

VOLUME IX

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Breviloquium

Edited by Dominic V. Monti, O.F.M.

WORKS of
ST. BONAVENTURE

BREVILOQUIUM

BONAVENTURE
TEXTS IN TRANSLATION
SERIES

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Volume IX

BREVILOQUIUM

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WORKS of
ST. BONAVENTURE

BREVILOQUIUM

Introduction, Translation and Notes
by Dominic V. Monti, O.F.M.

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PREFACE

The origins of this book go back almost a decade. I had recently completed an earlier volume in this series,¹ when Brother Edward Coughlin, then Director of the Franciscan Institute, asked me if I would consider translating the *Breviloquium*. I accepted his invitation, working at it over the past years, amidst countless interruptions due to more immediate tasks and other responsibilities. When I first mentioned this project to my former professor, Bernard McGinn, he remarked: “Great! We really need a good annotated translation of the *Breviloquium*.” I soon discovered what he meant. After completing a few of the chapters in Part 1, I found myself saying, “I’m translating Bonaventure’s Latin into English, and it’s still all Greek!” I had encountered for myself the remarkable “concentration of word and phrase” that Jacques G. Bougerol felt characterized this work.² In it Bonaventure’s style is “simultaneously compact and highly complex; his sentences are long and stately, with rhythmically balanced phrases,”³ making it very difficult to render into contemporary English.

¹*Writings Concerning the Franciscan Order*, The Works of Saint Bonaventure V (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1994).

²Jacques Guy Bougerol, *Introduction to the Works of Bonaventure*, trans. José de Vinck (Paterson, N.J.: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1963).

³Paula Jean Miller, “Marriage: The Sacrament of Divine-Human Communion: Vol. I: A Commentary on St. Bonaventure’s *Breviloquium*,” (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1995), 6.

Furthermore, the work is packed with technical medieval theological terms that seem like meaningless jargon to many contemporary readers unfamiliar with Scholastic categories. This led me to adopt an approach with which Father Zachary Hayes, who was named general editor of this series while my work was already in progress, fully agreed. And so I have not simply provided a translation, with a few basic notes indicating Bonaventure's major sources, as did the previous 1962 English translation of José de Vinck⁴ and the 1996 Italian translation in the Opera di San Bonaventura series.⁵ Rather, I attempted to compose content notes as well, so that the reader might refer immediately to an explanation of an otherwise problematic passage. In light of the extensive notes in the body of the translation, the introduction to the volume is relatively modest, providing a general orientation to the work, its place in Bonaventure's overall theological effort, and some interpretative keys for the reader approaching it.

This project has taken a long time to reach fruition and I have many people to thank for their assistance over the years. First of all, I acknowledge the Washington Theological Union for generously providing two semester-long sabbaticals, in 1997 and again in 2001, in which I did the bulk of the translation and notes. I am grateful, too, for the encouragement of my colleagues on the Bonaventure Texts in Translation Board, especially for the leadership of Zachary Hayes, who carefully edited the translation. No one knows Bonaventure's thought better than he, and

⁴*The Breviloquium*, trans. José de Vinck, Works of St. Bonaventure II (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1962).

⁵*Breviloquio*, trans. Mariano Aprea, Opera San Bonaventura: Opuscoli Teologici, 2 (Rome: Città Nuova Editrice, 1996).

that fact helped greatly in capturing the most appropriate translation. Over the past several years, a number of scholars have used drafts of this translation in their classes: Ilia Delio of the Washington Theological Union, Michael Blastic and Oleg Bychkov of St. Bonaventure University, and Wayne Hellmann at Saint Louis University. They have detected a number of errors and made some helpful suggestions for which I am most grateful. In particular, I would like to acknowledge Professor James Ginther of Saint Louis for alerting me to Bonaventure's dependence on a work of Robert Grosseteste in the Prologue. And I must thank the editors of Franciscan Institute Publications for their patience as I brought this effort to completion.

This year marks my fortieth anniversary as a professed Franciscan friar. As I look back over these years, my brothers in Holy Name Province deserve my special thanks for their constant affection and support. To them I dedicate this book. In a particular way, I will be ever grateful to those who encouraged my gifts during my formation years: Reginald Redlon, Boniface Hanley, Hugh Eller, Damian McElrath, Alexander DiLella, Regis Duffy, and Vincent Cushing.

Iuveni quaerenti lucem
Exempla erant et magistri

Dominic V. Monti, O.F.M.
St. Bonaventure University
Feast of the Holy Trinity, 2005

ABBREVIATIONS

- AC *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*. Edited by Brian Davies and G. R. Evans. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- PG *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series graeca*. Edited by J. P. Migne. Paris, 1857-66. 161 volumes.
- PL *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series latina*. Edited by J. P. Migne. Paris, 1844-64. 221 volumes.
- Vg Vulgate version of the Christian Bible. See *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatem Versionem*. Edited by Robert Weber et al. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983.
- WSA *Works of Saint Augustine*. Edited by John E. Rotelle, O.S.A. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1991- .

INTRODUCTION

The *Breviloquium* and the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* are undoubtedly the two works of the Seraphic Doctor that have received the most sustained admiration over the centuries. To judge by the number of extant copies, the *Breviloquium* was the more popular of the two works in the Middle Ages, surviving in some 227 manuscripts.¹ Jean Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris, was one of those who testified to their impact:

Two works of Bonaventure are composed with such a divine art of synthesis that nothing at all surpasses them, namely the *Breviloquium* and the *Itinerarium*. . . . More than thirty years ago, I chose to familiarize myself with these two small treatises; since then I have read them often, frequently meditating on certain passages and even specific words. Now, at my age, I have the leisure to achieve my fondest desire: to begin to experience them afresh, for to me they always seem ever-new and enchanting.²

¹The *Itinerarium* survives in some 138 manuscripts. *Doctoris Seraphici Sancti Bonaventurae . . . Opera Omnia* V (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1882-1902), xvii-xxxiii. Hereafter this edition will be referred to simply by the volume and page numbers within parentheses.

²J. Gerson, *De libris legendis a monacho*, 5-6, *Opera J. Gerson* (Strasbourg, 1515), Fol. XIX, G.

In recent years, the fortunes of these two works have been somewhat reversed. Although there has been a considerable amount of research on the *Itinerarium* that has unfolded its riches for a contemporary audience, the *Breviloquium* has remained comparatively neglected. This is most unfortunate, for it is not only a brilliant compendium of Bonaventure's theology, but as Alexander Gerken has observed, "its literary genre is matched by nothing comparable in the whole of the Middle Ages."³ It is the purpose of this introduction, then, to provide a brief general understanding of this work so that contemporary readers might begin to open "this precious jewel box" of medieval thought for themselves.⁴

SETTING AND PURPOSE

Scholars have generally maintained that Bonaventure completed the *Breviloquium* in 1257.⁵ Indeed, one of the earliest manuscripts containing the work explicitly dates it to that year.⁶ Internal evidence definitely indicates that Bonaventure composed it after the *Quaestiones disputatae de scientia Christi* and *de mysterio Trinitatis*, most commonly assigned to 1254 and 1255 respectively.⁷ We may

³Alexander Gerken, "Identity and Freedom: Bonaventure's Position and Method," trans. Myles Parsons, *Greyfriars Review* 4: 3 (1990): 95.

⁴M. J. Scheeben, *Handbuch der Katholischen Dogmatik* (Freiburg, 1933), 1:432.

⁵Balduinus Distelbrink, *Bonaventurae scripta: authentica dubia vel spuria critice recensita* (Rome: Istituto Storico Cappuccini, 1975), 3-4.

⁶Jacques G. Bougerol, *Manuscrits franciscains de la Bibliothèque de Troyes* (Grottaferrata: Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas, 1982): 262: "Explicit brevilquium fratris Boneventure de ordine fratrum minorum ad intelligentiam sacre scripture et fidei christiane. Anno domini, M.CC.L.VII."

⁷J. G. Bougerol, *Introduction to the Works of Bonaventure*, trans. José de Vinck (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1964), 108; Distelbrink, 4, 10, 13. One piece of evidence is Bonaventure's treatment of the fullness

accept the common dating of 1257, then, as fairly certain.⁸ This is significant, for during that year Bonaventure was coming to grips with a dramatic transition in his own life, as he moved from a university career to one of major pastoral responsibility. Within his literary corpus therefore, the *Breviloquium* occupies a pivotal position; in the words of one recent study, it is a “turning-point text or a borderline text” standing between two worlds.⁹

From one perspective, it is rightly viewed as the capstone of Bonaventure’s twenty-year career as student and teacher at the University of Paris.¹⁰ He had arrived in the city in 1235 as a young student of arts. After completing his master’s degree in 1243, he had joined the Friars Minor at Paris. His superiors quickly recognized his talents; after completing his novitiate year, he immediately commenced his theological education at the Franciscan School. One of the few friar students there actually matriculating for the University degree, Bonaventure began lecturing on the Bible in 1248, gradually progressing to the point where he assumed the duties of regent master of the Franciscan School of theology early in 1254. During

of wisdom of Christ’s human intellect (pt. 4, chap. 6). This clearly reflects his *Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ*, q. 7 (V, 37-43). This is a significant advance from his earlier position in the *Sentences Commentary* (3.14.2.3 [V, 312-317]).

⁸Camille Bérubé is an exception to this consensus; he does not believe the Troyes manuscript is decisive, and would prefer a date several years later – perhaps after the *Itinerarium* (1259) (*De la philosophie a la sagesse chez Saint Bonaventure et Roger Bacon* [Rome: Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 1976]), 117-118.

⁹Emmanuel Falque, *Saint Bonaventure et l’entrée de Dieu in théologie. Études de philosophie médiévale* (Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 2000), 25: “un texte charnière ou un texte frontière.”

¹⁰For a good brief summary of Bonaventure’s career, see J. F. Quinn, “Bonaventure, St.,” in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. Joseph R. Strayer (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1983), 2:313-319.

his teaching career, Bonaventure utilized the increasingly sophisticated techniques that had been developed over the preceding century in the urban theology schools of Western Europe we know as Scholasticism.¹¹ The most fundamental of these techniques was that of methodical commentary on authoritative texts (*lectio*); the second, the systematic analysis and resolution of doctrinal and moral issues arising from those texts (*quaestio* and *disputatio*). Bonaventure proved himself a master of these techniques in his commentaries on the Biblical books of Ecclesiastes, Luke, and John; his massive commentary on the *Four Books of Sentences* of Peter Lombard; and three series of disputed questions. But Scholastic theologians had also pioneered a third technique: the attempt to synthesize the diffuse results of *lectio*, *quaestio* and *disputatio* into a coherent and comprehensive presentation of Christian doctrine for instructional purposes. This was the task Bonaventure set for himself in the *Breviloquium*, and in this regard it stands unique among his works, presenting a concise synthesis of his mature teaching. But the reasons for its publication were not purely academic.

In 1257 Bonaventure's professional teaching career effectively came to an end, for in February of that year the Franciscan general chapter had elected him General Minister of the Order. The pressing responsibilities of that office soon demanded his full attention. The Friars Minor were just beginning to emerge from a serious crisis in which their opponents, the secular masters of the University theology faculty, articulating the complaints of many of the clergy of Western Europe, had mounted a sustained attack on the new mendicant orders' pastoral ministry in

¹¹My description of the scholastic method draws on Bernard McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism*, vol. 2 of *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 367-374.

the church, indeed on their entire way of life.¹² Given this volatile situation, Bonaventure wisely decided to maintain his principal residence at Paris for the next several years. Although he had traveled to Italy to confer with Pope Alexander IV after having received word of his election, he quickly returned to Paris. There, in August, Bonaventure and his Dominican colleague, Thomas Aquinas, were grudgingly accepted by the consortium of masters of theology into their number, marking an end to the long and bitter controversy. Bonaventure could then oversee the transfer of his seat in theology to his successor, Gilbert of Tournai.¹³ It is Bonaventure's new responsibilities as General Minister of the Franciscan Order that provide another vantage point from which to view the *Breviloquium*, one that allows us to appreciate it as more than simply an academic contribution to theology. Over his years of teaching, Bonaventure had become convinced that there was a critical need in the education of young friars, and in this work he attempted to supply it.¹⁴

Why was a book like this necessary? By the 1250's, the number of Franciscans engaged in formal studies had increased exponentially. In virtually every large friary a lecturer was assigned to teach theology to the clerical members

¹²For a good recent summary of the conflict at Paris, see Bert Roest, *A History of Franciscan Education*, c.1210-1517 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 51-57. The standard detailed history of this earlier phase of this protracted conflict is M.-M. Dufeil, *Guillaume de Saint Amour et la polémique universitaire parisienne, 1250-1259* (Paris: Editions A. et J. Picard, 1972).

¹³For details, see my introduction to Volume 5 in this series, *Writings Concerning the Franciscan Order* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1994), 21-32.

¹⁴In this sense, the *Breviloquium* may be compared to another work Bonaventure supplied for the formational needs of friars, the *Regula novitiorum*. Cf. Roest, 243-250.

of the community so they would be well-equipped for their primary ministry of preaching and hearing confessions. Theology classes were an integral part of their weekly schedule. This created a constant demand for qualified friars to serve as lectors. To meet it, promising young friars were assigned to pursue theological studies at schools the Order had established, not only at the universities of Paris, Oxford, and Cambridge, but also in more than a dozen other *studia generalia* (general study centers) that had sprung up by this time.¹⁵ The curriculum in these other study centers largely replicated that of the university faculties of theology. To be qualified as a lector, a friar had to study theology for four years. For the first two he attended lectures on the Bible, then two more on the *Four Books of Sentences* of Peter Lombard.¹⁶ This was a top-notch education for the time, a fact recognized by a Papal privilege Bonaventure obtained shortly after his election that granted students who had completed the curriculum at the Order's *studia generalia* a license to teach theology, thus granting them an equivalent of a university degree.¹⁷

However, by today's standards, young friars in the 1250's were singularly unequipped to embark on theologi-

¹⁵Roest, 6-42. In addition to the three Franciscan schools that were incorporated into University theology faculties, by the 1250's study houses had been established in Bologna, Padua, Florence, Perugia, Naples, Toulouse, Montpellier, Dijon, Magdeburg, Cologne, Regensburg, Strasbourg, and Erfurt. These schools were 'general' in the sense that they attracted friar students from beyond their own provinces, even though some were effectively only regional. We are not certain precisely when each of these *studia* was officially designated 'general.' It is important to note that these study centers also were open to secular clergy. For the legislation governing the *studia*, see the *Constitutions of Narbonne*, 6.12-24 in Works of St. Bonaventure 5: 101-103 (note 127 on p. 102 must be corrected in light of Roest's study).

¹⁶Roest, 87-97, 133-137.

¹⁷*Exultante spiritu* (23 March 1257), *Bullarium Franciscanum*, 2:208b, n. 317. Cf. Roest, 31.

cal studies. We have to remember that parishes provided no formal religious instruction in the Middle Ages; catechisms designed for the religious education of youth would only be a product of the reforming spirit of the sixteenth century. In terms of exposure to the elements of Christian doctrine, candidates joining the Order might know only the Apostles' Creed. Certainly, during their novitiate year, young friars would be immediately immersed in a Biblically based religious culture. The daily rounds of the Liturgy of the Hours demanded that novices commit the Psalms to memory; they also quickly gained familiarity with other Biblical texts that occurred in the liturgy and the communal readings during meals. In addition, they would often hear thematic sermons that would elucidate doctrinal topics.¹⁸ Still, they would never have been exposed to any formal theological instruction. This situation was complicated by the fact that many young candidates were entering the Order after at least several years of university training.¹⁹ Their exposure to secular learning, both in terms of content and method, thus far exceeded their knowledge of their faith. Furthermore, the standard textbooks in theology – the Bible and Peter Lombard's *Sentences* – did not present the same scientific clarity as textbooks in the arts, with their clear outlines and definite objectives. The Bible appeared to be a confusing and contradictory collection of stories, the *Sentences* a disorganized assemblage of arcane and sterile questions. Was there some unity and coherence in this subject matter –

¹⁸Roest, 250-258.

¹⁹Already, the Order had passed legislation about 1242 mandating that no one should be admitted as a friar without having received competent instruction in grammar, logic, law, or medicine. Cf. C. Cenci, "De Fratrum Minorum Constitutionibus Praenarbonensis," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 83 (1990): 75. Cf. Roest, 239.

the Christian faith? It was such a logical and comprehensive presentation of Christian doctrine that Bonaventure set as his agenda in this treatise:

This teaching [theology] has been transmitted, both in the writings of the saints and in those of the doctors, in such a diffuse manner that those who come to learn about Sacred Scripture are not able to read or hear about it for a long time. In fact, beginning theologians often dread Sacred Scripture itself, feeling it to be as confusing, disordered, and uncharted as some impenetrable forest. That is why my colleagues have asked me, from my own modest knowledge, to draw up some concise summary of the truth of theology. Yielding to their requests, I have agreed to compose what might be called a brief discourse [*breviloquium*]. In it I will summarize not all the truths of our faith, but some things that are more opportune [for such students] to hold.²⁰

Bonaventure was not the only teacher who recognized the need for a logical synthesis of theology that both teachers and students could use. Such was also the goal of those who composed *summae* (summaries) of theology. Bonaventure's own predecessors as masters of the Franciscan school had already provided such a magisterial synthesis, generally known as the *Summa fratris Alexandri* or *Summa Halensis*, to serve as a comprehensive theological encyclopedia for reference purposes.²¹

²⁰Prologue, 6.5.

²¹This work was a team effort, compiled over the span of almost two decades (1238-1257) by Alexander of Hales, Jean of La Rochelle, Eudes Rigaud, William of Middleton, and perhaps other Franciscan lectors.

²²*Summa Theologica*, Prol. (Parma, 1852), 1:1.

Other contemporaries also stepped in to fill this gap; one of these was Thomas Aquinas, whose reasons for composing his celebrated *Summa theologiae* are remarkably similar to Bonaventure's own:

It is the task of the teacher of Catholic truth to instruct not only advanced students, but also beginners. . . . It is thus our intention in this work to present those things that pertain to the Christian religion in a manner befitting the education of beginners. . . . Students in this science have not seldom been hampered by what they have found written in other authors, partly on account of the multiplicity of useless questions, articles, and arguments; partly also because the things they need to know are not taught according to the order of learning, but according as the plan of the book might require or the occasion of disputing might offer. . . . Anxious, therefore, to overcome these and other obstacles, we will try . . . to present those things pertaining to sacred doctrine briefly and clearly insofar as the matter will permit.²²

As the recent study of Emmanuel Falque points out, the stated goals of Bonaventure and Thomas are remarkably similar – a concern with beginners, the desire to achieve a brief and coherent synthesis. But the results are strikingly different. Most obvious is the sheer matter of size – the 512 questions of the *Summa theologiae* (without the Supplement) versus the 72 chapters of the *Breviloquium*. Thomas simply treats a great many more topics, and in a much more detailed way, than Bonaventure. But more importantly, there is a fundamental difference

²²Falque, 34-35.

in method between the two works. It is here that the originality and importance of Bonaventure's effort lies.²³ As Alexander Gerken has observed: "It is not so much by reason of its contents but undoubtedly by reason of its method that the *Breviloquium* breaks the bonds of Scholastic theology."²⁴

METHOD

When Thomas Aquinas set out to compose a synthesis of Christian doctrine for instructional purposes, he utilized the *quaestio* technique that had come to dominate the classrooms – as did Bonaventure's predecessors in the Franciscan school who composed the *Summa fratris Alexandri*. This technique employed what has been called the "dialectical" or "Scholastic" method,²⁵ which began by posing a question about a certain issue. It then juxtaposed alternative solutions, first suggesting a tentative answer (the thesis) and enumerating various arguments that favored it (*sic*, "yes"), but then raising other reasons that seemed to oppose it (*non*, "no"). The master then "determined" the question, offering his own resolution of the issue at hand, showing why the arguments in favor of one side were persuasive while the others were not. This method became standard for teaching theology at the medieval universities. This *quaestio* technique was simultaneously being developed by masters in schools of law in order to decide which statutes should apply in a certain case.²⁶ When applied to theology, the technique had the effect of "bracketing" Christian belief, creating a kind of

²⁴Gerken, 95.

²⁵For a good description of this method, see Edward Grant, *God and Reason in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 105-107.

²⁶The masterpiece of this effort was Gratian's *Decretum* (c. 1140), which he entitled the *Concordance of Discordant Canons*.

medieval “hermeneutic of suspicion.” It seemingly called accepted beliefs into question, and then attempted to reach a conclusion about them by logical analysis of evidence. Peter Abelard (d. 1142), who stands at the forefront of this method, justified it in the following words:

We should like, as we proceed, to gather together diverse statements of the holy fathers that come to mind as involving some question by reason of the discrepancy they seem to contain: these may incite youthful readers to a strong effort in seeking for truth and make them keener by reason of their inquiry. For this is the first key of wisdom: constant and frequent questioning. . . . It is by raising a doubt we arrive at inquiry, and by inquiring we grasp truth.²⁷

However, we must realize that this dialectical technique, although it has become “almost synonymous with what has come to be known as the Scholastic method,”²⁸ was not the only one that medieval theologians employed to probe the meaning of Christian faith. In an insightful article, Charles Burnett reminds us that Abelard himself, like all Scholastics, recognized that there were two modes of human reasoning: inductive and deductive, which he attributed to Aristotle and Plato respectively.²⁹ The inductive method begins by examining particular instances and on that basis reaches universal conclusions; in contrast, the deductive method proceeds from evident first principles

²⁷Peter Abelard, *Sic et Non*, prol. (PL 178, 1349).

²⁸Grant, 105.

²⁹Charles Burnett, “Scientific Speculations,” in *A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy*, Peter Dronke, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 151-176. The reference to Aristotle and Plato is on p. 152.

to understand the particular. Medieval logicians believed that these two modes of human reasoning were complementary, leading to the same ultimate truth, but they also emphasized that their opposite starting points led to quite different types of conclusions. As Burnett explains, in an inductive reasoning process, the premises of the argument are based on one's experience of particulars, and in that sense, express opinion. The resultant conclusions are thus "*probabilis* – a word that has the sense of 'able to be approved of by reliable opinions' or 'plausible' rather than 'probable' [in the modern sense] or 'provable.' Their validity must be judged on the basis of their rationality."³⁰ In a deductive reasoning process, on the other hand, the premises are not elicited from experience, "but intuited as self-evident axioms, and the arguments from these premises are 'necessary' and lead to 'demonstration.'"³¹ Hugh of St. Victor neatly described the difference between these two modes of argumentation:

Demonstration consists of necessary arguments and belongs to philosophers.

Probable argument belongs to dialecticians and rhetoricians. . . . Probable argument is divided into dialectic and rhetoric, both of which contain invention and judgment as integral parts. . . . Invention and judgment integrally constitute argumentative logic. Invention teaches the discovery of arguments and the drawing up of lines of argumentation. The science of judgment teaches the evaluation of such arguments and lines of argumentation.³²

³⁰Burnett, 154.

³¹Burnett, 154.

³²*Didascalicon*, 2.30, trans. Jerome Taylor, *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor: A Medieval Guide to the Arts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 81, alt.

The *quaestio* technique we commonly associate with Scholasticism epitomizes what Hugh calls the dialectical method of “drawing up lines of argumentation” and “the evaluation of such arguments.” This form of argumentation is based on an inductive process of marshalling particular pieces of evidence (Biblical texts, traditional authorities, philosophical opinions), which are then logically analyzed to arrive at general, but probable conclusions. Bonaventure shows himself a master of this mode of theological reasoning in his *Commentary on the Sentences* and especially in his three series of disputed questions; these were products of his classroom teaching, which demanded the *quaestio* technique.

The *Breviloquium*, however, differs radically from Bonaventure’s other works of systematic theology. In it he departs from the customary inductive mode of analysis, employing instead what his contemporaries regarded as a superior mode of reasoning, namely, the deductive method. To illustrate how this method works, let us examine a typical chapter in the *Breviloquium*, in which Bonaventure treats “the contamination of original sin.”³³ He begins his discussion of the topic, not by posing a question, but by simply declaring a tenet of Christian faith: “The human race is corrupted by original sin.” He then goes on to specify the exact nature of this corruption. Using a phrase from Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, Bonaventure asserts that human beings come into the world as “children of wrath,” waging a life-long struggle against bodily afflictions, ignorance and concupiscence, bearing the ultimate penalty of physical death and eternal separation from God. After enunciating the Christian doctrine of original sin, he goes on to suggest *a ratio ad intelligentiam* (a rational demonstration of its truth):

³³Part 3, chapter 5.

Since the First Principle acts by its own power, according to its own law, and with itself as an end, it must therefore be utterly good and righteous, and hence most loving and most just. That is why all the ways of the Lord are *mercy and truth*, or judgment.³⁴ Now if God had created humankind in such wretchedness from the very beginning, he would have violated his own love and righteousness by oppressing his own handiwork with such miseries through no fault of its own. Nor would divine providence have governed us with kindness and justice had it afflicted us or permitted us to be afflicted with these miseries in the absence of sin. If it is certain, then, that the First Principle is most upright and merciful both in creating and in governing, it follows by necessity that God made humankind in the beginning free from guilt and misery. It also follows that in governing humankind, God cannot permit any distress to exist in us without some antecedent offense.³⁵

Bonaventure's reasoning here is totally deductive, appealing to no outside evidence whatsoever. He begins from an implicit premise: that one First Principle is the cause of all things. He has already demonstrated that premise in earlier chapters, as well as the fact that such a Principle cannot be conditioned from without; rather, all its actions must flow from its very being ("utterly good and righteous"). This premise then leads "by necessity" through a chain of corollaries to his conclusion: that humanity is afflicted with such miseries, not through an arbitrary decision of a vindictive God, but as a fitting consequence of

³⁴Ps 25:10 (Vg 24:10).

³⁵Part 3, chapter 5.

its own freely chosen actions. The doctrine of original sin is thus logically demonstrated by showing that it flows necessarily from the nature of the First Principle itself. This is precisely Bonaventure's stated aim throughout the *Breviloquium*:

Because theology is, indeed, discourse about God and about the First Principle, as the highest science and doctrine it should resolve everything in God as its first and supreme principle. That is why, in giving the reasons for everything contained in this little work or tract, I have attempted to derive each reason from the First Principle, in order to *demonstrate* that the truth of Sacred Scripture is from God, that it treats of God, is according to God, and has God as its end.³⁶

Bonaventure knew that in order to “demonstrate the truth of Scripture,” he had to provide what we saw Hugh of St. Victor call “necessary arguments.”³⁷ That is why his treatment of original sin emphasizes that the reasons for the doctrine flow “by necessity” from the nature of the First Principle. What precisely did Bonaventure understand by “necessary” arguments? Where did he turn for models of a theology constructed on such a basis? To answer the first question, let us look more closely at the notion of ‘demonstration.’

Ironically, it was Aristotle, the thinker Abelard considered the exemplar of the inductive method, who stressed in his *Posterior Analytics* that deductive reasoning provides the only firm basis for truly scientific knowledge.

³⁶*Brevil.*, prol., 6.6.

³⁷*Didascalicon*, 2.30, in the passage cited previously: “Demonstration consists of necessary arguments.”

This means that one comes to know things in more than a superficial or accidental way; it means understanding *why* things are the way they are. If one knows the causes on which a thing depends, then one can see that it *has* to be the way it is. As Aristotle explains, a demonstration begins from “premises which must be true, primary, immediate, and better known than, and prior to the conclusion, which is further related to them as effect to cause.”³⁸ In a demonstration, conclusions follow necessarily from the premises, although the premises themselves are indemonstrable. Boethius (d. 524), for centuries the main Latin conduit of Aristotle’s ideas, described the kind of premise on which a demonstration is based as a “common conception of the mind,” a self-evident truth that “people accept as soon as they hear it.”³⁹ A “necessary argument,” then, is simply one that draws out the inescapable corollaries of a self-evident premise.

Let us now turn to the second question – where did Bonaventure look for examples of a theology constructed by means of ‘demonstration’? For medieval theologians, the phrase “necessary arguments” immediately called to mind the individual often called “the father of Scholasticism,” Anselm of Canterbury (d. 1109). Anselm re-invigorated a deductive style of reasoning in Western theology. Unlike Abelard, he does not begin his inquiry from a neutral starting point by “bracketing” beliefs but by plunging more deeply into the realities experienced in faith to uncover their rationale. As he explained to Pope Urban II,

No Christian ought to argue how things that the Catholic Church believes with its heart and confesses with its mouth are not so. Rather, by always

³⁸*Posterior Analytics* 1.2 (Bekker ed. 71b 20-21), as cited in Burnett, 155.

³⁹*De hebdomadibus* (PL 64, 1311B), as cited in Burnett, 157.

adhering to the same faith without hesitation, by loving it, and living according to it, a Christian humbly ought to seek, so far as one can, the reason how they are so. . . . For it is a fact that the more powerfully Holy Scripture nourishes us with things that feed us by obedience, the more accurately we are carried along to things that satisfy us intellectually. . . . Certainly, this is what I am saying: those who have not (first) believed, will not understand. For those who have not believed will not experience, and those who have not experienced, will not know.⁴⁰

Anselm, then, out of his faith experience, sought to work out the inner logic of Christian beliefs in a way that would be convincing to those who doubt them. He explained that he wrote his *Monologion* and *Proslogion* “especially to show that necessary reasons apart from the authority of Scripture can establish things that we by faith hold about the divine nature and its persons.”⁴¹ He pressed this method of even further in his famous *Cur Deus homo*, in which he tried to show that even if we knew nothing of Christian revelation, it would still be necessary to postulate that God would have to become human in order to redeem sinful humanity.⁴²

Although Anselm did not leave any immediate disciples, in the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries theologians resumed his quest for *a priori* demonstrations of Christian beliefs, despite the contemporary fascination with the new *quaestio* technique. One of these was Rich-

⁴⁰*De Incarnatione Verbi*, 1 (PL 158, 253-254 [AC, 235-236 alt.]).

⁴¹*De Incarnatione Verbi*, 6 [AC, 246].

⁴²René Roques, “La méthode du ‘Cur Deus Homo’ de Saint Anselme de Cantorbéry,” *Structures théologiques: De la Gnose à Richard de Saint-Victor* (Paris: Ecole des Hautes Etudes, 1962), 243-293.

ard of St. Victor (d. 1173), who, like Anselm, would influence Bonaventure deeply. As he affirmed in his treatise *On the Trinity*: "I believe, without a shadow of a doubt, that arguments which are not only probable (i.e., those attained through the dialectical method), but actually necessary, are not lacking to explain anything whatsoever which has to be explained, even though these may elude our diligent inquiry."⁴³

These theologians had resources to assist them in this search that were unavailable to Anselm, namely a vast array of philosophical and scientific texts finally available in Latin translation. Most notable of these were that part of Aristotelian corpus that contemporaries called the "new logic," including the *Posterior Analytics*, a work which, as we have already mentioned, argued for the superiority of deductive reasoning as the base for truly scientific knowledge. But perhaps just as significant in this regard were a number of texts that actually embodied such a method: Euclid's *Elements* of geometry and a wide variety of works by syncretistic neo-Platonic authors, whose religious orientation made them especially appealing to medieval Christian theologians.⁴⁴ Chief among these were the writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius, whose notion of hierarchy would exert a profound influence on Bonaventure's thought. But there was another important source of medieval neo-Platonism: works by Muslim authors.

One particular Islamic text would have a major impact on both the concepts and the literary form of Bonaventure's *Breviloquium*. This was a small treatise, generally known as the *Liber de causis* (*The Book of*

⁴³*De Trinitate*, 1.4 (PL 196, 892).

⁴⁴See the classic essay by M. D. Chenu, "The Platonisms of the Twelfth Century," in *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century*, trans. Jerome Taylor and Lester Little (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 49-98.

Causes), a Latin translation of an anonymous Arabic work, probably dating from the ninth century.⁴⁵ This came into circulation in the Latin West sometime between 1170 and 1185 under the title of *Liber Aristotelis de expositione bonitatis purae* (*The Book of Aristotle Concerning the Pure Good*), which immediately won it a wide audience. Despite this attribution, however, the *Liber* is actually a concise and creative re-working of the *Elements of Theology* of the Neo-Platonic philosopher Proclus (d. 485). Working out of his belief in one Almighty God, the Muslim author has transformed Proclus' doctrine of impersonal cosmic emanation into a true doctrine of divine creation and providence. Within the brief space of thirty-one chapters, called propositions, the author unfolds the structure of the entire universe. Like other neo-Platonists, he works out of a profound sense that reality is a cosmos: an ordered, hierarchical totality structured according to basic metaphysical principles, of which the most important is the principle of causality. The first proposition lays the foundation for the whole treatise: that there is a first and highest cause which is prior to, immanent in, and subsequent to all other causes and their effects. As the work progresses through a series of necessary arguments, the author makes clear that this First Principle, which is Goodness and Richness itself, extends its causal influence to all things, giving them being, overflowing its perfections on them, and governing them with an overarching providence. This work filled a real gap in the Aristotelian corpus, advancing the concept of the First Cause beyond that of a static "unmoved mover" to a dynamic creating principle. Despite the ecclesiastical ban on Aristotle's *libri naturales* (books of natu-

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 89-91. This work has been translated by Dennis Brand, *The Book of Causes*, 2nd ed. (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1984), who provides a helpful introduction, 4-18.

ral philosophy), it was soon being studied avidly by theologians.⁴⁶

The striking aphoristic literary style of the *Liber*, as well as its message, made an impact as well. As one modern scholar describes it,

The style of the *Liber* is characterized by a brevity which leaves no room for digression, rhetorical ornament, or appeal to authority. The method of the book is in accord with its systematic purpose. The propositions [chapters] seek to exhibit succinctly the structure of reality. Each proposition is accompanied by a brief comment which proves or at least explains the statement. . . . We have here a concatenation of interrelated statements, which resembles Euclid's work as a structured presentation of doctrine descending from higher to lower causes.⁴⁷

These words could aptly describe the *Breviloquium* itself; it is obvious that Bonaventure had the *Liber de causis* in mind when he developed his own treatise.⁴⁸ He was not alone in this attraction. Alan of Lille (d. 1202), the first great Paris theologian to use the work, had been in-

⁴⁶Among the more significant of these was Alexander of Hales; Roger Bacon was lecturing on the *Liber* around 1245, when it was still officially banned from the classroom. The work became a required text in the Arts curriculum at the University of Paris in 1255. See Brant, 1-8.

⁴⁷Charles H. Lohr, "The Pseudo-Aristotelian *Liber de Causis* and Latin Theories of Science in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," *Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jill Kraye, W. F. Ryan, and C. B. Schmitt (London: The Warburg Institute, 1986), 56.

⁴⁸As Etienne Gilson observed years ago, "Every time a philosophical or theological opusculum consists of concise aphoristic statements, often alliterative, and attended or not by a short commentary, the influence of the *Book of Causes* can at least be suspected." *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York: Random House, 1955), 236.

spired by the *Liber* to compose his *Regulae de sacra theologia*, which similarly is made up of a number of propositions with accompanying explanations and proofs.⁴⁹

What Bonaventure, like Alan before him, found seductive about the *Liber de causis* was its deductive method, which could provide precisely a “demonstration” of the premises of Christian faith rather than the “probable” arguments that resulted from using the *quaestio* technique. The dialectical method of the latter employed the arts of rational philosophy (grammar, logic, and rhetoric), which examine concepts and their organization into statements and judgments, thus determining “the truth of speech,” or logical truth. The demonstrative method, on the other hand, was proper to natural philosophy, whose different branches (physics, mathematics, and metaphysics) examine “the truth of things,” or ontological truth.⁵⁰ As Bonaventure explains, the several branches of natural philosophy all enlighten the mind “to know the causes of being.” Specifically, he sees metaphysics as that science “concerned with the knowledge of all beings according to their ideal causes, tracing them back to the one first Prin-

⁴⁹On this work, see G. R. Evans, *Alan of Lille* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 64-80. A similar work is the *De arte fidei catholica* of Nicholas of Amiens. Nicholas’ work differs somewhat from Alan’s *Regulae* in that it is directly modeled on Euclid’s *Elements* and thus attempts a demonstration of the truths of theology *more geometrico*, with purely deductive reasoning from *axioms*. Alan’s *Regulae* is modeled instead on the *Liber de causis*; although both of these works order their materials systematically, providing a demonstration or at least explanation for each proposition, they do not presuppose any axioms (Lohr, 61-62). *The Breviloquium* follows the pattern of the latter.

⁵⁰See the selection from Hugh of St. Victor’s *Didascalicon* cited previously, whose approach Bonaventure develops in his treatise *De reductione artium ad theologiam* [*On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology*], trans. Zachary Hayes, *The Works of Saint Bonaventure*, Volume 1 (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1996). On this distinction, see Hayes’s commentary, 19.

ciple from which they proceed, that is, to God, in as far as God is the Beginning, the End, and the Exemplar."⁵¹

The summit of that metaphysics available to natural reason, explicated in the *Liber de causis*, is when the mind achieves knowledge of a first and highest Principle (*principium primum et summum*), a self-diffusive goodness which is the source of all that exists. But for Bonaventure, such knowledge is the starting point for another, more profound kind of metaphysics, a specifically theological metaphysics.⁵² The First Principle that is dimly perceived by natural philosophy the Christian has come to experience dramatically in the person of Jesus Christ.⁵³ Christian faith reveals a deeper, theological metaphysics centered on the Word of God, which reveals the true character of the first and highest Principle through the foundational mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation.⁵⁴ Through faith, we come to recognize that the First Principle has created all things through the Word precisely to

⁵¹*De red. art.*, 4 (Hayes, 41-43).

⁵²Cf. *Brevil.*, pt. 1, chap. 2: "Theology is also the only perfect wisdom, for it begins with the supreme cause as the principle of all things that are caused – the very point at which philosophical knowledge ends." The distinction between a philosophical and a theological metaphysics in Bonaventure's thought was first developed in the seminal article of Zachary Hayes, "Christology and Metaphysics in the Thought of Bonaventure," in *Celebrating the Medieval Heritage: A Colloquy on the Thought of Aquinas and Bonaventure*, ed. David Tracy, *The Journal of Religion, Supplement* 58 (1978): S82-S96, along with the response by Ewert Cousins (S97-S104).

⁵³As Bonaventure states, in Scripture the ultimate principle of all knowledge [the self-diffusive Good] is "clearly revealed," while in the books of other sciences it "lies hidden" and is seen only partially. *De red. art.*, 26 (Hayes, 61).

⁵⁴Bonaventure emphasizes that the "truth to which we are bound to assent by faith . . . is divine truth as it exists in its own proper nature or in its assumed human nature. . . . Thus the articles of faith that are the foundations of belief are concerned either with the Godhead or with the humanity [of Christ]." *Brevil.*, pt. 5, chap. 7.6.

communicate itself personally to its creatures in order to draw them into the mystery of its own overflowing Love:

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 (*medium*), 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 (*principium*). And thus you will be a true metaphysician.⁵⁵

Bonaventure provided two ways through which to approach this theological metaphysics: one more inductive, from a knowledge of creatures; the other deductive, from the experience of faith itself. Gerson, that perceptive reader of Bonaventure, recognized that the difference between the *Itinerarium* and the *Breviloquium* lies in the fact that these two works present different but complementary ways of coming to know God.⁵⁶ The *Itinerarium* “proceeds from creatures to God by means of six successive stages until attaining anagogical ecstasies.”⁵⁷ In contrast, the

⁵⁵*Hexaem.* 1. 17 (V: 332).

⁵⁶J. Gerson, *De libris legendis a monacho*, 5-6, *Opera J. Gerson* (Strasbourg, 1515), Fol. XIX, G: “. . . *Breviloquium* et *Itinerarium* in quibus processum est duabus viis cognosendi Deum. Primus namque horum duorum tractatum procedit a primo principio, quod Deus est, usque ad alias veritates sub Deo creditas et habitas. Alius econtra progreditur a creaturis ad Creatorem per sex gradus scalares usque ad anagogicos excessus.”

⁵⁷“It is in harmony with our created condition that the universe itself might serve as a ladder by which we can ascend into God. . . . [Finally], after our consideration of the attributes of God [as First Being], the

Breviloquium “proceeds from the First Principle, which is God, to arrive at [an understanding of] the other truths believed and possessed in light of God.” Its starting point is the experience of Christian faith itself, which is based on the self-revelation of the Trinity within human beings and their acceptance of that revelation.⁵⁸

Both works employ Bonaventure's characteristic method of *reductio* (the “reduction” or “retracing” of things to their origin).⁵⁹ As Bougerol explains it,

The reduction is not merely a technique – it is the soul of the return to God; and since all knowledge depends on principles, and principles are born within us under the regulating and motivating action of divine ideas, the certitudes which seem most capable of being self-sufficient are necessarily linked, by means of the first principles, with the eternal reasons and their divine foundation. To reduce, then, the truth of any judgment amounts to bringing back this judgment, from condition to condition, to the eternal reasons upon which it is established.⁶⁰

The technique of *reductio*, however, operates differently in the *Itinerarium* and the *Breviloquium*. In the

eye of intelligence must be raised to the contuition of the most Blessed Trinity.” *Itin.* 1.2, 6.1.

⁵⁸*Brevil.*, prol., 2. The distinction between these two ways of arriving at a knowledge of God is concisely described by Francisco Chavero Blanco, *Imago Dei: Aproximacion a la Antropologia Teologica de San Buenaventura* (Murcia: Publicaciones del Instituto Teologico Franciscano, 1993), 196-201.

⁵⁹On the notion of *reductio*, basic to Bonaventure's theology, see Bougerol, *Introduction*, 75-77. For more detail see Guy Allard, “La technique de la *Reductio* chez Bonaventure” in *S. Bonaventura 1274-1974*, vol. 2, ed. Jacques G. Bougerol (Rome: Collegio S. Bonaventura Grottaferrata, 1974), 395-416.

⁶⁰Bougerol, *Introduction*, 76.

Itinerarium, “as the mind speculates the various ‘*gradus*’ of the created order, it increasingly perceives the relationship of all reality to God. In this way the *reductio* leads from the inferior through the intermediate to the superior”⁶¹ As one comes to know the layers of reality in ever-deeper ways, one arrives at a philosophical, and finally a theological, metaphysics. The *Breviloquium*, in contrast, is grounded in theological metaphysics. It begins with the mystery of the Trinity, and from there proceeds to “reduce” or “retrace” the various beliefs proposed in the Catholic tradition to the foundational mystery of the self-diffusive First Principle in order to demonstrate how they all logically flow from it. “Although theology is broad and varied in content,” Bonaventure intends to show that “it is nevertheless a single science.”⁶² For since theology is “discourse about God and about the First Principle, as the highest science and doctrine it should resolve everything in God as its first and supreme principle.”⁶³

As Gerken aptly states, Bonaventure’s method of *reductio* “proves nothing, but shows something. It shows, namely, what is [already] present in cognition.”⁶⁴ Following the path blazed by Anselm’s *Proslogion*, written “from the point of view of one seeking to understand what he believes,”⁶⁵ in the *Breviloquium* Bonaventure intends to provide his readers with a means of meditating on their

⁶¹Jay M. Hammond, “Order in the *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*,” Appendix to J. A. Wayne Hellmann, *Divine and Created Order in Bonaventure’s Theology* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2001), 212.

⁶²*Brevil.* 1.1.

⁶³*Brevil.*, prol. 6.6.

⁶⁴Gerken, 64.

⁶⁵*Proslogion*, proem. (AC, 83). It is no accident that Bonaventure closes the *Breviloquium* with a long quotation from the *Proslogion*. On Anselm’s influence on Bonaventure, see J. G. Bougerol, “Saint Bonaventure et Saint Anselme,” *Antonianum* 41 (1972): 333-361.