William J. Short, OFM

Alexander of Hales in the *Book of Conformities* of Bartholomew of Pisa

Abstract: Knowledge of Alexander of Hales was spread by the late 14th-century work of Friar Bartholomew of Pisa, *The Book of Conformities*. This includes chapters on Franciscan theology and major Franciscan scholars, among whom Alexander figures prominently. His *Summa Theologica*, especially its third book, provides authoritative support for the author's views on the life of Christ. Hagiographical interest in Alexander as a figure of exemplary Christian life also appears in the work, as does the Parisian title honoring him as the 'fount of life'. Attention is given to his decision to relinquish the status as a secular master at Paris to join the newly founded Order of Friars Minor, an event considered miraculous by Bartholomew. His collaboration in a commentary on the Franciscan Rule receives admiring attention. The *Book of Conformities* declined in popularity after its critique by Luther in the mid-16th century, diminishing its importance as a vehicle for disseminating knowledge of Alexander and his writings.

In the years between 1385 and 1390, Bartholomew of Pisa, a Friar Minor, wrote a very long book about the similarities between the life of Christ and the life of St Francis of Assisi. The title he gave to the work was *The Book of the Conformity of the Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Life of our Holy Father Saint Francis*. When the book was finished he submitted it to the Franciscan Minister General, friar Enrico Alfieri, and in 1399 the General Chapter of the Order, meeting in Assisi, gave official approval for its distribution.

The book explores forty similarities between events in the life of Jesus and in the life of Francis, organized according to the form of a tree, an image of which was included with the original text and specifically mentioned in the decree of approval. This tree has twenty branches and each branch bears two fruits, one describing an aspect of the life of Christ and the other a similar aspect of the life of Francis. These forty similarities or fruits are called 'conformities', giving rise to the common name for this work: the *Book of Conformities*.

The *Conformities* is divided into three books, corresponding to major divisions in the life of Christ: the Incarnation, Nativity and early years in book one; the years of public ministry, his Passion and death in book two; and the Resurrection and Ascension in book three. In the first part of each fruit or 'conformity', that in which some aspect of the life of Christ is explored, ample space is dedicated to questions of biblical texts and their interpretation, as well as questions of a philosophical or theological nature. On a range of such questions Bartholomew, a master of theology himself, offers the views of many *auctoritates* on the matters under discussion. Among these

authoritative interpreters of scriptural, philosophical, and theological matters he includes with a certain regularity the writings of master Alexander of Hales, whose *Summa Theologica* clearly had been carefully studied and was easily recalled by the author. (Bartholomew considers Alexander as the author of the *Summa*, while acknowledging the work of others in completing it after his death.)

The popularity of the *Conformities*, especially in the libraries of the Friars Minor, is attested by the large number of its extant manuscripts, making it an important vehicle by which aspects of Alexander's thought reached a readership that was probably wider than that of his *Summa*. Three print editions of the *Conformities* in the 16th century (Milan, 1510, 1513; Bologna, 1590) guaranteed its broad diffusion throughout the following centuries. We even find it listed among the few books included in the supplies destined for the first Franciscan missions in Cumaná (in today's Venezuela) and Mexico in the early 16th century.

In the 1540s the work was harshly criticized in the polemics of the Reformation over Catholic veneration of the saints. The German author Erasmus Alber parodied the work in his *Der Barfüßser Mönche Eulenspiegel und Alcoran* (with a preface by Martin Luther).¹ Alber's critique concerned the hagiographical sections of the *Conformities*, those concerning St Francis, rather than the theological sections citing Alexander's works on the person and life of Christ.

Despite its popularity in earlier years, the *Book of Conformities* gradually fell from favor in the 17th century as the Bollandists and their *Acta Sanctorum* pioneered a more critical approach to saints and their legends. But the work of Friar Bartholomew remains important nonetheless for its very accurate transmission of the writings of St Francis and many early Franciscan hagiographical texts, as well as references to the works of Alexander and other early Franciscan authors. These are some of the reasons which prompted its publication by the friar Editors of Quaracchi in a modern scholarly edition in the early 20th century.²

Alexander Among the Franciscan Authors in the *Conformities*

In several places friar Bartholomew considers questions of learning and displays his respect for his scholarly friar-predecessors, even providing lengthy lists of important

1 Erasmus Alber, *Der Barfüßser Mönche Eulenspiegel und Alcoran mit einer Vorrede D. Martini Luth[eri]* (Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, 1542).

2 *Analecta Franciscana* (AF) vols IV, V (Quaracchi: Collegio S. Bonaventura, 1906, 1912). The first translation of the *Conformities* to be published is the English version by Christopher Stace, to whom I am indebted for the English citations used here: Bartholomew of Pisa, *The Book of the Conformity of the Life of Blessed Francis to the Life of the Lord Jesus, Our Redeemer*, trans. Christopher Stace, 3 vols, *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, vol. IV, pt. 1–3 (Hyde Park NY: New City Press, 2020). AF IV-V pagination is indicated in the text.

Franciscan authors and their works. He also addresses theological questions himself as part of his overall project of comparing the life of Francis to that of Christ, and he uses the writings of those Franciscan authors (among many others) to shed light on the problems he poses. While not his most frequently cited *auctoritas* (that honor goes to Bonaventure) master Alexander receives very honorable treatment in Bartholomew's work.

The *Book of Conformities* in its account of the life of Francis (the second part of each conformity) closely follows Bonaventure's account in his *Legenda maior*. So it is not surprising that Bonaventure should be cited also on theological issues of the work (the first part of each conformity).³ Other theological *auctoritates* are invoked regularly by our author: Augustine, above all, along with Ambrose, Jerome, Gregory the Great, and many others. The earlier medieval tradition is represented by Anselm, and especially the Victorines, Hugh of St Victor most frequently. As for 13th- and 14th-century authors, among the Dominicans Thomas of Aquinas receives frequent mention,⁴ as does his teacher Albert the Great.

Among the Franciscans, Bonaventure's mentor Alexander holds a place of special honor, but he is also surrounded by his contemporaries Anthony of Padua, John of Wales, John of La Rochelle, William of Melitona, Odo Rigaldus and Robert of La Bassée. Among the authors of the generations following Bonaventure, whether teaching at Paris or elsewhere, Bartholomew refers to Peter Auriol, John Duns Scotus, Alexander of Alexandria, Gerard Odonis, Peter John Olivi, Bertrand of La Tour, and Elias of Nabinaux. In Conformity VIII, the Pisan author assigns some of these important scholars to 'the order of doctors' in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, with the great English master in first place:

There are and have been holy brothers of the order of doctors: for example master Alexander of Hales, master John of Wales, St Anthony, and his companion Luke, and many others.⁵

If we turn our attention specifically to the role assigned to Alexander of Hales in the pages of the *Conformities* we see him mentioned in two different contexts. The first is his appearance in the various lists of important Franciscan authors, with information concerning his life and works scattered through several of the individual conformities. The second context is that of specific theological topics examined in the first part of each Conformity, that concerned with the person and life of Christ.

³ The edition used here is *Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae Opera Omnia*, 11 vols (Quaracchi: Collegio S. Bonaventura, 1882–1902).

⁴ Edition used here is *Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera Omnia*, 39– vols (Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1882–).

⁵ AF IV, p. 363.

Bio-bibliographic Information about Alexander

A succinct early reference to Alexander is given in the course of Bartholomew's description of the friars of the English Province in Conformity XI:

In this Province of England there are and have always been brothers especially ordained to recite the Divine Office, celebrate Masses and perform the other duties of our Order, and for this reason God has increased their numbers, their temporal goods and their learning. For the province has always had a profusion of masters and excellent brothers. Master John Scotus was of this province, the 'Subtle Doctor', whose intellectual reputation will never die, and who composed many works. So too was master Alexander of Hales, although he lived a long time in Paris.⁶

Other bio-bibliographic references are to be found in Conformity VIII in Bartholomew's listing of important friars buried at Paris:

In the same place lies master Alexander of Hales, who is called 'the fount of life', and who wrote a very important treatise on theology⁷ which was approved by the Lord Pope Alexander IV⁸ and sixty masters of theology in Paris.⁹ He is also said to have composed many commentaries on Holy Scripture and ordinary glosses. His entry into the Order of Lesser Brothers was miraculous, his remaining in it was miraculous, and he died a glorious death.¹⁰

Bartholomew already knows of a 'nickname' for Alexander as *fons vitae*, 'the fount of life'. The earliest evidence we have for this title comes to us from an Oxford manuscript, Canonici Misc. 525. As Roberto Paciocco explains it, this 'saints' catalog' of the Franciscan Order was composed in the same years that Bartholomew was writing the *Book of Conformities*.¹¹ The manuscript's origin can be traced to today's Albania, and

⁶ AF IV, p. 547; see also AF IV, p. 339, and A.G. Little, *The Grey Friars in Oxford* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892).

⁷ His *Summa Theologica* (hereafter *Summa*) or Alexander of Hales, *Doctoris irrefragabilis Alexandri de Hales Ordinis minorum Summa theologica* (SH), 4 vols (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1924–48).

⁸ Bull, *De fontibus Paradisi* (28 July 1256): *Bullarium Franciscanum*, ed. Giacinto Sbaraglia (Rome: Propaganda Fide, 1761), vol. II, p. 151; *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, eds. H. Denifle and E. Chatelain, 4 vols (Paris: Delalain Frères, 1889), vol. I, p. 328.

⁹ Conformity XI (AF IV, p. 543).

¹⁰ AF IV, p. 309.

¹¹ Roberto Paciocco, 'Il codice Canon. misc. 525 e il Catalogus del 1385–93,' in his *Da Francesco ai catalogi sanctorum: livelli istituzionali e immagini agiografiche nell'Ordine Franciscano (secoli XIII–XIV)*, *Collectio Assisiensis* 20 (Assisi: Edizioni Porziuncola, 1990), p. 148: 'Item frater Alexander de Alles, qui sic subtiliter in theologia locutus est et habunde, magister in eadem (universitate) Parisiensi quod fons vite vocatus, ab Alexandro 4o speciali bulla in toto opere suo super sententias in ecclesia approbatus est; et Minorum ordinem ingressus, ag(gra)vatus perseveravit orans, vidit Christum ut puerum magnam crucem ligneam baiulanten, a quo cum vellet ipsum iuvare audivit quod sibi dici: "vade, vade, quia laneam quam super te habes ag(gra)varis portare" et statim disprens confirmatus in Ordine hoc devote referens sancte finivit.'

its contents include the *Speculum perfectionis* (the so-called Sabatier text), and a kind of Franciscan miscellany, *Liber notabilium gestorum beati Francisci et sociorum sive discipulorum in ipsius legenda omissorum*. The text of particular interest here, on ff. 184r-92v, concerns the burial places of notable friars, and entitled *De sacris beatorum fratrum tumulis*. It was written between 1385–93 in the Province of Dalmatia (the former Sclavonia) possibly in the friary of Durazzo (Durrës). That this is the first document to mention the title of honor assigned to Alexander does not mean, of course, that the title itself only came into use around the time of Bartholomew's composition, but the *Conformities* became a means by which such an epithet for the English master would become more widely known.

The Story of Alexander's Conversion

Bartholomew's mention of master Alexander's decision to join the Friars Minor and remain with them as 'miraculous' refers to the accounts of his change of vocation, an event that provoked great enthusiasm in the Franciscan house of studies in Paris. Alexander's 'conversion' refers to his decision to change his ecclesiastical status from that of a 'secular master', a canon of St Paul's in London and later archdeacon of Coventry, to that of a member of a religious community, the Friars Minor. This remarkable change of direction in the master's career receives attention in Conformity XI, as Alexander is pictured making his choice in the context of competition for new members between the new mendicant Orders at Paris:

This master entered our Order in miraculous fashion, for, although he loved our brothers, he had determined to enter the Order of Preachers because it was not so rigorous as ours.¹²

Conformity IX, dedicated chiefly to an explanation of the friars' Rule, considers how 'the Lord Jesus brought many to the observance of this Rule when they entered the Order.' There follow several notable examples including Ralph of Rodington, Bishop of Hereford, and John of Brienne, King of Jerusalem, and Alexander himself:

Master Alexander of Hales also entered the Order as the result of a divine revelation. He had asked the Lord to tell him what Order he should enter and received the response that he should enter the Order of those who were first to come to him in the morning seeking alms, and when the Lesser Brothers arrived first, he at once became a Lesser Brother.¹³

¹² AF IV, p. 543.

¹³ AF IV, p. 429. See a more extended account in Arnald of Sarrant, *Chronica XXIV Generalium Ordinis Minorum*, in AF I, pp. 218–19. There, Alexander had bound himself to accede to any request made 'for the love of the Blessed Mary.' Knowing this, a woman told Cistercian monks to use this formula to persuade him to join their Order. Conversing with him, however, they forgot to use it, as subsequently did some Dominicans, but a Franciscan who came there to beg used the words by

Bartholomew mentioned that Alexander's remaining in the Order was also miraculous, and in Conformity XI the fuller account of that miracle is given. In his later years, we are told, Alexander regretted his decision to join the friars, 'since he was old and had lived a life of luxury.' He had already made the decision to leave the Franciscans because of the 'rigidity of the Order' which he found intolerable. But, having recourse to prayer, he asked for divine guidance in his decision. In a dream, like a Parisian Jacob, he saw many friars climbing a ladder from earth to heaven. But as he tried to ascend the ladder, despite his best efforts, he was unable to climb beyond its mid-point. He then understood that the ladder represented the Order he was about to leave, and only by persevering in it would he reach his goal.

Realizing therefore that if he persevered in the Order he would finally go to heaven, he thereafter remained in the Order. With his life, eloquence and learning, his writings on theology and his commentaries on Holy Scripture, he enlightened not only France but the whole of Holy Church, and as a result of this he was deservedly called 'the fount of life'.¹⁴

Alexander as Friar: Commentary on the Rule of the Friars Minor

Within the Order he joined, Alexander is especially remembered for his work on an early commentary on the Rule of the Friars Minor, the so-called *Commentary of the Four Masters*, described by Bartholomew in this way:

Brother Robert of La Bassée was a great teacher of Holy Writ; he wrote on the *Sentences*, and together with Alexander of Hales, Rigaldus, and John of La Rochelle sent a declaration of the Rule to Brother Haymo the General Minister.¹⁵

The Commentary in question¹⁶ was commissioned to respond to a series of questions regarding the interpretation of the Rule of the Friars Minor as approved by Honorius III in 1223 (the so-called *Regula bullata*). The text (composed in 1241–42) has the 'four masters' as its corporate author, and does not distinguish as we might wish between the contributions of individual authors. Working with Alexander, who had joined the Order only five years earlier, the commission included his confrère John of La Rochelle, also a master of theology (by 1238), a co-worker of

chance, and so persuaded him to become a Lesser Brother. (A similar story is told earlier of Brother Adam of Oxford, in Thomas of Eccleston's *Chronicle*, in *AF* I, p. 224.)

¹⁴ *AF* IV, p. 543.

¹⁵ *AF* IV, p. 337.

¹⁶ *Expositio quatuor magistrorum super Regulam Fratrum Minorum (1241–1242)*, ed. L. Oliger (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1950); now see also 'The 1242 Commentary' (or 'Commentary of the Four Masters'), in *Early Commentaries on the Rule of the Friars Minor (13th–14th Centuries)*, ed. David Flood, vol. 1 (St Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2014), pp. 1–30.

Alexander who succeeded him as Regent Master in 1241. A younger scholar was named to the group, Odo Rigaldus, a Bachelor still lecturing on book II of the *Sentences* at the time of his appointment: he was later to become Regent after John's death in 1245. The fourth member of the group, Robert of La Bassée, was also a Bachelor at the time he was asked to participate in the commission's activities. He would later become an important author of scriptural commentaries, and is mentioned by Bartholomew of Pisa as a scholar in his own right elsewhere in the text. In Conformity IX, in its detailed explanation of the Rule and its commentaries, the superior (*custos*) of the Custody of Paris, Godfrey of Brie is also mentioned as a co-worker of Alexander on the commission, in addition to the 'four masters'.¹⁷

Alexander's Theological Works in the *Conformities*

In Conformity VIII, after a lengthy treatment of friars notable for their holy lives, Bartholomew turns to a listing of friars who are remembered for their learning. The very first to be mentioned in what would become a long list is our English master:

Brother Alexander of Hales, who was of English nationality, lectured for a long time at Paris, and composed a very important *Summa* of theology which he divided into four parts.¹⁸ And since he was the first to do this, what is amazing about this *Summa* is not only the depth and immensity of its learning, but its discovery of so many doubtful issues and titles of questions, and it was for this reason that in Paris he was called 'the fount of life'. This master also commented on and expounded more or less the whole of Holy Scripture. His theological works were approved in a bull of the Lord Alexander IV and sixty masters at Paris.¹⁹

The reference here to the *Summa Halensis* and its organization ('titles of questions') points to what Bartholomew considered the innovative structure of this work of Alexander and his collaborators. The use of Peter Lombard's *Sentences* as the basic text for comment in a master's lectures on theological topics is not mentioned, and by the late 14th century was simply identified with the study of theology itself, as illustrated by Bartholomew's remarks regarding 'the study of theology, i. e. the book of *Sentences*' (below), as if the two were identical.

Alexander's early reputation as a biblical scholar also earns a mention, though a generic one, among influential Franciscan commentators. The esteem in which his commentaries were held leads Bartholomew to rank him alongside the eminent scholars of the previous 150 years of Franciscan exegesis:

¹⁷ AF IV, p. 379.

¹⁸ SH, and *Doctoris irrefragabilis Alexandri de Hales Ordinis minorum Summa theologica: Indices in tom. I-IV* (Grottaferrata: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1979).

¹⁹ See also AF IV, p. 336.

There were also other brothers, who, together with those masters named above, wrote a variety of different works. In order to recount them succinctly, leaving aside the study of theology, i.e. the book of *Sentences*, if we speak of Holy Scripture and of the brothers who commented on the whole of it, they are as follows: master Alexander of Hales, master Nicholas of Lyra; and those who were not masters: Brother Pontius Carbonelli and Brother Peter of John.²⁰

It is high praise for Alexander to be mentioned with Nicholas of Lyra, author of the influential early 14th-century *Postils* on the Bible. But mention of the works of a Catalan contemporary of Nicholas, Ponç Carbonell may be unexpected. Though enjoying an excellent reputation in the 1300s, his works are relatively unknown today though he, like his confrère Nicholas, commented on the whole of the Bible with a series of *catenae* of important authorities.²¹

The Reputation of Alexander among Scholars

Alexander's reputation as a Scripture commentator depended in part on an Apocalypse commentary formerly attributed to him. When Jean of La Haye published that commentary, the engraver who created the frontispiece of the work pictured Alexander, clothed in the habit of the Friars Minor, as he lectured to a small group of students seated on a single bench before his elevated lectern. Among them are two figures identified as the Seraphic Doctor (Bonaventure) and the Angelic Doctor (Thomas).²² Though not historically accurate in its portrayal of the two great medieval thinkers seated side by side at the feet of Alexander, the image does capture an enduring perception of the master's influence on subsequent scholarship at Paris. His oft-quoted opinion of Bonaventure, his former pupil, is mentioned in Conformity VIII, as the Seraphic Doctor's burial at Lyons is described:

When a youth, he was saved from the jaws of death by a miracle of blessed Francis; he entered the Order, and was so conspicuous for his good character and integrity that master Alexander of Hales said of him once that in him Adam seemed not to have sinned.²³

This relationship of master and disciple is reflected in the Christological sections at the beginning of each Conformity. There Bartholomew will most often cite Alexander on a topic and immediately afterward the views of Bonaventure, Thomas and others, according him a certain priority. Conformity XI, in describing the resting-place of friar

²⁰ AF IV, p. 340.

²¹ See Alexander Fidora, 'Ponç Carbonell and the Early Franciscan Reception of the *Pugio fidei*,' *Medieval Encounters* 19 (2013), pp. 567–85, on pp. 570–71.

²² *Alexandri de Hales ... Eruditissimi Commentarii nusquam impressi*, in *Apocalypsim Sancti Joannis*, ed. Jean of La Haye (Paris: Bertier, 1647); engraving bears the caption: *Angelicum docuit doctorem, Seraphicumque, Ergo spiritibus doctior angelicis*.

²³ AF IV, p. 305.

saints and scholars, also testifies to a special regard for Alexander among the Parisian masters after his death in 1245:

The Custody of Paris has the place of *Paris*, which was built by Brother Agnellus of Pisa, who was the first Custodian of Paris, and then became the Minister of England. In this place lies master Alexander of Hales, who, although English by birth, lectured in Paris for many years. This master is regarded with more veneration than any other in the University of Paris, and his work, which was approved by seventy-two masters who appended their own signatures and seals, and finally by a bull of the Lord Pope Alexander IV, is all kept in the sacristy of the convent at Paris.²⁴

Bartholomew's most important affirmation here, that of the high regard in which Alexander was held at Paris, seems well-founded. And papal esteem for his work is amply demonstrated in the fulsome praise of Alexander IV when he wrote to the Minister Provincial of France a decade after Alexander's death in the Bull *De fontibus Paradisi* (28 July 1256), urging that the *Summa* be completed by another friar, William of Melitona.²⁵

More controversial is Bartholomew's mention here of the *Summa*'s approval by six dozen Parisian masters, a remarkable assertion increasing the number (sixty) reported earlier in Conformity VIII.²⁶ Whether the smaller or the larger number, such reports were dismissed as fables by Heinrich Denifle and Emile Chatelain in their *Chartularium* of the University of Paris.²⁷ But the Quaracchi editors of the *Summa Fratris Alexandri*, in their apparatus for the critical edition, pointedly noted that, according to the same *Chartularium*, forty Parisian masters and experts approved the *Ars brevis* of Raymond Llull in 1310.²⁸

Alexander on Theological Questions: The Person of Christ

In Conformity XVIII, our Pisan master of theology considers questions related to the person of Christ, and specifically the kinds of knowledge Christ had. There he explores the affirmation that besides the knowledge that Christ's soul possessed in the Word, he also possessed created knowledge. On this point Alexander's opinion, from distinction 14 of book III,²⁹ is simply listed along with similar ones from Bona-

²⁴ AF IV, p. 543.

²⁵ BFr vol. II, p. 151; *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis* I, p. 328.

²⁶ AF IV, p. 309.

²⁷ *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis* I, p. 329, note.

²⁸ *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis* II, p. 140.

²⁹ SH IV, P1, In1, Tr3, Q2, C1 (n. 116), pp. 163–64.

venture³⁰ and Thomas.³¹ But Alexander's specific view on these two kinds of knowledge, uncreated and created, is highlighted:

Alexander says, loc. cit., q. 13, that 'the knowledge of Christ's soul (the first as well as the second type already mentioned, that is, uncreated knowledge and his created, beatific knowledge), is not sequential, but comes in a single vision, because it occurs in contemplation of the Cause, which is God, in which it sees everything at one and the same time, in accordance with what the Apostle says at 1 Corinthians 13:12: "Then I shall know even as I am known."'³²

Three additional kinds of knowledge in Christ are then explored briefly, and for each one Alexander's position is cited first,³³ followed immediately by that of Bonaventure,³⁴ demonstrating how close the disciple remains to the thought of his master on these matters.

The third kind of knowledge is that 'through the most perfect grace of union,' by which Christ knows all that regards the salvation of humanity more perfectly than prophets or angels. By a 'fourth knowledge' the intelligible species of all things are imprinted by the Word upon the soul of Christ, though in Alexander's view such knowledge did not allow it 'to survey everything simultaneously.'³⁵ Finally, Alexander and 'other doctors' posit a *fifth* kind of knowledge:

Alexander, loc. cit. q. 13,³⁶ names it after the suffering nature assumed by Christ, and Bonaventure, book III, distinction 14, question 8,³⁷ and *Breviloquium* part II, chapter 6 who refers to it as 'sense experience';³⁸ and because the senses do not perceive anything except in the presence of an object, it follows, as he says, that with the experience of the senses, which in book III he also calls 'experiential', he did not perceive all things simultaneously, but now some and now others.³⁹

Besides the importance of the *Summa Halensis* in this detailed examination of questions on Christ's knowledge, it also contributes substantially to Bartholomew's consideration of other types of questions. Among those for which Alexander's work provides an important point of reference are inquiries about the ways in which Christ's Transfiguration reveals the future state of the beatified body in heavenly glory.

³⁰ Bonaventure, *Breviloquium* pt. IV, c. 6, in Bonaventure, *Opera omnia*, 10 vols (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1882–1902), vol. V, pp. 246 ff. AF V, pp. 150 ff.

³¹ Aquinas, *Summa* III, q. 9 (*Opera Omnia* 11:138–47), on Christ's knowledge generally; q. 10 (*Opera Omnia* 11:148–56), on the beatific knowledge of Christ's soul.

³² SH IV, P1, In1, Tr3, Q2, C5 (n. 120), pp. 170–71. AF V, p. 151.

³³ SH IV, P1, In1, Tr3, Q2, C2 (n. 117), Solutio, p. 166.

³⁴ Bonaventure, *Breviloquium* pt. IV, c. 6 (V, p. 247).

³⁵ SH IV, P1, In1, Tr3, Q2, C5 (n. 120), p. 170.

³⁶ SH IV, P1, In1, Tr3, Q2, C2 (n. 117), Solutio, p. 166.

³⁷ Bonaventure, *Commentaria in quatuor libros Sententiarum* III, d. 14, ar. 3, q. 2, in Bonaventure, *Opera omnia*, 10 vols (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1882–1902), vol. III, p. 322.

³⁸ Bonaventure, *Breviloquium* pt. II (= pt. IV) c. 6 (V, p. 246).

³⁹ AF V, p. 152.

The Transfiguration and its Anticipation of Beatitude

In considering Christ's Transfiguration in Conformity XV,⁴⁰ Bartholomew explores several theological problems or 'difficulties', for which Alexander's work offers helpful solutions. In summary form, Bartholomew presents the difficulties by asking a number of direct questions, and follows these with their resolutions, relying on the evidence of the *auctoritates*. The following will give an idea of this question-and-answer method familiar to students of Scholastic theology.

With regard to the brightness described by the evangelists in their account of Christ's appearance at the Transfiguration the question arises: 'Where in the subject did this radiance inhere?' Alexander's reply is given in two parts: that brightness 'inherited in his body,'⁴¹ while the external visible radiance seen on his clothing 'came from the brightness shed upon it by his face.'⁴²

And, since the Lord's body also had the qualities of subtlety and agility, 'When he chose to demonstrate the beatitude of his body, why did the Lord reveal this to the Apostles by his endowment of clarity rather than by his other endowments?'⁴³ Here the first part of the answer is, quite simply, that he had already revealed other qualities like subtlety in his birth and agility in his walking on water. 'Therefore it remained for him to reveal this endowment, i.e. that of clarity.' And it is Alexander's *Summa* that demonstrates that the other qualities listed are in fact consequences of that clarity:

For light passes through transparent bodies without suffering loss, and so it is quite subtle. It appears suddenly in many different forms, and so is quite agile. It is not contaminated when passing through contaminated things, and so is impassible, as Alexander says, part III of question 21.⁴⁴

As the questions about the transfigured body of Christ continue, the next is about color: 'How could this clarity occur while he retained his former color?' Alexander's affirmation resolves the question because, with respect to light, 'color is a material thing,'⁴⁵ and precious stones show us by experience that 'color and brilliance occur together.' And if we wonder how 'such glorious clarity could be in a mortal body,' the answer is that, since these qualities of a transfigured body are discrete, God in His omnipotence, 'could temporarily grant one without the other.'⁴⁶

⁴⁰ AF V, pp. 61–62.

⁴¹ SH IV, P1, In1, Tr6, Q2, Ti1, C3 (n. 182), p. 254.

⁴² SH IV, P1, In1, Tr6, Q2, Ti1, C4 (n. 183), pp. 255–56.

⁴³ SH IV, P1, In1, Tr6, Q2, Ti1, C8 (n. 187), p. 261.

⁴⁴ SH IV, P1, In1, Tr6, Q2, Ti1, C8 (n. 187), p. 261.

⁴⁵ SH IV, P1, In1, Tr6, Q2, Ti1, C2 (n. 181), p. 253.

⁴⁶ SH IV, P1, In1, Tr6, Q2, Ti1, C5 (n. 184), p. 257.

Master Bartholomew reminds us of his own erudition at this point as he invokes the views of Hilary of Poitiers⁴⁷ and Haymo of Auxerre,⁴⁸ who say ‘this clarity was a hundred times brighter than the sun.’ And if that was the case, ‘Why did it not light up the whole world?’ Bartholomew derives his answer from the *Summa Halensis*, though without revealing it as his source: this clarity on the Lord’s body ‘was revealed through his own volition’ and was ‘manifested to those whom he chose.’ It did not light up the entire world because ‘it was not set in the proper place’ for that to occur. In this sense it was like a lamp, which ‘does not give light unless in an appropriate place.’⁴⁹ The only authority whom Bartholomew does cite in this regard is Augustine, who provides the closing argument in his *Letter to Paulina*: ‘As it is in our power to see corporeal things, so it is in the power of spiritual beings to enable us to see them or not.’⁵⁰

The question of light continues to absorb Bartholomew’s attention as he considers the wonder of the Transfiguration. His next question touches on a scientific question about the functioning of the human eye. If our eyes cannot look directly at the sun ‘because of its brilliance,’ how was it that the Apostles were able to look at the bright light on Christ’s body without harm to their eyes? Drawing on the *Summa*, Bartholomew gives us ‘Alexander’s answer’:

we cannot look at the sun, because its heat destroys the inner moisture of the pupil of the eye. But glorious clarity does not overwhelm and destroy the vision, rather it comforts and strengthens and delights it, and thus they were able to look at it.⁵¹

After answering these questions, Bartholomew turns to the question of the appearance of Moses and Elijah on the mountain with Christ, as described in Matthew 17:3: ‘Behold, there appeared Moses and Elijah talking with him.’ In this regard he wonders if this means that Moses rose from the dead. ‘Alexander’s answer’ here is a clear ‘no’. ‘His soul was certainly there, but it was not necessary for his body to be there.’ He appeared ‘through God’s power,’ just as angels can appear ‘in a body they assume:’ he appeared in this way ‘because we cannot see a spirit with our bodily eyes.’⁵² And the fact that it is Elijah who appears with Moses, rather than another figure, for example, Enoch, poses a different kind of question. Here ‘Alexander’s answer’ is that in this transfiguration Christ wished ‘to display the glory of the resurrection and the work of redemption that was to come,’ something explicitly communicated only after the flood (e.g. from Abraham onward). In Enoch’s time, that mystery was believed only implicitly, ‘so he was not summoned.’⁵³ Bartholomew adds that, in

⁴⁷ Hilary of Poitiers, *Commentarius in Matthaeum* c. 17 (PL 9:1014; SC 258:62).

⁴⁸ Haymo of Auxerre, *Homilia de tempore* 34 (PL 118:222–23).

⁴⁹ SH IV, P1, In1, Tr6, Q2, Ti1, C6 (n. 185), p. 258; SH IV, P1, In1, Tr6, Q2, Ti1, C9 (n. 188), p. 263.

⁵⁰ Augustine, *Epistola ad Paulinam de videndo Deo* (PL 33:597–98; CSEL 44:297).

⁵¹ SH IV, P1, In1, Tr6, Q2, Ti1, C9 (n. 188), Solutio, p. 263. AF V, p. 62.

⁵² SH IV, P1, In1, Tr6, Q2, Ti1, C8 (n. 187), p. 261.

⁵³ SH IV, P1, In1, Tr6, Q2, Ti1, C8 (n. 187), p. 261. AF V, p. 63.

any case, Moses already knew all about the first age of humanity by divine revelation, so another witness like Enoch was not necessary.

To conclude this series of questions about the Transfiguration, Bartholomew mentions the opinions of Ambrose and Jerome about the appearance of Moses, namely, that he was brought back to life temporarily. But Alexander disagrees with the two Western Fathers on this point, and Thomas⁵⁴ shares the opinion earlier taught by Alexander: 'he appeared in another body which he temporarily assumed.'⁵⁵

Of all the places in the *Conformities* where Friar Alexander's thinking is used to explain aspects of the life of Christ, its section on the Transfiguration and the treatment of light there must rank as one of the most influential pieces of the *Summa* for Bartholomew. The remaining theological questions that draw considerably on Alexander's work pertain to problems of soteriology.

The Redeeming Work of Christ: *The Conformities*, Book Two; *Summa Halensis*, Book Three

Alexander's *Summa* is cited in regard to soteriological questions, notably its treatment of the infinity of Christ's merit in the work of salvation (in Conformity XXXII).⁵⁶ Bartholomew first presents Bonaventure's view of the question, taken from book III of his *Sentence* commentary, where merit is linked to the dignity of a person. Since in Christ the person is infinite, Christ has infinite merit.⁵⁷ Bartholomew then goes on to note that the same view can be found in the works of a later author like Peter Auriol,⁵⁸ in that of Bonaventure's contemporary, Thomas Aquinas,⁵⁹ and in the third book of the *Summa fratris Alexandri*.⁶⁰

In a similar vein, Bartholomew explains that Christ's life is supremely loved by God. And he uses Alexander's explanation from book III in these terms: since Christ's life is that of God, it is supremely loved by God, more than anything other

⁵⁴ Aquinas, *Summa* III, q. 45, ar. 3, ad 2 (*Opera Omnia* 11:432).

⁵⁵ SH IV, P1, In1, Tr6, Q2, Ti1, C8 (n. 187), p. 261.

⁵⁶ AF V, pp. 421 ff.

⁵⁷ Bonaventure, *Commentarium in IV libros Sententiarum* bk. III, d. 13, q. 2, conclusio, in Bonaventure, *Opera omnia*, 10 vols (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1882–1902), vol. III, p. 279b.

⁵⁸ This is likely d. 13, q. 2 in Peter Auriol, *Petri Aureoli Verberii Ordinis Minorum Archiepiscopi Aquensis S. R. E. Cardinalis Commentariorum in Tertium Librum Sententiarum* (Rome: Luigi Zannetti, 1605), pp. 416 ff.

⁵⁹ Aquinas, *Scriptum super Libro Tertio Sententiarum* d. 18, ar. 6, q. 3, solution I, in S. Thomae Aquinatis scriptum super Sententiis Magistri Petri Lombardi, ed. Maire-Fabian Moos (Paris: Lethielleux, 1933), vol. III, p. 576.

⁶⁰ SH IV, P1, In1, Tr4, Q3, M4, C2, Ar2 (n. 139), p. 192.

than God.⁶¹ From this he draws the conclusion that Christ delights in his own life more than any creature could delight in anything.⁶²

This line of reasoning leads to the conclusion that Christ's offering of his own life was an infinite gift to God.⁶³ Following the development of Alexander's thought, grounded in satisfaction theory, our Pisan author emphasizes three elements of satisfaction. First, he speaks of how much was paid in satisfaction, and identifies this with the intensity of Christ's pain at the separation of body from soul at the moment of death. Second, he examines the means of payment, here identified as that pain 'beyond all reckoning' and the death that followed, as suffered by one who was the Son of God. Third, he explains the reason for this satisfaction, which in Christ was a love that is 'boundless', making such satisfaction as in itself is 'beyond all reckoning'.⁶⁴

On another soteriological question, Christ's Passion and the work of redemption are presented in the *Conformities* as understood through the lens of the *Summa Halensis*. Quoting Paul in Titus 2:14 and the Book of Revelation 5:9, Bartholomew argues that by Christ's Passion 'our redemption was wrought and accomplished.' In this, following a popular theory of redemption, in book III Alexander affirms that 'to redeem is to recover what is one's own for a just price';⁶⁵ and so 'Christ redeemed us, and recovered us when we were slaves, by paying the price, that is, himself.'⁶⁶

Predictably, Bartholomew does not present innovative arguments or diverge in his theological opinions from the teaching of his *auctoritates* in these matters of redemption and satisfaction. And among the many authors available to him in the late 14th century Alexander's work remained a consistent and respected point of reference.

The Third Book of the Conformities: The Glorification of Christ

In its third book, the *Conformities* addresses questions regarding Christ's Resurrection. In several places the treatment of these questions in the *Summa Halensis* forms the basis for Bartholomew's presentation of the theological issues involved. Among the questions are several regarding the properties of a risen body, with Alexander's arguments not only stated but also traced back to their origins, frequently in the writings of Augustine.

⁶¹ SH IV, P1, In1, Tr4, Q3, M4, C2, Ar2 (n. 139), p. 192a.

⁶² AF V, pp. 421–22.

⁶³ AF V, p. 422.

⁶⁴ AF V, p. 422.

⁶⁵ SH IV, P1, In1, Tr5, Q1, M3, C2 (n. 149), p. 209.

⁶⁶ AF V, p. 424.

One example concerns the question of the food eaten by the risen Christ in the company of the Apostles. The question is posed simply in the *Summa*: 'What happened to the food?' Alexander's solution is put forward,⁶⁷ as well as its foundation in Augustine's solution, namely that the food was transformed into vapor, 'a spiritual form', as happens with water when exposed to the sun's heat.⁶⁸

In a similar vein, the more general question of Christ's body and its qualities after the Resurrection is addressed. For example, 'How could Christ's body be handled, when he was impassible?' Turning to Alexander for enlightenment, Bartholomew explains that Christ's risen body can be touched 'if he wishes, and not if he does not.' Alternatively, one can say that such an impalpable body can be touched only 'supernaturally' but not 'naturally'.⁶⁹

Moving through the events following the Resurrection in the New Testament accounts, the Pisan master turns once again to the *Summa fratris Alexandri* for an explanation of the Ascension, and the place of Christ in glory, 'at the right hand of the Father,'⁷⁰ pondering Hebrews 1:3ff. The treatment of the question in the *Summa* makes a distinction between the expressions 'to sit' and 'to be' at the Father's right hand. Alexander explains that sitting conveys 'unity and equality', 'communion', and 'a particular sharing of beatitude,' with God the Father, and such a place of honor is suitable for Christ alone. But the more general expression, 'to be' at the Father's right hand can appropriately be used in reference to all the saints in heavenly glory. As with the earlier treatment of the question on the Transfiguration, so in these questions on the glorified Christ the works of Alexander provide respected solutions to the problems, great and small, posed by a fellow Franciscan theologian.

Conclusion

The examples given here can serve to illustrate the varied ways in which the theological work of Alexander, as reflected in the *Summa Halensis*, provided a reliable point of reference for a Franciscan master like Bartholomew more than a century after the work's composition. The diffusion of manuscripts of the *Summa* and the wide distribution of its later printed editions testify to its use among friars and others studying and lecturing in theological schools over several centuries. But beyond that specialized audience, appreciation of Alexander's thought and veneration of his memory derived also from such popularizing works as the *Conformities*, likely read by an audience broader than that of theologians. In its theological discussions at the beginning of each of its forty conformities of the life of St Francis to that of Christ, Bartholomew

67 SH IV, P1, In1, Tr6, Q2, Ti2, M2, C3 (n. 196), p. 277.

68 Augustine, *Epistula* 102 (49), *Sex quaestiones contra Paganos*, q. I (PL 33:372; CCSL 31B:11).

69 SH IV, P1, In1, Tr6, Q2, Ti2, M2, C2, Ar1 (n. 194), *Solutio*, p. 274.

70 SH IV, In1, Tr7, Q2, C1 (n. 207), p. 293.

lomeu of Pisa's *Book of Conformities* offers a worthy tribute by a late 14th-century master to his early 13th-century predecessor Alexander, 'king of theologians' and 'fount of life'.