in the soul's journey through its union with a knowing soul: body and soul must work

harmoniously in order to bring all of creation into luminous, proportionate beauty. But this proportion has been lost because of the self's sinful failure to accomplish its task, through which it abandoned the body and all of worldly corporeality. Because the rational soul failed to grow in God-likeness, the worldly body-soul self now exists in a state of fractured "ugliness" that, to a certain extent, is irreparable.

Chapters four and five will turn to two important biographical texts: By examining the aesthetics of the *Lignum vitae'*s historical Christ in chapter four, I will show how sin has permanently reversed the terms of Beauty's visibility within this world, while the Cross has opened a way to Beauty traveling through the irreparable fragmentation of human diminishment. For as long as this fallen world remains, Beauty's luminosity may only be entered through surrender to its "dim" and distorted appearance. This "way of darkness" is revealed in Jesus' life-giving move toward obscurity and bodily death, painted vividly by Bonaventure in terms of his body's darkness or unintelligibility, which veils an increasing openness and vulnerability to God and others. A paschal passage is thus opened up within the aesthetic context of this world, which is taken up and modeled by Bonaventure's Francis in chapter five. In that chapter, through a close reading of the *Legenda maior,* I will show how Bonaventure's master grows in beauty through the generative movement of his whole self toward diminishment, spurred on through transparent fellowship with the poverty of others. That Beauty has come to animate Francis' diminishment will be demonstrated by showing how Bonaventure contrasts images of bodily dimness and luminosity throughout his text. Francis participates in the aesthetic journey outlined in chapters two and three, but according to the sensual terms set forth in chapter four.

In her important study of premodern, Western theologies of bodily resurrection, Caroline Walker Bynum describes how for Bonaventure and his contemporaries, the soul in death longs for reunion with the same body it knew in life. Some scholastics, including Bonaventure, suggest that this "appetite" might extend the other way round, too, so that matter itself "yearns" to be gathered up once more by the soul that loves it. From this context, Bynum quotes Bonaventure:

> But the body [too] has an orientation [*ordinationem*] by reason of divine providence. What however it might have through some other orientation that is of and in itself, coming from that out of which it was dissolved, I do not dare assert, because neither reason nor authority nor faith compels a position. But because this could be what God gives, I do not obstinately deny it... For whether or not there is a yearning in the dust [*in pulveribus appetitus*] even if it is dissolved into the tiniest particles, something

> [*aliquid*] however does not perish which has respect to the resurrection... But into whatever dust or ashes it is turned, ...into the substance of whatever other bodies, or into the elements, or into whatever food, it will return, at that [last] moment of time, to the soul which animated it first.[85]

Bonaventure's musings here spark the imagination, tapping into that bodily discomfort I described at the beginning of this chapter. While Bonaventure is himself engrossed in a technical question concerning the ontological properties of corporeality, it is possible to see in his language of scattered "dust" and "yearning" a way to positively position our own sense of bodily diminishment. Sin has broken us. Our souls have scattered us. But Bonaventure seizes on the promise that somehow, one day, human bodies will be raised, redeemed and glorified through the healing of all worldly estrangements. It remains to be seen how, in this life, the yearning of diminishment might make the body a partner—and perhaps even a leader—in the soul's quest for beauty.

[85]Bynum, *Resurrection of the Body*, 244. Bynum is quoting *IV Sent.*, dist. 43, q.5, conclusio. Bracketed translations are Bynum's.

Chapter Two

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Beauty in Expression

> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation;
> for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created...
> He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.
>
> -Colossians 1:15-20, NRSV

In what follows, I will carefully examine Bonaventure's most mature and complex metaphysical work, the *Collationes in hexaemeron,* looking for the pattern of Bonaventure's soteriology, and considering the means by which believing souls participate in the Word's trinitarian momentum.[1] While this thesis explores the self's failure to "become beautiful" primarily through the lens of body-soul fragmentation (a theme I will develop in chapter three), for Bonaventure this fragmentation begins with the soul's failure to know God properly. "Ugliness" is an *inward* reality that works itself out to a corresponding expression (or lack of expression) in the body. This chapter uses the *Hexaemeron* to explore the journey the soul is called to make toward beautiful expression, leaving the question of the body's participation to be discussed in chapter three.

My organization of this chapter closely mirrors Bonaventure's own organization of the *Hexaemeron* and is divided into three broad sections: First I will probe the aesthetic ground of Bonaventure's three-part introduction, exploring the Church as context for the soul's journey in an effort to illumine the communal dimension of beautification discussed briefly in chapter one (1.1). Next I will analyze the starting and ending place of wisdom, which for Bonaventure outlines the shape of the aesthetic journey undertaken by the Church (1.2 and 1.3).[2] Having done this, I will next move to section two, which traces how

[1]Bonaventure's *Collationes in hexaemeron* exists in two different manuscript forms. Since the differences between these two are not significant enough to affect my study here, I have chosen to work from the manuscript chosen for inclusion in the Quaracchi critical text.

[2]For a clear analysis of "wisdom" in Bonaventure's thought, see Christopher Cullen, *Bonaventure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 23-35. For Bonaventure there is both created and uncreated wisdom. Uncreated Wisdom most properly refers to the second Person of the Trinity, while created wisdom is the vision that expands and lifts the soul (through the influence of the Inspired Word) as it journeys toward the full enjoyment of uncreated Wisdom.

this journey is reproduced in individual human souls, making them beautiful throughout each of the four days or "visions" covered by Bonaventure's text. In a brief third section, I will synthesize the salient bits of our textual tour in preparation for chapter three, which considers how corporeality participates in the soul's noetic ascent.

It is worth issuing a warning at the start of this chapter: the *Hexaemeron* is a dense text filled with lists and numbers branching out into evermore obtuse layers of exegesis, and a certain amount of patience is required of the reader who would reap its rich rewards. This is typical of the period in which Bonaventure writes.[3] While a shorter (though equally dense) text such as the *Itinerarium* would have sufficed to demonstrate how salvation is for Bonaventure first and foremost a noetic journey undertaken by the soul, no text weaves Bonaventure's Christology and Trinitarian theology together into quite so rich an aesthetic synthesis as the *Hexaemeron*. How humans participate in divine fruitfulness or generation on the road to Beauty (see "vocation" under I.2.6.3 above) is an especially compelling feature of the text, and one that will become very important in successive chapters. Because of the text's complexity, and in an effort to preserve the metaphysical shape it traces, I have avoided a thematic reading in favor a more methodical, sequential exegesis. My hope is that this might ease the burden of the text as we proceed.

The *Hexaemeron* is a series of twenty-three lectures outlining how human beings come to participate in the divine Word or Wisdom.[4] Particular theological burdens permeate Bonaventure's lectures, born of his deep suspicion of the Averroists, who were gaining traction in Paris toward the end of Bonaventure's career. Three Averroist "errors" were of particular concern to Bonaventure: the notion that the world had no beginning or end (and was therefore uncreated), the idea that truth could only be known through the

[3]A humorous observation on this point is made by C.S. Lewis: "At his most characteristic, medieval man was not a dreamer nor a wanderer. He was an organiser, a codifier, a builder of systems. He wanted 'a place for everything and everything in the right place.' Distinction, definition, tabulation were his delight. Though full of turbulent activities, he was equally full of the impulse to formalize them.... Highly original and soaring philosophical speculation squeezes itself into a rigid dialectical pattern copied from Aristotle. Studies like Law and Moral Theology, which demand the ordering of very diverse particulars, especially flourish... There was nothing which medieval people liked better, or did better, than sorting out and tidying up. Of all our modern inventions I suspect that they would most have admired the card index." *The Discarded Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 10.

[4]The *Collations* were given as evening lectures or sermons at the University of Paris. Kevin Hughes briefly discusses how the Collations should be classified in "Crossing Over: Biblical Types of Transitus in Bonaventure's Collations on the Six Days," p. 3, note 2. (Unpublished paper uploaded by Kevin Hughes on www.academia.edu), accessed March 8, 2016, https://www.academia.edu/4190512/Crossing_Over_Biblical_Types_of_Transitus_in_Bonaventure_s_Collations_on_the_Six_Days

operation of a single, universal agent intellect, and the denial that eternal punishment or reward was the destiny of every rational creature.[5] In Bonaventure's view, the danger of these three errors rests in their denial of the exemplary Word who, as expression of the Trinity, carries and bears forth the whole truth of God who is Origin, perfecting Principle, and meaningful End of creatures. By denying this ancient Christian metaphysics, the Averroists not only rejected essential aspects of God's nature, but also threatened traditional Christian soteriology, doing away with the ground and structure of creaturely becoming. Etienne Gilson gloomily suggests that Bonaventure actually foresaw the nominalist turn soon precipitated by the new Aristotelianism, and devoted the end of his theological career to restraining the impending tide.[6] Bonaventure's defense of the old metaphysic may be especially relevant in our own time, as theology struggles to articulate a way of knowing based on the beautiful whole of revealed Truth, while remaining sensitive to the questions posed by its own journey through modernity.

In chapter one, Balthasar helped us imagine how human "becoming" might emerge from the act of "mediating" or bringing other creatures to light (see I.2.6.3 above). It seems fortuitous, then, that the soul's journey toward Wisdom is explored through an analogy so powerfully suggestive of God's creative activity in both the *Hexaemeron* and *Itinerarium*. Throughout both works, the "days" of the Genesis creation narrative are used to map out the flow of the soul's maturing experience of contemplation, which Bonaventure breaks into six stages. While the stages of neither text represent a rigidly prescriptive format for how the journey to God should occur, we do see spiritual progression maturing with the dawn of each successive vision. A rational creature's "becoming" parallels its growing interior light, which is the presence of that primordial Beauty reflected in the creatures and revealed truths it contemplates. In the *Itinerarium*, which shares much in common

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[5] *Hex*. 6.4-5.

[6] See Etienne Gilson, *The Philosophy of Saint Bonaventure*, trans. by Illtyd Trethowan and F.J. Sheed (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1938), 1-105, especially 26-27. Gilson describes Bonaventure's alleged anti-Aristotelianism as a rejection of the idea that philosophy can exist apart from theology. Other more recent Bonaventure scholars, such as Christopher Cullen, argue that Bonaventure did indeed articulate a robust "philosophy" or role for natural reason, without denying that for Bonaventure all knowledge, including natural reason, is rooted in theology or faith in the exemplary Word (see Cullen, *Bonaventure*, xi-xiv). Bonaventure's real problem with the Averroists—who advocated a very extreme interpretation of Aristotle—was clearly their implicit denial of exemplarism. It was a departure from this traditional theological tenet, of course, that helped precipitate the nominalist turn reflected in the thought of later Franciscans. Lydia Schumacher's recent monograph argues that in fact Bonaventure himself was largely to "blame" for this theological development within the Franciscan order. Her reading of Bonaventure is controversial. See Lydia Schumacher, *Divine Illumination: The History and Future of Augustine's Theory of Knowledge* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), chapter 4.

structurally with the *Hexaemeron*, this End is the summit of the sixth day, the point at which human perfection occurs through union with the Crucified (the "perfect man," presumably), ushering souls into Sabbath rest.[7] Bonaventure indicates his intention to go beyond the six days of creation in his *Hexaemeron*, to an exploration of the seventh and even the eighth eschatological day wherein the body is resurrected and the world renewed. But his sudden death at the Second Council of Lyons in 1274 prevented this, and in fact Bonaventure only managed to explore the first four days of the soul's spiritual progression. We turn now to Bonaventure's own long introduction, which lays out the metaphysical structure of salvation, before considering the days themselves in part two.

1. Introduction to the *Collationes in Hexaemeron* (Collations 1-3)

Bonaventure's *Hexaemeron* begins with the abruptness of the biblical creation week itself: Speech is the opening motif, and one can imagine the rhetorical beauty of this as Bonaventure stood in a Paris hall to speak about the beautiful Word of God. It is within this expressive Speech alone that Bonaventure himself presumes to speak:

> *In the midst of the Church the Lord shall open his mouth, and shall fill him with the spirit of wisdom and understanding and shall clothe him with a robe of glory.* In these words the Holy Spirit teaches the prudent man to whom he should address his speech, from where he should begin it, and finally where he should end it.[8]

Bonaventure here is speaking for the prudent man, and the three movements of speech highlighted in this passage reveal the pattern of his entire work: The beginning of prudent speech is Christ, that which it carries along can only be the people of God (the Church), and the End to which such souls are carried is again that divine Speech from which they first set out. As we proceed, I will try to show how Christ or uncreated Wisdom is himself the Speech carrying along the people of God, which becomes the substance of a person's own expression insofar as that person has come to reflect the likeness of Christ. Bonaventure carefully unpacks these three movements in his introduction, beginning with the Church—those individuals who are about to embark upon Bonaventure's noetic

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[7] See *Itin*. VII.2.

[8] *Hex*. 1.1. Unless otherwise noted throughout this thesis, italics within Bonaventure's quotations indicate where he himself is quoting the words of Scripture or other authoritative sources. I am simply copying this convention from the English translations of Bonaventure's texts from which I quote.

pilgrimage.

1.1. The Church: hearers of God's Word (collation 1)

Two points have particular significance for our discussion in this first section of Bonaventure's introduction: first, the idea that beautiful becoming is a communal, ecclesial enterprise, and second, the idea that a person's belonging within this community depends on whether or not he pursues the whole of Truth rather than the little bits of it reflected in particular creatures, which would unwittingly pry those creatures away from their Creator in the mind of the knower. If the Church is a pilgrim people becoming beautiful on the way to Beauty, then in Bonaventure's view, any individual's attempt to fracture Truth should be seen as a sign that she is not, in fact, a part of the unified, proportioned Church.

As could have been anticipated in view of McAdams' work, light presents itself as an image for creaturely becoming very early in the *Hexaemeron,* and dominates as the text proceeds. Bonaventure counsels individual pilgrim souls to grow in qualities of virtue that enable the Church to "see," in order that they might better receive the illumination necessary for them to become its members: "for a ray of light [truth] offered to a weak eye blinds it instead of enlightening it."[9] Bonaventure harnesses the full gamut of aesthetic language when discussing the union of individuals comprising the Church: "We should speak of the Church which is a union of rational men living in harmony and uniformity through harmonious and uniform observance of divine Law, harmonious and uniform adherence to divine peace, harmonious and uniform concelebration of divine praise."[10] The state experienced by harmonious and uniform people is three-fold (involving Law, peace and praise), as if to emphasize, it seems, the Church's collective reflection of the beautiful Trinity's own uniform harmony.[11] Gazing upon the Law enlightens the mind with faith and

[9] *Hex*. 1.2.

[10] *Hex.* 1.2. Christopher Cullen succinctly summarizes the meaning of "Law," a theme we will continue encountering throughout the *Hexaemeron.* "Law" in this context refers to "the basic principles of all knowledge by which we judge, whether about speculative matters or about practical ones" (Cullen, *Bonaventure* 25). Wisdom's first "beautiful face," the "rules of divine Law" covered in *Hex*. 2.9-10, reflects Wisdom's uniformity as that Light of Truth who shines into the intellect from above, making intelligible all things represented in the other three faces. "Rational men," then are presumably those whose lives are ordered by the patterns of knowledge reflected in the divine Law.

[11] Triads dominate the *Hexaemeron*, as if Bonaventure wishes to frame this richly layered aesthetic text with the Trinity's beautiful Expression from all sides. Sometimes these triads have important technical meanings, and other times Bonaventure seems to works really hard to give his ideas a trinitarian shape.

strengthens it "by the constancy of virtue." But Bonaventure explains that the soul "who does not look upon" the Law, and therefore does not experience the light of faith and virtue, "does not belong to the unity of the Church."[12] In other words, a person's reception of this light is evidence of their harmonious participation within the beautiful whole of the Church growing toward uncreated Wisdom. The same is true for peace, which Bonaventure describes as the ordered love exercised by disciples of the Law for one another, while praise is the task of the individual practiced in accordance with the whole, loving body: "As a sweet chant results from a great number of voices united in a certain proportion and harmony, so also a spiritual harmony pleasing to the Most High comes forth from the harmony of the love of many."[13]

Bonaventure goes on to expose those who are not of the Church as those who, against faith and its virtues, are carnal and possessive.[14] Against the light of peace, he says, they opt for darkness and are thus "unqualified to listen to God's Law," and instead of the praise emerging from peace, such people praise only themselves. Here Bonaventure gives his first clue as to the kind of knowledge toward which God's Speech, Word or Wisdom directs its hearers in the Church. Those who praise only themselves are those consumed with the "spirit of presumption and curiosity," containing the "splendors of knowledge," but no devotion. The fact that this way of knowing seperates individuals from the whole of the Church suggests again that fracturing occurs through the soul's preference for some particular knowledge other than the whole who is God ("curiosity"). But such knowledge cannot be true, and we see it making souls likewise "untrue" throughout the text. Bonaventure observes a strange sterility at work in the lives of such "unknowers": the accumulation of knowledge apart from the whole of Wisdom is likened by Bonaventure to the building of "wasps nests without honeycombs, while the bees make honey."[15] This motif of sterility is increasingly juxtaposed against the fruitfulness of genuine contemplation as Bonaventure's exploration of the soul's spiritual progression proceeds.

In Bonaventure's presentation of pilgrim souls at the start of his work, we see both aspects of Bruyne's "formalist" definition of beauty coming to light: beauty exists in the whole together (the Church), and in each part (each individual member) that relates

[12] *Hex*. 1.3.
[13] *Hex*. 1.5.
[14] *Hex*. 1.6-9.
[15] *Hex*. 1.8

properly to the whole. The individual member only becomes beautiful by belonging to the whole, but her individual beauty is what assigns her a place within that whole. And the journey of each pilgrim soul toward individual and communal beauty only occurs insofar as such a person holds all the "parts" of knowledge together interiorly as a unified whole reflecting the Trinity's beautiful Speech. Immediately we see what a richly layered aesthetic text we are dealing with in Bonaventure's *Hexaemeron*.

1.2. The Beginning: Christ the Center (collation 1)

The second movement in Bonaventure's introduction seeks to establish Christ as the center and starting place of knowledge, which Bonaventure breaks down into seven branches, each revealed through a different aspect of the Word's life.[16] As I examine these seven centers, I will try to show how, for Bonaventure, the soul's beautiful beginning equips it to traverse divine Speech so that it can arrive again, fully beautiful, at the Beauty from which it began. Created beauty emerges from, proceeds by, and is consummated in this uncreated Beauty speaking through Christ:

> For [Christ (the Incarnate Word)] Himself is the Mediator between God and men, holding the central position in all things... Hence it is necessary to start from Him if a man wants to reach Christian wisdom, as it is proved in Matthew: *for no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son and him to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.*[17]

Bonaventure links his seven centers to particular orders, powers and places of revelation, so that compiled here for ease of reference, they look something like this:

1. Christ the Center (Tables and Illustrations)

1.2.1. Christ is center in terms of essence in the metaphysical order, and is thereby first by his eternal origin as revealed in his eternal generation.

[16]Interestingly, there is already a sequence of progression from beginning to end within this section on the Wisdom's beginning, and we will see this in Bonaventure's discussion of Wisdom's end as well. The seven branches of knowledge seem to be organized according to the sequence of human knowing, and move from the origin of things to their end as they are carried along by events occurring through the activity of the Word.

[17]*Hex*. 1.10.

1.2.2. Christ is center in terms of nature in the physical order, and is therefore most strong through the diffusion of power as revealed in his incarnation.

I.2.3. Christ is center in terms of distance in the mathematical order, and is therefore most deep because of the centrality of his position as revealed in his passion.

1.2.4. Christ is center in terms of doctrine in the logical order, and is therefore most clear by rational proof as revealed in his resurrection.

1.2.5. Christ is center in terms of moderation in the ethical order, and is therefore most important because of the choice of moral good as revealed in his ascension.

1.2.6. Christ is center in terms of justice in the political order, and is therefore outstandingly beautiful because of the retribution of justice revealed in the judgment to come.

1.2.7. Christ is center in terms of concord in the theological order, and is therefore at peace through universal conciliation revealed in the eternal retribution or beatification that befalls each creature.

1.2.1. Essence in the Metaphysical Order: First, Eternal Origin, Eternal Generation (1.12-17)

We have already considered the place of the Second Person within Bonaventure's metaphysical system. In this center, Bonaventure uses light imagery to describe how the natural consideration of the totality of a given creature's being (its beginning, centre and end) again reveals, through the Son's gift of divine illumination, the notions of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thus Bonaventure exclaims that "when [the metaphysician] considers... being in the light of that principle which is the exemplar of all things [the Son] he... is a true metaphysician."[18] The Beauty of the Trinity is the light by which all true knowing and becoming progresses, a conviction reflected in Bonaventure's critique of any "curiosity" or

[18]*Hex*. 1.13.

"experimentation" that would, as we have already seen, seek to tear Truth apart:

> But if we stoop to a knowledge of things acquired by experimenting on them, investigating beyond what is conceded to us, we fall from true contemplation and taste of the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil, as did Lucifer. For if Lucifer, in contemplating this Truth [the Truth reflected in the collective beauty of the whole creation] had been led back from the knowledge of creatures to the unity of the Father, he would have turned dusk into dawn and would have enjoyed daylight.[19] But because he fell for the love and desire of his own excellence, he lost the day.
>
> Now, this Center is one that produces knowledge, it is the Truth, that is, the Tree of Life, while the other truth is an occasion of death, when a man falls for the love of created beauty.[20]

For Bonaventure, each creaturely encounter should occur in such a way that the knower is led upward, ecstatically, to the simplicity of Trinitarian Light contained within and emanating forth from the Father. It should move the knowing creature from "dusk" to "dawn" to "daylight," whereas the possessive, partitioning knowledge sought by Lucifer is a love of darkness and an "occasion of death."

1.2.2. Nature in the Physical Order: Strength, Diffusion of Power, Incarnation (1.18-20)

This section locates Christ's centrality in the headship he acquired through the Incarnation. Christ is to the Church as the sun is to its celestial children; as the sun directs planetary courses by diffusing its life force through the dancing orbs, so Christ diffuses his grace into each of his human members. Bonaventure sees another analogy for this in the way the heart diffuses its life throughout every extension of the body. In both metaphors, members "come to be" through a vital life-force that joins itself to the lesser, needy reality, just as the Word joined itself to humanity in the Incarnation.

1.2.3. Distance in the Mathematical Order: Depth, Position, Passion (1.21-24)

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[19]On the knowledge of dusk, dawn and daylight, see *Brev* II. 8. 2, where the good angels are said to have been confirmed in the knowledge of dusk, morning, and sunlight. A footnote in Dominic Monti's English translation explains that Bonaventure gets this from Augustine (*De civ. Dei,* 11.29 [PL 41:343]). "The knowledge of dusk' is a knowledge of things in themselves; 'the knowledge of morning' is that by which one sees things as they exist in the Word; the 'knowledge of full day' is an immediate intuition through which God reveals himself directly to the created intellect." Cross references are given including *In 2 Sent.* 3.2.2.2 and *Itin*. 1.3.

[20]*Hex*. 1.17. Throughout many of these seven centers, Bonaventure discusses the failure of knowledge to mature properly through the light of Christ, as we shall see. We might think of these as "false starts" down the road to Wisdom and to creaturely beauty therein.

This center links the mathematical order with depth because, Bonaventure says, the mathematician is concerned with "the measuring of the earth." Christ "measured the earth" through the profound humility that carried him through his passion, down to the depths of the world, and into hell itself.[21] Bonaventure explains that the mystery of this centrality has a "saving power, and anyone who draws away from it is condemned, as drawing away from the means" by which one enters the kingdom of heaven (humility).[22] Where humility has been rejected, "darkness has crept in... Man opposes his own salvation, being unable to measure himself."[23] This is a significant statement on the part of Bonaventure, as for him "measure" signifies a creature's identity in relationship to the Father.[24] Bonaventure seems to be saying that through the humility of his passion, Christ has searched out the truth of the whole world in relationship to its Paternal Source, making it available for human actualization. But a creature who rejects humility cannot know who he is within this whole, since he will not receive his truth through conformity to Christ's knowing, and chooses rather to seize upon his own self-knowledge. Those who pridefully sell themselves short in this way never become themselves, but rather waste away in creeping darkness.

"But how is it that [this] humility is lacking, and also the light of wisdom?," Bonaventure asks.

> Because the fire is not banked in cinders, but our lantern is exposed to every wind, and before long the light goes out. As soon as there is something good in us, we want to show it off. By contrast, how marvelous is divine wisdom, for it brought forth salvation through the cinders of humility. For the center is lost in the circle, and it cannot be found except by two lines crossing each other at a right angle.[25]

The light of wisdom grows in a paradoxical hiddenness, such as was revealed in the Cross. It expands by the very movement through which it seems to lose itself. Humility looks like

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[21] *Hex*. 1.22.
[22] *Hex*. 1.23.
[23] *Hex*. 1.24.
[24] Bonaventure speaks frequently of the "measure," "number" and "weight" of creatures. A clear explanation of this is offered in *Brev*. II.2: "When we say in measure, number, and weight, we indicate that the creature is an effect of the creating Trinity by virtue of a three-fold causality: efficient, through which there is in the creature unity, mode, and measure; exemplary, from which the creature derives truth, form, and number; and finally, from which it is endowed with goodness, order, and weight. These, as vestiges of the Creator, are found in all creatures, whether corporeal, spiritual, or composites of both." Here we see how the cyclical, metaphysical journey from the Father, in the Son and through the Spirit leading back again to the Father is literally written into every creature.
[25] *Hex* 1.24. This is a reference to the self-effacing humility of the Cross.

darkness and obscurity, but it is fruitful and alive.

1.2.4. Doctrine in the Logical Order: Clarity, Rational Proof, Resurrection (1.25-30)

In his fourth center, Bonaventure discusses "the reasoning of Christ," which is constructive and restoring" up against the reasoning of the devil, which "leads to hell" because "it is a fallacy, a sophistic and destructive reasoning."[26] The devil's reasoning assumed that because human beings were created to be in God's likeness, they ought to be equal with God. But this reasoning worked to tarnish God's likeness in creatures: "The devil... made man differ from God while promising to make him similar to Him," and because of this, "Christ had to make Himself similar to man in order to make man similar to Himself, that is to God" in the resurrection.[27] Again, for Bonaventure true human identity emerges, in resurrection, through the humility of Christ's decent. One order of reason leads to degeneration and death through the pride of a false beauty (trying to become God rather than his created likeness), while the other leads progressively "from mortality to immortality, from poverty to opulence, from suffering to the crown of glory."[28] In Bonaventure's view, the latter reasoning operates paradoxically, by taking on its "opposite extreme" in the cross. But since by "its very essence life cannot be dominated by death, nor power by need, nor impassibility by suffering," imitation of Christ's humility becomes the door by which human creatures achieve the beauty of God-likeness. "This is our logic," Bonaventure declares. "This is our reasoning which must be used against the devil who constantly argues with us... Often in fact we refuse to suffer, we refuse to be crucified. And yet the whole reasoning tends to this one point: that we resemble God."[29]

1.2.5. Moderation in the Ethical Order: Most Important, Choice of Moral Good, Ascension (1.31-33)

In this center, Bonaventure links Christ's ascension in the midst of a cloud forty days after his resurrection to Moses' forty-day ascent to God in the midst of Sinai's clouds, where

[26]*Hex*. 1.26.
[27]*Hex*. 1.27.
[28]*Hex*. 1.27.
[29]*Hex*. 1.30.

God revealed uncreated Virtue to the leader of Israel. According to Aristotle, Bonaventure observes, "virtue consists in the middle way," and therefore by ascending in the midst or middle of the clouds, Christ revealed himself to be in the midst or center of virtue, as Moses was when beholding God.[30] This reveals that "the Christian must rise from strength to strength, and not stand still on the terminal point of virtue, for by so doing he would cease to be virtuous."[31] Virtue progresses in the souls of pilgrim creatures: it must always beget more virtue. But since faith is a foundation for other kinds of virtue, virtue begins in faith-begetting baptism, just "*as the morning star in the midst of a cloud*." The Christian "enters darkness, and this darkness of faith is accompanied by a mysterious light" that guides her into the perfection of virtue. This perfection, Bonaventure explains, is "*a pure effusion of the glory of the Almighty*," and "*the refulgence of eternal light.*"[32] Here again creaturely progression is described in terms of growing luminosity, revealed now to be the light of Beautiful Virtue blossoming in beautiful souls.

1.2.6. Justice in the Political Order: Outstandingly Beautiful, Retribution of Justice, Judgment to Come (1.34-36)

This center highlights one of the more difficult aspects of medieval thought, namely the fate of the damned in hell. The overarching beauty in which the damned participate allows Bonaventure to rejoice in a fate which many modern readers might find troubling: "Justice embellishes the whole world," Bonaventure writes. "It makes beautiful what had been deformed, it makes more beautiful what was already beautiful, and most beautiful what had been improved. In this sense Augustine writes that the damned are most beautifully placed in hell."[33] Bonaventure is so committed to the beauty of God's created order, that even hell is called upon to participate in its eschatological victory. Beauty is accomplished when each creature receives what it has merited, making retribution a beautiful adornment when poured out upon the ugliness of the damned. Christ's beauty envelops the damned not by reforming them, but by meeting them with punishments "fitting" to the selves they have

[30] *Hex*. 1.31.
[31] *Hex*. 1.32.
[32] *Hex*. 1.33.
[33] *Hex*. 1.34. Bonaventure quotes Augustine on this theme in *Brev*. II.7.1., saying that "the ugliness of sin is never without the beauty of punishment." See also *In 2 Sent.*, 3.2.1.

become (or failed to become) in this life.[34] What is interesting to recognize here is that however important the fate of the individual creature may be, the fate of the whole is equally—or perhaps even more—important in Bonaventure's system. Creation is predestined for beauty, which will one day be accomplished as a harmony of individuals suspended in their proper places. From the hierarchy of the blessed all the way down to the damned and the devil himself, everything will one day become beautiful through the ordering ministrations of Christ in judgment.

1.2.7. Concord in the Theological Order: Peace, Universal Conciliation, Eternal Retribution or Beatification (1.37-38)

It is as center of the theological order that Christ fulfills the journey of the elect, leading them into that Wise End discussed in the third part of Bonaventure's introduction, to which we shall shortly turn. In glory, "the Lamb of God leads us, so that seeing the body and the soul and the divinity, we may find pastures either by going in or by going out. Here the beatifying Center sheds its light on body and soul."[35] Christ who has drawn the elect along to their Paternal End now continues to mediate this End, dispersing God's luminous Presence into blessed bodies and souls. I will revisit the relationship between Christ's humanity and the bodies of the blessed in chapter four, but in the mean time it is enough to see in this seventh center that the physical, individual body of Christ relates in an aesthetic, noetic way to the bodies of the elect in glory. In chapter four, I will try to show that this beatific exchange has earlier, temporal origins for Bonaventure, or at least *can* have such for those trying to construct a meaningful aesthetics of the body.

Bonaventure closes his tour of the seven centers with a final burst of revelatory light. Drawing on imagery from the book of Revelation, he explains that the seven centers are the "seven golden lamp-stands," and that Christ is in their midst (at the center of all the centers, presumably). He calls his centers the "seven illuminations of wisdom," the "seven eyes of the Lamb," the "seven facets of the stone mentioned by Zachary," and the seven days that followed upon the first light." Christ himself sees "in the midst" of these seven orders of knowledge. The luminous totality of knowledge is seen by Christ with perfect sight, and

[34]For a treatment of "fittingness" in Bonaventure's thought, see Zachary Hayes, "The Meaning of *Convenientia* in the Metaphysics of St. Bonaventure," in *Franciscan Studies* 34 (1974), 74-100.
[35]*Hex*. 1.38.

this sight is itself the light we saw given to the Church in section one, enabling it to journey toward uncreated Light and its own consummation therein.

By exploring these seven centers, Bonaventure has tried to demonstrate how Christ is the ground and centre of every possible space one can reason from. Collectively, these seven centers appear to form the metaphysical circle characterizing the Word's own procession from the Father, descent into the world, and movement back to the Father again as Jesus Christ. It is as though in the Incarnation, the Word "picks up" humanity and carries it back to the place of rest and perfection that is its original Source, showing that the Word's own activity at the heart of reality is what makes creation's soteriological journey possible.[36] In chapter four I will try to show how this metaphysical pattern is also replicated in the three movements of Christ's life as described in the *Lignum vitae,* which then becomes the ground and springboard for my explication of Francis' journey to God in chapter five.

Having explored the Origin of wisdom, it is to its End that Bonaventure's text now turns.

1.3. The End: Beautiful Wisdom (collations 2-3)

Arriving finally at creation's End, Bonaventure first describes Wisdom itself before turning again to the question of how souls become wise through their growing encounter with Wisdom. If, as I have already shown, to become "like" God is to grow in beauty (proportion), then it seems right to suggest that growth in wisdom constitutes the gradual manifestation of beauty within rational creatures. Bonaventure devotes his second collation to the Wise End itself, while collation three outlines the shape of creaturely understanding in relationship to that Wisdom.

Bonaventure begins his second collation by asking his readers to consider four things about creation's Wise End: its origin, dwelling, door and beauty. Wisdom's origin and dwelling, Bonaventure explains, have already been covered in an earlier work, the *Collationes de septem donis Spiritus Sancti,* in which Bonaventure showed Wisdom to be

[36] Thus, for Bonaventure, the metaphysical, soteriological pattern I have been discussing is best represented by the image of a circle—an image we will return to in due course. On this and other symbols in Bonaventure, see Francis Biscoglio, "Cross, Tree, Bridegroom and Circle: Marking in the Mystical Journey of Bonaventure and Jacpone da Todi," *Studia Mystica* 11 (Summer 1988).

"a light coming down from the Father of Lights within the soul... radiating through it" and making it into "the form of God, and the house of God."[37] The Father is the origin of Wisdom, and the rational soul is its proper dwelling place, made resplendent by Wisdom's presence. In this section of the *Hexaemeron*, Bonaventure now briefly considers Wisdom's door before devoting his full attention to its beauty. Bonaventure explains that "yearning desire" is Wisdom's door and "the road by which wisdom comes within me, by which I go into wisdom, and wisdom comes into me, and likewise charity."[38] In Bonaventure's view, the soul is shaped by that which it desires, so that it comes to resemble divine Wisdom itself, who is "the refulgence of eternal light, the spotless mirror of the power of God."[39] As Bonaventure writes, "*Her I loved and sought after from my youth; I sought to take her for my bride and was enamored of her beauty.*"[40] This beauty becomes the subject of Bonaventure's discussion throughout the rest of collation two.

Bonaventure's reflections on Wisdom's beauty demonstrates the interchangeable nature of light and beauty in Bonaventure's aesthetic system. Light is said to clothe itself in four different ways, making the "beauty (of Wisdom) wondrous, for at times it is uniform" (its first clothing), "at others manifold" (its second clothing), "at times it assumes every form" (its third clothing), "and at others none" (its fourth clothing). These four luminous presentations or "faces" of Wisdom are "seen as uniform in the rules of divine Law, as manifold in the mysteries of divine Scriptures, as assuming every form in the traces of the divine works, and as without any form in the elevations of divine raptures."[41] Bonaventure asks his listeners to gaze upon these four resplendent faces, for it is in their contemplation that believers come to gaze upon the very Wisdom of God.

Wisdom's first beautiful face, the "rules of divine Law" covered in 2.9-10, reflects Wisdom's uniformity as that light of truth shining into the intellect from above, making intelligible all things represented in the other three faces.

Wisdom's second face occupies a longer discourse, and Bonaventure calls it manifold because it shines forth in Scripture "under many figures, many sacraments, many signs, in

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[37]This is what we will later see Bonaventure calling the "inspired Word," that is, the Word who, in its metaphysical return to the First Principle through the Spirit, inspires creation to participate in the journey to the Father made possible by the "incarnate Word." Bonaventure traces the Word's metaphysical journey and the possibility of human participation by distinguishing between the "Uncreated Word," the "Incarnate Word," and the "Inspired Word."

[38]*Hex*. 2.2.

[39]*Hex*. 2.6.

[40]*Hex*. 2.6.

[41]*Hex*. 2.8.

order also that it be hidden to the proud and revealed to the humble.[42] These veils cover Christ, hiding wisdom from the wise and impure."[43] In Bonaventure's view, Wisdom's manifold manifestations all point to the one uniform truth of Christ only accessible to the humble.[44] Humility penetrates the veils set forth in Scripture by receiving faith, hope and love, which "shine forth" through the three spiritual interpretations telling souls what to believe (faith at work in Scripture's allegorical interpretation), what to expect (hope at work in Scripture's anagogical interpretation), and what to do (love at work in Scripture's tropological interpretation).[45]

Bonaventure's light images dazzle as he talks about how these three interpretations become, like those souls transformed by understanding them, progressively expressive of divine Wisdom. The face of Scripture is like a series of mirrors "unveiled, reflecting... the glory of the Lord... being transformed into [God's] very image from glory to glory: from the clarity of allegory to the clarity of analogy, and again to that of tropology," where love is consummated.[46] Scripture, it seems, is an increasingly bright revelation for the humble who learn to read its hiddenness properly. Under the final, tropological interpretation of Scripture, Bonaventure compares Paul's own "unveiled" face to that of Moses, which was "horned with light through the contemplation of the law."[47] Paul's face is unveiled because he gazes on the New Testament realization of Moses' Old Testament faith and hope— the loving Wisdom who is Jesus Christ.[48] Bonaventure seems to be saying that the "coming to be" of human creatures is also their transformation into intelligible displays of God's self-revelation, occurring as they are penetrated by the light of Scripture's mysteries. This is what it means for a creature to arrive at its wise End through the second face of Wisdom's beauty.

Bonaventure nuances his triad of Scripture's spiritual interpretations (allegory, anagogy, tropology) with increasing complexity as his text continues. Speaking of allegory,

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[42] *Hex*. 2.11-19.
[43] *Hex*. 2.12.
[44] Here and elsewhere in the text, Bonaventure seems to use "Christ" interchangeably with "Word," even though he is referring to Christ's uncreated nature. This demonstrates how central the incarnation is to Bonaventure as that which reveals the Word and makes the journey to Wisdom possible.
[45] *Hex*. 2.14-17.
[46] *Hex*. 2.19.
[47] The Hebrew words for "light" and "horn" are very similar, and the Latin Vulgate translates the Hebrew *qaran* (light) in Ex. 34:29 as *cornuta* (horned), a mistake that has influenced medieval interpretations of the text. The light present in the original Hebrew doesn't seem to be lost on Bonaventure, however, despite the fact that he also speaks of horns. I thank Katie Marcar for drawing this to my attention.
[48] *Hex*. 2.19.

Bonaventure argues that faith carries the Church's union with Christ forward from the time this union is established until its fulfillment in glory. Spiritual progression here is once again marked with light, and Bonaventure is careful to describe it according to his three soteriological stages: Solomon, Bonaventure says, praises the threefold state of the Church (beginning, pilgrimage and end), asking, "Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun... coming up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved" in glory?[49]

The third face of Wisdom's beauty is revealed in the created order.[50] Bonaventure explains how Wisdom continues expressing itself in each created form despite the inability of fallen souls to recognize its presence. We resemble "the unlettered man who owns a book and has no concern for it," Bonaventure exclaims.[51] For him, this is especially true of "philosophers," who want to know individual creatures out of "idle curiosity" (which I already argued only express "parts" of the divine Unity), rather than as signs along the road to Wisdom. Bonaventure explains that a creature can only be known rightly insofar as it is considered in terms of its measure, number and weight, that is, its origin in the Father, its particular identity in the Son, and its final end within the Spirit. Through this trinitarian pattern, "a trace may be seen, and wisdom is manifested, as the foot is shown by the trace."[52] The Trinity stamps its expression in the beauty of creatures, so that contemplated creatures open onto "that Wisdom in whom there is mode without qualification, number without quantity, and order without ordination."[53] "And so it appears," Bonaventure continues, "that the whole world is like a single mirror, full of luminaries that stand before divine Wisdom, shedding light as would live coals."[54]

Having explored Wisdom's self-revelation through the inner light of the "divine Law," the light of Scripture and of creatures, Bonaventure finally reveals a fourth "more difficult and hidden face of wisdom" to the perfect.[55] Mystical theology, Bonaventure explains, considers the height of Wisdom— the fulness of God who cannot be grasped, but instead must grasp the human knower.[56] The desire propelling souls to this height is

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[49]*Hex*. 2.14.
[50]*Hex*. 2.20-27.
[51]*Hex*. 2.20.
[52]*Hex*. 2.23.
[53]*Hex*. 2.23.
[54]*Hex*. 2.27.
[55]*Hex*. 2.28-34.
[56]This language of "being grasped" rather than "grasping" has been used by several Bonaventure scholars. See especially Kevin Hughes, "Remember Bonaventure? (Onto)Theology and Ecstasy" in *Modern*

described by Bonaventure as a strong "light" and "flame" requiring the transcendence of all created, changing lights in exchange for the pure, uncreated "radiance of darkness."[57] In this darkness, Bonaventure explains, truth "does not bear upon the intelligence, and yet the soul is supremely flooded with light." Here where apophaticism is introduced into the text, we see the most profound level at which hiddenness and revelation work together in Bonaventure's thought. Unlike the darkness of broken bodies I will discuss in chapters three through five, the darkness of mystical theology, of course, has no negative dimension. It is hiddenness, but it is not diminishment. But in the bodies of Jesus and Francis to be discussed in chapters four and five, we see a mystical hiddenness that is as disorienting as it is profound, because of the broken nature of its sensual vessels.

With Bonaventure's third collation, attention shifts to the question of how souls come to understand, or "grow into" the Wisdom they have contemplated through each of its four, beautiful faces. How, Bonaventure wants us to consider, does the vision of Wisdom penetrate and transform human knowers? In this section we see most clearly how the road of Wisdom or Beauty extending from its Origin ("Christ the Centre") delivers pilgrim souls to the full, Wise End of Beauty in whom rests the fruition of their own, created beauty:

> The key to contemplation is a threefold understanding: of the *Uncreated Word* by whom all things are brought forth; of the *Incarnate Word* by whom all things are restored; and of the *Inspired Word* by whom all things are revealed. For no one can have understanding unless he considers where things come from, how they are led back to their end, and how God shines forth in them (emphasis mine).[58]

The categories of Uncreated, Incarnate and Inspired Word here seem to parallel, functionally, the Trinitarian shape of Bonaventure's three-fold metaphysic: The Uncreated Word suggests emanation from the Father, the Inspired Word suggests the full completion and revelation of things through the generous work of the Spirit, and the Incarnate Word suggests the Word itself who enables this journey of revelation to unfold. But of course, all three Persons of the Trinity are involved and expressed in every stage of the Word's soteriological witness. Wisdom's whole Beauty, it seems, embraces the journey of each pilgrim creature, telling the story of the Trinity's expression in the Word through the revealed radiance of its uniform, multiple, total and formless forms (its four beautiful

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Theology 19.4 (October 2003): 529-545.
[57]*Hex*. 2.32-34.
[58]*Hex*. 3.2.

faces). We begin to see that for Bonaventure, beauty is perfected in souls as they learn to contemplate the whole world, including their own journeys, according to the Word's whole metaphysical witness. This observation will grow in importance as we go along, and is central to what it means for rational souls to participate in divine generation.

Discussing each movement of the Trinity in creatures individually, Bonaventure first turns to the Uncreated Word to show how the meaning of creaturely multiplicity is found in God's simplicity:

> Since [the Word] represents the Father's power, it represents a power that is absolutely one; but "the more a power is one, the more it is infinite." Hence this likeness properly represents infinite things; and therefore it is necessary that many things proceed from one. If, then, you understand the Word, you understand all understandable things.[59]

No multiplicity exists in the Word, but in speaking of "infinite things," Bonaventure nevertheless uses the language of multiplicity, drawing once again on the aesthetic concept of parts ("things"), it seems, to talk about the unity of the divine ideas.[60] Understanding the Source of created things to be infinite Expression enables knowers to see the genuine multiplicity of instantiated creatures as part of the Whole within whom alone all creatures are beautiful. Creation is only "true" as a communion, and understanding this through the light of the Uncreated Word is exactly what places knowers within the communion they contemplate.

Turning next to the Incarnate Word, Bonaventure discusses how the second Person "must needs have touched both heaven and earth," thereby establishing him as creation's hierarch.[61] In Bonaventure's view, it is through his incarnation that the Word is able to order all things under him in accordance with their proper hierarchy. Or put in aesthetic terms, we might say that it is through his incarnation that the Word makes all things beautiful by arranging their harmonious proportion beneath his headship. In one of the *Hexaemeron*'s most moving expositions of light, Bonaventure compares the one who sees the Incarnation truly to Moses gazing in rapturous wonder at the mystery of the burning bush. This gaze enlightens and lifts the pilgrim soul to the uncreated Light:

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[59] *Hex*. 3.4.

[60] Cf. *Scien. Chr.* Q. 3, resp. Bonaventure uses images of light and color to describe the relationship existing between the knowledge of the Word and the creatures it instantiates: "As the sun by shining brings forth a variety and number of colors, so out of this Word there comes forth a variety of things." *Hex*. 3.9

[61] *Hex*. 3.12. I will look more closely at Bonaventure's concept of hierarchy in chapter three.

> Hence Moses, after he had led the flock across the desert, saw a bush which, though on fire, was not consumed. 'I must go over,' he said, 'to look at this remarkable sight, and see why the bush is not burned.' And there he was enlightened. The spiny bush is the flesh liable to suffering; the flame is the soul of Christ full of light and of the fire of love; the light itself is the Godhead; the light joined to the bush by means of the spirit or soul.[62]

In Bonaventure's view, the Word blazes in the creaturehood of Jesus Christ, who diffuses his restoring life in such a way that souls may now encounter God by gazing truly upon the smallest member of creation. Speaking eschatologically, Bonaventure explains that "Whatever is said in the Bible of the sun shedding light, or of other diffusions, or of banquets, is said of [Christ's] bounty [and]... lavishness."[63] Therefore as "Father of the age to come," and "the Principle of those influences by which we will live in the future," Christ begets creation on the way to its full fruition in glory: "We are now the beginning of creatures," Bonaventure writes, "but then we shall be creatures in full."[64] The ability to encounter this mystery in the truth of other creatures is the soul's own perfection in Christ. Again, the soul arrives at beauty by seeing all other creatures according to their beauty in God.

Turning finally to consider the Inspired Word, Bonaventure outlines the six visions through which he will soon begin tracing the soul's ascent to the seventh vision of perfect Wisdom (although he only makes it through the end of vision four before he dies). It is insofar as the the whole trajectory of creation is understood that human beings can be said to have arrived, themselves, at the seventh day. By understanding the Wisdom it sees—not in an abstract, propositional way, but as a contemplative, experiential reality, the soul arrives, wise and beautiful, into the vision of Wisdom and Beauty.

In this first section of my chapter, I have carefully studied the introduction to Bonaventure's *Collationes in hexaemeron*, examining both who is equipped to make the pilgrimage to Wisdom (virtuous members of the unified Church), and also the shape of the pilgrimage itself. The journey to God must begin with Christ the centre if it is to proceed at all, and as uncreated Wisdom, Christ is also the road by which souls progress as well as the End toward which their journey leads. The journey and its End are the subject of collations two and three, which describe the "door" to Wisdom as the soul's own yearning, while

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[62] *Hex*. 3.13.
[63] *Hex*. 3.19.
[64] *Hex*. 3.19.

Wisdom's "beauty" is discerned through the four different "faces" through which Wisdom reveals itself: the ordered nature of reality (the "divine Law") comprehensible through natural reason, Scripture, the sign value of creaturely parts pointing to the divine Unity, and the formless face of mystical theology. Bonaventure's third collation explains how a deep awareness of reality's metaphysical shape and destiny is what allows rational souls to grow in the Wisdom contemplated through the four faces. The key idea here is that understanding creation rightly is how human beings participate in Wisdom's work of drawing the world back to the First Principle, which is simultaneously their own coming to be. I will develop this further in what follows below and in my summary at the end of the entire chapter. Having explored the basic pattern of the soul's journey, we turn now to a more detailed analysis of the journey itself.

2. The Four Visions (Collations 4-23)

As an analysis of the journey to God described in collations 4-23 of the *Hexaemeron*, this section will consider the spiritual qualities Bonaventure sees growing in souls as they advance in luminous beauty. Central to these qualities, for Bonaventure, and of particular importance for the argument I will develop in future chapters, is the the continuing theme of human fruitfulness—that is, how the soul participates in Wisdom's work through its own coming to be, as summarized above. Understanding this will help us see how the road extending between Wisdom as Beginning and End is actually Wisdom itself (an idea implicit in the text, but not stated explicitly by Bonaventure), which will prepare us to recognize the metaphysical shape of the *Lignum vitae* in chapter four. This in turn will enable us to interpret the aesthetic journey undertaken by Francis in chapter four, when his increasing inward brightness hides itself beneath the sensual dimness of stigmata and death. While the details of Bonaventure's four visions are vast and complex, in what follows I will simplify his system as much as possible, discussing only those details which most directly illumine the soul's soteriological journey.[65] Bonaventure's first day "corresponds to the first day on which light was made," and considers the innate ability human beings have to know and reason, which we already saw reflected in the first face of

[65]By referring to each "day" of creation as a "vision" of light, Bonaventure highlights the noetic progression he is tracing throughout his text.

Wisdom in section 1.3 above. I will try to show how, according to Bonaventure, the proper exercise of natural reason gives birth to virtue as faith penetrates the soul, deepening its journey along the path to Wisdom. Faith itself is the subject of Bonaventure's second day, and here I will detail how faith (and indeed the whole of virtue) "lifts up" human understanding, preparing believers to facilitate the world's beautiful journey back to God through participation in God's own Speech. Turning to day three, I will explore how Bonaventure uses Scripture's three spiritual interpretations to show how the soul gives birth to the beautiful vision of creation God begets within it, which is simultaneously the soul's own coming to be. Arriving finally at his fourth vision, I will show how, for Bonaventure, the soul's contemplation of the heavenly and ecclesiastical hierarchies is itself an act of participation that makes the soul a beautiful part of the beautiful whole. Considering this, Bonaventure himself declares: "*Then you shall be radiant at what you see, your heart shall throb and overflow*: in contemplation, there is admiration, expansion, a transference and restoration of one's self."[66] It is worth stating once again that in this section, just as in section 1, I am only exploring the process by which human *souls* progress in beauty. Bonaventure does not discuss the body's participation in this noetic journey in the *Hexaemeron*, and therefore I will have to consider the question of bodily participation more constructively in chapter three. There I will show how the refusal of body and soul to work together as a beautiful whole leaves the person fractured and unformed, leading to the dimming of creation and of the self's own disparate parts.

2.1. The First Vision: the Light of Natural Reason (Collations 4-7)

"*God saw that the light was good. God separated the light from the darkness, etc*."[67] So begins Bonaventure's first vision, which explores natural reason as the soul's first light—a divine gift to be opened up to the even richer light of faith received through the vision of creation week's second day.[68] Natural reason, for Bonaventure, is the capacity for truth shared by all human beings regardless of their spiritual commitment: "The passage, *God*

[66] *Hex*. 3.28.
[67] *Hex*. 4.1, 5.1, 6.1, 7.1. Bonaventure introduces each of his four visions or days with its corresponding biblical text.
[68] For Bonaventure, natural reason is a divine gift, but it is only a remnant of the knowledge human beings had before the fall. William Crozier argues that for this reason, one could also see natural reason as a punishment for sin.

saw the light, is quoted on account of the first vision of the intelligence, which is infused by nature. It means that God has made it possible to see." At the beginning of the soul's journey to Wisdom, God "turns the lights on" interiorly, as it were, in the same way God's spoken light initiated the world's becoming at the dawn of time.

Bonaventure sees natural reason radiating forth from God in three ways: first, in the truth of things themselves (rational knowledge), second, in the "truth of signs or words" (natural or essential knowledge), and finally through the "truth of behavior (moral knowledge).[69] "Philosophers" who rely solely on natural reason can observe these three radiations in Aristotle's efficient, formal and final causes, which lift the soul up "to eternal matters and also to the cause of all."[70] But in Bonaventure's view, although Aristotle's followers acknowledge truth's trinitarian shape, their denial of an expressing Exemplar has prevented them from recognizing the divine nature from which this shape is derived and the metaphysical journey into which it invites rational creatures.[71] In order to "see" this, the gift of faith is needed: "If the spice of faith is added," Bonaventure argues, "things become easier: the cause of being is... attributed to the Father, the reason of understanding to the Son, and the norm of life to the Holy Spirit.[72]

The failure of the "faithless" Averroists to see this has devastating consequences in Bonaventure's view: what was once an interior light becomes dark, abandoning the self to entropy. Having acknowledged that "the philosophers" could perceive the beginning and end of Wisdom through the light of natural reason, Bonaventure asks how such souls could still have fallen away: "But why have some of them followed darkness? Because of this:

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[69] *Hex*. 4.2-3. Bonaventure appears to be importing this delineation of natural reason from his *De reductione atrium ad theolgiam*, which includes nine further distinctions gestured toward in Hex. 4.1 and throughout collation 5. *See De red. art.* 4.

[70] Bonaventure doesn't mention Aristotle's fourth, material cause at all. He again wants to operate in triads in order to show the trinitarian scope of revealed truth.

Plato, Plotinus, Tullius and especially Aristotle are the "philosophers" Bonaventure criticizes by name. Scholarship has tended to focus only on Bonaventure's critique of Aristotle, which is understandable, but it can lead one to assume that Bonaventure has a particular vendetta against Aristotle, while really he wants to emphasize the subservience of all pagan philosophers to the authority of Christian revelation. Bonaventure does indeed speak more harshly of Aristotle (or rather, of Aristotle's followers in Paris), but this, I think, is because Aristotle was more threatening during Bonaventure's lifetime, whereas Plato had a safe, long-established reception through Augustine. Bonaventure himself is very clearly indebted to Aristotle, as we will see in chapter three especially.

[71] In Bonaventure's view, the Averroists deny the divine Word who expresses the shape of Trinitarian life and of creation's soteriological journey. This shape is denied in the three errors of the Averroists, which, incidentally, seem to correspond to the Trinitarian Persons: By denying creation, the originating Source of all things is ignored. By proposing a unified agent intellect, the exemplary Word is denied, and by denying eternal reward and punishment (the "end" of all things), the Spirit is rejected.

[72] *Hex*. 4.5.

although all could see the first cause as the universal principle and universal end, they had different opinions concerning the *means*" [emphasis added]. It was through ignorance concerning the Word that "these men... fell into error and were not separated from darkness.[73] "The philosophers" failed to see natural reason as an aspect of divine revelation illumining the intelligible structure of reality contained within the Word. As a result, Bonaventure explains, "the philosophers" were not able to edge beyond the constraints of natural reason and thus were not "separated from darkness" to progress toward the second day of creation week (in other words, they failed to become). Bonaventure's seventh collation attributes both light and darkness to the philosophers, calling those who "presupposed the existence of ideas" (forms or universals) "enlightened," since they were able to secure the cardinal virtues and enjoy "happiness as such." But because the philosophers failed to posit the ideas in the unity of the divine Mind, Bonaventure explains, "these men lived in darkness. ...[For] they did not have the light of faith."[74]

The aesthetics of this failure becomes even more evident as Bonaventure continues his discussion on the relationship between natural reason and the four cardinal virtues. In collation six, Bonaventure describes virtue as the power of life in the soul, saying that the "sun of wisdom" radiates

> over the hemisphere of our mind and passing on, ordains our life through... the virtues. ...Whatever other sciences a man may possess, if he have no virtue, neither does he have life... These virtues flow from eternal light in the hemisphere of our mind and they retrace the soul to its origin, as the vertical or direct ray also returns by that same path by which it had come down. And such is blessedness."[75]

Bonaventure argues that this reduction was accomplished, at least on a superficial level, by "the philosophers."[76] But a quote from Augustine helps him qualify his affirmation significantly: "A virtue is not true unless it directs the intention toward God the Fountainhead."[77] Virtue isn't virtue if it ceases to be the child of Wisdom. And this, Bonaventure insists, is exactly what occurs when natural reason closes its virtue off from the light of faith. Virtues are only "true" if they heal and lead pilgrim souls to God, but "no one is healed unless he knows his disease, its cause, a physician, and the proper

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[73] *Hex*. 6.5.
[74] *Hex*. 7.3.
[75] *Hex*. 6.19, 24.
[76] *Hex.* 5.33.
[77] *Hex.* 7.5.

medicine."[78] In Bonaventure's view, only faith in the divine Exemplar makes natural virtue efficacious, since faith banishes "obscurities" and "indicates the disease, its cause, Physician, and medicine."[79] Faith does this by making virtue fruitful in the soul of the believer, so that virtue expands beyond its natural boundaries through the vision of virtue's form (Love) within the divine Exemplar. The theological virtues of faith, hope and love deepen reason's experience of the four cardinal virtues, turning them into lenses through which the soul may gaze ever more deeply on the Light of God. Through the faith-infused virtue of prudence, souls begin to perceive God's Mind, through temperance the fact that this Mind "is turned upon itself by a perpetual intention," through fortitude, "the fact that it is always the same and is never changed in anything whatsoever," through justice, "the fact that by an eternal law, [this Mind] is not deflected from the continuation of its sempiternal operation."[80] Thus Bonaventure likens faith, hope and love-saturated prudence, temperance, fortitude and justice to virtues with "clothes" on, shining forth the truth of God's own Beauty. Illumined by the theological virtues, the cardinal virtues become an "*armor of light*" blazing in the darkness and adorning all those who journey toward the full light of day.[81]

But the rejection of faith and its fruitfulness is a deathblow to creaturely becoming. Closed in on itself, natural virtue becomes stale and stagnant, no longer acting as the soul's life by bearing it forth toward Wisdom. And Bonaventure is clear that "when a being falls into nothingness, it ceases to be," just as "when it comes to be from nothingness, it begins to be."[82] Bonaventure uses several analogies to express this spiritual truth. At the beginning of his fifth collation, Bonaventure asserts that Moses learned to progress in Wisdom so as not to lose his humanity, and he invites his hearers to join Moses on the mountain of contemplation so that they "may act with propriety and industry, and not as... beast[s], for... beast[s] cannot go up into the Mountain: a beast that touches the Mountain must be stoned.[83] Bonaventure compares "the philosophers" to beasts again when he laments that without the light of faith, they had "wings of ostriches" which allowed them to flap about but never leave the ground.[84] One gets the image of a person walking cyclically to consider

[78]*Hex*. 7.8.
[79]*Hex*. 7.13.
[80]*Hex*. 6.32.
[81]*Hex*.7.15.
[82]*Hex*. 4.13.
[83]*Hex*. 5.1. Cf. 13.7, which likens the philosophers to "jackals" that have made Mount Sion "desolate."
[84]A footnote in Jose de Vinck's English translation of the text explains that wings enable ostriches to balance

Wisdom's origin and end, but never spiraling upward to the grace of created wisdom through an actual flight to uncreated Wisdom. Indeed, Bonaventure argues that by denying the Exemplar of the virtues, the philosophers invented strange cyclical errors such as the transmigration of souls (reincarnation or continual repetition of this earthly life).

Human beings who fail to "become" are described with increasing barrenness as Bonaventure's text progresses. Infused with the three theological virtues, the four cardinal virtues become as "the seven loaves of the gospel, from which the whole body of the elect is fed." But "for the philosophers, these four virtues became stones," even though there were "actually seven breads of life... made out of the fat of... wheat."[85] Those virtues which were in theory possible without faith in an Exemplary Cause dried up like sterile and unyielding stones, where four could have multiplied to the perfection of seven.[86] But brought to life by the theological virtues, the totality of virtue rises "up to a series of seven symbolized by the seven stars, the seven women, and the seven loaves of the gospel: and this, in so far as they are resplendent, fecund and strengthening. Their luminosity is represented by the seven stars."[87] This theme of fruitfulness in the lives of pilgrim souls deepens as the next three visions proceed, paralleling the creature's growing ability to see creation truthfully in God.

2.2. The Second Vision: the Light of Faith (Collations 8-12)

Bonaventure's second vision includes four main sections spanning five collations: In collation eight, Bonaventure first explains how the light of faith is revealed in the Scriptural account of creation week's second day: "*God called the firmament heaven. And there was evening and morning, the second day.*"[88] Having offered his interpretation of this passage, Bonaventure next outlines the three "objects" of faith by which human understanding is "lifted up": faith's loftiness, its stability, and its visibility, clarity, or beauty. In discussing faith's loftiness (the majority of collation eight), Bonaventure presents the scope of faith's concern, which is both the Trinity (faith's "height"), and also

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and walk, but not to fly upward.

[85] *Hex*. 119.

[86] This again brings to mind the image seen in section I.1 above, where Bonaventure complained that philosophers built wasps nests devoid of honey.

[87] *Hex*. 118.

[88] *Hex*. 8.1.

the entirety of God's created realm into which the Incarnate Word descended (faith's "depth). In his discussion of faith's stability (collation nine), Bonaventure considers how faith can be "certain" about those truths it has beheld in faith's loftiness. Turning finally to the question of faith's clarity or beauty (collations ten through twelve), Bonaventure examines the specific theological articles adopted by persons of faith as a result of their certainty, likening these doctrines to luminous stars adorning the heavens ("heavens" being the firmament of faith in the knowing mind). In what follows, I will explore the process by which these starlike epiphanies of revealed truth come to manifest themselves in faithful souls, flooding them "with a manifold light."[89] Through the progression outlined in this second vision**,** Bonaventure seems to be saying that faith-filled souls themselves become lofty, stable and visible by being filled with the loftiness, stability, and visibility of divine Truth. As Bonaventure says, "faith makes the soul... visible, because it displays its multiformed light."[90]

2.2.1 The Firmament of Faith (Collation 8)

In this first section of his collations on the second day, Bonaventure emphasizes the fact that God is said not just to "see" the firmament, but to "call" it.[91] This is important, Bonaventure explains, because creaturely "faith consists more precisely in the confession of truth than in the communication of light... therefore in a certain sense faith sees, and in another it does not see. The merit of faith is founded on non-seeing, the light of faith on believing."[92] In Bonaventure's view, the believing soul interiorizes faith's light not because it "sees" truth with the light of reason, but because God declares it. Faith's light consists of the trust it practices in darkness. Bonaventure is quick to recognize and make use of this paradox, explaining that, as the "substance of things hoped for" and the "evidence of things unseen," faith has within it "both light and clouds." "Many possess it... without knowing it, for the face of faith is covered." Though an effulgence of clarity, faith "wears a kind of dark veil."[93] The dark light of faith is available to creatures because God "sees" its object—

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[89]Speaking of these souls, Bonaventure says that "*the wise... shine brightly like the splendor of the firmament" Hex.* 8.2.
[90]*Hex*. 8.2. The meaning of this will be explained under 2.2.4 below.
[91]*Hex*. 8.1. "*God called the firmament heaven. And there was evening and morning, the second day*"
[92]*Hex*. 8.3.
[93]*Hex*. 8.3.

God knows Godself and freely offers that knowledge to creatures, even when they cannot perceive the gift's substance.

2.2.2. Faith's Loftiness (Collation 8)

We now turn to "faith's loftiness" in order to consider how God makes the Light of God known, begetting certainty and the beauty of faith's articles in human souls. As already noted above, Bonaventure makes two distinctions when considering the scope of faith's reach: "The height of faith consists in understanding the eternal God, its depth in knowing God made man."[94] Placing the firmament of faith "*in the midst of the waters*," Bonaventure wants to show that faith illumines "those things that are above the firmament [God] and those that are below it" (creatures).[95] The truth of Divinity is expressed in God's eternity, but the truth of creatures is expressed in "God made man."

The faithful soul's ascent to the luminous darkness of God's expressive Word is depicted by Bonaventure as a kind of responsive speech uttered with the wonder and awe of Isaiah's seraphic vision in which the prophet sees "*the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne.*"[96] God's self-revelation causes the seraphim to cry "holy, holy, holy," and for Bonaventure this cry is the voice of the faith-enlightened creature gazing upon the entire scope of reality expressed in the Word's simplicity: "Wherefore Isaiah says I saw, that is, through the vision of understanding lifted up by faith and stabilized in the height of eternal wisdom... our intellect enlightened by faith cries out three times: Holy, holy, holy."[97]

Bonaventure explains that this "faith makes the soul seraphic... and makes the mind winged with six wings," showing that faith enables souls to ascend to what they behold.[98] But then Bonaventure reveals that there are actually two seraphim crying out in faithful souls, each uttering a distinct unity of three "holys": the first seraph *exclaims* the *heights* of faith's scope (God's eternity), and the second *answers* by declaring the *depths* of the incarnate Word (and, it follows, all created things encompassed by the human nature of

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[94] *Hex*. 8.5.
[95] *Hex*. 8.5.
[96] *Hex*. 8.7.
[97] *Hex*. 8.8-9.
[98] We'll recall here how, by contrast, "the philosophers" were like ostriches, unable to fly upward because of their denial of the exemplary Word and the resulting sterility of their virtue.
It is hard to miss the link between this image and Bonaventure's earlier use of it in his more popular *Itinerarium*, which sees the six seraphic wings as stages of the soul's noetic ascent.

Christ): "The other Seraph answers *Holy, holy, holy*, for as in the eternal God there are trinity of Persons and oneness of essence, so also in God made man there are trinity of natures [*tres naturae*] and unity of Person... the holy Christ has a holy body, the holy Christ has a holy soul, the holy Christ has a holy divinity. He is holy without, holy within, and holy above."[99]

Bonaventure introduces further distinctions by dividing each set of six wings into sets of three. In the seraph representing God's eternity Bonaventure sees the Trinitarian Persons in one set of three wings, and in the other he sees the Trinity's self-diffusion in creatures.[100] In the union of these complimentary wing sets, Bonaventure discerns a portrait of how creatures emerge from and return to God: in creation, humans receive their essence, through sanctification they receive grace (power), and through "retribution" they receive the glory or damnation that is due them (operation). But Bonaventure leaves it to the second seraph, representing the incarnate Word, to explain *how* the creatures emerging from the second set of wings reduce back to the uncreated Trinity of the first set. In that second seraph, Bonaventure sees six key Christological tenets lined up in descending and ascending order: descending down one side there is incarnation, crucifixion, and Christ's journey into hell, and rising up the other side are the three movements of resurrection: ascent "out of hell into the world..., out of the world to heaven," and finally a full ascent to glory at the second advent "so that there be a rising out of the Church Militant into the Church Triumphant."[101] These six movements in the life of Christ once again seem to express the Word's metaphysical journey (emanation and return), leaving Exemplarity as the reality by which creatures may be drawn, through the Incarnation, back up to the First Principle. It is in Christ that the return to God alluded to in the first seraph's pairs of wings occurs within the speech of the faithful who cry "Holy, holy, holy." And the ascent of creatures from below (represented in the incarnate Word) to above (the eternal Word's expression of the Trinity) occurs through the firmament of faith mediating between reality's depth and height. Here we see that the soul's faithful response to God's Speech occurs as its knowledge is carried back to the whole, uncreated Word. The soul "speaks"

[99]The editors of the Quaracchi critical text here trace Bonaventure's curious introduction of three natures to Bernard of Clairvaux, V. *de onsiderat*. c. 9. n. 20. Bonaventure's "*natura*" appears to be the same word as was used in the Latin translation of the Greek Chalcedonian Definition when describing the two natures of Christ. See Bonaventure, *Opera Omnia* tome V, 370.

[100] Because they have essence, power and operation.

[101]*Hex*. 8.16.

what it hears darkly—what it knows but cannot not comprehend, and it is through this faithful activity that the soul also begins speaking forth its own existence. Here the theme of fruitfulness reemerges in the context of Bonaventure's second vision.

2.2.3. Faith's Stability (Collation Nine)

We turn now briefly to the question of faith's stability or certainty before taking up faith's visibility, clarity, or beauty. In Bonaventure's view, as was already alluded to in his discussion of loftiness, faith is confirmed and made certain through God's own self-witness in the Uncreated, Incarnate, and Inspired Word. Bonaventure explains that it is through the Inspired Word (the message of the Holy Spirit) that the testimonies of the Uncreated and Incarnate Word are heard. Bonaventure traces the various manifestations of this witness, drawing largely from the lives of faithful men and women throughout history. The significance of all this is seen toward the end of the ninth collation, where Bonaventure explores how God "stabilizes" recipients of God's self-witness, presumably turning them, also into vessels of the Inspired Word. Receiving God's self-witness, a "threefold flow" of light emerges in the soul, "through which it is steadied in God," and its third flow (after virtue and truth), is that of love, which is "the highest point of faith."[102] The "inebriation" of love is what makes "faith most secure," a point Bonaventure makes by referencing the story of the Syrophoenician woman, in which inebriation occurs through a spirit of deep humility and trust.[103] Love, faith's maturity, "is at its highest when the burning soul feels that the Lord makes it taste the children's bread," and this is the certainty by which faith is stabilized interiorly.[104]

2.2.4. Faith's Visibility (Collations 10-12)

In this third and longest section of the second vision, Bonaventure comes finally to the question of faith's beauty, and here human participation in divine generation becomes the dominant motif. The soul that has beheld faith's loftiness with certainty is said to generate twelve "thoughts" or "objects of faith" (the theological articles indicated above), which

[102] *Hex*. 9.27, 29.
[103] Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7-24-30.
[104] *Hex*. 9.29.

Bonaventure divides into four classifications containing three doctrines each: pre-existent truth, efficient truth, restoring truth, and perfecting truth. From first to last, these "thoughts" hold that God is the soul's first consideration, that God is a Triune Unity, and that God is Exemplar (pre-existent truth), that God is Creator, the One who gives form to the soul, and the One who brings it to life (efficient truth), that God is incarnate, that God was crucified in Christ, and that God was raised in Christ (restoring truth), and that God is the soul's remedy, that God has established the Church, and that God will ultimately bring about each soul's punishment or reward (perfecting truth). While Bonaventure's first desire in this section is to affirm that souls accepting God's self-witness somehow come to understand (mysteriously) that which they have already chosen to accept, the order set forth in these twelve thoughts is also significant, as it once again reveals the shape of the journey to God. And knowledge of this shape in itself is evidence, for Bonaventure, of God's fruitful work within the soul. Bonaventure explains that Abraham was physically fruitful, but "all the more so would his spiritual begetting be fruitful: for he begot spiritually through his fruitful mind. Now, the great number of thoughts arising out of faith transcend in clarity the light of the stars."[105] Though the "stars are countless," they exist in twelve clusters (the twelve thoughts), and they are also like the "clarity of pearls," which are "bright, vivifying and joyful." The twelve thoughts, then, adorn the faith-filled mind as the stars adorn the firmament. And it is for this reason, Bonaventure says, that heaven is called "*caelum*, because engraved (*caelatum*), that is, sculptured with stars."[106] The interior presence of these twelve thoughts, Bonaventure explains, is the "way that men enter into contemplation, ...[for no one can] attain the visions of the Apocalypse [behold the fulfillment of creation and come to rest] unless he understands such things as these." Here Bonaventure introduces the biblical text that will preface the last two collations on faith's visibility (eleven and twelve). Lifted up by faith, Bonaventure says, souls are "*transformed... from glory to glory*, and this *with faces unveiled*, so that in a sense [they] are made to become similar to the twelve stars and to the twelve pearls."[107] The beauty of the soul's adornment (its ability to contemplate the whole scope of the world's journey to God) is simultaneously its own gradual transformation, making it like the beautiful truth it

[105]Here Bonaventure cites God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 15:5: "*Look at the heavens and, if you can, count the stars... so shall your posterity be*" *Hex*. 10.1.
[106]*Hex*. 10.1. Latin provided here by the text translator.
[107]*Hex*. 10.3.

declares in response to God's beckoning Word.

The rest of Bonaventure's meditation on the second vision considers only the first three of these twelve begotten thoughts, namely those related to pre-existent truth: God as first consideration, God as Three and One, and God as Exemplar. While Bonaventure seizes the chance here to offer some fairly sophisticated Christological and Trinitarian reflections (no doubt in response to his Averroist opponents), Bonaventure also shows how a deep awareness of pre-existent truth initiates the world's journey to God in the mind of the human knower. It is this understanding, as I have already shown, that leads the soul from "glory to glory" (or from light to light), as is emphasized through the recurring text of 2 Corinthians 2:18. As Bonaventure explains toward the end of his meditation on the "thought" of the Exemplary Word, when a soul sees the darkness and opacity of creatures, that soul

> should go through them from shadow to light, from the way to the end, from the trace to truth, from the book to veritable knowledge which is in God. To read this book is the privilege of the highest contemplatives, not of natural philosophers: for the former alone know the essence of things, and do not consider them only as traces.[108]

This contemplation is the gift of faith, and it locates the multiplicity of creatures within the whole unity of divine Speech uttered within the self, which in turn brings the self's own created beauty to birth.

2.3. The Third Vision: The Light of Scripture (Collations 13-19)

Turning to the soul's third vision, Bonaventure attempts to show how natural reason illumined by faith ascends to even greater heights by immersing itself in the many-layered fruitfulness of scripture. It is through the inward germination of Scripture's manifold spiritual meanings that pilgrim souls arrive at contemplation on the fourth day. The theme of fruitful generation in the *Hexaemeron* is at its richest in this set of collations.

Bonaventure begins his exposition, as usual, with the properly corresponding Genesis text:

> "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place and let the dry land appear." And so it was. God called the dry land Earth and the assembled waters Seas.

[108] *Hex*. 12.15.

> And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth vegetation: seed-bearing plants and all kinds of fruit trees that bear fruit containing their seed," etc.[109]

Bonaventure assigns interpretive significance to each of the three movements in this text: In the gathering of waters, Bonaventure sees a depiction of how Scripture's three spiritual meanings flow to the infinite depth of God, which only Wisdom can penetrate.[110] In the emergence of vegetation, Bonaventure sees the sacramental symbols of Scripture's literal meaning represented, and in seed-bearing fruit, the many possible layers of interpretation one may encounter through Scripture's sacramental meanings, leading back to the depths of God from whom they first emerged.[111] Just as we saw virtue and truth multiplying fruitfully in Bonaventure's previous two visions, so now do we see how the fructifying influence of Scripture in the soul gives birth to a multitude of meanings, all reducing to a simple unity of uncreated Truth perceived as creatures advance in contemplation:[112]

> Who can know the infinity of seeds, when in a single one are contained forests of forests and thence seeds in infinite number? Likewise, out of Scriptures may be drawn an infinite number of interpretations which none but God can comprehend. For as new seeds come forth from plants, so also from Scriptures come forth new interpretations and new meanings, and thereby are Sacred Scriptures distinct (from everything else). Hence, in relation to the interpretations yet to be drawn, we may compare to a single drop from the sea all those that have been drawn so far.[113]

Bonaventure defends his decision to symbolize the heights of Scripture with the lowness of the earth and its vegetation by invoking the language of masculine begetting and feminine receptivity so common throughout Bonaventure's writing. The relationship between Scripture and the earth in the Genesis text, Bonaventure writes, "is excellently pointed out: for whatever the heavens contain in any measure of excellence, the earth holds or receives or possesses in some measure of liveliness. Wherefore it receives the influences of heaven

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[109] *Hex*. 13.1.
[110] *Hex*. 13.5.
[111] C. Colt Anderson identifies the sacramental symbols as "simply the people, places, things and events recorded in scripture." See *A Call to Piety: Saint Bonaventure's Collations on the Six Days*. (Quincy: Franciscan Press, 2002), 133.
[112] Drawing on Isaiah 11:9, Bonaventure describes contemplation in this vision as the flooding of the "sea" of God all over the earth: "The earth shall be filled with knowledge of the Lord, as water covers the sea... There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain" (*Hex*. 13.6). The mountain, Bonaventure explains, is the "contemplative Church," from which the "monsters of heresy shall flee on account of the proper use of wisdom."
[113] *Hex*. 13.2.

and brings forth the most beautiful swarms of beings."[114] Bonaventure's analogy speaks not only to how God's self-revelation is begotten and brought to birth in the expressive womb of Scripture, but perhaps also to the seed-like power of Scripture itself as it penetrates the womb-like understanding of the human knower. Indeed, this latter truth soon comes to dominate Bonaventure's vision, as we shall see shortly.

We turn now to the movements of sea and rivers, vegetation, and seed to see how each gives birth to the next in Bonaventure's account. Introducing the first movement, Bonaventure explains that the "waters of the sea" parallel the "totality of [Scripture's] spiritual meanings." As the rivers join the sea, so do these three meanings (allegory, anagogy and tropology) empty into the sea. And this sea, as the "totality" of truth, is only searched by Wisdom, the second Person of the Trinity, pointing to the Word as that reality alone who can penetrate the depths of the Father.[115] Any creature who would approach God's infinite nature must take "as support the wood of the cross: for anyone who seeks to enter the sea of Scriptures without this wood is submerged, for he sinks into the greatest errors..., [but] by faith in the cross, Peter walked on the sea."[116] Bonaventure is saying here that any person who would approach God's depths must do so through the Incarnate Word by whom alone humanity can be drawn into divinity. "This is what incarnate Wisdom says," Bonaventure writes,

> *I dwelt in the highest heavens*, in the creation; *My throne is in a pillar of cloud*, in the incarnation; *I have walked in the waves of the sea*, in the passion; *I have penetrated into the bottom of the deep*, in the penetration of Scriptures, for after He arose, *He opened their minds, that they might understand the Scriptures*. By faith in the cross, Peter walked on the sea.

It is the totality of Christ's existence as incarnate Word that enables him to lift up human understanding, symbolized here by Peter's walking on the sea. It is as if Christ himself is "seeded" in the understanding of believers at this level of vision; through union with Christ, the maturing believer is drawn evermore deeply into the dynamic relationship created truth has with its expressive Word, so that the knowing of the knower becomes a kind of participation in the Word's own speaking, as we also saw happening in Bonaventure's second vision.

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[114] *Hex*. 13.1.
[115] *Hex*. 13.5.
[116] *Hex*. 13.5.

For Bonaventure, this participation transforms the believer, enabling her to speak herself within the Word. The rivers are "meanings" (spiritual interpretations) of the sea, but so, says Bonaventure, are those who know by them: "The spiritual meanings are called rivers—and also those men who understand in a spiritual manner because they have their origin from the Scripture and are confirmed by the Scriptures."[117] This moving symbolism expands as the text proceeds, as water evolves into light and finally into speech. It is as though souls returning to the deep sea of God are coming to life by coming to light, a life that is the Word's speech echoing in the creature's own voice. Bonaventure's fourteenth collation offers a detailed examination of how Scripture has grown, through its various phases and six ages, into the full fruition of New Testament truth.[118] This is previewed through a succinct summary offered in the thirteenth collation:

> *The little fountain grew into a river, and was turned into a light, and into the sun, and abounded into many waters.* Scripture was a *little fountain* at the time of the giving of the Law, for the book containing the commandments of the Law is small; but later it grew into an immense river in the books of Josue, Judges, Kings, Esdras, Judith, Tobias, Esther and the Maccabees. Then it was *turned into light*, that is the light of the Prophets, for prophecy is light; then again, into the sun, that is, in the Gospels.[119]

The Gospels here are presented as the radiant blossoming of water into fire—as sun blazing the fulness of divine revelation, drawing God's children in Scripture toward their own increasingly luminous fulfillment within the revealed Word, the great Source and Center of all created light-forms.

Having made full use of this analogy, Bonaventure plunges once more into the metaphor of water and its unity. The interpretations (the three spiritual plus the literal) are likened to Ezekiel's wheels within wheels: "*The appearance of the wheels and the work of them was like the appearance of the sea*," and the sound of their wings was "*like the roaring of mighty waters, like the voice of the Almighty.*"[120] The roaring of Scripture's multiform spoken meanings, or the speaking of creatures themselves, occurs as and within the very speaking of God—the activity and movement of God's own begotten and begetting voice (the Word). "The sound of their wings is heard when... minds are

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[117]*Hex.* 13.4.
[118]We saw the same thing happening to Scripture's luminosity as it brightened from allegory (faith) to anagogy (hope) and finally to tropology (love) in the souls of the faithful.
[119]*Hex*. 13.8.
[120]*Hex*. 13.9.

prompted; and the voice of the Almighty rings out because all things are from God."[121] Bonaventure is saying here that the illumined mind can hear the totality of God's Expression speaking through the multiplicity of Scripture's meanings. Bonaventure then goes on to identify this multiplicity as the means of the knowing creature's own spiritual reduction. He explains that multiformity is what distinguishes theology from other sciences, which are defined by creaturely speech and thus only have literal meanings (we could say that they exist as single, created words emanating from the Word's simplicity): "But God is the cause of the soul and of language which is formed by the soul, and also of the things with which language is concerned."[122] In Bonaventure's view, Scripture's literal meaning seems to correspond to the human knower herself, while the three spiritual meanings symbolize God's Self-expression within that knower, or rather, God's way of holding the self-expression of the creature within the divine Word:

> For God manifests Himself in every creature in a threefold manner... and every creature represents God, who is Trinity, and shows the way to Him. And because the way to God is through faith, hope, and love, every creature is a suggestion of what we should believe, expect, and do. And parallel to this, there is a threefold spiritual meaning: the allegorical concerning what we should believe, the anagogical concerning what we should expect, and the moral concerning what we should do, for love leads to action.[123]

Through the directive force of these three meanings at work within the knower himself (who is the literal meaning), the sea might now even stand, in a more limited way, as an analogy for the human knower who receives truth ecstatically in accordance with its shape in God, and who thus has come to share in God's likeness. As God's unity generates threeness, so might the creature symbolized in Scripture's literal interpretation share in the generative beauty of Scripture's three spiritual meanings:

> These four [interpretations] are like the appearance of the sea because of the primitive origination, the most profound depth, and the abundantly flowing multiformity of the spiritual meanings. And so, as there are three Persons within the single Essence, there are three meanings beneath the single surface of the letter.[124]

But for Bonaventure, the creature receiving Scripture's three-fold witness has also become

[121] *Hex*. 13.9.
[122] *Hex*. 13.10.
[123] *Hex*. 13.11.
[124] *Hex*. 13.11.

the object of God's self-expression, in a way even richer than what we saw happening throughout Bonaventure's second vision. The depth of God's own Trinitarian Unity is expressed within the unity of the individual creature who has substance, power, and operation—who believes (has faith), expects (hopes), and acts (loves), and who, by being "beautiful" in this way, is able to speak God outward through the fruitful "seed" of Scripture's manifold interpretations.

2.4. The Fourth Vision: The Light of Contemplation (Collations 20-23)

Bonaventure's use of light imagery climaxes in his fourth and final vision, where the sun, moon and stars emerge on the fourth day of creation:[125]

> *And God said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate day from night; let them serve as signs and for the fixing of seasons, days and years... God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day and the smaller one to rule the night, and He made the stars.God set them in the firmament of the heavens to shed light upon the earth... God saw that it was good. And there was evening and morning, the fourth day.*[126]

Bonaventure's final vision in his uncompleted schema is concerned with the "understanding suspended through contemplation," and in his view, three different lights can be observed illumining the souls of true contemplatives: the sun symbolizes the heavenly hierarchy (God and angels) which gives its light to the moon of the Church and to the "stars" (individual souls) adorning the ecclesiastical hierarchy.[127] The soul's consideration of this cascading flow of light is the means by which it comes to participate in what it observers; the soul's own "hierarchization" rests in its vision of the whole panoply of ordered reality:

> On the fourth day, God made the sun and the moon and the stars, wherefore this vision is principally concerned with three things: the splendid consideration of the heavenly hierarchy; the splendid consideration of the Church militant; the splendid consideration of the hierarchized human mind. For unless (the soul) beholds the monarch from above and sees at the same time the descent from it of the Church Militant, together with its hierarchical adornment, it will never be contemplative. But

[125] Had Bonaventure finished his collations before dying, rapture and glory (the seventh day) would have been the final climax.
[126] *Hex*. 20.1.
[127] *Hex*. 20.3.

if it does, it will have light—from the sun, the moon and the stars.[128]

While sophisticated Dionysian details concerning hierarchy permeate the four collations making up this last vision, for our purposes it is enough to observe how all the layers of reality (divine, angelic and ecclesiastical) work together as a harmonious whole to bring about creation's beauty. For Bonaventure, the beauty of particular creatures rests in their ability, as parts of this whole, to help bring other creatures into the whole as well. This activity, it seems, is the soul's participation in divine, generative Beauty. Having just led his readers to consider contemplation as a vision of the whole, Bonaventure then describes contemplation as a vision of God's fecundity, which begets and brings all the parts of creation to birth within the redeemed whole:

> ...In eternal wisdom there is a principle of fecundity tending to the conceiving, the bearing and the bringing forth of everything that pertains to the universality of the laws. For all the exemplary reasons are conceived from all eternity in the womb or uterus of eternal wisdom. [This is true] most of all [of the exemplary reason] of predestination. And so, because [the heavenly Hierarchy] conceived the principles of predestination from all eternity, it cannot fail to love us. And as it conceived them from all eternity, so also it produced [them] or bore [them] in time, and later, gave birth [to them] by suffering in the flesh. And the intelligence is able to understand this and in so doing, it has attained the highest contemplation.[129]

For Bonaventure, the soul's vision of creation's preordained destiny in God is its highest grasp of truth. The emphasis is on the vision of God, but the vision seen is a God who loves and has chosen to exist for all creaturely instantiations of the exemplary reasons or divine ideas by conceiving their destiny and giving birth to its fulfillment through the humility of incarnation and death.

This fruitful work of the Word is what cascades down through the hierarchical levels of creation in Bonaventure's forth vision, cycling creatures back up to the Trinitarian sun that emanated them forth. And contemplation of this reality is the soul's fruitful act, begetting an interior vision of creation's destiny in God which, as Francis will demonstrate in chapter five, faithful souls begin to mediate in practical ways. Contemplation turns to concrete action as the soul shares with Christ in creation's redemption, and this is the means by which the soul itself is "hierarchized" and made beautiful—by being a fruitful part of creation's harmonious whole, participating in the movement of things back up to

[128] *Hex*. 20.3.
[129] *Hex*. 20.5. Brackets belong to the translator.

their luminous Origin, and in the process, also coming to "light":

> The contemplative soul is represented by a woman [because a woman is fruitful], and contemplative souls are called the daughters of Jerusalem [the Church], because they are beautiful and fruitful. And beauty is fruitfulness, for the more light they conceive, the more beautiful they are.[130]

Bonaventure emphasizes the beautifying potential of contemplating the "whole" by remembering the experience of Benedict, whose contemplation of creatures facilitated his own interior expansion. As the light of the limited, creaturely whole opened up to its limitless Source, so did Benedict's own soul open ecstatically to receive the vision:

> As the rising sun is clear to all, so the glory of the Lord shines upon all His works. [As] Gregory writes: "How is it that they do not see, who see the One who sees all?" The soul of blessed Benedict was truly contemplative, for he saw the whole world in a single sunray. ...As Gregory explains, the world was not narrowed to a single sunray, but his soul was expanded, for he saw all things in the One in relation to whom all creatures are narrow and small and limited in extent.[131]

But without this interior expansion (the growth of created wisdom), the soul shrinks to nothingness, as we have already seen occurring in the previous three visions:

> Consider what the world would have been, had there been no sun, moon or stars in the firmament. It would have been nothing but a kind of dark mass, for even with the light of the stars, the night is dark and horrible. It is the same with the soul: one deprived of the grace of contemplation is like a firmament without lights... A man who lacks [these lights] is beast-like, with his face bent down to the earth, like an animal, but the man full of lights is fully angelic.[132]

By setting out to reach Wisdom, from Wisdom, by the light of that Wisdom who bears the truth and unity of all things, the soul itself becomes luminous and beautiful in the realization of its own created potential.

3. The Soul's Journey: A Summary

In this chapter, I have traced the Christological ground and key aesthetic features of the soul's journey to God throughout Bonaventure's most mature soteriological text. In part

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[130] *Hex*. 20.
[131] *Hex*. 20.7.
[132] *Hex*. 20.2.

one, I examined Wisdom as the Beginning and End of the soul's journey, while in part two I looked more closely at the way of Wisdom itself, which Bonaventure traces through the six days of creation paralleling the soul's own "coming to be."

Exploring Bonaventure's first day or "vision," I showed how, according to Bonaventure, the light of natural reason stagnates if not expanded by the light of faith bearing witness to the Exemplary Word. Natural virtues become sterile and closed in, and rational souls fade to dimness and non-being by not participating in God's Self-expression.

This faith was the object of Bonaventure's second vision, where he described faith's "loftiness," "stability," and "clarity." "Loftiness" concerned both the "heights" and "depths" of faith's divine Object: the Trinity and the Incarnation. Bonaventure explored the intersection of these two realities through the image of twin seraphim, one answering the other and thus reducing creation back to the Trinity through the Incarnation. Faith, Bonaventure demonstrated, is able to comprehend the shape of this journey because of its openness to the theological truths of both seraphim.

The section on faith's stability showed how the light of faith increases through the witness of others, maturing into love, while the long section on faith's beauty showed how the knowledge of particular theological articles concerning the Word as pre-existent, efficient, restoring and perfecting Truth manifest as star-like heavenly jewels adorning the souls of the faithful, turning them into radiant bursts of revelatory truth as well. Of particular interest to Bonaventure were those articles concerning God as Exemplar or divine self-expression. Souls who learn to see creatures as signs of divine Expression, Bonaventure explained, are transformed "from glory to glory" (2 Corinthians 2:18), or from light to yet still greater light.

This light burst wide open in Bonaventure's third vision, where we saw the seed of Scripture blossoming into manifold interpretations all reducing back to God's simplicity, again bringing to mind Bonaventure's aesthetics of harmonious parts, which, as we saw in chapter one, can be seen in divine simplicity when a multiplicity of essences is not implied. The Word alone, Bonaventure, emphasized, is capable of penetrating this Simplicity, and union with the Incarnate Word is the condition for any creature being able to enter the "sea" of its depths. Entering the "sea" is simultaneously the soul's own self-utterance, which has a trinitarian pattern reflecting the three spiritual interpretations of Scripture. According to Bonaventure, these three interpretations testify to the faith, hope and love propelling the soul upward with ever increasing light.

Light reached its highest point, finally, in Bonaventure's fourth vision, where he described the soul's experience of contemplation as nothing less than the vision of Light itself, and also its descent through the order of creaturely beauty in the angelic and ecclesiastical hierarchies. The primary attribute of the soul recognized by Bonaventure at this stage, we saw, was fruitfulness (the reason why, he said, femininity symbolizes contemplation). This fruitfulness was described as the ability to see things not according to their own limitations, but as expansive reflections of the divine Unity inspiring the soul's "becoming" on the road to Wisdom's End. Those who fail to contemplate, by contrast, end up fading from light and deteriorating into beast-like states.

A number of key textual features emerge from our tour of the soul's journey, confirming and expanding the observations made by McAdams and Balthasar summarized under I.2.6 above.

First and foremost is the soteriological prominence of the Word, who draws creation into the Trinity's metaphysical circle. Christ as the divine Word or Wisdom is the Beginning and End of the soul's journey, but he is also the Way of Wisdom, since union with Christ is union with that divine Meaning who brings creation to full expression. Exemplarity is Bonaventure's richest soteriological category, as it is God's Self-expression meeting the world in Christ, who then transforms souls into "beautiful" reflections of uncreated Speech.

Second is the way in which Bonaventure introduces the concept of sin—both what it is and how it affects the human person. Sin appears in the text as a kind of false knowing grounded in a lack of humility through which "man opposes his own salvation."[133] The desire to "become like God" discussed under 1.2.4 runs contrary to the soteriological arc the text, which sees only the humble coming to behold Truth's simplicity. While contemplation is an ecstatic experience taking creatures increasingly out of their own limited ways of seeing and being, those who fight against their own salvation wish, it seems, to be arbiters of their own identity. They are too proud to enter the joy of contemplation. While for "fruitful" contemplatives the world is always open and bursting with revelation, false, prideful beauty recoils from the overwhelming abundance of divine Expressiveness, and as a result, spirals downward into darkness and non-being.

Third is the way in which Bonaventure parallels the soul's journey into Wisdom, its

[133] *Hex*. 1.24

journey into selfhood, and its growing knowledge of other creatures—a knowledge begotten in the soul by the Word in which it participates. These three realities logically occur together in Bonaventure's soteriology.

Forth and finally is the luminous imagery Bonaventure so consistently uses to describe the soul's spiritual progression (which, we'll remember from McAdams, is synonymous with beauty for Bonaventure). Light grows as souls progress in virtue and knowledge from the starting place of natural reason, through the fruition of faith and love, through Scriptural revelation, and into the full fruitfulness of contemplation. The luminosity or beauty of creatures indicates the "level" of their participation in Being, which is why "the philosophers," whose virtue and knowledge grow stale, end up degenerating like beasts. It also accounts for the luminosity streaming so magnificently from the text of the fourth vision, where contemplation is described as a vision not just of God, but of the actualized created beauty shining forth from the harmonious proportion of the angelic and ecclesiastical hierarchies.

Chapter Three

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The Broken Center

> We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for our adoption, the redemption of our bodies.
>
> -Romans 8:23, *NRSV*

Having established the terms and features of the soul's aesthetic journey, I will now attempt to locate the body within Bonaventure's soteriology—something Bonaventure's epistemological concerns do not compel him to explore directly. While the building blocks of my argument in this chapter are, for the most part, derived from prominent features of Bonaventure's synthesis, a few components will require constructive development. Very clear in Bonaventure's texts are the ways in which the body gathers sensory data for the soul's knowing, the notion that human bodies contain a "perfect proportion" of corporeal elements, and the idea already highlighted by Balthasar that, as body-soul composites, human beings stand between pure corporeality and uncreated Spirituality, and are charged with the task of uniting the two.

Perhaps not so explicit in his texts are the ways in which, as I will try to show, Bonaventure's key aesthetic principles help illumine the soteriological significance of body-soul integrity. An important prerequisite for attaining the "fruitful contemplation" described in chapter two is the unity of human "parts" (body and soul) which, at least in glory, enables the body to share in the soul's light as an external sign of the self's inward beauty. Bonaventure is clear that human nature is composite and that the self is only a self when its "parts" are joined, but he does not overtly identify this nature as a kind of "harmonious proportion" or beauty. As I will try to show, there is strong precedent in Bonaventure's texts for seeing the act of contemplation as an activity that draws body and soul together with the increasing harmony and luminosity indicated by Augustine's aesthetic definition. Thus we see that "expressive" beauty (in which the person comes to reflect its exemplary reason) is achieved in the human person through the actualization of a

"formalist" beauty (in which a thing possesses its own harmonious proportion or coherence).[1] This suggests again, as I claimed in chapter two, that the journey to God is, for Bonaventure, simultaneously a journey into true selfhood. And it seems an especially legitimate reading of Bonaventure's soteriology when we consider that, for him, the refusal to see things truly (sin) leads to the rupture of body-soul proportion in diminishment and death. At creation, God arranged the composite parts of the human self (the four elements of the body and the two divisions of body and soul) to grow in luminous intelligibility by sharing together in the act of contemplation. It was through bodily sensing that the soul was to begin knowing creation, and it was through right knowing that the soul, in turn, was to inform and perfect the body's elements. But this "proportion" was upset by the fall, leading to body-soul fragmentation and the "dimming" of the body toward obscurity and death.

And so, in what follows, I will rely primarily on the *Breviloquium* to show how human and worldly beautification occurs, for Bonaventure, through the action of body and soul working together as a rightly-ordered contemplative whole (part one). Next, I will show how the sinful rupturing of this holism at the fall obscured the human body and all the elements it contained, abandoning corporeality to death (part two). By doing this, I hope to suggest some ways in which corporeality's original "abandonment" has forever changed the terms of beauty's sensual manifestation in fallen men and women. The fracturing effects of sin are terminal, and if any possibility for beautification now remains, it can only exist as God's new gift. I will wait until chapter three to argue that, for Bonaventure, such a gift has indeed been revealed in the life of Jesus Christ. But its appearance there, and the path of Christian imitation, has been shaped irreparably by the fracturing effects of sin I will explore in this chapter.

By following the constructive flow outlined above, my hope is that two broad but important secondary arguments will begin to emerge. First, I will try to show how Bonaventure's commitment both to the soul's immortality and to anthropological wholeness opens up a unique space in which to discuss the feelings of bodily alienation I presented at the beginning of chapter one. Second, I will demonstrate that although Bonaventure uses the traditional language of perpetual bodily rebellion when discussing the effects of original sin, he also suggests (less formally, but very richly) that in its first sin, the soul was guilty of abandoning the body. This abandonment, unlike the body's

[1]These two aesthetic categories were introduced in I.2.1 above.

rebellion, is not, of course, transmitted automatically through generation, nor is it irreparable. For Bonaventure, it is indeed possible for a human soul to regain perfect order in this life. But attending to the problem of human fragmentation from the perspective of the soul's sin makes it easier, I think, to see the body's irretrievable move toward death as a reality that can paradoxically aid the soul on its journey toward glorification (something we will see happening more explicitly in chapter five). Moreover, it reflects a compassion for corporeality that more truly reflects Bonaventure's understanding of its role as participant and medium of the soul's future beatitude. Far from being the captive victim of a powerful and "wicked" body, the soul's task as it heals from sin is to reclaim the vulnerable body it abandoned at the fall, together with the whole corporeal creation it represents. Corporeality longs to be gathered up, nurtured, and brought to life ("informed") by the loving discipline of a rightly ordered soul.

1. The Beautiful Whole

We turn first to the question of how, for Bonaventure, humanity was entrusted at creation with the task of bearing corporeality toward its fullest meaning in God—a work accomplished (as I will try to show) through the soul's increasingly beautiful expression of its own corresponding body. The exercise of proportion or beauty is what enables the self to contemplate the "parts" of creation as signs of the divine Unity.

Bonaventure's anthropology spans chapters 9-11 in part II of the *Breviloquium*, and 17.2.1-3 of his *Commentarius in II Sententiarum*.[2] Human beings feature prominently in Bonaventure's overall discussion of creation since, in his view, their unique nature gifts them with a very special vocation within the created order. A recurring theme throughout Bonaventure's works is that before the fall, men and women received divine revelation through two complementary "books"—the "outer" book of nature and the "inner" book of Wisdom, whose light illumines all rational souls.[3] Positioned at the top end of creation's hierarchy, purely spiritual creatures (angels) were vested with an "internal sense for

[2] For the relevant text from Bonaventure's Commentary, see *Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae Opera Omnia,* 10 vols, ed. PP. Collegii Sancti Bonaventurae (Quaracchi: Collegii Sancti Bonaventurae, 1882-1902), II, 419-26). There is no available English translation of books II-IV of the Commentary.

[3] According to Bonaventure, knowledge of the "inner book" was obscured by the Fall, and so God has gifted human beings with a third book—the book of Scripture, which makes it possible for them to "see" again. For a concise introduction to Bonaventure's theology of Scripture, see *Brev*. Prologus.

understanding the interior book" of Wisdom, while on the bottom of the hierarchy, purely corporeal creatures such as animals enjoyed only knowledge of the "outer book," (corporeal objects, but not the uncreated Beauty to which they point). Angels gazed directly on the Word of God in whom the fulness of creaturely meaning dwells, but animals only had knowledge of the creatures themselves. Positioned between these two extremes of pure spirituality and pure corporeality were human beings, created with a "double ranges of senses" so as to have "knowledge of both the inner and outer books, that is, of Wisdom and its works."[4] Humans were able to know like animals and like angels: with the five senses of the physical body, and with the trusting love of a rational mind.[5]

For Bonaventure, the unique position and composition of human beings seems to vest them with a capacity for spiritual progression not experienced by creatures on the two extreme ends of the hierarchy. Non-rational creatures were not gifted with the capacity for blessedness, while the simple spiritual nature of angels led to the immediate confirmation of each one in either glory or damnation through the first exercise of their freewill.[6] But as composites of corporeality and spirituality, human beings were of a "precarious nature, formed from nothing and not yet confirmed by glory."[7] In Bonaventure's view, Adam and Eve were placed in an earthly paradise where the full scope of human nature (corporeality and spirituality) could participate in the growth of merit through contemplation, thereby accomplishing its own fruition. However, Bonaventure's way of framing this journey to glory seems vulnerable to oversimplification if viewed hastily: glorification is described by Bonaventure as a future hope to be merited through obedience to God's commands—specifically, in the beginning, his command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Though Bonaventure states that God's command was established as a "test of obedience," and that such a "test" was necessary for human beings to achieve merit, this does not mean that the commandment was arbitrary. And while Bonaventure adopts traditional penal language when talking about humanity's meritorious journey toward glory

[4]*Brev*. II.11.2.

[5]On the centrality of the will (love) in Bonaventure's understanding of the self's spiritual journey, see Robert Glenn Davis, "The Force of Union: Affect and Ascent in the Theology of Bonaventure," PhD diss., Harvard University, 2012.

[6]Bonaventure explains the reason for this in *Brev*. II.6.4: "Such a substance [an angelic nature], however, because it is simple, has virtuosity in action; having virtuosity and personal distinctness, it has a distinctive service to perform; having simplicity and virtuosity, it has a keen power of discernment; having simplicity and keen discernment, and hence a God-formed intellect, it also has immutability in its choice of either good or evil.

[7]*Brev*. II.11.6.

or damnation, there seems to be a clear, intelligible correspondence between the actions of people and the "punishments" or "rewards" they receive in the *Breviloquium*. In his section on the fall, Bonaventure describes the first sin as a disordered desire that distorted humanity's perception of the "outer book" (corporeal creation). We might say that rather than embracing creation as a sacrament of Truth itself (the "inner book"), Adam and Eve became greedy and possessive, fastening onto isolated creaturely "parts" rent apart from the beautiful and whole meaning of divine Wisdom, just as we saw happening to those who became like "beasts" in the *Hexaemeron.*[8]

But according to Bonaventure, so far as we can tell, God's desire at creation was for humanity to merit glory through the faithful exercise of its whole body-soul nature. With the help of grace, human beings were to "take in" creation with the five senses of their corporeal bodies (the outer book), and through that knowledge, their intellectual souls were to deepen progressively in loving communion with divine Wisdom (the inner book). As Bonaventure writes, "In the state of innocence, when the image [the rational soul] was not yet spoiled but rendered God-like through grace, the book of creation sufficed to enable human beings to perceive the light of divine Wisdom." Adam and Eve "were then so wise that when they saw all things in themselves, they also perceived them in their proper genus and with reference to God's creating Art."[9] It was through this knowledge that human beings were to have journeyed upward, carrying the goodness of signful creatures with them into glory. Thus beatitude would have been a progressive experience, growing to maturity within contemplative souls. And glory would have been the height of this growth—a state in which the self "merited" full release into the vision of God animating the beauty of creation's harmonious parts. The rational soul was to use the body in its pursuit of this end, but for Bonaventure, as will soon become clear, the body was created *not just* to "collect" sensory data for the rational soul's contemplation, for this might reflect a utilitarian view of the body, perhaps validating the critiques of those who see Christian Platonism as irretrievably negative in its appraisal of corporeality. For Bonaventure the

[8]Bonaventure does not explicitly describe the failure to contemplate in aesthetic terms, as a breaking of creaturely parts away from the the beauty of the whole, but this seems an obvious implication of the idea that creation is beautiful in its reflection of uncreated Beauty by being a harmony of parts, as I explained in II.2.5 above (here quoting my own summary of Balthasar): "In Balthasar's reading of Bonaventure, the created order achieves 'beauty' not through an exact resemblance (or proportion) to its divine exemplar (which would be impossible for creatures), but through a certain 'harmony of order' in its parts, modeled on Dionysian hierarchy..." (*Theological Style*, 300).

[9]*Brev*. II.12.4.

body has a much more active and dynamic role in the task of contemplation, which is to literally—even tenderly—carry corporeality within itself into the vision of God enjoyed by the composite union that is human nature. As we proceed, I will show how Bonaventure uses hylomorphism to explain how the contemplative activity of a unified human body and soul was meant to bring the world's corporeality to life and light. I will explore the aesthetics of this progression by first showing how, for Bonaventure, all of corporeality is "summed up" within the human body (1.1). Having done this, I will then show how the fruitful soul described in chapter one was meant to bring this corporeality to life through the act of willingly gathering up and "informing" its human body, together with all that it contains (1.2, 1.3). For Bonaventure, the two "parts" of the human being were designed to progress in beauty by functioning as a fruitful, proportionate whole in which the light of the contemplative soul could spill over into the radiance of corporeality, making the self a coherent revelation of uncreated Light. Thus we begin to see the extraordinary depth with which Augustine's aesthetics of light and proportion saturates Bonaventure's soteriology. For Bonaventure, the journey of salvation can only be a journey to Beauty. The sinful interruption of this journey, and its permanent effect on the sensuality of creaturely beauty, won't be discussed until section two.

1.1. The Body

In order to interpret Bonaventure's writings on the meaning of human bodies, it is necessary to understand his Ptolemaic cosmology, which sees the corporeal universe as a series of fourteen rings or layers suspended on a descending spectrum of luminosity. The most luminous, and therefore the most like God in terms of signfulness, is the empyrean—a region of pure, created light in which faithful men and women are destined to one day dwell. While the souls of the blessed are said to participate in uncreated Light, Bonaventure sees the bodies of the blessed corresponding physically to the luminous created space (the empyrean) in which souls enjoy their spiritual vision. Blessed bodies, it seems, must become—like the empyrean itself—perfect corporeal reflections of the divine Beauty contemplated by souls. Like other scholastics of his time, Bonaventure sees four special "dowries" shaping the glorified body: clarity or brightness (its chief characteristic), agility, impassibility and subtlety. Bonaventure describes these attributes as "rewards" gifted by God to the bodies of obedient souls, but he also describes them as the natural overflow of

the soul's own beatific joy, demonstrating once again the intelligible nature of reality animating Bonaventure's use of penal concepts. In glory, the body's beauty is directly related to the soul's beauty, and expresses the soul as much as the soul itself expresses uncreated Beauty. I will come back to this idea in due course.

But if empyreal luminosity is something toward which the body must journey, where does the body begin its journey, and why does God ask it to undergo a journey in the first place? The answer to this can be found by examining the order of Bonaventure's fourteen-sphere universe, which is divided into two natures: the celestial and the elemental. The empyrean is the highest sphere of the celestial nature, followed by the crystalline heavens (a translucent, watery region), the firmament or "fixed heavens" which includes the stars of the earth's night sky, and finally the seven planetary systems (Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, and the Moon). These seven incorruptible spheres, Bonaventure explains, "act as a kind of link or bonding between the inferior elemental spheres and the superior [three] heavenly spheres, and thus complete and embellish the universe."[10] The lower, elemental nature includes four spheres: fire, air, water and earth. In contrast to the empyrean, the elemental spheres are dense, dark and "far" from God. But in Bonaventure's view, God's creative power is made most profoundly manifest in God's ability to draw upward those things that are most distant from divinity. It is for this reason that God created Adam's body from the "slime of the earth"—a dim, dense corporeality through which the whole elemental nature (as we shall soon see) might come to reflect the radiance of divine Beauty. Recalling that luminosity expresses and communicates a creature's participation in Being, we can deduce that for Bonaventure, corporeality's journey from dimness to iridescence involves a move toward a more substantial way of being—a deeper, richer form of existence.[11] This makes sense especially in view of the fact that Bonaventure, following Augustine, describes unglorified corporeality as "almost nothing" on more than one occasion.

So how does worldly corporeality position itself to make this pilgrimage of light? It

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[10] *Brev*. II.3.5.

[11] Some ambiguity is suggested by the way in which Bonaventure presents the elements and their relationship to the body. On the one hand, elements themselves are perfected by journeying to glory in the body, since the body is comprised of elements. On the other hand Bonaventure suggests that the arrival of the body in glory is a "moving away" from elemental nature. See *Brev*. VII.7.4. and my discussion under 1.3 below. What this suggests is that each individual piece of worldly corporeality isn't "subtlized" by being carried into glory (except, perhaps, for that which exists in particular human bodies). Rather, the whole makeup of corporeality is rewritten by being actualized through human contemplation.

seems that for Bonaventure, the journey is made possible by a second, earthly hierarchy of beauty ascending from minerals, to plants, to animals, and finally to human bodies, which Bonaventure describes as the crown of all corporeality. But while the beauty of the universal spheres is found in their luminosity, the beauty of particular classifications of elemental creatures (minerals, plants, animals and human bodies) seems to arise, for Bonaventure, from the perfection of their proportion. This is not to say, of course, that luminosity is completely absent from elemental nature. On the contrary, as I have already mentioned, for Bonaventure light is the first substantial form of all bodies ("bodies" being any corporeal formation, not just human bodies). Genesis identifies corporeal light as the first thing created by God, and it was to this corporeal light, Bonaventure argues, that further forms were added and the multiplicity of creatures brought to birth.[12] All bodies participate in light because of light's lingering formal impression in all matter. And it is this primordial participation, along with the proportion I will soon describe, that seems to vest creatures with their potential for luminous progression, since having no light would mean having no existence at all.[13] But for Bonaventure, proportion seems to be the vehicle for elemental nature's luminous progression; the world's potential for actualization is poised within the corporeal proportion of its creaturely hierarchy. On the low extreme of the hierarchy, lifeless minerals are said to be "far removed from an equal balance" or proportion of the four elements (fire, air, water and earth). A slightly better proportion is found in plants or "vegetative life," while a near perfect proportion of elements produces the bodies of non-human, sentient beings. Perfect proportion, however, can only be found in the human body. And it is this perfect beauty of proportion which in turn prepares the body to receive the "noblest form" found among elemental creatures, the human soul:

> The body of the first man [Adam], formed from the slime of the earth, was created subject to the soul and yet proportioned to it in its own way. By 'proportioned,' I imply a well-balanced physical constitution, a beautiful and complex structure, and an upright posture. By 'subject,' I mean that the body was created obedient to the soul without rebellion... to function without defect, wholly exempt from decay, and immune from death.[14]

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[12]In Bonaventure's view, the form of light was impressed into all prime matter on the first day of creation. On this, see especially Gilson, *Philosophy*, 245-264 and John Francis Quinn, *The Historical Constitution of St. Bonaventure's Philosophy* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1973), 112-114; 219-234.

[13]*Brev*. II.3.2.

[14]*Brev*. II.10.1. For more on the immortality of the body in Bonaventure, see *II Sent*. 19.2.1

Section two below offers a more detailed exploration of what it means for the body to be subject to the soul and how this, also, can be thought of as a reflection of aesthetic proportion. For now, it is important to understand that just as perfectly proportioned corporeality was created subordinate to the human soul, imperfectly proportioned corporeality (minerals, plants and animals) was created subject to human bodies, which, in Bonaventure's view, is higher than other corporeal creatures on the chain of nobility.[15] Bonaventure seems to be arguing for the preeminence of the human body by describing other creatures as imperfectly beautiful (not perfectly proportioned) within themselves. It is this imperfection, it seems, that makes it necessary for "less noble" creatures to be "ordered" to the perfect harmony of elements existing in human bodies. (Bonaventure sees the maturing evolution of the elements as implicit in the Genesis creation narrative, where human bodies are created on the sixth day, after the production of plants and animals.) The human body thus becomes the agent through which the dense panoply of worldly corporeality is ordered and proportioned to achieve glorification. Perfect corporeal proportion alone, it seems, may journey into perfect corporeal light.

1.2. The Soul

Having explored the process by which dim corporeality matures and perfect itself within the human body's perfect elemental proportion, I will now demonstrate how, for Bonaventure, the world's light pilgrimage was meant to occur through the proportion existing between the body and soul. And here my project faces a challenge. Because of the fall, Bonaventure's description of the journey from creation to glorification does not follow a straight trajectory, but is instead unfolded through the sensual darkness of humanity's sin-broken reality. We can therefore only draw conclusions about corporeality's progression by considering its end, where all sensual ambiguities are finally set right and the truth of faithful journeys revealed. Sensual beauty must be epistemologically significant for human beings, otherwise Bonaventure would not insist, with Aristotle, upon the sensual roots of any noetic act, nor would he speak of sacraments or corporeal signs (such as light), nor

[15] For a longer study of this, see especially James McEvoy, "Microcosm and Macrocosm in the Writings of St. Bonaventure," in *S. Bonaventurea 1274-1974,* ed. Collegio S. Bonaventura (Rome: Grottaferrata), II: 317-318, 323. Balthasar claims that, for Bonaventure, "man is the longing of all nature, and the uniting of spirit and matter which takes place in him is the opposite of a falling-away of spirit from itself." *Theological Style,* 315-316.

would human bodies be destined to partake of light's radiance as the overflow of the soul's consummated beatitude. As we already saw, human beings were originally designed to understand the "inner book" of divine Wisdom by experiencing the "outer book" of creatures. To deny that at some level, in this world, spiritual beauty relies upon corporeal beauty to communicate itself would be to dismiss the basic meaning and integrity of corporeality. So how are human beings of this world to recognize their own spiritual progression, not to mention the growth of others, if sin obscures or changes beauty's sensual manifestation? In order to answer this question, it is first necessary to consider how the sensual beauty of humans "might" have matured had sin not interrupted the natural progress of human nature. Only then can we begin discerning the process once again under the guise of a new, sin-broken sensual aesthetic.

And so in this section I will explore the aesthetic movement by which, so far as can be extrapolated from Bonaventure's texts, the soul was to have fulfilled its task of enlightening dim corporeality prior to the Fall. Through this discussion, my hope is that we will begin to see why it might make good sense to speak of the soul's need to reclaim the body where traditionally theologians have spoken of the body's need to reorder itself to the soul. Also, by studying the aesthetics of body-soul proportion undergirding the human creature's journey to glory, we will see that for Bonaventure, contemplation requires the integrity of the whole, undivided human nature. Only through this beauty can human creatures accomplish their noetic task and journey.

We begin with Balthasar, who explains succinctly how, according to Bonaventure, the soul's formal relationship to the body is what makes the corporeal journey possible:

> 'The form of the [body-soul] composite is more perfect than any one part, because the parts are ordered towards the form of the composite...[16] Since therefore the perfecting of grace and glory presupposes the perfection of nature, the whole man, not only the soul, must be transfigured,' though it is at the same time clear that the condition which permits this to man is his immortal soul, which as such is capable of blessedness. But man in his essence must bring his body into this blessedness, and through his body the whole physical world below which is ordered towards transfiguration through man.[17]

Balthasar agrees that for Bonaventure, the human self is structured as a composite in order

[16]Here Balthasar comes very close to articulating the aesthetics of harmonious proportion I have proposed can be found in Bonaventure's conception of the body-soul relationship.
[17]Balthasar, *Theological Style,* 317.

that it may beautify corporeal creation, and that the burden of this project rests upon the knowing soul. To discover how the soul accomplishes its appointed task, it may help to look more closely at two different aspects of the soul—its relationship to the world, and its relationship to the body. The first of these relationships can be easily explained in light of chapter one. Like other theologians of his time, Bonaventure subscribes to the notion that the soul is a microcosm of the worldly macrocosm. Everything existing in the world also exists, intellectually, in the knowing soul. As McEvoy succinctly puts it, "The body should have an agreement with all [the] physical elements [of creation] precisely because it is to be proportionate to a soul which is "all things."[18] And the soul is "all things" because it participates in them, spiritually, through the act of knowing.[19] But as we saw in chapter one, contemplative souls must know the whole through the light of divine Wisdom, for to know otherwise is to close creation in on itself by failing to receive it as a sign of endlessly expansive uncreated Truth. In other words, the soul's microcosmic relationship to the world is contingent upon a first, spiritual relationship existing between the soul and God. Also important to remember is the fact that for Bonaventure, the soul actually needs the body in order to be "all things," since for him, knowledge of the world begins in the senses. Body must aid the soul before the soul can usher the body into deeper being. The soul makes use of the body's "five portals" and, "by virtue of its sensitive power," the soul then

> apprehends sensible objects, retains what it has apprehended, and combines and sorts what it has retained. It apprehends through the five external senses... it retains through memory; it combines and distinguishes through imagination... Finally, by means of its intellectual power, the soul discerns truth, avoids evil, and seeks the good...[20]

In Bonaventure's view, the bodily senses "take in" creation so that the intellectual soul may understand and bear it toward Truth in the glory and vitality of the body. This turns us more directly to the question of the soul's relationship to the body, which Bonaventure conceives in very Aristotelian terms. Bonaventure subscribes to a universal notion of hylomorphism, in which all created substances—even those with simple natures such as angels—are composites of form and matter.[21] "Matter," of course, is a thing's existence,

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[18]McEvoy, "Microcosm and Macrocosm," 331.
[19]McEvoy, "Microcosm and Macrocosm," 323; Quinn, *Historical Constitution,* 134.
[20]*Brev*. II.9.5. For a lengthy and detailed explanation of how beauty is sensibly perceived according to the technical Aristotelian categories of abstraction described by Bonaventure here, see the first chapter of Spargo, *Category of the Aesthetic.*
[21]The fact that this is not a contradiction to Bonaventure further illustrates how united it is possible for the

while "form" is the quiddity or particularity of that existence—that which makes a thing whatever it happens to be. Every creature has both "matter" and "form," existence and quiddity. In the case of the human person, the body, for Bonaventure, is matter vivified and brought to expression through the informing presence of a unique human soul. The soul, Bonaventure explains, is a "form endowed with existence, life, intelligence, and freedom of choice." Its existence is created by God from nothing, its life is eternal, its intelligence is capable of grasping God, and its freedom is a "joint capacity of will and reason, which are the principle faculties of the soul."[22] And since the soul in question is microcosmic in nature, it seems uniquely suited to the task of "informing" or bringing to life all the creatures it knows within the "matter" (the human body) that is their corporeal perfection. The complex beauty of the human body, with all its sensual capacities, is ordered to a spiritual capacity that "knows" both Creator and creatures, and thus can return and unite the latter with the former, making corporeality a "beautiful" reflection of God.

Bonaventure suggests all this in his *Breviloquium*. If soul and body "are to be well ordered," he argues, "the first must command and the latter obey. Whenever the reverse happens, the rectitude and proper government of the soul are cast from their place."[23] Bonaventure isn't saying here that one part of the person must dominate or subjugate the other. His emphasis isn't on the distinction that exists between humanity's two parts, but on their unity. As Christopher Cullen points out, for Bonaventure "The human being is not simply a soul making use of a body; rather, the rational soul enters into composition with material elements, thereby perfecting these material elements into a living, sensing body and forming a composite, whole substance—a rational animal."[24] But in order for the self to *be* this unity, the proportion of the body (matter) must be gathered up by the rational soul (form) and brought to life and light. The soul becomes spiritually illumined through its vision of God, and this illumination spills over to the body in a way reflecting the interior beauty of the soul.

Now the soul's growing knowledge of God and creation, had it occurred unhindered, I submit, would have been the soul's gathering up and informing of corporeality. The body

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matter and form (body and soul) of a human person to become, though of course this breaks down in that body and soul are definitely "parts" of a human composite. Angels are only spiritual, and therefore matter and form, for them, cannot properly be called parts.

[22] *Brev*. II.9.1.

[23] *Brev*. II.11.3.

[24] Cullen, *Bonaventure*, 54.

was a mute, expressionless "not yet" given by God for the soul to actualize by fruitfully bearing the truth of creation forth within the self's own "harmonious proportion." The richness of this vocation, and how deeply engrained it is in what it means to be human, can perhaps best be explored by considering how Bonaventure's doctrine of "unibility" might be said to facilitate and complete the self's beauty.[25] While a (very) few technical studies of the doctrine do exist, its potential soteriological function has not explicitly been considered.[26]

As is true of other scholastic writers, Bonaventure's discussion of unibility arises from his understanding of how angels differ from human souls—an important question, since angels and souls are both simple spiritual substances and thus bear much in common. A key difference between the two, in Bonaventure's view, is that angels were created to be spiritual, whereas human souls possess an "appetite" for union with a body. Caroline Walker Bynum helpfully describes this appetite as "the metaphysical cement binding body to soul."[27] In the *Breviloquium*, Bonaventure himself speaks of this "cement" as a kind of yearning or desire (*appetitus*). And while he leaves open the possibility that unibility might exist in matter (as we saw at the end of chapter one), he describes it most clearly and confidently as a property of the soul:[28]

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[25]"Unibility" or "*unibilitas*" is the name commonly given, in scholastic theology, to the doctrine under discussion. Bonaventure himself uses a variety of Latin terms when discussing the concept, as we shall see.

[26]See Francesco Bottin, "*Unibilitas*. Back to the Source of the Soul's Unibility to the Body," unpublished paper uploaded by Bottin to www.academia.edu, accessed March 10, 2016, https://www.academia.edu/5133022/UNIBILITAS._BACK_TO_THE_SOURCE_OF_THE_SOUL_S_UNIBILITY_TO_THE_BODY. See also Bynum, *Resurrection of the Body*, 247-255; Cullen, *Bonaventure;* Thomas M Osborne, "*Unibilitas*: The Key to Bonaventure's Understanding of Human Nature," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 37.2 (April 1999): 227-250; and Quinn, *Historical Constitution*, 103-133. Cullen, Osborne and Quinn all express regret at the lack of attention this doctrine has been given in Bonaventure studies. For primary material, in addition to the *Breviloquium* references mentioned above, see *In IV Sent*., 43.5;44.2.1, reply 3; 454, dub. 1 (IV, 462, 481, 507) and *II Sent*., d. 1, p.2, a.3, q.9, fund. Contributing to the lack of scholarship may be the diverse language with which Bonaventure himself discusses the concept of unibility.

[27]Bynum*, Resurrection of the Body*, 253.

[28]On the question of unibility as a property of the body itself, Bynum points out an interesting passage from *II Sent*. Having spoken of the soul's longing for its own particular body in the resurrection, Bonaventure suggests that an orientation to be reunited with its soul also exists within the body "by reason of divine providence." He then continues:

> What however [the body scattered in death] might have through some other orientation that is of and in itself, coming from that out of which it was dissolved, I do not dare assert, because neither reason nor authority nor faith compels a position. But because this could be what God gives, I do not obstinately deny it. For whether or not there is a yearning in the dust [*in pulveribus appetitus*] even if it is dissolved into the tiniest particles, something [*aliquid*] however does not perish which has respect to the resurrection... But into whatever dust or ashes it is turned, ...into the substance of whatever other bodies, or into the elements, or into whatever food, it will return, at that [last]

> When God created the body, God joined it to the soul, uniting them to each other by a natural and mutual yearning [*appetitus*]. God placed the body under the government of the soul, creating it in a state of merit. To gain this merit, God willed that in this pilgrim state the soul should stoop down to the level of the body, directing its attention towards governing. Hence, the soul cannot be fully happy unless a body is restored to it, because it has an inclination [*inclinationem*] built into it by nature to be reunited with a body.[29]

Looking forward to the general resurrection here, Bonaventure is saying that even in the unnatural state of body-soul separation (something humans only experience because of the Fall), a blessed soul longs for its body and cannot fully be at rest until it has regained the matter it desires to inform. A yearning to inform the dust of the human body is embedded in the very nature of what it means to be a human soul.

Of course, for Bonaventure, a bond of attraction exists in some sense within every hylomorphic creature. In the *Hexaemeron*, interestingly, Bonaventure identifies having matter, form and the bond between as part of what makes each creature a vestige or "footprint" of the Trinity:

> Now, in substance there is a higher trace that represents the divine essence. For every created substance has matter, form, and composition [*compositionem*]: the original principle or foundation, the formal complement, and the bond [*glutinum*]. It has substantial existence, power, and operation. And in these the mystery of the Trinity is represented: the Father as the origin, the Son as the image and the Holy Spirit as the bond [*compago*].
>
> In creatures, there is a distinction between the original principle and the formal complement: not a hypostatic distinction as in the Godhead, nor an accidental distinction, but a distinction as between principles, one of which is active [form] and the other passive [matter]. And to deny this to the creature is to deny that it represents the Trinity: as if it were said, for instance, that the creature is pure act, and not a

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moment of time, to the soul which animated it at first (*Resurrection of the Body*, 244). Brackets are Bynum's own.

One possible interpretation of Bonaventure's reluctance here is to say that even in the body's death, Bonaventure sees something about the scattered dust of the elemental body that is ready, "poised" as it were, to be gathered up and restored to a willing soul. The particles needing resurrection after death "are not bits of inert stuff," Bynum argues. "They are dynamic—pregnant with something akin to feeling" (*Resurrection of the Body*, 241). In Bonaventure's speculations here perhaps we see his sensitivity to the trajectory of elemental nature and the rich meaning of expressive human bodies. To my knowledge there is nothing in Bonaventure's physics that would allow formless matter to participate in unibility of itself, and yet the intimacy of matter and form—the depth with which the two belong to one another—prevents Bonaventure from excluding it completely as a property of matter. Somehow, in its readiness to be expressed, matter itself seems to be yearning.

[29] *Brev*. VII.7.4. For the Latin text, see Bonaventure, *Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae Opera Omnia*, tome V, ed. PP. Collegii Sancti Bonaventurae (Quaracchi: Collegii Sancti Bonaventura, 1882-1902), 289.

composite.[30]

Bonaventure is saying here that a trace of the Trinity can be found in every creature: in matter we see a reflection of the Father ("the original principle"), in form we see a sign of the Son ("formal complement"), and in the composition itself, we see a reflection of the Holy Spirit (the "bond").[31] Bonaventure then equates these three "parts" of the creature with existence, power and operation which, like measure, number and weight and a number of other of other triads, gesture toward the full scope of creation's soteriological journey (emanation, exemplarity and return).[32] Besides declaring its own origin, reality and destiny, having this pattern is one of the things what makes creatures signs or "vestiges" of the Trinity. Not possessing the capacity for contemplation, non-rational corporeal creatures do not experience spiritual progression for themselves in this life. They are "returned" to God through the mediation of human beings."[33] On the other end of the spectrum, purely spiritual substances (angels) do not experience progression because they are immutable. But human beings, being both spiritual and corporeal, and being "images" as well as "vestiges" of God (that is, possessing memory, intellect and will), do indeed experience progression, as we have already seen.[34] What I'd like to suggest is that the bond between body and soul, which corresponds signfully to that uncreated Desire (the Holy Spirit) who draws each creature back to its End, can be seen as the *activity* of humanity's responsive desire for its own completion. This is perhaps why Bonaventure describes unibility primarily as a power of the soul—that is, of the self's rational capacity. To yearn to be be whole (the bond between body and soul) is to long to be a human self. Not to yearn is to allow body and soul to fall apart, to cease desiring to be a self—and this is exactly what happens when human knowing fails to open contemplatively beyond the constraints of created objects. Noetic progression ceases, and the unity of the self falls apart. Of course, Bonaventure does not overtly suggest unibility (a technical ontological category) as the place where human freedom engages with the world of matter (body). But given that the

[30]*Hex*. II.23-24. For the Latin text, see Bonaventure, *Opera Omnia,* tome 5*,* 340.
[31]As an aside, while Bonaventure has largely been seen to have a heavily Eastern, Dionysian doctrine of the Trinity shaped by the "fontal fullness" idea of the Victorine school, here is one aspect of his thought that seems to reflect the more Augustinian concern with Trinitarian relation.
[32]In *I. Sent.* d. 3, p. 1, dub. 3, Bonaventure lays out a series of six different triads that can be applied to creaturely vestiges of the Trinity: See Bonavetnure, *Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae Opera Omnia*, tome I, ed. PP. Collegii Sancti Bonaventurae (Quaracchi: Collegii Sancti Bonaventura, 1882-1902).
[33]See *Itin*. I-II for Bonaventure's clearest account of how this happens.
[34]On humans as "images" of God, see *Itin* III-IV.

human soul is rational and thus free, it seems reasonable to imagine this as a possibility. Thinking of unibility in this way suggests an overall coherence and rich layering of aesthetic concepts in Bonaventure's anthropology, revealing how the self's own growing beauty (body-soul integrity) is simultaneously its move toward God and the gathering up of other corporeal creatures into that destiny. As the body becomes increasingly transparent to the soul's vision of God through the soul's yearning love, the human body, soul and bond participate in generative, Trinitarian Beauty, acting more and more as one harmonious unity. Human beauty can thus be understood as a collection of "parts" deepening in union until wholeness is achieved in the self's perfect spiritual-corporeal expression. This was the aesthetic journey given for human beings to fulfill from the day they were created. All this does not deny, of course, that in a certain sense the beauty of proportion already exists, for Bonaventure, in the basic union of body and soul found in all living humans. But perhaps this union can be said to deepen as the self participates more fully in Being, merits glory, and grows in luminosity through the proper contemplation of corporeal creatures. Bynum beautifully articulates the human holism I am talking about here when she says that "what Bonaventure describes... is not a soul-self to which a house or garment or tool [body] has been unaccountably or adventitiously added, nor even a soul-self expressing that self in a body. [Because, as has already explained, a human soul on its own is not a self.] It is a body-soul self: a particularized, experiencing, glowing, and... sensual person, moving ever deeper into delight."[35]

1.3. The Luminous End

I have been claiming that at creation, the whole of dim, elemental nature was proportioned to journey, in the human body, to the truth and beauty of glory through the informing guidance of a willing, human soul. I also suggested that sin has made it difficult to trace the process of worldly beautification within corporeality—a claim I will develop further in section 2 below. But before turning to that discussion, we turn briefly to consider the visibility of creation's promised end in God—that is, how actualized spiritual beauty is expressed in the luminous corporeality of the redeemed.

Bonaventure describes the resurrection of the body in both his *Breviloquium* and in

[35]Bynum, *Resurrection of the Body*, 254.

the fourth book of his *Commentarius in librum Sententiarum*. At the end of the world, when human progression comes to rest, all corporeal things will be renewed:

> Now humanity will be consummated when the number of the elect reaches completion in glory: the state toward which all things tend as to their final end and fulfillment. Therefore, as soon as this number is completed the motion of the heavenly bodies must cease and come to rest; likewise, the transmutations of elements will come to an end, and consequently the process of generation in animals and plants. For since all these creatures were ordained toward the more noble form, the rational soul, once souls have achieved their final state of rest, all other things must also come to completion and repose. That is why when the heavenly bodies do finally attain repose and the fullness of luminosity, they are said to have received their reward... Vegetative and sensitive beings do not possess the power of perpetual life and eternal duration that is reserved to the higher state, and so their whole substance will be consumed... However they will be preserved as ideas; and in a certain manner they will survive also in their likeness, humankind, who is kin to creatures of every species. And so one can say that all things will be made new and, in a certain sense, rewarded in the renovation and glorification of humanity."[36]

In this passage, Bonaventure explains that the corporeal world reaches fulfillment and rest when the souls of the elect are fully illumined by the vision of God. For Bonaventure, non-human corporeal creatures do not share in this vision directly, since they lack the rational capacity necessary to do so. One might object to Bonaventure's easy dismissal of animal consciousness, but perhaps the more important thing to take from this passage is that for him, in the end, all creatures do finally achieve the end for which they are disposed, whether directly or through the mediating influence of a knowing human soul.[37] In the human body, worldly corporeality comes to correspond to the soul's vision of divine Truth, and thus it is there, Bonaventure says, that the world finally comes to express itself. Likewise the "renovation and glorification" of humanity does not just involve the soul's contemplation of God. It requires a fulfilled, radiantly corresponding sensuality, since grace, in glory, is poured out "not only in the perfection of love in the soul, but also in the beauty and splendor of its perfect bodily expression."[38] Bonaventure seeks to captivate readers with this truth in the moving last section of his *Breviloquium*, where the body is said to share in the beatific rewards of the soul through the enjoyment of four "dowries." Through these dowries, Bonaventure explains, the soul's joy "spills over" into sensual

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[36] *Brev*. VII. 4.7.

[37] I have not yet found anything that hints at what might have happened to plant and animal life, in Bonaventure's system, had the Fall never occurred.

[38] *Brev*. VII.7.5.

bliss:

> But since the soul will be enlightened through the vision of the eternal Light, the body also must shine with great splendor. Since the soul will become supremely spiritual through the love of the highest Spirit, the body also must display a corresponding subtlety and spirituality. Since the possession of eternal life will make the soul totally incapable of suffering, the body also must become completely impassable, internally as well as externally. And since all these endowments will give the soul a supreme readiness to ascend to God, the glorified body must also possess supreme agility.
>
> ...[These four things] are said to be the special dowry of the body. They enable They likewise assimilate the human body to the heavenly bodies, for through these four properties the heavenly body is gradually drawn away from the four earthly elements. Hence, this fourfold dowry of the human body not only perfects it in itself but also conforms it to its heavenly dwelling place and to the blessed Spirit. Through that Spirit, the fullness of delights and the inebriation of bliss flow from God the Head, down upon the skirt of the garment, the human body.[39]

Again, this time in his fourth *Commentarius in librum Sententiarum*, Bonaventure argues that

> Body must rise, that it may be blessed through co-participation in and overflowing of blessedness. And so it is with grace, for if grace exists in the soul in the rational power, it flows over into the sensible power, and the more it quiets that power through its abundance the greater the pleasure, as the Psalmist says: 'My soul thirsts for thee.' Thus when there is perfect, overflowing abundance and delight in glory, we should not marvel if it flows over into body; and no one doubts this unless he has never known it.[40]

In these passages we see the rich sensuality with which the body is said to share in the soul's vision of uncreated Light. On one level, in the first passage Bonaventure seems reluctant to affirm the goodness of corporeality too robustly. To be truly good, he explains, the body must be spiritualized or "subtilized" as it draws away from the unintelligible density of elemental nature. A certain reading of the second text, likewise, suggests that for Bonaventure the body's bliss occurs as its sensual faculties are overtaken (and thus suspended) by the happiness of the graced soul. But another way of reading this text—more consistent with the deeper logic of Bonaventure's system, I submit—is that in glory the sensual powers come to "rest" by experiencing full saturation. The contemplative soul comes to possess the body so deeply that there is nothing left for it to express (the two are

[39] *Brev*. VII.7.4.
[40] *IV Sent.* dist. 49, pt. I, art., I, q. 3, here translated by Bynum. See *Resurrection of the Body,* 250.

completely one). The body's subtlety becomes its complete transparency to the soul's knowledge of God and world, and its rest is its complete vitality.

It is this beauty that seems to fit the redeemed for renewed ecclesial communion, in Bonaventure's view. Once the blessed rise with "unimpaired bod[ies], in the prime of life, and well-proportioned," then, we read, "...*all* the saints will *come together into a perfect man, into the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ.*[41] Although the glorified soul enjoys a direct, unmediated vision of God, perhaps it is possible to say that this vision, for Bonaventure, does not exclude communion with all the parts of creation that finally unite to form the unified and beautiful body of Christ. The soul's vision of the whole, glorified creation participates in its vision of God; the love the blessed have for one another is charged by the love they have for their Creator. On this point, Bonaventure devotes the closing lines of his *Breviloquium* to a moving passage from Anselm, a brief portion of which I quote here:

> 'Or does wisdom delight you? The very Wisdom of God will show itself to them. Or friendship? They will love God more than themselves and one another as themselves. For they will love God and themselves and one another through him, while God loves himself and them through himself...
>
> Now surely, if someone else whom you loved in every respect as you do yourself were also to have such happiness, then your own joy would be doubled, for you would rejoice for that person no less than for yourself. If, then, two or three or many more possessed it, you would rejoice for each of them as much as for yourself, if you loved each one as yourself. Therefore, in that perfect love of the countless blessed angels and human beings where no one will love another less than himself, each will rejoice for every other as for himself. If, then, the human heart will scarcely be able to contain its own joy that will belong to it from so great a good, how will it comprehend so many and such great joys?'[42]

In Bonaventure's vision of future beatitude, human beings are united through shared, ecstatic happiness, so that the whole mystical body, in addition to the united parts of individual selves, together express the radiance of divine Beauty

We have so far considered what the self's journey from creation to completion *might* have looked like had sin not interrupted its beautiful progression. We have done this by examining the vocation given to the self at creation, the aesthetics of the unfallen human person, and the luminosity of its completed eschatological experience. But the fact remains

[41] *Brev*. VII.5.1.
[42] *Brev*. VII.7.7-8.

that at some point between humanity's beginning and end—the period in which the world now finds itself—human souls abandoned corporeality. In glory, according to Bonaventure, the body's reception of the four dowries will make it like a bride participating in the soul's groom-like glory—a fitting medieval analogy for how the body is to be loved, claimed, and cherished by the soul.[43] But in this world, the soul has failed to gather and carry dim elemental nature into intelligible light, causing it to scatter and fall apart toward diminishment and death. As a result, it has become difficult to recognize the goodness of corporeality here and now. Bodies no longer reveal beauty through perfect proportion and growing luminosity. They no longer correspond sensually to the beauty growing in graced souls. Human souls abandoned their bodies at the fall, and now they no longer know how to read them, to love and share them, or how to carry all things to perfection within them. It is to this sinful "interruption" that I now turn.

2. Fragmentation

Bonaventure dedicates the whole third section of his *Breviloquium* and much of volume two of his *Commentarius in librum Sententiarum* to a discussion of the Fall and its consequences. Describing the Fall itself (which we also saw briefly discussed in the *Hexaemeron*), Bonaventure explores Eve's experience with the forbidden fruit as a kind of indulged false spiritual perception. In his view, Eve privileged one book—the outer book of creation—without reference to the inner book. "And so the woman," Bonaventure explains,

> by listening to the serpent with her exterior perception, failed to read the inner book, which was legible to the right judgment of reason. She kept her mind on the outer book instead, and so began to focus on the external good. Because her perception did not press forward to the infallible truth, her desire began to turn away to a changeable good... [after which] man similarly turned to the outer book and to transitory goods.[44]

In Bonaventure's view, Eve's fundamental problem was that she failed to see creation as a sign of uncreated Meaning. This is why Bonaventure agrees with Augustine that "'sin is not a desire for evil things, but a forsaking of what is better.'" In sin, the will, "because of

[43]On this, see Bynum, *Resurrection of the Body*, 242.
[44]*Brev*. III.3.3.

its imperfection, mutability, and fickleness, rejects the Good that is unfailing and immutable, and clings to one which is changeable." As a result, the "measure, form and order" (truth or trinitarian trace) of the desired creature is corrupted.[45] Considering all this in aesthetic terms, we might say that Eve tried to master the simple unity of Truth (to "be like God") by clinging to one of its created signs (a "part" broken from the whole). She wanted to know Truth possessively, rather than ecstatically, and thus she severed corporeal creatures from the beauty they once possessed as parts reflecting the unity of divine Wisdom.[46] What this amounted to, most fundamentally, was the soul's rejection of corporeality through the abandonment of its meaning. It seems fitting, then, that sin resulted in the diminishment of corporeality's most perfect summation, the human body. By rejecting the beauty of God and creation, the self rejected its own beauty; order and proportion were disrupted and dislodged through the soul's failure to properly use the body's sensory data. It is possible to see the self's failure to perceive external corporeal beauty extending, in a sense, to the self's perception of its own body "Inordinately raising themselves above themselves," Bonaventure explains, Adam and Eve "fell miserably beneath themselves."[47] Humanity's "abandonment" of corporeality explains the shame experienced by Adam and Even when they saw that their bodies were naked. The immediate result of corporeality's objectification, Bonaventure writes, is that "men and women felt their punishment in the rebellion and shame of their own flesh."[48] Here Bonaventure is probably speaking of disordered sexual desire or lust. But lust itself can be seen as the possessive desire of another creature for its own sake, or even simply as a desire

[45] *Brev*. III.4-5.

[46] Perhaps this is the reason Bonaventure describes sin as a kind of greed: Adam "fell away from the divine friendship into his own greed and disobedience... the man and woman there occurred a disordering of their faculties from highest to lowest.. Both of them fell into disobedience and were enticed by greed because both had risen up in pride, the woman by seeking and desiring what she did not possess, the man by too greatly loving and clinging to what he had [woman]. The woman believed that by eating she would be exalted; Adam, relying on his own importance and God's love, thought he would be punished lightly, for he had never yet experienced the rigor of divine severity" (*Brev*. III.3.3-4). Greed is also seen in Lucifer's sin: "Having free will, Lucifer was able to turn toward the supreme good or to turn to a private good. But aroused by the sight of his own beauty and eminence, he fell in love with himself and his private good, and so laid presumptuous claim to the eminence he had and sought to gain a further excellence that he did not possess (*Brev.* II.7.3). The relationship between greed and pride will be discussed more explicitly in chapter five, section four.

[47] *Brev*. II.3.4.We see something similar happening in Bonaventure's description of Lucifer's fall, though as a creature with a simple spiritual nature, the ugliness of sin did not manifest itself through the fracturing of parts. Nevertheless, wanting to be like God and not accepting the finitude of his own created nature, Bonaventure tells us that Lucifer became his "own end" and thus thwarted his true potential.

[48] *Brev*. III.4.1.

for the *body* of another creature, without consideration of the whole person. It's worth considering more broadly what it might mean for any part of the body—in fact, the whole of "body" itself—to become a source of shame because of the sinful soul's propensity to grasp and possess it crudely, to strip it of meaning by severing it from the light of Truth. Here again we can begin to imagine how Bonaventure's understanding of sin might speak to human experiences of bodily alienation and diminishment.

According to Bonaventure, a major penalty of the self's brokenness and the body's ensuing meaninglessness, of course, was the promise of bodily death (the "fullness" of diminishment). The body's original immortality came from its basic proportion to its immortal soul, which was contingent upon the body having a perfect proportion of elements: "The actual incorruptibility and immortality of Adam's body derived first from the soul, as its determining and influencing principle; from the excellent coordination of his body, as its disposing and receptive principle..."[49] So when the soul abandoned the truth of corporeality, the body exchanged meaningfulness for mortality. Bonaventure explains the body's mortality as a kind of fatal sickness in which the perfect proportion of the four elements became permanently dislodged. This perhaps helps explain why, in Bonaventure's view, death cannot be averted even by those human bodies that have been reclaimed by holy, contemplative souls such as the saints. By going unloved and being unknown, the body's elemental proportion fell into permanent disrepair, and body-soul proportion was likewise corrupted.[50] John Saward thus rightly describes death as a "final ugliness" in which the

> Body's beauty is destroyed. It decomposes, rots, falls apart. In fact, when no longer informed by the spiritual soul, it is not really a body at all, but only a loose amalgam of dissipating elements... the separation of immortal soul from mortal body is a marring of the beauty of the whole human nature, which God made to be a unity of matter and spirit. It is a cruel and crude severance.

Though Saward does not directly discuss proportion and luminosity in his short article on Bonaventure's aesthetics of the resurrection, he does suggest here that the body's diminishment is the result of its divorce from spirit or soul. And it is because of this

[49] *Brev*. II.11.4.

[50] This is suggested by *Brev*. III.9.5: "Hence, as grace does not remove penalty and corruption from the flesh, so also the consequences of original sin—concupiscence and bodily infirmity—may coexist with healing grace. And so, although concupiscence may be reduced little by little, its root remains; thus, no earthly wayfarer is completely rid of it, except the most Blessed Virgin through a singular grace."

fragmentation that signful luminosity becomes impossible for the body to achieve in this worldly life.

For aesthetic reasons discussed under II.1.2.6 above, Bonaventure persists in using penal language to describe what should by now look simply like a logical consequence of sin:

> Finally because the man had chosen to be separated from the good of his mind on account of the good of his flesh, by the just judgment of God the soul is unwillingly separated from its body by the body's death and dissolution into dust. In the order of nature, God had given to the man a body that would obey his soul, procreate without lust, grow without defect, and remain free from the corruption of death. Now, because he had sinned, the order of divine justice ordained that all these qualities would be taken away and imposed their contraries instead; thus sin would not remain unpunished and disordered—for divine providence could never allow that to happen... [Deprived of original justice], our souls incur a four-fold penalty: weakness, ignorance, malice, and concupiscence... These spiritual punishments are matched in the body by all kinds of pain, imperfection, labor, sickness, and affliction. To these are finally added the penalty of death and the return to dust, and the penalty of the deprivation of the vision of God and the loss of heavenly glory."[51]

But Bonaventure does not rely exclusively on penal language when describing sin's bodily effects. In his *Commentarius in II librum Sententiarum*, Bonaventure describes bodily death as "not only a punishment but also [the self's] true fault."[52] The self's sin logically brings about its own death. If death is God's "punishment," then "punishment," for Bonaventure, is simply God making the soul's own will manifest within the body. Death is the full revelation and manifestation of what the willing soul has done—or rather, failed to do—to elemental nature. This once again signals the profound relationship existing between corporeality and human knowing. "Failing to know" abandons corporeality to a meaninglessness so real that it is best described as the concrete disruption of elemental parts. And the irreparable disorder of humanity's parts means that it is no longer poised for sensual beautification. By abandoning its contemplative vocation, the soul's yearning to express itself in corporeality became corrupt, and human beings failed to become beautiful. Bodies became isolating, cramped-in spaces where once they were luminous vessels of spiritual communion.[53] This reading of original sin, I submit, is what animates

[51] *Brev*. III.4.5-5.2.
[52] See II *Sent.* 30.1.2.
[53] Supporting this, it is interesting to consider how Bonaventure describes the bodies of the damned. Though in a sense alive because of the soul's immortality, Bonaventure describes them as dead "corpses" (a reference to Isaiah 66:24). The fires of hell are described as suited to the lowest expression of

Bonaventure's description of the body's chronic state of rebellion against the soul.[54] It is a sickness passed down from parent to child, through which newly created souls come to inform (however clumsily) fallen, poorly-proportioned human flesh.

The body's permanent move toward death, of course, must have significant implications for the way in which beautiful progression sensually expresses itself in the world's fallen context. If increasingly beautiful souls are ordered to express themselves in correspondingly beautiful bodies, it seems reasonable to assume that the lingering effects of original sin (bodily death) must disrupt this aesthetic integrity somewhat drastically. Because bodily death is a permanent consequence of original sin, there is no longer any guarantee that inward beauty will be able to express itself as corporeal beauty. A kind of sensual "ugliness" seems impossible to avoid for human creatures doomed to body-soul separation, since beauty involves a union of parts, and in our world, sin has forever upset the balance of those parts. The question of whether human "ugliness" can ever possess a kind of hidden intelligibility, and of whether broken bodies can recover their noetic function in spite of their untruthful appearance, will become a dominant theme in my following chapter.

Of course, some have objected to Bonaventure's anthropology, arguing that it does not represent a faithful Aristotelian hylomorphism, maintaining, rather, an unhelpful but characteristically Christian body-soul dualism.[55] But as I have tried to show in this chapter, Bonaventure's way of configuring the human person as a union of parts ontologically capable of separation provides him with a unique and potentially very helpful way of reflecting on the disruption human ontological progression. Moreover, it leaves space for the strange bodily dis-ease experienced by living Christians to be expressed and explored. Nevertheless, there remains an element of paradox in Bonaventure's anthropology. For him, the human soul is not a self without the body. To speak of body-soul separation is to speak of something that is not human. And yet, as we have seen, sin produces a strange circumstance in which the dissonance of human parts occurs. The body is orphaned by the

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corporeality: "The sinner must be afflicted [in hell] by what is of the basest nature, and hence must suffer, not from a spiritual substance, but from one that is material and lowly, that is, the *dregs* of material bodies; they must be fettered to this filth, and *tormented with fire and sulfur*." Bonaventure goes on to say that the fire cleaves to the damned as the tormenting principle like the soul to the body as its life-giving principle (*Brev*. VII.6.5).

[54] *Brev*. III.6.

[55] On this problem, Thomas Osborne points to *A. Pegis, St. Thomas and the Problem of the Soul in the Thirteenth Century* (Toronto: St. Michael's College, 1934), E. Weber, *La personne humaine au xiiie siecle* (Paris: Vrin, 1991), 1-113., and others.

soul, and in one sense, even if a redeemed soul reclaims its body and the self's proper order is regained, the body cannot enjoy full renewal except by a fresh divine intervention called resurrection.[56] The soul can't reconfigure what has fallen away. It can learn to see God again by cherishing corporeality as a sign of uncreated Beauty, but it can't recreate what it has lost. What I will try to show in chapter three is how Christ's life, death and resurrection opens up a way for fallen corporeality to be reclaimed so that the body's darkness becomes a place of hidden spiritual light despite the continuing sensual darkness it bears on the way toward disintegration and death. Thus we see that while Christian theologians have long spoken of the body's rebellion from the soul when trying to explain sin's effect on the human person, Bonaventure's way of framing the problem encourages us to turn things around and to seek healing by attending to the soul's relationship to its body and the whole corporeal world. Contemporary believers might find it helpful to consider the many thoughts and acts by which the unconverted will continues to alienate corporeality with messages of guilt, fear, pride or greed—indeed, with any lie that facilitates bodily diminishment.

[56]Bonaventure states this clearly in *Brev*. VII.5.5: "Now, God has imprinted this order upon nature, but nature itself cannot fulfill it, since it cannot raise the dead. But since divine providence does nothing in vain, it is necessary that each individual body should be restored by God's own power: immortal and complete in all its parts, thus preserving the whole truth of the nature. Thus, nature does not have these things in its power, but only in its appetite. It cannot restore to life the same body once destroyed, since it does not have full control over the substance of a thing; nor can it make a body immortal, since everything born of nature is corruptible, nor again can it gather what has been scattered abroad. Therefore, resurrection cannot be brought about by seminal or natural causes, but only by the First Cause; so that it occurs in a wondrous and supernatural way at the command of the divine will." For Bonaventure, the corporeality of human beings is permanently effected by the Fall, and resurrection requires a fresh divine intervention.

Chapter Four

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When Truth is Ugly

> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself... And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him... so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
>
> Philippians 2:5-11, *ESV*

Having explored how, for Bonaventure, dim corporeality was proportioned to become "beautiful" through the mediation of whole body-soul human selves, and how the soul's fall interrupted human contemplation, abandoning corporeality to death and disintegration, we are now better positioned to understand the place of Jesus Christ in Bonaventure's synthesis. In this chapter, I will show how, when met by the brokenness of our world, God's way of drawing creation back to its divine Source through the Incarnation establishes a paschal aesthetics as the means by which, in Christ, human beings may regain aesthetic integrity, reclaim corporeality, and continue their journey to glory. Of course, as I have already argued, "aesthetic integrity" does not suggest that interior beauty will obviously correspond to its sensual manifestation. The body's irretrievable move toward death means just the opposite; because of sin, every human being must die. Every human creature, no matter how interiorly beautiful it becomes in this life, must endure death and all the experiences of bodily diminishment leading up to it. The death of Jesus Christ, however, makes it possible for diminishment to become a paradoxical expression of generative beauty. Through Christ the Head, what once was terminal can become meaningful again for all of Christ's members.

To demonstrate this claim, I will show, simply, how for Bonaventure the interior beauty of Jesus Christ charges the sensual ugliness of his death on the cross, transfiguring and making it a place of hidden life. In the Passion, Jesus' soul actively directs his body's

move toward death even though, in another sense, his life is passively taken from him by the circumstances of the Fall. This means that although Jesus' humanity was subject to death just like the rest of humanity, on a deeper level there was in him no interruption or severance of the ordered and beautiful relationship existing between body and soul. Jesus' way of confronting death is such that in him corporeality is never "abandoned," but is rather surrendered fully to the Father in whom its meaning is affirmed and vindicated through the resurrection. Because of Christ's position as head of the Church, this victory opens the way for his members to respond in like trust when confronting the suffering and alienation of their own bodies—to live their dying with a generosity that fruitfully affirms their own meaning and the meaning of all corporeal creatures, leaving humanity's contemplative vocation mysteriously fulfilled. Moreover, the paschal mystery reveals the new sensual aesthetics of spiritual progression once disrupted by the Fall. While the interior beauty revealed in his resurrection facilitates Jesus' worldly diminishment, for Bonaventure its visibility remains dim and unintelligible. This reality invites believers to discern and live by a new aesthetics of progression, which takes into account both the noetic limitations and opportunities of worldly embodiment.

As we proceed, I will establish my claim by offering a brief reflection on the meaning of the Incarnation within the history of corporeality's spiritual evolution, followed by a brief analysis of Christ's particular human nature as understood by Bonaventure. Having done this, I will then offer a long reading of the three movements in Bonaventure's *Lignum vitae* (Origin, Passion and Glorification) against the three-fold metaphysic that is by now familiar, mapping Origin onto emanation, Glorification onto return, and holding up the Passion as a portrait of the Word's exemplary Beauty making human beauty possible through Jesus Christ ("progression"). I will argue that in Bonaventure's *Lignum vitae*, Christ's move toward death in the passion gradually manifests a convergence of revelations. The Truth of God and the potential truth of all humanity are exposed to one another in the increasing clarity of Christ's particular humanity. However, the revelation is cloaked beneath the dimming sensuality of Christ's body, which grows in apparent unintelligibility to the point where Bonaventure calls Jesus "ugly" in appearance at the exact moment of his death.[1] While the death that rends Jesus' body and soul apart from one

[1]*Lig. vit*. 29. I am working with the English translation of the *Lignum vitae* found in *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God, The Tree of Life, The Life of St. Francis,* The Classics of Western Spirituality, trans. and ed. Ewert Cousins (New York: Paulist Press, 1978),118-175.

another is the most dim and sensually obscure moment of the incarnation, it is also, paradoxically, the brightest and most beautiful.

The reason Truth's beauty is more exposed the "uglier" Christ's humanity grows is because of the *way* Christ encounters the death to which he is led. Rather than grasping after his own corporeal life as though it were a thing of ultimate meaning (the sin of Eden, we'll recall), Christ's human soul lives from its knowledge of the Word, in whom his identity is immersed and through whom he is completely transparent to the Father. We might say that despite the efforts of the world to break the integrity of Truth's revelation by killing and dominating Christ, Christ opens himself to reality as it comes to him—trusting himself to the Father—without the defensiveness or violence that leads to genuine interior ugliness. While the world does succeed in breaking apart Jesus' body and soul through the act of murder, it is significant, I think, that according to Bonaventure, both of those "parts" remain hypostatically joined to the Word during his three days of body-soul estrangement.[2] What I want to suggest through all this is that by finding one's own humanity within Christ's, it is possible for a believer to live her "ugliness" in such a way that it becomes a means of receiving and communicating the meaning of the self encompassed by the divine Word. If Christ's journey to death is for Bonaventure the same event as Christ's self-revelation, then this spirituality must also be possible for those who are becoming members of Christ's mystical body. Moreover, Jesus' way of being in his Passion shows how bodily death can actually become a means by which humanity fulfills its contemplative vocation. In fact, if contemplation is the means of human progression, then this must logically be so. And so while on one level Jesus bears all the marks of being a victim onto whom death is passively forced in the Passion (enduring feelings of confusion, grief and abandonment), Jesus' approach to others, his generosity with himself, and his openness to the Father suggest that on a deeper level, he remains very much in control of his own situation. Jesus isn't just a "victim" of his violent death. Rather, as Beauty incarnate, Jesus has become master and mediator of his body, offering all that it contains up to the Father and thus completing, through the union of his soul and body, creation's return to its originating Source right at the moment where everything seems lost. Diminishment does not become

[2]"Therefore, when he died, even though his soul was separated from his body, the oneness of his person remained, and thus neither soul nor body was separated from his Godhead. Now since it is precisely the union of body and soul that makes a living human being, it follows that, during those three days, Christ was not a man, although both his soul and body were united to the Word" (*Brev*. IV.9.8).

"good" in this reading of Christ's death, but it is able to be graced and *harnessed* for good. The aesthetics of the paschal mystery can teach human beings how to die their deaths in the direction of resurrection, where before death was a terminal ugliness.

1. The Meaning of the Incarnation

In his chapter on Bonaventure in *Studies in Theological Style: Clerical Styles*, Balthasar highlights a significant passage from Bonaventure's *De reductione artium ad theologiam*, which Zachary Hayes also identifies as "a very succinct statement of the central insight of a cosmic Christology."[3] In the relevant text, Bonaventure first states what I tried to demonstrate throughout chapter three, namely that "the natural tendency in matter is so ordered to the intellectual principles that generation would not be perfect without the union of the rational soul with the material body."[4] In other words, the fruitfulness of corporeality is found in its union with a rational soul that is able to trace and actualize the body's meaning through knowledge of the divine Word. But then Bonaventure goes on to add something new:

> We come to the conclusion that the highest and noblest perfection cannot exist in this world unless that nature in which the seminal principles are present [corporeality], and that nature in which the intellectual principles are present [the created, knowing soul], and that nature in which the ideal principles are present [the divine Art, Beauty or Word in whom the the First Principle fully reproduces itself], are simultaneously brought together in the unity of one person, as was done in the incarnation of the Son of God."[5]

Bonaventure is saying here that something new and deeply significant has been achieved in the person of Jesus Christ: while spiritual knowing and corporeal matter reaches a kind of perfection in the human person, true perfection can only be accomplished in a human being who is also the Word—a person who is a unity of human body, human soul and divine Meaning itself. Though human beings are a unity of body and soul, a new, richer beauty appears in the unity of Christ. It is this beauty that enables human beauty to reach its true, generative potential, and it is for this reason that Hayes emphasizes the Incarnation as a

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[3]Zachary Hayes, *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings* (New York: Crossroad, 1999), 30.
[4]*De red. art. 20.* See Bonaventure, *On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology*, The Works of Saint Bonaventure trans., ed., Zachary Hayes (St. Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute, 1996), 57.
[5]*De red. art. 20.*

kind of "cosmic completion," arguing that sin was not the primary reason for the Incarnation in Bonaventure's view.[6] The Incarnation, Hayes explains, "is about overcoming all obstacles to the fullest union with God we can have, including but not limited to sin."[7] In the same vein, Balthasar identifies human beings as the "crowning process of the world's coming to be," but Jesus in particular as "the crowning of [this] historical process."[8] Later, Balthasar likens the incarnation to a word of the mind clothing itself in a voice, a revealing analogy that Bonaventure himself uses: "No one is more suitable to lead humanity back to a knowledge of God than the Word, by whom the Father expresses himself, a Word that has the potential to be united to the flesh, as a (human) word has to its utterance."[9] For Bonaventure, as Mark McIntosh has suggested of other Christian Platonists, salvation is humanity becoming the "speech of God" through union with the divine Word in the Incarnation. The Incarnation as the deepest historical moment of divine Speech is what draws creation into its own deepest self-utterance. Balthasar reminds his readers once again, as we saw in chapter one, that this "beautiful" expression is ultimately rooted in the Trinity, who expresses itself as uncreated Beauty in the Word:

> "...the eternal Word, the expression of the Godhead, when become audible and visible, can be understood only as the expression of the Godhead: In Jesus Christ, the whole Trinity gives witness to itself. The Father gives witness to himself in the fact (of the Incarnation), for he is the power: the Son in the utterance, for he is the Word; the Holy Spirit in the intention, for he is the love and bond. Without God's Trinity, the Incarnation of God cannot be understood, and the phenomenon of Jesus Christ cannot be interpreted.[10]

It is no doubt for this reason that Bonaventure clearly emphasizes the Incarnation as a work of the whole Trinity, a point that will become significant as we begin our close reading of the *Lignum vitae.* Although the Incarnation is in a special sense the work of (or "most fittingly appropriated to") the second divine Person, Bonaventure explains that "The Incarnation is a work of the Trinity, through which took place the assumption of flesh by the Godhead and the union of the Godhead with the flesh."[11] According to Bonaventure,

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[6]"What has happened between God and the world in Christ is the fulfillment of the deepest potential of the created cosmos so that a cosmos without Christ would not have reached its fullness." Hayes, introduction to *The Reduction of the Arts to Theology, by Bonaventure*, trans., Zachary Hayes (St. Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute, 1996), 30.
[7]Hayes, *Mystical Writings*, 92.
[8]Balthasar, *Theological Style,* 307.
[9]*Brev*. IV.2.6.
[10]Balthasar, *Theological Style,* 327-328.
[11]*Brev*. IV.2.2.

Beauty is expressed first in the eternal Word who manifests Trinitarian Unity, but it communicates its power to human beings through God's bodily Incarnation:

> The flesh is the part of our being most evident to us as well as the most distant from God. And so, in order that this work might be designated in the most expressive manner, so as to indicate better the humiliation [of God] and more profoundly explain the exaltation [of our flesh]. It is called, not 'inanimation,' but 'incarnation.'"[12]

We have seen so far that for Bonaventure, the task of achieving creation's salvation is first taken up by God in the Incarnation before continuing in the paschal mystery.[13] Christ as humanity "fully returned" to God in the metaphysical journey of creaturely being makes sense of the emphasis Bonaventure gives to Christ's headship. In Bonaventure's soteriology, creation is able to be redeemed because the "return" to Beauty is opened up by Jesus Christ the Supreme Hierarch, just as Adam and Eve were the cause of creation's fall and disorder. This understanding of Jesus as the accomplished salvation (or, we might say, the "realized meaning") of creation is a central key to understanding Bonaventure's soteriology, and the cause of the aesthetic parallels we will observe between Jesus Christ in this chapter and Francis in the next, who for Bonaventure is the most perfect example of a human person brought to life beneath Christ's headship.

2. The Nature of Christ

Christology features prominently in virtually all of Bonaventure's works, with highly developed accounts appearing in book three of his *Commentarius in librum Sententiarum* and in his *Questiones disputatae de scientia Christi.* A simple, systematic account, which is best for our purposes, is offered in Bonaventure's *Breviloquium*. Considering both the inward and outward, bodily state of Jesus Christ reveals how the brokenness of human

[12] *Brev*. IV.2.4.

[13] For an excellent exploration of how some of the important Christological themes I have traced so far in Bonaventure are held in common by many premodern Christian Platonists, and how these themes emerge from and give rise to an organic synthesis of Christian doctrine, see Mark McIntosh, "The Maker's Meaning: Divine Ideas and Salvation," *Modern Theology* 28.3 (July 2012): 365-384. While some have emphasized the uniqueness of Bonaventure's Christology, McIntosh's ongoing study of the divine ideas tradition (the exemplarism discussed in chapter two above) shows how Bonaventure's Christology fits within a long tradition affirming "a crucial contemplative role for the human as the creature who, holding together the goodness of the material and the spiritual, is meant to prize the bountiful goodness and truth of all things as a gift of the Creator, and by honest and non-possessive thinking and thanking re-unite the whole creation with its origin and end in God." See "Maker's Meaning," 376.

nature was taken on by Christ despite the fact that his human soul never experienced the greed of spiritual rebellion. Although Christ's sinless body did not suffer the same infirmities as other human bodies, in Bonaventure's view, it nevertheless did not escape key "diminishing" manifestations of sin's penalty, and ultimately death.

Bonaventure devotes the fourth part of his *Breviloquium* to the subject of the Incarnation, explaining how God took on the whole of what it means to be a body-soul human composite. He writes that Mary "conceived not only the flesh, but the flesh infused with a soul and united to the Word, untainted by sin but completely holy and immaculate."[14] Jesus was "free from corruption of mind and body..."[15] Because Christ's humanity possessed the fulness of grace, he "was immune from all sin—both in act and in possibility—because he neither sinned nor was capable of sinning..."[16] The divine and human aspects of Christ's knowledge were likewise perfect and complete. The *Breviloquium* distinguishes five different ways of considering Christ's knowledge:

> One, by His divinity, He knew actually and comprehensively all things, actual and possible, finite and infinite. Two, by glory [in the human intellect], He knew actually and comprehensively all things actual and finite; but the infinite [his human nature] did not know, except perhaps through a knowledge that was virtual or excessive [ecstatic knowledge]. Three, by grace, He knew everything related to the salvation of [human]kind. Four, by integrity of nature, as it was in Adam, He knew everything related to the structure of the universe. Five, by sensible experience, He knew all that falls under the senses.[17]

In these five ways of knowing, Bonaventure distinguishes between the knowledge Christ had as a human being and as the divine Word. Christ's divinity knew all things, while his human nature knew, beatifically, all that it was possible for a human being to know. As Bonaventure later elaborates, the created "intellect of Christ grasps everything within the reach of finite nature beatified by the infinite Good to which it is supremely united." But though Bonaventure argues that Christ's human soul experienced the light of glory in this world, Bonaventure's well-known gospel meditation, the *Lignum vitae*, speaks repeatedly of Christ's mental disorientation (*confusio)* in the passion as he moves toward death. And while Bonaventure writes that Christ's body entered the world unstained by sin, he also

[14]*Brev*. IV.3.1.
[15]*Brev*. IV.3.3.
[16]*Brev*. IV.5.2.
[17]*Brev*. IV.6.1.

explains that the pattern of Jesus' living and dying is what merited the bodily glorification achieved in the resurrection.[18] All this suggests that Jesus' body shared something in common with the pre-Fall bodies of Adam and Eve, which were poised and ready to be glorified through the contemplative guidance of a soul fully open to God and creation. But because of his union with the Word, Jesus' soul was already beatified at conception for Bonaventure, suggesting that if the pattern set before him was the same as it was for Adam and Eve, then his body would also already be glorified. Jesus' pre-resurrection human nature thus seems to be unique—not Edenic, and certainly not like human beings here and now, but also not completely like the eschatological bodies of the redeemed. Jesus' pre-resurrection soul was already glorified, but his body was not. Something about his body, "perfect" though it was, still conformed to the broken aesthetics of this world. Bonaventure thinks it would be unfitting for innocence to take on the four "penalties" experienced by human beings on account of the Fall (ignorance, bodily infirmity, malice and concupiscence).[19] But Christ does, nevertheless, take on other "defects" that

> give occasion for the practice of perfect virtue and testify to a humanity that is genuine, not feigned. These are the handicaps that pertain to human nature in general, such as hunger and thirst in the absence of nourishment, and sorrow and fear in the presence of harm. Hence it was fitting that Christ assume these, and he did in fact do so.[20]

Again,

> Christ assumed not only a human nature, but also the defects associated with it. He thus assumed our bodily disabilities such as hunger, thirst, and fatigue, and such handicaps of the soul as sorrow, anguish, and fear. Christ did not, however, assume all the bodily afflictions, such as the many types of physical illness, nor the spiritual penalties [due to original sin], such as ignorance and the rebelliousness of the flesh against the spirit.[21]

It is as though Bonaventure doesn't want to have Christ taking on anything that might be interpreted as a punishment fittingly or "beautifully" meted out against the ugliness of sin, but does see Christ taking on the very basic vulnerability to diminishment that is so much a part of what it means to be human in this world. Thus Bonaventure maintains that

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[18]See *Brev*. IV.7
[19]*Brev*. IV.8.4.
[20]*Brev*. IV.8.4.
[21]*Brev.* IV.8.2

> Christ suffered in every part of his body and every power of his soul, even in the highest part of his reason. Although as a spiritual principle united to things above, [his soul] fully enjoyed the presence of God, as a principle of nature attached to things below, it suffered most intensely, for Christ was a pilgrim as well as one possessing [beatific union with God].[22]

Studying Christ's nature confirms the existence of a worldly brokenness that cannot be healed before all things are renewed, even in souls that have "reclaimed" their bodies to the point of experiencing beatitude here and now. Indeed, Bonaventure argues along with other Scholastic theologians of the period that the worldly suffering of Christ is actually *heightened* by the holiness of his soul and the wholeness of his body.[23] We will come back to this in due course.

One could object at this point that perhaps innocent, unglorified Adam and Eve possessed a similar quality of human nature, but never experienced occasions for hunger, thirst, sorrow, fear or death in the untarnished beauty of Eden. Building on this, one could also speculate that perhaps Jesus' sinless body, like the bodies of Adam and Eve, would eventually have become glorified without dying had death not been thrust upon him by the violence of others (though considering the beatitude of Jesus' soul, the delay of bodily glorification seems inexplicable).[24] However even if nothing in Christ's body left him *ontologically* subject to death, we can say with confidence that in Bonaventure's view, sin has at least made a *world* in which every human creature must die.[25] If this was not intrinsic to the kind of body Jesus took on, it is at the very least intrinsic to the world Jesus' body was a part of. The world's preference for ugliness means that when untarnished beauty appeared in its midst, beauty was attacked and forced through the crucible of a worldly aesthetics.

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[22] *Brev*. IV.9.5. Brackets are the editor's.

[23] Because Christ's "body possessed perfect physical balance and his senses were in their full vigor, and as his soul possessed perfect love for God and supreme concern for neighbor, his anguish in both body and soul was immeasurable" (*Brev*. IV.9.6).

[24] Or perhaps we could imagine instead that something *like* death (without any trace of suffering or sadness) might have been the the locus of creaturely transposition at the end of a natural, earthly life. An example of what this might look like can be found in C.S. Lewis' fantasy story *Out of the Silent Planet*, where "*hnau"* or rational creatures live to their fulfillment, but can be killed if death intrudes from the outside. When Weston, Devine and Ransom travel from Earth to the unfallen planet of Malacandra, they are able to kill *hnau*, but this kind of death is completely foreign to the Malacandrans, and a thing of pain and grief, whereas the death-like passage every hnau makes at the end of its allotted time on Malacandra is devoid of any sadness. See C.S. Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet* (Macmillan, 1943).

[25] I have found nothing in Bonaventure's writings that speak of the translation of Enoch or Elijah, of 1 Thessalonians 4:17, or anything pointing to the assumption of Mary.

3. The *Lignum vitae*

In the close reading of Christ's life that follows I have chosen to rely largely on the gospel meditation already mentioned, the *Lignum vitae*, to show how Christ establishes a paschal aesthetics, opening human ugliness to the mystery of transfiguration.[26] I have chosen this text for two reasons. First and most importantly, medieval gospel meditations were written as companions for the spiritual journey; writers of meditations hoped for their readers to be drawn, through compassion, into the spiritual realities revealed by Jesus' life and death. Since I am proposing that the pattern of Christ's dying and rising opens up new aesthetic paradigms for use by believers of today, it seems fitting to engage a gospel meditation for this task. The aesthetic paradigms I am trying to illumine emerge from a particular way of weaving together Bonaventure's vision of the historical Christ described in the *Lignum vitae* with the mystical or "cosmic" Christ already seen in works such as the *Hexaemeron* and *Itinerarium*. Denys Turner and Ilia Delio have highlighted striking parallels between the *Lignum vitae* and the *Itinerarium*, despite the fact that they belong to different textual genres. Speaking of the *Itinerarium*, Turner observes that Bonaventure

> locates the *transitus* [of the sixth day]... not abstractly in the incarnate Christ as some generalized symbol... [but instead] Bonaventure locates that *transitus* in the broken, crucified Christ... It is in this, the most radical conclusion of his *Itinerarium* that we find the unity of Bonaventure's Neoplatonic "exemplarism" with the almost brutal concreteness and historical specificness of his meditations on the life of Christ in the *Lignum vitae.*[27]

What I want to suggest as we go along is that the visceral, bodily nature of Bonaventure's journey of ascent can be observed in the second section of the *Lignum vitae* (on Christ's passion), and that this is what makes Bonaventure's mysticism so humanly accessible. It communicates a vision of the paschal mystery rooted in the worldly realities of bodily and existential suffering, making participation possible in what might seem, after a mere cursory glance at the *Itinerarium* or other ascent-themed mystical texts, an esoteric and

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[26]There have been few studies of Bonaventure's Lignum vitae. A recent devotional contribution is Rick Martignetti, *Hidden Beauty: Reflections on Saint Bonaventure's Tree of Life* (Pheonix: Tau Publishing, 2013). For a study that engages the *Lignum vitae*'s paschal themes, see Patrick Francis O'Connell, "The *Lignum vitae* of Saint Bonaventure and the Medieval Devotional Tradition," (PhD diss, Fordham University, 1985).

[27]Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 132. It is precisely this fact that makes Bonaventure so well suited to the aims and concerns of this thesis.

illusive passage reserved for very special people. The passage to God, which is the recreation and confirmation of human beauty through and in uncreated Beauty, occurs by fusing concrete human "ugliness" with the historical, cruciform "ugliness" of Jesus Christ. The *Hexaemeron* described the virtues and spiritual dispositions making this passage possible, while the *Lignum vitae* shows how these dispositions animate the humanity of Christ, which human beings are invited to model so as to be united in the paschal mystery.

My second reason for working with the *Lignum vitae* is because of how well, as I have already hinted, the text's shape corresponds to the cyclical metaphysics I have mentioned so often in previous chapters. Bonaventure describes the text's three movements as three layers of branches on a tree going from lowest to highest, as if to show, I think, the motif of ascent we see most strongly pronounced in the *Itinerarium*. In the *Lignum vitae,* the lowest section describes Christ's origin and life, the middle his passion, and the highest his glorification. Each of these layers is comprised of four branches (sections in the text), and upon each branch hangs a fruit so that in total there are twelve branches bearing twelve fruits.[28] The totality of Christ's journey from the Father, into the depths of the world enabling its spiritual progression though the passion, and back to the Father in his resurrection and glorification, is the "Tree of Life" made available for human participation, making Christ the world's "medicine."[29] Bonaventure describes this at the beginning of his text, imploring readers to

> Imagine that the leaves are a most effective medicine to prevent and cure every kind of sickness, because the word of the cross is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. Let the flowers be beautiful with the radiance of every color and perfumed with the sweetness of every fragrance, awakening and attracting the anxious hearts of men of desire. Imagine that there are twelves fruits, having every delight and the sweetness of every taste. This fruit is offered to God's servants to be tasted so that when they eat it, they may always be satisfied, yet never grow weary of its taste. This is the fruit that took its origin from the Virgin's womb and reached its savory maturity on the tree of the cross under the midday heat of the Eternal Sun, that is, the love of Christ.[30]

2. Tree of Life Image (Tables and Illustrations)

[28] *Lig. vit.* Prologus. 2. Bonaventure draws this image from Revelation 22:1-2.
[29] Bonaventure explains that "this fruit is one and undivided," though it "nourishes devout souls with varied consolations in view of its varied states, excellence, powers and works."
[30] *Lig. vit.* Prologus. 3.

Pacino di Bonaguida, Tree of Life, c. 1310, tempera and gold leaf on panel.
Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence
Many depictions of the Tree of Life, including this one, have four images per branch, drawing attention to the four different moments in Christ's history which together illustrate each fruit. There are a total of forty-eight stories in the text, together describing a total of twelve fruits—four for each of the three overarching movements of Origin, Passion and Glorification.

While Bonaventure does not himself directly apply the movements of emanation, exemplarity and return to the *Lignum vita*e's sections on the origin, passion and glorification of Christ, the *Hexaemeron* does identify Bonaventure's three-fold metaphysic with the movement of the Word drawing all things back to their Paternal Source. It is because of this that Bonaventure there describes the Word as the "Tree of Life." We first saw a section of this passage in chapter one, and have returned to it several times since:

> The Word expresses the Father and the things made through him, and he is foremost in leading us to the Unity of the Father who brings all things together. For this reason he is the Tree of Life, because through this center we return and are given life in the fountain of life... This is the metaphysical center that leads back and this is the sum total of our metaphysics: it is about emanation, exemplarity and consummation, that is, to be illumined by spiritual rays and to be led back to the Highest Source. And thus you will be a true metaphysician.[31]

[31] *Hex*. 1.17.

Bonaventure is saying here that the totality of the Word's own relationship to the Father is engaged in the world's salvation. And this is precisely what Bonaventure asks his readers to contemplate when describing the Word's descent or emanation in the section on Christ's origin, and in his section on Christ's glorification, which shows the redeemed humanity in Christ "returning" to the Father, where it is finally vindicated and confirmed. The middle section on Christ's passion, then, I'd like to propose, corresponds to "exemplarity"— that is, the place where humanity makes its gradual journey between origin and return. I will explain this claim further in due course.

It seems fair to say, then, that Bonaventure's metaphysics of emanation, exemplarity and return, while existing most truly in the Trinity, is actually embedded within the structure of the *Lignum vitae*. It is for this reason that gospel imitation becomes the pattern by which humans can "return" to God in Christ's divinely-claimed humanity. By living from their origin in God with Christ, human beings are empowered to progress in truth and beauty on their way to worldly and eschatological confirmation. By living their "ugliness" according to Christ's Beauty, individuals make the passage, in Christ and through the Spirit, back up to their divine Source. John McEvoy explains succinctly how the movement of the Word in the person of Jesus makes the movement of return possible for the whole world:

> The reditus to God of the central figure of creation [humankind], and therefore of creation universally, does not derive from man's unaided powers; man cannot from his side alone bridge the gap between finite and infinite. It is by the descent of the Word into the representative nature, man, that the world gets a renewed share in the divine order and is taken up into the circular movement of return to its principle. The finite circle is expanded by the irruption of the infinite, and the linear progression of natures is curved back in a circle to its origin.[32]

How this works, I will now try to show through my reading of the *Lignum vitae,* is that the Passion (part two of Bonaventure's text) becomes the place where Christ's humanity lives out the truth of its Paternal Origin and End, so that this Source animates Christ's human response to his own suffering. Thus death and human truthfulness become one movement under the sensual aesthetic of the Passion. Christ's "ugliness" becomes the "dim" container of his hidden Beauty.

But the whole, the cyclical sequence of Christ's revelation in the *Lignum vitae* has

[32]McEvoy, "Microcosm and Macrocosm," 337-338.

further, related significance for Bonaventure, I think. In chapters two and three we saw how sin, for Bonaventure, involves breaking creation into "parts" that can be possessed and mastered apart from the "whole" of their uncreated Meaning. Now in the *Lignum vitae*, after his readers are invited to receive the whole of Christ for spiritual nourishment ("this fruit is one and undivided," Bonaventure insists), devoted souls are told to abhor

> the example of unfaithful Adam who preferred the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17) to the tree of life. No one can avoid this error unless he prefers faith to reason, devotion to investigation, simplicity to curiosity and finally the sacred cross of Christ to all carnal feeling or wisdom of the flesh.[33]

Those who eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil are, as we saw in chapter two, those who, distracted by investigation and "curiosity" (the "wisdom of the flesh"), seek to know things in themselves and not as signs capable of carrying them into the divine Knower and Giver. Such souls cannot make the the return journey to the Father in Christ, since they refuse to release themselves to the incomprehensible meaning of the Word made manifest in Jesus.

Since clarity cannot be offered to the human creature longing to undertake the pilgrimage to divine Beauty and creaturely truthfulness (as Bonaventure makes so clear in his *Itinerarium,* where he advises readers to "seek confusion, not clarity; darkness, not light"), Bonaventure begins his gospel meditation with words corresponding to the *Itinerarium's* cruciform Image of noetic passage—that bold declaration from Paul's letter to the Galatians: "*With Christ I am nailed to the cross*." He continues,

> The true worshiper of God and disciple of Christ, who desires to conform perfectly to the Savior of all men crucified for him, should, above all, strive with an earnest endeavor of soul to carry about continuously, both in his soul and in his flesh, the cross of Christ until he can truly feel in himself what the Apostle said above.[34]

The reader of Bonaventure's gospel meditation is invited to approach the treatise's three movements as active participant—to inwardly undergo the reality enacted by Christ's soul and made sensually manifest in his body. It is through this mental, mystical participation that believers come to "conform perfectly to the Savior" (that is, become "truthful" in a humanity mirroring uncreated Truth). Here surely is an opportunity to see bodily alienation

[33]L*ig. vit.* Prologus. 4.
[34]*Lig. vit.* Prologus. 1.

and diminishment as a point of entrance into the mystical journey toward full openness and aesthetic transformation Bonaventure is about to unfold.

A practical note on critical sources and citations is in order before we turn to the text itself. As we proceed, I will be using a double citation method for the sake of clarity. The Quaracchi critical text and the modern English translation I am using provides numbers to mark out each small section of text (Prologue 1-6, followed by a list of chapter headings, and then 1-49—forty-eight numbers for each story, with number forty-nine marking Bonaventure's closing prayer). I will use this citation in the footnotes (where necessary) for ease of reference. But so that we may follow the three-part structure of the text with greater ease, in the body of the text I will use a system that first identifies the "fruit" number under consideration (1-12), followed by the story number being discussed as part of that fruit (1-4). In this system, 1.1-4.4 discuss Christ's Origin, 5.1-8.4 his Passion, and 9.1-12.4 his glorification.

3.1. On the Mystery of His Origin (Quaracchi 1-16)

We turn now to the text of the *Lignum vitae* to see how Christ opens the way for believers to be drawn, with Christ, into the Word's return to the First Principle. Loosely mirroring the pattern of the *Hexaemeron* explored in chapter two (which began by considering where the journey to God begins and ends before considering the Way of Wisdom itself), I will start by exploring the section on Christ's origin before turning to the section on Christ's passion. This middle section, I will demonstrate, can be read in a way that corresponds to the journey between creation's Origin and End. Being a place where Christ's body is gradually "dimmed" and broken by the world, it provides those struggling with diminishment an ideal point of entrance into the eternal Word's spiritual return. I will end, finally by considering the section on Christ's glorification, in which the true aesthetic features of the soteriological journey are finally revealed in the luminosity of Christ's body.

As we travel through all three sections of the text, I will try to show how the journey to God can be considered from two angles corresponding to Christ's divinity and humanity. First, it is possible to trace the journey of the uncreated Initiator and Engine of the whole soteriological process (the Word), who, sent forth by the Father, guides Christ's humanity through the Passion and into the beauty of rest described in Bonaventure's section on Christ's glorification. Second, it is possible to follow the movement and aesthetics of

Christ's responsive humanity, and the relationship the redeemed have to it. Considering this layer of Bonaventure's text, the reality and goodness of Christ's humanity is revealed in part one, its humble trust and confidence in confrontation with diminishment is revealed in part two, and its aesthetic vindication is revealed in part three, which is extended to the mystical body by virtue of Christ's headship. Though not imperative to the success of my argument, what the hypostatic union accomplishes and how it opens the way of salvation to Christ's mystical body can, I think, be observed in the way Bonaventure patterns his stories throughout the *Lignum vitae*. One can observe a loose parallelism between the first four fruits on Christ's origin and the last four on his glorification in which the last four fruits "fulfill" the first four. Christ's completed journey seems to open members of his mystical body to the End his own humanity has achieved and now diffuses. I here provide a graph laying out all the different branches and fruits of Christ's origin and end, with supplemental italics attempting to show how sections 8-12 ("end") represent a fulfillment of sections 1-4 ("origin"), expanding the metaphysical circle for participation by those who find their place beneath Christ's headship.

(Page over to see chart on facing pages)

3. Christ's Origen and Glorification in the Lignum Vitae *(Tables and Illustrations)*

On the Mystery of His Origen

1. First Fruit: Distinguished Origin
Speaks of the Word's incarnation in Christ

1.1. Jesus Begotten of God
Emphasis is on Christ's divine origin

1.2. Jesus Prefigured
His appearance is desired by those who long to know salvation

1.3. Jesus Sent from Heaven
The Incarnation occurs as Jesus' individual body and soul are united to divinity in the womb of Mary

1.4. Jesus Born of Mary
Jesus becomes "small and poor," renounces his own power and is born in obscurity

2. Second Fruit: The Humility of His Mode of Life
Focuses on Christ's decent

2.1. Jesus Conformed to His Forefathers
Jesus is circumcised to show that he belongs to the people to whom he was promised

2.2. Jesus Shown to the Magi
Lying in a manger, Jesus shows himself to the Magi, who recognize him as King

2.3. Jesus Submissive to the Law
Jesus submits to the Jewish law and is presented in the temple

2.4. Jesus Exiled from His Kingdom
Jesus is exiled from his kingdom, exercising poverty, and obedience. He suffers and is killed in each of the children Herod kills on account of him.

3. Third Fruit: The Loftiness of His Power
The power for salvation is offered through Christ's power

3.1. Jesus, Heavenly Baptist
Jesus opens the way to regeneration by establishing baptism as "the doorway of the sacraments and the foundation of virtues," through which the Trinity is opened to believers

3.2. Jesus Tempted by the Enemy
By taking up a hard life, Jesus stirs the faithful to imitation so that they too may learn the trust in God needed to defeat the enemy's temptations

3.3. Jesus Wonderful in His Miracles
Jesus heals and cleanses all those who call to him in their sickness.

3.4. Jesus Transfigured
Christ's future glory is foreshadowed and revealed to his disciples in order that souls may be borne up in truth and virtue

4. Fourth Fruit: The Plentitude of His Piety

On the Mystery of His Glorification

9. Ninth Fruit: The Novelty of His Resurrection
Speaks of humanity's resurrection through the Word in Christ

9.1. Jesus Triumphant in Death
Christ's divinity begins to "shine forth in his [created soul," making him victorious over death

9.2. Jesus Rising in Blessedness
Is raised to "make known... the paths of life" [salvation], and appears to the devout and the wicked

9.3. Jesus, Extraordinary Beauty
The humanity of Jesus that had "withered in the passion, thus blossomed again in the resurrection so as to become the beauty of all"

9.4. Jesus Given Dominion over the Earth
Jesus is given authority over the whole world, so that every knee will bow at his name

10. Tenth Fruit: The Sublimity of His Ascension
Focuses on Christ's ascent

10.1. Jesus, Leader of His Army
The gates of heaven are opened and the exiled are brought into the kingdom and made "fellow citizens with the angels and members of God's household." Bonaventure is here quoting from Ephesians 2, where the "members of God's household" are gentiles who were once called "the uncircumcision" by circumcised Jews (vs. 11)

10.2. Jesus Lifted Up to Heaven
Seated in "Majesty," Jesus shows himself (in particular, his wounds) to the Father, who vindicates him

10.3. Jesus, Giver of the Spirit
The risen Jesus sends the Holy Spirit, giving grace, knowledge and power to plant the beautiful Church

10.4. Jesus Freeing from Guilt
Jesus gives gifts and sacraments so that forgiveness may be given through belonging to the faith of the Church. The Church is to suffer like Christ the head, in order to be "purified until the end of the world"

11. Eleventh Fruit: The Equity of His Judgment
The elect and are confirmed and the wicked damned through Christ's judgment

11.1. Jesus, Truthful Witness
Through the "testimony of truth speaking in Christ," the destiny every creature has made for his/herself is revealed with "clear certainty."

11.2. Jesus, Wrathful Judge
God's judgment of the foolhardy enables them to be "conquered by all creatures" once and for all

11.3. Jesus Glorious Conqueror
Jesus casts the reprobate (who are like corpses though immortal) into eternal hell

11.4. Jesus, Adorned Spouse
Christ is "clothed with all the beauty of the elect as if with a many-colored tunic," with whom he is fully united in glory. [Bonaventure elsewhere uses color to refer to virtue, so Bonaventure could here be saying that the glorified Christ will be clothed in the virtue of the elect.]

12. Twelfth Fruit: The Eternity of His Kingdom

Christ inspires desire and gathers souls to himself on earth through his compassionate generosity 4.1. Jesus, the Solicitous Shepherd *Jesus is a shepherd who gathers and cares for a flock* 4.2. Jesus Bathed with Tears *The Wisdom of the Father weeps over human death, sin, weakness, darkness and depravity* 4.3. Jesus Acclaimed King of the World *Readers are bidden to behold Christ's humility, and follow him with works of piety and virtue.* 4.4. Jesus, Consecrated Bread *Christ generously gives himself as food for the redemption of those who long for God and run to him with ardor of spirit*	***Christ is the triumphant centre and end in whom the desires of the blessed are eternally fulfilled*** 12.1. Jesus, King, Son of the King *Jesus is the King from whom a kingdom is derived, the members of whom reign with him* 12.2. Jesus, Inscribed Book *The eternal Kingdom is perfect because it is ordered by the light of Jesus, the Father's Wisdom* 12.3. Jesus, Fountain-Ray of Light *Readers are bidden to "run with living desire" after Christ, the "fountain of life and light"* 12.4. Jesus, Desired End *All desires are finally fulfilled and salvation of the blessed is finally complete in the glorified Jesus*

With the whole scope of Christ's journey in mind, let us now look more closely at the aesthetic features present in each of the text's three movements, with the aim of understanding how Christ's beauty made manifest in the sensual ugliness of the passion makes the transfiguration of human ugliness possible. I will proceed fruit by fruit in order to let the aesthetic and metaphysical shape of the text speak for itself.

3.1.1. First Fruit: his distinguished origin (1-4)

The four sections of Bonaventure's first fruit highlight the uncreated Beauty sourcing Jesus' journey, the responsiveness of Christ's humanity that makes his paschal journey possible, the victories he accomplishes for the sake of future believers, and the compassion by which he draws human beings into his own spiritual momentum. Christ's victories and patterns of responsiveness are to be embraced by those who would follow Christ into the mystery of his dying and rising.

Bonaventure begins by explaining how contemplating Christ's origin is meant to help readers understand the bright, uncreated Beauty from which Christ's historical life is sourced. Readers are invited to acquire "the vision of the dove and the eagle," which allows souls to gaze with a penetrating simplicity into the very heart of Trinitarian life. There souls with true sight can see that from the Father, who is Eternal Light, "there emerges a coeternal, coequal and consubstantial splendor, who is the power and wisdom of the Father" and the one in whom all things are ordered "from eternity." This Beauty is the source of God's creative power and the End to which all creatures are being drawn (or we might say, the Beauty in whom all creatures, including the text's reader, may become what they are meant to be). Beauty (the Tree of Life) is the person God promised to the world from the moment Adam and Eve first "ate of the forbidden tree," "inflaming" human souls with faith and "living desires." Recalling the propensity of sinful souls to break things apart, it is fair to say, I think, that the "desire" presented here at the very beginning of the text is for Bonaventure that which enables human beings to recognize and receive the infinite mystery of the Word when it comes in human form, just as "yearning desire" was presented as the door to Wisdom in Bonaventure's introduction to his *Hexaemeron*.[35] Souls of "desire" don't reduce God's revelation through "some inadequate thought of the flesh"

[35]See section II.1.3 above.

(reason, investigation, curiosity), but receive it gladly, and with it, the new humanity it bears in Jesus Christ.

Moving into section 1.3, readers encounter the figure of Mary, who is the first and prime recipient of God's revelation. Here Bonaventure deepens the language of "inflaming" he used to speak of desire in 1.2: "The Holy Spirit came upon [Mary] like a divine fire inflaming her soul and sanctifying her flesh in perfect purity."[36] Reading the annunciation story through the lens of our discussion on humanity's contemplative calling, it is possible to see the Incarnation as a sort of fulfillment of humanity's desire, which is felt most earnestly and answered most completely in Mary.[37] The perfection of Mary's desire makes her body not only a vehicle for creation's journey to God, but also the means of its perfect fulfillment, since it bears forth that humanity in whom creation's journey is finally fulfilled.

After nine months had past, Bonaventure continues in 1.4, "the King of Peace like a bridegroom from his bridal chamber (cf. 1 Par. 22:9; Ps. 18:6) came forth from the virginal womb. He was brought forth into the light without any corruption just as he was conceived without any stain of lust.[38] Although he was great and rich, he became small and poor for us." Here Bonaventure reveals the inward disposition by which Christ sets about accomplishing the world's regeneration, which is a poverty and humility that comes to express itself most fully in Christ's move toward death and darkness, as we shall soon see. But here where it first appears, the brightness of God's revelation is very clear, despite the hiddenness of his humble birth: "Then 'there shone upon us a day of new redemption, restoration of the past and eternal happiness. Then throughout the whole world the heavens became honey-sweet.'"[39]

3.1.2. Second Fruit: The Humility of His Mode of Life (5-8)

In the second fruit on Christ's origins, Bonaventure again makes humility paramount, first

[36] *Lig. vit.* 3.
[37] I believe I may have picked this idea up from Mark McIntosh, in a lecture or homily given sometime between 2012-2015.
[38] We could read lust here again as a manifestation of sinful possessiveness. This was not a feature of Mary's body, and could not have been involved in the conception of Jesus because greed is at odds with the desire for the whole Beauty of God. Bonaventure, like others of his time, may have seen sex as inseparable from this kind of greed or lust.
[39] *Lig. vit*. 4.

showing how it was displayed in Christ's readiness to submit to the rite of circumcision practiced by his ancestors. By receiving this "seal" in his body, Christ takes "his beginning from humility, which is the root and guardian of all virtues."[40]

In 2.3, humility is again seen in the way Jesus submits to the Jewish laws concerning the redemption of firstborn males (even though he himself is "the redeemer of all"), and also in the way his mother observes the law of purification, "although she was most pure."[41] Just as Jesus was circumcised to show his true solidarity with the Jewish people to whom he was promised, here now Jesus humbly continues that solidarity through his submission to the Law. This humility is what liberates those who are "*under the Law*" and frees them "f*rom the slavery of corruption to the freedom of the glory of the sons of God*." The vision of Christ in the temple again inspires desire, which now bursts into celebration. Bonaventure's readers are instructed to "let love overcome... bashfulness," and to let affection to "dispel... fear." "Receive the Infant in your arms," Bonaventure pleads, "and say with the bride: *I took hold of him and would not let him go.* Dance with the holy old man and sing with him..."

In Jesus' exile, finally, (2.4), humility takes the form of poverty, as it does especially for Francis in the *Major Life*. Jesus flees as a refugee, as a "pilgrim and pauper" to Egypt in order to avoid the wrath of Herod who wants to kill him. As a boy Jesus is subject to his parents and lives in patience and obedience. Bonaventure sees beauty shining through the poverty of exile when he exclaims, "O, how you would weep if with devotion you could look upon so venerable a lady, so charming a girl, in a foreign country with so tender and handsome a little boy."

3.1.3. Third Fruit: The Loftiness of His Power (9-12)

Bonaventure's third fruit begins with the story of Christ's baptism, which establishes the sacrament's efficacy for all of Christ's future followers. Quoting Bede, Bonaventure explains that Jesus conferred "'regenerative power on water by contact with his most pure flesh.'"[42] This regeneration gives believers power to "explore [Christ's] secrets," which

[40] *Lig. vit*. 5.
[41] *Lig. vit*. 7.
[42] *Lig. vit*. 9. Christ's sensual beauty shines through here as contact with his body via water is what cleanses fallen human beings of original sin.

Bonaventure describes primarily as a growing sensitivity to the mystery of the Trinity. Those who know Christ are able to "discern the Father in the voice, the Son in the flesh and the Holy Spirit in the dove," suggesting that Trinitarian awareness is a deepening of baptism's regenerative work. When this reality—when this "heaven of the Trinity is opened" up to those who accompany Christ, Bonaventure writes, they "will be take up into God." Being immersed in the secrets of the Son, who is the splendor of the Father, is in fact an immersion or ascent into the knowledge and life of the whole Trinity.

In Jesus' confrontation with the Enemy in the desert, humility is revealed as the hidden source of Jesus' power. His victory has the power to make believers "courageous," ready to "strive toward perfection" and to "endure hardships." But his triumph occurs through humble endurance rather any obvious revelation of divine or human power. With few exceptions (such as his birth and ability to work miracles), it isn't until section three (Glorification) that Christ shines with very obvious displays of beauty and power. Even prior to the passion, because of the world's brokenness, God's revelation takes the form of hardship and diminishment.

In 3.3, Bonaventure focuses on Christ possessing the power to restore creation to the beauty of wholeness. Bonaventure tells us that Jesus

> transforms the elements, multiplies the loaves of bread, walks upon the sea and calms the waves; he curbs the demons and puts them to flight; he cures the sick, cleanses the lepers and raises the dead; he restores sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the mute, the power to walk to the crippled, sensation and movement to the paralytics and those with withered limbs.

Readers of the Gospel meditation are invited to spiritualize these maladies and to call with a "sinning conscience," "*Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean*," "*Lord, my servant boy is lying at home paralyzed and is suffering intensely*," "*Have mercy on me, Son of David*," "*If I touch the hem of his garment, I will be cured*," and "*See, Lord, the one you love is ill*."[43] In the intimacy of these pleas, Christ is seen reordering not only the "rebellious" elements, but also the confusion of hostile human hearts.

The transfiguration story would be a wonderful opportunity for Bonaventure to interject some powerfully cataphatic imagery, but he is surprisingly restrained in his description of the event. The transfiguration seems to be, for Bonaventure, a revelation of

[43] *Lig. vit*. 11.

the whole paschal mystery and its Trinitarian significance rather than the luminous display of Christ's future glory emphasized by the Synoptic Gospels.[44] Jesus, Bonaventure writes, "revealed to them the mystery of the Trinity and foretold that he would be rejected in his passion. He showed the glory of his future resurrection in his transfiguration."[45] The entire journey of descent and ascent—of Christ's emanation and return—is present, given full attention, and offered to his disciples as the means of salvation. The Trinity's presence in this revelation of the paschal mystery is as important here as it was at Christ's baptism, where the paschal journey was also prefigured: The Father and the Holy Spirit, Bonaventure explains, are present with the Son in the voice and in the cloud. The soul who is "borne to the summit of virtue" is able to receive this vision and to contemplate God with "enjoyment... repose and ecstasy," through which the soul hears "*secret words*," suggesting the intimacy of spiritual regeneration.

3.1.4. Fourth Fruit: The Plentitude of His Piety (13-16)

In this fourth and final fruit on Christ's Origin, Jesus is first identified as the "Good Shepherd" who compassionately feeds the flock he gathers to himself.[46] Trying to awaken affection and repentance in his readers, Bonaventure emphasizes the suffering Christ endures "for the sake of those who are [spiritually] sick" while Christ's own affection for the penitent reveals "the open bosom of divine mercy."[47]

In 4.2, the transcendent and the passible meet in the compassion of Jesus: "The Wisdom of the Father" is seen weeping for the "misery of human weakness,... the darkness of a blind heart, … [and] the depravity of obdurate malice." "Consider your weeping physician," Bonaventure pleads, inviting his readers into the Son's regenerative love.

This compassion is extended yet again in 4.3, as Jesus rides into Jerusalem and is briefly acclaimed by the crowd. Jesus weeps and laments over the destruction of the city

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[44]In Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus' face shines like the sun, and his clothing like light. In Matthew, a "bright cloud" covers the scene and the Father's voice is heard affirming Christ's Sonship and authority. In both Matthew and Mark, the only reference to the passion occurs as Jesus tells his disciples to "tell no one of the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead" (Matt. 17:9), and the disciples are puzzled (Mark 9:10). In Luke, the glorified Moses and Elijah speak of Jesus' "departure which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem," but nothing more, and the dazzling glory dominates. The Gospel of John doesn't include the transfiguration account at all.

[45]*Lig. vit*. 12.

[46]*Lig. vit*. 13.

[47]*Lig. vit*. 13.

even as the Jewish people, a "reverent mother," sing "a hymn of praise" for "the birth of the Church." Once again, Bonaventure resists painting this revelation of Christ's generative kingship with any bright aesthetic language, instead emphasizing the divine humility, which Bonaventure sets before believers as the path to salvation. Piety and virtue, the children of humility, are to be the olive branches and palms of those who "follow the Lord of heaven and earth, sitting on the back of an ass."

Finally, in the establishment of the Eucharist, Bonaventure sees Jesus giving himself "with marvelous richness of generosity" as food for his followers—"our viaticum and sustenance." Christ has revealed himself as the divine physician, and now he himself, in his humanity (particularly in the *bodiliness* of his humanity)—is the medicine he serves, restoring wholeness to his many-membered mystical body. Humility is once more emphasized in Christ's relationship with his disciples: "The marvelous example of his humility shone forth when, girt with a towel, the King of Glory diligently washed the feet of the fishermen and even of his betrayer."[48]

Throughout the first four fruits of the *Lignum vitae*, Bonaventure has invited his readers to behold with him the One sent forth from the Father and given to the world in the perfection of Christ's humanity. Through Jesus' way of being in the world, he has begun gathering up a mystical body, initiating its redemption through the spiritual desire his witness has inspired and by the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist. All four fruits have revealed the divine humility made manifest in Christ's humanity, which his followers are called to imitate. This humility will take the form of utter trust and abandonment to the Truth that sources Christ's life in the section on his passion, revealing the means by which paschal participation may occur for Christ's mystical body. Imitating Christ's approach to his own diminishment is what draws the self into the journey of return, transforms its relationship with creation, brings it to life, and thus enables bodily diminishment to be transfigured despite the "dimness" of its continuing visibility. For those who have imitated Jesus and responded to his healing compassion, taking his humanity as their own, participation in Christ's passion becomes a crucible of trust in God, whose Beauty is desired beyond the security any creature can provide.

3.2. On the Mystery of His Passion (17-32)

[48] *Lig. vit*. 16.

We now turn to the most aesthetically dynamic part of the *Lignum vitae,* which is the mystery of Christ's Passion in which Jesus; growing bodily diminishment increasingly manifests his hidden truthfulness.

Throughout this second section of Bonaventure's text, physical and mental "darkness" provide the momentum carrying Jesus toward his death. The brightness of Jesus' body is dimmed through its vulnerability to the world's abuse, and Bonaventure speaks repeatedly of the confusion and anxiety felt by Jesus' soul despite its perfect trust in the Father's will. The growing darkness of the Passion is strangely mirrored in the text by the increasing revelation or "exposure" of Jesus' body until it is finally lifted up, broken and naked on the cross.[49] It is as though Jesus' body reveals something that the crowd and especially Bonaventure's readers should be able to see despite the fundamental unintelligibility of its visibility. The moment of Jesus' actual death is recounted at the beginning of the fourth and final fruit in the Mystery of the Passion, under a heading clearly charged with the Bonaventurean aesthetics I have been describing: "Jesus, Sun Dimmed to Death." This section offers the most concise textual evidence for the strange unintelligibility of death I tried to describe in chapter three: "Then he who is fairer in beauty than the sons of men (Ps. 44:3), with his eyes clouding and his cheeks turning pale, appeared ugly for the sons of men..."[50] Here when Jesus dies—when his body and soul are rent apart from one another—he appears "ugly." I will unpack this text more extensively when I come to it below. For now it is enough to observe how the growing darkness and diminishment of Christ's Passion lead him to the point of death. Death seems to be the climax of a dimming, deepening "ugliness," which is simultaneously (and paradoxically) a growing revelation of Jesus' inward truthfulness.[51] In the view of Zachary Hayes, this "naked dereliction" reveals the humility of the God who flows lovingly through Christ's humanity to all who will receive divine Love:

Poverty becomes manifest... and is expressed in the naked figure on the cross who

[49]Except for a "cheap" loincloth.
[50]*Lig. vit*. 29.
[51]John Saward, who also makes use of Bonaventure's language of Christ's ugliness, has helpfully summarized the Patristic sources on the idea of Beauty's disfigurement on the cross: "For early interpretations of the uncomeliness of Christ in his Passion (Is. 53:2), see Clement, *Ped*. 3, 1, 2 and Tertullian *De carne Christi* 9. Augustine is the classic figure, who sees the Passion as a 'wonderful exchange' between our ugliness and Christ's beauty, hanging on the Cross, he was disfigured, but his disfigurement was our beauty' (S28,6, PL 38.181)." See Saward, "The Flesh Flowers Again," note 30.

> invites us to follow him, placing our absolute trust alone... The dereliction of the cross is the intense revelation of divine humility, and the piercing of the human heart of Christ is the opening to humanity of the depth of divine love embodied in the love of the incarnate Son."[52]

Hayes goes on to call this cross an "axis of transformation"—a place where "humility, poverty and love coinhere" so that "only the poor and humble can share in the humble love of God."[53] What I'm trying to suggest here in line with Hayes is that Bonaventure's journey to the cross involves a growing convergence of divine and human transparency in the heart of Christ, which is made fully manifest in the "ugliness" of death. As Ilia Delio has written with reference to Christ's followers, "mystical union with the Crucified is the highest poverty both on the part of God who, on the cross, empties himself of divine power and, on the part of the human person, who is purified, illumined and perfected through conformity to Christ."[54] My own emphasis is that, in fact, God and humanity (and indeed all of creation) have *already* completed this in the transparency of the hypostatic Christ, making union with God possible for all creation through the grace of Christ's headship. And although, as Bonaventure scholars such as Delio have noted, the cross represents a theological climax in the human journey to God, it is only the climax insofar as it is bled through with Beauty's victory. Delio's rich and thought-provoking work *Crucified Love* in particular emphasizes the centrality of the cross in Bonaventure synthesis, describing it as the place where, for Bonaventure, the fulness of divine love pours forth into human hearts. But a slight ambiguity is left open here, allowing readers to perhaps see suffering as efficacious *because* it is suffering. Delio herself is keenly aware of this danger, and argues toward the end of her book that suffering becomes the object of theological abuse whenever and wherever believers fail to love by means of it.[55] Her conclusion draws some profound reflections on what it might mean to suffer lovingly for others, but it is not within the scope of her book to systematically explore the realities of resurrection and glorification making such love possible. For Bonaventure, Christ's suffering is "loving" only because it is charged by the Word's responsiveness to the Father. The ugliness of the

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[52]Hayes*, Mystical Writings,*120. Poverty seems to have two meanings in Bonaventure's thought: the evangelical and the ontological, which will be discussed more fully in chapter five. Though some (especially Balthasar) have recognized in the evangelical meaning a way of practicing or "living into" the ontological, the creative constructive potential of this teaching has been undervalued.

[53]Hayes, *Mystical writings,* 123.

[54]Delio, *Crucified Love*, 99.

[55]Delio, *Crucified Love*, xxiii.

world creates the aesthetic context of this responsiveness, but God's love and Jesus' human participation in that love, provide its meaning. In the *Lignum vitae*, the witness of the historical Christ is shot through at every turn by the radiance of uncreated Truth.

But even with these qualifications and distinctions clearly stated, making the cross the supreme revelation of Beauty is a move fraught with danger. Pondering this, Richard Viladesau asks, "How can the cross be beautiful? Is suffering beautiful? Is a representation of suffering beautiful?" We might add our own questions in light of our study thus far: Why is the ultimate symbol of the "truth" we are becoming a body conformed to death? If we call death the face of life, aren't we providing a theological platform for masochism and abuse? Shouldn't the gravity of death be respected in its own right, without any well-intentioned spiritual interventions? Pointing to the authority of Karl Barth and Balthasar, Viladesau responds:

> The tradition says that to speak of the beauty of the cross... is to speak of a converted sense of beauty... the Christian notion of beauty—and specifically of the divine beauty—must be able to include even the cross and everything else which a worldly aesthetics... discards as no longer bearable... Beauty is [in]... the divine love abasing itself to raise up humanity, and the cross is its ultimate (but not unique) expression. This allows us to make a distinction and a contrast: the crucifixion as murder was ugly; as martyrdom it was beautiful. Physically it was ugly; spiritually—in its meaning, self-sacrifice for others—it was beautiful. What happened to Christ was ugly and horrid; his willingness to undergo it was beautiful. The emphasis is on the divine compassion, and on Jesus' free acceptance of his death.[56]

Viladesau here helpfully distinguishes between the aesthetics of violence enacted by others and the beautiful strength and compassion exhibited by Jesus in response to that violence. Still, Viladesau and others in the field of theological aesthetics prescribe caution well worth heeding as we turn to our meditation of Christ's Passion. As Richard Harries insists, the pain of the cross should not be minimized or "glossed" with art. It "is a horror, crying out to be stopped; totally contrary to the absolute will of a loving God..."[57] In chapter two, we

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[56]Richard Viladesau, *The Beauty of the Cross: The Passion of Christ in Theology and the Arts from the Catacombs to the Eve of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 9, 12. For more on this in Balthasar, the *Cambridge Companion* series is a good place to start. There when comparing divine and worldly beauty, Balthasar's view is summarized as follows: "The former, which is glory, differs from natural or worldly beauty in that it includes within it dimensions that flatly contradict the presuppositions of natural beauty. Glory embraces the Cross and the disfigurement of Christ as paradoxical manifestation of divine beauty." See David Moss and Edward Oaks, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 136.

[57]Richard Harries, *Art and the Beauty of God: A Christian Understanding* (London: Mowbray, 1994),138-139.

saw that diminishment of any kind (even sensual diminishment) runs in flat contradiction to the beauty God called the world to merit in its original innocence. Given the post-fall sensual ambiguity of beauty, perhaps the surest remaining test of a human being's truthfulness is whether or not it mirrors, in its own way, the generative Beauty of the Trinity we have explored in previous chapters. Death, more than any other human reality, is sterile because of how it fractures apart the two parts of the composite self. This is a technical point rooted in Bonaventure's anthropology. But more importantly, it is a *felt* reality for those burdened by the constraints of their own mortality.Yet for Bonaventure, the point where Jesus' body and soul are ripped apart is the point at which Jesus Christ is at his most generative (as we shall see). Jesus' simultaneous submission to the truth of God and to the brokenness of our fallen world of which he is a part, turns death inside out, exposing it as a portal of life despite the terminal nature of its continuing appearance.

All of this suggests the presence of a kind of apophaticism into Bonaventure's presentation of the Cross. Speaking of the paschal mystery as an "ultimately apophatic moment," Mark McIntosh points to the end of the *Itinerarium* and suggests that "what Bonaventure has done here is to set the apophatic ascent of Neoplatonism into the context of the paschal narrative."[58] We saw Denys Turner making a similar observation above. In the visible (cataphatic) brokenness of Christ's body, the whole apophatic but infinitely beautiful Truth is opened up to those who would "pass over" to the Father in Christ.[59] For this reason, I think, it is no coincidence that in the *Lignum vitae*, Christ's growing expression of his own luminous darkness dims until it terminates at the point of full obscurity (death). Perhaps Bonaventure is here exposing the paschal archetype upon which other great Christian Platonists have built their descriptions of Christian growth. For Carmelites such as Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross and Thérèse of Lisieux, mental bewilderment (such as the confusion described of Jesus in our Franciscan text) deepens the further the soul advances into God. But in the *Lignum vitae* especially, we see apophasis engaging not just the self's noetic capacity (soul), but the *whole* self, or rather, the self's holism: that union of body and soul which is dissolved in death, the point where God and the new humanity are revealed (in the case of Jesus Christ), and where our own

[58]McIntosh, *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 78.
[59]As Kevin Hughes puts it, for Bonaventure the paschal Christ who leads human knowers into God is the "empty space of the mercy seat, the saturated emptiness signaling God's holiness," leading to a knowledge that is "not mastery, but humiliation." Hughes, "Remember Bonaventure?" 533, 534.

transformation occurs (if we unite our diminishment with Christ's).[60] And if Christ's death is the ultimate apophatic moment, then all the poignant moments of confusion, anxiety and felt alienation described in the text beforehand can be seen as smaller apophatic moments, building to the point of death, that ultimate expression of divine Beauty in the created beauty of Christ's humanity. By considering how the "ugliness" of Jesus corresponds sensually to the Beauty of God, new possibilities may emerge for *other* "ugly" bodies as well; with grace we may begin to see *all* death-bound bodies (including and most especially our own) as matter possible of more than disintegration. But for Bonaventure, this involves surrendering our bodies to God with humility and trust, in spite of the worldly ugliness that leaves us rent apart, sometimes to the point of death. Jesus' own trust in the Father, and the compassion it awakens in him for violent, fearful and possessive creatures, is what vests receptive human brokenness with its hidden potential for beauty.

Having discussed the aesthetic momentum of Christ's Passion in the *Lignum vitae*, I will now resume my exposition of the text itself. Tracing Jesus' gradual movement toward death, I will draw out the relationship existing between his sensual ugliness and inward beauty, paying special attention to the truth-telling trust made manifest in Christ's humanity. To help us visualize this movement, here is an outline of Bonaventure's section on the Mystery of the Passion:

4. Christ's Passion in the Lignum vitae *(Tables and Illustrations)*

5. Fifth Fruit: His Confidence in Trials
    - 5.1. Jesus Sold through Guile
    - 5.2. Jesus Prostrate in Prayer
    - 5.3. Jesus Surrounded by the Mob
    - 5.4. Jesus Bound with Chains

6. Sixth Fruit: His Patience in Maltreatment
    - 6.1. Jesus Denied by His Own
    - 6.2. Jesus Blindfolded
    - 6.3. Jesus Handed Over to Pilate
    - 6.4. Jesus Condemned to Death

7. Seventh Fruit: His Constancy Under Torture

[60]Concerned to highlight the place where "divine meaning and human knowing are able to converse," Mark McIntosh draws our attention to the bodily language of Bonaventure's apophaticism of the crucified Christ, but doesn't discuss how it might actually invite the body itself into noetic participation. See McIntosh, *Mystical Theology,* 79.

7.1. Jesus Scorned by All
7.2. Jesus Nailed to the Cross
7.3. Jesus Linked with Thieves
7.4. Jesus Given Gall to Drink

8. Eighth Fruit: Victory in the Conflict of Death
8.1. Jesus, the Solicitous Shepherd
8.2. Jesus Bathed with Tears
8.3. Jesus Acclaimed King of the World
8.4. Jesus, Consecrated Bread

3.2.1. Fifth Fruit: His Confidence in Trials (17-20)

Bonaventure's text on the Passion begins with Christ's betrayal, an act attributed to Judas' guile, greed, ingratitude, and hardness of heart (5.1). We'll remember from our previous two chapters that for Bonaventure, sin can be understood in an Augustinian sense as the greedy desire for something other than God, the highest Good. This "disordered" desire rips the desired object away from its meaning in the Word, so that the desiring soul shrinks to the narrow limits of the object it tries to possess, making it ontologically untruthful (since it is no longer oriented to the exemplary truth God knows and calls it to be). In this first section of Bonaventure's fifth fruit, Jesus is "pursued to death" by the one to whom he had "entrusted everything." Judas sells "the all-good God [the highest Good] for money and [weighs] the most precious blood of Christ against the price of a cheap reward. For Bonaventure, an act of sinful possessiveness is what precipitates Jesus' (and Judas') move toward death. Later in the text, we will see how the "crowd" is likewise led by "envy" and "greed" (reminding us of Adam and Eve's distrust when confronted by the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, as I have discussed in previous chapters). In our journey through the *Lignum vitae*, it is possible to see Judas as a symbol of the worldly disposition that causes diminishment and revelation to run side by side as Jesus journeys to the cross. Right at the start of this section of the text, Jesus is, as it were, "pursued to death" by the sinful greed of the world's untruthful distrust. Nevertheless, Bonaventure writes, the "Lamb did not refuse to apply with a sweet kiss his mouth *in which no guile was found* to the mouth which abounded in iniquity in order to give the traitor every opportunity to soften the obstinacy of his perverse heart."[61] While Scripture clearly places the initiative for

[61] *Lig. vit.* 17.

this kiss on Judas the betrayer, Bonaventure records the event as though Jesus is himself its instigator. The scene here bears resemblance to another poignant kiss recorded in the *Legenda maior,* in which the truthful follower of Christ kisses health and wholeness into a mouth that is literally rotting (I will explore this story more carefully in chapter five). We can imagine something similar happening here in the *Lignum vitae,* where a mouth that is without guile—a mouth that is in fact the very fountain of divine Truth— eagerly offers itself to heal a place of creaturely untruth. This self-exposure is met by greedy resistance, a response opening both parties up to darkness and death—one that is terminal (Judas'), and another that is energized, and in the end vindicated, by Life itself. In this exchange, I think, we see Jesus as master of his destiny more than passive victim, though on a more superficial level he is indeed a victim. The visibility is of victimhood, but the deeper reality shows incarnate Truth offering itself eagerly to shrunken creatures of guile. It also reveals the perfection of Christ's humanity, which does not grasp after its creaturely life, but rather extends outward the Life it lives by. Toward the end of this fifth fruit, Bonaventure notes that Judas "preferred to die rather than live" (5.4). This, it seems, is the reality Judas has created for himself by rejecting Life itself.

In 5.2, the reader of Bonaventure's gospel meditation encounters Jesus in Gethsemane exhibiting "the natural weakness of the flesh," with "the combat of death" so close at hand. The "imagination of death [is] so horrible to Christ's sensible nature that he [prays]: *Father if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me* (Matt. 26:39)." But it is not just Jesus' passible body that recoils. His soul, also, experiences an anxiety that will only increase as the text proceeds.[62] This anxiety exists despite (or in a sense, because of) Jesus' perfect trust in and faithfulness to the Truth prompting the world's violence. ("Have you not offered to the Father an entirely willing sacrifice?," Bonaventure asks Jesus.) In this section of the text, Bonaventure addresses Jesus as "Ruler." The world's Ruler cannot comprehend his own power, and yet he has still somehow taken hold of it. Through his trust in the divine Truth he does not grasp, Jesus mysteriously masters his own move toward death.

When the mob comes finally to arrest Jesus in 5.3, Bonaventure tells us that Jesus is

[62]"The intensity of the anxiety in the Redeemer's spirit, springing from diverse causes, is testified to by the drops of bloody sweat that ran down to the ground from his entire body. 'Ruler, Lord Jesus whence comes to your soul such vehement anxiety and such anxious supplication?'" *Lig. vit.* 18. Ewert Cousins points to Pseudo-Anselm *Meditationes* 9 as the source for Bonaventure's quote. See Bonaventure, *Bonaventure,* Classics of Western Spirituality, 142 (note 7).

so “ready... to face his passion” that “he spontaneously [hurries] to meet them, [showing] himself plainly and [offering] himself to them,” just as he did with Judas. In our reading of the text, we can see Christ’s bold self-offering as the product of his deep trust in the Origin that has sent him on his mission. This Truth is exposed in Christ’s self-offering. And of course Bonaventure can’t pass over Jesus’ arrest without noting the servant’s ear that Jesus heals because of “the constancy of his kindness.” In this act Jesus’ lordship over elemental nature is also highlighted.

As a response to the healing life streaming from “the touch of [Jesus’] hand,” in 5.4 Bonaventure tells us that “the cruel executioners laid murderous hands upon the King of Glory[,]... bound with chains the innocent hands of the gentle Jesus... and led [him] to death, hands bound behind his back like an evildoer.” The contrast of murderous hands with Jesus’ innocent hands is quite striking in this part of text.

3.2.2. Sixth Fruit: His Patience in Maltreatment (21-24)

After a section on the betrayal (6.1) in which Peter denies Christ and the Master looks “upon his beloved disciple with mercy and grace” (again, Jesus maintains a position of authority throughout his ordeal), a moving section follows in which the “High Priest Jesus Christ” is presented, blindfolded to the high priests of the temple (6.2). Here a series of poignant contrasts are described and Jesus is again “condemned to death, as if for blasphemy”: Jesus, who is Truth itself, is condemned as a liar and blasphemer. His “face, venerable to the elders and desirable to the angels, which fills all the heavens with joy, [is] defiled by the spittle of polluted lips, struck by impious and sacrilegious hands, and covered in derision with a veil.” Thinking no doubt of the biblical account of Jesus’ mockery in the high priest’s courtyard, the English translation of the text (by Ewert Cousins), titles this section “Jesus Blindfolded.” But the Latin hints at the spiritual meaning Bonaventure perceives in Jesus’ presentation before the council. “*Jesus vultu velatus*,” Bonaventure calls this section (literally: Jesus’ face is veiled, hidden or concealed). For Bonaventure, the blindfolding referred to in the biblical accounts becomes the concealment of God’s revelation. And the tool of concealment is not so much a blindfold as derision itself (“*velo in derisionem obtegitur,”* we read—Jesus was “covered in derision with a veil”). For creatures endowed with sensual and rational knowledge, Christ’s face *should* be an intelligible sign of Christ’s inward truth, for the “face” concealed by scorn is also the

uncreated (incorporeal) face that, Bonaventure explains, is "venerable to the elders and desirable to the angels," filling "all the heaven with joy." It should also reveal the truth of Christ's created soul, which is defiled and hidden in the body it expresses "by the spittle of polluted lips" and by the violence of "impious and sacrilegious hands..." The brokenness of Christ's physical body here—his veiled and derided face—becomes the negative presence of his incorporeal truth. But this truth is not just "hidden" in the mystical sense of bearing a revelation too brilliant for human perception. It is borne within a genuinely unintelligible vessel.

When Jesus is presented to Pilate in 6.3, the crowd, like Judas in 5.1, seeks "to bring to death the Author of Life," preferring "the wolf to the lamb, death to life, darkness to light." Unsatisfied with the insults of the priests, the fury of the people increases until they are "raging with the madness of wild beasts..." Again and again in the *Collations on the Six Days*, as we saw in chapter one, Bonaventure describes those who break apart Truth's beauty as "beast-like," since such acts (which are intrinsically violent) destroy the rational capacity distinguishing human beings from animals. Now confronted with divine Truth and the perfect human responsiveness that is found in Jesus Christ, the crowd becomes like a pack of wild beasts, preferring "death" and "darkness" to the Beauty before them. Bonaventure seems to be saying that the eagerness of the crowd to destroy uncreated Life bears within it a kind of fatalistic desire for self-destruction. The disordered nature of such desires is revealed in the irrational chaos of the judgment scene before Pilate. With Jesus bound, Bonaventure tells us, the crowd "exposed the life of the Just One to an impious judge as if to be devoured by a mad dog!" Unfathomably, they demand "death by the torture of the cross for him who knew *nothing of sin* (2 Cor. 5:21)." They demand something that is "ugly," irrational and completely inconsistent with the beauty before them.

Finally, in Jesus' condemnation and scourging (6.4), the "King" in whom Pilate "found no cause at all for death" is "handed over... to the judgment of a cruel tyrant" (Herod), who mocks and fills Jesus' "soul *with bitterness* (Lam. 3:15)." Pilate then orders

> that Jesus should stand stripped in the sight of men who mocked him so that savage scourgers could lash that virginal and pure-white flesh [*virgineam illam et candidissimam carnem*] with fierce blows, cruelly inflicting bruise upon bruise, wound upon wound. The precious blood flowed down the sacred sides of that innocent and loving youth in whom there was found absolutely no basis for accusation.

In this passage we see a contrasting aesthetics revealed before the jeering soldiers, and the text's readers are instructed to "behold" (or perhaps to "recognize") "the most innocent Lamb."[63] Here Bonaventure locates the beauty of Christ's body in the brightness or clarity of his flesh, which is broken through the world's abuse, dimming to unintelligibility with each blow despite the fact that in him there is no untruth and therefore "absolutely no basis for accusation."[64] The "darkness" of Christ's body here stands directly opposed to the innocence and goodness it symbolizes. While this "darkness" is also found in Jesus' human soul, which is filled with "confusion and sorrow," inward confusion grows paradoxically from the spiritual trust and generosity facilitating Christ's decent. It as though Christ's outward stripping is a sign of his soul's transparency to the divine Word, here set before the bewildered senses of Bonaventure's readers.

3.2.3. Seventh Fruit: His Constancy Under Torture (25-28)

Bonaventure's emphasis on Jesus' spiritual confusion continues in 7.1, where he is "scorned by all"—especially the soldiers, who again strip him and then, by draping him in purple, "heap" the Savior's "soul full of mockery." As we have seen in other passages, here mockery is not just done "to" Christ, but actually enters into his depths. Death, as it were, works itself out in Jesus' soul. The bodily and spiritual dimness again thickens with blows and spit and scorn until Bonaventure asks "Who is it who comes in the likeness of the King and yet is filled with the confusion of a despicable slave? He is your King and your God, who is accounted as a leper and the last of men in order to snatch you from eternal confusion." The confusion of Jesus, which he enters existentially and with the humble authority of master and King through the relinquishment of his body, is efficacious and able to somehow rescue onlookers from a terminal confusion. Unlike terminal confusion, Jesus' confusion is charged with something "beautiful" (generative), but unseen.

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[63] *Lig. vit.* 24.

[64] The English translation of this text ("pure-white flesh") is misleading. The adjective c*andidus* refers more to a thing's luminosity or purity than its color, though there is still the suggestion of whiteness. Racially problematic images persist in Bonaventure's aesthetics of the body. In the *Legenda maior*, for example, Francis' body is described as naturally dark, and this darkness increases through bodily mortification and illness as Francis moves toward stigmata, where his darkness is most fully manifest. But as soon as he dies, Francis' body expressesses *candor*, or the purity suggested, for example, by the whitness of snow. This whiteness seems to correspond with the relic-like quality (or meaningfulness) of Francis' dead body. See *Leg. mai.* IV-IV or section V.6 below.

In the short passage on Jesus' actual crucifixion (7.2), the stripping of Christ is mentioned a total of four times.[65] After his scourging and humiliation by the Roman soldiers, "King" Jesus is "again clothed in his own garments," which are then "stripped off a second time" at Calvary. There he is "completely stripped and covered only with a cheap loincloth.[66] Next we see his "garments... given away as spoils" before Bonaventure's readers are led through a brief meditation in which the text again says that Jesus "was stripped of his garments so that he seemed to be a leper from the bruises and cuts in his flesh that were visible over his back and sides from the blows of the scourges."[67] When Jesus is finally nailed to the cross, his body is "pulled forward and stretched back and forth like a hide," and his "sacred hands and feet" are "most roughly torn with wounds.[68] He "who is *God blessed above all things*, is totally submerged in the waters of suffering from *the sole of the foot to the top of the head,*" and the longing prayer Bonaventure recommends to those beholding the scene asks that as Christ was "totally transpierced in both mind and flesh, I may be fixed with my beloved to the yoke of the cross." As we will see in chapter four, God's answer to this kind of prayer is of course most clearly manifest in the stigmata of St. Francis. And indeed, just as Christ's body is here "cut through with wound upon wound in order to heal" the world, so in the *Legenda maior* will the wounds of the stigmata serve as portals of regeneration for others. In the spirituality we are tracing through the *Lignum vitae*, the prayer to be united with the cross can be read as a longing for ugliness that was once terminal to be made efficacious, energized by the hidden beauty of Christ's own wounds.

In 7.3, Jesus' "confusion, ignominy, shame and suffering" is said to "increase" as he is "lifted up on the cross as a spectacle, in the midst of thieves, outside the gate in the place of punishment for criminals." Jesus' self-knowledge, it seems, is veiled even to himself by the world's untruthful condemnation. Nevertheless, spiritual confidence (trust) is operative on a more hidden level, as Jesus' confusion does not keep him from praying "out of the

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[65]Bonaventure may be playing with the fact that the body itself is often also talked about as a "garment" by theologians of his period.

[66]We will see a striking parallel of this dressing and undressing when we come to study Francis' imitation of Christ in the *Legenda maior*. In the case of both Christ and Francis, modesty is retained but exposure, vulnerability, and poverty are represented in the body's denudation.

[67]Toward his death, as we shall see, Francis' body is also said to make him look like a leper in the *Legenda maior.*

[68]These wounds will become theologically significant in 8.3, where Bonaventure refers to Jesus' body as the tunic of Joseph the beloved, its beauty befouled with "five lamentable gashes" and sent to the Father for recognition. I will look at this in greater detail below.

sweetness of his kindness to his Father for those who... [crucify] and [deride] him." Neither does it prevent him from promising paradise to the penitent thief.

By the time Jesus is given gall in 7.4, it is "as if in [its bitter taste] his passion [reaches] its fulness and completion." "While the hostile arrows of piercing suffering were increasing in each of his limbs," Bonaventure explains, "his spirit was drinking in their poison." Jesus was existentially engaged with the suffering of his body, thus validating the anxieties of all human beings who feel haunted by the vulnerability of embodiment. Jesus' bodily suffering is a central cause of his soul's bewilderment, but there are other causes as well, such as "zeal for the divine honor," "pity" for his tormenters, and compassion for his mother. These concerns demonstrate once again that Jesus retains a kind of spiritual confidence throughout his Passion, despite the paradoxical intensity of his confusion and fear.[69] Something strong and selfless is at work within those thoughts and feelings that invoke defensiveness in most human beings. In the example of Jesus, we see that it is possible for suffering to be lived with an authority and generosity that opens the self to others in new and creative ways.

3.2.4. Eighth Fruit: Victory in the Conflict of Death (29-32)

It is in the final fruit of Christ's passion that Jesus' gradual diminishment reaches full "apophasis." All along we have been tracing the paradoxical aesthetics of Christ's sufferings. Now at the moment of his death—the climactic event toward which all the myriad "dark" moments of the text have been building—Bonaventure is unambiguous in

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[69]Speaking to Mary, Bonaventure writes: "...with the eye of your mind
you saw that divine soul
filled with the gall of every form of bitterness,
now groaning in spirit,
now quaking with fear,
now wearied,
now in agony,
now in anxiety,
now in confusion,
now oppressed by sadness and sorrow
partly because of his most sensitive response
to bodily pain,
partly because of his most fervent zeal
for the divine honor taken away by sin,
partly because of his pity poured out upon wretched men,
partly because of his compassion for you,
his most sweet mother..." (*Lig. vit.* 28).

his aesthetic language. The "visible sun," shining in the sky, hides "the rays of its light," and Jesus himself becomes as a "Sun, dimmed to death," a "Fountain of Life dried up," and one who, though "fairer in beauty than the sons of men... [appears] ugly for the sons of men." The moment of death occurs when "Jesus, God and man, in order to manifest his feeling of pity and to declare the power of his divinity, commends his spirit to the hands of his Father and expires." Through this act of trust, Jesus affirms something powerful about his own identity. Throughout the section on Christ's Origin in the *Lignum vitae*, we saw how Christ's relationship to the Father charged his earthly life, and now we see that relationship carrying his life to its fulfillment. The spiritual trust making death a generous offering up of life rather than just life's involuntary termination is what makes Jesus' death a "death [that] brings the dead to life." "Then," Bonaventure writes, speaking of the exact moment of Jesus' expiration,

> *the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom and the earth quaked and the rocks were rent and the tombs were opened* (Matt. 27:51-52). Then the centurion recognized that he was truly God. Then those who had come to a spectacle to jeer *returned, beating their breasts* (Luke 23:48). Then he who is *fairer in beauty...* appeared ugly...

At the exact moment of Christ's death, when beauty is at its "ugliest" point of revelation, the eyes of all are opened and the truth of Christ's humanity and divinity are irrefutably exposed.

The generative nature of this "ugly truth" is described in 8.2, where Christ is pierced with a lance. "In order that the Church might be formed out of the side of Christ sleeping on the cross...," Bonaventure writes, Providence permitted this strangely "fruitful" act of violence.[70] The ensuing "gushing from the secret fountain of the heart gave power to the sacraments of the Church to confer the life of grace and to become for those already living in Christ a draught of *the fountain* of living *water springing up into eternal life* (John 4:14)." The reader is invited to apply his or her "mouth *to draw water from the Savior's fountains* for this is *the river arising from the midst of paradise* which, *divided into four branches* and flowing into devout hearts, waters and makes fertile the whole earth." Here, strikingly, the "fountain of life" that "dried up" in death is copiously available, gushing

[70]The analogy here seems to be of the bride of Christ (the Church) being taken from Christ's side while he sleeps in death, just like Eve was taken from the side of Adam while he slept in Eden. The barrenness of Christ's death is what gives birth to the new life of the infant Church.

with exposed fertility. God rejuvenates creation through the strange medium of Jesus' corpse.

It is in 8.3 more than anywhere else that the animating beauty of Christ's ugliness is revealed in our text. There Jesus' broken and bloodied bodily "tunic" is "sent to the Father for recognition" just as the beloved Joseph's tunic was sent for Jacob's recognition in Genesis 37:31-33. To show the significance of this event, it is necessary to skip forward briefly to the section on Christ's glorification, which nears its end with an image of the Church and Christ in union "when the face of the earth has been renewed" (11.4). There when "the light of the moon [is] like the light of the sun and the light of the sun [is]… like the light of seven days," the New Jerusalem—the Church, Bonaventure writes, "will be led into the palace of the heavenly court and introduced into that sacred and secret bridal chamber and will be united to that heavenly Lamb in so intense a covenant that bride and groom will become one spirit." This, for Bonaventure, is God's desire for creation—its true end and the reality God already knows of it in God's eternity. But Bonaventure reflects upon this unity of spirit through an image of visible bodily fusion. He explains that "Christ will be clothed with all the beauty of the elect as if with a many-colored tunic in which he will shine forth richly adorned as if covered with all manner of precious stones."[71]

But in 8.3, which considers Christ's physical body just after it has died, its streams of blood having brought his mystical body to birth, the immortal beauty of Christ's heavenly, bodily "tunic" is not yet sensually present, despite its fruitfulness. Blood-stained, it appears as a "priestly robe of red." Christ's bodily tunic— that locus of future glory—is described here as the beloved Joseph's beautiful cloak. But now, in death, its meaning is imperceptible (Bonaventure does not mention its many colors). "Dipped in blood" it is sent to the only one (the Father) who is able to perceive the true meaning and aesthetic quality of Christ's "ugly" and ruined body. Bonaventure entreats God, therefore, to

> 'Recognize the tunic of your *beloved* son Joseph, whom the envy of his brothers in the flesh has devoured like a wild beast and has trampled upon his garment [body] in rage, befouling its beauty with the remains of blood, for it has left in it five lamentable gashes. For this is indeed, O Lord, the garment which your innocent Son gave over… choosing to be stripped of the mantle of his flesh and to descend into the prison of death rather than to seek temporal glory by acquiescing to the shouts of the

[71] *Lig. vit.* 44. This certainly alludes to the biblical Joseph's tunic of "many colors." Bonaventure doesn't directly link Christ's risen body to Joseph's tunic, but given the fact that Bonaventure has already spoken of Joseph's tunic in 8.3, the link seems clear.

adulterous mob.'[72]

The tunic of Christ's temporal body is the color of sacrifice and death, not the many colors of the body in glory. And yet it is the same cloak of the beloved Joseph—obscured by the violent movements of fallen temporality, but recognized by the love of Eternity. These two realities are happening at once. It is through Christ's perfect loving at the cross—his humanity being fully ordered and open to the Word rather than the narrow "shouts of the adulterous mob,"—that his Father is *able* to recognize him. The ugliness of death here is very clearly the worldly face of uncreated Beauty.

In 8.4, finally, Jesus' "most sacred body" is reverenced by Mary Magdalene and the other women, who love and weep for him with "powerful desire." The efficacy ascribed by Bonaventure to the cruciform bodies of the blessed dead (i.e., Francis) will be considered more closely in chapter five, as we seek to discern the aesthetic potential of other diminishing bodies.

3.3. On the Mystery of His Glorification (33-48)

We turn now to the third and final section of the *Lignum vitae*, which concerns Jesus glorification and all that this includes: his resurrection and vindication, and the world's reordering through Christ's judgment. Discussing the relationship between creatures and uncreated Truth in the Christian tradition more generally, Mark McIntosh offers a summary of Bonaventure's Christology that provides the perfect prelude to what I will now attempt to show as our text circles back to the metaphysical End from which it first began:

> For Bonaventure, Christ, who is the perfect offering—of the Father to the world and of the world to the Father—accomplishes in this liturgy of his dying and rising the consummation of the journey of truth. For he bears within himself, the Temple of his Body, the truth of all the creatures; and allowing their broken and distorted forms to be enkindled and consumed in the fire of his passion, he passes over into their fulness and truth in the Father. The truth of all creatures is an eschatological truth for now—the world waits for its revelation. It does, however, radiate from this eschatological future into our time; and the sign it makes here, the presence it has now, is the presence of the crucified and risen Jesus. He is the appearing in our present world of

[72] *Lig. vit.* 31. Cousins again identifies Pseudo-Anselm as the original source of this passage (see *Meditationes*, 9). However the passage from 11.4 referring to Bonaventure's many-colored tunic seems to be original to Bonaventure. Cousins seems to see a reference to the wife of Potiphar in the "shouts of the adulterous mob," as he cites Gen. 39:7 in a footnote. The wife of Potiphar wrongfully accused Joseph of evil in the Genesis text, just as Jesus is wrongfully accused prior to his crucifixion.

> the truth of all things as they have passed from mendacity to reality, from death to life. In the bitter economy of lies, Christ, who is the truth of all things, appears as alienated and accursed by God; the resurrection reveals the truth of all things as vindicated and beloved of God."[73]

Here McIntosh prepares us to conceptualize how Truth or Beauty has been energizing the "ugly" diminishment of Jesus' soul and sensuality seen so rawly in the section on his Passion. If humanity reaches its truest beauty in the humanity of Jesus Christ, then humanity's broken aesthetics is fully healed in Christ's resurrection, which allows the "ugliness" of our worldly state not only to participate in Beauty, but also to be *recognized* as beautiful. The self's worldly ugliness and beauty exist together simultaneously, with the former opening onto the latter. Let us now once again follow Bonaventure's text to see the luminous beauty that, in his view, has animated the ugliness of Christ's passion, as well as the glory that has been opened to humanity as a result of his return to the Father.

3.3.1. Ninth Fruit: The Novelty of His Resurrection (33-36)

The truth of creation bursts brightly from the depths of Hell in 9.1, as Jesus descends to the pit victorious over death. Christ's divinity begins to "shine forth in his [created] soul," though his body (which is never abandoned by the Word) remains in the grave, and it is through this victory that the final exposure of sin occurs: "*Disarming the Principalities and Powers, he led them away boldly, displaying them openly in triumph in himself* (Col. 2:15). Death is vanquished through the revelation of what it really is—untruth, a nothingness rendered powerless in view of creation's fulfillment in Christ. Then he (the "Leviathan," devil, death or sin) "who had no right over the Head which he had attacked, also lost what he had seemed to have over the body... Then the long awaited brightness of a new light shone upon those *that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death* (Isa. 9.2)." In Bonaventure's view, everything opposed to Being is exposed and put to shame when Christ's beauty is unveiled, just as the beautiful truth of humanity was declared by the trust and generosity expressed by Christ in his passion.

Beauty is the chief lens through which Bonaventure describes Christ's glorified sensuality in 9.3:

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[73]Mark McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth: The Spirituality and Theology of Knowledge* (New York: Crossroad, 2004), 222.

> That most beautiful *flower of the root of Jesse* (Isa. 11:1), which had blossomed in the incarnation and withered in the passion, thus blossomed again in the resurrection so as to become the beauty of all. For that most glorious body—subtle, agile and immortal—was clothed in glory so as to be truly more radiant than the sun, showing an example of the beauty destined for the risen bodies.[74] Concerning this the Savior himself said: *'Then the just will shine forth like the sun into the kingdom of their Father*' (Matt. 13:43), that is, in eternal beatitude. And if the just will shine forth like the sun, how great do you think is the radiance of the very Sun of justice himself? So great is it, I say, that it is *more beautiful than the sun and surpasses every constellation of the stars* (Wisd. 7:29); compared to light, his beauty is deservedly judged to be preeminent.
>
> Happy the eyes that have seen!
> But you will be truly happy
> *if there will be remnants of your seed*
> *to see*
> both interiorly and exteriorly
> that most desired splendor (9.3).

If Beauty is the expression of the whole Trinity made manifest in the Word, here God's Beauty is shining with full intelligibility through Christ's soul and into a body no longer sentenced to the strange aesthetics of this world. Through obedience to the Beauty guiding and infusing it, Christ's body passes through death and becomes the "first fruits" of that brightness into which his mystical body and all individual, worldly bodies are being called (1 Corinthians 15:20). But the promise given is eschatological: "Happy the eyes that have seen! But you will be truly happy..." in the future when you see "both interiorly and exteriorly that most desired splendor." Here the blessed gaze upon a corporeality that finally corresponds to its interior, spiritual meaning. Christ's human body, bearing the whole world, is perfectly informed by his created soul, which is in turn embraced by the divine Unity. Here at last there is no brokenness, no disproportion, dimness or diminishment. The contemplative vocation set before humanity in Eden, together with its rightful aesthetics, is finally fulfilled.

"Shorn of the fleece of mortality," which he exchanges "for the glory of immortality," Jesus in 9.4 is said to reign "like another Joseph and *a true Savior* not only in

[74]Saward draws attention to an important Easter Monday sermon on the flowering of Christ's resurrected flesh in relation to the four "dowries" given to resurrected bodies. In this sermon, Saward says, Christ's body flowers "like the rose through the beauty of brightness," which, incidentally, is exactly the image we see in the side of Francis' dead body in the *Legenda maior,* though Saward doesn't mention this. Saward, "The Flesh Flowers Again."

the land of Egypt (Gen. 41:45, 45:26) but also '*in every place where* the eternal King *has dominion* (Ps. 102:22).'"[75] Here the truthful one, shamed and broken in the passion, is vindicated as rightful Head by the Source that energized his self-offering. "All power in heaven and earth [has] been given to him by the Father (cf. Matt. 28:16-20)," Bonaventure declares. And as a result, we can conclude, corporeality is fully claimed through Christ's dominion and authority. "In the power of the name of Jesus Christ," Bonaventure explains, the first followers of Christ had "command over all creatures and all diseases." The old estrangement of corporeality from the uncreated Meaning known by human souls is gone, unleashing a fresh fecundity. Corporeality is alive, claimed once and for all by the members of that risen Body to whom the Father has given all things.

3.3.2. Tenth Fruit: The Sublimity of His Ascension (37-40)

This theme is developed in terms of vindication in Bonaventure's tenth (and eleventh) fruit when, after Jesus' ascension (which opens "the gates of heaven" to his followers), Jesus appears "*before the face* of the most benign Father *to intercede for us* (Heb. 1:4, 9:24)." Because of God's own initiative and humanity's responsiveness in Christ, creation is drawn, healed and whole, back to its divine Source in Christ's glorified body. Christ has become the mediator between uncreated and creaturely truth, and his perpetual intercession is what makes creaturely truth a possibility perduring. This vindication of corporeality as true and good happens, we can say, as Christ the incarnate Word is gathered up into his Father's presence. "Seated at the right hand of Majesty," Bonaventure writes, Jesus shows "to the glorious face of his Father the scars of the wounds which he suffered for us" (10.2). Jesus becomes the world's "High Priest" and "advocate" because creation is validated and received in Christ's acceptance by the Father. Bonaventure's metaphysical circle is thus completed in the perfected humanity into which God will be able to raise each Christ-formed individual who desires recreation.[76]

It is for this purpose, no doubt, that Bonaventure sees Christ (together with the

[75]This again links to Pseudo-Anselm, *Meditations*, 9.

[76]This is reflected in Bonaventure's prayer in *Lig. vit.* 38: "Let every tongue give thanks to you, Lord our Father, for the unutterable gift of your most abundant charity. Y*ou have not spared the only Son* of your heart, *but you have handed him over* to death *for all of us* that we might have so great and so faithful an advocate before your face in heaven." In this we see that just as Christ gives all things to the Father in his return, the giving of the Son by the Father was actually the giving of everything to creation, or rather, the giving of creation to itself.

Father) sending forth the Spirit in 10.3, who taught the early disciples "all truth and inflamed them with all love and strengthened them in every virtue...," empowering them to plant "the Church with their own blood," making the Church "lovable to her Spouse and his attendants for being exceedingly beautiful and *adorned with* a wonderful variety (Ps. 44:15)."[77] The Spirit draws and bears Christ's members into his body so that they might be confirmed as a whole of many beautifully ordered parts ("the Church"). This is evident in 10.4 especially, where Bonaventure explains that "In this holy Church, which through the wonderful work of the Holy Spirit is diversified in a variety of forms throughout the world and yet is united in a single whole, there presides one High Priest, Christ, as supreme Hierarch." Just as the Word is the simple, infinite expression of uncreated Light, so now the Church conformed to that Word in Christ represents the redeemed and truthful whole of creation's many parts—from human beings down to the smallest speck of elemental nature contained within their bodies.

3.3.3. Eleventh Fruit: The Equity of His Judgment (41-44)

In his eleventh fruit, Bonaventure deepens his discussion of Truth's victory by reflecting on the meaning of eschatological judgment. "At that time," he writes, all "*things hidden in darkness will be illumined*."

> Thus, all together and in an instant, all the secrets of all will be revealed to all with such clear certainty that against the testimony of truth speaking in Christ and of each conscience giving similar testimony, not a single path will be open for denial, or defense or excuse or subterfuge, but each will receive *according to his deeds* (11.1).

In the presence of Truth itself, all things hidden are unveiled once and for all. But this, I think, need not be seen as God's vindication before creation or even as creation's vindication before God (after all, God needs no vindication, and God already knows the truth of creation). Rather, we can see in this passage the idea that creation is vindicated before itself, for its own sake. This is especially evident in 11.2, where Bonaventure explains that "those who fought insolently against the Creator of all will then, by God's just judgment, be conquered by all creatures." Here creation's goodness wins the battle sin has long caused it to wage against its own beauty and integrity—the battle that has made so

[77]Here is yet another example of death's generative potential.

many individual creatures feel alienated from themselves. God's judgment does not just demonstrate God's own righteousness. In God's judgment, rather, the righteousness of creation—the goodness of corporeality—is finally actualized and revealed. God's embrace of the world in Jesus Christ illumines it so brightly that all its deficiencies and potentialities are filled and silenced, delivering the Church into a state of rest.

But Bonaventure, influenced as he is by Augustine's aesthetics of Hell, doesn't see all parts of creation participating in this beauty in exactly the same way. The wicked participate through a just damnation, with an intensity corresponding to the severity of their sin, for every person gets what they have merited. (A more contemporary way of putting this, again, might be to say that every person receives the reality she has created for herself.) For the wicked, then, "to hide will be impossible and to be seen, intolerable."[78] Hell is described as a "horrible chaos," presumably because it is the realized destiny of every disordered creaturely ugliness. The world dealt deceitfully with Truth when it exposed Jesus to judgment, breaking apart its integrity and corrupting its visibility by subjecting him to death. Now every visibility at last rightly corresponds to its subject, fully intelligible because of Truth speaking in the luminosity and proportion of Christ's literal and mystical body. Bonaventure thus rightly describes the damned (who are essentially "untruthful creatures"), as "corpses," referencing Isaiah 66:24.[79] Immortal, they are alive in a very literal sense, but they are so devoid of Life's beauty and vitality that they can be called nothing else but corpses.[80] They are truly inert matter, uninformed by souls ablaze with the vision of God.

Finally in 11.4 we arrive at the very important aesthetic passage I drew into my

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[78] *Lig. vit.* 42.

[79] On one level, Bonaventure wants to emphasize the untruthfulness of the damned, but on another level he wishes to redeem their untruthfulness, arguing with Augustine, as we saw in chapter two, that the damned dwell beautifully in hell. This seems to give untruthfulness a kind of intelligibility of its own.

[80] Balthasar's emphasis on "expression" as described in chapter one can help make sense of this. Perhaps we can think of the damned as "corpses" because they aren't animated by souls who gather and bring their bodies to life through their own contemplative assimilation to the uncreated Word. Not speaking of Bonaventure directly, Balthasar asks in his introduction to his theological aesthetics, "What is a person without the form that shapes him... [and] which makes him... free for himself and his highest possibility... a form into which and through which to pour out his life, so that his life becomes the soul of the form and the form becomes the expression of his soul?" He goes on to say that this form is "freely chosen," so it must be more than just the body, though it is possible only in the body. It is the "very law of the individual. Whoever shatters this form by ignoring it is unworthy of the beauty of Being, and he will be banished from the splendour of solid reality as one who has not passed the test. Thus, while physically he remains alive, such a person decays to expressionlessness and sterility, is like the dry wood which is gathered in the Gospel for burning..." Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Seeing the Form*, The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, Joseph Fessio, John Riches (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982), 23-24.

discussion of *Lig. vit.* 31 (8.3) under section 3.2.4 above: Jesus' mystical body as the beloved Joseph's many-colored cloak. There is no need to discuss the passage in detail here again, but it is worth noting how well the image captures the aesthetics of the Church in glory. For Bonaventure, colors are the visual manifestation of clear light shining on corporeal objects. In the passage on Joseph's tunic as the body of Christ, we can imagine uncreated Light illumining Jesus' corporeal body through his soul. Its intelligibility is in its luminous colors, and here Jesus' literal body becomes a symbol of his mystical body, each corporeal member an ordered and proportioned color set ablaze by the uncreated Light dwelling in Christ. This metaphor is enriched by the fact that for Bonaventure, color is also a metaphor for virtue.[81] Presumably the blessed "parts" of Christ's glorified mystical body shine with the light of their own divinely infused and beautiful virtue.[82]

3.3.4. Twelfth Fruit: The Eternity of His Kingdom (45-48)

In the *Lignum vitae*'s twelfth and final fruit, Christ's garments are again mentioned as Bonaventure describes creation coming to rest beneath Christ's Kingship. Given the layered and luminous texturing of Bonaventure's references to robes and tunics, to Christ's physical and mystical bodies already seen in previous sections, it is possible to extract further analogy from Bonaventure's reference to Revelation 19:16 in 12.1. Here the victory of the King is inscribed on his clothing and in his physical body, reaffirming (perhaps) that Christ's personal victory is simultaneously the victory of his mystical body, i.e., his "kingdom" or the whole creation: "He indeed is King who has *on his garment and on his thigh a name written: King of kings and Lord of lords* (Apoc. 19:16), whose *power is an everlasting power that shall not be taken away* (Dan. 7:14)..."[83] If Christ's interior victory is here expressed in the resurrection and glorification of his physical body, here that body is expanded to become all of redeemed corporeality. It is *here*—in the visibility of Christ's mystical body—that the God-formed soul of Jesus Christ expresses itself for all eternity. And he, with all creation, is beautiful, for he is the King (of a kingdom) "whose *countenance* both heaven and *all the earth desire to look upon* (3 Kings 10:24)." The beauty of creatures is forever sustained by the contemplative gaze that is also their

[81]See Spargo, *Category of the Aesthetic,* 60-61 on this.
[82]Spargo directs her readers to IV *Sent* S. 49, 11, 2, 1 for more on the light and color of glorified bodies.
[83]*Lig. vit.* 45.

participation, and the wonder of it all elicits spontaneous praise from Bonaventure's pen:[84]

> O how glorious is the kingdom
> of this most excellent King
> where all the just reign with him!
> Its law is
> truth, peace, charity, life, eternity.
> It is not divided
> by the number of those who reign;
> nor lessened by being shared,
> nor disturbed by its multitude,
> nor disordered by its inequality of ranks,
> nor circumscribed by space,
> nor changed by motion,
> nor measured by time.[85]

Here in glory, Bonaventure is saying, the order and proportion of perfect beauty reigns. And the reason it does is because all things now, in Christ, correspond to and rest in the Beauty who first sent them forth to be. All things bear full, unhindered witness to uncreated Wisdom. Every creature, and the harmonious proportion of all creatures together, is "beautiful":

> ...the government of the kingdom is directed not by arbitrary decision but by the brilliant rays of the eternal laws emanating without deception from the light of wisdom. And this wisdom is written in Christ Jesus as in the book of life, in which God the Father has *hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* (Col. 2:3). Therefore, the only-begotten Son of God, as the uncreated Word, is the book of wisdom and the light that is full of living eternal principles in the mind of the supreme Craftsman, as the inspired Word in the angelic intellects and the blessed, as the incarnate Word in rational minds united to the flesh. Thus throughout the entire kingdom *the manifold wisdom of God* (Eph. 3:10) shines forth from him and in him, as in a mirror containing the beauty of all forms and lights and as in a book in which all things are written according to the deep secrets of God.[86]

The uncreated Word here is the Beauty who once sourced and now illuminates the truth of all things in Christ's eternal kingdom. Nothing is "arbitrary," and there is no "deception" in his kingdom, but rather all things are fully intelligible in that "book [Christ] in which all things are written according to the deep secrets of God." The inspired Word forever opens

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[84] These poetic interruptions occur frequently throughout the *Lignum vitae*. It is as though Bonaventure becomes overwhelmed by the beauty of what he is expounding, and needs suddenly to express his own devotion.
[85] *Lig. vit.* 45.
[86] *Lig. vit.* 46.

the souls and bodies of the blessed to receive that Light which once was hidden and is now fully revealed in Christ's kingly presence, and here Bonaventure's carefully meted meditation appropriately dissolves into ecstatic descriptions of Christ's meaning in view of his Paternal Source, and into luminous counsels to worldly pilgrims, who are told to seek this Beauty above all things. The blinding radiance and spiritual hunger of 12.3 is thus a fitting way to conclude this chapter, as it propels readers of Bonaventure's gospel meditation toward the luminous End from which our text first began:

> In this eternal kingdom, all good and perfect gifts come down in plenty and abundance from the Father of lights (James 1:17) through Jesus Christ, who is the superessential Ray and who, since he *is one, can do all things, and renews all things visible while perduring* (Wisd. 7:27) himself. For he is a pure effusion of the brightness of the power of the omnipotent God, and therefore nothing that is sullied can enter (Wisd. 7:25) into this Fountain-Ray of light.
>
> You soul devoted to God,
> whoever you are,
> run
> with living desire
> to this Fountain of life and light
> and with the innermost power of your heart
> cry out to him:
> 'O inaccessible beauty of the most high God
> and the pure brightness of the eternal light,
> life vivifying all life,
> light illuming every light,
> and keeping in perpetual splendor
> a thousand times a thousand lights
> brilliantly shining
> before the throne of your Divinity
> since the primeval dawn!
> O eternal and inaccessible,
> clear and sweet stream from the fountain
> hidden from the eyes of all mortals,
> whose depths is without bottom,
> whose height is without limit,
> whose breadth cannot be bounded,
> whose purity cannot be disturbed.'
> From this Fountain
> flows the stream of *the oil of gladness,*
> which *gladdens the city of God,*
> and the powerful fiery torrent,
> the *torrent*, I say, *of the pleasure* of God,
> from which the guests at the heavenly banquet
> drink to joyful inebriation

and sing without ceasing
hymns of jubilation.

Anoint us
with this sacred oil
and refresh
with the longed-for waters of this torrent
the thirsting throat of our parched hearts
so that *amid shouts of joy and thanksgiving*
we may sing to you
a canticle of praise,
proving by experience that
with you
is the fountain of life,
and in your light
we will see
light.[87]

4. Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to show how the paschal mystery makes it possible for the "ugliness" of human brokenness to be drawn into Bonaventure's soteriological circle, so that "ugliness" becomes a means of creaturely beautification where before it was simply a terminal consequence of sin.[88] This occurs, I explained, as humanity unites itself with Christ the Head or Hierarch of creation, who embraces the brokenness of creation within his own move toward death, not grasping fearfully or possessively at his own life, but rather trusting in its Source. This can be observed in the structure and momentum of the *Lignum vitae*, which first reveals the humility and transparency to God grounding Christ's human life, which next shows how this beauty energizes his diminishment in the passion, and which finally reveals the consummation and vindication of creation in Christ's glorification. Of particular relevance to the questions we have been pursuing throughout this thesis are the ways in which beauty and "ugliness" parallel each other throughout Christ's passion. Christ's gradual move toward death is traced by Bonaventure through a genuine worldly aesthetics: The body of Jesus "dims" with each violence that is inflicted upon him until, finally, body and soul are rent apart in death. At that moment, Bonaventure

[87] *Lig vit.* 47.
[88] A "means" because it is the place where the necessary dispositions for the journey to God can be cultivated, i.e., humility and trust.

explained, Christ "appeared ugly for the sons of men."[89] But despite the very real and honest unintelligibility of this moment, a strange and mysterious Beauty is hiddenly borne within it. It is as if Christ's descent toward death has been, simultaneously, an ascent to life.

The evidence of beauty's hidden presence is its generation of the Church, which includes the world's redeemed corporeality. In the paschal mystery, Christ fulfills the contemplative vocation given to Adam and Eve in Eden. But the visibility of its aesthetics cannot be set right until the world is remade. My aim in chapter five will be to show how the paradoxical "beauty" of Christ's diminishment can be harnessed by those who, following Christ's footsteps, are making the journey of return to God within the context of this world. Brokenness or diminishment is an unavoidable result of the Fall, and will always set the visible, sensual terms of the self's journey. But union with Christ makes it possible for this sensual unintelligibility to become a mysterious locus of beauty. The dimness and disproportion of the self become fruitful and generative through participation in uncreated Beauty, and through the growth of Christian virtues such as the humility and generosity we saw animating Jesus' life in the section on his origin in the *Lignum vitae*. We turn now to the *Legenda maior* to see how this new aesthetics is lived forth by St. Francis of Assisi, whom Bonaventure deems to be Christ's most faithful follower.

[89] *Lig. vit.* 38.

Chapter Five

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Communion of the Poor

> We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.
>
> 2 Corinthians 4:10, *NRSV*

Thomas of Celano's *Vita secunda* records a moving incident in which a distressed brother, recognizing the eagerness of Francis' body to always obey the soul's commands, counsels Francis to treat his body with more compassion. Questioned as to its conduct, Francis admits that his flesh has never spared "itself in anything, but [has] almost rushed headlong to carry out every order. It [has] evaded no labor, ...turned down no discomfort..."

"'Well, then,'" the concerned brother replies,

> 'where is your generosity? Where is your piety and your great discernment? Is this a repayment worthy of *faithful friends*...? To this day, what service could you offer to Christ our Lord without the help of your body? Haven't you admitted that it exposed itself to every danger for this reason? ...Is it reasonable that you should desert a faithful friend in great need, who risked himself and all that he had for you, even to the point of death? Far be it from you, Father, you who are the help and support of the afflicted; far be it from you to sin against the Lord in such a way!'[1]

In chapter one of this thesis, I proposed that while Patristic and Medieval theologians including Bonaventure have tended to emphasize the body's "rebellion" from the soul's headship when speaking of sin's effect on the human person, in our own historical period it may be more helpful to speak of the same theological reality by emphasizing the soul's original "abandonment" of the body at the fall, together with the whole corporeal world it represents. Journeying to glory under the aesthetic terms initiated by the Fall invites humanity to "reclaim" the corporeality it estranged when it tried to possess created goods divorced from the whole of uncreated Beauty. But this, I tried to show in chapters three and four, can only occur as believers come to locate their bodily diminishment within the

[1]Thomas of Celano, "Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul" in *The Founder,* Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, vol. II, ed. Regis Armstrong (New York: New City Press, 2000), 383.

glorified corporeality of the resurrected Christ. Relating to diminishment in this way can enable human beings to accept the movement of their worldly bodies toward death in the direction of transfiguration, so that broken corporeality becomes a hidden portal of light. While bouts of perplexity and feelings of bodily estrangement may linger (an experience we can perhaps read into the ambiguous relationship Francis maintains with his own body throughout Bonaventure's *Legenda maior,* as we shall soon see), Bonaventure's theological framework can teach believers to encounter the unintelligibility of their bodies and that of the whole "dim," corporeal world, with the same tender care Francis exhibits after receiving the counsel of the brother described above: "'Cheer up Brother Body, and forgive me," Francis responds, "for I will now gladly do as you please, and gladly hurry to relieve your complaints!'" As the body is "reclaimed" by the soul in this way, the fractured "parts" of fallen humanity may once again come, in hiddenness, to exercise their "harmonious proportion," and thus participate in the generative work of that uncreated Beauty who leads all things to glory.

In this chapter, I will explore the paschal aesthetics of Francis' spiritual journey in order to show how the aesthetic possibilities opened to humanity in Christ's paschal mystery might be taken up by contemporary believers struggling with the realities of bodily diminishment.[2] We have already explored the Christological dimensions Balthasar sees charging the striking sensuality of Francis' stigmata.[3] In Balthasar's view, the "darkness" or hiddenness of the stigmata bears the completed interior truth toward which Francis has journeyed, in Christ, throughout the course of his temporal life. Beginning with Balthasar's understanding of the stigmata as a divine, exterior "seal" confirming the beauty achieved by Francis' soul, this chapter seeks to explore the process by which Francis comes to merit such a "seal," why it must be expressed in the body, and what this says about corporeality's

[2]I am suggesting in this chapter that for Bonaventure, Francis is the best example of what is possible of all Christian journeys. But this doesn't negate the fact that, for Bonaventure, Francis has a unique function in human history different from other, ordinary believers. On this, see Joseph Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1971) which, among other things, examines Bonaventure's engagement with the twelfth-century figure of Joachim of Fiore, whose eschatological teachings provided thirteenth-century Franciscans a new way of understanding Francis.

[3]Balthasar's understanding of the stigmata is summarized succinctly in *Theological Style*: "...the stigmatisation is like a sign of [Francis'] inward resemblance to the crucified, a sign that demands a bodily visibility; and the inner resemblance, no less than the bodily resemblance, was the work of the crucified God whose love sought to express itself. The man's love makes the wax of the heart soft, and God's love imprints the seal; and so every Christian may be urged, 'Like a seal in soft wax, so print Jesus the Bridegroom on your soul.' Likewise: 'Long more forcefully for resemblance to God, through an explicit (*expressam*) following of the crucified Jesus'" (272). Latin is Balthasar's. Balthasar here incorporates quotes from *Perf. vit. ad sor*. 6 and *De regim. animae* 7.

participation in creation's future glory. The process, I will argue, is grounded in Francis' practice of evangelical poverty—a generous spirituality through which sinful greed is silenced and Francis' relationship with corporeality is reordered and renewed. Taking hold of his own necessary bodily diminishment and fusing it with the trust exhibited by Christ's humanity charges the dim unintelligibility of Francis' body with the brightness of uncreated Beauty, a reality testified to by the fruitful beauty exhibited by Francis' sensually "sterile" body throughout the *Legenda maior*. This paradoxical aesthetic is a dominant feature of Bonaventure's text, reaching its high point in the stigmata and enjoying full revelation just after Francis' bodily death. In the stigmata, Francis' diminishment is embraced by the Beauty animating Christ's own diminishment and death, allowing the meaning of all things won by Christ and vindicated by the Father to shine back through the "dark" but radiant wounds of Francis. But Francis is only able to receive this gift because of the distinctive pattern of evangelical poverty he has followed throughout the course of his worldly life, which has at its foundation the same humility we saw charging Christ's life in the first section of the *Lignum vitae*. In Francis' voluntary poverty, the corporeality humanity tried to possess and thus "abandoned" is released and thus "claimed" through the practical imitation of Christ's humility, which expresses a desire for God taking in but not limiting itself to the love of particular creatures. This deep desire expressed by Francis through bodily conformity to the poverty of Christ can be read as a profound spiritual openness to the "whole" of God rather than for creaturely "parts" that can be grasped and thus closed off from uncreated Beauty, suggesting a way in which the body's worldly unintelligibility may become fruitful and beautiful again. The obscurity of Francis' body in stigmata and death thus becomes a negative, even apophatic "sign" of creation's truth since, through the mediating union of his body and soul, corporeal creation is grafted into the luminous meaning of Christ's glorified body. Thus when Bonaventure writes that in the stigmata "Christian wisdom" was "ploughed into the dust" of Francis' flesh, he means, among other things, that Francis' body has recovered its spiritual meaning and is now able to channel the beauty of meaning into other corporeal creatures as well. He has achieved the body-soul integrity once lost through the Fall, enabling God's regenerating Beauty to pour itself out to others through Francis' body despite the unintelligibility of Francis' continuing worldly appearance. Considering all this in view of the existential questions we have been tracing throughout previous chapters, Francis emerges now as an example of one for whom the body's move toward death has become purposeful rather than merely

inevitable. Bonaventure's depiction of Francis allows us to imagine how diminishment might actually become a voice for the self's spiritual longing and a response to God's desire for the "return" of all creatures. When embraced by divine Beauty, a particular creature's obligation to pass through death no longer need prevent it from exercising the hierarchal ministry marking those who are becoming beautiful, even if this renewed capacity remains hidden beneath the body's worldly brokenness. The spirituality I have articulated here, of course, does not represent the only way of connecting evangelical poverty, aesthetics and embodiment in Bonaventure's *Legenda;* it is not the obvious or immediate concern of Bonaventure to to show how the body's diminishment can be reclaimed for Beauty in this way.[4] But the interplay of themes in Bonaventure's text provides ample opportunity for developing such a spirituality in answer to the contemporary existential problems with which we have been concerned from the beginning of this thesis.

In an effort to organize my exploration of Bonaventure's *Legenda maior*, I have divided this chapter into six sections:

In part one, I will briefly consider where Bonaventure's *Legenda* sits within the context of early Franciscan sources before touching on its structural and spiritual significance.

In part two I will explore the relationship Francis seems to have with his own body, first considering whether this poses any challenges to the spirituality I am trying to develop, and second, exploring how Francis' experience of embodiment unites him with Christ and thus ushers him into Bonaventure's soteriological journey.

This second consideration is expanded in part three, which analyzes the two powerful images of bodily nakedness bookending Francis' journey. Here I suggest that these two scenes can be read as a commentary on the inner disposition and union with Christ necessary for beginning and ending the soteriological journey.[5] The fallen instinct to

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[4]All references to the *Legenda* in this chapter refer to the *Legenda maior*, not to Bonaventure's other (short) life of Francis, the *Legenda minor,* which was written primarily for liturgical use. This chapter relies primarily on the *Legenda maior* because its pattern reflects Bonaventure's comprehensive theological vision, allowing readers to discern a faithful Bonaventurean spirituality of diminishment.

[5]Of course, the stigmata can also be read as the place where Francis reaches his perfect end. For this reason, I think Francis'

death can be read as a sort of extension of the stigmata, or rather the place where revelation is fully worked out. Francis' death also brings believers face to face with the full diminishment toward which they are heading, and so death's location as the paradoxical point of Francis' full aesthetic revelation seems worthy of consideration.

preserve and possess the self or any other creature must be exchanged for love of Beauty itself if diminishment is to be transfigured and the goodness of creation reclaimed.

In part four the intersection of poverty, virtue, and generation in the *Legenda* will dominate as I show how Francis' bodily communion with the poverty of others activates the hidden presence of divine Meaning. If the two scenes of nudity explored in part three disclose the Beauty by which Francis' journey begins and ends, then this section on poverty, virtue and generation comprises the mid-section wherein Francis comes to gradually correspond to his truth in Christ, allowing him to arrive at his own beautiful end.

In part five I will explore how the hidden fulness of Francis' interior poverty works itself out in the stigmata narrative, suggesting that the stigmata can be seen as the place where Francis' bodily diminishment is fully transfigured through perfect assimilation to Christ's own diminishment. Francis' growing participation in Beauty has carried him along to the point where his own eschatological truth finally bursts through the poverty of his body even though its appearance remains, for now, confined to the aesthetic parameters of this world.

In part six, finally, I will consider the aesthetics of Francis' body in death, after the departure of his soul, and how the truth achieved in the stigmata is revealed and vindicated in the unambiguous sensual beauty so strangely manifested by his dead body.

1. Bonaventure's *Legenda maior* within the Context of Early Franciscan Sources

Bonaventure's *Legenda maior* was commissioned at the General Chapter of the Friars Minor in 1260 at Narbonne, and was presented complete, along with the *Legenda minor,* at the Chapter of 1263 in Pisa, while Bonaventure was himself Minister of the Order. The circumstances of the text's composition have been the subject of vigorous debate since Paul Sabatier's influential *Francois d'Assise* appeared in 1894, initiating a trend that continues to see Bonaventure as an institutionalized cleric who harmonized the Order by compromising the radical, primitive spirit of Francis and his earliest recruits.[6] This reading

[6]More important critical voices of the twentieth century include John Moorman, Randolph Daniel and Rosalind Brookes, all of whom have shaped the current attitude toward Bonaventure and the early Franciscan sources by arguing that Bonaventure failed to understand Francis' spiritual vision. See John Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), and Rudolph Daniel, "St. Bonaventure: A Faithful Disciple of St. Francis? A Re-examination of the Question," in *Sancta Bonaventura 1274-1974,* vol. 2 (1973), 170-178.

of the eighth Minister General is fueled in part by Bonaventure's involvement in the trial of John of Parma, the Minister just before him who came under suspicion for his Joachite leanings. Joachim of Fiore was a twelfth century monk and apocalyptic teacher who predicted that the "Age of the Son" would be completed in 1260, initiating the "Age of the Spirit" and a time of spiritual renewal within the Church. Joachim's vision was appealing to those troubled by the Franciscan Order's growing laxity regarding the practice of evangelical poverty, as it provided a historical-apocalyptic framework wherein Francis—and his brand of evangelical poverty—could become the harbinger of Joachim's new spiritual age.[7] In hindsight, a lack of early sources makes it difficult to work out the actual circumstances of John's trial, and the issue is complicated by the fact that John himself recommended Bonaventure as his replacement for minister general, the fact that Bonaventure had Joachite leanings of his own (as Joseph Ratzinger has shown), and Bonaventure and the fact that both John of Parma had outstanding reputations for holiness. Etienne Gilson describes the only witness to the trial (Angelo Clareno) as invested in the apocalyptic idea that the Spiritual Franciscans were to undergo persecution, somewhat prejudicing his description of events. Clareno charges Bonaventure of "duplicity," and of forgetting "his usual kindliness."[8]

Making Bonaventure equally suspect for some modern historians is the 1263 edict from Pisa to "remove" all accounts of Francis' life written prior to the appearance of Bonaventure's own carefully researched version of events.[9] Of these earlier texts,

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[7]These men became known as the *Fraticelli* or "Spirituals." For a comprehensive history of the Franciscan Spirituals, see David Burr, *The Spiritual Franciscans: From Protest to Persecution in the Century after Saint Francis* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003).

[8]See Etienne Gilson, *Philosophy of St. Bonaventure,* 13-18. On Bonaventure's reputation for sanctity, see esp. 60-62. On Bonaventure's Joachitism, see Joseph Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*, trans. Zachary Hayes (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1971).

[9] Armstrong, Hellman and Short offer a translation of the order in their general introduction to *The Founder,* Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, vol. II, ed. Regis Armstrong (New York: New City Press, 2000): "The General Chapter likewise orders under obedience that all the legends of the Blessed Francis that have been made should be removed. Wherever they find these outside the Order, let the brothers strive to remove [*delere*] them. For this Legend made by the General Minister [Bonaventure] has been compiled as he received it from the mouth of those who were always with blessed Francis and had certain knowledge of everything, and proven facts have been diligently placed in it." Though *delere* can have a softer meaning ("to remove by wiping or scratching out"), Armstrong argues that the stronger meaning "to destroy completely" is intended (see p. 29, note 23). However, this need not imply any sinister intention such as the desire to suppress Francis' "dangerous" primitive spirituality. Sympathetic Bonaventure scholars see it as a strategic move meant to bring continuity to a rapidly expanding Franciscan order. None of the existing biographies could be used for this purpose, as none of them offered a comprehensive account of the saint's life. It has even been suggested that the order may have been given out of concern for evangelical poverty, so that the old parchment could be recycled. *The Saint,* Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, vol. I, ed. Regis Armstrong (New York: New City Press, 1999), 18.

Bonaventure's *Legenda maior* relied heavily on the *Vita prima* and *Vita secunda* by Thomas of Celano, written in 1229 and 1247, and to a lesser extent on the *Legenda S. Francisci* by Julian of Speyer, written in 1234-1235. Thomas' *Vita prima* and *Vita secunda* were themselves commissioned respectively by Pope Gregory IX and Minister General Crescentius, the latter not long before the commissioning of Bonaventure's *Legenda*.[10] Although the *Legenda* does include some fresh material acquired during interviews with those who knew Francis well, his principle contribution (as Bonaventure scholars have long recognized) lies not so much in the material itself (much of which is copied, sometimes verbatum, from Thomas and Julian), but in the way in which Bonaventure presents his source material.[11] This contribution was first described in detail by Regis Armstrong, but has since been echoed by other scholars such as Ewert Cousins and, most recently, Ann Astell.[12] In Armstrong's view, similar to what we've seen in Balthasar, the stigmata is a culmination or "seal" upon Francis' unfolding journey of virtue, which is described by Bonaventure throughout the middle section of the *Legenda maior.* On either side of this mid-section are chronological chapters first documenting Francis' early life, conversion, and founding of the Order, and then chronicling his stigmatization and death.[13] All of this richness makes the neglect of Bonaventure's *Legenda as* observed by Ewert Cousins already in 1978 rather unfortunate.[14] The "Franciscan Question" or search for the "Historical Francis" precipitated by Sabatier's work continues to cast a pall over Bonaventure's *Legenda*, and contemporary studies of Francis tend to engage earlier

[10]The *Vita secunda* was finished and presented in 1247 at the Chapter of Lyons. Thomas also penned two further texts: *The Legend for Use in the Choir* was completed in 1230 at the request of Brother Benedict of Arezzo, and *The Treatise on the Miracles* was completed in 1254 at the request of Minister General John of Parma. For further details on Thomas' works see Armstrong, et al., *The Saint,* 171-173. For an introduction to Julian's texts, see pp. 363-367 of that same volume.

[11]Drawing on the critical text published by Collegii Sancti Bonaventurae, which helpfully italicizes all material in the *Legenda* directly quoted from earlier sources, Ewert Cousins has summarized all sections of the *Legenda* that are unique to Bonaventure. The summary icomprises a long footnote in Cousins, introduction, 39 (note 74). For the relevant critical text, see Bonaventure, *Chronica aliaque varia documenta Legendae s. Francisci Assisiensis,* Analecta Franciscana X, ed. PP. Collegii Sancti Bonaventurae (Quaracchi: Collegii Sancti Bonaventurae, 1926-1941), 555-652.

[12]See Regis Armstrong, "The Spiritual Theology of the *Legenda major* of Saint Bonaventure" (PhD diss, Fordham University, 1978), Cousins, introduction, 42-46, and Astell, *Eating Beauty,* 104, 111-114. Astell provides a rare and excellent relatively recent study of Bonaventure's spirituality as reflected in the *Legenda*.

[13]See also Cousins, introduction, xix, xx, 42. Here again in the structure of the *Legenda maior* we see a sort of rough cyclical pattern detailing Francis' own origin (where he begins in Christ), the journey he makes to God in Christ, and the end or completion of his journey in Christ. We have already seen this shape reflected in both the inward journey outlined in the *Hexaemeron*, and in the journey of Christ opening up this soteriological pattern to human beings, as detailed through the three movements of the *Lignum vitae.*

[14]Cousins, introduction, 37-42.

Franciscan sources or even later hagiographical material over the biograpahical texts produced by Bonaventure.[15] As this chapter proceeds, I will build on the observation of Cousins, Astell and others that the *Legenda maior* contains a spirituality worth studying in its own right, despite whatever historical questions remain. Specifically, I will be tracing how the theological aesthetics we've seen in speculative texts such as the *Hexaemeron* works itself out in Bonaventure's biography of Assisi's saint, just as we saw it grounding the metaphysical pattern of the *Lignum vitae.*[16] This is not to say that Thomas and Julian do not possess significant, and in some cases even similar theological insights as Bonaventure. Bonaventure's *Legenda* condenses large quantities of early source material, and sometimes seeing Bonaventurean passages in their original context even enriches the spirituality I am trying to develop (though for the most part, I am limiting this study to Bonaventure's text alone. Much of the light imagery and language of generation we see in Bonaventure, for instance, can be traced back to Thomas, as will be indicated where appropriate. Rather than the themes themselves, then, it is the unique way in which these themes weave together Bonaventure's familiar soteriological arc that makes his text so spiritually significant. Reading Bonaventure's borrowed aesthetic imagery within the rich context of his whole speculative system allows readers to construct theological paradigms that aren't possible using the texts of Thomas or Julian alone. As I explore the *Legenda* throughout this chapter, I will therefore point out not only which stories are unique to Bonaventure, but more importantly, how we might imagine Bonaventure shaping and vesting the early Franciscan material with his own theological vision.

2. Francis and the Experience of Embodiment

I begin our exploration of the text with some observations which, at first glance, seem to

[15]For a relatively recent overview of the "Franciscan Question," see Armstrong, Hellman and Short, *The Saint,* 21-25. For an older, "classic" exploration, see M.D. Lambert, who shows how deeply the question is interwoven with concerns about the practice of evangelical poverty. Lambert, *Franciscan Poverty: The Doctrine of Absolute Poverty of Christ and the Apostles in the Franciscan Order, 1210-1323* (London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1961.

[16]Another interesting aspect of the *Legenda maior* is the way in which some of Bonaventure's abstract theological concepts are given practical shape throughout Francis' biography. The theme of poverty, for instance, receives systematic treatment as a concept in texts such as *Apologia pauperum contra adversarium* and *Questiones disputatae de perfectione evangeliaca.* However studying the *Legenda* provides an opportunity for readers to see Bonaventure's theology of poverty at work in the journey of a real Christian believer. There poverty becomes the means by which a particular human person (Francis) participates in Bonaventure's metaphysical journey. This will be explored further in 5.4 below.

challenge the spirituality I am trying develop. As we already saw in the moving passage from Thomas of Celano heading this chapter, Francis' biographers present him as one who was very hard on his body while at the same time emphasizing the holiness of what Francis treated so harshly.[17] In the *Legenda*, Bonaventure reflects that although Francis "had already attained the height of perfection, he used to try new ways of punishing his sensual desires by afflicting his body, as if he were always beginning again." Bonaventure's Francis may be (slightly) less "extreme" an ascetic than the Francis of Thomas, but a certain dismissiveness toward the body permeates Bonaventure's *Legenda* nonetheless. We read of how, for instance, Francis wanted to become, outwardly, "like a discarded utensil while inwardly possessing the spirit of holiness."[18] On the surface, this hardly sounds like a man who wants to see his own corporeality claimed and cherished, and projecting modern ways of speaking and thinking about the body back onto a medieval ascetic seems questionable.[19] My argument is that although the spirituality I am suggesting may not immediately present itself in the *Legenda*, it is implicitly present when read in view of the Bonaventurean cosmology and anthropology we explored in chapter three. As we proceed, I'd therefore like to propose that Francis' complex relationship with his body be read as a kind of commentary on the awkwardness and ambiguity human beings continue to experience with embodiment despite modern theology's growing emphasis on the body's

[17] *Leg. Mai.* V, which discusses the "austerity of [Francis'] life," is replete with examples. In V.6, for instance, we read of how Francis "used to call his body Brother Ass, for he felt it should be subjected to heavy labor, beaten frequently with whips and fed with the poorest food." In V.2, we read that "In the matter of clothes, [Francis] had a horror for softness and loved coarseness, claiming that John the Baptist had been praised by the Lord for this... if he felt the softness of a tunic that had been given to him, he used to sew pieces of cord on the inside...," and in the famous story of the snow family I will discuss momentarily, where in penance Francis plunges "his poor naked body into the deep snow," the cause for his zeal being the temptation to relax his asceticism after the devil tells him that God doesn't want him to destroy his body (V.4). This kind of asceticism is severe, but Bonaventure doesn't include material by Thomas that is even more so. Thomas writes, for instance, that under Francis' leadership the brothers "strove to restrain the burning of the flesh by such harsh treatment that they did not hesitate to strip themselves on freezing ice, and to cover themselves in blood from gashing their bodies with sharp thorns." "The Life of Blessed Francis" in *The Saint,* Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, vol. I, ed. Regis Armstrong, et al. (New York: New City Press, 1999), 219.

[18] *Leg. mai.* VI.3.

[19] While it is important to be honest about the difficult relationship Francis has with his body, this point should not be emphasized too strongly. There are times when Francis does treat his own body and the bodies of others with very great compassion. One moving instance involves a brother who was in "danger" of bringing "harm" to his body because of his intense fasting, Bonaventure records, drawing from Thomas, that Francis called the brother and began eating in front of him out of a tender desire to save his spiritual son from embarrassment. Bonaventure expands the account beyond Thomas by explaining that "through the discreet condescension of his shepherd, [the brother] avoided harm to his body and received an edifying example of no small proportion" (*Leg. Mai.* V.7). Here we see the body as something that needs care and that should not be wounded without warrant.

goodness. Healthy spirituality need not produce or depend upon unruffled confidence or existential stamina. It is an ideal into which believers are continually drawn by grace, sometimes in spite of themselves.[20]

Francis' behavior toward his body seems to be driven by at least two inward experiences, both of which are arguably worthy of emulation, but both of which may also complicate those feelings of anxiety and insecurity emerging from the worldly conditions of embodiment. The first of these experiences is self-awareness. Francis is profoundly in touch with his own vulnerability, and as a result he tries to cover his bases just "in case" he should fall prey to those disordered desires that so readily present themselves through the weakness of fallen flesh. "[Francis] used to say," Bonaventure writes, "that it should be incomparably more tolerable for a spiritual man to endure great cold in his flesh rather than to feel even slightly the heat of carnal lust in his heart."[21] Further on in the text we read of how distressed Francis became if ever he was flattered by the crowds: "'I could still have sons and daughters,'" he would tell them. "'Don't praise me as if I were secure! No one should be praised whose end is still uncertain.'"[22]

The second experience is the great urgency of Francis' yearning for God. Driven in all things by that yearning, Francis' spontaneous asceticism becomes the means by which he seizes his vulnerability (often with undiluted exuberance), transforming it into the very vessel by which he gives himself to God. We see this, for example, in the delightful story of the snow family footnoted above. There, having silenced a "temptation of the flesh," Francis is left "even more inspired by a wonderful fervor of spirit." As if drunk with this zeal, Francis opens "his cell and [goes] out into the garden and [plunges] his poor naked body into the deep snow." He then proceeds to form a mock snow-family for himself, as if countering the heat of his worldly desire with the heat of his love for God alone.[23] This

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[20]Perhaps Thomas senses this when he writes in his *Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul* that "This was the only teaching in which the most holy father's actions were not in harmony with his words. For he tamed his innocent body with flogging and privation, covering it with wounds for no reason. For the burning of his spirit had already refined his body so much that the most holy flesh thirsted for God in many ways, just as did his soul." see Armstrong, et al., *The Founder,* 561.

[21]*Leg. mai.* V.3.

[22]*Leg. mai.* VI.3

[23]"While he froze outwardly for penance's sake," Bonaventure writes, "he so quenched the fire of passion within that he hardly felt anything of that sort from that time on" (*Leg. mai.* V.4). Heat is used in the *Legenda* to express both good and bad desire. The height of desire, by which Francis is given to God in the stigmata, is also described as an inflaming heat, but in this story, Francis' response to the heat of lust is to passionately douse himself with cold.

Other comments in the *Legenda* also express the moving urgency of Francis' yearning. In. IX.2, Bonaventure writes that "Jesus Christ crucified always rested like a bundle of myrrh in the bosom of

deep yearning, of course, reaches its fullness in Francis' desire for martyrdom (something I will explore more closely in due course), which Bonaventure describes as an expression of Francis' interior generosity. Francis' desire to "give himself" to God seems to contrast directly against sin's possessive and self-preserving instinct as explored in previous chapters:

> The poor man of Christ had only two mites, namely his body and his soul, which he could give away in generous charity. But out of love of Christ he offered them so continuously that he seemed to be constantly immolating his body through the rigor of fasting and his spirit through the ardor of his desire, sacrificing a holocaust in the outer courtyard and burning incense in the interior of the temple.[24]

These two experiences of Francis (his self-awareness and the fervor of his love) at times manifest themselves in alarming and potentially destructive ways, a paradox that may shed light on the obscurity and ambiguity of those actions and feelings that continue to characterize humanity's pursuit of God. These actions and feelings may be deliberately chosen and practiced, but they may also appear as hidden, subtle attitudes and ways of relating to the body. Even those avenues by which human beings come to know and express their love for God are broken, awkward, and in need of gradual recreation.[25]

What is clear concerning Bonaventure's Francis, however, is that his spiritual journey does involve the gradual recovery of bodily innocence, and this growth of innocence seems to parallel the body's growing obedience to the soul (or, we might say, the soul's gradual recovery of the body).[26] Toward the end of his life, Bonaventure writes (borrowing from Thomas) that Francis' body "was so much in harmony with his spirit and so ready to obey it that when he strove to attain complete holiness, his body not only did not resist, but even tried to run ahead."[27] Francis' soul recovers its guardianship of the body, so that the body actually becomes an aid and instrument of his salvation.[28] That said, borrowing from

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Francis' soul, and he longed to be totally transformed into him by the fire of ecstatic love." On IX.1 we read of how, "Like a glowing coal, [Francis] seemed totally absorbed in the flame of divine love." It isn't hard to imagine how such a longing for union with God in the crucified Christ might produce extreme expressions of mortification.

[24] *Legenda* IX.3.

[25] Paul Tournier expresses this sense well: "Our vocation is, I believe, to build good out of evil. For if we try to build good out of good, we are in danger of running out of raw material." See Paul Tournier, *The Person Reborn* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 80.

[26] We see this especially in the *Legenda* IX.4: "For although [Francis'] innocent flesh, which always of its own accord subjected itself to the spirit, had no need for any penitential scourging..."

[27] *Leg. mai.* XIV.1. Source: *Vita prima* II.IV (*Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, v. 1, p. 266).

[28] We see an example of Francis' soul "managing" his body with care in *Leg. mai.* II.7: "After his work, to

Thomas, Bonaventure does still refer to the body as a "thin barrier" separating Francis from God even toward the end of his life.[29] Given the fact that Francis' innocent body no longer hinders but even assists him in prayer and contemplation, this comment seems curious. Perhaps we can see it as a response to the very real spiritual challenges that come with living in a "diminishing" body that does not correspond, sensually, to the beauty of the healed soul. As I have already argued, worldly bodies will always remain unintelligible in a sense, and thus pose practical challenges to the spiritual journey even after their meaning has been recovered.

Before looking at the two accounts of nakedness bookending the middle section of Francis' spiritual journey, I'd like to briefly consider how the complex experience of embodiment described in this section can actually draw human believers into Bonaventure's metaphysical momentum. Read against Bonaventure's speculative theology, Francis' experience of embodiment becomes an expression of Christ imitation and paschal participation through which Francis journeys back to the Father in the generosity of the Spirit. This reality is movingly displayed in a story that exposes evangelical poverty, practiced humbly in the body, as the face and door of creaturely glory, and it is a pattern we will see charging Francis' whole journey toward God as we continue through the text. Taking the disguise of a beggar on Easter Sunday, Francis comes to the hermitage where he is staying and asks alms from his fellow brothers. He then proceeds to instruct them "humbly" and "with holy eloquence that they should pass through the desert of the world like pilgrims and strangers and like true Hebrews continually celebrate in poverty of spirit the Lord's Pasch, that is his passing over from this world to the Father." In Francis' display of poverty and neediness contrasted against the victory and abundance of Easter Sunday, we catch a glimpse of how Francis will use evangelical poverty throughout his life to participate in the metaphysical journey of the Word back to the Father. Francis relinquishes every limited creaturely expression of Beauty in favor of the uncreated Whole. This participation deepens as Francis comes to fuse his own bodily diminishment with the beauty and generosity of Christ's diminishing body on the Cross. But as I will discuss at length below, poverty for Bonaventure's Francis is not something cramped or closed in, but

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prevent his body from becoming sluggish with laziness, he set himself to repair a certain church of St. Peter some distance from the town..."

[29] On the other hand, Bonaventure marvels at how Francis' "vigor of soul increased with the increase of his bodily weariness." See *Leg. mai.* XIV.2

rather "motivated...by liberty of spirit," as it stands open to the inexhaustible wealth of divine Beauty.[30] Nevertheless its worldly visibility remains that of evangelical poverty, so that poverty and abundance run parallel in Francis' spirituality, one acting as the veiled face of the other.

3. Naked Origin and End

Expanding on the meaning of embodied spiritual poverty described above, we turn now to the two stories of nakedness bookending Francis' journey in the *Legenda maior,* which powerfully showcase the inward and outward practices facilitating Francis' spiritual beginning, progression and end.[31] The first display of Francis' nakedness, occurring before the bishop of Assisi in chapter two of the *Legenda*, can be seen as a symbol of how, patterning himself after Christ, Francis turns from any destructive attempts to possess creatures (including himself), choosing instead to seek the whole of God. This conversion functions as a kind of recreation that sets Francis, soul and body reordered and opened to Beauty, on the path to glory once again. The second account of nakedness, occurring just before Francis' death, reveals both the inward disposition that enabled Francis to bear forth the stigmata two years previously, and the way in which this disposition unveils the stigmata's beauty in death. In both cases, as we will soon see, the ugliness of bodily diminishment remains the visibility of Francis' inward openness and generosity. Francis' practice of evangelical poverty, mirroring Jesus' humility, fuses the diminishment of his body with Christ's, allowing his movement toward fragmentation and death to be a simultaneous movement into the beauty of wholeness. The mid-section chronicling the progression of this movement will be taken up in section 4 below.

Regis Armstrong points to Gregory the Great as the figure who helped popularize nakedness as a motif of ascetical texts during the Middle Ages. His influence is seen in Bonaventure's description of how, at Francis' death, "in fervor of spirit, [Francis] threw himself totally naked on the naked ground so that in that final hour of death, when the

[30] *Lig. vit.* VII.9.

[31] Bonaventure recognizes the parallelism between these two stories in *Legenda* 318: "In all things [Francis] wished to be conformed to Christ crucified, who hung on the cross poor, suffering and naked. Therefore at the beginning of his conversion, he stood naked before the bishop, and at the end of his life, naked he wished to go out of this world."

enemy could still attack him violently, he would struggle naked with a naked enemy"[32] Armstong cites Gregory, who writes similarly in his well-known *Homilia in Evangelium* of how

> All of us who come to the wrestling ground of Faith are to wrestle with the evil spirits. Now, the evil spirits possess nothing in this world, and therefore it behooves us to wrestle naked with naked adversaries. For if a clothed man should wrestle with a naked man, he will soon be thrown down, for his adversary will have something by which to take hold of him.[33]

Gregory here seems to see nakedness as an interior disposition that has cast off any temporal trappings which would keep the soul back from fully engaging against those naked evils threatening the soul's salvation.[34] Real demonic forces may very well be a part of this threat in Bonaventure's view, but the temptation with which they harass men and women, for Bonaventure, is always the temptation to assert, possess and preserve the self against that mysterious divine Unity who alone holds the beauty of all creatures. Thus Francis begins and ends his journey in "naked" openness to this Unity, just as transparency and humility also sourced and guided the life and death of Jesus in the *Lignum vitae.*

We turn now to the first story of Francis' nakedness, which recounts the unhappy response of Pietro Bernardone to his son's spiritual conversion. There, having been dragged by his "carnally minded father" before the bishop of Assisi, this "child of grace" (Francis) offers a startling response to Bernardone's greedy desire to reclaim his son's discarded worldly goods:

> A true lover of poverty, Francis showed himself eager to comply; he did not wait for any words nor did he speak any, but immediately took off his clothes and gave them back to his father... Moreover, drunk with remarkable fervor, he even took off his underwear, stripping himself completely naked before all. He said to his father: 'Until now I have called you father here on earth, but now I can say without reservation, *Our Father who art in heaven* (Matt. 6:9), since I have placed all my treasure and all my hope in him.'[35]

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[32]*Leg. mai.* XIV.3.

[33]Armstrong cites Gregory the Great, *Homilia in Evangelium*, 32.2, as the source for this. See Bonaventure, "Legenda Maior" in *The Founder,* Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, ed. Armstrong et al., 536-541.

[34]For a full-length treatment of this theme in Bonaventure, see Jean Chatillon, "Nudum Christum nudus sequere: Note sur les origins et la signification du theme de la nudite spirituelle dans les ecrits de sain Bonaventure," *Bonaventura 1274-1974,* v. 4, ed. Collegio S. Bonaventura (Rome: Grottaferrata, 1974), 719-72.

[35]*Leg. mai.* II.4.

Here we see Francis rejecting the constraints that come with both owning and being owned by any worldly reality (material goods, familial relationships), instead abandoning himself to his "Father in heaven"—that unrestricted End toward which he is being drawn. This is the path Francis chooses by divesting himself of any symbols of spiritual constraint, of any false wealth that would close him off from the "wealth" of God."[36]

The bishop's response completes a section of the *Legenda* that poignantly parallels the strange liturgy of ugly and beautiful tunics we saw vesting and divesting Christ in the Passion and Glorification sections of the *Lignum vitae*. Stripping himself of everything in imitation of Christ, Francis finds himself tenderly drawn beneath the mantle of the bishop, God's worldly authority. Just as the "tunic" of Jesus' exposed and dying body in the *Lignum vitae* was charged by Christ's vindicated, eschatological body, perhaps the bishop's robe in the *Legenda* can be said to symbolize the truthful humanity of Christ with which Francis unites himself by divesting himself of every self-restricting lie. In the third section of the *Lignum vitae*, Jesus, whose naked, crucified body was the bloodied tunic of the Beloved, is gathered up into the Father's presence and clothed in the glory of the redeemed mystical body, whose beauty arises from the return of the elect to God in Christ. While the parallelism of these two accounts is loose, I think there is a strong case for seeing Francis' "naked" rejection of all creatures and the bishop's covering as a sign that Francis is here beginning his own journey divested of sinful possessiveness, clothed instead with the victory of Christ. The bishop's act is like a momentary, sensual revelation of the beautiful truth that will therefore be accomplished in Francis once he reaches his End. But Francis does not remain long beneath the visibility of the bishops's cloak. Instead he is given a "poor, cheap cloak," which Francis marks with a cross, "thus designating it as the covering of a crucified man and a half naked beggar. Thus," Bonaventure continues, "the servant of the Most High King was left naked so that he might follow his naked crucified Lord, whom he loved."[37] The fact that this robe covers Francis' own nakedness throughout his journey is significant in that it can be said, perhaps, to symbolize Francis' union with Christ's humanity. But its "ugliness" and poverty is also important, revealing the sensual terms by which Francis' worldly pilgrimage in Christ occurs.

It is in the final two chapters of the *Legenda*, on Francis' passing and the legacy of

[36]Here we see how Francis' practice of poverty might be shaped by Augustine's hierarchy of goods. For Bonaventure, evangelical poverty is about denying all lesser goods in favor of Goodness itself.
[37]*Leg. mai.* II.4.

his dead body, that we see most poignantly precisely how God's self-expression has been made manifest in Francis throughout his life. His stigmatized body wracked with illness, Francis has himself brought to the place where his ministry began. There, Bonaventure writes, Francis wishes "to show by the example of Truth itself [Christ] that he [has] nothing in common with the world." It is for this reason that he insists on lying naked on the ground, stripped of every last possession. Turning away from limited, worldly creatures, he instead lifts "his face to heaven in his accustomed way and [gives] his whole attention to its glory."[38] Eventually he is once again loaned a rough tunic, which he accepts in obedience to the strict orders of another brother. Filled with joy, Francis raises his hands and glorifies "his Christ because he [is] going to him, free and unburdened by anything."[39] The profound inward truthfulness, trust and generosity reflected in Francis' relationship with his own final diminishment here—his complete transparency to God in Christ—is what allows Beauty to shine through the body in such extraordinary ways after Francis' death, as we shall see below in section 6. The beauty of Francis is confirmed and consummated in this final act of total self-relinquishment.

4. Poverty, Virtue, and Generation

We launch now into the middle section of Francis' journey, sandwiched between Francis' "naked" origin and end. Here I will explore how Francis progresses toward his End, and also the aesthetics operative throughout this spiritual pilgrimage. Here evangelical poverty as the ground and fruition of virtue is revealed as the path whereby Francis comes to participate in divine generation, recovering his own truth and hierarchical role within creation.

Poverty is a complex theme in Franciscan studies, as it is deeply intertwined with the Franciscan Question described above in section 1.[40] Studying scholarship on the history of Franciscan poverty, one senses a concern to preserve the ethical implications of Francis'

[38] *Leg. mai.* XIV.3
[39] *Leg. mai.* XIV.4.
[40] Malcolm Lambert's *Franciscan Poverty* (*op. cit.*) is the definitive twentieth century text on this issue and is shaped by some of the concerns emerging from the Franciscan Question, such as the ethics of voluntary poverty. Developing these concerns, Kenneth Baxter Wolf argues that if a "key ingredient" of Franciscan poverty is that it be voluntary, then this poses "very real obstacles for the salvation of Christians whose poverty [is] a function of circumstances beyond their control." Wolf articulates a concern of many Franciscan critics, namely that mendicant poverty is a spirituality for the rich. See Kenneth Baxter Wolf, *The Poverty of Riches: St. Francis of Assisi Reconsidered* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 7.

primitive evangelical practice, and a suspicion that Bonaventure's theological contributions might have somehow dwarfed or obscured those implications.[41] My own sense is that theology *done well* can only enhance spiritual and ethical practice. But whatever one makes of Bonaventure's theology of poverty, it cannot be claimed that the matter is in any way unimportant to him. Bonaventure recognized along with Francis that "poverty was the foundation of the Order, on which the entire structure of [Franciscan] religious life so basically depended that it would stand firm if poverty were firm and collapse completely if poverty were undermined."[42]

For Bonaventure, evangelical poverty is the practice which, more than any other, cultivates humility in the hearts of believers. Christopher Cullen has described the ontological significance of humility, which in Bonaventure's view is the ground of all truthful human self-reflection. For Bonaventure, creatures are completely dependent beings, with a fundamental disposition to return to non-being if not constantly sustained by God.[43] For this reason, Cullen explains, "humility is essential to living the Christian life... If there is a reason why the Christian renounces temporal goods, it is that he has seen the nothingness of creation."[44] This way of framing Francis' poverty sits nicely with the idea

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[41]Contrary to the assumptions of some, concrete compassion for the poor is a part of the early Franciscan spirit Bonaventure chooses to preserve throughout the *Legenda*. The poor are not just "signs" of Christ and of human ontological truthfulness to be piously meditated upon by a spiritual elite. Bonaventure records that from his youth Francis had an "openhanded compassion for the poor," as well as a spontaneous warmth and "inborn kindness... to those suffering from any bodily affliction. To these men and women he always tried to lend a "helping hand" (*Leg. mai.* I.1; XIII.5). After a would-be brother fails to distribute his goods to the poor, instead leaving them to his comfortable family in VII.3, Francis expels him from the Order, exclaiming, "you have cheated the poor; you are not worthy of the holy poor," and on VIII.5, Francis declares, "I believe the great Almsgiver will charge me with theft if I do not give what I have to one who needs it more." This commitment to the poor is enriched and expanded by Bonaventure's theology, not watered down. It is a fair critique, however, to say that Bonaventure's theology is directed at those of means who voluntarily choose a life of poverty. There seems to be the subtle suggestion that those who are poor by birth or circumstance are somehow spiritually superior to those whose poverty is chosen, perhaps because of the way they model the poverty of Christ. They are already holy, and don't need penitential purification or spiritual awakening. But this doesn't mean that Bonaventure's Francis thinks the poor ought to be kept in poverty so that the rich may find their salvation, even if some have abused Bonaventure's theology in this way.

[42]*Leg. mai.* VII.2

[43]This is summarized well in *Brev*. V.2.3: "The First Principle, by means of its omnipotent power and most loving munificence, brought all creation into being out of nothing. And so, of itself, the creature is non-being, for its entire being comes from another. It follows, then, that the creature was made in such a way that, because of its own deficiency, it would always stand in need of its Principle, and that this Principle, because of its benevolence, would never cease to sustain the creature. Thus, by the very fact the rational spirit was brought into being from non-being, it is deficient in itself. By the very fact that it is limited and needy by nature, it thus turns back upon itself, loving its own good. But by the very fact that its whole being is from God, it is totally indebted to God. And so, being deficient, it tends of itself to nothingness; being turned in upon itself, it cannot raise itself to the righteousness of perfect justice."

[44]Cullen, *Bonaventure*, 13.

that sin is fundamentally a greed or possessiveness through which men and women create false identities, fail to simultaneously contemplate God and generate creatures, and thus, as we saw in chapter three, gradually disintegrate through body-soul fragmentation. It also sheds light on the place of pride, the vice dominating traditional theologies of sin. If humility is the disposition grounding and growing from poverty, then pride is what fuels and perpetuates greed—the notion that it is possible to assert a "self" apart from the divine Giver.[45] It is for this reason, perhaps, that Ilia Delio has described poverty as a "renewal of the innocence and freedom of paradise." "The mystery of poverty," she writes, "is the *re-creatio* where one can stand before God without demands."[46]

Humility being the meaning of poverty also reveals the organic link existing between poverty and virtue, since for Bonaventure, humility is the disposition necessary for acquiring Christian virtue. We see this in Francis' insistence to his brothers that "poverty is the special way to salvation, as the stimulus of humility and the root of perfection, whose fruit is manifold but hidden.[47] This is the Gospel's treasure *hidden in a field* (Matt. 13:44); to buy this we should sell everything."[48] Francis' instruction here also helps us see the link between humility and charity in particular, which for Bonaventure and other scholastics, is the "form" of all other virtues. In Bonaventure's view, human yearning for God (charity) expands and pours forth from humility, causing souls to cast off all lesser, partial goods in favor of hidden spiritual treasure. Thus we see Francis clothing "himself with a spirit of poverty, a sense of humility and a feeling of intimate devotion."[49] Humility and the spiritual desire are inseparable for Francis, which is why, for Bonaventure, it is only the "truly humble and lovers of poverty" in whom God's virtue-seeding grace can appear and flourish.[50] Here we see the means by which Francis grows into that total spiritual

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[45]Bonaventure assumes a link between pride and covetousness or greed in his *Breviloquium*: "...poverty of spirit... combines humility with [evangelical] poverty so that a perfect person is drawn away from the source of all sin and pride and covetousness..." *Brev*. V.6.5. In *Leg. mai.* IV.1, Bonaventure writes that "God's generosity in providing for their needs made them resolved to keep holy poverty." Of course, for Bonaventure God's generosity extends to the very giving of life itself, providing what is needed to exist and be a self.

[46]Delio*, Crucified Love,* 91. Ann Astell agrees, seeing the "restoration of beauty" coming through the practice of poverty, since humility 'directly opposes avarice, the root of all evils." See Astell, *Eating Beauty,* 116.

[47]"Perfection" here refers to the life of virtue.

[48]*Leg. mai.* VII. 1.

[49]*Leg. mai.* I.6.

[50]*Leg. mai. Prologus.*1.17. For more on the relationship between virtue and grace in Bonaventure, see especially *Brev.* V.4. Bonaventure movingly describes the divine origin of grace, and what it does in the soul, in *Brev*. V.1.4-5: "...The one who enjoys God possesses God... And no one possesses God without being possessed by God in a special way. And no one possesses and is possessed by God without loving God and being loved by God in a particular and incomparable manner, as in the case of a bride and groom

abandonment observed at the beginning and end of his life. In the words of Thomas of Celano, Francis "wanted to own nothing so that he could possess everything more fully in the Lord."[51] The firmness of this desire carries Francis into deepening layers of that truth and beauty known of him by Christ. Non-possessiveness becomes a kind of self-knowledge, or rather a kind of unknowing or blessed self-forgetfulness. This ungrasping, disinterested openness to truth heals the integrity of Francis so that abandoned corporeality is reclaimed by his soul, allowing Francis to act as a whole locus of contemplation once again, but now in sensual hiddenness. For the way the soul relates to the self is reflected in the way it treats the rest of creation, which it no longer wounds or rips away from Beauty, but rather cherishes and honors as a signpost of the God it loves.

We see this abundance of meaning growing in the consciousness of those brothers who practice poverty in so much of the source material Bonaventure weaves into his text, especially in chapter seven.[52] There we read, for instance, that "Because [the brothers] possessed nothing that belonged to the world, they were attached to nothing and feared to lose nothing." As a result, "Their very poverty seemed to them overflowing abundance."[53] And in 7.7, when a bishop is bothered by Francis' decision to beg rather than eat the lavish feast he has spread before him, Francis responds,

> "My Lord, I have shown you great honor in honoring a greater Lord. For the Lord is pleased with poverty... This is the royal dignity which the Lord Jesus assumed when he became poor for us that he might enrich us by his poverty and establish us as heirs and kings of the kingdom of heaven if we are truly poor in spirit. I do not wish to relinquish this royal dignity for a fief of false riches loaned to you for only an hour."[54]

Francis here signals toward the deeper wealth for which he has visibly abandoned everything, and calls this a way of honoring not only God, but the bishop himself, his

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where each loves and is loved by the other. And no one is loved in this way without being adopted as a child entitled to an eternal inheritance. Therefore the 'grace which makes pleasing' makes the soul the temple of God, the bride of Christ, and the daughter of the eternal Father. And since this cannot occur except through a supremely gracious condescension on the part of God, it could not be caused by some naturally implanted habit, but only by a free gift divinely infused. This is most evident if we consider what it truly means to be God's temple and God's child, and to be joined to God as in wedlock by the bond of love and grace."

[51]Thomas of Celano, "The Life of Blessed Francis" in *The Saint,* 222.

[52]Chapter seven discusses the "Love of Poverty and the Miraculous Fulfillment of His Needs."

[53]*Leg. mai.* IV. 7.

[54]*Leg. mai.* VII. 7.

fellow creature. Perhaps we can see this as a refusal of Francis to receive the bishop by the terms of his own "false riches," which would objectify and rob the man of his true "dignity" and truth as heir not just of creatures, but of their beautiful Source.

But the wealth of Francis' spiritual poverty does bear created gifts as well, indicating that such goods aren't bad in themselves, but only insofar as reliance upon them shrinks and impoverishes the soul. In 7.10, for instance, we read of how "Francis' wealthy poverty" supplied material needs which money could not alleviate. And in 7.13, we learn that

> Francis' poverty was so abundantly sufficient that it supplied by miraculous power the needs of those who came to his aid, providing food, drink and housing when money, skill and natural means were lacking.... If a dry rock gave abundantly to a poor man who was thirsty at the word of another poor man, nothing at all will refuse its service to those who have left all for the Maker of all.

In 5.10, when water becomes wine at Francis' bidding, it is "obtained by the purity of the holy man." Here we see how the proper reordering of goods expressed in poverty and grown up as virtue makes creation responsive again to the human will to which it is naturally ordered.[55] It is as if creation itself responds to the summons of the poverty that loves it and sees it according to its abundant truth in God ("the Maker of all") rather than in accordance with that limited reality "the world" would imagine for it.

Fruitfulness, wealth, abundance, beauty—whatever we'd like to call the hidden reality animating Francis' poverty throughout these stories—is perhaps most powerfully foreshadowed in a dream the saint has just prior to his denudation before the bishop of Assisi. In it, God shows Francis a "large and splendid palace" fit for him and for his knights (though he doesn't have any knights—or friars—at this point in his journey). Upon waking, Francis runs out in search of a count who can help him obtain the worldly knighthood he thinks his dream is pointing toward, but God stops him and asks, Francis, "Why... are you abandoning the Lord for a servant and the rich God for a poor man?"[56] Francis' whole life of embodied poverty seems to follow as a response to this prophetic question. He goes off in search of the "rich God" and of his own "knighthood," but quickly learns that the only way to acquire genuine abundance in this world is through a sensual

[55]Just after this, in 5.11, Bonaventure writes that "Not only did creation serve God's servant at his beck and call, but the Creator's providence itself everywhere inclined itself to his good pleasure."
[56]*Leg. mai.* I.3.

poverty mirroring the way of Christ Crucified.

A very significant aspect of Francis' evangelical practice which we have not yet discussed emerges years later when, in the thick of Francis' ministry, this "knight" theme reappears. Having fallen sick in 7.10, Francis sends his brothers out for food, but they don't find any for sale. When they come back empty-handed, Francis chastises them for the pride and misplaced trust that prevented them from begging. (Francis chides them for trusting in their 'flies' [money] over the generosity of God.) Finally, "putting aside their embarrassment," and being willing to expose themselves to others in this way, the friars go out to beg and "buy more with the love of God than with money." What is it that they buy? Upon encountering these "knights of Christ" (who came under the worldly guise of poverty), the hearts of the villagers are "struck with compunction by God," and they generously give not only their possessions, "but also themselves." Earlier in his *Legenda*, Bonaventure writes that to the sick, to the beggars in whom he saw an image of the poverty of Christ, Francis also "wished to give [away] not only his possessions but his very self." The desire is expressed almost frantically in the text: "At times he took off his clothes, at times unstitched them, at times ripped them in pieces, in order to give them to beggars, when he had nothing else at hand."[57] This same poverty embraced and exposed now in the friars awakens a similar reaction in others. There is a mutuality, a communion of poverty calling the poor to the beauty of even deeper poverty. Here the physical, sensual exposure of need and vulnerability is what liberates the hidden bounty of God, just as transparency to God and others characterized Christ's descent in the *Lignum vitae*.

We see this theme developing throughout other crucial stories in the midsection of Bonaventure's text. Francis' acquaintance with his own poverty seems to sharpen through his encounters with the honest poverty of others, making poverty a kind of door into the communal reality shared by all those who participate in Christ's unbroken Beauty. The eschatological communion of saints appears in this world, it seems, as a communion of the poor. Ilia Delio points out a significant implication of this: for Bonaventure, ascent to God is simultaneously a descent "to neighbor and the created world."[58] "It does not draw one upward beyond the world like the Plotinian flight of the alone to the Alone. Rather, in union with Christ one is drawn into the heart of the world where Christ is center."[59]

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[57]*Leg. mai.* I.6. See also IX.3.
[58]*Crucified Love,* xxi
[59]*Crucified Love,* 135. Bathasar expresses a similar idea: "For Bonaventure, it is vital that ecstasy, even in its

Joy and confidence appear as the fruit of this communion in so many of the stories Bonaventure includes in his *Legenda*. For "love of poverty," Francis is seen swapping clothes with the needy and spending time "in the midst of the poor with... unaccustomed joy of spirit."[60] "Putting aside all embarrassment out of love of Christ poor and crucified," we see Francis begging "from those among whom he used to show his wealth."[61] Francis exposes his poverty again and again, just as he does so dramatically before the bishop of Assisi and during the hours before his death. He is unashamed to be known for the needy man he is, and refuses to hide the depths of his vulnerability (or, we might say, of his beauty) with any lie of horded wealth. This transparency has a transformative effect on both Francis and others. Bonaventure tells us near the beginning of his text, in the section on Francis' conversion, that "the lover of complete humility," who was once terrified of lepers,

> went to the lepers and lived with them... He washed their feet, bandaged their ulcers, drew pus from their wounds and washed out the diseased matter... he who was soon to be a physician of the Gospel. As a result, he received such power from the Lord that he had miraculous effectiveness in healing spiritual and physical illnesses.[62]

Here we see how Christ-formed poverty practiced in communion with desperate worldly forms of poverty can heal that beauty and wholeness sin threatens to strip away. For Bonaventure, profound experiences of healing contemplation occur where truthful human beings open themselves to the darkness and unintelligibility of one another.[63]

This dimension of Bonaventure's spirituality is especially arresting in what may be the most moving story of the *Legenda*. Incidentally, it is not found in any other early Franciscan source:

> There was a man in the vicinity of Spoleto whose mouth and cheek were being eaten away by a certain horrible disease. He could not be helped by any medical treatment and went on a pilgrimage to implore the intercession of the holy apostles. On his

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Dionysian aspects, is not a flight out of the world that leaves it behind, but rather the opening of the world for God, or more precisely the revelation of the fact that the world has already been grasped by God" (*Theological Style,* 273).

[60]*Leg. mai.* I.6.

[61]*Leg. mai.* II.7.

[62]*Leg. mai.* II.6.

[63]We also see here an interesting relationship between the active and contemplative life. For Francis, contemplation involving the healing of broken creatures is not just a mental act. This inward experience compels Francis to "heal" the beauty he sees of others through Christ in very practical ways.

> way back from visiting their shrines, he happened to meet God's servant. When out of devotion he wanted to kiss Francis' footprints, that humble man, refusing to allow it, kissed the mouth of the one who wished to kiss his feet. In his remarkable compassion Francis, the servant of lepers, touched that horrible sore with his holy mouth, and suddenly every sign of the disease vanished and the sick man recovered the health he longed for. I do not know which of these we should admire more: the depth of his humility in such a compassionate kiss or his extraordinary power in such an amazing miracle.[64]

This remarkable story in which Francis communes as an equal with the image of brokenness before him, brings to mind the kiss of the *Lignum vitae* discussed in IV.3.2.1, where when Judas came to betray Jesus, Jesus took the initiative in kissing Judas. But in the *Lignum vitae*, Jesus' kiss reached out to a creature willing to exchange incarnate Beauty for worldly wealth. Judas' deceitful mouth refused the healing grace that Christ's kiss bore.[65] By contrast, the man of Spoleto whose mouth was physically disfigured comes to Francis in a spirit humble receptivity, recognizing the presence of divine Beauty in Francis. Francis' inward response to this neediness is equally urgent, compelling him to expose and extend himself without a trace of self-defensiveness, which results in the other man's restoration. It is as if the beauty already existing in Christ and Francis' mutual communion is able to flow with unrestricted freedom through the generosity of Francis' sensual kiss, drawing a third person into wholeness. This way of drawing or grafting others into Christ's body is the recovery of contemplation because it involves seeing others truly, in spite of their worldly brokenness. Perhaps the symmetry between human brokenness and the ugliness of Christ's cross even facilitates contemplation, helping the senses perceive the potentiality of worldly brokenness when united with Christ in the paschal mystery. The profound level of faith, hope and love required to engage in this kind of contemplation also reveals it to be the fruit of virtue.

While Francis' union with Christ allows him to see the world in all its glorified eschatological truth, it is important to note that this vision simultaneously involves his own healing. Francis isn't just a hollow conduit through which God's Beauty beautifies others. Humility and transparency do not "negate" Francis. Rather, Francis as a creature actually participates in the beautification of the others, becoming beautiful in the process. Perhaps

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[64] *Leg. mai.* II.6.

[65] "And nevertheless in the very hour of his betrayal this most mild Lamb did not refuse to apply with a sweet kiss his mouth in which no guile was found to the mouth which abounded in iniquity in order to give the traitor every opportunity to soften the obstinacy of his perverse heart" *Lig. vit.* V.17.

it is for this reason that Bonaventure periodically describes Francis in terms of light and color even during Francis' worldly pilgrimage. Although humility involves the stripping away of false wealth, Bonaventure describes Francis' humility as an "ornament."[66] The virtue that grows from this ornament causes Francis to shine "with... splendor..., *like the morning star in the midst of clouds*." "By his resplendent rays," Bonaventure writes, "Francis guided into the light those sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, and like a rainbow shining among clouds of glory he made manifest in himself the sign of the Lords's covenant."[67] The "sign" of the new covenant to which Bonaventure refers here is the stigmata, "colorful" in meaning as the summation of a life of virtue, but "dim"—even violent—when we consider its sensuality.[68] It is the hidden fruition of this virtue along which Francis' growing contemplative capacity runs parallel, revealed wherever Francis humbly communes with the brokenness of others. But we see its efficacy extending even beyond human relationships where Bonaventure advises his readers to

> Consider carefully the marvelous purity and degree of virtue that Francis attained. At his mere wish fire tempered its heat, water changed its taste, an angelic melody brought him comfort and a divine light gave him guidance. Thus it is proven that all of creation came to the service of the sanctified senses of this holy man.[69]

Bonaventure seems to suggest here that creation has reordered itself to Francis because of the virtue by which he himself has been reordered to God.

So far I have tried to show how the presence in the *Legenda* of a dynamic central to Bonaventure's speculative texts—described there at times as contemplation, fruitfulness, the proper exercise of human headship within creation's hierarchy, participation in divine generation, etc.—is evidence of Francis' growing beauty as he journeys to his end in God. Before turning to the event in Francis' life revealing this more than any other—the stigmata—I will now briefly consider the striking language Bonaventure uses to describe it in the *Legenda,* which shows how Francis' developing experience of contemplation follows the "return" arc of Bonaventure's metaphysical circle. The language is borrowed from Thomas of Celano, but having examined the concept itself throughout other Bonaventurean

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[66]*Leg. mai.* VI.1.
[67]*Leg. mai.* Prologus. 1
[68]Bonaventure here implies that as the rainbow was the sign of a covenant between God and Noah in the book of Genesis, so the stigmata represents a rainbow that is a sign of the new covenant made between God and all believers: the creaturely beauty that is possible in Christ and made manifest in Francis.
[69]*Leg. mai.* V. 12.

texts such as the *Hexaemeron, Breviloquium and Lignum vitae*, not to mention the *Legenda* itself, we are now in the position to appreciate the rich theological meaning it bears for Bonaventure. At various points throughout the *Legenda*, we see Bonaventure describing Francis as one who "brings to birth" that which has been begotten in him by the Word, a process occurring alongside Francis' growth in poverty, humility and virtue.[70] This language seems to thrive within the context of hiddenness, for Bonaventure, and this hiddenness occurs, it seems to me, because of the world's broken aesthetics. In III.7, for instance, Bonaventure contrasts Francis' fruitfulness with his "lowly and seemingly *sterile* simplicity," which is the visibility of renunciation and bodily "mortification."[71] The role of virtue in making such "sterility" fruitful is highlighted where Bonaventure explains that when Brother Bernard became "the firstborn son of our blessed father," it was because "he discovered for himself the holiness of Christ's servant." When Francis hears of Bernard's conversion, Bonaventure again writes that Francis is "filled with the consolation of the Holy Spirit over the conception of his first child." And "not long afterwards, five other men

[70]While Bonaventure borrows language of conception and birthing from Thomas of Celano, he prefers to refer to Francis as a "father," whereas Thomas freely speaks of Francis in feminine terms. In the *Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul, for instance,* for instance, Brother Pacifico pleads with Francis, "Give us your blessing, my dearest mother, and give me your hand to kiss!," and later asks, "What trouble have I caused you, dear mother?" (See Armstrong, ed., *The Founder,* 336). Earlier in the text, we read of a faltering brother who, returning to Francis "immediately... jumped up and ran to his mother's lap" (268), and on 301, Brother Pacifico dreams of a beautiful woman and later realizes that "'This very beautiful lady... is the beautiful soul of Saint Francis.'" On 255, we read that Francis appears as a woman "not because he was soft in his deeds, but because he was fruitful and bore many children. The desert was the world, which was then wild and sterile, with no teaching of virtue. The many beautiful children were the large number of brothers, clothed with every virtue. The king was the Son of God, whom they resemble by their holy poverty." On 260, Francis himself has a night vision in which "he saw a small black hen, similar to a common dove, with feathered legs and feet. She had countless chicks, and they kept running around her frantically, but she could not gather all of them under her wings. The man of God woke up, remembering his concerns, interpreted his own vision. 'I am the hen,' he said, 'small in size and dark by nature, whose innocence of life should serve dove-like simplicity, which is as rare in this world as it is swift in flight to heaven. The chicks are the brothers, multiplied in number and grace. The strength of Francis is not enough to defend them from human plotting and contradicting tongues." The maternal and aesthetic imagery of darkness is striking in this passage. What we don't get from Thomas, however, is a way of consistently and systematically interpreting his language of fruitfulness and light. The language is strong where it appears in Thomas, but it isn't woven into a compelling and cohesive metaphysical journey such as we see in the structure of the *Legenda*, charged as it is by Bonaventure's speculative thought.

[71] Bonaventure discusses the potential "fruitfulness" of "sterility" in the context of preaching in *Leg. mai.* VIII.2: "He explained the text *So that the barren has borne many* (1 Kings 2.5) as follows: 'The barren woman,' he said, 'is that poor little friar who does not have the duty of bringing forth the children in the Church. He will bring forth many at the judgment because those he is now converting to Christ by his private prayers, the judge will ascribe to his glory. … *she that has many children will be weakened* (1 Kings 2:5), means that a vain and loquacious preacher who now rejoices over the many as if he had brought them forth by his own power will then realize that he had nothing of his own involved with them."

[are] called by the same Spirit, and the number of Francis' sons [reaches] six."[72] After a seventh man joins the order, Francis discloses

> his plan to send them to the four corners of the world. For already the lowly and seemingly *sterile* simplicity of our holy father had *brought to birth* (1 Kings 2:5) seven sons. And now he wished to call all the faithful of the world to repentance and to bring them to birth in the Lord.[73]

If divine Beauty and Meaning is mediated to "dim" and broken creatures through the recovered integrity of Francis' body and soul, as I have already tried to show, then this integrity becomes the "womb" through which Francis gives birth both to sons and to the stigmata in chapter thirteen, at the very height of his life of virtue. And just as Mary was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit when giving birth to incarnate Meaning, so now does the Spirit facilitate the contemplative experience drawing Francis back to God. It is the Spirit who returns creatures, united with Christ, to that First Principle from whom they first proceeded in the Word. Evidence of the Spirit's involvement here is found not just in the grace, humility and virtue energizing Francis' contemplation (gifts very clearly sown in creatures, for Bonaventure, by the Spirit), but also, significantly, in the generosity and openness Francis manifests so consistently in his relationships with others.[74] In his *Breviloquium*, Bonaventure identifies generosity as the fertile key in the relationship between the God and Mary during the conception of Christ: "And because generosity is appropriated to the Holy Spirit, so too is the sanctification of the Virgin in whose womb the Word was conceived. Therefore, although the Incarnation is the work of the whole Trinity, by appropriation we say that the Virgin "conceived by the Holy Spirit."[75] For Bonaventure, the conception of Christ occurs at that point where divine love (the Spirit) draws forth the generosity of Mary's own humanity, resulting in the kind of mutual yearning we see Bonaventure describing throughout his *Itinerarium*. The way to God, Bonaventure writes there, is "most secret," and "no one knows [it] except him who receives it, and no one receives it except him who desires it, and no one desires it except he who is penetrated to the marrow by the fire of the Holy Spirit, Whom Christ sent into the world."[76] For

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[72]*Leg. mai.* III.3
[73]*Leg. mai.* III.7. Here we see how those who are born of Francis come to participate with him in the birthing of others; to recover one's beauty is to become a priestly medium of the Word's regenerative ministry.
[74]On the relationship between the Spirit and the grace of virtues, see *Brev*. V.
[75]*Brev*. IV.
[76]*Itin.* VII.4

Bonaventure, the Spirit "penetrates" the one who desires God (Mary, Francis), bringing Wisdom to birth within that person.[77] This is the end and perfection of every human creature, and the final completion of Bonaventure's metaphysical circle. We turn now to the stigmata and death narratives of the *Legenda* in order to explore the challenging worldly aesthetics of this end.

5. Stigmata

Scholars have often read Bonaventure's *Legenda* as a sort of commentary on his *Itinerarium,* which was completed shortly before the biography was commissioned.[78] In the *Itinerarium*, six progressive stages open up to a seventh stage of union with the Crucified*,* while in the *Legenda,* six strategically placed "visions" of the cross appear prior to the stigmata, suggesting that Francis may be hinting at the *Itinerarium*'s pattern of mystical ascent.[79] XIII.10 recounts these visions after Bonaventure's description of the stigmata, which is taken to be the seventh appearance of the cross, completing the six earlier visions: "This vision confirms the previous ones," Bonaventure writes, "and receives from them the testimony of truth."[80] Here follows a summary of the six visions occurring prior to the stigmata:

i. Francis' night vision of the emblazoned cross (I.3)

This vision, appearing near the beginning of Francis' journey, occurs as part of the story we already saw under section 4 above, in which Francis dreams of worldly treasures and knighthood. Asleep, he sees a "large and splendid palace full of military weapons emblazoned with the insignia of Christ's cross." These gifts, he perceives, are "for him and his knights." Eventually Francis realizes that the vision "foretells a spiritual outcome" that

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[77] As if speaking to Francis at the end of his chapter on the stigmata, Bonaventure writes, "...no truly devout person can reject this proof of Christian wisdom ploughed into the dust of your flesh" *Leg. mai.* XIII.10.

[78] Astell, *Eating Beauty*, 104.

[79] Noel Muscatt thinks that Bonaventure uses these visions "in order to situate Francis within the context of a mystical ascent through six grades of illumination in order to arrive at ecstatic union in the vision of the crucified Seraph on La Verna." See Noel Muscat, "The Life of Saint Francis in Light of Saint Francis in the Light of Saint Bonaventure's Theology on the <<*Verbum Crucifixum*>> in *Antonianum* 65.1 (1990), 5.

[80] As Ewert Cousins points out, although Thomas of Celano also lists these visions, he does not provide a "rhetorical structure" or the "spirited interpretation supplied by Bonaventure." See Bonaventure, *Bonaventure*, Mystical Writings, 314, note 46.

God will bring to fruition, and that the way to achieve such riches is through their worldly opposite: spiritual and evangelical poverty. But the beautiful, eternal destiny of Francis and his followers shines forth unveiled in this dream.

ii. A vision of the Crucified received while praying (I.5)

In this story, a vision of Jesus appears to Francis while, praying, he is "totally absorbed in God through... extreme fervor." Seeing this vision, his soul is "melted," and "the memory of Christ's passion was so impressed on the innermost recesses of his heart that from that hour, whenever Christ's crucifixion came to mind, he could scarcely contain his tears and sighs." It is through this encounter with Christ that Francis comes to internalize the Gospel command to "*deny yourself and take up your cross and follow me.*"

iii. The voice from the cross at San Damiano (II.1)

Here Bonaventure chronicles the well-known exchange between Francis and the crucifix at San Damiano, in which Francis hears the Crucified telling him to "'go, and repair my house which, as you see, is falling completely into ruin.'"

iv. The cross proceeding from the mouth of Francis (III.5)

Here a priest called Silvester (who later becomes a brother) has a vision in which he sees Assisi under siege by a dragon while a giant golden cross of "shining splendor" proceeds from the mouth of Francis, encompassing the world and banishing the beast.

v. Cruciform swords pierce the body of Francis (IV.9)

In this story a rambunctious composer (who later becomes Brother Pacificus) finds Francis preaching in San Severino and has a vision in which he sees "Francis, the preacher of Christ's cross, signed with a cross, in the form of two flashing swords, one of which stretched form his head to his feet, the other crossed his chest from one hand to the other." Shortly after in the same section of text, Bonaventure adds a second vision seen by Pacificus, in which a great Tau appears on the forehead of Francis, shining "in a variety of

colors and [causing] his face to glow with wonderful beauty."[81]

vi. Francis is seen lifted up in the shape of a cross (IV.10).

Here during the chapter of Arles, a brother called Monaldus sees Francis, who was not in attendance at the chapter, "lifted up in midair" by the door where they were meeting. He was blessing the friars, his arms "extended as though on a cross."

Regis Armstrong, Ewert Cousins, Noel Muscat and others have shown how these six visions provide, together with the crowning vision of the stigmata, a map of the mystical ascent in which Francis participates throughout the *Legenda*, the first two visions being rooted in chapters dealing with Francis' purgation, the second two, his illumination, and the final two, his perfection.[82] The *Legenda* thus becomes a commentary on the three-fold mystical schema presented in *De triplici via*, the six-fold schema of the *Itinerarium*, and also, Ann Astell argues, on the pattern of the *Hexaemeron,* which presents Francis as the Angel of the Sixth Seal.[83]

Another less obvious way of reading Bonaventure's successive visions, it seems, might consider how the sensual aesthetics of the stigmata contrasts with its earlier prototypes. In the four visions portraying Francis' union with the Crucified (i, iv, v, and to a lesser extent, vi), sensual beauty flashes and shines according to the interior truth of Francis being visibly represented.[84] In vision one, the "knight" Francis is surrounded by palatial treasures emblazoned with the cross, revealing the divine riches he will come to merit by forsaking all false worldly wealth. Visions four and five showcase markers of sensual intelligibility (light and color), and in vision six, even the subtlety and agility of the resurrected body seems to make an appearance. These revelations of sensual beauty, however, all appear in the shape of the cross, as if Bonaventure wants to remind readers of

[81] This second vision of Pacificus is not included in the six visions recounted in chapter thirteen, suggesting that it may be read as an extension of the fifth vision.

[82] See Muscat, <<*Verbum Crucifixum*>>, 5 for an analysis of how the six visions correspond to the three stages of ascent. Also see Cousins, introduction, 42-46.

[83] See Astell, *Eating Beauty,* 104, note 22. It's important to remember, of course, that the *Hexaemeron* was actually written after the *Legenda*.

[84] The two remaining visions, two and three, aren't actually focused on Francis himself, or the hidden truth of his journey. Rather, they are visions had *by* Francis concerning the way he must journey as a worldly pilgrim (which seems to be self denial in vision two, and fruitful labor for the Kingdom in obedience to the Crucified in vision three).

beauty's worldly, paschal pattern. Interestingly, the later three later visions (iv, v, vi) are had by other people concerning Francis, who seem able to perceive the hidden beauty and truth of the saint because of their own virtue.[85]

But Bonaventure's final vision concerning Francis—the stigmata—does not follow the earlier four in terms of visibility. In this climactic event, in which Francis' journey to God stands totally complete, beauty's visibility is very strikingly veiled. Unlike the intellectual visions of beauty occurring earlier in the text, this one, occurring within Francis' actual body, is dim and unintelligible, like the cross of Christ itself. Its true aesthetic quality isn't sensually revealed until after Francis' death. It is as if the intellectual nature of the earlier visions allows the true aesthetic quality of Francis to be perceived and rightly reported by persons of virtue, but because the seventh event alone is emblazoned into Francis' worldly body, its visibility must fit the visibility of that body, even though it signifies the same truth as the earlier four visions (and even more fully since it symbolizes Francis' perfect union with God, just as the seventh day of the *Itinerarium* signifies union).[86] It isn't until Francis actually dies and his soul departs that his followers are able to perceive Francis' recovered truth in the beauty of his body. Thus there is a period of two years between Francis' stigmata and death during which the brokenness of Francis' body is totally absorbed in the Beauty of Christ without corresponding to it sensually (or rather, during which he only corresponds to its own "dim" worldly visibility). This window of time on the way to death, it seems, richly captures the spirituality I have been trying to uncover, revealing once more that it is possible for worldly diminishment to to be transfigured and rendered strangely meaningful through paschal union with Christ.

We turn now to the stigmata itself, the summation of Francis' life-long pursuit of God. As the *Legenda* gradually approaches La Verna, something that has hovered and pulled the reader along throughout Bonaventure's text seems finally to show itself in Francis' desire for martyrdom in chapter nine. Read in isolation, such a desire may strike some as fanatical. But seen as an urgent outgrowth of Francis' love, the desire for martyrdom appears as a way for Francis to express and consummate the longing of his soul

[85]On the question of virtue, it is noteworthy that Bonaventure goes out of his way to say that Sylvester and Monaldus both see their visions on account of their virtue. The second vision seen by Pacificus is likewise the result of how much he has "advanced in holiness."

[86]While the first three visions of Francis (i, iii, v, vi) are clearly intellectual in nature, Bonaventure suggests that the sixth vision may have been something like a real event. For this reason it is interesting to note that this sixth vision isn't draped in beauty and sensual power to the same extent as the other three. Agility seems to prefigure the resurrected body, but light and color are absent.

in the only place he can: his own body and the world it symbolizes. Burning with "divine fire," Francis travels to Syria and then Morocco in search of a "precious death for the sake of Christ." He goes "flying along, as if drunk in the spirit" to meet his end because he is "not terrified by the fear of death, but rather drawn by desire for it."[87] Poverty has been moving somewhere in Bonaventure's text, going in a particular direction through Francis' deepening transparency to God and others. Like the poverty of Christ in the *Lignum vitae*, it has been moving *toward death*. It is as if the prospect of death becomes for Francis a kind of fully activated poverty—a way of handing himself over to the rich Beauty of God without any reservation, so that the death every worldly creature must die is taken into Francis' own hands, becoming a tool through which he may express the depths of his spiritual desire. Francis no longer stands as the passive victim of his own inevitable death. Like Christ in the *Lignum vitae*, he becomes its steward and master.

Francis does not attain martyrdom in quite the way he hopes, but Bonaventure suggests that Francis' object is nevertheless achieved in the stigmata.[88] The stigmata becomes, as I have already said, the place where Francis fully claims and transfigures the unavoidable diminishment of his own body by allowing it to become a source of openness to God in Christ.[89] Thus the stigmata express the ultimate triumph of beauty even while speaking honestly about human brokenness. There is a certain pastoral humility here that honors the painful experiences of this world while also speaking hopefully of the body's

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[87] *Leg. mai.* IX. 6.

[88] "Thus by the kindness of God and the merits of the virtue of the holy man, it came about mercifully and remarkably that the friend of Christ sought with all his strength to die for him and yet could not achieve it. Thus he was not deprived of the merit of his desired martyrdom and was spared to be honored in the future with a unique privilege. Thus it came about that the divine fire burned still more perfectly in his heart so that later it streamed forth clearly in his flesh. O truly blessed man, whose flesh, although not cut down by a tyrants's steel, was yet not deprived of bearing a likeness of the *Lamb that was slain*! O, truly and fully blessed man, I say, whose life 'the persecutors's sword did not take away, and who yet did not lose the palm of martyrdom'!" *Leg. mai.* IX.8.

[89] The idea that Francis' diminishment is engulfed and carried along by his spiritual desire is particularly strong in this passage: "And although his body was already weakened by the great austerity of his past life and his continual carrying of the Lord's cross, he was in no way terrified but was inspired even more vigorously to endure martyrdom. His unquenchable fire of love for the good Jesus had been fanned into such *a blaze of flames* that m*any waters could not quench* so powerful a *love* (Cant. 8:6-7). By the Seraphic ardor of his desires, he was being borne aloft into God; and by his sweet compassion he was being transformed into him who chose to be crucified because of the *excess of his love* (Eph. 2:4) *Leg. mai.* XIII.2-3.

Speaking allegorically toward the end of the *Itinerarium*, Bonaventure writes that "only he perceives [God] who says: 'My soul chooses hanging and my bones death.' Whoever loves this death [of the sixth day—a death died in union with Christ] can see God..." (7.6). In the *Legenda*, by contrast, the body is the place where Francis exercises this spiritual longing, so that the body is drawn into the mental journey Bonaventure outlines in the *Itinerarium* and his other explicitly soteriological texts.

eschatological vindication.

Bonaventure's account of the stigmata event itself is the theme of chapter thirteen, and occurs as the summation of a life in which, "like the heavenly spirits on Jacob's ladder [Francis] either ascended to God or descended to his neighbor."[90] Having reached La Verna, Bonaventure describes how Francis was "borne aloft not like one who out of curiosity searches into the supreme majesty only to be crushed by its glory, but like the faithful and prudent servant searching out God's good pleasure, to which he desires with the greatest ardor to conform himself in every way." Here Bonaventure describes Francis' contemplation as the very opposite of those fracturing, destructive patterns of knowing we saw Bonaventure condemning throughout the *Hexaemeron.* In the stigmata, Francis gazes ecstatically upon the whole of divine Beauty, who gushes forth through Francis' soul into his body, filling the world's estranged corporeality with meaning.

Of course, Bonaventure does not directly describe the stigmata as a recovery of the world's meaning, or even of Francis' meaning, for that matter. An early section of chapter thirteen carefully reports the events of La Verna, describing how, in the midst of Francis' contemplation, a "Seraph with six fiery and shining wings descended from the height of heaven" bearing "the figure of a man crucified."[91] Bonaventure draws attention to the stark contrast between the "weakness of Christ's passion" and the "immortality of the Seraph's spiritual nature," which, for Francis, seem "in no way compatible" with each other. Finally Francis understands

> by a revelation from the Lord that divine providence had shown him this vision so that, as Christ's lover, he might learn in advance that he was to be totally transformed into the likeness of Christ crucified, not by the martyrdom of his flesh, but by the fire of love consuming his soul.

Here we see an awareness within Francis himself of how diminishment ("the weakness of Christ's passion") is able to sit paradoxically in hand with Beauty (the "immortality of the Seraph..."), and of how this strange possibility is to play itself out in his own experience. Francis is to be molded to Christ's worldly weakness as the deepening of his own journey into God. The fact and pattern of the body's participation in this mystery are both significant. In the fact of its participation is evidence that the self's "beautiful" redemption

[90]*Leg. mai.* XIII.1.
[91]*Leg mai.* XIII.3.

must involve the body. To be beautiful (to be redeemed) is to be whole, and therefore Francis' body cannot play second to the soul's beatitude. But its visibility, as participant, remains "weak," suggesting that it has not yet been released from its worldly condition. In the stigmata, the proportion of Francis' body and soul is mysteriously reforged even as, in another sense, the dimness and disproportion of the worldly self remains.

While Bonaventure does not spell out that the recovered union of Francis' "parts" has been achieved in the stigmata, or what the implications of this might be for the rest of worldly corporeality, God's vindication of Christ as revealed in the *Lignum vitae*'s glorification narrative seems to extend to Francis in the *Legenda*'s stigmata account. Because of the stigmata, Bonaventure writes (as if speaking directly to Francis),

> God's *testimony* about you and through you *has been made overwhelmingly credible*, removing completely from unbelievers the veil of excuse, while these signs confirm believers in faith, raise them aloft with confident hope and set them ablaze with the fire of charity.[92]

Here we see Francis participating in the victory of Christ's humanity, the truthfulness of which was validated before the Father in the *Lignum vitae*. In chapter four I suggested that Christ's bodily glorification is the world's victory over that sinful possessiveness by which human beings have for so long sabotaged their own beauty. Now, through his union with the paschal Christ, we see Francis participating in creation's vindication, albeit in sensual hiddenness.[93] Francis' worldly body is in fact united with the resurrected body of Jesus, living Christ's life and sharing Christ's glory despite the strange weakness of Francis' own appearance. Just as Francis' soul is no longer constrained to the parameters of worldly knowing, so his body is likewise carried beyond the diminishment of its worldly experience, into the heavenly glory contemplated by the soul.[94] It is because of this reality,

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[92] *Leg. mai.* XIII.9. At the very beginning of Bonaventure's text, in the Prologue, Bonaventure likewise points forward to the stigmata, saying that Francis' status as a messenger of Christ worthy of imitation is "confirmed with the irrefutable testimony of truth by the *seal of the likeness* of the living God, namely of *Christ crucified*, which was imprinted on his body..." (Prologus 2). For Bonaventure, the stigmata is the truthful testimony of Truth itself. In the Incarnation, Christ has opened and 'graced' human flesh, enabling it to 'speak' the self's interior truth as outward fruitfulness.

[93] On the beauty and integrity of Francis himself, Zachary Hayes' reminder seems especially relevant: "the more we are in union with Christ, the more truthful we become as human persons. When Francis descended the mountain as an icon of the Crucified, he did not descend as the Crucified: he descended as Francis, that is, as the truly loving person he was created to be" *Mystical Writings*, 124.

[94] This is implied in *Leg. mai.*15, wherein the dead body of Francis, now fully revealed for its beauty, the marks of the stigmata appear as "certain signs of *future glory*, so that his most holy flesh, which had been *crucified along with its passions* and *transformed into a new creature*, might bear the image of Christ's

it seems, that Francis is able to participate so meaningfully in God's work of regeneration.

It is in the contrasting appearance of Francis before and after death that we see most clearly how "death" and "resurrection" can be simultaneously present in the stigmata, or rather, how death has become in Francis the worldly face of resurrection.[95] Immediately after the seraph's departure from La Verna, bodily redemption takes the shape of ugly, cruciform wounding. The nail marks in Francis' hands and feet are black and bent, "as if driven back with a hammer."[96] His bloody side stains his clothing, even causing pain in a way consistent with true human diminishment.[97] A kind of awkwardness characterizes Francis' relationship with his own stigmata, which I will consider more closely in chapter six, and Francis experiences great physical weakness as his body plods along toward its death two-years later. Significantly, there is no mention of the stigmata as having any kind of sensual beauty in chapter thirteen. Only in chapter fourteen, after Francis' death, does the stigmata appear to others in accordance with its truth. It is then only that the sacred wounds can be "contemplated and venerated *with unveiled face* (2 Cor. 3:18)."[98]

Nevertheless, despite the dimness of its visibility, the stigmata are clearly fruitful in chapter thirteen, which would not be possible for a body separated from the soul and its contemplation of divine Beauty. In just one account, Francis, "burning with the fire of divine love," touches a man distracted from sleep by "the biting cold." At the touch of Francis' wounds, which "bore the burning coal" of the seraph," heat enters the cold man's body.[99] Bonaventure's reference to Isaiah 6:6-7, I think, again points to the expressive Word as the source of Francis' new corporeal fruitfulness. By pressing coal to the lips of the biblical prophet, the seraph awakened Isaiah's mouth, enabling him to speak God's truth to others. Likewise with Francis, where before the body's brokenness was terminal, the seraph's work has made it expressive and able to participate in Christ's regenerative work.[100] His body, though it continues to appear broken, has become transfigured in

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passion by a singular privilege and prefigure the resurrection by this unprecedented miracle."

[95] For a full listing of twentieth-century studies on the stigmata itself, see Armstrong, et al., The Saint, 31 (note 62). The most important and comprehensive text on the subject is Octavian Schmucki, *The Stigmata of St. Francis of Assisi: A Critical Investigation in the Light of Thirteenth-Century Sources*, trans. Canisius F Connors (St. Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute, 1992).

[96] *Lig. vit.* XIII.3.

[97] *Lig. vit.* XIII.8.

[98] *Legenda* XIII.8 This seems to mirror the experience of Jesus' disciples, who weren't able to fully recognize his divine identity until after his death and resurrection.

[99] Leg. mai. XIII.6.

[100] As Balthasar puts it, "the divine truth is able to give utterance to itself and to everything in one unique highest expression, so that the self-utterance of a creature succeeds only when it is embraced by the self-

hiddenness. Bonaventure describes other significant miracles that occur in chapter thirteen as a direct result of the stigmata during Francis' lifetime, including the protection of lands from plague and destructive weather patterns, suggesting that the stigmatized Francis has regained his hierarchical role over worldly elements.[101]

6. Beauty in Death

It isn't until his actual death—the complete fulfillment of his worldly diminishment—that Francis' body begins to manifest a sensual beauty corresponding to its meaning. Death is the full fruition of the poverty he has practiced all along, and this final act of trust (dying) acts, strangely, as beauty's unveiling, just as it did for Jesus on the cross.

Having reached his end and bared himself naked on the ground in perfect self-relinquishment, Bonaventure writes that Francis "glorified his Christ because he was going to him, free and unburdened by anything."[102] "At last, when all of God's mysteries were fulfilled in him and his most holy soul was freed from his body to be absorbed in the abyss of the divine light, the blessed man fell asleep in the Lord (Acts 7:60)."[103] Francis' soul, "seen" by a brother, appears with a beauty corresponding to that Beauty which it now beholds: it is like a "radiant star" shining "with the brightness of sublime sanctity" and enters "the place of light and peace where forever [it] rests with Christ." But Francis' dead body, separated from his soul in death, now also bears those marks of intelligibility we would expect from resurrected corporeality reunited with the soul in glory. The wound in his side,

> drawn into a kind of circle by the contraction of the flesh looked like a most beautiful rose. The rest of his skin, which before was inclined to be dark both naturally and from his illness, now shone with a dazzling whiteness [*candore*],[104] prefiguring the beauty of that glorious second stole.

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utterance of the eternal light" *Theological Style,* 294.

[101] Bonaventure describes the significance of these miracles in *Leg. mai.* XIII.5: "Since it is for God to reveal for his own glory the wonders which he has performed, the Lord himself, who had secretly imprinted those marks on Francis, publicly worked through them a number of miracles so that the miraculous though hidden power of the stigmata might be made manifest by the brightness of divine signs."

[102] Most of all, we might say, he has relinquished the burden to define and possess his own life. In the trust exhibited by Francis at the end of the *Legenda*, we can see how the literal act of dying can become for all Christian people a way of practicing the gospel counsel to find one's life by losing it. See *Leg. mai.* XIV.4.

[103] *Leg. mai.* XIV.5.

[104] As in the *Lignum vitae,* the Latin here suggests more luminosity or purity than whiteness of color, though in a certain sense the two concepts are related. I have already mentioned the problematic nature of this language as seen throughout the tradition.

> His limbs were so supple and soft to the touch that they seemed to have regained the tenderness of childhood and to be adorned with clear signs of his innocence. The nails appeared black against his shining skin... so that it is no wonder the onlookers were amazed and overjoyed at the sight of such varied and miraculous beauty.[105]

In XV.5, Francis' wounds are described as "heavenly pearls," and his body, a "precious treasure." Here we see the deep efficacy of God's redemptive work, which overcomes even the most destructive consequences of sin. The power of death to alienate creatures from their meaning has been undone in this man who has been united with Christ, even as Francis' body awaits reunification with his soul and full glorification in creation's eschatological renewal. Just as the Word remained joined to the dead body of Jesus in the *Lignum vitae*, so the inevitable separation of soul from body in Francis cannot strip the body of the meaning it has regained through union with Christ's dying and rising. Thus we read in the *Legenda* of how Francis' dead body "began to reflect the light radiating from the face of God and to sparkle with many great miracles so that the sublimity of his holiness... was approved from heaven."[106] Francis' body has the power to heal not only physical wounds, but existential ones as well. In XV.4, Bonaventure describes a doubting man's encounter with the dead body of Francis, bringing to mind the apostle Thomas who, like so many modern people in touch with human diminishment, struggled to embrace the astonishing possibility of Beauty's triumph: "While he was examining with his hands these authentic signs of Christ's wounds," Bonaventure writes, this man "completely healed the wound of doubt in his own heart and in the hearts of others. As a result, later along with others he became a firm witness to this truth which he had come to know with such certainty."[107] Here we see Beauty speaking through broken corporeality into the body and soul of one who then himself becomes a regenerating presence for others.

7. Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen how, throughout Bonaventure's *Legenda maior*, abundance pours from renunciation, self-negation, like water out of rock (which actually does occur in one story).[108] Maternal images are prevalent throughout the text, and Bonaventure marvels

[105] *Leg. mai.* XV.2.
[106] *Leg. mai.* XV.5.
[107] *Leg. mai.* XV.4.
[108] *Leg. mai.* VII.12.

over how Francis' apparent "sterility" gives birth again and again. Paradoxically, the "pangs of childbirth" seem to increase in the text as the saint's poverty deepens and grows. Poverty self-negation, it seems, is no privation, but a vibrant, life-giving goodness in disguise, carving Francis' life into Bonaventure's distinct metaphysical shape from the nakedness of its origin to its completion in death, where beauty is paradoxically unveiled. Francis' embodied imitation of Jesus Christ becomes locus of a deep transparency between God and others, and in the nakedness of death, the truth of Francis that was formerly hidden by the body's unintelligibility is at last fully exposed, healing lives and regenerating the faithful. By relinquishing his insistence on a life that can be comprehended and possessed, Francis becomes master of his death, trusting in that uncreated Beauty who knows and holds his deepest truth. Death becomes an occasion for Francis to give his life to God and others as an expression of his own urgent, longing love. But this only occurs because his brokenness and vulnerability has rooted itself in Christ's cruciform poverty, through which brokenness becomes a paradoxically fruitful conduit of divine abundance. The bodily appearance of this beautiful "abundance" remains "ugly," but its "ugliness" takes on an apophatic dimension where before it was just terminal.

With grace, and in the Spirit's own time, awareness of this reality made manifest in Francis may be able to help diminishing believers of today pray the difficult prayer Francis offers, naked, at the end of his own worldly pilgrimage: "Welcome, my Sister Death."[109] And the words spoken to Francis by divine Beauty may stand open to all those in search of lasting wholeness: "'Rejoice, then'... 'for your illness is the pledge of my Kingdom; by merit of your patience you can be firm and secure in expecting the inheritance of this Kingdom.'"[110]

[109]Thomas of Celano, "Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul," 388.
[110]Thomas of Celano, "Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul," 384.

Chapter Six

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The Paschal Body:
Bodily Aesthetics in Bonaventure's Soteriology

> It is a beautiful night out—a good strong moon, stars, a beautiful black sky, and Wichita all lit up under it. I listened to "Adagio for Strings" tonight. It is a beautiful sound, and… maybe I will someday write something as beautiful as "Adagio," something as beautiful as this night. And if I had a child, I'd tell him to let these things speak to him as I cannot speak, and to see in them what cannot yet be seen in himself, and know that a day is coming when the night will envy his beauty and when 'Adagio' will sound like a theory assignment compared to the sound that he will be—one vibrant, shimmering answer that silences the noise of proud skepticism.
>
> -Rich Mullins[1]

1. Thesis Summary

Throughout this thesis, I have used Bonaventure's category of the aesthetic to trace how the self journeys to God through the harmonious, contemplative exercise of its body-soul "parts," allowing the whole corporeal world to participate in the self's becoming. This constructive way of considering Bonaventure's soteriology, I have claimed, directly addresses and reframes the question of the body's role in the self's journey, where Bonaventure himself, in explicitly soteriological texts such as the *Hexaemeron, Itinerarium* and *De triplici via,* has tended to prioritize the journey of the soul.

In chapter one I introduced the Trinitarian ground and shape of Bonaventure's soteriological journey by exploring the three-fold metaphysic permeating his entire synthesis. I showed how Beauty, for Bonaventure, expresses the the divine Unity by whom creatures have been sent forth into being, through whom they advance, and in whom they finally come to realize their end and full potential. But Bonaventure's use of Augustinian aesthetic categories such as luminosity and proportion to describe this process allows us to conceive of the self's beauty not just as an "expressive" journey (in which the creature

[1]James Bryan Smith, *Rich Mullins: A Devotional Biography: An Arrow Pointing to Heaven* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2000), 122.

comes to correspond to God's knowing of it), but also as a "formalist" journey involving the self's own growing aesthetic integrity. Indeed, for Bonaventure it is by becoming beautiful in the formalist sense that the self's expressive beauty is actualized. How this occurs, I said, would be explored in dialogue with Bonaventure's anthropological hylomorphism in chapter three.

In chapter two, I considered the journey of the soul to God as discussed in Bonaventure's most mature theological work, the *Collationes in hexaemeron,* there deepening my exploration of its noetic scope and Christological shape (Wisdom being the origin, means and end of the self's noetic journey). Key aesthetic features of the soul's journey were drawn from the text in preparation for my consideration of the body's participation in chapter three, the paschal deepening of the self's journey and the transfiguration of bodily diminishment in chapter four, and the living forward of this journey by Francis in chapter five. In addition to Bonaventure's strong emphasis on light, fruitfulness emerged as a significant aesthetic theme, and evidence, for Bonaventure, of the soul's deepening contemplative experience. The importance of fruitfulness, I prepared us to see in chapter three, rests in its independence from sensual beauty, since the beauty of sensual luminosity and proportion was, in Bonaventure's view, irreparably corrupted by the Fall.

While chapter two offered a close reading of Bonaventure, chapter three was more constructive in nature, showing how Bonaventure's body-soul hylomorphism might be harnessed to explore the self's beauty as a harmonious proportion of parts. I suggested that the soteriological journey set before humanity in Eden was meant to involve a growing harmony of body and soul as corporeality was taken up and informed by the soul through the act of contemplation. Thus the journey to God, had it gone uninterrupted, would have involved a gradual evolution shaping corporeality to correspond to the uncreated Light beheld by the knowing soul. But this momentum was interrupted by the Fall, an event through which humanity attempted to possess creation and thus broke it apart, separating it from its meaning as signful reflection of uncreated Beauty. Where the soul should have remained open, ecstatically, to the infinite Beauty of God, it instead became a space closed in, away from the expansiveness of its end. It "shrunk" to the size of those creatures it tried to possess, and thus abandoned corporeality to an expressionlessness and death after the pattern we saw Balthasar discussing in chapter one's literature review. This has permanently disrupted the original aesthetics of growing luminous proportion set for

humanity to accomplish in Eden. In the context of this world, even redeemed human bodies are now condemned to the dimness and disproportion of diminishment.

Chapter four sought to show how Bonaventure's synthesis provides for the transfiguration of humanity's fallen sensual aesthetics through the incarnation and paschal mystery. Loosely mapping the three sections on Christ's origin, passion and glorification onto the movements of Bonaventure's soteriological journey, a close analysis of the *Lignum vitae*'s aesthetic momentum showed how the transparency existing between Christ's divinity and humanity, and the humility and trust exhibited by him through his own bodily diminishment, reveals the pattern by which all corporeality may come to share in Christ's resurrection and vindication. As "supreme hierarch" and the one who finally completes humanity's contemplative vocation, Christ completes corporeality's soteriological journey within himself, making it possible for individual, whole human creatures to share his victory. The pattern of the *Lignum vitae* reveals how Beauty paradoxically energizes the "ugliness" of Christ's diminishment and body-soul fracturing in death, as revealed in Christ's decision not to master and possess his own meaning, but rather to entrust his life to God. Christ's death thus becomes the fruitful expression of his own realized beauty rather than a merely tragic end, opening the possibility for imitators of Christ to harness their own unavoidable diminishment for the purpose of personal beautification.

In chapter five, finally, I showed how the aesthetic possibilities opened up to humanity by Christ are lived forward by St. Francis of Assisi, whose depiction by Bonaventure in the *Legenda maior* reveals a person whose virtue is sourced by the same trust, transparency and humility energizing the *Lignum vitae*'s Christ. These interior dispositions bear Francis toward the full fruition of his own diminishment in stigmata and death, which, though "dim" and unintelligible, are nevertheless, simultaneously, the paradoxical climax of his own fruitful and fully actualized beauty. This beauty is unveiled to the senses of those who come in contact with Francis' dead body toward the end of the *Legenda*, confirming that for Bonaventure, it is possible for bodily diminishment to bear full witness to its recovered eschatological meaning through union with Christ in the paschal mystery.

2. Conclusion

This brief summary of chapters invites us to reconsider the aims that were set forth in chapter one, part one of this thesis. From the very start, my project has been motivated by a common human struggle: the experience of bodily diminishment, which threatens to turn corporeality into a noetic obstacle rather than the communicative medium it was intended to be. At its most basic level, the body, for Bonaventure, was created to gather up within itself all the parts of creation. It was to be a home and meeting place of world and uncreated Meaning—a profoundly intimate space inviting the soul to feel comfortable and at ease as contemplative bridge between God and creatures. But for many, the experience of embodiment in its fallen context struggles to mirror this ideal; spiritual alienation, awkwardness and anxiety flourish in the face of bodily diminishment.

This study set out to engage the struggle described above by pursuing three specific aims: First, it sought to explore how Bonaventure's hylomorphism functions within his soteriology, and to discern whether his anthropology might offer anything helpful to contemporary believers struggling to manage experiences of bodily diminishment.

Its second aim was to detail how, in Bonaventure's view, the body participates in the soul's soteriological journey. I wanted to explore how giving due attention to the body's journey might suggest fresh ways of constructing the post-Fall relationship between body and soul. While classical theology has tended to talk about sin's effect on the human person in terms of the body's rebellion against the soul, Bonaventure's deepest logic, I claimed, made it possible to consider the problem of body-soul disorder from the perspective of the soul's abandonment of the body. Such a reconfiguration, I suggested, could go a long way toward nurturing a spirituality of compassion, humility and trust—the very spiritual dispositions necessary, in Bonaventure's view, for making the journey to God.

My third aim, finally, was to articulate a Bonaventurean spirituality able to harness experiences of bodily diminishment for redemptive purposes without (on the one hand) turning diminishment into a place of ontological meaning, and without (on the other hand) dealing dismissively with the problem of suffering, as if suffering doesn't matter since it isn't "real." I wanted to be faithful to the tradition that sin represents a privation of the good, while also attending to the very real effects of sin reflected in bodily diminishment. I wanted to see if Bonaventure's soteriological vision could allow believers to be honest about the body's brokenness in this life, while also enabling that brokenness to lead beyond itself as mysterious "sign" of the self's growing beauty in Christ.

Responding to my first aim, that is, how Bonaventure's anthropology functions

within his soteriology and whether this can have any enduring spiritual significance for modern believers, this thesis demonstrated how speaking of the self as a growing harmony of "parts" can help account for the emotional effects of bodily diminishment. If the mind feels estranged and alienated from the body, there exists in Bonaventure a language for talking about such feelings. Ontologically, Bonaventure's anthropology suggests, it is legitimate for such feelings to exist. They are credible, and even testify to important theological realities such as the Fall and the very existence of uncreated Beauty, who calls human beings to growing wholeness along the "return" journey to God's own Unity.

My second question, that is, how the body participates and even facilitates the self's journey to God, was explored by considering the body's relationship to corporeality more generally, and how the soul's gradual informing of the body occurs, for Bonaventure, as the self contemplates other creatures. By gathering the "parts" of creation into the "whole" of creation's meaning, the body itself, we saw, eventually comes to express that uncreated Light which the soul has contemplated. On the one hand, for Bonaventure, the glorified body is said simply to receive the overflow of the soul's beatitude. But on the other hand, for Bonaventure the soul's joy is only possible in the first place because of the body. The body "gathers up" worldly corporeality, which allows it, in turn, to be "gathered up" by the knowing soul and carried into glory. The Fall led to a disordering of this relationship. Because of the soul's greed and pride, the body lost its proportion to the soul, and the self was left fractured, "ugly," and unformed. If sin involved the soul's "abandonment" of the body and all of worldly corporeality, it follows that salvation should involve a recovery of bodily corporeality rather than its further rejection through the sinful, subtle forms of condemnation and blame which Christian Platonism, for all its many other virtues, seems vulnerable to perpetuating. Bonaventure's synthesis challenges believers to reorient themselves toward corporeality in tender and compassionate ways, so that diminishment itself can become a place of spiritual trust and hope.

This challenge prepared us to pursue our third aim, which was to articulate a spirituality that harnesses diminishment for good, while remaining theologically faithful and pastorally honest. This was accomplished as we came to see how, for Bonaventure, the paschal mystery is best understood not so much as a sequence of events, but rather as a single reality wherein worldly death and eschatological renewal coinhere. Death and glory run parallel in Bonaventure's paschal imagery, one a temporal reality experienced by human beings still effected by sin's consequences, and the other an eternal reality existing

in God, yet able to animate the way worldly death and diminishment are encountered for those who enter it through the portal of Christ's own dying. But it must be said that this does require a very real "entry." By emphasizing the resurrection without duly considering the passion, or by emphasizing the ugliness of the cross only as the hiddenness or strange "appearance" of beauty (as if beauty is still fully intact and there is nothing ontologically substantial about the diminishing nature of its vessel), it is possible not only to contrive a spirituality that is aloof from the experiences of ordinary people, but also one that neglects the only reality through which human beings may pursue their true meaning in God: that is, the selves they actually are, within this world. Mark McIntosh writes richly of the cross as that which reveals the world's fearful and constricted refusal to receive divine Abundance as made manifest in Christ. From a pastoral point of view, it might be possible to hold this truth in greater tension with the true scarcity and diminishment humanity has inflicted upon itself because of sin. The vision of scarcity itself may be an illusion, but the effects of believing in it are not, and those effects are what make it so difficult for human beings to reorient themselves toward Abundance and its beauty. It is therefore necessary for Christian spirituality to speak very robustly of sin and suffering, and a close study of Bonaventure's anthropological aesthetics such as we have undergone shows how Bonaventure provides such a language without compromising his commitment to the traditional doctrine of sin as privation. A person's worldly existence is important. There is perhaps a danger that by dwelling solely on the actualized ideas concrete worldly people remind us of ("resurrection"), we might disregard broken human beings themselves, as they exist now, within the fallen world we actually inhabit. Overlooking human ugliness by not grounding it sufficiently in Christ's passion makes the contemplative ministry of "returning" real people to God a very difficult ideal to accomplish.

On the other hand, of course, there is a danger that the effort to be pastorally sensitive might lead to suffering being given a kind of ontological significance of its own. Theological faithfulness here is imperative. It has become common in recent times to critique Christianity as a religion morbidly obsessed with suffering. For some believers, critics say, suffering is a sign of spiritual advancement and an end to be sought for its own sake. This critique has been made against Mother Teresa of Calcutta in recent years, who allegedly told another woman that her suffering brought her so close to the cross that Jesus could reach out and kiss her. "Oh Mother Teresa," the woman responded, "please tell Jesus

to stop kissing me."[2] It is possible to hallow and even romanticize the experience of suffering as a form of spiritual union to such an extent that its "kiss" ceases to have the same healing power we saw offered to Judas by the mouth of Christ in the *Lignum vitae* and bestowed by the mouth of Francis in the *Legenda maior*. Of course, even where theological faithfulness is not technically compromised here, it is easy to slip into this kind of spirituality given, as Ilia Delio has argued convincingly, that the crucified Christ rests at the center of Bonaventure's mystical synthesis.[3] It is important to emphasize that although the crucified Christ may be this "center" for Bonaventure, he is not its climax. Its climax remains the return and glorification of all things in Christ.

In short, the paschal spirituality of diminishment emerging from Bonaventure's synthesis steers clear of either of the two extremes discussed above by giving a distinct purgative function to brokenness and by emphasizing the need to travel "through" death, to the other side of it, where one might be tempted to either go "around" death or to make of it a permanent spiritual home. Bonaventure invites human beings to ride the brokenness of their fallen humanity to its full existential limits, for to rush past the darkness of their temporal experiences in search of God's deeper truth would paradoxically obscure access to that truth. It is only through visceral nakedness, honesty and trust that the body's brokenness can again come to signify the beauty of the creature known by, and eternally adorning, the glorified body of Christ. This can perhaps be seen in Francis even in his stigmatized state, the glory of which runs parallel to a kind of residual awkwardness and unknowing emerging from his worldly context. Bonaventure writes that sometimes Francis' stigmata caused him great physical pain, and inwardly, he was "thrown into an agony of doubt" as to how even to respond to the goodness of what had happened to him. He struggled to discern whether he should reveal his gift to others or whether he should keep it silent and secret.[4] Thomas of Celano records that Francis "was not able to hide completely the stigmata on his hands and feet," and was "vexed if someone stared at

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[2]Christopher Hitchens, *The Missionary Position: Mother Teresa in Theory and Practice* (London: Verso, 1995), 41.

[3]That the Crucified Christ is the center of Bonaventure's whole theological synthesis is Delio's argument in *Crucified Love*. Delio herself recognizes the danger implicit in such a vision, but argues that "while there is historical truth" to the claim that passion-based spiritualities can tend toward masochism, "oppressive suffering persists because we fail to love by way of suffering" (*Crucified Love*, xxiii). The problem could perhaps be addressed more fully via an explicit exploration of how glory or beauty, for Bonavnture, actually charges Christ's decent, such as I have tried to present throughout this thesis.

[4]*Leg. mai.* XIII.4, 8.

them."[5] And the pain he bore was so intense that once, when Brother Rufino touched one of his wounds, Francis was forced to push his friend's "hand away, crying out for the Lord to spare him."[6] If the stigmata can be seen as a transfigured expression of Francis' own diminishment, then here suffering hasn't been avoided, but has rather been opened up to resurrection by finding its source and end in Christ's own paschal momentum. Diminishment has ceased operating as a noetic obstacle, and has become fruitful despite the paradoxical nature of its continuing worldly brokenness.

3. Reading the Paschal Body: Three Future Possibilities

At least three worthwhile avenues for future exploration have been opened up by the spirituality I have sought to develop throughout this thesis—two of them research projects, and one a spiritual challenge for personal refection and development. The first has already been hinted at above. It may not be accidental that the maturation of popular passion piety corresponds in history, chronologically, to the the rise of nominalism in the universities, and that both were developed through Franciscan thought and practice.[7] A future research project might look more intentionally at how Bonaventure holds together passion piety and theological realism, and how the way in which the cross bears glory within it as the full expression of exemplary Beauty might allow passion piety to thrive in a spiritually liberating way, rather than in the destructive ways theologians and secular people have rightly criticized. Bonaventure's unflinching commitment to the divine ideas tradition can, I think, help the wounds of suffering "sparkle" with healing life and meaning again, as we saw them doing for Francis in the stigmata.

A second research project might use the conclusions of this thesis to recover an intelligible theology of relics. The efficacious beauty of Francis' dead body, fruitful because of the meaning mediated to it through the soul's contemplation, shows that the veneration of relics need not emerge from superstition or sensationalism, but from a

[5]Thomas of Celano, "The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul," *The Founder,* ed. Regis Armstrong, et al., 45.

[6]Thomas of Celano, The Life of Blessed Francis," *The Saint,* ed. Regis Armstrong, et al., 265.

[7]Ewert Cousins claims that the emphasis on Christ's passion became so strong by the late middle ages that Christians almost lost track of the resurrection as well as the way in which all theology is interconnected by being grounded in the doctrine of the Trinity. See Ewert Cousins, "The Humanity and the Passion of Christ," *Christian Spirituality III: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, ed. Jill Raitt, World Spirituality series 17 (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 375-378.

committed wonder at the integrity and signful goodness of redeemed corporeality. Such a theology would again find its roots in a coherent account of the exemplarism expounded by Bonaventure, and could be extended to consider the relic-like quality of living holy persons on their move toward full diminishment, such as Francis during the two years between stigmata and death. This might in turn open up questions concerning the self-understanding of holy persons, who so often struggle with their simultaneous brokenness and holiness, seeming ill at ease with the paradoxes they have become.[8]

Third and finally, my hope is that the soteriological journey traced throughout this thesis might bear a private but more immediate spiritual future for anyone who wills it: that is, the confidence to become beautiful and to experience the self as a beloved whole, including the body in all its strangeness and unintelligible suffering.[9] A passage from the diary of Rich Mullins prefaced this final chapter of my thesis, expressing hope that "proud skepticism" might be silenced through the beautiful answer of an actualized self. The skepticism needing to be silenced here emerges not from modernity or secularism or all the other external systems of thought producing fear and defensiveness in the hearts of contemporary believers. It is rather the skepticism of the floundering self who fears that she cannot or should not dare make the journey to God. Perhaps the only objection to Christian faith that theologians have been consistently speechless before is the problem of suffering and diminishment. And so this thesis has attempted to articulate a spirituality able to exist within that speechlessness. One of the challenges of diminishment is that it strips believers down to faith's most naked objection, forcing a confrontation. If there is going to be genuine knowledge, that is, belief in God and the possibility of a soteriological journey at all, then it can only credibly emerge for each individual as a personal response to this confrontation, or perhaps through the witness of another who finds a way to believe in the

[8]This is reflected, perhaps, in the self-effacing nature of the saints, and occasionally even in what seems to be their false humility. The resulting awkwardness can be seen, for example, in Francis' relationship with his own stigmata as described above. How does a holy person both acknowledge the goodness of their own transformation, without pride, while remaining appropriately "guarded" in the face of their continuing vulnerability? And if it is proper to venerate a "dead" relic, what kind of veneration is appropriate to bestow upon "living relics"? How much "veneration" is safe for "living relics" to endure, and how should they respond to it?

[9]Owen Barfield talks about the "will" required for this to happen in *Saving the Appearances*: "The world of final participation will one day sparkle in the light of the eye as it never yet sparkled early one morning in the original light of the sun. But the coming of this light presupposes a goodness of heart and a steady furnace in the will..." Barfield suggests here that the soul has to *really want* to see beauty in the world in order for it to appear. As we saw in II.1.3 above, for Bonaventure desire is the "door" energizing the whole soteriological journey, propelling creatures toward Wisdom. See Owen Barfield, *Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1957), 189.

midst of their own suffering. Throughout my thesis, I have therefore tried to honor the experience of diminishment, because no intellectualizing can adequately answer the objections to faith it poses, but only the courage of those who have journeyed to God and become “beautiful” selves where, from a worldly perspective, such a future should have been impossible.

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