

Transcending the Limits of Finitude In St. Bonaventure's *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*

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The *“Itinerarium Mentis in Deum”* has been described as an essentially Franciscan tract, guiding learned men in the spirit of St. Francis to his mode of contemplative life. Though intended by St. Bonaventure as a guide towards meditation and contemplation, it is our intention to emphasize and elaborate on a theme, particularly on the question of transcendence and human finitude, within the *Itinerarium* rather than to controvert the prevailing scholarly judgments regarding the nature and utility of the work. St. Bonaventure's description of how man comes to his self-realization or self-identity is simultaneously an inventory of man's intellectual powers and operations with a collage of Scriptural injunctions regulating the course of intellectual introspection. The coalescence of these two dimensions is an entree to the Truth of God. After the reflection of the mind upon itself, man discovers that he is an *imago Dei*. The name *imago* was given by God to man in Genesis. But now, man re-enacts that part of Creation and appropriates the name to himself. The act of self-naming is a cry of attenuated triumph. The power to name is an activity of dominion, and the act of self-nomination is the consummate exhibition of human autonomy.

First of all, the term “Transcendence” and “Person” is not very appropriate terms when it comes to St. Bonaventure¹ and the *Itinerarium*. The term “Person” as we understood it now speaks about subjectivity, the self, uniqueness, autonomy, the Existential which is in stark contrast to the Boethian universal definition of person

¹ St. Bonaventure, a native of Bagnoregio in Tuscany, Italy, was born Giovanni di Fidanza about 1217. He entered the Franciscan Order in 1243 and in the short space of fourteen years became the 7th Minister General of the Order of the Friars Minor. He was a Professor of Theology at the University of Paris and was appointed Cardinal-Bishop of Albano shortly before his death by Pope Gregory X. He died in the year 1274 at the 2nd Council of Lyons, the 12th Ecumenical Council of the Church. He was widely known and venerated during his lifetime and is even mentioned as a Saint in Dante's *Paradiso*. He was formally canonized as a Saint in 1482 by Pope Sixtus IV and declared a Doctor of the Church in 1587 by Pope Sixtus V. He is regarded as the Doctor Seraphicus or the Seraphic Doctor.

as an individual substance. Similarly, the term “Transcendence” as we understood it speaks about “the going beyond” or “the a priori conditions of knowledge” (in Kantian terms), contrary to its original signification which is in reference to God’s relation with the world, that is, that God is completely outside of or beyond the world, as contrasted with Immanence, that is, that God is manifested in the world. But we will not let these nuances in language impede our investigation. As we go along, I will try to expound what Person and Transcendence means in his magnum opus.

First of all the *“Itinerarium Mentis in Deum”* has been described by Fr. Philotheus Boehner as an “essentially Franciscan tract, guiding learned men in the spirit of St. Francis to his mode of contemplative life.”² This paper is intended to emphasize and elaborate on a theme, particularly on person and transcendence, within the *Itinerarium* rather than to controvert the prevailing scholarly judgments regarding the nature and utility of the work. To aid us in understanding the Bonaventurian system of thought, it is very necessary to first lay down his arguments pertaining to the reconciliation of theology and philosophy, of faith and reason. After establishing this, we can now proceed to our main problem.

St. Bonaventure on Faith and Reason

To speak about God and to speculate about Him should always be within the context of *Credo ut Intelligam*, as St. Bonaventure said: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of Lights . . . So it is fitting at the outset of any good work to call upon Him from whom all goods proceed as from their source, by whom they are produced as by their exemplar, and to whom they return to as their end.”³ This gift is basically the gift of faith. Every medieval philosopher or theologian admits without doubt that there are two sources of human knowledge. Those two sources are Reason and Divine Revelation. From the latter comes forth the truths of faith which have their basis in the authority of the Sacred Scriptures and the Catholic Church. The former on the other hand is based on empirical data, truths that are founded on

²Bonaventure, St. “The Journey of the Mind to God.” Philotheus Boehner, trans. (New York: The Franciscan Institute, 1956), p. 12.

³Soliloquy, II.

experience and evidence. Most often problems arise regarding the truths arrived at by reason and truths established by revelation. Every now and then the results established by philosophy appear to be in stark contradiction and disagreement with that which must be hold on by faith. To resolve the issue, one should be suppressed to give way to the other. Either faith must give way to reason or denounce reason to exalt the gift of faith.

The approach of St. Bonaventure to the issue between faith and reason is a unique one. The truths of faith and the truths of reason have their origin in God, and therefore, any contradiction between the two is definitely non-existent. Quoting once again the passage from St. James, Bonaventure explains:

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of Lights, as James writes in the First chapter of his Epistle. This passage both indicates the origin of every illumination, and suggests that there are many lights generously flowing from this frontal brilliance. Although every illumination of knowledge is within, we may rationally distinguish, in a manner of speaking, an EXTERIOR LIGHT, that of the mechanical arts; an INFERIOR LIGHT, that of sense knowledge; an INTERIOR LIGHT, that of philosophical knowledge; and a SUPERIOR LIGHT, that of grace and of Sacred Scriptures.⁴

In case there is a contradiction between reason and faith, St. Bonaventure maintains that such a contradiction is only an apparent one. One has to search out with good will the error he has committed either in the interpretation of the Sacred Scriptures or in his very rational analysis. He insists that such a contradiction is never objective, rather, it is always a subjective one. He is very clear when he said: "Doubt (apparent contradictions) arises because of a defect in the act of analysis when the carnal mind is not capable of resolving beyond those things which are evident to the senses, as are corporeal realities."⁵ He even gave an analogy to prove his point. "Some have thought that the visible sun . . . was God since they did not know how to resolve things further to an incorporeal substance nor to the first principle of things."⁶ For St. Bonaventure, contradictions therefore are never in reality, rather it is always in our thinking.

⁴On Retracing the Arts to Theology, I.

⁵Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity, Q. 1, Art. 1.

⁶Ibid., Q. 1, Art. 1, ad 1.

Acknowledging the value of faith and reason, we now ask a further question: why is divine revelation still necessary? Is reason not capable enough to solve all human problems and issues without recourse to revelation? No one will deny that human nature is intrinsically imperfect, and therefore, it is not capable of attaining the complete development that is proper to him. Following the Augustinian doctrine that man is capable of God (*Capax Dei*), St. Bonaventure argues that men must be able to know all that will order his perfection. He unhesitatingly referred to men as Lovers of Wisdom (*Sapientiae Amatores*),⁷ for without comportsing oneself to wisdom, we can never know happiness that will satiate our innermost longing. Cullens explains this point saying: “Bonaventure’s quest for wisdom is always a striving for happiness, which he regards as man’s final end. Hence there is an urgency and passionate intensity evident throughout his writings. The quest for wisdom originates here in this world through the use of reason, but it finds its most fruitful and direct way in the science of God’s own revelation, namely, Theology.”⁸

St. Bonaventure then has a very different conception of the human understanding. Different from St. Thomas Aquinas who argued that the proper object of the intellect is the *Quidditas rei materialis*, St. Bonaventure believes that God is the final object, the ultimate object of the intellect. Conversely, for St. Bonaventure, the search for truth is the search for God. In the *Itinerarium* he writes: “Open your eyes, alert your spiritual ears, unlock your lips, and apply your heart so that you may see, hear, praise, love, adore, magnify, and honor your God lest the entire world rise up against you.”⁹ All knowledge then is merely a step to reach this objective. The material object of the intellect is not changed with the elevation of man to the supernatural; the only change is in the manner and perfection by which the material object is attained or grasped. In other words, only the formal object of the intellect is changed.

⁷The complete passage states: “Now since we must ascend before we can descend on Jacob’s ladder, let us place the first step of our ascent at the bottom, putting the whole world of sense-objects before us as in a mirror through which we may pass to God, the highest creative Artist. In this way we may become true Hebrews, passing from Egypt to the land promised to the forbears. And we shall be Christians passing over with Christ from the world to the Father. We shall be lovers of that wisdom which calls and says: Pass over to me, all you who desire me, and be filled with my fruits. For in the greatness and beauty of created things their Creator can be seen and known.” *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, I, 9. (emphasis mine).

⁸Cullens, op. cit., p. 26.

⁹*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, I: 15.

Having admitted that God is the proper object of the intellect, Bonaventure further elucidates the possibility of a knowledge of God which is more perfect compared with conceptual knowledge or knowledge arrived at by inference, albeit abstractly. He referred to this more perfect knowledge of God as Contemplation. He writes:

For this triple vision (the vision of God as found in creatures – image, likeness, and similitude), man was endowed with a triple eye, as explained by Hugh of St. Victor: the eye of flesh, of reason, and of contemplation; the eye of flesh, to see the world and what it contains; the eye of reason, to see the soul and what it contains; the eye of contemplation, to see God and that which is in him. Through the eye of the flesh, man was to see the things outside of him; with the eye of reason, the things within him; with the eye of contemplation, the things above him. Now, the eye of contemplation cannot see with perfect clearness except through glory, which man may lose through sin, but restore through grace, faith, and the study of Scripture. By these means, the human soul is cleansed, enlightened, and perfected for the contemplation of heavenly things, unto which fallen man cannot reach unless he first admits this insufficiency and blindness; and this he cannot do unless he remembers the downfall of human nature.¹⁰

It is a knowledge of God indescribable for him who has not or failed to experience it. We can say that at this point, the intellect no longer understands by means of concepts or ideas, or formulate truths within the domain of judgments and inferences. It is a form of knowledge that is penetrating, a form of knowledge sparked and inflamed with love, an act in which the highest capacity of the understanding is reached and all intellectual faculties blended together in one sublime moment.

It is in this sense that for the Seraphic Doctor, philosophical knowledge that is entirely divorced from faith or separated from the Sacred Sciences is empty and devoid of any meaning. If the goal of human knowledge is ultimately the contemplation of God, philosophy then can only be an initial step, a preparation towards this objective. Indeed, such knowledge is impossible to achieve given the fact that the mind is obscured and finite, distracted and so much engrossed with so many things – a fact that the history of philosophy will bear witness to.

Reality is not a scattered manifold, a multiplicity that denotes chaos so to speak, rather, it is a structured multiplicity bound

¹⁰Breviloquium, II: 12.5.

together by an organic whole, a wise plan which is manifested through many signs. However, to be able to realize such, man has to search and to inquire. For St. Bonaventure, this is the fundamental task of the philosopher. Many philosophers was able to reach a knowledge of the metaphysical and the physical structure of things, yet they failed to discover the profound design of the creation and realize the supreme wisdom of its Creator. This is precisely what happened to Aristotle. He has discovered and learned so many things. He was able to know the nature of reality, yet he failed to understand the profound design that binds all of reality itself. Plato and his follower Plotinus were wiser for St. Bonaventure. They saw clearly that the explanation of the world must be sought in God. But they too became entangled in various errors. Deprived by the light of faith, they failed to understand the unity of God in the Trinity and his manifestation is the beauty of creation. No wonder, for St. Bonaventure: "These are the foremost philosophers of the Gentiles, who could see God's invisible attributes . . . being understood through the things that are made. Yet because they philosophized without the Mediator, that is, without the man Christ, whom they did not accept as the One who was to come to the prophets and who did come to the apostles, in wickedness they hold back the truth."¹¹ Indeed, "Only Augustine, with the light of faith, achieved a comprehensive wisdom: He posited the forms as ideas in the divine mind, and yet, maintained that the things of the world was real."¹²

This leads us unequivocally to the conclusion that "Philosophical knowledge is the way to the other sciences; but he who wishes to remain in this way falls into darkness."¹³ The reason for this failure of philosophy is clearly explained by St. Bonaventure in the Collations. He explains:

It should be noted, however, that while the world serves man in his body, it serves him more practically in his soul; and that if it serves him more particularly in his soul; and that if it serves to forward life, it serves more particularly to forward wisdom. It is certain that as long as man stood up, he had the knowledge of created things and through their significance, was carried up to God, to praise, worship, and love him. This is what creatures are for, and this is how they are led back to

¹¹Collations on the Six Days, VII: 9.

¹²Christus Omnium Mqgister, XVIII.

¹³Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, IV: 12.

God. But when man had fallen, since he had lost knowledge, there was no longer any one to lead creatures back to God. Hence this book, the world, (has) become as dead and deleted. And it was necessary that there be another book through which this one would be lighted up, so that it could receive the symbols of things. Such a book is Scripture which establishes the likenesses, the properties, and the symbolism of things written down in the book of the world. And so, Scripture has the power to restore the whole world toward the knowledge, praise, and love of God.¹⁴

Contemporary readers may find the above passage surprising, if not perplexing, and regard it as a sign that indeed St. Bonaventure is a theologian relevant only in the thirteenth century. This kind of language apparently goes well in spirituality and the heights of mysticism but not definitely in philosophy. But let me contend, St. Bonaventure was speaking here to philosophers, particularly those philosophers who professed themselves followers of the Greek thinker Aristotle. It may sound mystical, but we have here a philosopher speaking to other philosophers during that era.

In the passage we have just cited, St. Bonaventure regards the world as a book, and conversely, things as words. As words have significance, not so much as in themselves, but inasmuch as they signify reality, so creatures too, although they have significance in themselves, have this only because they bear witness to the majesty of God and his perfection. To make an analogy, as a book is entirely useless to an illiterate person who sees letters but does not comprehend the meaning of it, so the world loses its fundamental significance when man knows it only in itself but does not perceive its relationship with God. Every science therefore, even the most profound, is imperfect and ends in error for St. Bonaventure when it does not grasp the meaning which is so crucial in the things which it studies.

Man has lost this spiritual vision of reality which for St. Bonaventure is its most important and authentic aspect. Only in the realm of faith that man will be able to find this again and retrieve this understanding of reality. Unless philosophy is aided by faith, it will continue to err and fall short of the truth. St. Bonaventure explains: "Suppose that a person possesses natural and metaphysical science which reaches to the highest substances, and suppose this

¹⁴Collations on the Six Days, XIII: 12.

person strives to reach the point and there come to rest. This is impossible without falling into error unless this person is aided by the light of faith by which this person comes to believe that God is one and three, most powerful, and the best with respect to the ultimate influence of goodness.”¹⁵ There is something that lies beyond philosophical knowledge which is theological science, and St. Bonaventure thinks that “God has given us theological science which is the pious knowledge of truth that is believable. The eternal light, which is God, is inaccessible to us as long as we are mortal and have the eyes of a bat. Therefore, Augustine says, ‘the high point of the mind is incapable of fixing itself on such an excellent light unless it is purified by the justice of faith.’ Thus theological science is founded on faith.”¹⁶

Only in faith can we reach the fullness of understanding reality. All human sciences, including philosophy, give us an understanding of things as they are, but only faith tells us why they are such. Reason and philosophy gives us knowledge, but only faith and theology leads us to wisdom.

St. Bonaventure on “Person” and “Transcendence”

The title of the work deserves more than a mention. The *Itinerarium* is not a journey in any ordinary sense. As Boehner points out, it is a pilgrimage. It is a pilgrimage similar to other pilgrimages in that it has marked signposts, resting places along the way, and an intended goal. But the pilgrimage which St. Bonaventure outlines has three unique features. It is a solitary effort rather than a group endeavour; a reflective or contemplative activity rather than a literally pedestrian enterprise; and a goal of spiritual union with God rather than one of physical presence in a holy place. The *Itinerarium* is indeed a pilgrimage, but essentially metaphorical.

The elements of the sustaining metaphor are indexed in the opening words of the Prologue: “In Principio”, that is, “In the beginning”. It is the beginning of St. Bonaventure’s work, but it equally refers to the opening words of the Scriptures, as well as the beginning or genesis of the world. Gilson explains that the invocation of the Prologue continues by acknowledging his dependence upon

¹⁵Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, IV: 12.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, IV:13.

God for every best and perfect gift and petitioning for three special gifts for the begun work, that is, illumination, guidance, and a peace “which surpasses all understanding.”¹⁷

The prayerful acknowledgement of dependence on God should be in no way be read as a justification for any sort of quietism. For it is immediately followed by a purposeful account of St. Bonaventure has made. To seek peace, he had travelled to Mt. Alverno (the place where St. Francis received the stigmata) where he intellectually and systematically dealt with the spiritual ascents to God. The articulation of the desire for peace, the decision to visit a holy place, and the occupation with intellectual endeavours – all are marks of self-determination, the characteristics of independence or autonomy.¹⁸

Now, the way suggested was a pilgrimage that has basically two dimensions: first, “the illumination by which the soul is disposed . . . to peace through the ecstatic transports of Christian Wisdom”¹⁹; and second, “the outcries of prayer” and “the refulgence of speculation”²⁰ which makes a “man of desires” – an indispensable condition for man if he is to be disposed for “divine contemplations.”²¹

The end of the pilgrimage has been set. But the essential marks of the pilgrim have simultaneously, just as the vision of St. Francis had a double signification.²² The pilgrim, that is, the reader, is addressed as a “man of God”, a man who must prayerfully acknowledge his dependence on God by cleansing and polishing the mirror of the soul before he begins his own speculations and deliberations. The “man of God” is both dependent and autonomous. The tension between these aspects and activities can never be factually resolved, only separated and emphasized in discourse.

In the Prologue, St. Bonaventure has discovered a way to achieve the kind of contemplation with which he thought St. Francis was blessed. He commends it to the “man of God”, the Christian homo viator who believes and knows that he was created and redeemed. Furthermore, the language of the Prologue with its

¹⁷Etienne Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*. (New Jersey: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1965), p. 34.

¹⁸Cf. J. Guy Bougerol, *Introduction to the Works of Bonaventure*. (Paterson: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1961), p. 123-125.

¹⁹Cf. *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, I:9.

²⁰Cf. *Ibid.*, I:10

²¹Cf. *Ibid.*, I: 11.

²²Joseph Ratzinger, *The Theology of History of St. Bonaventure*. (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1987), p. 119.

emphasis on “remorse of conscience” does indeed suggest that the *Itinerarium* is a work in mystical theology.²³ However, I would like to suggest that the *Itinerarium* has philosophical appeal to those who do not share St. Bonaventure’s convictions. I hold that the very utilization of Scriptures in his work has produced a unique kind of speculation which at least by analogy allows us to more fully appreciate philosophic enterprises which has defined and make the reflections of St. Bonaventure truly unique in the medieval ages.

The speculative pilgrimage begins with a terse titular announcement that the pilgrim is a “*pauper in deserto*”:²⁴ In a single phrase St. Bonaventure has thematically compacted the human estate. For “the desert” is not so much a barren place far removed from the heavenly Jerusalem, as it is a sense of solitude – a realization of that loneliness endemic to speculation.²⁵ And the “poor man” not only exhibits the impoverishment whose complete need is union with God, but a reverently humble man who properly fears that his speculations may become pretentious. St. Bonaventure says: “man is ordained to rise above himself”²⁶, that is, man is condemned to climb the steps of God. but he must always be alert, lest he even inadvertently invest his speculations with ultimate finality. For St. Bonaventure then, man best exhibits his autonomy by the full admission of his dependency. That admission is verbalized in prayer for aid.²⁷

The literal preamble to the pilgrimage is prayer which St. Bonaventure describes as the “mother and origin of upward action.” John of Salisbury insightfully announced that “poetry is the cradle of philosophy”.²⁸ St. Bonaventure might be paraphrased as saying that prayer is the womb of speculation. For St. Bonaventure, prayer is far more than an institutionalized pious amenity. It is an integral part of the method of speculation.²⁹ Prayer is the procedure for balancing the tension between autonomy and dependence.

²³Philotheus Boeher explains that “the prologue introduces us to the prayerful spirit required to begin our journey on the road to peace. It also anticipates the six steps toward union with God that the *Itinerarium* will indicate to us. Furthermore, it underscores need for justice or a holy life to begin the climb towards this goal with the words: “The mirror of the external world . . . is of little or no avail unless the mirror of our soul has been cleansed and polished.” See the introduction of Boehner in “*The Journey of the Mind to God*”, op. cit., p. xv-xvi.

²⁴*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, I.

²⁵Cf. Gilson, op. cit., p. 38.

²⁶*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, I: 1.

²⁷Cf. Ibid.

²⁸John Francis Quinn, *The Historical Constitution of St. Bonaventure’s Philosophy*. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1973), vi.

²⁹Gilson, op. cit.

The problem of pretension and the need for balance between autonomy and dependence cannot be thought of as a unique penalty attached to speculation which has a scriptural point of departure. The history of philosophy is replete with treatises and essays on man, on the limits of understanding, on the extent and domain of reason, on the reconciliation of the principles of nature and grace. At least one of the aims of such examination is to discover, define, or demonstrate the legitimacy of the claims of certitude, necessity, probity, or veracity attaching to the various inquiries. And philosophers are at pains to warn us against the pitfalls of enthusiasm, pretentious metaphysics, formulation of antinomies, and indeed, even incorrect usage. Indeed, philosophers self-consciously insist on the recognition or use of some therapeutic device to keep the inquirer from either exaggerating his standing or from abdicating without just cause his obligation to pursue the intellectual quest. For example, refutation has been claimed to induce modesty; postulates establishing God, Freedom, and Immortality; the happiness of the state as opposed to individual happiness; the happy discovery of a pre-established harmony – all of these are balancing principles for the inherent tension between man’s autonomy and dependence. Philosophers invoke on these with much fervor as St. Bonaventure exhibits in prayer. For him, prayer is a necessary preparation for the human pilgrimage.³⁰

St. Bonaventure describes the pilgrimage as a coming to know the steps or stages of the ascent to God. He insists that the human condition allows us to see the world as a ladder, the rungs of which he designates as the way to God, the Truth of God, and that kind of understanding and reverence of God which issues from a dialogue of the mind with itself.³¹

To assent to man’s dependence on God as the *summus opifex*, a Creator and Redeemer, gives the pilgrim a unique point of departure. For St. Bonaventure’s pilgrim does not begin his reflections *in medias res*, nor does he initiate his reflection from an appropriate and self-evident first principle. Instead, by looking to Scripture, he sees the world as a *universitas rerum* – a living wholeness of all creation, in which through the Divine Art all things are declared to be “metaphors”. The assent to Scripture makes the ascent to God

³⁰Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 38-40

³¹*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, II:1.

possible.³² Yet the assent to the truth of scripture by no means divests man of his autonomy. On the contrary, in theological terms the assent to Scripture through faith and charity makes the genesis of grace and redemption satiable. But only through the speculations of the pilgrim – the life of reason – can the satiable character of grace be made apparent to the self and to his fellow pilgrims.³³

St. Bonaventure's description of how man comes to his self-realization or self-identity is simultaneously an inventory of man's intellectual powers and operations with a collage of Scriptural injunctions regulating the course of intellectual introspection.³⁴ The coalescence of these two dimensions is an entree to the Truth of God – the second rung on the ladder. After the reflection of the mind upon itself, man discovers that he is an *imago Dei*. The name *imago* was given by God to man in Genesis. But now, man re-enacts that part of Creation and appropriates the name to himself. The act of self-naming is a cry of attenuated triumph. The power to name is an activity of dominion, and the act of self-nomination is the consummate exhibition of human autonomy.

Man as *imago* shares in the Divine Art of creation. By fully sharing in the Creative Art, man also becomes an *opifex*; Of course, not the *summus opifex*, but surely, a *magnus opifex*. The difference between God's art and that of man lies in the character of the artefact. God created things which are for men metaphors. And man, in searching out ways to discover the meaning of those metaphors, turns within himself to formulate knowledge, artefacts which can unerringly guide the pilgrim on his way. For St. Bonaventure this is only possible because eternity has sanctioned it. Man's mind, according to St. Bonaventure, is "enlightened and over-flooded" by the "lights and beacons of the eternal law".³⁵ In the words of Gilson, "Man can only mandate in time what God has legislated in eternity."³⁶

After the first two parts of the pilgrimage is complete, St. Bonaventure insists that the pilgrim must now transcend himself by contemplating the Eternal Truth which directly forms our mind.³⁷ The enjoined contemplation is now more than the

³²Gilson, op. cit., p. 45.

³³Ratzinger, op. cit., 121.

³⁴Cf. *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, II: 4-6.

³⁵*Ibid.*, II: 6.

³⁶Gilson, op. cit. P. 47.

³⁷Cf. *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, III-V.

previous speculations in which the pilgrim was set on the way and then led into the Truth. For this contemplation is an almost rhapsodic hymn in which the purposefulness of the pilgrimage is rightly seen and rightly done. It is in this section of the *Itinerarium* that St. Bonaventure most incisively reveals his own dominion over the intellectual quest, and shows to others not only a way to God, but equally reveals to man that vision of his better self which was formed and reformed in grace.³⁸

The text is discursive, and the arguments precise and incisive. Yet what emerges from the contemplation of *Essentialia Dei* and the *propria personarum* is a fusion of distinctions which on their face seem destined to resist unification.³⁹ St. Bonaventure is deliberate in his warning that the result of this contemplation is best paradoxically stated. When the mind gazes upon the very light of the Highest Being it appears to see nothing. "It does not understand that this very darkness is the supreme illumination of our mind, just as when the eye sees pure light, it seems to be seeing nothing."⁴⁰

It is at this terminal point of rest that the statutory distinctions of the disciplines are vitiated by an all-encompassing and pervasive mode of life – a life of peace to be lived and enjoyed. All the previous labor, all the artful constructions, the scientific analyses have brought man to fruition. The fundamental tension between autonomy and dependence is resolved, in as far as it is possible, through and in a "unity with Him Who is above all essence and knowledge." The speculative and the practical, the intuitive and the demonstrative, thought and action, unity and plurality – all these are fused in the realized hope of man's intrinsic dignity and nobility of purpose. Man cannot be a "useless passion", sickened by the plague of life, because he has believed and now he understands that "he can see God". "The 'seeing of God', according to Ratzinger, is not only a personal fruition, but because of the community of human minds, establishes a social communion among men who respond to the message of the prophet: 'So be it, So be it, Amen.'"⁴¹

³⁸*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, IV: 8.

³⁹Gilson, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

⁴⁰*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, V:4.

⁴¹Ratzinger, *op. cit.*, 125.

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