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**THE NATURE OF MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE, MYSTICAL UNION,
AND THE INFLUENCE OF GRACE IN THE MYSTICAL JOURNEY:
AN INQUIRY INTO THE WRITINGS OF ST. BONAVENTURE**

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The history of Christian Spirituality is nurtured and nourished by great mystics. As a religious and priest, I had asked to myself, what really mysticism is? What exactly are the distinctive features of mysticism? Is it attainable for every believer? With a determination to have a clear idea of Christian mysticism, I began reading several writings on mysticism especially the works of Bonaventure who authored many writings with a mystical orientation.

Given the ambiguous interpretations attached to the term "mysticism" in both everyday discourse and scientific inquiry, it is evident that any attempt to define the term will be problematic. According to Thomas Merton, the term "mystic" originally meant "one who has been initiated into the mysteries". It refers to someone who has strange, esoteric, supra-rational or illogical states, sentiments, or intuitions. In a broad sense, he also emphasizes the incorrect association of the term with occultism, spiritualism, theosophy, or simply aestheticism, among other things. Merton also agrees with the Oxford Dictionary definition of the term "mystic" and he believes that a mystic 'is a proponent of mystical theology; one who seeks union with or absorption in the deity through contemplation and self-surrender, or who believes in the spiritual perception of truths unavailable to the normal understanding.'¹

Is it possible to have Christian mystical theology? According to Andrew Louth, many people, notably Protestants, disagree, but the occurrence persists, despite the fact that it appears impossible. The Church Fathers are not immune to the conflict between the mystical and the anti-mystical. Mysticism, like monasticism, is not a religious phenomenon unique to Christianity, and its importance to Christianity is debatable. However, it can be defined as a search for and experience of God's immediacy. The mystic yearns for oneness with God, not just knowledge of God. Union with God can take several forms, ranging from literal identity, in which the mystic loses all sense of self and is absorbed into God, to the union experienced as the completion of love, in which the lover and the beloved remain keenly conscious of themselves and each other. It is a mistake to assume that all mysticism is the same, because how mystics perceive the path and aims of their quest is influenced by what they believe

¹ Thomas Merton. *An Introduction to Christian Mysticism: Initiation into the Monastic Tradition 3*, ed. Patric F. O'Connell. Cistercian Publications, 2008, pp. 23, 29.

about God, which is influenced by what they experience. Yet, for the purpose of His own sake, the hunt for God, or for the ‘ultimate,’ and a reluctance to be content with anything less than Him, the quest of immediacy with this object of the soul's desire appears to be at the core of mysticism.² It is self-evident that mysticism is culturally and ideologically rooted, and that no mystical experience can be fully comprehended without considering the mystic's philosophical, religious, social, and historical environment. Such factors will almost certainly influence not only how the experience is described, but also the experience itself. The mystic's ‘forms of awareness’ put limitations on the real experience. As a result, tradition is the channel through which each given spiritual experience receives continuity and expression.³

Merton also lectures that Christian mysticism derives from John's gospel and Paul's letters. For him, both Theology and Mysticism in John's Gospel are one: one - in our life in Christ - doctrine of the mystical body of Christ, which is inextricably linked to Paul's teaching of our "divinization." The notion of divinization in Christ is a doctrine of spiritual regeneration in the image and likeness of Christ (Col. 1: 15-19; 2Cor: 3, 17).⁴ One of the important concerns of St. Bonaventure, in his mystical works, is the process of “deification” (deiform) of the soul through grace.

The mystical element in Christianity, in the sense that we're using the term "mystical" here, is that portion of faith and practice that deals with the preparation for, awareness of, and response to what Mystics regard as a direct, instantaneous, and transformative experience with God. While many mystics talk of such transforming direct communion as reaching unity with God, others eschew the term, and thus Bernard McGinn prefers to use the term “presence” instead. But, in mysticism, presence isn't a simple concept. Because God is literally "no-thing," he cannot be present in the same way that a creature can. God may appear in a way that is similar to how two people appear to each other, particularly in the presence of lovers; however, God as an infinite person is so far beyond the categories and consciousness of our own finite subjectivity that the divine presence is frequently realized in forms of absence and negation that mystics have explored with courage, tenacity, and

² Andrew Louth. *The Origins of the Christian mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys*. Oxford University Press, 2007, p. xiv.

³ See in: Celia Kourie. "Mysticism: A Survey of Recent Issues." In: *Journal for the Study of Religion*, Vol. 5. 2. (1992), ProQuest, pp. 96, 97.

⁴ Thomas Merton. *An Introduction to Christian Mysticism*, pp. 38-41.

great subtlety. All mystics agree that what they learn about God through their yearning for and encounters with the holy presence is incomprehensible.⁵

Here one may ask, is it required for one who make a study on mysticism to have had personal encounter with the mystical dimension in order to properly engage in the discussion and evaluation of the subject? At this stage, two things should be considered. Firstly, mysticism can be examined from a practical standpoint, with the goal of following the mystic path and gaining enlightenment and mystical insights via personal experience. Second, it might be viewed through the lens of a conceptual framework aimed at learning about mysticism. The fundamental concern of the latter approach, then, is to provide a scientific and theoretical understanding of the presuppositions and principles of mysticism. There is a distinction to be made between existential and theoretical comprehension. In the study of mysticism, a more thorough and integrated approach can be more beneficial.⁶

It is at this juncture of my search that I came across the writings of Bonaventure, a Franciscan saint who has developed an integral approach to mysticism. I was drawn towards his insights and decided to make a serious study of his theologising on mystical experience. This thesis '*The Nature of Mystical Experience, Mystical Union and the Influence of Grace in the Mystical Journey: an inquiry into the writings of St. Bonaventure*' is a study, mainly concerned with *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, a mystical work written by St. Bonaventure. The Seraphic Doctor, Bonaventure, is rooted in his Franciscan vocation and therefore Francis of Assisi becomes the role model and Franciscan Spirituality becomes the tradition of his mystical Journey.

Bonaventure named his mystical writing as a "*Journey of the Mind to God*". It is important to look at mysticism as a total process, not merely some particular moment or moments in or beyond time where special contact with God is made. Mysticism is a journey, a path that almost invariably demands long preparation and whose true attainment can be measured only by the effects that mystics have upon others, both their contemporaries and their readers over the centuries. All the mystics desired finding deeper contact with God as the central goal of their lives. The purpose of this work is also a small contribution to the ongoing dissemination of the work of Bonaventure's transforming message.⁷ "Mysticism is

⁵ Bernard McGinn and Patria McGinn. *Early Christian Mystics: The Divine vision of the Spiritual Masters*. The Crossroad Publishing company, 2003, pp. 11-12.

⁶ See: Celia Kourie. "Mysticism: A Survey of Recent Issues," p. 92.

⁷ Bernard McGinn and Patria McGinn. *Early Christian Mystics: The Divine vision of the Spiritual Masters*. p. 12.

a manifestation of a deeper, permanent way of life, in which the purifying, illuminating and transforming power of God is experienced, effecting a transformation of the mystic's entire being and consciousness.”⁸

It is already evident from *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* and especially from its prologue on which this study concentrates, and from the interpretation of the whole of the mystical works of St. Bonaventure that the final goal of the mystical journey is “ecstatic-union” which will consequently result in “ecstatic-peace.” Bonaventure, according to many scholars, was not really interested in analysing the many forms of mystical union, and hence it was not his main preoccupation. However, in his writings, Bonaventure deals with different aspects of mystical union though not in detail. As a result, this research is primarily an attempt to define the nature of mystical union in *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, in the light of the entirety of Bonaventure's writings. Secondly, Bonaventure claims in his writing *The Journey of the Mind to God* that this mystical journey is impossible unless grace is poured into the soul of the wayfarer, “For into this heavenly Jerusalem no one enters unless it first comes down into his heart by grace...,” (*Itinerarium*, IV, 4); however, he does not explain in his book how grace affects the mystical movement of the soul into God. Therefore, based on Bonaventure's works in general and the *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* in particular, this study will investigate how grace influences the processes of the soul's mystical journey. Again, Bonaventure appears to be sceptical of the wayfarer's efforts in mystically uniting with God. But, if someone wants to go on this path and experience God, will they simply be a passive receiver? In Bonaventure's writings, how do the wayfarer's disposition and effort affect the journey process? This is the focus of the study's third segment of inquiry.

In the first chapter of this study, I intend to investigate the two traditions, implicit in the philosophical-mystical works of Bonaventure namely, theological-intellectual, and Franciscan-spiritual. This chapter of the work also will deal with how Bonaventure was influenced by the other schools of thought like Plato, Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, the school of St. Victor and wisdom theology. The second chapter of the work will be dealing solely with Bonaventure's writing *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, in order to analyse the objective of the mystical journey. In the third chapter, I wish to analyse the nature of the mystical union in the writings of Bonaventure and critically compare and apprise his notion of Contemplation and Union with the general notion of Christian Contemplation and

⁸ Celia Kourie. "Mysticism: A survey of Recent Issues," pp. 84, 85.

mystical union. In the same chapter, I try also to analyse certain symbols in relation to the concepts of “the ascent/ lift” given in *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* which may enable one to understand in depth the process of ecstatic union. The last part of this chapter enquires into the consequence of the Mystical union or the experience of Union as *Mens Pacifica* (Ecstatic Peace) and the resulted bliss/ joy. Finally, the last chapter inquiries into the concept of Grace in the works of Bonaventure and the efficacy of grace in the mystical journey of the soul. The first part of this chapter deals with the general understanding of grace as expressed in *Breviloquium* by Bonaventure and the second part will analyse the effect of grace as “deiformity”- restoring Godlikeness and the last section will enumerate the role of grace on the experience of mystical union as well the obligation of human effort in achieving the goal of the mystical journey. The concluding part of the thesis will engage with a short discussion on the relevance of contemplation, particularly, the relevance of the Franciscan- Spiritual way as envisaged by Bonaventure.

History shows that when traditional religion becomes opaque due to certain historical, social, and religious factors, it seems there cannot but arise a pursuit of spirituality, which in its radical form emerges into mysticism. The human being as *homo religiosus* cannot but be *homo spiritualis* who again and again—sometimes in the midst of the ruins of the cultural and religious edifices of meaning—consciously seeks an intimate communion with the sacred at the depth of reality and life and, furthermore, can and does aspire to be *homo mysticus* for communion’s completion in an excess of desire.⁹

⁹Pyong-Gwan Pak. “The Relevance of Mystical Spirituality in the context of Today’s “Spirituality Phenomenon.” In: *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, Vol. 15. 3, (2012), 126. .

CHAPTER I

ST. BONAVENTURE OF BAGNOREGIO

The first Chapter of this work contains mainly two sections. Firstly, it enquires into the relevant biographical content of the life of St. Bonaventure of Bagnoregio and his works. Secondly, it looks into the general notions of mystical theology so that we can understand the mystical works of Bonaventure in a better perception. Thirdly, this chapter researches the main schools of thoughts and persons which had an influence on the thought of Bonaventure, especially on his mystical writings.

1. The Biographical Aspects of Bonaventure

Bonaventure had many followers and students who were interested in his works, but no ardent compiler of his biography; there is no one who had tried a living spiritual profile that would have let generations dig into the depth of his soul with facts other than those gleaned from his writings. This could be explained by the attitude of that great century, which was fascinated by ideas but uninterested in concrete persons behind the ideas. Even then St. Bonaventure profoundly inspired his contemporaries not only with the sharpness of his ideas and the coherence of his doctrine, but also along with his administrative accomplishments. The available historical facts regarding him concern mainly his external activities; data on matters and activities referring to his inward life are scarce, extraordinarily brief, fragmentary, and unsure. The first biography of Bonaventure was written at the close of the end of the fifteenth century by Mariano of Florence, nearly 200 years after his life on this earth.¹⁰

1. 1. Life of Bonaventure

Bonaventure was born in Bagnoregio (Civita di Bagnoregio), a little town in the Lazio hills near Viterbo (Tuscany) around 1221 (1222).¹¹ Some authors also suggest the year as 1217.¹² “Probably in 1217 (some scholars opt for 1221), Bonaventure was born in

¹⁰ See in: Efrem Bettoni. *Saint Bonaventure*. The Notre Dame Pocket library, University of Notre Dame Press, 1964, p.3.

¹¹ See in: Efrem Bettoni. *Saint Bonaventure*, p. 4.

¹² See in: Paul Rout. *Francis & Bonaventure*. Liguori Publications, 1997, p.5.

Bagnoregio—in those days an episcopal residence located between Orvieto and Viterbo.”¹³ Bagnoregio lies on a rising hill overlooking a vast panorama of jagged white volcanic rock peaks set against the dark, looming Appenine Range on the background. Giovanni di Fidanza was Bonaventure's father, and Maria di Ritello was his mother. Bonaventure was given his father's name, Giovanni, during his christening; he was given the name Bonaventure after joining the Franciscans. Bonaventure's childhood is almost completely unknown. Bonaventure writes about his own life in relation to Saint Francis, claiming that he was a kid who suffered from a life-threatening sickness and was miraculously healed due to the saint's intercession acquired through his mother's prayers.¹⁴ “I was delivered by him from the jaws of death and restored to a healthy life” (*Legenda minor*).¹⁵ Commenting on the same matter Schlosser says:

Unfortunately, little is known about his childhood and early youth except one autobiographical note (*Legenda Minor* 7, 8 and *Legend. Maior* Prol. 3): Here Bonaventure reports that as a child he had once been seriously ill but then recovered by the intercession of St Francis. From the report we cannot conclude for certain if this event meant a personal encounter between the child and St Francis, whether he was still alive or already a canonized saint (in 1228). Legend has it that it happened during the lifetime of St Francis and that the name “Bonaventura” goes back to a remark which the Poverello himself had made about the child. In any case the Fidanza family seems to have had connections with the Saint from Assisi or at least with the community of his brethren who had a convent in Bagnoregio.¹⁶

Francis is said to have preached in Bagnoregio and founded the Convent of San Francesco, which was located in a now-lost portion of the town. Bonaventure had his early education with the Franciscans in his birth town, according to testimonies for his canonization. Bonaventure left his hometown for studies in Paris as a youth in 1234/1235.¹⁷ “In time, this young man would assume the leadership of one of the fastest/growing religious movements in medieval Europe—the Franciscans—and would be recognized as one of the leading General Ministers of the Order.”¹⁸ While studying at the University of Paris, he met Alexander of Hales (1185-1245), a refuted professor who became Bonaventure's primary and most influential teacher. From Bonaventure's own words, we know that Alexander had a tremendous influence on him: he called him “master and father” and considered himself a

¹³ Marianne Schlosser. “Bonaventure: life and works,” trans. Angelica Kliem. In : *A Companion to Bonaventure*, ed. Jay Hamond et Wayne Hellmann. Brill, 2014, p.9.

¹⁴ See in: Christopher M. Cullen. *Bonaventure*. Oxford University Press, 2006, pp.09-10.

¹⁵ Quoted in: Efrem Bettoni. *Saint Bonaventure*, p.4

¹⁶ Marianne Schlosser. “Bonaventure: life and works,” p. 9.

¹⁷ See in: Christopher M. Cullen. *Bonaventure*, p.10

¹⁸ See in: Ilia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure: An Introduction to His Life, Thought, and Writings*. New City Press, 2001, p. 21.

successor of Alexander and his work.¹⁹ It could be that this great master, at the University of Paris, had inspired Bonaventure in his choosing the Franciscan way of life. “There was John de la Rochelle, Odo Rigaldi, William of Melitona, and especially Alexander of Hales, the greatest of them all, who, already an old and esteemed master, had entered the Order of the Poverello of Assisi in 1231.”²⁰ Alexander of Hales was a significant and influential individual in the thirteenth century for two reasons: first, he used philosophy extensively in his theological work to address many theoretical concerns in spiritual science, and second, he had a significant influence on the nascent Franciscan school.²¹

At the newly created University of Paris, Alexander was one of the first theologians to address Aristotle's thought. He made a concerted attempt to engage Aristotle, quoting from all of the Stagirite's major works. Alexander was on the forefront of research at the time in this respect, yet he remained basically an Augustinian on a wide range of topics. Indeed, Alexander had long been considered the wellspring of what is known as "the Augustinian" school and the medieval “Franciscan” school and its Augustinian perspectives were shaped by Alexander.²² Bonaventure got this spirit of the legacy from Alexander, which would form later his own synthesis-especially the currents emanating from Augustine, the pseudo-Dionysius, and the Victorines-and this relationship was crucial for Bonaventure in his later scholarly career.²³

Bonaventure's precise date of entry into the order is uncertain. Some say he entered in 1238, while others say it was in 1243. If he had entered in 1238, he would have been seventeen years old and had just completed his Master of Arts degree in the same year. Those who disagree with this year believe Bonaventure earned his Master of Arts in 1242 and joined the order in 1243.²⁴ Commenting on the Bonaventure's entrance into the Franciscan Order Bettoni writes:

The young Fedenza must have gone to study at Paris before joining the friars, and there at the school of Alexander his Franciscan vocation matured. This is one more reason which causes me to place the date of his entrance into the Order in the year 1243, rather than 1238, the year in which he probably went to Paris to study and became the disciple of Alexander who, as was then the custom, taught at the Franciscan friary there.²⁵

¹⁹ See in: Christopher M. Cullen. *Bonaventure*, p.10.

²⁰ Efreim Bettoni. *Saint Bonaventure*, p. 6.

²¹ See in: Christopher M. Cullen. *Bonaventure*, p.10.

²² Ibid., pp.10,11.

²³ See in Ilia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, p. 22.

²⁴ See in: Christopher M. Cullen. *Bonaventure*, p.11

²⁵ Efreim Bettoni. *Saint Bonaventure*, p.6.

Even though he was a member of the Roman Province, he would have completed his novitiate in Paris, regardless of the consent on the year of his entry into the Order.²⁶

Bonaventure commenced his Commentary on Peter Lombard's Sentences in 1250. In 1254, he most likely acquired his licence to teach theology. Bonaventure was supposed to join the guild of Master of Theology in 1254, but due to a conflict between the secular and mendicant masters, it was postponed until October 1257. Bonaventure was only admitted to the guild of masters as a consequence of papal intervention. Bonaventure and his colleague, Thomas Aquinas, legally came into possession of their theology chairs at the university in August 1257. By October of that year, however, the issue of Bonaventure's formal admission to the university faculty became irrelevant, because of the development in the Franciscan Order.²⁷

As the fight between the secular masters and the mendicants raged on in Paris, the Franciscan Order, which had expanded from a few thousand friars in Francis' time to over 30,000 friars by 1250 (St. Francis died in 1226), was torn apart by conflict and dissension. A fictitious group of Franciscans known as the zealots was the main source of conflict. The Franciscan zealots were devoted to extreme poverty, pureness, humility, and ascetic piety, inspired by the teachings of the Calabrian abbot, Joachim of Fiore. They not only despised learning and institutional structures, but also predicted that the current ecclesiastical organizations will be replaced by an age of the spirit. This new epoch would result in a new and eternal Gospel, transcending the New Testament itself. They claimed that Francis of Assisi was the messenger of this new era. Francis' existence represented the final age of this world as the angel of the sixth seal who had ushered in the new age of the spirit. On February 2, 1256, John of Parma resigned as General in the chapter of Aracoeli in Rome due to conflicting circumstances, and Bonaventure (at the age of 36) was elected as the seventh Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor.²⁸

The order was at the brink of a split when Bonaventure took over as the minister General, but not nearly as severely as it would be in the years after his death. One group, who would later solidify their positions and become known as the Spirituals, battled against any rule counter measures, particularly in the area of property. Another group, subsequently known as the Conventuals, made up the bulk of the order and was generally willing to accept

²⁶ See in: Christopher M. Cullen. *Bonaventure*, p.11.

²⁷ See in: Christopher M. Cullen. *Bonaventure*, p.12.

²⁸ See in: See in Ilia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, pp.23,24

various popes' permits that permitted the order to "use" property. Bonaventure did little to change the general chapter's decision to suspend papal bulls that relaxed the observance of 'poverty' on certain issues. He did, however, make an effort to alleviate poverty where it was interfering with the ability to learn in study houses.²⁹ According to Bettoni, Bonaventure governed the order with the following principles: sympathy and appreciation for those friars who, enlightened by divine inspiration, wished to live the primitive Franciscan ideology in all its pureness; unbending discipline with all who desired to extend the Rule and Franciscan poverty beyond legitimate papal inferences; vibrant commitment to lead the Order back to full adherence of Rule 1223. He intended to strike the right balance in order to solve all of the problems. Bonaventure participated in this restoration not just via the wisdom of his legislation and the virtue of his sanctity, but also through the doctrine of his works, which awakened people and justified his efforts.³⁰ Bonaventure also had to deal with the order's enormous size, which was split into 36 provinces by thousands of friars. Bonaventure's letters from the beginning of his generalship show that he was acutely aware of the issues that the relatively new order was facing. One of the key reasons that a majority of Franciscan historians see the choice of Bonaventure as God's intervention. Bonaventure worked so much to keep different groupings of Franciscans and his spirit of moderation rescued the order from turmoil. And that was one of the key reasons for the majority of the scholars of Franciscan history, to note that the choice of Bonaventure as the General, has been an intervention of God. For those who question that view, it's worth remembering that the order fell into a nearly four-decade schism shortly after his death, which culminated in the burning at stake of four Spirituals in Marseilles in 1318.³¹

It's significant to note that there's no reference of Francis in Bonaventure's life or writings before to 1257, the year he was appointed Minister General. Of course, this could be owing to the fact that little is known about Bonaventure's life before being the general, and his writings are all intellectual works published at the University. However, after his election as Minister General, Bonaventure's thoughts are dominated by the figure of Francis. In the preface to his classic *Soul's Journey into God*, written in 1259, Bonaventure mentions Francis' figure for the first time. He informs us that he walked up to the mountain of La Verna in search of peace, following in the footsteps of "our most blessed father Francis."³²

²⁹ See in: Christopher M. Cullen. *Bonaventure*, p. 12.

³⁰ See in: Efrem Bettoni. *Saint Bonaventure*, pp. 10,11.

³¹ See in: Christopher M. Cullen. *Bonaventure*, p. 13.

³² See in: See in Ilia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, p. 25.

Rout comments on the same in relation to St. Francis, “Bonaventure’s position as Minister General drew him deep into the conflict and for this reason, he withdrew in 1259 into the solitude of the Franciscan holy mount La Verna in order to immerse himself more deeply in the spiritual world of the founder.”³³

Pope Clement IV desired to make Bonaventure archbishop of York in 1265 but he denied the offer. Later, Pope Gregory X persuaded him to become bishop of Albano in November 1273 and consecrated him in Lyons same month and consequently Bonaventure resigned as Minister General in May 1274. He, as cardinal-bishop, attended the 2nd Council of Lyons in 1274 and actively worked for the reunification with the Greek Church of the east which was one of the main aims that Pope Gregory X had intended for the council when he called it.³⁴ Bonaventure died suddenly on July 15, 1274, in the early morning hours, eight days after the union was finalised. In attendance of the funeral were Pope Gregory X, the Eastern and Western council fathers, and the papal curia. Bonaventure was laid to rest in Lyons' Franciscan church.³⁵ Sixtus IV, the Franciscan pope, canonised him on April 14, 1432, and Pope Sixtus V named him a doctor of the church with the title "Seraphic Doctor" (*Doctor Seraphicus*) on May 14, 1588 (*Doctor Seraphicus*). His tomb was invaded, and the remains destroyed by a crowd of French revolutionaries in the eighteenth century.³⁶

1. 2. Important Literary Works of Bonaventure

Bonaventure's works can be divided into two phases of his life: those from his “regency”, when he taught at the university of Paris, and those from the period when he was general and after. *Commentaries on the Bible and the Sentences* (a textbook written by Peter Lombard in the 12th century) are Bonaventure's most important works, followed by *Breviloquium* ("Summary") and *De Reductione Artium Ad Theologiam* ("On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology"), which reveal both his theological and philosophical thoughts and opinions. These works, as well as later works such as *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* ("Journey of the Mind to God"), *Mystical Opuscula*, show that he not only followed St. Augustine's ideas, but also that he was influenced by ancient thinkers, most notably Aristotle. His writings, like his personal life, exhibit an exceptional capacity to reconcile divergent traditions in both theology and philosophy, which is why his contemporaries already

³³ Paul Rout. *Francis & Bonaventure*, pp. 6,7.

³⁴ See in: Christopher M. Cullen. *Bonaventure*, p. 14.

³⁵ See in: Efrem Bettoni. *Saint Bonaventure*, p. 12.

³⁶ See in: Christopher M. Cullen. *Bonaventure*, p. 14.

regarded him as one of the best intellectuals.³⁷ There are three *quaestiones disputatae* of special importance from his period of university- regency: *Disputed Questions on Evangelical Perfection*, *Disputed questions on the knowledge of Christ*, and *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of Trinity*. Bonaventure delivered a number of conferences at the university and the important collections of his conferences are known as: *the Collections on the Ten Commandments*, *the Collections on the Seven Gifts*, *the Collections on the Six Days*. Bonaventure had left behind him some of other important works which are dealing with theological themes in particular (*mystical Opuscula*): *on the Threefold Way*, *Soliloquies*, *the Tree of Life*, *On the Five Feasts of the Child Jesus*, *Treatise on Preparation for Mass*, *On the Rule of the Soul*, *on the Perfection of the Life of Sisters*, *on the Six Wings of the Seraphim* and so on.

At this point of the Study, it may be good to introduce here the Book *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* in an elaborate mode, which is Bonaventure's most important mystical work and on which this study is concentrated. Bonaventure wrote what is regarded to be his most renowned work, "the Pilgrimage Way to God" (*Itinerarium mentis in Deum*), in the seclusion of his spiritual retreat on mount Laverna, in 1259. The literary form of "itinerary" was employed in late antiquity to express a journey, most commonly a pilgrimage to the Holy Land: *in terram sanctam*. Bonaventure's *Itinerarium* recounts the pilgrimage *in Deum*; it is a description of a person's spiritual journey; God, who desires to dwell in the human soul as in a 'spiritual Jerusalem', is its destiny. It is a voyage made with the mind (*mens*), which is the soul, to the extent that it has the capacity for God. It causes an inner "metamorphosis" rather than a change of location. Drawing closer to the "beloved," or becoming more like that person, causes a change of heart.³⁸

The way to experience God's presence is through "reflections", which is a type of speculation/meditation. Six of these speculations are found in three pairings in *Itinerarium*. The meditation begins with the senses' perception of the present reality. The individual who is meditating is intended to recognize that this reality would not exist without God as its source or support. The person should then recognize himself as a creature with intellect and free will and realize that he could not be this much enlightened, reflecting, and yearning (person) unless his understanding and desire were linked to the ultimate Truth and Love. Finally, God becomes the subject of reflection: God as perfect 'Being'- which the human

³⁷See in: Christopher M. Cullen. *Bonaventure*, p. 15.

³⁸ Marianne Schlosser. "Bonaventure: life and works," p. 33.

person can grasp only through right application of intellect - as well as God, the 'Triune Being,' which can only be known via God's revelation in Christ. All human knowledge of creation, human personhood, and finally, all knowledge of God - whether learned by philosophical thought or revealed - becomes a lesson on how to 'see' and 'experience' God's presence in *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*.³⁹ The upcoming chapters will deal with this work of Bonaventure in detail to analyse the nature of mystical journey and mystical union.

2. The Mystical Writings of Bonaventure

The works of Bonaventure can be classified into three groups: 1) Scholastic writings created between 1243 and 1257; 2) Spiritual writings composed between 1257 and 1267; and 3) Lectures or *collationes* presented at the Paris University between 1267 and 1273. The real content/elements of mystical theology can be found in the latter two groupings of his works. The mystical experience of the Crucified Word (Christ) is a recurring theme in these works. Bonaventure demonstrates how mystical experience is grounded in imitation of the Christ crucified and one's love towards the Crucified.⁴⁰ The most important work in the group of mysticism is his *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* (Mind's/souls Journey into God). This diploma Paper is mostly centred around the mystical work *Soul's Journey into God*.

Bonaventure's mystical theology is mostly traditional, influenced by Augustine, Dionysius, Gregory the Great, the Cistercians, and the Victorians, among others. Bonaventure's greatest influence, however, is Francis, particularly the stigmatized Francis, and it is this influence that saves him from becoming a cynical interpreter of tradition.⁴¹ The contemplation of God, according to Bonaventure, involves both the body and the soul, whose harmony leads to the mystical serenity that is the end of union. Ecstasy, which is unity with the Crucified, is the ultimate level of mystic experience. Rather than drawing one away from the world, joyful union draws one closer to it. Union with the Crucified is required for the eschatological age of peace and the fulfilment of creation. Bonaventure's mystical theology is described as a new sort of mysticism that both characterizes Bonaventure's theory of contemplation and highlights a radical shift from contemplation as a Neoplatonic world view to contemplation as a Christocentric world view through his theology. In the coming sections

³⁹ Marianne Schlosser. "Bonaventure: life and works," p. 33.

⁴⁰ See in: Noel Muscat. The life of Saint Francis: In the light of Saint Bonaventure's Theology on the "Verbum Crucifixum." Studia Antonina. Editrice Antonianum, 1989, p.109.

⁴¹ See in: Ilia Delio. *Crucified Love: Bonaventure's Mysticism of the Crucified Christ*. Franciscan Media, 1998, p. 26.

of this chapter, we shall see in detail the historical development of the mysticism and branches of schools which have influenced the mystical thoughts of Bonaventure.

2. 1. The Term “Mysticism”

It might be helpful to define the term "mysticism" in general, as well as in Bonaventure's writings, at the outset of this study. During the Middle Ages, this term most likely entered the spiritual lexicon of Christianity. It is probable that the term "mysticism" was coined and used (in today's sense) in seventeenth-century France to describe the role of human effort in contemplative meditation. In contrast to acquired contemplation, which was the result of human effort, “mysticism” defined infused contemplation, which was an unparalleled gift of grace.⁴² Contemplation is a simple, instinctive gaze on God and supernatural things that originate from love and is focused on them. Whereas infused contemplations “is a simple, loving, protracted gaze on God and things divine, under the influence of the gifts of the Holy Ghost and of a special actual grace which takes possession of us and causes us to act in a passive rather than in an active manner.”⁴³

Mysticism is derived from the same root as mystery. In profane Greek, a mystic is a person who has been ‘initiated into mysteries’, and everything that has to do with ‘mysteries is mystical.’⁴⁴ In his book *The Inner Eye of Love*, Johnston writes,

Historically the word mysticism is associated with the mystery religions or mystery cults which flourished in the Greco-Roman world in the early century of the Christian era. Eleusinian, Dionysian, and Orphic mysteries attained to great popularity, attracting thousands spiritually hungry devotees to their esoteric rites and ceremonies. The mystic (*mustes*) was the initiate who in an oath of secrecy swore to be silent or, literally, to keep his mouth shut (*muein*) about the inner working of his new-found religion. In its original meaning, then mysticism is associated with mystery and secrecy and occult.⁴⁵

According to Ewert Cousins, the term "mysticism," is derived from the Indo-European root *mu*, which "suggests the boundaries of language" in its etymological meaning. The nouns *mysterion* (*mystery*) and *mystes* (one initiated into the mysteries) as well as the adjective/ substantive *mystikos* are derived from this root, as are the Latin *mutus* (mute, dumb, silent) and the Greek verb *myein* (to close the eyes or mouth) (mystical, mystic). These phrases have a cultural basis in what are known as mystery religions in ancient

⁴² See in: Ilia Delio. *Crucified Love: Bonaventure's Mysticism of the Crucified Christ*, p. 173.

⁴³ Adolphe Tanqueray. *The Spiritual life: A Treatise on Ascetical and Mystical Theology*, trans. Herman Brandeis. Newman Press, 1930, p. 650.

⁴⁴ See in: Albert Plé. *Mystery and Mysticism*. The philosophical library, 1956, p.9.

⁴⁵ William Johnston. *The Inner Eye of love: Mysticism and Religion*. Harper & Row, Publishers, 1982, p.16.

Greece.⁴⁶ Bouyer argues in response to the same issue that the word *mystikos* comes from the verb *muo*, which meaning "to close," specifically "to close the eyes." Its oldest recorded use in pre-Christian times is in association with Mystery religions, or cults whose vital rites were kept hidden from all save the initiated. Thus, the Mysteries' rites are referred to as *ta mystika*, and the initiated are referred to as *mystikoi*. However, it is crucial to remember that the secret to which the word alludes in this first phase of its use is a strictly ritual secret. It is not a theory or esoteric information that the initiated must keep hidden from their interrogators, but rather it refers to the intricacies of a ceremony.⁴⁷

It is now evident that the pagan mysteries were nothing more than hidden practices. That is to say, they were ceremonies that were only revealed to the initiated, and they were performed according to a defined ceremonial entrusted to the initiating priests, who were the only ones with the authority to carry them out. Only by literary adaptation do we come across the word, which may be used to any form of doctrine, and this occurs as early as Plato's time.⁴⁸ The term "mysticism" was adopted by Neoplatonism and became connected with the practice of closing one's eyes to all exterior stimuli, which was important to Neoplatonic mediation. The verb *muein* was employed by both Plotinus and Proclus to describe someone who is *raptured* in deep contemplation and has closed their eyes. The word *mystikos* was employed in the Christian world to refer to the Scriptures, sacraments, and spiritual life. The Alexandrians, Clement, and Origen were the first Christians to use the term *mystikos*, which they applied to Scriptural exegesis and the finding of the allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures. Exegesis, according to Origen, is "mystical and ineffable contemplation," exposing the mystical sense as the hidden meaning beneath the literal words of the text. The term "mysteries" were used to describe the Christian sacraments, particularly the Eucharist and baptism. The word *mystikos* came to mean union or partaking in God's life in the texts attributed to Macarius. This could be the first time the term "mystical union" appears in Christian literature.⁴⁹ In this context McGinn notes, "In the writings ascribed to Macarius it had even come to modify union or sharing with God — the earliest appearance of "mystical union" in Christian literature. But it was Dionysius more than anyone who gave the word

⁴⁶ See in: Ewert Cousins. "Bonaventure's Mysticism and Language," in *Mysticism and Language*, ed. Steven T. Katz. Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 236.

⁴⁷ See in: Louis Bouyer. "Mysticism: An Essay on the History of the Word," in *Understanding Mysticism*, ed. Richard Woods. Image Books, 1980, p.43.

⁴⁸ See in: Albert Plé. *Mystery and Mysticism*, p. 19.

⁴⁹ See in: Ilia Delio. *Crucified Love: Bonaventure's Mysticism of the Crucified Christ*, p. 174.

the importance it has continued to enjoy in Christian thought, using it often and in key contexts in his writings.”⁵⁰

Commenting on the Christian adaptation of the term “Mysticism” and “mystic” Louis Bouyer notes,

It is very remarkable that at the moment when the language of Christians borrows the word "mystic" from the pagan tongue, it does not make use of it to describe either a ritual or a spiritual reality. In those two fields in which its use corresponds either to that which in fact the Hellenistic religion has known, or to Christian realities which are to be explained by references to pagan religious realities, it is not at first used, historically speaking, in connection with anything "Greek," but with earlier Christian significance. This usage applies it to the least Greek thing about Christianity: The Bible. It is quite true to say that the pre-Christian source of the word is always evident. But what is most evident is the very commonplace use to which it has been reduced, as we have already shown, a use which gives the Christians their chance to adopt it. An expression which has become of common use for their contemporaries is at their disposal to enable them to make known to others their own new and original teaching.⁵¹

The Mystical Theology, a text by Pseudo-Dionysius, had an influence later, on Christian understanding of this spiritual phenomena. This work, written in the fifth or sixth century, has had a significant impact on the history of spirituality in the Christian East and West. By methodical rejection of language of all sense experiences, images, ideas, and concepts, the author created an idea of a spiritual ascension to God. The Pseudo-Dionysius therefore mapped what became the classical version of the *apophatic* way, whose technical name comes from the Greek words *phasis* (speech) and *apo* (away)- (away from). As a result, the *apophatic* road is the route of language negation, of non-speech or non-language. This was in contrast to the *kataphatic* method outlined in Pseudo-Dionysius' earlier work *On the Divine Names*. The word "*kataphatic*" comes from the Greek words *phasis* (speech-affirmation) and *kata* (according to). The *apophatic*, rather than the *kataphatic*, was preferred by Pseudo-Dionysius and much of the succeeding tradition. As a result, the word "mystical," which originally meant "hidden or secret," came to be associated with the spiritual practice of negation.⁵²

Of course, the Dionysius the Areopagite is most known for coining the phrase "mystical theology" (*theologia mystike*). This *terminus technicus* refers to the knowledge (or, rather, "super-knowledge") that deals with the mystery of God himself, *mone*⁵³, not

⁵⁰ Bernhard McGinn. *Foundations of Mysticism*. Vol. 1. *The presence of God: A History of western Christian Mysticism*. Cross Road, 1994. P.171.

⁵¹ Louis Bouyer. "Mysticism: An Essay on the History of the Word." In: *Understanding Mysticism*, p. 45.

⁵² See in: Ewert Cousins. "Bonaventure's Mysticism and Language," in *Mysticism and Language*, p. 237.

⁵³ "*Mona* refers to the absolute transcendence of the first principle: motionless, detached from everything, unalterable and always the same". Available in: <https://faberinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Ganz-Notes-on-Dionysius-the-Areopagite.pdf>. Accessed on: 05.05.2022.

merely a specific type of experience. Although Dionysius distinguishes between mystical, symbolic, and cataphatic theology, these are distinctions of functions rather than distinct types of theology. As a result, it is not wrong to describe his entire concept as mystical in the sense that the interaction of all modes has as its objective, the attainment of unity with God in darkness and quiet.⁵⁴

It is apparent from history that the Greek Fathers used the term "mystical" to characterize first and foremost the divine reality that Christ gave to us, which the Gospel revealed, and which gives all the Scriptures their profundity and definitiveness. Furthermore, mystical refers to all knowledge of divine things that we gain via Christ and then apply to those things themselves through derivation. Finally, the phrase indicates the spiritual actuality of worship in "spirit and in truth," as opposed to the vanity of an outward religion that has not been revived by the coming of the Saviour. This essential agreement must never be lost sight of as we move on to new interpretations.⁵⁵ The mystical experience symbolized God's experiential awareness in the Middle Ages. Mysticism is an experimental consciousness of God, but one that comes to us through mystery. It is more than believing in mystery and frequenting the sacraments. The Christian mystic may be nothing more than a nice gift given to us through mysteries. The Mystic is one who neither rejects Christ's humanity, communion in the mystical body, the sacraments, hearing God's message, or connection with his fellowmen in order to reach the divine, nor is he the one who rejects all that is not Divine in order to reach God. God manifests himself to him, dwells within him, and allows himself to be known experimentally in these human realities, which faith embraces as mysteries. These mysteries permeate the depths of the faithful soul as he progresses in mystical experience; these are the graces of prayer that become the mysteries that give him access to God.⁵⁶

McGinn describes mysticism as involving an instantaneous awareness of God's presence as a basic assertion that exists in practically all mystical books. Mystics maintain that their manner of access to God is fundamentally different from ordinary consciousness, as well as from the awareness of God received through traditional religious practices such as prayer, sacraments, and other rituals. They acknowledge that God is present in these acts as believers, but not in a direct or immediate way. Mystical religious writings are those that

⁵⁴ See in: Bernhard McGinn. *Foundations of Mysticism*, p.171.

⁵⁵ See in: Louis Bouyer. "Mysticism: An Essay on the History of the Word," in *Understanding Mysticism*, p. 47

⁵⁶ See in: Albert Plé. *Mystery and Mysticism*, pp. 12,13.

bear witness to a different kind of divine presence, one that can sometimes be obtained through ordinary religious observances but does not have to be. Its presentation as both subjectively and objectively more direct, even at times as immediate, distinguishes it from other types of religious consciousness, and this takes place on a level of the personality deeper and more fundamental than that of regular conscious activity. It's also worth noting that this immediacy refers to the mystical experience itself, rather than the preparation for it.⁵⁷

To conclude this part of the chapter, the term "mysticism" was not extensively used in the Middle Ages as it is today, at least in terms of experiencing spiritual reality. It was connected with the allegorical interpretation of Christian Scripture, alluding to the sacred text's symbolic meaning, as it was in the early church. In the Middle Ages, *contemplatio*, a Latin translation of the Greek *theoria*, meant "looking at" or "gazing at," was a typical term for the phenomenon of spiritual experience. Contemplation was a term used to characterize a human's personal relationship with God as a "gazing upon" or experiential knowledge of God that could lead to mystical union via grace and perfection. Mysticism can be broadly defined as contemplation in which one enters into direct or indirect contact with God. Because the word contemplation appears frequently in Bonaventure's writings, the terms "mysticism" and "contemplation" are used interchangeably in this essay. However, the term "mysticism" more adequately depicts the encounter with God concealed in the person of Jesus Christ, which is at the heart of his mystical theology.⁵⁸

After seeing the meaning and history of the term Mysticism, let us now closely examine the writings of Bonaventure, especially his works which have a mystical orientation, and we shall situate them in the context of the general trends in his thought pattern.

2. 2. The General Trends in the Mystical Writings of Bonaventure

An examination of Bonaventure's Mystical writings reveals the two things that merge in his thought. The 'Franciscan-Spiritual tradition' is one, while the 'Theological-Intellectual' (also mystical) tradition is the other. As previously stated, the Theological-intellectual tradition may be mainly traced all the way back to Augustine's ideas and includes works by Dionysius the Areopagite, Richard of St. Victor, and Bernard of Clairvaux. In the context of the Aristotelian movement of Bonaventure's period, the interaction of these two types of

⁵⁷ See in: Bernhard McGinn. *Foundations of Mysticism*, p. xix.

⁵⁸ See in: Ilia Delio. *Crucified Love: Bonaventure's Mysticism of the Crucified Christ*, pp. 174,175.

traditions gives his work a distinctiveness and develops into a particular form of wisdom theology.⁵⁹ The upcoming section intends to examine the aspect of wisdom theology in Bonaventure.

2. 2. 1. Bonaventure and “Wisdom” Tradition

Bonaventure's ideas are so centred on the concept of “wisdom” (*sapientia*) that it may be properly regarded the entire aim of his work and life. He exhorts us to be “lovers of wisdom” because without wisdom, we cannot know the peace or happiness that alone satisfies the human being. Bonaventure's pursuit for wisdom is always a pursuit for happiness, which he considers to be man's ultimate goal. As a result, his compositions have a feeling of urgency and passion. The pursuit for wisdom begins in this world with reasoning, but it is most direct and fruitful in theology, the science of God's own revelation. Theology isn't only a theoretical science; it's also a very practical one, dealing with topics that affect life and death in relation to human soul. On the question of whether theology is a speculative or practical science, Bonaventure chooses a middle way, claiming that it is a ‘sapiential habit’. Faith is a cognitive process, yet its function is to stimulate the affective faculties of mind. Contemplation and sanctity are inextricably linked, yet theology's primary goal is to make us better people. Theology is a coherent way of living with the objective of achieving union with God. It gets the final say since it is the princess of the academics. The search for wisdom paths should lead the seeker back to God himself, for wisdom is there with God.⁶⁰ Therefore “Wisdom” (*sapientia*) is a concept that encompasses more than just having knowledge (*Scientia*). In a fascinating sermon on the mystery of God's kingdom, Bonaventure comments about wisdom in its multifaceted nature, “There are some dimensions of wisdom that relate to our intellect, others that relate to our desires, and others that are to be lived out. Therefore, wisdom ought to take possession of the entire person, that is with respect to the intellect, the affective life, and the person’s action. (Sermon II on the Kingdom of God 34 (5:548)).”⁶¹

This text shows that Bonaventure's wisdom school is concerned with the process of incorporating different levels of human experience into a cohesive notion of humanity's spiritual journey. The spiritual journey's purpose, however, is not only to become a knower but also a lover. In other words, the purpose of the spiritual journey is not only to have a

⁵⁹ See in: Zachary Hayes . *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*. Crossroad publishing Company, 1999, p. 37

⁶⁰ See in: Christopher M. Cullen. *Bonaventure*, p. 23.

⁶¹ Quoted in: Zachary Hayes . *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p.38.

conceptual understanding of God's presence and, to some extent, his nature. We must progress beyond that into a union of transformative love with the divine mystery.⁶² According to Marianne Schlosser, the concept of wisdom contains two aspects for Bonaventure: "being wise" as a cognitive component and "tasting" as an affective-experiential component. In the wisdom of "theology, which bestows the spiritual gift of insight, the cognitive element is dominant, but it is accompanied by a certain (experiential) "Tasting". Therefore, theology - insofar as it is knowledge that comes from love and gives joy - has a pronounced affinity with the "*cognitio experimentalis*", in which the "tasting" has priority.⁶³

Further, Bonaventure conceives the term wisdom in a variety of ways, at least four of which may be clearly distinguished. To begin with, it can be used in a generic sense to refer to general knowledge of things (*communiter*). Second, Bonaventure employs this phrase (*minus communiter*) to denote the cognition of the eternal things (as against created things) in a less common sense. Third, Bonaventure employs the term "wisdom" in the proper sense to refer to God's cognition according to Piety, in the context of faith, hope, and love. Finally, Bonaventure refers to the mind's ecstatic union with God as "wisdom" in a stricter sense (*magis stricte*).⁶⁴

Commenting on the wisdom content of Bonaventure's mystical theology, Schlosser says that theological cognition and mystical cognition differ in the degree of the affective "tasting". This way the separation between *ratio* and *contemplatio* becomes transparent. Ideally the transition to *sapere* becomes reality in the act of theological *intellegere*.⁶⁵ In other words, it refers to the mystical condition that begins with intellect and concludes with affection in this sense. Wisdom, for Bonaventure, is not only a distant aim for eternity, but it is also the objective of human life on this planet. This state, according to Bonaventure, is accompanied by peace, which belongs to the mind of the real contemplative who has been enlightened with the light of heavenly wisdom. It is a knowledge gained through "tasting", or through experience. One of the main outcomes of this wisdom, according to Bonaventure, is peace born of an ecstatic passing out of the self into a loving unity with God. *Excessus*

⁶² See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p.38, 39.

⁶³ See in: Marianne Schlosser. "Zur Theologie der Mystik bei Bonaventura." In: *Mystik in den franziskanischen Orden*, hrsg. Von Johannes B. Freyer, (free trans. to English). Verlag Butzon & Bercker, 1993, p.58.

⁶⁴ See in: Christopher M. Cullen. *Bonaventure*, p.24.

⁶⁵ See in: Marianne Schlosser. "Zur Theologie der Mystik bei Bonaventura", p. 59.

mentalis is the name he gives to this wisdom.⁶⁶ This is where one may find the basic orientation that can be found in almost all of Bonaventure's mystical writings, which could be described as 'the union of God and humanity' and this trend can be carried out in the journey to the ultimate goal, namely, the mystical union of the person with God, using, in general, human cognition, sciences and art.⁶⁷

After having seen the particular aspect of “Wisdom” theology in the writings of Bonaventure let me examine in detail the influence of different traditions of thoughts in Bonaventure’s mystical writings.

2. 2. 2. The Theological Intellectual Tradition

As it is already mentioned previously the most important personalities or rather, important schools of thought which influenced the mystical thoughts of Bonaventure are Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysus, and the school of St. Victor. This section of the chapter analyses the important aspects of each school that had helped to form the mystical thoughts of St. Bonaventure.

2. 2. 2. 1. St. Augustine

The scope of this paper does not include any critical analysis of the works of St. Augustine. However, it is truly clear that Bonaventure had taken from Augustine, the elementary principles for his theological-mystical reflections. Augustine stressed in his works that rational arguments would not produce faith and no amount of reasoning could bring about such a conviction.

Augustine urges that we begin with that conviction and then seek to understand it. This task of understanding will necessarily entail that we rationally reflect on our faith. Theology addresses this task as one of its major concerns. Consequently, Augustine affirms, the Church’s theology must begin with the Scriptures, with revelation, the expression of faith convictions which have been handed down through the ages.⁶⁸

Bonaventure insisted like Augustine those theological reflections should begin with faith. And this faith is based on the belief that God is the one who created the world, as well as the one who retains and sustains it in existence. The secret of Bonaventure's theology can be summarized as follows: mind and heart, *intellectus* and *affectus* (intelligence and desire), particularly the desire for love. The goal of theology for Bonaventure is to generate wisdom, *sapientia*, by combining mind and heart.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ See in: Christopher M. Cullen. *Bonaventure*, p.25.

⁶⁷ See in: Zachary Hayes . *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p.42.

⁶⁸ Rout Paul. *Francis and Bonaventure*, p.25

⁶⁹ See in: Rout Paul. *Francis and Bonaventure*, p.25.

Psychology, or the study of the human being, is a very important topic of investigation in today's world. Augustine was a Christian psychologist who lived in the early centuries of Christendom. Augustine did comprehend an immensely crucial religious truth: when we dig into the mystery of the human person, we dive into the mystery of God in some sense, because the human person is formed in God's image. While Augustine's psychological explanation of the human person may look over simplified, this does not diminish the significance of his essential insight. We can see the outlines of the interior journey to find God in the depths of the human mind in his writings. The notion that the human person is basically the image of God is Augustine's starting point. When we look into our own eyes, it's as if we're looking into a mirror that reflects the light of God.⁷⁰ Finding the inner self is a process, a way of contemplation and a journey. Commenting on the same theme Andrew Louth writes:

Plato had distinguished between the changing world that we experience through the sense, and the real world, the spiritual world, that we apprehend with the mind. Plotinus sees this real-world as the interior world: 'we are each of us the spiritual world' (*Enneads* III. 4. 3). I enter into myself; withdraw from the sensible world in order to apprehend—to be in -the real world. And this movement of withdrawal, introversion, concentration is something that requires practice and effort. It is a way of meditation more than anything else. This Augustine takes up. The first step to God is discovery of self, discovery of the self as a spiritual being that contains and transcends the material order.⁷¹

In his *Soul's Journey into God*, Bonaventure uses up such ideas, especially in the third chapter of the book, "Now it is, on a third step, that entering into ourselves, and, as it were, forsaking the outer court, we ought to strive to see God through a mirror in the Sanctuary, that is, in the area before the Tabernacle. Here the light of Truth, as from candelabra, will shine upon the face of our mind, in which the image of the most Blessed Trinity appears in splendor." (3.1).

It does not mean that Bonaventure identifies the religious experience with psychological quest. But "Bonaventure does claim that his path will lead to a clearer understanding of the self - the self will only be fully understood in reference to God, who is its source and its final destiny."⁷² Here Bonaventure challenges us to consider the psychological aspects of the human self; because the self is the image of God; analogies that assist us to know God can be drawn from those reflections. We express a desire to transcend

⁷⁰ See in: Rout Paul. *Francis and Bonaventure*, p. 26.

⁷¹ Andrew Louth. *The Origins of the Christian mystical Tradition*, p.138.

⁷² Paul Rout. *Francis and Bonaventure*, p. 27.

the boundaries of the present moment by applying our reasoning abilities. We have a natural inclination toward the infinite, where God's life is mirrored.⁷³

Bonaventure relies on Augustine for support for his belief that human life cannot be understood without reference to God, and that there should be no distinction between faith and reason, theology, and philosophy. Augustine also provides the psychological framework that allows Bonaventure to expound on his greater conviction that the human person, created in the image of God, can know and experience God. But it's possible that his meditations on the life of a poor man from Assisi were the foundation of this inspiration.⁷⁴

2. 2. 2. 2. *Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite*

The second trend of thought that influenced the mystical writings of Bonaventure is the compilation of writings which has been entitled to Pseudo-Dionysius. "... was a Christian Neo-Platonist who wrote in the late fifth or early sixth century CE and who transposed in a thoroughly original way the whole of pagan Neo-Platonism from Plotinus to Proclus, but especially that of Proclus and the Platonic Academy in Athens, into a distinctively new Christian context."⁷⁵ Dionysius impacted European mystical theology and also the later Scholastic intellectuals in the Middle and High Middle Ages, for example Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* (apoptotic theology).

All reality, according to Neo-Platonism, springs from an original source known as 'the One. And now Pseudo-Dionysius' texts reveal the basic Neo-Platonic structure, albeit inside a Christian framework. 'The One' becomes the Book of Genesis' creator God. The work of Creation is an emanation, or a flow of God's creative energy. Because creation is diverse, it exhibits multiple levels: entirely spiritual creatures, spiritual and material beings, and totally material realities. Each of these levels is linked to another. For example, nature's tangible world, because it is created by God, can also teach humanity about God. In this perspective, the various levels of reality, via their interconnectedness, work to bring all people closer to God, a process Dionysius refers to as "hierarchy." This 'hierarchical' aim is to allow for the appropriate fulfillment of journey through life, which is the reunion with God.⁷⁶ Pseudo-Dionysius' conception of God and creation is dynamical, rather than a distant

⁷³ See in: Paul Rout. *Francis and Bonaventure*, p. 27.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p.28.

⁷⁵ "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite." In: Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy. Available at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pseudo-dionysius-areopagite>, 26.03.2022, p.1.

⁷⁶ See in: Paul Rout. *Francis and Bonaventure*, pp.29,30.

'unmoved Mover.' Creation is considered as God's free gift, an overflowing of divine goodness itself, and God is intimately concerned with it.

In weaving together, the themes of the pagan Neo-Platonism authors with the Christian tradition, Dionysius saw the universe as a beautiful circle of longing love. Creation originates in the divine Eros; the overflowing of Goodness is multiplied into all the individual elements of creation. Each created unit participates in its own share of Eros, longing love for God, and desire to return to be reunited with the divine Eros.⁷⁷

So, Dionysius envisioned, God will that we should share to our utmost ability in His goodness, that we should become 'God-like'. God wants that we should be divinized through the process of returning to the divine source or having oneness with God.⁷⁸

The writings of Pseudo-Dionysius were primarily contemplative thoughts on how to achieve oneness with God. The Incarnation and Trinity are the two most essential Christian ideas found in Pseudo Dionysius' treatise. Unlike Augustine, he conceived the Trinity as the essential essence of the uncreated God in whom Christians subsist, rather than expounding on the catholic teaching of the Triune God. Furthermore, He sees creation in e a triadic formula created by its Creator, who is Trinity. In this way, anyone researching pseudo-Dionysius' theology must understand the three-fold metaphor underlying his ideas. Indeed, the kind of mystical theology he established in his well titled book *The Mystical Theology* follows the structure of a threefold ascent into God's mystery. Dionysius' three stages of 'contemplative ascent' are crucial to Bonaventure's later works. The 'hidden God of Darkness' and 'transcendence' play a significant role in his mystical theology. His mystical theology culminates in unity with God in God's hiddenness, but it roughly follows a three-fold process, as is typical of Pseudo-Dionysus' ideas. "Purgation", "illumination", and "union", are the three steps. Purgation refers to the process of cleansing oneself of whatever that is preventing one from beginning one's road to God. Purgation is a conversion event that involves throwing off one's old self and departing from one's own epistemological preconceptions.⁷⁹ Purgation is a conversion event that involves throwing off one's old self and departing from one's own epistemological preconceptions. When one is purified, he progresses to the next degree, the illumination, which is a higher state of contemplation on God's mysteries. This illumination brings a sense of "where God dwells," rather than just a

⁷⁷ Bernard McGinn and Patricia McGinn. *Early Christian Mystics*. The Crossroad Publishing, 2003, p.174.

⁷⁸ See in: Paul Rout. *Francis and Bonaventure*, p.30.

⁷⁹ See in: Toy Adams. "Bonaventurian mysticism: The Crucifixion of Pseudo-Dionysius' Mystical Theology". United Theological Seminary, 2016, pp.1-5. Available in: https://www.academia.edu/29783252/Bonaventurian_Mysticism_The_Crucifixion_of_Pseudo_Dionysian_Mystical_Theology, as on 30/03/2022.

sense of comprehending or perceiving God. To put it in another way, the mystic enters the genuinely strange darkness of unknown, and he belongs entirely to Him who is beyond all. As a result, the illumination is the stage of the journey when one's soul seeks to be at one with God by being purified of sense and lighted to that which is beyond all perception and seeing.⁸⁰

When it comes to returning to God or being in union with God, Areopagite's writings reflect that we are confronted with two seemingly opposing viewpoints. Based on the biblical texts from Rom 1:20 and Jn 1:18, he argues that the presence of God can be perceived within creation and yet, at the same time, God is entirely beyond all that has been created. Thus, on the one hand, one can speak something about God from his own experience and on the other hand, one can never capture the reality of God who is essentially beyond all the experiences.⁸¹ In this dialectic of negation and affirmation, as one gains a deeper understanding of God, he or she must simultaneously deny each step of understanding, because God is beyond all that one can grasp. It is a dialectic of affirmation and denial with the objective of seeing and being united with God, which is the Journey's final step. Thus, for pseudo-Dionysius, oneness with God arises in the pivotal point of one's ascent, which is offered through theopoetic reflection on God's apophatic, incomprehensible darkness and mystery.⁸²

To conclude with Dionysius, first of all, through Dionysian thoughts Bonaventure was able to express his conviction that God is not distant and abstract but a God of dynamic goodness, closely involved with the creation, which is itself an overflow of that goodness. Moreover, the final destiny of human life is to be united with God or return to God. The return is to be completed through a journey which both affirms the goodness and the diversity of God's creation and yet at the same time moves beyond this to the origin and destiny of all created realities – the life of God.⁸³

Secondly, in his mystical works, Bonaventure draws on a variety of sources to synthesise his mystical theology, particularly on Dionysius' language, despite the fact that his major focus was on Francis' (seraphic) contemplative vision and his Franciscan tradition,

⁸⁰ See in: Toy Adams. "Bonaventurian mysticism: The Crucifixion of Pseudo-Dionysius' Mystical Theology, p.5.

⁸¹ See in: Paul Rout. *Francis and Bonaventure*, p.30.

⁸² See in: Toy Adams. "Bonaventurian mysticism: The Crucifixion of Pseudo-Dionysius' Mystical Theology", p.6.

⁸³ See in: See in: Paul Rout. *Francis and Bonaventure*, p.32.

which finds nourishment in the crucified Christ. Bonaventure travelled to La Verna in *Soul's Journey into God* because it was there that St. Francis experienced a seraphic vision of a crucified angel and received his stigmata. Bonaventure wishes to be more like Francis, and he, too, has a vision of a seraph on his pilgrimage. He did observe, however, that the seraph symbolizes one's journey into unity with God because it has three wings on each side of its 'torso,' totalling six or three sets of two, which corresponds to the Bonaventure's theology of ascent into God. Bonaventure's work contains the nature of these six steps in the three-fold process of purgation, enlightenment, and union.⁸⁴

2. 2. 2. 3. *The School of St. Victor*

Writings from the school of St. Victor also impacted Bonaventure's style. Hugh and Richard of St. Victor are two major figures from this school, whose ideas influenced Bonaventure's theological works. The richness of the Victorine symbolic method of thought was highly valued by Bonaventure. The Victorian tradition held that theology should be concerned first and foremost with religious symbolism. Hugh of St. Victor wrote in his *In Hirarchiam* that because of the impossibility to represent unseen objects using just visible representations, every theology of inevitability must rely on system of symbols to make the invisible known.⁸⁵

In his writings, Francis of Assisi repeatedly referred to God as good, often using superlatives like "all good" to describe God's goodness.⁸⁶ Bonaventure used the symbolic method to emphasize Francis' belief that God's goodness can be seen in all created realities. Since creation is an outpouring of God's goodness, created beings can act as religious symbols and they contain manifestations of that goodness. We will be able to distinguish the traces of God's footsteps that will take us to the One whom our hearts desire if we approach the created world in a spirit of prayer and contemplation, says Bonaventure, enabling this universe to engage our imagination.⁸⁷

We've explored focusing on some of the major influences they had on Bonaventure's theology, as well as the nature and manner of his theology. However, an analysis of these previous authorities alone will not suffice to comprehend Bonaventure. Bonaventure not

⁸⁴See in: Toy Adams. "Bonaventurian mysticism: The Crucifixion of Pseudo-Dionysius' Mystical Theology", pp. 7,8.

⁸⁵See in: See in: Paul Rout. *Francis and Bonaventure*, p.32.

⁸⁶See in: See in Ilia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, p. 41.

⁸⁷See in: See in: Paul Rout. *Francis and Bonaventure*, p.33.

only relied on their ideas, but he also molded and altered them, resulting in a new and distinct theological style. To explore the mystery at the center of Bonaventurian thought, we must first comprehend how he molded everything he authored with the insight of the poor man of Assisi, Francis, which will be the topic of the next division of this chapter.

2. 2. 3. Franciscan-Spiritual Tradition

The founder of the Order, Francis of Assisi, into whose spirituality Bonaventure was initiated, had a tremendous impact on Bonaventure's religious worldview. This section of the Theses will enquire into the mode of influence which Bonaventure's mystical writings, especially *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* had from life of St. Francis. The first part of this section research into certain general points of influence and the later part deals with the influence on *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* in particular.

As we have already seen previously, Bonaventure's mystical theology is mostly traditional, particularly inspired by Augustine, Dionysius, and the Victorines. Bonaventure's greatest influence, however, is Francis, primarily the stigmatized Francis, and it is this influence that saves him from becoming a cynical interpreter of tradition.⁸⁸ Bonaventure combined two aspects of Francis's faith: his imitation of Christ and his experience of God's universal presence in nature, to form the idea of Christo-centricity. With Francis in mind, Bonaventure considered not only God's love in him, but also how that love is manifested in the created world. The figure of Francis imprinted with Christ's mystical wounds suggested to Bonaventure that mystical union with the Crucified Christ is the foundation of spiritual transformation and completion of the new life in Christ. To Bonaventure, the stigmatized Francis represents the need to contemplate God and seek for mystical communion by conforming to Christ Crucified, the Word of God, if one desires serenity and peace.⁸⁹

Bonaventure travelled on retreat to the Franciscan holy mount La Verna, where Francis had undergone the stigmata, shortly after his election as Minister General of the Franciscan Order. It was here that he was to write the *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, which would serve as a framework for all of his theology. Bonaventure's brilliance is in the way he grasps Francis' experience and gives it philosophical and theological form. This is what distinguishes and adds significance to the Bonaventurian system of theology.⁹⁰ Hans Urs von Balthasar portrays the essence of Bonaventure's ideas as being moulded dynamically by

⁸⁸ See in: Ilia Delio. *Crucified Love: Bonaventure's Mysticism of the Crucified Christ*, p. 26.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. xvii.

⁹⁰ See in: Paul Rout. *Francis and Bonaventure*, pp. 35,36.

Francis' life. Balthasar talks about the Stigmata occurrence in his penetrating study of Bonaventure:

When we speak of this event, we have at least mentioned the living, organising centre of Bonaventure's intellectual world, the thing that lifts it above the level of a mere interweaving of the threads of tradition. His world is Franciscan, and so is his theology, however many stones he may use to erect his spiritual cathedral over the mystery of humility and poverty like another Baroque Portiunkula over the unpretentious original chapel. And yet when we have established that the Franciscan mystery is the centre that crystallizes all, we have not yet uncovered the ethos that is peculiar to Bonaventure. For Bonaventure does not only take Francis as his centre: he is his own sun and mission.⁹¹

Bonaventure, according to Zachary Hayes, incorporated essential ideas from St. Francis' spirituality into theological and metaphysical concepts, considerably enriching the Christian theological heritage. This had to do with a particular kind of Christology, a distinct kind of trinitarian theology, and a kind of creation theology that incentivises a contemplative view of the world.⁹² Bonaventure himself suggests Francis had an influence on his thinking when he recounts his interpretation of the Stigmata in the preface of the *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*. Bonaventure travelled up to La Verna to seek peace in 1259, two years after his designation as Minister General. While pondering on Francis' Stigmata, he saw the meaning of Francis' vision of the fiery Seraph in the figure of the Crucified in a flash of illumination.⁹³ He writes:

Inspired by the example of our blessed father, Francis, I wanted to seek after peace with yearning soul, I withdrew to Mount Alverna, as to a place of quiet, there to satisfy the yearning of my soul for peace. While I dwelt there, pondering on certain spiritual ascents to God, I was struck, among other things, by that miracle which in this very place had happened to the blessed Francis, that is, the vision he received of the winged seraph in the form of the crucified. As I reflected on this marvel, it immediately seemed to me that this vision might suggest the rising of Saint Francis into contemplation and point out the way by which that state of contemplation may be reached.⁹⁴

The pilgrimage of Bonaventure to Mount La Verna in pursuit of inner serenity took place in 1259. There he was enlightened by the mystical experience of the 'speculation of a poor man in the desert'. On La Verna, on the seventh day, Bonaventure discovered the secret of inner peace in Saint Francis' unitive experience of meeting the Crucified Seraph and having his body marked with the holy stigmata. The *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* is undoubtedly a work of great philosophical speculation, but Bonaventure is aware that he was confronted with a riddle that could only be penetrated with the strength of Francis' *sapientia*

⁹¹Hans Urs von Balthasar. *The Glory of the Lord: A theological Aesthetics*, vol. 2, trans. Andrew Louth. Ignatius Press, 1984, p. 263.

⁹²See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p. 22.

⁹³ See in: Ilia Delio. *Crucified Love: Bonaventure's Mysticism of the Crucified Christ*, p. 27

⁹⁴Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God.*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 1, (Prologue).

Crucis. This lowly stooping into genuine wisdom, which comes from Crucified Christ's *speculatio*, is the key to reading and interpreting the *Itinerarium*.⁹⁵ Commenting on the influence of Stigmatization of Francis on Bonaventure, Hayes writes that other literature, including as St. Francis' Life and Bonaventure's sermons, address the secret of the stigmata experienced by St. Francis on Alverna. Bonaventure's approach to this facet of St. Francis' 'faith-journey' gives vital insights into Bonaventure's appraisal of Francis, as well as the nature and objective of the spiritual journey. This is undoubtedly the pinnacle of Francis' experience for Bonaventure. He describes it as an extraordinarily strong ecstatic experience, not just a visionary one.⁹⁶ "Here he passed over into God in a transport of contemplation. He is set forth as an example of perfect contemplation, just as previously he had been of action, like a second Jacob-Israel."⁹⁷ (7. 3)

Bonaventure represents Francis' image as the exemplification of Christ Crucified as the result of a protracted experience of prayer and inward searching. One must pause and reflect in front of this icon. The Seraphic Doctor makes an attempt to describe how this pondering occurs. He claims that it is a matter of the *apex affectus* (height of affection) that goes far beyond any rational action, that it is a *docta ignorantia* that conceals the mysteries of theology in the most dazzling darkness of a wisdom-filled tranquility.⁹⁸

Speaking on the influence of the life experiences of Francis on the mystical writings of Bonaventure Paul Rout writes that there are particularly three areas where we find this influence, namely, on the concept of 'Road to God', on the understanding of the 'created world' and on the 'search for peace'. Let me now examine these points now, mostly in relation to *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*.

2. 2. 3. 1. The Road to God

The *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* is developed around Francis' stigmata, the five wounds of the crucified Christ which were imprinted on his body. This work is a contemplative and thoughtful meditation that seeks to bring the individual closer to God. Francis, as Bonaventure underlines in the Prologue and again in the closing section, is the example for completing the journey successfully.⁹⁹

⁹⁵Noel Muscat. "Francis of Assisi and Bonaventure's Theology of the cross". Available in: https://franciscanstudies.files.wordpress.com/2018/10/cross_in_bonaven.pdf, as on 06. 04. 2022, p. 12.

⁹⁶See in: Hayes Zachary. Bonaventure: Mystical Writings, p. 29.

⁹⁷Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God.*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 38

⁹⁸ Noel Muscat. "Francis of Assisi and Bonaventure's Theology of the cross", p. 13.

⁹⁹ See in: See in: Paul Rout. *Francis and Bonaventure*, p.36.

While I dwelt there, pondering on certain spiritual ascents to God, I was struck, among other things, by that miracle which in this very place had happened to the blessed Francis, that is, the vision he received of the winged seraph in the form of the Crucified. As I reflected on this marvel, it immediately seemed to me that this vision might suggest the rising of Saint Francis into contemplation and point out the way by which that state of contemplation may be reached.¹⁰⁰ (Prologue 2)

The Journey's first six steps are referred to as "reflections." It may appear that Bonaventure is implying that we can reason out our way to God through intellect. However, the author makes it obvious at the start of the first chapter that human effort alone is not enough to lead to God. If a person is to progress along the journey, he or she will need God's support. Bonaventure, like Francis, commences with God. As previously stated, Bonaventure employs pseudo-Dionysian Trinitarian thinking because Dionysian thought talks of an active Trinity. It all starts with the belief that God is the highest good. Francis, on the other hand, saw God not only as goodness, but also as love, possibly more strongly. Therefore, Bonaventure makes a point of incorporating Richard of St. Victor's ideas into his trinitarian theology. But he went on to add that nothing can be compared to love as a better good. As the totality of love, God's life is the never-ending transmission of that love among three, Father, Son, and Spirit. Bonaventure can talk of God not only in terms of expressive goodness but also in terms of communication of love by incorporating Richard's idea into his Trinity theology, as well as that of Pseudo-Dionysius. In doing so, he provides theological expression to Francis' experience of God as the one who communicates, who stretches out and draws the human spirit in love's embrace. It is in keeping with Bonaventure's Francis-inspired motivation that love takes precedence. This is not to say that Bonaventure is a sceptic of intelligence. The *Itinerarium's* first six stages testify to the sacred significance of human reason. However, as the voyage progresses beyond the cognitive stage, affection replaces rational thinking.¹⁰¹ In chapter VII. 4 of *Itinerarium* we read, "In this passing over, if it is to be perfect, all intellectual activities ought to be relinquished and the loftiest affection transported to God."¹⁰² His belief that love is the driving force behind the journey is reflected in his Triple Way: "Through love, whatever we lack is given to us; through love, an abundance of all good is given to the blessed: and through love, there is attained the supremely desirable presence of the Spouse. ".¹⁰³ Francis' mystical experience of the stigmata is based on the same love. The stigmata take the form of a winged Seraph in

¹⁰⁰ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God.*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p.1.

¹⁰¹ See in: See in: Paul Rout. *Francis and Bonaventure*, pp.37,38.

¹⁰² Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God.*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p.38.

¹⁰³ Bonaventure. "The Triple Way." In : *Mystical Opuscula: The Woks of Bonaventure*, trans. Jose de Vinck. St. Antony Guild press, 1960, p. 71.

the form of the Crucified. In Dionysian texts on angels, seraphs can be found. They are the highest angelic rank, and their sole purpose is to love God completely. Francis' stigmata are, in essence, his awareness of God's profound love for him, as well as an affirmation of his own love for Christ, the son of God. Here, Bonaventure is interested to show that it is possible for a human being to know God – experientially. His foundation is his belief that God is the highest good and that the world is God's creation. He strives to make this religious reality visible for us through his meditations on Francis of Assisi's experience of God. Since God “is,” according to Bonaventure, and the world and all in it, is God's creation, we, like Francis, can discover God's presence and so want, know, and experience God.¹⁰⁴

It is true that Bonaventura's natural theology does not aim with its logical premises to prove that God exists in reality. Rather Bonaventure begins with the conviction of faith, the conviction that it is possible to experience the God who is spoken about in the scriptures. This has been shown in the life and experience of Francis of Assisi. Bonaventure is convinced from the life of Francis, even if one cannot logically prove to a non-believer that God exists but it is possible for a believer to experience God. Bonaventure's theological approach to the question of God cannot be properly understood without the recognition that it is shaped and inspired by Francis's experience of God.¹⁰⁵

2. 2. 3. 2. *The World of Creation*

Francis' closeness with God spilled over into his relationship with the world of creation. He was enthralled by God's benevolence, and he rejoiced and revered the environment around him because it continuously reminded him of God's goodness, from whom all creation flowed. Bonaventure's thoughts on the nature of the created world once again articulate in theological perspective what Francis perceived in his Cantic of Brother Sun. The created world including human body, according to Bonaventure, serves a divine function. It is given to humanity as a home, and it is to serve humanity by reawakening the fire of love for God, the Creator of all, in the human spirit. As a result, humanity must respect and care for the world that has been created.¹⁰⁶ “All material things exist to serve man, and to enkindle in him the fire of love and praise for the Maker of the universe through whose providence all is governed. Therefore, the fabric of the sensitive body is like a house made for man by the supreme Architect to serve until such time as he may come to the house not made by human hands...in the heavens.”¹⁰⁷ (Brev. 2.4)

¹⁰⁴ See in: Paul Rout. *Francis and Bonaventure*, pp.38,39.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p 41.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 41-43

¹⁰⁷ Bonaventure. *The Breviloquium: The Works of Bonaventure*, trans. Jose de Vinck. St. Antony Guild Press, 1963, p. 80.

Francis' realization of the of the dignity of the created universe as divine is expressed by Bonaventure through the idea of Exemplarism. Exemplarism is the technique of producing prints of an artistic original. God, according to Bonaventure, is the divine Artist. The Trinity is the original model of God. Bonaventure considers the world to be God's creation of art. We can learn something about God by contemplating on creation.¹⁰⁸ "From this we may gather that the universe is like a book reflecting, representing, and describing its Maker, the Trinity, at three different levels of expression: as a trace, an image, and a likeness."¹⁰⁹ (Brev. 2.12) .

2. 2. 3. 3. *"Peace" as Goal of the Journey*

God, according to Bonaventure, embodies both the unity and the uniqueness of the Trinity at the same time. Persons within the Trinity are entirely unique and distinct, yet they are brought together via the mediation of divine love. Unity exists in and through diversity at the deepest level of God's life. These are the characteristics that should constitute life in the universe too, a life of unity in difference. The journey of humanity through history must be one of reconciliation. It is to be a journey that acknowledges the distinct originality of each and every human being while also actively participating in the goal of achieving peace. Again, for Bonaventure, Francis, the man of peace, serves as a paradigm for this journey.¹¹⁰ At the starting of the Prologue of *Itinerarium* we read:

In the beginning I call upon the very first Beginning from Whom all enlightenment flows, the Father of Lights, from whom is every best and perfect gift, that is upon the Eternal Father, through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, that through the intercession of the most Blessed Virgin, Mother of that same God and our Lord Jesu Christ, and through that of blessed Francis, our guid and father, He may enlighten the eyes of our mind to guid our feet into the way of that peace which surpasses all understanding, that peace which our Lord Jesus Christ preached to us and which He gave to us. His message of Peace our father Francis ever repeated, announcing Peace at the beginning and at the end of all his sermons, making every greeting a wish for peace, making every prayer a sigh for ecstatic peace, like a citizen of that Jerusalem, ...".¹¹¹ (Prologue 1)

The *Itinerarium's* framework is defined by the path to ecstatic wisdom and peace, which Francis set out by his conformity to Christ Crucified. Bonaventure authored the *Itinerarium* based on Francis' stigmata and vision of the flaming Seraph. This profound

¹⁰⁸ See in: Paul Rout. *Francis and Bonaventure*, pp.43,44.

¹⁰⁹ Bonaventure. *The Breviloquium: The Works of Bonaventure*, trans. Jose de Vinck, p. 104.

¹¹⁰ See in: Paul Rout. *Francis and Bonaventure*, p. 44.

¹¹¹ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God.*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 1.

mystical work was inspired by Francis, yet it was written by Bonaventure.¹¹² The aspect of peace in the *Mind's Journey to God* will be dealt in detail elsewhere in this Study.

In general, we can conclude that Bonaventure was aided by the Victorine school in identifying the stigmata's particular kind of mysticism as love-mysticism. It also contributed to a better understanding of the significance of the symbol through which St. Francis' experience was communicated. Love's transformative power is depicted by the heat of a fire, which may soften iron to the point where any mark can be etched on the molten substance. The seraph's shape recalls the same thought because it represents "burning love," according to Bonaventure. While the mystery of the stigmata is central to Bonaventure's interpretation of St. Francis' spirituality and serves as the inspiration for the framework of the *Journey of the Soul into God*, there are a number of other aspects of St. Francis' life that appear into Bonaventure's spirituality. Bonaventure would extend the notion of God as a loving Father, which was so evident in St. Francis' experience, into a complex theology of the Trinity as the mystery of primordial love. The spirituality of Christ's imitation is transformed into a breath-taking Christocentric view of all created reality. And, by drawing on Augustine's theology, St. Francis' sense of the goodness and beauty of creation is developed into a strong theology of the symbolic significance of the universe.¹¹³ Finally, through Dionysian thoughts Bonaventure was able to express his conviction that God is not distant and abstract but a God of Dynamic goodness; moreover adopting the Dionysian language and steps of mysticism, Bonaventure was able to give a living expression to the experiential union of Francis with God with an aim of spiritually "tasting" this as an experience that can be attained by everyone who desires for it.

¹¹² See in: Ilia Delio. *Crucified Love: Bonaventure's Mysticism of the Crucified Christ*, pp. 27,28.

¹¹³ See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, pp.31-33.

Chapter II

“The Journey of the Mind to God”

Marianne Schlosser, in her book *Bonaventura Begegnen* opined that Francis' life in union with Christ is the “model Christian” behind the mystical writings of Bonaventure. By the 'itinerary' of the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, he wants to make the exemplary life of St. Francis, especially from the point of view of his spiritual-mystical life, fruitful for the brothers and sisters who aspire the mystical union. What was given to Francis as an individual should become a source from which many can draw inspiration. Francis' unique endowment with grace consisted of his extraordinary conformity to Christ, not only in spirit but also in body.¹¹⁴ “The journey to God, therefore, which holds up Francis as the model *viator*, recapitulates Bonaventure's thought, namely, that we come from God, we exist as the image of God, and we are returning to God.”¹¹⁵

As we have seen already, Bonaventure wrote the book *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* in 1259, autumn, while on retreat at La Verna, the mount on which St. Francis received the stigmata. Using the title *itinerarium* Bonaventure shows the intention of his work. Since the late antiquity in Christian literature the term *itinerarium* is used to describe the pilgrim's ways, mainly for journeys to the Holy Land and especially to Jerusalem. Bonaventure does not describe here a journey by foot, but a journey of the ‘mind.’ Augustine designates the Latin term *mens* (mind/soul) as the spiritual centre of the person, a dimension of the human being, which is ‘capable of God’.¹¹⁶ In this context it may be good to examine in detail the meaning of *mens* (mind/soul) in the understanding of Bonaventure.

1. The Concept of *mens* (Mind) in Bonaventure's Mystical Writings

It is accurate to state that St. Bonaventure is an Augustinian who used Aristotle's ideas extensively. It is evident that for Augustine the concept of *mens*, is not merely cognition; ‘human mind’ does not refer only to man's ability to think abstractly. It is fundamentally axiological in character, and rationality has its due place within that axiological orientation. The mind reaches a pinnacle in cognitive contemplation, which

¹¹⁴ See in: Marianne Schlosser. *Bonaventura begegnen*, (free translation into English.). Sankt-Ulrich-Verlag, 2000. p.64.

¹¹⁵ Ilia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, p.99.

¹¹⁶ See in: Marianne Schlosser. *Bonaventura begegnen*, p.61.

culminates in a glimpse of God's incorporeal, everlasting, and unchanging reality. For Augustine, man's noetic activity, not merely his cognitive powers, is included in the concept of mind.¹¹⁷

This mystical climax in St. Agustin's epistemology has become a defining feature of all medieval mysticism. St. Bonaventure continues the quest started by St. Augustine. In supporting the 'primacy of the good' above the 'true' (being) and the 'primacy of willing' over 'knowing,' he plainly follows St. Augustine. St. Bonaventure is keen to define the steps to the ultimate "good" in the *Journey of the Mind to God (Itinerarium Menits in Deum)*, and his approach is essentially Augustinian in that it is devotional rather than philosophical.¹¹⁸ He explains what he means by mind right at the start of the *Itinerarium's* Prologue: "He may enlighten the eyes of our mind to guide our feet into the way of that peace which surpasses all understanding."¹¹⁹ From this statement it is very clear that the mind is not to be equated with Intelligence. In the first chapter of the *Itinerarium* Bonaventure describes the different aspects of mind:

Following this threefold progress, our mind has three principal aspects. One refers to the external body, wherefore it is called animality or sensuality; the second looks inward and into itself, wherefore it is called spirit, the third looks above itself, wherefore it is called mind. From all of which considerations it ought to be so disposed for ascending as a whole into God that it may love Him with all its mind, with all its heart, and with all its soul.¹²⁰

This idea should be viewed in the context of St. Augustine's conception of *mens*. The mind is the part of the human body that is focused on God's Divine Illumination. There are three components to it that deal with the three dimensions of existence – 'external', 'internal', and 'eternal' – but all of them, under the Divine Illumination unveiled to the person in Christ, point to the highest aim of mind – the ecstatic 'knowledge of God Himself.'¹²¹ In chapter seven of the *Itinerarium*, the final goal of mind is plainly stated: man achieves peace of mind at the level of oneness with God, "Accordingly, the mind has reached the end of the way of the six contemplations. They have been like the six steps by which one arrives at the throne of the true Solomon and at peace, were, as in inner Jerusalem, the true man of peace rests with a tranquil soul."¹²²

¹¹⁷ See in: Charles N. Foshee. "St. Bonaventure and the Augustinian Concept of Mens." In: *Franciscan Studies*, Vol.27, Annual V, 1967, p.170.

¹¹⁸ See in: Charles N. Foshee. "St. Bonaventure and the Augustinian Concept of Mens", p.170.

¹¹⁹ Bonaventure. *The Mind's Road to God.*, trans. George Boas, p. 3.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p.8.

¹²¹ See in: Charles N. Foshee. "St. Bonaventure and the Augustinian Concept of Mens," p. 172.

¹²² Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p.37.

The notion of *mens*, defined as the entirety of mind, or, in a narrower sense, that which comprehends and acknowledges the Eternal, is central to Augustine and Bonaventura's theologies. Bonaventure's thought is profoundly rooted in the Augustinian notion of *mens* as the way to the beatific vision. The *mens pacifica* can only be experienced through the union of the mind in man and the Divine - a unity made possible by Christ. When viewed from the perspective of Divine Illumination, all reality in man and nature acts as a conduit for that mystical experience.¹²³

2. The Beginning of the “Journey”

Bonaventure, who had been the General of the order for more than two years (from February 2, 1257), was looking for some peace and quiet on Mount Alverna. Following Francis in the direction of the order, he desired to step fully into his spiritual succession and devote himself to contemplation in this famous place for a period of time. The aspired *pax*, which Bonaventure recognized as the main point of Francis' preaching as an imitation of Christ's preaching, is a keyword in his mystical writings.¹²⁴ He describes his visit there in the following words: “Inspired by the example of our blessed father, Francis, I wanted to seek this peace with yearning soul...”, (*Itinerarium* pro: 2).¹²⁵ It was in Alverna that he has received the inspiration or the insight for his mystical work *The Journey of the Mind into God*. “Actually, as Bonaventure described it, the insight had two points: (1) the vision expressed the goal of the spiritual ascent, namely the mystical ecstasy given to Francis; and (2) it symbolized the stages of the journey by which the mind reaches that goal.”¹²⁶

Itinerarium mentis in Deum is divided into six levels/stages of gradual contemplation, which are symbolized by the six wings of the crucified ‘Christ-Seraph’ image that appeared to Francis and culminate in the seventh stage of ecstatic wisdom’.¹²⁷

Although we can find in this work various inspirations from the spiritual tradition (Augustine, Bernard and above all Richard of St Victor), it is structured around Francis' vision of the seraph, which constitutes its centre. With the help of its six “wings” (the six speculations), this contemplation aims at drawing nearer to Christ crucified by love (Prol. 3–4): Bonaventure purposely calls the mystical union “suspension” (as being suspended on the cross) and “transitus” (“pascha” meaning transit: 7, 2). No manner of sophisticated contemplative

¹²³ See in: Charles N. Foshee. “St. Bonaventure and the Augustinian Concept of Mens”, pp.174,175.

¹²⁴ See in: See in: Marianne Schlosser. “Zur Theologie der Mystik bei Bonaventura“, p. 53.

¹²⁵ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, p.1.

¹²⁶ See in: Ewert H. Cousins: *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites*, p. 77.

¹²⁷ See in: Ilia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, p.99.

method can help to attain the inner “peace beyond comprehension” without this inner union with Christ.¹²⁸

Bonaventure introduces three elements at the start of *The Journey of the Mind into God* that are crucial for the understanding of the ‘spiritual’ journey's starting point: the prologue expresses Bonaventure's desire for ‘peace’, and he sets out on this road with that objective in mind; it also considers the individual who embarks on this road to be a person of ‘desire’; and before the first chapter begins, there is a title that reads: “Here begins the reflections of the poor man in the desert.”¹²⁹ A short analysis of the above points will enumerate the beginning of the journey.

2. 1. The ‘Man of Desire’

In the prologue to *Itinerarium* “For no one is in any way disposed for divine contemplations that lead to spiritual transports unless, like Daniel, he is also a man of desires.”¹³⁰ The individual who aspires to embark on the mystical journey is portrayed and compared by Bonaventure to Prophet Daniel. Bonaventure describes Daniel as a ‘person of desire.’ A person who wishes to embark on a mystical journey must have a strong ‘longing’ for peace and unity with the divine.

One of the greatest obstacles to the spiritual journey, he claims, is that the human heart is hardened by sin. He describes the obstinate human heart as ‘hard’, ‘pervasive’ and ‘proud’. Such a heart, he indicates, is closed to God. To begin the journey to God, one must desire God, and to truly desire God, one must ‘apply the Heart’. For Bonaventure, this means opening up one’s heart to the challenges and risks of compassionate or agapic love.¹³¹

For Bonaventure, this desire is expressed in prayer. Conversion of the hardened heart, however, can take place only through an intimate relationship with God and this intimacy is only possible through prayer. Therefore, Bonaventure holds that prayer is the “mother and origin” of the mystical journey to God.¹³² In other words, the desire to be united with God manifests itself in profound and steady prayer. Prayer will help to open up the human person to be receptive to the entirely free grace of God. And without the support of divine grace, the spiritual journey cannot be carried out effectively.¹³³ Stressing the need for divine support in the journey Bonaventure writes in *Itinerarium*, “However much, then, the steps of our interior progress may be well-ordered, we can do nothing unless divine aid support

¹²⁸ Marianne Schlosser. "Bonaventure: Life and Works," p. 34.

¹²⁹ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p.5.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p.2,

¹³¹ See in: Ilia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, p. 100.

¹³² See in: Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p.5

¹³³ See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p.51.

us. This divine aid is at hand for all who *seek* it with a truly humble and devout heart, that is the mother and origin of every upward striving of the soul.”¹³⁴ Again, regarding the significance of prayer for the Journey, Bonaventure writes to the religious sisters in the small work *On the Perfection of Life*: “prayer is a vessel with which the grace of the Holy Spirit is drawn from that overflowing font of delight, the most blessed trinity.”¹³⁵

Bonaventure employs the symbol of *iter* (journey) to represent the 'desire' that drives someone to seek God. God himself, by grace, inspires the desire to seek Him in the deepest level of the human heart. Because of this desire, a human being cannot be satisfied within himself until he has reached God, and therefore "desire" motivates one to embark on a spiritual path.¹³⁶

2. 2. The 'Poor One in the Desert'

The phrase “poor one in the desert” evokes a number of thoughts. The best possibility is that it is a reference to Francis, ‘the poor man’.¹³⁷ The phrase can also point to Bonaventure himself because of the fact that he is a mendicant and is a poor one in that sense.¹³⁸ Schlosser explains the meaning of the “poor man” in the following manner: the term "poor man" conjures up images of *Poverllo*, the Assisi's ‘little poor man,’ as well as those who follow in his footsteps. Despite this undoubtedly deliberate Franciscan distinction, "poor" here denotes considerably more. The "poor" is the man who has not yet obtained the goods he desires while also being aware of his poverty: it is the man of longing who, according to Bonaventure, should be the reader of the *Itinerarium*; it is the man who has not yet arrived at his destination but is steadfastly on his way there, on a pilgrimage. Of course, he has already left the world's apparent riches, much like the Israelites did when they left Egypt, but after passing through the Red Sea - the symbol of their separation from Egypt - he arrives in the Promised Land after a lengthy journey through the desert.¹³⁹

In general, the poor person is one who knows exactly who s/he is in God's eyes and is completely reliant on God. Poverty, for Bonaventure, then, is not merely a lack of wealth

¹³⁴ See in: Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 5.

¹³⁵ Bonaventure. “On the Perfection of life, Addressed to Sisters.” In: *Mystical Opuscula: The works of Bonaventure*, p.236.

¹³⁶ See in: Ilia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, p. 99.

¹³⁷ See in: Ilia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, p. 100.

¹³⁸ See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p.52.

¹³⁹ Bonaventura. *Itinerarium mentis in Deum: Der Pilgerweg des Menschen zu Gott*, übersetzt und erläutert von Marianne Schlosser. Lit Verlag, 2004, p.119.

or possessions. Rather, it is a recognition of one's complete reliance on God, and the conviction that all good things flow from God's benevolence. Poor people are aware of God's blessings and, as a result, they rely on God to get them through this road.¹⁴⁰

The *Itinerarium* takes place in the “desert.” The desert is a powerful metaphor, representing solitariness, lack of self-sufficiency, and encounters with one's own self, among other things. Bonaventure makes use of the symbol, emphasizing one key feature, namely, the ‘exodus’. The Hebrews make their way from slavery to the promised land across the desert. It is a paschal trekking over the wilderness. As a result, *Itinerarium* is a ‘paschal journey’ undertaken by a poor person with a specific purpose.¹⁴¹

Since the time of desert Fathers, the “desert” is a key word in the Christian spirituality. The desert plays a great role in the faith experiences of Israel, and in the spirituality of the orders. The word "*desertum*", most often used by the Fathers of the Church, means "lonely place"; Israel is not only led to be tested there, but also to meet God. The desert is also the place of danger as well as the place of refuge (Rev. 12, 16), the place of purification and self-knowledge, the preparation for a mission (Baptist, Jesus), and the overwhelming experience of God (Moses, Elijah). The one who goes to the desert faces his own poverty in a comprehensive sense, and certain solitude before God and with God, which belongs to the essence of man.¹⁴² In another sense, the word "in the desert" recalls the desert's spiritual nuance as a site of testing and divine encounters. Such a mix of motifs is unmistakably linked to the necessity for austerity and asceticism in order to convert from human wickedness and sinfulness.¹⁴³ Bonaventure writes in *The Triple way*:

First, let us consider what meditation is. We should know that there are three things in us through the use of which we may proceed along the triple way: the STING OF CONSCIENCE, the BEAM OF INTELLIGENCE, and the LITTLE FAME OF WISDOM. If you wish to be cleansed, **turn to the sting of conscience...**¹⁴⁴

To be in the desert, is an insistent call to be aware of one's failings and sins, to be oneself as well as a call to serious prayer in order to overcome such flaws. Bonaventure has very well depicted the process of the mystical experience as a “journey of the poor man in the desert,” impregnated with full of meaning and content.

¹⁴⁰ See in: Ilia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, p. 100.

¹⁴¹ Muscat, Noel. *The life of Saint Francis: In the light of Saint Bonaventure's Theology on the "Verbum Crucifixum."* In: *Studia Antonina*. Editrice Antonianum, 1989, p.116,17.

¹⁴² See in: Bonaventura. *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*: Der Pilgerweg des Menschen zu Gott, p. 119.

¹⁴³ See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p.53.

¹⁴⁴ Bonaventure. „The Tripel Way “: *Mystical Opuscula*, p. 64.

2. 3. The 'Journey'

The *Itinerarium's* overall environment demonstrates Bonaventure's desire to guide us on a profound contemplative pilgrimage. The goal is to have a deep, personal relationship with God, experiential knowledge of God. He would like to lead us to an encounter with 'our environment,' 'ourselves,' and God repetitively. But how is the world formed, and how is humanity equipped for this spiritual journey? Bonaventure separates three worlds: one outside of us, one within us, and one above us. The first is an empirically observable world of bodily creatures. The second realm is the realm of spiritual reality, which we find within the human being, "the soul/ mind". The divine mystery, which surpasses anything at either of these levels, is the subject of the third.¹⁴⁵

Regarding the equipment of the human person Bonaventure writes in *The Breviloquium* commenting on Hugh of St. Victor, "For this triple vision, man was endowed with a triple eye, as explained by Hugh of St. Victor: the eye of flesh, of reason, 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 within him."¹⁴⁶

The same idea is also expressed in *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* by Bonaventure with more clarity and expression:

In keeping with this threefold progression, our mind has three principal ways of perceiving. In the first way it looks at the corporeal things outside itself, and so acting, it is called animality or sensibility. In the second, it looks within itself and into itself, and is then called spirit. In the third, it looks above itself, and is then called mind. All three ways should be employed to ascend to God, so that He may be loved with the whole heart, and with the whole soul, and with the whole mind. Herein lies the perfect observance of the Law and at the same time in this is found Christian wisdom.¹⁴⁷ (1.4)

Despite the beauty and wisdom of creation, Bonaventure believes that humanity has become oblivious to it and unaware of its value. The 'triple eye'¹⁴⁸ of the human being was deformed by humanity's fallenness, rendering the majesty and wisdom of creation incomprehensible. Bonaventure used symbolic language throughout his texts to depict the tragic image of a human being lying on the ground/dust in need of assistance. He describes a weird intellectual blindness that stops humans from seeing God's presence. The human

¹⁴⁵ See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p. 54.

¹⁴⁶ Bonaventure. „On Creation “: *Breviloquium*, pp.105,106.

¹⁴⁷ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 6.

¹⁴⁸ "The eye of the flesh, of reason, and of contemplation".

being, accustomed to sensory obscurity, is like a ‘bat in the daylight’ who sees nothing.¹⁴⁹ “The result is that man, blinded and bent over, sits in darkness, and does not see the light of heaven unless grace comes to his aid- with justice to fight concupiscence and with knowledge and wisdom to oppose ignorance. These effects are brought about through Jesus Christ....”¹⁵⁰ (1. 7)

The Itinerarium is structured into a prologue and seven chapters, as previously stated. The prologue introduces us to the praying spirit that will guide us on our way to serenity. The prologue also foreshadows *Itinerarium's* six stages (some scholars suggest 7) toward oneness with God.¹⁵¹ Bonaventure intended to explain the six stages involved in this ‘ascent to God’, based on biblical traditions and influenced by Richard of St. Victor's Mystical Ark. The first two stages are contemplating the world outside of us, two are contemplating the world within ourselves, and the other two are contemplating the mystery of God/ world above us.¹⁵² He continues to write that human person is equipped with six powers corresponding to these six stages:

These six powers are the senses, imagination, reason, understanding, intelligence, and summit of the mind or the spark of synderesis. We have these powers implanted within us by nature, deformed through sin, reformed through grace. They must be cleansed by justice, trained by knowledge, and perfected by wisdom.¹⁵³ (1.6)

These six abilities should not be regarded as mind’s faculties, but rather as mind’s functions. The internal point of unification of the many distinct activities and abilities of the soul relates to the concern with the zenith of the mind, *apex mentis*. The phrase *apex mentis*, according to Bonaventure, refers to the interior (in the innermost part of mind) point of totality and integration that is essential for the mystical experience.¹⁵⁴ Together with the six equipment of the mind, Bonaventure stresses the need for grace through prayer for a successful road to God: And since grace is the foundation for righteousness of the will, and for the penetrating enlightenment of reason, we must first of all pray. Lest we must live holily. Then we must gaze at the spectacles of truth, and by gazing at them; rise step by step until we reach the mountain height where the God of gods is seen on Zion.¹⁵⁵ (1.8)

With the preceding clarifications, one can get a sense of the six stages of the mystical journey's organization, as well as the relationship between these stages and an understanding

¹⁴⁹ See in: Ilia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, p. 101.

¹⁵⁰ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 7.

¹⁵¹ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, Introduction, p. xv.

¹⁵² See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p.55.

¹⁵³ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 7.

¹⁵⁴ See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p.56.

¹⁵⁵ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, pp. 7,8.

of the human being who will embark on the journey. This journey is engaged by a person of faith. Faith is the lens through which one views reality in order to deduce its fundamental significance. The next section of the chapter will look more closely at the "three world" structure and the contemplation of it.

3. The “Three World” Plan of *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*

The structural design of *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* is inspired by a vision of the six-winged Seraph in the shape of the crucifixion. "The fiery ones" is what Seraphim signifies. It's the plural of "seraph." The Bible mentions angels with faces, hands, and feet. Every seraph has six wings, four of which are used to hide themselves in front of God as a symbol of humility, while the other two are used to fly. They repeatedly exclaim "holy, holy, holy" and appear to worship God; we read about them in the book of Isaiah in a special way. They frequently appear in religious art.

In the *Itinerarium*, the bottom pair of wings represents the material world, the middle pair represents the soul, and the highest pair represents the consideration of God himself, according to Bonaventure. As a result, Bonaventura's path is a climb from the lowest to the highest, from the material world to God. The soul reaches the state of mystical ecstasy after ascending through the three levels, which is portrayed by the whole vision. Bonaventure uses the ladder as a symbol, specifically referring to Jacob's ladder, and sees all of creation as a ladder on which we might ascend to God. Bonaventure uses the emblem of the tabernacle in the midst of the *Itinerarium* to signify the trip into the depths of the soul. He takes the reader through the tabernacle's many zones, leading him further and deeper into the hallowed sanctuaries until he reaches the Holy of Holies. The six-winged Seraph, the mountain, the ladder, and the tabernacle all convey the theme of the soul's road to God in their own unique ways. The path of Bonaventura now has three primary stages: the corporeal world, the mind/soul, and God's considerations. He divides each one into two, totalling six. This structure acts as the treatise's overview and the basis for each chapter's content.¹⁵⁶

3. 1. The World- “External”

The reader is introduced to a manner of pondering on the wonder of the created order in the opening chapter of *The Journey of the Mind to God*. In this chapter, St. Francis' experience collides with Bonaventure's theological and philosophical reflections in an

¹⁵⁶ See in: Ewert Cousins. Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites, pp.77-79.

interesting way. It is clear that this perspective of the material cosmos differs significantly from medieval Catharism, which held the belief that material existence is intrinsically malevolent. However, it has been suggested that St. Francis' vision included a spirituality that lays a particular emphasis on the material world. The tangible world of God's creation plays a particularly positive role in spirituality in the instance of Francis and in the Bonaventurian development of Francis' perspective.¹⁵⁷ In the first chapter of the *Itinerarium* comments Bonaventure, "For we are so created that the material universe itself is a ladder by which we ascend to God."¹⁵⁸ Therefore, for Bonaventure creation plays an important role on the mind's road to God.

The first two of the six steps marking this journey deal with the vestiges of God in the visible world. The first chapter of Mind's road towards God is divided into two sections: an introduction and a description of the first rung of the journey's ladder. The 'six stages' that make up this journey are outlined in the introductory section. The first 'level' which is considered in two stages wraps up Chapter One and Two and concentrates on the outside world.

3. 1. 1. The 'World of Creation'

For Bonaventure, all creatures mirror God in some sense, even though it may be a very remote one. In this way the whole of creation can be considered as vestige of Creator God. The Latin word for 'vestige' simply means a 'footprint'.¹⁵⁹ Every creature has the potential to awaken us to the source of this imprint, "The origin, greatness, beauty, and other characteristics of the external objects and used these things as mirrors reflecting the power, wisdom, and goodness of God. We are led *through* them to God above who in His goodness has created them according to His purpose."¹⁶⁰

Of course, the observer needs to have the right eye to perceive this reflection. Whereas the visible creation offered a clear mirror in the state of paradise, that is, before man's fall and the resulting blindness of the inner eye, this mirror is now "mysterious"; the creation no longer leads "by itself" to the knowledge of the Creator, but man requires guidance on how to understand the "Book of Creation."¹⁶¹ Because of ignorance and concupiscence, man frequently fails to see the sense reality as clearly as he could. The

¹⁵⁷ See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p. 58.

¹⁵⁸ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 5.

¹⁵⁹ See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p. 62.

¹⁶⁰ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. xvi.

¹⁶¹ Bonaventura. *Itinerarium mentis in Deum: Der Pilgerweg des Menschen zu Gott*, pp.121, 122.

cosmos can be viewed to reflect the richness of divine existence to the degree that one's thinking is freed from sin by grace.¹⁶² Further, faith, and true understanding of the word of God play an important role for a true vision of the created things.¹⁶³ The sacred Scriptures show the humans that the things of human sense' experiences do not explain themselves by restoring accurate view of sensible reality. The soul that has been enlightened by the Scriptural message and the true description of their existence understands that they were created by God in His kindness and that they are part of His most clever plan.¹⁶⁴

In the same chapter of this work, Bonaventure considers the created realities as having different forms of existence: "And among things, some are vestiges, others, images; some corporeal, others, spiritual; some temporal, others, everlasting; ...",¹⁶⁵ (1.2). In this regard, it is worth noting that Bonaventure regards spiritual realities such as the human soul to be higher on the ladder of being than the body and all of material creation, and he refers to mind as God's image: "Next, we must enter into our mind, which is the image of God, an image which is everlasting, spiritual, and within us."¹⁶⁶ However, the Physical beings have significantly less similarity to the Creator than spiritual or personal beings who are "images of God." Although they are not "eternal" in the same sense that God is, they are temporal in a different way than simply physical beings; they are transcended by time in some way. The two degrees of similarity and depiction of the Creator, known as "trace" and "image," differ not just in quantity but also in quality.¹⁶⁷ At the end of his explanations about the triadic structures in relation to the functions of the soul, Bonaventure writes, "Therefore, from visible things the soul rises to the consideration of the power, wisdom, and goodness of God, in so far as He is existing, living, intelligent, purely spiritual, incorruptible, and immutable,"¹⁶⁸ (1. 13).

To conclude this part of the chapter, the 'first level' in the initial phase concentrates on the cause, greatness, beauty, and other characteristics of external world, using them as mirrors to reflect God's might, wisdom, and benevolence. We are guided to God above through them, who, in His goodness, has created them for His wise purpose.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶² See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p. 67.

¹⁶³ See in: Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, pp.8,9.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p. xvi.

¹⁶⁵ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 5.

¹⁶⁶ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p.6.

¹⁶⁷ See in: Bonaventura. *Itinerarium mentis in Deum: Der Pilgerweg des Menschen zu Gott*, p. 122.

¹⁶⁸ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p.9.

¹⁶⁹ See in: Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. xvi.

3. 1. 2. Sense Experience and Discovery of God

Bonaventure's fundamental point of view is that God is present in all beings because of the divine essence, power, and presence.¹⁷⁰ The 'second stage 1' of the first level of Bonaventure's reflection centers on the presence of God *in* created realities. This approach to the sensible objects reveals the great impact of St. Augustine's philosophical ideas on Bonaventure, particularly his 'illumination theory' of Knowledge. In sense experience, what we know is God, according to Augustine and Bonaventure, even if we are not aware of it at first. The visible things are illuminated from within by the invisible God, just as the stained-glass window is illuminated by the invisible sun so that we may see the colors and shapes of it.¹⁷¹ This step is well explained in the second chapter of *Mind's Journey into God*. "We may behold God in the mirror of visible creation, not only by considering creatures as vestiges of God, but also by seeing Him in them; for He is present in them by His essence, His power, and His presence."¹⁷²

In the three paragraphs (4-6) of the chapter two of *the Itinerarium*, it is explained that in which way, and in which steps the things of the visible world "enter into man": first by perception/apprehension, then follows delight/pleasure (the senses are delighted in an object) - or also the opposite - and finally a 'judgment or a reflection.' In the following (7-9) paragraphs these observations are evaluated for the consideration of the properties of God, beauty, sweetness, wholeness, truth...etc. Further in paragraph,10, Bonaventure extends this speculation by considering the seven steps, how we ascend to God in Wisdom through the concept of beauty and delight , based on St. Augustine's book *On True Religion and Music*.¹⁷³

At this point in the process of thought, one can wonder what happens in our bodies when the exterior world of physical realities makes contact with human experience via our sense organs. Bonaventure writes, "It should be noted that this world, which is called the macrocosm, enters our soul, the microcosm, through the portals of the five senses in so far as sense objects are apprehended, enjoyed, and judged,"¹⁷⁴ (2.2). Since God is already present in things, and if we analyze our sense knowledge, our enjoyment of sense objects, and the judgments we make about them, we will come to realize God's invisible presence in

¹⁷⁰ See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p. 68.

¹⁷¹ See in: Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, (Introduction), p. xvii.

¹⁷² Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, (Introduction), p. 11.

¹⁷³ See in: Bonaventura. *Itinerarium mentis in Deum: Der Pilgerweg des Menschen zu Gott*, pp. 138-143.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.11.

them.¹⁷⁵ One may be able to achieve a higher degree of reality through more concentrated sensory awareness than he is aware of in his ordinary life. This is not to be

with the journey's end goal, the mystical experience. It's already a divine encounter, but "through a glass, darkly."¹⁷⁶

3. 2. The World-“Internal”

Bonaventure asks us to advance from our reflection on the 'external world' to the contemplation of the 'internal world,' which remains buried inside ourselves, the human soul with its various functions,' at the third and fourth levels (second phase), which mark 'the mind's journey to God.' In fact, in this phase of the Journey, Bonaventure introduces us to one of the most important features of asceticism, namely, 'solitariness', which aids in the attainment of religious or mystical experience. The contemplative dimension of Francis was so powerful in Bonaventure's judgment that which could be considered as the final meaning of his manner of life, as evidenced from the various writings.¹⁷⁷

Like the previous 'level' which is already explained with the reflection on the 'external world', Bonaventure approaches the issue of the 'world- internal' in two stages. The third stage deals with the reflections on the nature of the soul precisely as an image of God. It sees that it loves, but it wouldn't be able to do so until it understood itself. It couldn't even recognize itself unless it went into conscious memory. The fourth stage, which runs concurrently with the second, leads to a study of God's presence in the soul. The presence of God in the soul, by grace, restores it to its supernatural resemblance to God. In chapter four, the soul's whole beauty is shown as it reveals its divine riches by wearing 'theological virtues of faith, hope, and love', restoring spiritual senses, and becoming purified, enlightened, and perfected.¹⁷⁸

3. 2. 1. The Soul as Image of God

After "passing through" the visibly created world, the time has now come to "enter" into one's own interior. Bonaventure introduces a new image to clarify the now upcoming section of the road: that of the covenant tent or the temple as the place of God's presence. The vestibule is crossed, one enters the sanctuary - the most holy will then be the

¹⁷⁵ See in: Bonaventura. *Itinerarium mentis in Deum: Der Pilgerweg des Menschen zu Gott* , p. xvii.

¹⁷⁶ See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p.70.

¹⁷⁷ See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p. 80.

¹⁷⁸ See in: Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, (Introduction), p. xvii.

contemplation of the names of God. In this part of the sanctuary is the lampstand, in the Holy of Holies, the Ark of the Covenant. The lampstand represents the image of the divine light, the truth that shines on us.¹⁷⁹ Bonaventure now asks us to look to the realm of our own inner world after having been led to God through and in nature:

The first two steps, by leading us to God through the vestiges through which He shines forth in all creatures, have thereby led us to enter into ourselves, that is, into our mind, where the divine image shines forth. Now it is, on a third step, that entering into ourselves and, as it were, forsaking the outer court, we ought to strive to see the tabernacle. Here the light of truth, as from candelabra, will shine upon the face of our mind, in which the image of the most Blessed trinity appears in splendour.¹⁸⁰ (3.1)

Here, Bonaventure reflects on the human being as a resemblance of the Trinity in the third stage (step) of the ladder. Through meditation on the soul's capacities, faculties, and functions, he comes to this concept of the human being. In order to do so, he employs the Augustinian anthropology that St. Augustine used in his work *On the Trinity*.¹⁸¹ "As for Saint Augustine in his work *On the Trinity*, so for Saint Bonaventure in Chapter Three, it is through *memory*, *intelligence*, and *will* as the three faculties of the one soul that we discover the most suitable analogy in the natural order to the three persons in the one God."¹⁸² Because the topic at hand is the ascent of the mind, Bonaventure defines these in terms of their potential to guide the soul back by itself to the eternal Art, highest Truth, and supreme Good.¹⁸³ Now let me analyse these three faculties of the mind in detail.

3. 2. 1. 1. *The Memory*

The translation of the term "memory" as used by Bonaventure is extraordinarily difficult, because the usual "memory" covers by no means all functions of this mental ability, as can be seen just from the passage of the third chapter. Schlosser translated it using the following several terms to express its complicity- "remembering", "being remembered", "consciousness", "spiritual self-possession". The "*memoria*" is in a way the spiritual soil, the root from which the faculties of knowledge and love grow like two instincts.¹⁸⁴ According to Robert Davis, "Memory holds all things in the soul – past, present and future; It is not only a depository of things derived from sense, but also a kind of 'inner reason' (quoting

¹⁷⁹ See in: Bonaventura. *Itinerarium mentis in Deum: Der Pilgerweg des Menschen zu Gott*, p. 146.

¹⁸⁰ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 18.

¹⁸¹ See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p. 83.

¹⁸² Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, (Introduction), p. xvii.

¹⁸³ Robert Davis. "The Force of Union: Affect and ascent in the theology of Bonaventure." *Doctrinal Dissertation*, Harvard University, 2012, p. 123.

¹⁸⁴ See in: Bonaventura. *Itinerarium mentis in Deum: Der Pilgerweg des Menschen zu Gott*, p. 147.

Augustine) which is able to assent immediately to the first Principles of the sciences ‘as though it recognizes them as innate and familiar.’¹⁸⁵

In his theory of memory, Bonaventure follows St. Augustine. Memory encompasses not just the past, but also the present and future for Bonaventure. Memory, in this way, reflects some of God's eternal mystery. Augustine views memory as a far deeper source of pre-conscious connection with the self (memory of the self) and ultimately with God, rather than simply a location where we store our prior information. Bonaventure uses the term "memory" in a similar way. Without that pre-conscious presence to self-involved in memory, it is difficult to come to a conscious self-knowledge. The Platonic notion of the world of ideas is very similar to this hypothesis. Christian theology has placed these thoughts in the Mind of God since Augustine's time.¹⁸⁶ Concerning the relation of memory to the other activities of the mind Bonaventure writes:

Enter into yourself, therefore, and observe that your soul loves itself most fervently. It could not love itself unless it knew itself, nor could it know itself unless it summoned itself to memory, for we do not grasp anything with our understanding unless it is present to our memory. From these considerations notice, not with your bodily eyes, but with the eye of your mind, that your soul has three powers. Consider, therefore, the activities of these three powers and their relationships, and you will be able to see God through yourself as through an image; and this indeed is to *see through a mirror in an obscure manner*.¹⁸⁷ (3.1)

According to Schlosser the "memory" contains the *a priori* presuppositions. Since these are not obtained through sense experience, but are prior to it, they must be given "from above," that is, they must have their origin in the simplicity and necessity of divine truth itself: in that the "memoria" contains such principles, it is in continual contact with truth itself, the presence of God.¹⁸⁸

3. 2. 1. 2. *The Intelligence*

“The intellective power (*virtus intellectiva*) – Bonaventure’s precise term here for Augustinian *intelligentia*- is the ability to understand terms, prepositions, and inferences and Bonaventure describes this power as the processes of reducing specific definitions, and prepositions to more general ones until the intellect arrives at the exemplars of the knowable things in the eternal Art.”¹⁸⁹ Bonaventure is concerned at this stage of reflection with the need of understanding the meanings of terminology used in making judgments and building

¹⁸⁵ Robert Davis. “The Force of Union: Affect and ascent in the theology of Bonaventure,” p. 123.

¹⁸⁶ See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p. 85.

¹⁸⁷ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 18.

¹⁸⁸ See in: Bonaventura. *Itinerarium mentis in Deum: Der Pilgerweg des Menschen zu Gott*, p. 148.

¹⁸⁹ Robert Davis. “The Force of Union: Affect and ascent in the theology of Bonaventure,” p. 123.

arguments. Bonaventure believes that unless we understand being as a whole, we will be unable to properly comprehend the definition of any specific being. In other words, without some understanding of the everlasting and pure being in which all other things exist, the human mind cannot arrive to certain knowledge of created beings. In other words, without some understanding of the everlasting and pure being in which all other things exist, the human mind cannot arrive to certain knowledge of created beings:¹⁹⁰

...therefore, our intellect does not make a full and ultimate analysis of any single created being unless it is aided by a knowledge of the most pure, most actual, most complete, and absolute Being, which is Being unqualified and eternal, and in Whom are the essence of all things in their purity. For how the intellect could know that a specific being is defective and in complete if it had no knowledge of the Being that is free from all defects?¹⁹¹ (3.3)

As a result, this line of reasoning leads to the conclusion that humans do, in fact, have specific knowledge and that this fact cannot be described just in terms of intellect. The source of this certain understanding, according to Bonaventure, is divine illumination. As a result, it must derive from the eternal art's exemplar, according to which objects have a connection and relationship to one another that follows their portrayal in the eternal art.¹⁹² In mind's Journey to God, we read:

Thus, as St. Augustine says in *On True Religion*, "The light of one who reasons truly is enkindled by that truth and strives to go back to it." From this it is manifestly evident that our understanding is joined to eternal truth itself, and if this light does not teach, no truth can be grasped with certitude. You are able, then, to see within yourself the Truth that teaches you, if desires and sensory images do not hinder you and become as clouds between you and the ray of Truth.¹⁹³ (3.3)

The cognitive faculty has three activities: the formation of concepts, judgments, and conclusions. None of these functions, as Bonaventure wants to show, would be possible without a continuous, implicit contact to the First Truth/ Principle. It is about 'insights' which are qualified by Bonaventure as "*cognitio certitudinalis*": with the recognition of the truth of a proposition or conclusion is also connected the 'insight' into its necessary validity. The question that arises for every philosophical theory of cognition, in which the certainty of some cognitions or the insight into necessity is based, finds its answer with Bonaventure in the so-called doctrine of illumination. Illumination means the continuous binding of the created spirit to the eternal truth; it belongs to the nature of man, as well as being the image of God. But according to Bonaventure, the non-believer, through philosophical reflection,

¹⁹⁰ See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p. 86.

¹⁹¹ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 19.

¹⁹² See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p. 87. (Quoted from Bonaventure : *Disputed questions on the Knowledge of Christ*.)

¹⁹³ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 20.

can come to know the unchanging truth as the principle of their thinking (*notitia confuse*). Whereas the believer knows about the influence of God in cognition, because he knows about the Word, which is the "light of men" (John 1:1). Wisdom/"knowledge with tasting" - not merely a philosophical discourse - has its place within the *Itinerarium*.¹⁹⁴

3. 2. 1. 3. *The Will*

Instead of being referred to as just "will," or "love" the third faculty is to be taken as "the power to choose," because it refers to the part of the 'striving power' or "desire" that seeks for the "Good" consciously, that is, spiritually and in conjunction with the cognitive power. This striving has three components: deliberation, judgment, and practical reason: what to select or do, and to desire.¹⁹⁵ "The third power, which is the elective power, involves three aspects: *consilium*, *indicium*, and *desiderium*."¹⁹⁶

The faculty of will allows us to think, judge, and make decisions. The will's goal is to do good. It is impossible to 'deliberate' about, form 'judgments,' and make 'choices' about the lower degrees of the good without awareness of the 'supreme Good.' As a result, some stimulus of the supreme Good must be inscribed on the mind for the will to be efficacious.¹⁹⁷

Robert Davis writes:

The first of these *consilium*, (commonly translated "deliberation") is the determination of better and worse, which Bonaventure explains, is in fact a determination about a thing's proximity, to what is best and requires some notion of a highest good (*Summum bonum*). *Indicium* (judgement) makes a determination about rightness of something with respect to some higher law. When the soul judges itself, it requires some law higher than itself, as depends on a divine law for its operation. The first two aspects of the elective power, then, involve both deliberation and a notion of the highest Good.¹⁹⁸

Desire (*desiderium*), the third aspect, harkens back to Bonaventure's description of the natural will in the *Sentences* commentary. Desire is mostly concerned with the things that 'make it move'. And the thing that moves it the most is the thing that is most loved. And the thing I enjoy the most is 'being happy'. Happiness, on the other hand, can only be obtained by achieving the best and final goal. As a result, human desire seeks only the 'supreme Good' or that which leads to or reflects it in some way. Desire, as explained in the *Sentences* commentary, is that which is always moved by and to the *summum bonum*.¹⁹⁹ The

¹⁹⁴ See in: Bonaventura. *Itinerarium mentis in Deum: Der Pilgerweg des Menschen zu Gott*, pp.148-151.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 151.

¹⁹⁶ Robert Davis. "The Force of Union: Affect and ascent in the theology of Bonaventure," p. 123.

¹⁹⁷ See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p. 87.

¹⁹⁸ Robert Davis. "The Force of Union: Affect and ascent in the theology of Bonaventure," p. 124.

¹⁹⁹ Robert Davis. "The Force of Union: Affect and ascent in the theology of Bonaventure," p. 124, 25.

power of the highest Good is so tremendous that nothing can be enjoyed by a creature except by a longing for it.²⁰⁰

Bonaventure leads us to "a sense of the triadic, relational nature of spirit" in the human being through the above analysis, as well as to a sense of how the mind - the image of God - is related to God in terms of "divine eternity" (in memory), "divine truth" (in intelligence), and "divine goodness" (in will). Bonaventure enables us to get a knowledge of God's mystery through his reflections on the working of the human intellect. Because we are thinking on the mystery of spiritual existence in ourselves as the image of God, this level of contemplation can be considered a fuller meditation of God than the previous steps.²⁰¹ "See, therefore, how close the soul is to God, and how, through their activity, memory leads us to Eternity, intelligence to truth, and the elective faculty to the highest Good."²⁰²

The preceding reflection emphasizes the human mind's nobility and dignity. At the same time, Bonaventure is convinced of the mind's limitations and flaws. According to Bonaventure even while the mind bears the image of God and the potential for the divine, not many observe the first Principle within themselves.²⁰³

3. 2. 2. The Image Reformed by Grace through the Theological Virtues

Now the wayfarer moves slowly to the fourth stage (in the second level) of the journey which is detailed in the fourth chapter of *The Journey of the Mind to God*. In the first chapter itself, Bonaventure speaks about the importance of grace in the mystical journey:

He, therefore, who wishes to ascend to God, must first avoid sin, which deforms nature. He must bring the natural powers of the soul under the influence of grace, which reforms them, and this he does through prayer; he must submit them to the purifying influence of justice, and this, in daily acts; he must subject them to the influence of enlightening knowledge, and this, in meditation; and finally, he must hand them over to the influence of the perfecting power of wisdom, and this in contemplation. For just as no one arrives at wisdom except *through grace*, justice, and knowledge, so it is that no one arrives at contemplation except through penetrating meditation, holy living, and devout prayer. And since *grace is the foundation* for righteousness of the will, and for the penetrating enlightenment of Reason, we must first of all pray. Next, we must live holily. Then we must gaze at the spectacle of truth, and by gazing at them, rise step by step until we reach the mountain height where the God of gods is seen on Zion.²⁰⁴ (1.8)

The contemplation of God in His image reproduced by the gifts of grace is the fourth step (stage) of the journey, as previously mentioned. The remarkable 'inability' of the

²⁰⁰ See in: Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 21.

²⁰¹ See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p. 88.

²⁰² Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 21.

²⁰³ See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p. 91.

²⁰⁴ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, pp. 7,8.

creature to be close to God, that is, "to turn the gaze on God's presence," and the "closeness of God," that is, his presence in the spiritually equipped creature, is evident. The distortion of the three mental faculties, according to Bonaventure, forbade - and still makes it impossible even for a well willed believer - from contemplating the image of God in his own interior.²⁰⁵

Distracted by many cares, the human mind does not enter into itself through the memory; beclouded by sense images, it does not come back to itself through the intelligence; and drawn away by the concupiscence, it does not return to itself through the desire for interior sweetness and spiritual joy. Therefore, completely immersed in things of sense, the soul cannot re-enter into itself as the image of God.²⁰⁶ (4.1)

But even if a man makes this return through his effort, he does not succeed perfectly. The metaphysical insight remains strangely powerless; man does not succeed in making this insight fruitful for a "tasting" or "loving contemplation". For this, the fallen human being needs help.²⁰⁷ "And Just as, when one has fallen, he must lie where he is unless someone join him and lend a hand to raise him up, so our soul could not be perfectly lifted up out of these things of sense to see itself and the eternal truth in itself had not Truth, taking on human form in Christ, become a ladder restoring the first ladder that had been broken in Adam."²⁰⁸ So this help is made possible in Jesus Christ, the revelation of God. For Bonaventure, the virtues, and a life of grace play a significant role in the process of 'ascent' to God. One who wishes to advance journey further has to come to Jesus. To come to Christ is to have 'faith' in him, 'hope' in him, and 'love' him. The ability for contemplation is restored through these qualities, and the spiritual senses are regained. These spiritual senses do not refer to a new "habitus" (characteristics, virtues in a broader sense), but rather to the exercise, or activity, of the particular "habitus." In *Breviloquium*, Bonaventure calls this *usus gratiae*, (participatory grace).²⁰⁹ To reach again the 'enjoyment of Truth' through the mediation of Christ, the image of our soul must put on the three theological virtues, by which the soul is purified, enlightened, and perfected.²¹⁰ This is in correspondence with the three 'hierarchic acts' that the Journey involves: 'purgation', which purifies the soul from the obstacles in the journey, 'illumination' which enlightens the mind to perceive like Christ and perfection or 'consummation' which consists of a profound union with God in 'charity.'²¹¹ The virtue of

²⁰⁵ See in: Bonaventura. *Itinerarium mentis in Deum: Der Pilgerweg des Menschen zu Gott*, pp.154, 155.

²⁰⁶ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 23

²⁰⁷ See in: Bonaventura. *Itinerarium mentis in Deum: Der Pilgerweg des Menschen zu Gott*, pp.155.

²⁰⁸ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 23.

²⁰⁹ See in: Bonaventura. *Itinerarium mentis in Deum: Der Pilgerweg des Menschen zu Gott*, pp.154-157.

²¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 23,24.

²¹¹ See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p. 94.

faith awakens and sharpens the spiritual sense of sight and hearing which leads to *admirtatio* ('entranced wonder') for the word of God, and its object is the overwhelming beauty of what is seen and heard. Hope draws to greater longing by the fragrance of the promised Good, and thus longing becomes wholehearted and causes trusting devotion (*deovtio*) for the word of God--'spiritual sense of smell.' Finally, love attracts the soul to the Incarnated Word and is nourished by the presence of the beloved, and the result is the experienced closeness with overflowing joy (*exullatio*) and a passing over to Him in ecstatic love through which the soul recovers the 'spiritual sense of taste and touch.'²¹² The soul may now 'see, hear, smell, taste, and hug her lover,' and can sing like the bride of the Canticle of Canticles, which was prepared for the meditation which suits to the fourth stage. But no one else can access it except the one who is freely given, because it is based more on the experience of the 'affection' than on 'mental reflections.'²¹³ "From all this, God is seen to be as *all in all* when we contemplate Him in our minds where He dwells through the gift of the most bountiful love"²¹⁴How the grace effects this process of regaining the supernatural likeness and the vision of God on Zion, will be dealt in detail in the forthcoming chapter basing on the different writings of Bonaventure.

3. 3. The World- "Above"

We have contemplated the worldly objects or sense objects that are outside the pilgrim's 'awareness,' as well as his 'interior realm, meaning the mind,' in the last sections. Bonaventure now leads the wayfarer to ponder the reality of the world above him/her. In analyzing the second 'level', Bonaventure demonstrated that, even if one is unaware of it, a thorough examination reveals that God must be Being in its fullest sense as the first object known. Now the meditation of the mind on God moves over to God's necessary and personal traits in the fifth and sixth stages (in the third level). We may call this reflection on God as *metaphysical mysticism*²¹⁵ and it might appear to be highly speculative. Bonaventure considers God as Being in Chapter Five and God as Good in Chapter Six, which leads to the entrance into 'mystical ecstasy' in Chapter Seven.

As stated already, the fifth stage is built on the observations collected throughout the previous stages. The pilgrim has already crossed from the outside to the inner court,

²¹² See in: Bonaventura. *Itinerarium mentis in Deum: Der Pilgerweg des Menschen zu Gott*, p. 162.; Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 24.

²¹³ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 24.

²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 25.

²¹⁵ See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*,p.101.

according to the temple-symbolism introduced by Bonaventure in chapter three of *Itinerarium*. At this point, one moves closer to the temple's Holy of Holies, which houses the Ark of the Covenant. Over the mercy seat, he sees the ark, which is topped by two cherubim facing one other.²¹⁶ Marianne Schlosser discusses the tabernacle as a symbol: "Bonaventure knows the illustrating picture from Richard of St. Victor, who himself had compared the last two stages of contemplation with the two cherubim facing each other above the Ark of the Covenant."²¹⁷ Commenting on the same symbol of Bonaventure Ewert H. Cousins says:

He draws his description of the tabernacle from Exodus and follows the tradition of the New Testament and of Christian mystical writers of seeing the temple, so He is present in the soul. Just as God is present in the temple, so He is present in the soul. As we enter more deeply into ourselves, we penetrate ultimately into the Holy of Holies, where we gaze upon the divine light shining in our souls and contemplate Christ, who is the Mercy-Seat situated at the centre of the Holy of Holies over the Ark. The Holy of Holies symbolizes the presences of God in the depth of the soul; the cherubim symbolize two basic attitudes of contemplating God; and the Mercy-Seat symbolizes Christ."²¹⁸

To understand what Bonaventure is getting at here, it's important to remember what occurred to the text of Exodus 3:14 when it was translated from Hebrew to Greek. God has commanded Moses to return to Egypt and lead the Egyptians out of slavery. When the people question who sent him, Moses responds to God by asking how he should identify God. The Greek versions of the Hebrew text, with all its apparent intellectual overtones, were highly regarded by scholars during Bonaventure's day. What sticks out in that reading of the Greek interpretation of the passage is that God's designation that was given to Moses is the same as the Greek word employed by antiquity's philosophers to describe the subject of their concern, that is, "Being". This Greek word is nearly impossible to translate without resorting to 'paraphrase'. Because it is the present participle of the Greek word, for "to be", accompanied by a definite article in grammar, a very literal but an uncomfortable translation may be "the being-one." The Greek translation clearly indicates that what thinkers explored under the name, "Being", is essentially the same as the God of the Hebrew covenant. Across its history, much of European Christian theology has reflected this conviction.²¹⁹ This might be of considerable help when we turn to Bonaventure, as he tells us that two cherubim above the ark symbolize two ways of contemplating the invisible mystery of God, "One cherub stands for the contemplation of God's revelation at the burning bush: I AM WHO I AM, the

²¹⁶See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p. 101.

²¹⁷ Bonaventura. *Itinerarium mentis in Deum: Der Pilgerweg des Menschen zu Gott*, p. 167.

²¹⁸ See in: Ewert Cousins. *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites*, pp. 85,86.

²¹⁹ See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, pp. 101,102.

other for the revelation of the Triune God in the name of ALL GOODNESS.”²²⁰ The first approach, focusing on the divine name found in Hebrew scriptures and philosophy, focuses on what philosophy and philosophical theology refer to as the divine's key attributes in terms of its nature as primal unity, whereas the second approach, focusing on the divine name drawn from the Christian scriptures, focuses on that which pertains properly to the divine nature of the Trinity.

Even if the first name: I AM, THE I AM, as it seems, can be deduced with the means of philosophical thinking, it must not be overlooked that it is the name that God has given to himself, which no man has come up with on his own, and which, with all its lucidity, remains mysterious. This is even truer of the second self-designation: no one is good except God alone (Luke 18, 19) - Jesus says to the rich young man. The Gospel and also the evangelical counsels are rooted in the goodness of God; they are possible only because God is all goodness par excellence. With this statement of Jesus, "bonus" is, so to speak, declared to be the proper name of God. This also implies that the goodness of God, as well as his unique "being", are not the increase of earthly qualities, but lie on another level.²²¹

3. 3. 1. God as “Being in its Fullness”

The cherubim have an important symbolic function in the organization of the passage's logical framework. In the following terms, Bonaventure describes their significance, “By these cherubim we understand the two kinds or grades of contemplation of the invisible and eternal things of God: the first considers the essential attributes of God, the second, the proper attributes of the three Persons,”²²² (5.1). As a result, Cherubim become particularly essential emblems of contemplation in the fifth and sixth stages of the *Itinerarium*: the fifth considers God as ‘Being and Unity’, while the sixth considers God as ‘Goodness and Trinity’. “The first approach fixes the soul’s gaze primarily and principally on Being Itself, declaring that the first name of God is He Who is,” (5.2).²²³ As previously noted, this is anchored in the Old Testament and God's revelation of himself to Moses as “I am Who am.” It is primarily concerned with the divine essence's unity. “Hence John Damascene, following Moses, says that *He who is* the first name of God,”²²⁴ (5.2) As a result, the fifth chapter of *Itinerarium* is titled: “The consideration of the divine Unity through its Preliminary name which is *Being*.”

Further, Bonaventure describes how to adopt the first Cherub's posture and thus behold God in the unity of his essence:

²²⁰ Bonaventura. *Itinerarium mentis in Deum: Der Pilgerweg des Menschen zu Gott*, p. 167.

²²¹ Ibid., p. 168.

²²² Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 28.

²²³ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 28.

²²⁴ Ibid., p.28.

He, therefore, who wishes to contemplate the invisible things of God in relation to the unity of His essence should fix the attention of his soul on Being itself and see that Being itself is so absolutely certain that it cannot be thought not to be, because the most pure Being Itself does not come to our mind except with the full flight of nonbeing, in the same way as absolute nothing does not come to our mind except with the full flight of being. Just as, therefore, complete nothingness contains nothing of being or of its attributes, so contrariwise, being itself contains nothing of non-being, either in act or in potency, in objective truth or in our estimate of it. But since non-being is the privation of being, it does not come into the intellect except by means of being,”²²⁵ (5,3).

Bonaventure, following Anselm's ontological reasoning, claims that being is so certain that it cannot be imagined not to be. Being and non-being are diametrically opposed. They're both retreating from each other. There is nothing of being in complete nothingness, and there is nothing of non-being in being. Although they are diametrically opposed, they are related since non-being is the absence of Being. Being in potency can only be grasped via being in act; non-being can only be grasped through being. Being as pure act – boundless, unmixed with potency – is what initially enters the mind, and this is the divine Being.²²⁶ Yet it is difficult to recognize this to be the case. “Strange, then, is the blindness of the intellect which does not consider that which it sees before all others and without which it can recognize nothing,”²²⁷ (5.4).

We confuse ‘being’ for ‘non-being’ and non-being for being in the gloom of human existence. We believe we are seeing nothing when we glance at the highest entity. We are so accustomed to ‘particulars’ and ‘universals’ that we fail to notice the being that exists outside of all classifications. In the sunshine, we resemble a ‘bat’. We are conditioned to see nothing when we look at the light of being itself because we are conditioned to perceive the ‘darkness of being’ and the ‘phantasms’ of material things. We don't realize that this exact blackness is our mind's highest ‘illumination’, just as the eyes appears to see nothing while it sees pure light.²²⁸

Bonaventure moves from the darkness of the human condition to the pure radiance of ‘being itself, God’, “Hence, if ‘God’ is the name of the being that is first, eternal, most simple most actual, and most perfect, such a being cannot be thought not to be, nor can it be thought to be other than one. *Hear, therefore, O Israel, the Lord our God is One Lord*,”²²⁹ (5.6). He continues to deduce its qualities after grasping being itself as ‘pure act’:

²²⁵Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, pp. 28,29.

²²⁶ See in: Ewert Cousins. *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites*, p.87.

²²⁷ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 29.

²²⁸ See in: Ewert Cousins. *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites*, p.87.

²²⁹ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 30.

Furthermore, you have here something to lift you up in admiration. For being itself is both the first and the last; it is eternal and yet most actual and still most changeless; it is most perfect and nonetheless immense; it is supremely one and yet pervades all things. Admiring all these consideration with a pure mind, you will be flooded with a still greater light when you behold further that pure being is precisely the last because it is the first. For since it is first, it does all things for itself, and thus the first being is of necessity the ultimate end; it is the beginning and the fulfillment, the *Alpha* and the *Omega*.²³⁰ (5.7).

Divine Being is simple and absolute, and yet the cause of the many. God is not any of all that is created, and for that very reason "the ground of all beings without exception". His "simplicity is more and more perfect than a mere negation of composition: just as the "eternity" of God is something different and more perfect than the negation of a temporal beginning or end. The fact that God is eternal does not mean that he does not know the temporal, but only because he is eternally present, he embraces and pervades all times. This living fullness in the simplicity of God points to the deepest mystery of his being, the fullness of life of the three persons.²³¹ Therefore, "To behold Him perfectly is most blessed thing...."²³²

The mind's gaze on the first Cherub is the centre of Chapter five, (the fifth level of the journey), which explores the heavenly 'Being' who is above the mind. This meditation returns to the first part of the threefold procedure of doubling and resolves the mind's power of intelligence on how: 1) God's divine 'Being' is the origin or 'Alpha' of all things, to which all wisdom is ultimately reduced (*reductio*); 2) the mind perceives the philosophical knowledge that God's being is the 'universal triple cause of everything', through the mirror of the divine light; 3) this 'illumination' reaches the mind through the strong association to Being itself.²³³

3. 3. 2. God as "The Good"

The sixth stage deepens the realisation that "Being" is also "The Good." "The second approach fixes the soul's gaze on the 'Good' itself, saying that this is the first name of God,"²³⁴ (5.2). The pilgrim is to look at God as "the Good" from the perspective of this second Cherub. While the first Cherub is linked to the Old Testament through Moses and the revelation of "God as Being," the second is linked to the New Testament through the revelation of the 'Trinity' and Christ's remark to the rich young man that only God is 'Good'.

²³⁰ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, pp.30,31.

²³¹ See in: Bonaventura. *Itinerarium mentis in Deum: Der Pilgerweg des Menschen zu Gott*, pp.171,172.

²³² Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 32.

²³³ See in: J. A. Wayne Hellmann. *Divine and Created order in Bonaventure's Theology*. The Franciscan Institute, 2001, p. 244.

²³⁴ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 28.

One of Bonaventure's major influences, Pseudo- Dionysius, thought that 'the Good' was the ideal name for God.²³⁵ "Having considered the essential attributes of God, we must raise the eyes of intelligence to the conduit of the most Blessed Trinity, so as to place the second Cherub facing the first,"²³⁶ (6.1). The intellect achieves its pinnacle of perfection while considering the triune God's communicative existence which itself is 'the Good', particularly when contemplating on Christ, the ideal image of God. Bonaventure draws the Trinitarian processions from an examination of the Good during this phase. Starting with Anselm's *Proslogion* concept, Bonaventure claims that what is definitely the best cannot be believed not to be, because it is better to be than not to be.²³⁷ "And this good is such that it cannot rightly be thought of as non-existing, since to exist is absolutely better than not to exist,"²³⁸ (6.2). The Anselmian concept is then combined with the Pseudo-Dionysian postulate that the Good is self-diffusive by Bonaventure.²³⁹ "It is the nature of the good to be self-diffusive. But, if God is the highest Good, then God must be self-diffusive in the highest sense. To speak of a highest good that could not be self-diffusive in the highest degree would simply be a contradiction."²⁴⁰

Consequently, Bonaventure demonstrates how the divinity's great self-diffusiveness necessitates the procession of the son and the Holy Spirit. If God is the ultimate good, and the essence of the highest good is found in the highest form of love, then the Trinity's mystery becomes the mystery of the primeval, self-communicative love that is productive inside the Godhead before moving forth to create the universe.²⁴¹

As previously said, God is the 'greatest love' within the Godhead, and hence He does not require a world to be God. The world did not come into being because God had to make it. God, who is perfect love in himself, produces out of pure love, which is an embodiment of the mystery of truth, goodness, and beauty on the outside. As a result, the purpose of creation is participatory, i.e., the creatures are made capable of partaking in the majesty of divine life.²⁴² From this perspective of the creation of the cosmos Bonaventure says, "For

²³⁵ See in: Ewert Cousins. *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* , p.89.

²³⁶ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 33.

²³⁷ See in: Ewert Cousins. *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* , p. 90.

²³⁸ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 33.

²³⁹ See in: Ewert Cousins. *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* , p. 90.

²⁴⁰ Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p. 109.

²⁴¹ Ibid., p.109.

²⁴² Ibid., pp. 111, 112

the diffusion that occurred in time, in the creation of the world, is no more than a focal point or brief moment in comparison with the immense sweep of the eternal goodness,”²⁴³ (6.2).

3. 3. 3. Christ, ‘the Mercy-Seat’

At this juncture, we have arrived at the journey's final endpoint. We experience the mystery of Christ in the most inaccessible portion of the temple, in the holy of holies, at the mercy-seat, the seat of reconciliation and mercy with the Son. For it is in Bonaventure's writings that we discover the symbol that evokes a recognition of the most wonderful union of God and man in the person of Christ.²⁴⁴

If you are one of the Cherubim contemplating the essential attributes of God, and if you are amazed at the fact that the divine being is both first and last, eternal and most present, most simple and without limit, wholly everywhere and nowhere contained, most actual and never moved,...containing in Himself all things- all power, all truth, all goodness-if then, you are this Cherub, gaze at the Mercy-Seat and be amazed. For in hat Mercy-Seat the first Principle is joined with the last. God is joined with man, who was formed on the sixth day; the eternal is joined with time-bound man, in the fullness of time born of the Virgin; ...²⁴⁵ (6.5).

Bonaventure establishes a point of comparison between the divine nature's confluence of opposites and Christ's more spectacular manifestation. If, like the second Cherub, we marveled at the coincidence of unity and uniqueness in the Trinity, Christ shall astound us. “If you are this Cherub, now face toward the Mercy-Seat and be amazed that in Christ a personal unity coexists with a trinity of substance and with a duality of natures,”²⁴⁶ (6.6). As a mystical experience, Christ serves as a bridge between intellectual reflection and mystical ecstasy. First, we see Christ as the visible God's image as well as a paradigm for our humanity. We see our humanity beautifully enhanced when we identify with him as a man. The first and the last, the greatest and the lowest, the rim and the center, ‘the alpha and the Omega’, ‘the cause and the caused’, the creator and the creation, that is, ‘the book written within and without’, are all unified in Christ. We arrive at a pure actuality in Christ.²⁴⁷

The mind has now reached the final stage of illumination, where it is focused on the second Cherub. The mind reaches its pinnacle of perfection while considering the triune God's communicative activity, particularly when contemplating God's Son, Christ, the perfect image of the invisible God. The intellect has arrived the deepest level of its own being, ‘the apex mentis’ or a flash of ‘synderesis’. Synderesis, according to Bonaventure,

²⁴³ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 33.

²⁴⁴ See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p. 114.

²⁴⁵ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 35.

²⁴⁶ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 36.

²⁴⁷ See in: Ewert Cousins. *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites*, p. 92.

refers to the mind's innate propensity toward 'the Good'. Thus, in the sixth stage of 'illumination', the divine 'Good' floods the mind's 'synderesis', preparing it for mystical 'transitus'. 'Synderesis' is also regarded as the highest point of the mind and the innermost aspect of the soul.²⁴⁸ "The synderesis, whose task it is to warn against evil as such and to stimulate the good, relates to the *affectus quoad honestem* (love with reverence and respect) like the *conscientia* to the *intellectus practicus*, (practical understanding). One could therefore also call it a habitus of the aspirational faculty."²⁴⁹

3. 4. The "Transitus": The 'Passover' of the Mind to God

Now, the mind has reached the pinnacle of its being, and the soul has ascended the 'six-story mountain'. The intellect has done everything it can to comprehend God, the goal of the soul's longing, to the utmost extent conceivable. The mind yearns not only to comprehend God, but also to be one with Him. Who can assist it in bridging the gap between it and the 'Beloved'? In chapter seven, we learn that there is only one person who may act as a Mediator: Jesus Christ. He appeared to Francis as the Crucified and converted him into His image. The soul must now set its sight on the crucified and wait, full of faith in Christ, expecting the final unity with God via His grace.²⁵⁰

To begin with the "transitus" of the soul into Christ, the beginning of the end of the journey, Bonaventure writes in *Mind's Road to God*, "

"When the mind has done all this, it must still, in beholding these things, transcend and pass over, not only this visible world, but even itself. In this passing over, Christ is the way and the door; Christ is the ladder and the vehicle, being, as it were, the Mercy-Seat above the Ark of God and *the mystery which has been hidden from eternity*,"²⁵¹ (7.1).

The wayfarer is now standing in front of God's throne. He's done everything he can think of. To 'pass over' into God, all that is required is to totally immerse oneself in God's loving embrace through Christ. Only Christ's 'transitus' or 'pascha', that is, his death on the cross, can provide this transcendent going over or passing beyond (the 'transitus').²⁵² Bonaventure sets Francis *transitus's* experience on Alverna against the backdrop of Israel's crossing of the Red Sea, "Thus, using the rod of the cross, he may pass over the Red Sea, going from Egypt into the desert, where it is given to him to taste the *hidden manna*; he may

²⁴⁸ See in: J. A. Wayne Hellmann. *Divine and Created order in Bonaventure's Theology*, p. 191.

²⁴⁹ Marianne Schlosser. *Cognitio et amor: zum kognitiven und voluntativen Grund der Gotteserfahrung nach Bonaventura*. Schöningh, 1990, p. 74.

²⁵⁰ See in: Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, (Introduktion), p. xviii.

²⁵¹ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 37.

²⁵² See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p. 126.

rest with Christ in the tomb, as one dead to the outer world, but experiencing, nevertheless, as far as is possible in this present state as wayfarer, what was said on the cross to the thief who was hanging there with Christ: *This day you shall be with me in paradise,*”²⁵³ (7.2).

Referring to the ‘ecstatic transitus’ experience of the Wayfarer, basing on the sixth paragraph of the seventh chapter of the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, Bernard McGinn writes:

According to Bonaventure it is an experience of *super luminous ray of the divine darkness*, a concept that he took over from Dionysius’s *Mystical Theology* at this point. What is not Dionysian in Bonaventure’s presentation is the idea, that we might call *dying into love*. *The fire that wholly inflames and carries one into God through transporting unction and consuming affections* that carry us over into God are enkindled by Christ *in the white flame of His most burning Passion*. Our love for his death leads to our sharing in the archetypal *mors mystica*: *Let us die and enter into the darkness...; with Christ crucified let us pass out of this world to the Father* (Itinerarium. 7. 6).²⁵⁴

Commenting on the same aspect of *transitus* which is the main idea of the last chapter of the *Mind’s Journey into God* Marianne Schlosser opines:

To pass over to God means to enter into union with Christ in order to pass over with Him to the Father, as Bonaventure writes in n. 6 (7). This going over (*trans-ire*) or going out and crossing over (*ex-cedere*), is not done with the feet, but with the heart. But the change of place of the heart consists in the approach to a beloved person. The approach of the heart is love, and love does not exist without a transformation to the beloved. *Transire*, therefore, means to be transformed, to become one spirit with the beloved. The contemplation of Christ, who died for us, is a dying, a co-dying with Him, and therefore entrance into the new life, transformation and assimilation to Him (*transforamtio*).²⁵⁵

To conclude this section of the chapter, Bonaventure states in *Itinerarium* that this ‘Passover’ is ‘mystical’ and most hidden, and that no one knows about it save the one who ‘desires’ it and ‘gets’ it through the Holy Spirit’s fire. To put it another way, the final ecstatic ‘*Transitus*’ is only attainable through grace of the Holy Spirit,²⁵⁶ (7.4). This was the secret that the seraphic vision disclosed to Francis. St. Francis on Mount Alverna is singled out by Bonaventure as an exemplary depiction of such a passing over. St. Francis, who had been the paradigm of action earlier in his life, now becomes the perfect model of contemplation. God welcomes anyone who wish to embark on a spiritual journey, according to Bonaventure, through the example of St. Francis,²⁵⁷ (7.3). The transitus experience, the concept of ascent

²⁵³ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 38.

²⁵⁴ Bernard McGinn. *The flowering of mysticism: men and women in the new mysticism (1200-1350)*. No. 3. Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998, 110.

²⁵⁵ Bonaventura. *Itinerarium mentis in Deum: Der Pilgerweg des Menschen zu Gott*, p. 178.

²⁵⁶ See in: Ibid., p.38.

²⁵⁷ See in: Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 38.

and union will be dealt with in detail in the forthcoming chapter. Now let me present the direction of the movement of the soul's journey according to Bonaventure.

3. 5. 'Christo-centric' Movement of the Journey in *Itinerarium mentis Deum*

Bonaventure's account of the mystical road to God is entirely 'Christo-centric,' as evidenced by *The Itinerarium*, because Christ is the journey's start, middle, and end. Delio Ilia opined, there is one aspect of this journey that is commonly overlooked: it cannot be completed without faithful imitation of Christ.²⁵⁸ "In the opening section of *The Journey of the Soul into God* Bonaventure had invited the reader to *groan of prayer through Christ crucified, in whose blood we are cleansed from the filth of our vices*, (pro. 4). The figure of Christ is basic in Bonaventure's spirituality and theology."²⁵⁹

Bonaventure sought to explain how we know the reality of things in God through his doctrine of illumination. Knowledge, for Bonaventure, is a means to God, not a goal in itself. Knowledge is a way through which a person might come to know God's love. According to Bonaventure, we must draw closer to the divine light that shines inside us, illuminating the truth of our existence and the reality of the world around us, in order to arrive at this understanding. The trouble with going within and moving toward this light, however, is that we are captives to sin. As per Bonaventure, sin darkens the brain, enslaves one in the senses, and leads one to hang back in the world, asking infinite questions in search of that which has been lost.²⁶⁰ Bonaventure writes, "It seems strange indeed that after what has been shown of God's closeness to our souls there are so few concerned about perceiving the first principle within themselves,"²⁶¹ (4.1). The fact that humans are made in God's 'image' is at the basis of sin. Actually, we aren't born with a sinful nature. According to Bonaventure, we are made in God's benevolence, but the fact 'we are made' implies that we have limited freedom rather than full freedom like God. Perfect freedom is built in perfect love, and accordingly one can choose nothing except perfect love; but as created beings we are 'limited' which means we have the power to turn away from God and select something other than God—and this is the source of sin.²⁶²

²⁵⁸ Ilia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, p. 111.

²⁵⁹ Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writing*, p. 115.

²⁶⁰ See in: Ilia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, pp. 103,104.

²⁶¹ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 23.

²⁶² See in: Ilia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, p. 104.

Because humanity has fallen to the earth, according to Bonaventure, it cannot rise from the consequences of senses to see itself (truthfully) and the Eternal Truth in itself without divine assistance. This supernatural assistance is offered to us via Christ Jesus, who is the Truth of all reality as the Word.²⁶³ Christ is the one who re-establishes Adam's damaged relationship with God. Any knowledge other than Christ, according to Bonaventure, will be futile in the end.²⁶⁴ "No matter how enlightened one may be by the light coming from nature and from acquired knowledge, he cannot enter into himself to delight in the Lord except through the mediation of Christ...."²⁶⁵ Further in the same passage Bonaventure holds that the only way to true knowledge is via Christ, and to enter through him, one must believe in him, hope in him, and love him. As a result, true knowledge is founded on faith, hope, and love in the God who became flesh in Jesus. However, the kind of knowledge that Bonaventure is referring to is not the "bookish- knowledge", rather, it is knowledge that arises out of a relationship with Christ, the knowledge that is founded on a true experience with Christ, a knowledge which is 'experiential.' One cannot penetrate into God's secret, unless and until he or she develops a special bond with Christ. That is why the wayfarer's relationship with Christ is so important in the 'mystical journey' to God; the pilgrim's relationship with Christ will determine how he completes the journey, i.e., whether or not he will reach the mystical journey's objective of unity with God. There is no 'mystical communion' with God apart from Christ, according to Bonaventure. The soul is purified, illuminated, and perfected as a result of Christ's mercy. The godly image within the believer is repaired and restored to God's likeness when the believer enters more deeply into a personal relationship with Christ.²⁶⁶

"Bonaventure uses the term *hierarchy* to indicate that in union with Christ, the soul is reordered", (Itin. 4. 4). The word *hierarch* means "sacred" (*hier*) "principle" (*arche*). Christ is the "sacred principle" or *hierarch* who restores the soul to its God-conformed likeness; the more God-like the soul becomes more by grace, the more clearly it sees the truth of things, that is, the more God-like the soul becomes by grace, the more clearly it sees the truth of things, that is, the more it is illumined."²⁶⁷

The home of Trinity becomes the soul's residence when it is created 'hierarchically' in Christ (the process of 'hierarchization' will be explained in the next chapter). The soul becomes the eternal Father's child, Christ's bride, and the Holy Spirit's temple, "...grace is a gift by which the soul is perfected and transformed into the bride of Christ, the daughter of

²⁶³ See in: Ilia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, p. 105.

²⁶⁴ See in: Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 23

²⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 23

²⁶⁶ See in: Ilia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, pp. 105-107.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 108

the eternal Father, and the temple of the Holy Spirit,”²⁶⁸ (5.1.2). Thus, through a unifying relationship with Christ, one participates mystically or enters into a mystical communion in the life of the Trinity.²⁶⁹

To conclude this chapter, Jesus Christ is the interior teacher of the soul, as well as the standard and example of human behaviour, as the eternal Word and Word incarnate. According to Bonaventure, the journey to God transforms the entire individual in the end. As a result, everything occurs within must be expressed externally. Christ is both the mediator and the portal through which one might enter into God's contemplation (union) and the world's contemplation in God. Mystical union, according to Bonaventure, is not a ‘rational ascent’ of the mind to the uncreated holy Word. Rather, it happens as a result of ‘imitating Christ.’ Although we don't normally think of contemplation in terms of ‘imitation of Christ,’ Bonaventure believes, it is what brings the universe's harmony, a harmony that encompasses everything in the universe, because contemplation allows us to see with perfect clarity, and when we see clearly, we love rightly. All are bound together in the unity of the Father and the Son through love, which is vivified by the Spirit's power. Thus, the Trinity exists where there is love and oneness, and ‘happiness and peace’ exist where the Trinity exists. For Bonaventure, the journey's achievable goal is ‘happiness (joy) and peace.’²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ Bonaventure. *The Breviloquium: The works of Bonaventure*, p. 194.

²⁶⁹ Ilia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, p. 108.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.111,112.

Chapter III

The Nature of Mystical Experience and Mystical Union

As it is evident from the prologue of *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* and from the interpretations of the whole work of Bonaventure, the final goal of the mystical journey of the soul is “ecstatic- union” which results in “ecstatic-peace”. Bonaventure uses different terms such as “contemplation”, “ecstasy”, “*raptus*” ...etc. to express the mystical experience of the human soul. After clarifying these terms in short, this chapter will deal with the processes of analyzing the Content of Mystical Union in the mystical works of Bonaventure. However, before entering deeper into the nature of mystical experience or “ecstatic peace” and ‘Union’, it may be good to look closely into the objectives of ‘Mystical Journey’ in a bird’s eye view.

1. The Objective of the Mystical Journey in *The Journey of the Mind to God*

At the outset of the *Itinerarium* Bonaventure clearly hints at the Goal of the Journey:

... He may enlighten the eyes of our mind to guide our feet into the way of that peace which surpasses all understanding, that peace which our Lord Jesus Christ preached to us and which He gave to us. His message of **peace** our father Francis ever repeated announcing ‘Peace at the beginning and at end of all his sermons, making every greeting a wish for peace, making every prayer a sigh for **ecstatic peace**, like a citizen of that Jerusalem ...’,²⁷¹ (prologue 1).

There are various levels of knowledge or wisdom, according to Bonaventure, that appear to be the result of human effort and talent. However, such efforts do not lead to the attainment of higher wisdom which will consequently lead the wayfarer to the desired peace. It is a gift from the Holy Spirit (Solil. 2. 3, 14) and is most likely best understood as a sort of ‘infused contemplation’, as later authors would characterize it. Bonaventure singled out the case of St. Paul, which he sees as involving a very exceptional privilege, in the context of the many forms of divine knowledge which Adam had experienced in his state of innocence (II Sent., d. 23, a. 2, q. 3). It is described as an experience in which one does not act but is acted upon which is called ‘rapture’ and it's a rare happening. Therefore, rapture

²⁷¹ Bonaventure. *The Mind's Road to God.*, trans. George Boas, p .1.

cannot be identified with the goal of the journey which Bonaventure describes for the Pilgrim. This goal lies in the area of what he calls 'ecstasy' which would effect peace.²⁷²

Bonaventure's work has already been analyzed as an example of what is known as 'wisdom theology.' Knowledge, according to Bonaventure, is an important aspect of the human spiritual journey, but it is not the objective of that journey. He considers knowledge as a necessary step toward his objective. The aim of the journey is stated in terms of love, which draws the person beyond plain comprehension.²⁷³ Knowledge is crucial because we can't love what we don't understand. But it is intellectual understanding, that can take us to the edge of God's mystery. Love is what guides the traveller into the heart of this mystery, and for Bonaventure, love is the most profound wisdom of God;²⁷⁴ as he puts it in his *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*: 'Ecstatic love, according to a threefold hierarchic power: purgative, illuminative, and perfective, is the basis of all mystical theology.'²⁷⁵ Progressive intellectual and spiritual exercises such as 'purgation' and 'illumination' that lead to the knowledge of God are not only philosophical conjecture for Bonaventure, but loving contemplations. To put it another way, it exudes the warmth of spiritual reflection:

The truth is sought by the intellect urged on, however, by the anxiety of love which desires to know and then to embrace with intense fervor the truth known. Only under this condition does knowledge bring us near to God; only in this way does it become true progress in the soul's journey towards Him. In this process the intellect and the will advance together, vying, as it were with one another.²⁷⁶

Focusing on the Journey's Goal, Hayes Zachary holds, the 'peace' of which Bonaventure said at the start can be discovered by silencing all of the soul's cognition, having left behind all of the sensory images, and attempting to enter into the darkness of silence in which all our worries are forgotten (*Itin.* 7. 4), and in which, to some extent, God can be tasted (*Itin.* pro. 4). The 'peace' that Bonaventure seeks is this 'tasting' or enjoying of God in 'mystical relationship.'²⁷⁷ Bonaventure discusses the last experience of the journey who walked the prescribed steps, in the last chapter of *Itinerarium*, which is the journey's objective, "They have been like the six steps by which one arrives at the throne of the true

²⁷² See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p. 130.

²⁷³ See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p. 128. .

²⁷⁴ Ilia Delio. *Franciscan Prayer*. St. Antony Messenger Press, 2004, p. 132.

²⁷⁵ Bernard McGinn: *The Flowering of Mysticism*, p.103.

²⁷⁶ Efreem Bettoni . *Saint Bonaventure*: trans. Angelus Gambatese. The Notre Dame pocket library, 1964, p. 114.

²⁷⁷ See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, p. 136,

Solomon and at **peace**, where , as in inner Jerusalem, the true man of **peace** rests with a tranquil soul,”²⁷⁸ (7.1).

2. Meaning of the Terms: ‘Contemplation’, ‘Ecstasy’ and ‘Rapture’

Even though the mystics say that their mystical experiences are beyond words and expressions, they have tried to define their experiences in their writings using the so-called mystical language, even though in a limited way. From the period of the early Christianity, there are certain words that are used to express the concept of mystical union and their process. Three of the terms deserve special consideration in our evaluation of the understanding of mystical union in the writings of Bonaventure. This is because Bonaventure uses these terms in his works interchangeably as already mentioned.

2.1. The ‘Contemplation’

As we have previously seen the Latin term *contemplatio* (contemplation) comes from the Greek *theoria*, which means "seeing at" or "gazing at." It denoted the sense of unity with God in the church fathers, that is, gazing at God's face or ‘resting in God.’²⁷⁹ The progression of a mystical journey, as per Bonaventure, culminates in contemplation. Commenting on “contemplation”, in *Simply Bonaventure*, Ilia Delio writes:

...contemplation is that resting in God whereby one's entire life is centred in God and, we might say, God is the centre of one's life. It is that mutual exchange in love, a sharing of the wills, as Bernard of Clairvaux described it, the nuptial union of the divine and human will. It is the ultimate transformation of one's life in God in which the heart beats with compassion and rests in the One it most desires. For Bonaventure, contemplation is the goal of Christian life.²⁸⁰

It may be helpful to look into the history of the term "contemplation" to gain a better understanding of it. Contemplation, according to the ancient Greeks, is a journey away from the world to look upon the "Mind," or cause of the ultimate reality. The material world, including the body, had no spiritual significance for the Greeks, and hence the spiritual road to ultimate truth required transcending the world and submitting the body to the Spirit.²⁸¹ As can be seen from a study of Greek philosophy, Plato believed that human-souls contemplated eternal truths or realities, the Forms, or Ideas, at first. However, the soul's embodiment is a painful process that leads the soul to forget. It has forgotten its flawless vision of truth and

²⁷⁸ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the mind to God*, trans, Boehner, p.37.

²⁷⁹ See in: Illia Delio. *Crucified Love: Bonaventure's Mysticism of the Crucified Christ*. P. 174

²⁸⁰ Illia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, p. 130.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

beauty and now lives in a world of deception. True wisdom comes from recalling what the spirit formerly knew. Plato views the world in which we live as a changing universe in which true knowledge is impossible. Philosophy's goal is to reclaim authentic understanding of truth and beauty. Real knowledge, according to Plato, entails the orientation of the entire person, allowing him to participate in the realm of Ideas and forms, which is the divine sphere. The soul is a dweller of the divine sphere because of its capacity to know the Forms. As a result, the soul's need to understand the forms is akin to its returning home/original state. The soul is divine by nature, and it yearns to return to it. Contemplation (*theoria*) of 'Being', 'Truth', 'Beauty', and 'Goodness' make this possible. The act of *theoria* entails more than just comprehension; it also entails unity and participation. In *Republic*, Plato's renowned allegory of the 'Cave' elucidates his thoughts regarding *theoria*.²⁸²

'Contemplation' is the most accurate phrase used by Bonaventure to describe mystical experience. In contrast to contemporary understanding, Bonaventure defined contemplation as the 'operation of God's grace on a human being: The grace to encounter 'God as present within oneself' is received in contemplation.' This differentiates 'contemplative knowledge from faith', which is based on the acceptance of another's message, as well as 'prophetic knowledge,' which provides insight into the content of the knowledge and is frequently associated with supernatural events, like 'apparition'; it also distinguishes contemplative knowledge from seeing the 'glory', which is "God is seen in His clarity" (rapture). The contemplative experience can be of many degrees of intensity; it can also be heightened by various concerns, as *the Itinerarium* demonstrates,²⁸³ which we shall evaluate elsewhere in this work.

According to Bonaventure, contemplation cannot be limited to the spirit alone because the soul cannot live without the body and therefore it encompasses the whole person. In *Breviloquium* Bonaventure writes about the role of the body in the act of contemplation, "...while other just men obtain it through speculation, which starts from the senses, reaches the imagination, proceeds from imagination to reason, from reason to the intellect, from the intellect to understanding, and from understanding to wisdom, that ecstatical-knowledge which begins in this life to reach fulfilment in eternal glory."²⁸⁴ The word of God, united

²⁸² Andrew Louth. *The origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, pp.1-3.

²⁸³See In: Marianne Schlosser. "ecstasis/excessus mentis/ raptus/unio. In: *Dizionario Bonaventuriano, Filosofia -teologia-spiritualita, a cura di Ernesto Caroli*. Editrici francescane, Padova (2008). Free trans.from Italian, pp. 390, 391.

²⁸⁴ Bonaventure. *Breviloquium*, V. 6, 6, p. 206.

with the flesh and body, ‘ennobles’ our nature by providing the object of contemplation required for the purification of our nature, and for Bonaventure, this object is Christ, God in human flesh, rather than a glorious and distant God unlike for the Greeks.²⁸⁵

Further, different from the Greek thought, Bonaventure understands contemplation as ‘Christ-centred.’ For Bonaventure, imitation of Christ is to lead to contemplation. The ‘journey’ of the returning to God becomes the ‘following and imitation of the Word made flesh,’ Jesus Christ. Here Bonaventure draws a remarkable connection between man's being an image (*imago*) and following (*imitatio*). The likeness of God in man comes from discipleship and imitation, in as much as the discipleship of Christ restores the lost original ‘likeness.’ The imitation becomes the likeness and through it the renewal of the likeness (*imitatio*). For Bonaventure, this imitation of the likeness refers in a special way to the imitation of Christ as the Crucified, because it is precisely in this that the perfection of the life according to the Gospel is revealed.²⁸⁶

Christ is the genuine spark of wisdom who instructs both internally and externally, re-ordering the world's corrupted order. Bonaventure portrays contemplation as a two-fold process, a “going-in” to divinity through the uncreated Word and a “going-out” to mankind through the incarnate Word, in light of the mystery of Christ. Entering into the mystery of Christ as the uncreated Word is to “go-in” to Christ. To “go-out” to Christ entails imitating or following Christ's example in both word and deed. This thought may be difficult for us to fathom, yet it is fundamentally the mystics' experience.²⁸⁷ Bonaventure plainly states in his works that the more a pilgrim delves into Christ's person, the more he contemplates God.

Quoting Bonaventure's sermon *Christ, the One Teacher*, Delio says that contemplation is really a ‘climb’ (ascent) and a ‘descend’ to God, The deeper the soul sinks in imitation of Christ, the higher it ‘ascends’ to God through divine illumination. The body is moulded to ‘Christ's poverty’, ‘humility’, and ‘suffering’ as the spirit becomes “hierarchical” and so illumined and completed in Christ. As a result, both the soul and the body ascend and descend in accordance with Christ.²⁸⁸ This helps to explain why Francis was drawn to Jesus' suffering and aspired to imitate him. Schlosser remarks on Francis' experience, “Francis' contemplative experience culminates in the “*suspensio*” in which he

²⁸⁵ See in: Illia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, p. 108.

²⁸⁶ Johannes B Freyer. *Homo viator-der Mensch im Lichte der Heilsgeschichte: eine theologische Anthropologie aus franziskanischer Perspektive*. Butzon & Bercker, 2001., pp. 283, 284.

²⁸⁷ Illia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, p. 131

²⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 131.

receives the stigmata. No one can be led to this, but to that in which this extraordinary experience has its reason: to be conformed to Christ (*conformitas, transformatio*).²⁸⁹

The path to contemplation is this way of 'ascending' and 'descending' in conjunction with Christ. Bonaventure's *Itinerarium* is a radically mystical exploration of the ascending or internal path. This mystical pilgrimage in unity with Christ, according to Bonaventure, is a dynamic one in which the pilgrim penetrates profoundly into the heart of the soul, where it discovers its real image in which the soul was constituted initially. According to Bonaventure, this means that one's relationship with Christ compels one to draw closer to God from the inside, and in doing so, to 'gaze upon God' in all of the eternal mystery. Because the image of the Trinity is reflected on Christ in an exemplary fashion that Bonaventure argued that entering into oneness with Christ is to enter into the mystery of the Trinity, that is, the mystery of love.²⁹⁰ "For, if an image is an expressed likeness, then when our mind contemplates in Christ the Son of God, who is by nature the image of the invisible God..., it has already reached something that is perfect,"²⁹¹ (6.7). We are led into the depths of the Trinity, the boundless communion of self-diffusive love, as we contemplate the mystery of God in Christ and the image in which we are made. This "upward" journey into the Trinity of love is ultimately a journey of the heart. We enter the heart of the Trinity through love, and for Bonaventure, love is the 'deepest understanding of God'.²⁹² Contemplation is a "transitus" into the mystery of the Trinity's dynamic love in connection with the spouse, the Crucified Christ. Only through oneness with the Christ crucified, a union connected by the flame of the Spirit's love, according to Bonaventure, can one pass over into the Lord of unending love.²⁹³

2. 2. The 'Ecstasy'

Because Bonaventure was familiar with the mystical theology of the 12th century, particularly that of Bernhard, Wilhelm of St. Thierry, Hugo, and Richard of St. Victor, as well as Latin patristic like Augustine, Gregory the Great..., it is clear that Bonaventura knows a variety of terms for the mystical knowledge of God. At the same time, when speaking about spiritual 'ascent', he refers to Aegidius of Assisi's "Golden Words." The terms are not always used in the same way or have the same meaning. It is not always possible to translate

²⁸⁹ Marianne Schlosser. „Zur Theologie der Mystik bei Bonaventura,“ pp. 54,55.

²⁹⁰ Illia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, pp. 132-134.

²⁹¹ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, p. 36.

²⁹² Illia Delio. *Franciscan Prayer*, p. 132.

²⁹³ See in: Illia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, p. 137.

them into modern languages in a satisfactory manner.²⁹⁴ Bonaventure suggests that there are levels of experience that can be thought of as similar to the passing through death to the vision of heaven. Such experiences can include both ecstasy and rapture. But ecstasy and rapture are not to be identified with each other. Ecstasy is a lesser form of experience and is the more frequent of the two. Rapture, as Bonaventure understands it, is very rare. It seems to consist in a vision of God which, (already here in history), anticipates the experience of the beatific vision.²⁹⁵

‘Ecstasy’ refers to a certain component of the mystical experience which is a greatest degree of it: a state in which the soul is completely isolated from all other things, filled with love for God, and God pours His grace and love into it, drawing the soul closer to Him. Bonaventura uses a variety of terminology to describe ecstasy and its qualities, which he cannot always distinguish clearly. The following are some of the most important aspects of Bonaventure's understanding of ecstasy in his writings: 1) Ecstasy is a unique feeling that has been defined as "illuminated darkness" (*tenebrae, caligo illuminans*), "sleep" (*sopor, somnium*) that is similar to "being awake" (*mors, transitus*), and "death." Because all of his strength is focused on God, a human in ‘ecstasy’ can be enthralled beyond his senses (*alientatio a sensibus*), that is, lured away from all created things. At this point, it may be good to note that physical effects of ecstasy, while possible, are not decisive for Bonaventure. 2) Ecstasy is facilitated by grace (*gratia, divinitus data*): the individual must be elevated to this state. 3) The most crucial aspect of this encounter is God's ‘love’ (*affectus, amor, complacentia*). Love brings everything together, brings harmony, and joy.²⁹⁶

2. 3. The ‘Rapture’

The *raptus* refers to a special ‘cognitive-experiential- ability’ and occurs very seldom: it lasts for a very short time and the still living person is able to see God (experience) directly. Elsewhere, in an ‘unreal’ sense Bonaventura uses *rapi*, being captivated, in order to describe the intensity of God's attraction towards human being.²⁹⁷ In *Collations on the Six Days of Creation*, Bonaventure makes a distinction between ‘ecstasy’ and ‘rapture’ and explains the following regarding *raptus*:

The sixth vision is that of understanding absorbed by rapture in God. Hence, the Epistle to the Corinthians: *I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago —whether in the body or out of*

²⁹⁴ See in: Marianne Schlosser. “ecstasis/excessus mentis/ raptus/unio p. 390.

²⁹⁵ See in: Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, pp. 130,131.

²⁹⁶ See in: Marianne Schlosser. “ecstasis/excessus mentis/ raptus/unio p. 390.

²⁹⁷ See in: Marianne Schlosser. “ecstasis/excessus mentis/ raptus/unio p. 390.

the body I do not know, God knows — such a one was caught up in this way. This lifting up makes the soul as similar to God as is possible in the state of pilgrimage, Ecstasy and rapture are not the same, wherefore it is said that they do not have merely a disposition toward glory, but the very act. And as the one vision consists in the common boundary between the way and the fatherland, so the other consists in the common boundary between union and separation from the body. Hence the Apostle writes: *Whether in the body or out of the body I do not know.*²⁹⁸

Bonaventure appears to position the high feeling of rapture as the dividing line between historical journey and heavenly experience. Or, to put it another way, a person journeying in history gets a real taste of heaven.²⁹⁹

Raptus, in the strictest sense, has a distinct connotation that is not the same as ecstasy. Bonaventure intended to devote a series of sermons in the *Collationes in Hexaem* to the manner of attaining knowledge in relation to the "*raptus*," but he died before these lectures could be completed. From his brief notes, it is possible to deduce the following: While 'ecstasy' is a dimension or facet of mystical experience – Aigidius of Assisi characterizes it as an 'extreme sensation of comfort' (extreme consolation), and therefore, the 'raptus' is not part of the contemplative field; a person who has had the raptus has a 'clear perception and knowledge' of God, the *visio*; in rapture the person is drawn out of his usual condition into a fierce and violent mode, the tie between body and soul is almost broken, leaving the person "suspended" between death and life. According to a widely held theological opinion (e.g., Thomas Aquinas), the 'raptus' is the grace of the "*visio beatifica*" in this life, but for a limited time only, rather than being taken to an eternal state of Joy.³⁰⁰

According to Zachary Hayes, Bonaventure talks in similar terms in his exposition of the many forms of divine knowledge (II sent.), which he describes in a wide-ranging examination of Adam's experience in the condition of innocence. Bonaventure calls out the situation of St. Paul in this discussion as involving a highly exceptional privilege. It is described as an experience in which one does not act but is acted upon, in the language of rapture. It's a rare opportunity. As a result, we assume that rapture has nothing to do with the destination of Bonaventure's journey.³⁰¹ Bonaventure credited this event solely to the apostle Paul, but he appears to have included persons like the Areopagite and Francis indirectly. In any event, only a few people are given the opportunity to experience raptus. Bonaventura is noticeably hesitant while discussing 'raptus' because he believes that God's vision is given

²⁹⁸ Bonaventure. *Collationes in Hexaemeron*. Reportatio B. available at: <https://dokumen.pub/collationes-in-hexaemeron.html>, stand on: 25.04.2022, p. 53. Accessed on 30.05.2022.

²⁹⁹ Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: mystical writing*, p. 131.

³⁰⁰ See in: Marianne Schlosser. "ecstasis/excessus mentis/ raptus/unio" p. 393

³⁰¹ Zachary Hayes. *Bonaventure: mystical writing*, p. 130.

in principle in the state of death, i.e., at the end of time. Those who have a raptus, as we suppose Paul did, may be an exception. Due to a rare privilege, such people transcend the state of pilgrimage on this planet. They don't accomplish anything on their own to get to this point; it's just something that happens to them by destiny, and call. There is no clarity about 'ecstatic knowledge', in contrast to 'raptus-knowledge'. The state of pilgrimage is linked to the "darkness" of the intellect. Even the highest levels of mystical experience are bound by faith's norms; they don't permit for an unfettered vision (II Sent. Dist. 23 a.2 q.3 ad6; Q. II, 546a). More than knowledge, love based on trust is sufficient for the present life on earth.³⁰²

Although Bonaventure understood contemplation as a broad 'continuum' of increasing contact with God culminating in the 'loving ecstasy' described in the *Itinerarium* and elsewhere, a number of texts in his writings distinguish between 'excessus/exstasis' and 'raptus'. "For example, in the Collations on the Hexaemeron, while the fourth of the sixth illuminations leading to the heavenly seventh day is "suspension in contemplation" , the series culminates in the vision of the understanding absorbed in God through rapture. Here, Bonaventure notes that This uplifting makes the soul as like to God as it can be in this life. 'Ecstasy' is not the same as 'rapture'." ³⁰³ As a result, those who possess the latter, do not have the habit of Glory, but rather an actuation of it. Paul, Job, and Dionysius are given as examples of individuals who have experienced rapture; Moses was also traditionally counted among "the very few" who have experienced it. Thus, 'rapture' is a foretaste of heaven's splendour in this life, a temporary reception of the glorious light in the soul, but not a permanent habit found among the blessed. It's so uncommon and unique - that it is why Bonaventure didn't mention it in the *Itinerarium*, which is best understood as a universal invitation to all Christians to follow Francis' path to 'excessus mentis'.³⁰⁴ In this context, McGinn also points out that there is a subtle difference between 'excessus mentis' and 'ecstasy'. Excessus mentis is a higher, 'affective stage' depicted by Christ's crucified seraph, whereas ecstasy is largely an intellectual, though supra-rational state of mind signified by the 'cherubim'.³⁰⁵

³⁰² See in: Marianne Schlosser. "ecstasis/excessus mentis/ raptus/unio p. 394.

³⁰³ Bernard McGinn. *The Flowering of Mysticism*, p. 112

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Bernard McGinn. *The Flowering of Mysticism*, p 110.

3. The Concept of ‘Mystical Union’

From the thirteenth century onwards, the scholars debated the nature and forms of the mystical union extensively. In his *Commentary on Sentences*, Bonaventure speaks about "expressed union / uniting" (*expressa unitio*) with God, in analysing the forms and manners of union. Here, he makes evident, the extraordinary nature of God's union with humans in the person of the incarnated Word. However, Bonaventure, according to McGinn Bernard, was not really interested in analysing the many forms of mystical union, hence it was not his main preoccupation.³⁰⁶ However, in his writings, Bonaventure deals with different aspects of mystical union though not in detail. In this section of the paper, I try to present the understanding of Christian mystical union in general and the nature of mystical union in the writings of Bonaventure in particular.

3. 1. General Notion of Mystical Union in Christian Literature

The Christian notion of “*unio mystica*” can be traced back to a long development process that began in the fourth century, and this concept can be found in the New Testament. The life with Christ, according to both Paul and John, is characterized by a dynamic unity with God. This union comprises in Christ as God's divine self-expression. The Holy Spirit seals the union and begins an ever-deepening involvement in the divine life's intimacy. The believer receives a "sense" of the divine from the Holy Spirit. And if a believer develops this "feeling" of the divine that the Spirit gives him, he may be able to "taste" (*sapere*) God and his mysteries. The church fathers evolved diverse theologies of ‘experiential union’ based on this ‘mysterious’ affinity to a divine ‘inhabitation’.³⁰⁷

We start talking about Christian mystical theology with Origen. Origen was the originator of the ‘intellectualist-mysticism’, which was further expanded by Evagrius. Contemplative union, according to this school, is defined as the union of the *nous*, the highest point of the soul, with God through a transformative vision. And it is in this connection that the *nous* discovers its ‘actual nature’; *nous* does not “pass out of itself onto the other”; therefore, ecstasy does not exist. The God with whom the soul is unified is also not

³⁰⁶ Bernard McGinn. *The Flowering of Mysticism*, p. 112.

³⁰⁷ See in: Louise Dupre. “The Christian Experience of mystical Union”. In: *Journal of Religion*, Vol. 69, issue 1, Jan. (1989), p.13.

unknown. As a result, darkness is a stage behind that the soul passes through on its way up: there is no ultimate darkness in God. We have a mystique of light here.³⁰⁸

The church fathers of the early centuries recognized that believers had the ability to sense the presence of God's Spirit at work in them. The Platonic and Neoplatonic language was used by theologians of Alexandria, Cappadocia, and Greece, as well as later by the Latin theologians in the west, to portray the soul's development toward union with God. Because Christian faith was centred on the basic mystery of God becoming flesh, the use of Platonic thinking in Christian mysticism sparked debate among theologians. Any theory of spirit that did not cover the entire person was ruled out by the biblical anthropology that Christianity had acquired. Despite their differences, Christian theologians agreed on one fundamental principle: the Christian is 'united' with God in Christ in a very 'intimate' way.³⁰⁹ Even though Bonaventure used Platonic language in his mystical works, he remained committed to the Christian doctrine of salvation, which states that the mystical relationship with God is only possible through a union with Christ, the Word made flesh:

His discussion of union with God in the sentence Commentary makes it clear that the affective joining of God and human brought about through charity never takes away the dignity of our personhood. We can never be said to be "one with God" in any univocal sense, because any affirmation of oneness with the divine nature is incorrect without the addition of some qualification or determination, like *unus* "spiritus".³¹⁰

There have been many other disputed questions about *unio mystica* throughout the history of mystical theology, including (1) "whether *unio mystica* refers to an experience or, rather, a state of being that lies beyond experience"³¹¹; and (2) "how could the mind "experience" a reality that it declares lies beyond the mind's measure."³¹² In her depiction of the spiritual union, Saint Teresa of Avila describes the 'state of ecstasy' as so complete that it appears to forget everything as if the soul no longer 'is' (exists).³¹³ One wonders if the mystic loses consciousness from this vantage point. The mystics' and mystical theologians' responses to these questions differ basing on their cognitive patterns. As previously indicated, Bonaventure's writings do not go into those details about such issues. However, along his texts, the reader will come across some discussion on the subject. Bonaventure

³⁰⁸ Andrew Louth. *The Origins of Christian mystical Traditions: from Plato to Denys*, p. 72.

³⁰⁹ See in: Louise Dupre. "The Christian Experience of mystical Union", pp.1,2.

³¹⁰ Bernard McGinn. "Love, Knowledge, and Mystical Union in Western Christianity: Twelfth to Sixteenth Centuries", p. 11.

³¹¹ Louis Dupre. "Christian Experience of Mystical Union". p. 3.

³¹² *Ibid.*, p.5.

³¹³ See in: Teresa of Avila. *The Interior Castle, (The seventh Dwelling place, 7. 3)*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Rodrigues. Paulist Press, 1979, p.183.

might not have been too concerned with the mystical union's hypothetical nature. He was more concerned with a pilgrimage that would allow him to experience the *unio mystica*, similar to St. Francis of Assisi's experience on Mount Laverne.

From the 12th to 16th sixteenth century, the classic schools of mystical writers in the Western church used the concept of "unio" with God as a favoured means to distinguish the purpose of their beliefs and activities. Their interpretations of "union," however, were varied and multifaceted. The link between unity and the mystic's key conscious powers, namely, the cognitive powers of 'love' and 'knowledge', is the cause for tremendous difficulty in grasping *unio mystica*. The mystical masters spent time and effort delving into the roles of 'love and knowledge' on the journey to mystical oneness, and also how 'affection and intellection' exist together inside union itself. It is vital to trace the interaction between the idea of 'union' and the ways in which 'love', and 'knowledge' relate to these both as means and as ends in order to truly comprehend the concept of mystical union with God according to the western Christian school as well as the mystical thought of Bonaventure.³¹⁴

Bernard of Clairvaux is the finest place to start our investigation, not only because of the clear attention he dedicated to it, but also because of his reputation and holiness, which earned him canonical status among subsequent mystical theologians like Bonaventure. Bernard examines four stages of the climb of charity in *De diligendo Deo*, as well as the mystical journey's objective of oneness with God. His theology is mostly Pauline, with a strong emphasis on 1Corinthians 6:17, which states, "But anybody united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him." The three images Bernard uses to articulate the union – 'a drop of water in a glass of wine', 'iron in a fire', and 'air transformed into sunshine' - allude to some form of substance-union between the person and God, which Bernard is keen to avoid, since he insists that the material will survive, but in a new form, (all of these examples had been used in philosophical and theological debates long before Bernard). Examining additional passages concerning Divine union, Bernard's concept of "unio" with God is likely to be essentially a 'union of wills' (*unitas sprirtus*), not of 'essence or substance'. Bernard emphasizes in the *Sermones in Cantica* that love is the only means by which a human being can deal communally with God, and that 'nuptial love' is the highest form, the love that best

³¹⁴ See in: Bernard McGinn. "Love, Knowledge, and Mystical Union in Western Christianity: Twelfth to Sixteenth Centuries", In: *Church History*, Vol. 56, (1987), p.7.

symbolizes unity. Therefore, Bernard's mysticism is classified in the category of 'affective mysticisms.'³¹⁵

William of Saint Thierry, a contemporary of Bernard, endorses and deepens his approach. William frequently uses the Pauline *unus spiritus* language when discussing oneness with God. William emphasizes that there is no 'metamorphosis' in union into the divine nature like in marriage, and he, too, sees a fitting image for union in the *Song of Songs*' 'nuptial metaphor', particularly in the embrace of the lover and the beloved (Song of songs 2:6), which he relates with the Holy Spirit. William also emphasizes the need of love in the 'lift' (ascension) process. In fact, he lays out a two-way path to union: an 'intellectual' (*credo ut intelligam*) and an 'affective' (*credo ut experiar*) 'ascent', which he tries to combine in his concept of the *ratio fidei*. What William teaches is an *intelligentia amoris*, a 'mutual interpenetration of love and knowledge' on a higher level, not a confused identity or mere metaphor. Later, the Victorines, particularly Richard, in his book *De gradibus caritatis*, whose ideas influenced Bonaventure, share the same tendency of thinking pattern.³¹⁶

3. 2. The Nature of Mystical Union in Bonaventura's Writings

In *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, Bonaventure lays out a multidimensional plan for the 'ascent' of the soul's six faculties to God. The ascent engages all of the soul's intellectual faculties, but 'affectivity' transcends 'cognition.' "In this passing over, if it is to be perfect, all intellectual activities ought to be relinquished and the loftiest affection transported to God..."³¹⁷ Here at the final level, which is the *apex mentis*, the mind is transformed in *apex affectus* to a stage of "deiformity". Since the '*apex mentis*,' the sixth and final stage of the ascent, surpasses the level of *intelligentia* that can know the "divine unity" identified with 'esse' (God's unity through Being) and the Trinity as a '*bonus*,' (Trinity as Good), it can be argued that Bonaventure's thought still has a subsuming aspect, that the transcendent love of *unitas spiritus* includes a transformation of its intellectual foundation. As a result, ecstasy, also known as *excessus mentis*, can be thought of as a form of "intellectualized affectivity." It is characterized by 'intense love' and extends beyond conventional 'faith- knowledge.'³¹⁸

³¹⁵ See in: Bernard McGinn. "Love, Knowledge, and Mystical Union in Western Christianity: Twelfth to Sixteenth Centuries", p. 8.

³¹⁶ See in: Bernard McGinn. "Love, Knowledge, and Mystical Union in Western Christianity: Twelfth to Sixteenth Centuries", pp.9,10.

³¹⁷ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, 7. 5

³¹⁸ Bernard McGinn, *Love, Knowledge, and Mystical Union in Western Christianity: Twelfth to Sixteenth Centuries*, 11.

As per Bonaventure, a person of desire who has entered the mysteries of divine love through the Crucified Christ is led into union with God by love. This *unio* is a loving union that is beyond all of our understanding and words. It's a passionate love, one that Francis of Assisi felt in unity with Christ. The glory of God on the cross changes one into the crucified Christ when contemplated. In the manifestation of 'Stigmata,' Francis experienced this communion with the crucified Jesus on the mountain of La Verna. Bonaventure portrays crucified Christ as "spouse" and the ecstatic union of love as a mystical marriage.³¹⁹

In its mystical sense, according to Bonaventure, contemplation is a 'transcendental union in love.' Bonaventure comes to this realization because he recognizes that God is not only 'Being', but also the 'highest Good', which is love. As a result, the human response cannot merely be intellectual contemplation; it must lead to a union of love with the primeval mystery of love, that is, to be guided back to a loving relationship between father and son. Because it involves a whole re-centring of oneself in God, the transitus into God described by Bonaventure at the end of the voyage is an 'ecstatic contemplation'. Bonaventure adds, "Whoever loves this death sees God" (Iten. VI.6), describing it as "a mystical death." It is a "death" since neither the intellect, nor the bodily senses can comprehend God. Rather, the mind is centred in the heart, which is centred in God. At this point in the journey, only the spiritual senses can touch and taste God, who is only known through the profound sense of love. One is drawn beyond oneself into the unfathomable mystery of the God of love, who envelopes the inner soul with love's wounds as He is crucified. As Bonaventure writes, it is a death into love: "Let us, then, die and enter into the darkness...With Christ crucified, let us pass out of this world to the Father" (Iten. VII. 6), so that when the glimpse of Father is given to us, we are allowed to respond, "it is enough" (Iten. VII.6). To complete this journey, one must simply resign in whole love to the father, as the Crucified did, in order to pass over into the 'dominance of grace' through a sensual death.³²⁰

The mystical union with Christ is a love-based oneness that turns the human being into a new person. The three theological virtues that link the human being to God in a state of grace are the foundation of the "unio." Referring to the union and the relationship of the theological virtues in *Mind's Journey*, Schlosser comments on the nature of the mystical experience of the wayfarer in the following way that Spiritual sensitivity will increase if a person lives in faith, hope, and love. Christ is the object of the virtues as well as the spiritual experience for Bonaventura. He shows Himself in His beauty, and the message of faith

³¹⁹ See in: Illia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, p. 136.

³²⁰ See in: Illia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, p. 138

sounds like a gentle word in the "ears of the soul" (*'spiritualis visus et auditus'*). Because, like the "odour" (*'spiritualis odoratus'*) of a yet distant "good," Christ invites the human person to follow Him, the virtue of hope creates a longing (desire). Because of this "odour," one rushes to the "good" that is still a long way away. Finally, love recognizes that it has touched Christ since this love can only be provided by the Holy Spirit, Christ's Spirit. As a result, the senses of direct contact, such as tasting and touching (*'gustus and tactus'*), or rather an embrace, are used to express experiential love/physical love (*'osculum, amplexus'*).³²¹ Commenting on the affective experience of the divine goodness in Bonaventure's writings, Timothy Johnson says that the essence of Love determines Bonaventure's stance that the soul's relationship with God is fundamentally affective. For Bonaventure, love entails the cleaving of affection toward the one loved. As a result, according to Bonaventure, love might be described as "unitive." As a result, love may be described as an emotional force that brings the lover and the beloved together. As the soul cleaves to God, the affective, unitive power of love, as manifested in charity, penetrates deeply into the divine mystery and provides joy.³²²

According to Schlosser, *Excessus mentis*, the last level of the ascent, is the outcome of the ecstatic experience, which is nothing more than the 'most intense spiritual sense experience' possible. Bonaventure ascribes the three theological virtues, which underpin the five senses, to the three "colourings" of the ecstatic experience referring to Richard of St. Victor, that admiration strikes the soul that perceives Christ's splendour in a unique manner (*'excessus admirationis'*). The soul itself is gloaming because of the received splendour of light, just like the bride in "Songs of Songs" (Song of Solomon 6, 10). The soul that recognizes Christ's "aroma" and is consumed with longing and devotion (*'excessus devtionis'*) emits a "fragrant odour" similar to burning frankincense (Song of Solomon 3, 6). The soul who experiences Christ's love, who rejoices in it as a man rejoices in his bride, is overjoyed (*'excessus exultationis'*).³²³

In *The Journey of the to God*, Bonaventure leads the wayfarer to the mystical union through certain stage of 'ascents/lifts and he connects these 'ascents' with certain symbols mainly from the Old Testament. A study of the meaning of ascents or lifts may give us better clarity about the nature of Mystical union in the works of Bonaventure. The following

³²¹ See in: Marianne Schlosser. "ecstasis/excessus mentis/ raptus/unio p. 393.

³²² See in: Timothy J. Johnson. *The Soul in Ascent: Bonaventure on poverty, prayer and union with God*, p. 165.

³²³ See in: Marianne Schlosser. "ecstasis/excessus mentis/ raptus/unio. p. 393.

section of the Paper looks into the details of “accent” and symbols related to it in *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*.

3. 2. 1. The Ascent (*The lift*) and Ecstatic Symbols in *Itinerarium*

The gradual ascent of the soul's Journey into God, with its associated symbolism of ladder, mountain-ascent, six-winged Seraph, and entry into the Temple, has already been examined in part in the previous chapters of this work. This section of the paper will focus on three more symbols of the 'ascent' of the soul discovered in the *Journey* that have garnered less attention than the others: the column of smoke, the rise of celestial phenomena (dawn, moon, and sun) into the sky, and the upwelling of a spring. These images are taken over from the *Song of Songs* and appear in Chapter four of the *Itinerarium*, where they are associated with human beings “coming up” or “arising out of” the wilderness. These symbols are being analyzed in relation to the ‘visionary lift’ which they signify correspondingly.

3. 2. 1. 1. *The Ascent (The lift) in General*

In her article interpreting the symbolisms in *Itinerarium*, Elizabeth Watts proposes a secular interpretation for the phenomenon of 'ascent':

Experience of non-ordinary states of consciousness often involves disorientation of the self. Such realms of consciousness alter the normal operations of the senses, which have to orient the self in the world. The resulting change in perception is often described by mystical and visionary writers as an ascent or lift. At the same time, for the most part, the writers are careful to point that the “lift” involved is not necessarily a physical phenomenon. The process underlying this experience of ascent seems to be part physiological, part psychological.³²⁴

The word 'ascent' comes from the Latin *ad scandere*, which means 'to travel up step by step.' Commenting on the ascent/lift in the writings of Bonaventure Robert Davis writes that the highest movement that human beings are proficient of – ‘the ascent towards and union with God’ – most closely reflects the most basic kind of movements in the universe – that of the elements moving towards their natural places; and the agent of the motion in the soul is the weight of charity, a gift of the holy spirit.³²⁵

Readers of the literature of comparative religion are familiar with the physiological qualities of the ascent from the Hindu *kundalini Yoga* tradition, in which movement of

³²⁴ Elizabeth Watts. “ Symbols of Ascent in the Soul’s Journey into God of Bonaventure,” in: *The Cord*, vol. 38, no. 9, (1989), p. 263.

³²⁵ Robert Davis. *The Force of Union: Affect and ascent in the theology of Bonaventure*. Doctrinal Dissertation, Harvard University, 2012, pp.107,108. Available at: https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/9385627/Davis_gsas.harvard_0084L_10307.pdf?sequence=3, stand on 28.04.2022.

concentrated psychic energy ‘up the spine and into the brain’ allows the *Yogi* to have spiritual experiences. The existence of this energy manifests itself physically as a flush rising through the body as blood flows up towards the brain and as a result the *yogi*’s focus increases.³²⁶ Some Christian mystics too who undergo the same type of experience feel it as an outside force which lifts them up in a factual sense. Thus St. Theresa of Avila, for example, says:

...often it comes like a strong, swift impulse, before your thought can fore warn you of it or you can do anything to help yourself; you see and feel this cloud, or this powerful eagle, rising and bearing you up with it on its wings... It seemed that I was being lifted up by a force beneath my feet so powerful that I know nothing to which I can compare it....³²⁷

Teresa refers to this experience as “elevation,” “flight of spirit,” “transport,” and “ecstasy. In her discussions, in a number of passages, Teresa makes clear that the soul is not only the thing that rises; the body or some part of the body is felt also as raised into the air.”³²⁸ “My soul has been borne away, and indeed, as a rule my head also, without being able to prevent it: sometimes my whole body has been affected, to the point of being raised up off the ground.”³²⁹

In psychological terms, the inner ascent may stem from the shared experience of realizing that better perspectives come at higher elevations - such as when climbing a tree, a tower, or a mountain. As a result, the “lift” occurrence may naturally serve as an archetype for greater eyesight. The archetypes by which one orients oneself in the world of the senses may nevertheless come into play if the human mind finds itself in a state of consciousness where typical sense data does not apply. To re-centre the experience and make it accessible and meaningful in terms of the usual levels of awareness to which the visionary returns, some kind of vision is required. The visual lift thus takes one beyond the regular bounds of awareness while also providing a vantage point from which to orient oneself amid the confusion that such a spiritual ascent entails.³³⁰

3. 2. 1. 2. *Bonaventure and the ‘Visionary Ascent’ (Lift)*

Bonaventure locates the beginning of the pilgrimage in the “groans of prayer,” by which desire is enkindled in the soul, in the prologue to the texts of *The Journey of the Mind to God*.³³¹ The desire and the thirst for prayer in the hearts of the wayfarer bring about an

³²⁶ Elizabeth Watts. “Symbols of Ascent in the Soul’s Journey into God of Bonaventure,” p. 264.

³²⁷ E. Allison Peers. *The Life of Teresa of Jesus: The Autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila*. New American Library, 1990, pp. 147.

³²⁸ Nelson Pike. *Mystic Union*, p.11.

³²⁹ E. Allison Peers. *The Life of Teresa of Jesus: The Autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila*, p. 149 .

³³⁰ See in: Elizabeth Watts. “Symbols of Ascent in the Soul’s Journey into God of Bonaventure,” p. 264.

³³¹ See in: Robert Davis. *The Force of Union: Affect and ascent in the theology of Bonaventure*, pp. 113.

association with the divine and this association with the Divine, initiates the process of Ascent.³³² Then he declares at the start of chapter One that "prayer is the mother and origin of the upward movement" (1.1).³³³ Bonaventure felt that the Journey, with its several stages of ascent and various methods of contemplation, would elicit an inner "lift" in the mind of the pilgrim. In *Itinerarium*, chapter Five, Bonaventure writes, "Furthermore, you have here something to lift you up in admiration," (5.7). Again, he writes in chapter six, "Who would not be lifted up in admiration at the sight of such great wonders?" (6.3). Referring to contemplation he says in the same section, "And while you consider these things, one by one, you have the subject matter that will enable you to contemplate Truth. When you compare them with one another, you have the subject matter that lifts you to the utmost heights of admiration," (6.3).

Based on Dionysius' *Mystical Theology*, Bonaventure held that the "ascent" of the soul must begin with prayer because the 'ascent' of the soul is a question of the intellect exceeding itself, rising above itself, "not, indeed, by bodily ascent, but, by an ascent of the heart,"(1.1).³³⁴ According to Elizabeth Watts, Bonaventure insisted on the personal experience of the 'ascent' or 'lift' because he has recognized the need of an emotional fulfillment to correspond the intellectual fulfillment imparted through the philosophical contemplation mapped in *Itinerarium*.³³⁵ Further, the mind is incapable of 'ascending itself on its own, "We cannot be elevated above ourselves unless a superior power lift us up. No matter how our interior stages may be ordered nothing will happen if the if divine aid does not help us. But divine aid comes to those who pray from their heart humbly and devoutly "(1.1).³³⁶

But for Bonaventure the 'lift' is not merely a physiological or psychological phenomenon. Rather, it is also supernatural. And this supernatural ascent is made possible only with the co-operation of God, the Almighty, through the deep yearning of prayer from the part of the wayfarer.³³⁷

The "ascent" /"lift" begins with affective prayer, not as the soul's first deed, but as the first surrender of oneself to the divine activity that allows the soul to move. Furthermore,

³³² See in: Watts. "Symbols of Ascent in the Soul's Journey into God of Bonaventure ," pp. 264, 264.

³³³ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, p. 5.

³³⁴ See in: Robert Davis. *The Force of Union: Affect and ascent in the theology of Bonaventure*, pp. 113

³³⁵ See in: Elizabeth Watts, *Symbols of Ascent in the Soul's Journey into God of Bonaventure*, p. 264.

³³⁶ See in: Robert Davis. *The Force of Union: Affect and ascent in the theology of Bonaventure*, pp. 113.

³³⁷ See in: Elizabeth Watts, *Symbols of Ascent in the Soul's Journey into God of Bonaventure*, p. 265.

because 'lift' requires divine assistance, ecstasy, the state of the soul as above or outside itself, is not reserved for the *Itinerarium's* final stage. In other words, Bonaventure does not offer a series of stages taken by the soul to bring itself into order, only to have that order surpassed at the end. Rather, the entire journey into God is an ecstasy, or more accurately, a sequence of ecstasies. Bonaventure is insistent from the start that the entire seraphic order is set on fire and fastened to the cross, as the six wings of the seraph imply an ordering of the 'soul's illuminations from vestige to image, and from image to likeness.' The *Itinerarium's* aim is peace, which is defined as the "right order," and it is apparent that this is an 'ecstatic order' from start to end, a moving order. The three-fold ordering method is depicted as a journey from without, within, above, and beyond, rather than as a three-step, vertically oriented ladder. Here, the *Itinerarium's* articulated and navigated order is centred on the human mind.³³⁸ "By so praying, we are given light to discern the steps of the soul's ascent to God...the universe itself is a ladder by which we may ascend to God," (1.2).³³⁹

3. 2. 1. 3. Different Levels of Ascent (Lift) in Itinerarium with their Symbols

Given the significance of the 'ascent,' Bonaventure believes that it should be incorporated into the soul as "hierarchical operations." Bonaventure pursues the active process of mystical ascent within the self in accordance with the traditional Christian mystical pathway of 'purgation,' 'illumination,' and 'perfection,' which will renew the soul or spiritual senses in this regard. In the ascension process, three stages of 'devotion,' 'admiration,' and 'exultation' are also involved.³⁴⁰

The 'awakening of the five spiritual senses and the three ascents' are part of the soul 'becoming hierarchical.' Invoking the book of the Bible, *Song of Solomon*, Bonaventure claims that the lover's longing for her beloved is what causes this awakening. Hierarchical growth is internal and 'ecstatic,' 'experiential and affective' in this context. As we've seen, faith restores the spiritual senses of 'sight and hearing', which allow the soul to comprehend light and Christ's word. Hope enlivens the soul's sense of longing for the inspired word. In love, the bridegroom's soul embraces him, receives his thrill, crosses over to him in euphoric love, and receives his taste and touch.³⁴¹ As previously indicated, the reader will detect an implied relationship between contemplation and emotions in Bonaventure's works. It's

³³⁸ See in: Robert Davis. *The Force of Union: Affect and ascent in the theology of Bonaventure*, pp. 113,114.

³³⁹ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, p. 5.

³⁴⁰ See in: Elizabeth Watts . *Symbols of Ascent in the Soul's Journey into God of Bonaventure*, p. 265.

³⁴¹ See in: Robert Davis. *The Force of Union: Affect and ascent in the theology of Bonaventure*, P. 127.

because, according to Bonaventure, praying with emotions creates a window into the psyche through which irrational events might occur. This dominion of experience is more ‘affective’ than ‘rational’ for Bonaventure.³⁴² However, emotion and affect are obviously not the same thing. The term "affectus" in medieval times referred to much more than what we now call "emotion." The assumption of a conflict between a "theological framework" and "affective response" expresses the vast difference between modern conceptions of emotion and medieval Christian affectivity.³⁴³

3. 2. 1. 3. 1. *The First Level of the Ascent / Lift*

The process of the ascent, that of the first stage, that is, purgation, corresponds to the theological virtue of faith.³⁴⁴ The soul becomes "a pillar of smoke with the smells of Myrrh and frankincense" (Song 3:6 ; Itin. 4.3) during the ‘first ascent’ because it is filled with an abundance of devotion.³⁴⁵ The first symbol of ascent, the pillar of fragrant smoke, accurately depicts the important characteristics of the preliminary occurrence of the visionary lift and the reorientation of consciousness that this entails. As smoke would harm the eyes at the start of a close contact with this growing pillar, it may obscure the sharpness of regular eyesight. This temporary blindness alludes to the disorientation of regular eyesight that occurs as a result of the transition to supernatural dominance. This detachment of one's experience from regular parameters can feel like a painful purgation. In two ways, the upward lift is depicted by the pillar of smoke. The column of smoke rises through its own inward dynamic, as dark and perplexing as it may be to those who experience it. The basic direction in which the soul reorients itself is thus formed by this ascent.³⁴⁶

3. 2. 1. 3. 2. *The Second Level of the Ascent /Lift*

In the second, the spirit is brimming with admiration, and the soul is transformed into "the dawn, the moon, and the sun," (Song 6.10, Itin. 4.3). These three lights refer to three illuminations that astonish the bridegroom's soul.³⁴⁷ To the ordinary world of perception, the soul's experience was as dark smoke in the first stage of the visionary lift. As befits a process that so deeply includes experience of the ‘coincidence of opposites,’ the second part of the ascent offers light. Wherever there is darkness, light is likely to shine. This sequence of light

³⁴² See in: Elizabeth Watts . *Symbols of Ascent in the Soul's Journey into God of Bonaventure*, p. 265.

³⁴³ See in: Robert Davis. *The Force of Union: Affect and ascent in the theology of Bonaventure*, p. 183.

³⁴⁴ See in: Elizabeth Watts . *Symbols of Ascent in the Soul's Journey into God of Bonaventure*, p. 266.

³⁴⁵ Robert Davis. *The Force of Union: Affect and ascent in the theology of Bonaventure*, p. 129.

³⁴⁶ Elizabeth Watts . *Symbols of Ascent in the Soul's Journey into God of Bonaventure*, p. 266.

³⁴⁷ Robert Davis. *The Force of Union: Affect and ascent in the theology of Bonaventure*, p. 129.

images (dawn, moon, sun) contrasts with the smoke of the first stage. The pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud alternated during the Exodus, and these celestial lights are reminiscent of them. The establishment of both light and darkness within the self, as depicted by the section in the Song that Bonaventure draws on, may be said to be the second stage of spiritual existence. The first stage's dark pillar expands to become the all-pervasive darkness of night in illumination. The dawning of the illuminative path takes place within this darkness, and the dynamic experience with light begins. The soul is guided by ascending pillars of darkness and light, just as the Israelites were in the 'wilderness.'³⁴⁸

3. 2. 1. 3. 3. *The Third Level of Ascent/Lift*

The third ascent is triggered by an excessive amount of delight or exultation. The soul "is made to overflow with delight" and "leans completely on her Beloved" (Itin.4.3; Song 8.5) in this ecstasy.³⁴⁹ The verb "overflow" reminds us of the imagery of the fountain in Song of Solomon 4:15. This final stage of the mystical journey is related with charity, or love. Love is impossible to have without the other, with whom it strives to bond. This is what the bride and groom represent to each other. When this final stage is well-established in the soul, love can flow in an infinite fashion through a finite human being, as if it were a spring; the quality of water to completely merge with its likeness, as well as its requirement for life, exemplifies the perfect union of love.³⁵⁰

The transformation of the soul's image into a likeness to God is the process of becoming hierarchical. Through the parable of the good Samaritan from Luke 10, the opening of chapter four makes it obvious. Bonaventure considers it as a representation of a fallen human race in need of healing assistance. This is the soul's status at the start of the fourth stage. The soul, like the injured man, is waiting for someone to help it up. The soul receives trust, hope, and love from above in the fourth contemplation. These virtues arouse the spiritual senses, through which the soul gets such a joy that it overflows, lifting it to the heavenly place where it has already made its home. Therefore, at the fourth stage, the soul reformed by faith, hope and love, is made into an *imago* of the whole heavenly retinue in which God dwells as the contemplated. By the lover's ecstasy the soul is stretched to encompass the heaven, and thus to become "a house of God", "a temple of the Holy Spirit."³⁵¹

³⁴⁸ Elizabeth Watts . *Symbols of Ascent in the Soul's Journey into God of Bonaventure*, p. 268- 269, 271.

³⁴⁹ Robert Davis. *The Force of Union: Affect and ascent in the theology of Bonaventure*, p. 129,130.

³⁵⁰ Elizabeth Watts . *Symbols of Ascent in the Soul's Journey into God of Bonaventure*, p. 272.

³⁵¹ Robert Davis. *The Force of Union: Affect and ascent in the theology of Bonaventure*, p. 131,132.

The Soul is now able to listen the tone of the Solomonian lover, with its spiritual senses renewed and the mind is also able to feel her beloved. In fact, according to Bonaventure, the Song of Songs were composed for and about this fourth level of ascension, which "no one grasps except the one who receives it," because it is 'more a matter of affective experience than of rational consideration,' (*Itin.* VII. 4). The fivefold spiritual sensory experience of Christ causes the soul to overflow in three ways: devotion, adoration, and exultation, and this awakening of the spiritual senses leads directly to these ecstasies. These three ascents are described by Bonaventure in the language found in *Song of Solomon*.³⁵²

3. 2. 1. 4. 'The Transitus of the Affectus and Death of the Mind'

Bonaventure depicts the fifth and sixth stages of the *Itinerarium* with the confronting Cherubim placed on the ark of the covenant, using Richard's symbolism for the highest degrees of contemplation. However, 'ark symbolism' is incorporated into the Tabernacle pattern here, with the fifth and sixth stages located in the Temple's innermost chamber, the Holy of Holies. The two cherubim represent two modalities or phases of contemplation of God's *invisibilia*, namely God's two names, 'Being and Good.' The soul contemplates the divine essence in the first instance, and the persons of the Triune God in the second. Though each may be considered independently, the mind is 'suspended' in the highest amazement and to the completeness of the mind's illuminations when contemplating together the essence and persons, the unity and trinity, the Being, and the Goodness of God. The mind beholds the mysteries of the unity and trinity when they are contemplated together, beyond the intellect's "discriminating power". In a sense, the completion of the mind's contemplation includes its own transcending, resulting in the *excessus mentis*, in which the intellect rests totally.³⁵³

The second Cherub is the centre of attention in Chapter VI, the final of the mind's illuminations. The *apex mentis*, or spark of *synderesis*, is where the intellect has reached the furthest depths of its own being. The technical term *synderesis*, according to Bonaventure, refers to 'conscience,' or the mind's natural temperament toward good. The mind's *synderesis* is thus overflowed by the divine Good in the sixth level of illumination, preparing it for mystical *transitus*.³⁵⁴ The summary of the six contemplations at the start of Chapter

³⁵² Robert Davis. *The Force of Union: Affect and ascent in the theology of Bonaventure*, P- 129.

³⁵³ See in: Robert Davis. *The Force of Union: Affect and ascent in the theology of Bonaventure*, p. 142.

³⁵⁴ See in: J. A. Wayne Hellmann. *Divine and Created Order*, p. 248.

VII harkens back to the terminology used to explain the fourth phase, in particular, “Accordingly, the mind has reached the end of the way of the six contemplations. They have been like the six steps by which one arrives at the throne of the true Solomon and it peace, where, as in a inner Jerusalem, the true man of peace rests with a tranquil soul.”³⁵⁵ (7. 1)

Bonaventure discusses his travel to La Verna, a tranquil area where he might find peace, in the prologue. Bonaventure's summary, now nearing the end of the work, demonstrates how many levels of allegory are compressed into this "location" - Francis' location of vision, which was the throne of Solomon in the heavenly Jerusalem. This heavenly Jerusalem occurs within the soul throughout the soul's ecstatic journey, allowing the soul to find peace both within and above itself. The internal hierarchy is modelled after the celestial hierarchy, and it is generated through hierarchical operations (purgation, illumination, and perfection), which are ecstasies of the soul in love with Christ. The soul contemplates God through and in the likeness of the divine light, which has been raised above itself.³⁵⁶

“...when the mind has done all this, it must still, in beholding these things, transcend and pass over, not only this visible world, but even itself,” (7.1).³⁵⁷ The *Itinerarium* comes to a close here, for the soul has reached the pinnacle of contemplation and has nowhere further to go. Only “death” exists after this, but that is not the destination of the journey. “Death,” on the other hand, puts the soul in motion in a different way than the culmination of contemplation. Robert Davis opined, the *excessus mentis*, unlike the *mentales excessus* of the fourth stage, may not be a contemplative movement. The ecstasies of the lover were simultaneously outside and inside the mind. In this case, however, the terminology is interchangeably applied with the term *transitus*.; more over the topic of the final chapter is “*de excessus mentali et mystico*” (The Spiritual and mystical Transport of the Mind).³⁵⁸

Bonaventure exhorts: “Let us, then die, and enter into this darkness.”³⁵⁹ Commenting on the aspect of darkness while passing through the “Passover” experience of the soul, Adriaan Peperzak writes.:

Instead of maintaining a speculative distance, these affections unify the soul with the *paseha* of Christ who leads from Egypt through the Red Sea and the desert to paradise. At this point (*Itin.* 7, 2), it becomes clear how Bonaventure interprets the inherent negativity and the

³⁵⁵ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, p. 37.

³⁵⁶ See in: Robert Davis. *The Force of Union: Affect and ascent in the theology of Bonaventure*, p. 143,

³⁵⁷ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, p. 37.

³⁵⁸ See in: Robert Davis. *The Force of Union: Affect and ascent in the theology of Bonaventure*, pp. 143,144.

³⁵⁹ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, p. 39.

profound darkness (*caligo*) indicated by Dionysius' *Mystical Theology* and quoted toward the end of the *Itinerary* (*Jtin.* 7, 5). Reaching out to God leads through a desert of suffering with Christ into the peace of His grave. The certainty given by the Word of God that the very event of such a *paseha* is the presence (*hodie*) of paradise (*Luk.* 23,43), is not only an article of faith, but a felt experience (*sentitns tantum, !tin.* 7, 2). The union with God in the dark cloud of ignorance, as thematized by Dionysius' *Mystical Theology*, is retrieved in a hermeneutics of an affective response to the sacrament of God's historical Passion. The ascent from affirmative names to negations and from negations to the obscure clarity of union is transformed into the passage from a theology of being and generosity to the dark splendour of a "more than" divine, namely, divinely human and historical, humiliated and mortified love. Sharing Christ's destiny in faith and love transforms a human being in God (*Jtin.* 7, 4).³⁶⁰

The seventh chapter's interwoven scriptural and Christological analogies act out the *excessus* displayed there. Nothing is simply what it is in ecstasy; every imagery dissolves into another. The soul, like the words employed to describe it, is in a 'state of beyond itself.' The *transitus*, or the 'ascending movement,' which can be compared to St. Paul's rapture, is the crossing of the Red Sea, the Passover experience of Israel, which is the Pascha - Christ's sacrifice on the cross - in a term that is undiminished by the richness of the allusion, simply 'death.' The shadow of death is the end point of 'illumination.' We can see here that the characteristics of intellectual knowledge and affective desire are divisible towards the end of the Mind's journey into God – and should be if the soul's ascent is to be completed.³⁶¹ "In this passing over, if it is to be perfect, all intellectual activities ought to be relinquished, and the loftiest affection (*apex affectus*) transported to God and transformed into Him."³⁶² There is a Dionysian connection here, indicating that the *excessus mentis* (*going beyond/passing out of the mind*) is actually an unknowing state. The "affect," on the other hand, is introduced not to reinstall the knowledge that Dionysius so strongly rejects from union, but to provide an account of the dynamics of union that go beyond knowing.³⁶³

If you wish to know how these things may come about, ask grace, not learning; **desire**, not understanding; the groaning of prayer, not diligence in reading; the Bridegroom, not the teacher; God, not man; darkness, not clarity; not light, but the **fire** that wholly inflames and carries one into God through transporting unctions and consuming affections.³⁶⁴

The desire is the catalyst for the soul's 'transformation' and journey to God, as symbolized by the image of fire.³⁶⁵ " God himself is this fire" (7.6, *Itin.*), Bonaventure asserts, claiming that such desire is not soul's possession or activity. But, to equate God

³⁶⁰ Adriaan T. Peperzak. "Bonaventure's Contribution to the Twentieth Century Debate on Apophatic Theology," Faith and Philosophy: In :Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers: Vol. 15 : Issue. 2, (1998), p. 191.

³⁶¹ See in: Robert Davis. *The Force of Union: Affect and ascent in the theology of Bonaventure*, p. 145.

³⁶² Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, p. 38.

³⁶³ See in: Robert Davis. *The Force of Union: Affect and ascent in the theology of Bonaventure*, p. 146.

³⁶⁴ See in: Robert Davis. *The Force of Union: Affect and ascent in the theology of Bonaventure*, 39.

³⁶⁵ See in: Robert Davis. *The Force of Union: Affect and ascent in the theology of Bonaventure*, p. 147.

with fire here is to describe God as the agency that occupies and drives the soul, as well as the desire that burns it. Fire is the most active element, and it is also the most accountable for motion. Further Bonaventure writes, "...and it is Christ who enkindles it in the white flame'.... Let us, then, die and enter into this darkness. Let us silence all our cares, our 'wants,' and our imaginings."³⁶⁶ Bonaventure invites the pilgrim soul to silence all its wants and needs – the word is *concupiscentiis*, not *desideriis* – in his final exhortations. For 'desire' isn't something you have, like *conscientia*, or something you do with your soul, like contemplation: 'it's the grace of Christ's passion at work in your soul.' This desire can only be developed and perfected in *excessus mentis* because it has always exceeded the soul from the beginning of rise. The desire that eventually overwhelms the soul, according to Bonaventure, has always been there in the soul. Desire continues after all the faculties of the soul have been subdued or abandoned in the "pacified soul" (*in mente pacifica*). It is the soul's ability to be transported above and outside itself, not only by its own self-motion but also by the attraction of its beloved, at both the start and finish of the ascent. The surrender of all the soul's higher powers and self-motion – a cessation of activity given on the soul as its long-awaited "death" – is the result of the *transitus* of the *affectus* into God. Of fact, the *Transitus* of 'affection' into God isn't just death. It's the soul's highest level of mystical experience, like the Paul's rapt into the third heaven and the stigmata experience of Francis.³⁶⁷

3. 2. 2. Mystical Union as "Experiential Knowledge"

"Experiential knowledge of God" (*cognitione die experimentalis*) or "experience of God's sweetness" refers to the deepest feeling of God's love in the deepest portion of the human spirit. Because the human soul transcends the boundaries of normal comprehension during this experience, it is referred to as *notitia excessiva*. "Wisdom as a gift of the Holy Spirit" is the *habitus* that conveys this understanding. The unique aspect of this experience is that this knowledge cannot be attained in an abstract-rational manner, but only through direct contact with God, which is bestowed as a gift by the influence of grace (*influentia gratiae*). Grace is the only way for God to take possession of a person so that the person might possess God on his own.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁶ Bonaventure. *Mind's Journey into God*, p. 39.

³⁶⁷ See in: Robert Davis. *The Force of Union: Affect and ascent in the theology of Bonaventure*, pp. 147,48.

³⁶⁸ See in: Marianne Schlosser. "ecstasis/excessus mentis/ raptus/unio pp . 390,391.

Bettoni, opining on Bonaventure's concept of mystical union, claims that in ecstasy, the mind does not attain a more perfect conceptual knowledge of God, and as a result, the intellect remains, as it were, inactive – an inactivity, however, that stems from the intellect's inability to comprehend and hold the object, rather than from the absence of the object. It is a state of mind brought on by an abundance of light rather than a lack of it. It is an experience – and in this sense, knowledge – that defies all of our current conceptual frameworks. The will, which never ceases to be rational, surges toward that mystical presence in which it senses its Beloved pursued through all of its paths - the goal where all of its wishes and love are filled with the tranquillity and security of him who has found everything. With all of its worries, wants, and illusions, the world fades away. It is the most exquisite foreshadowing of everlasting glory.³⁶⁹

Excessus mentis or ecstasy are terms used by Bonaventure to describe this transcendental kind of knowledge/experience or to emphasize a particular facet of it. God's kindness is experienced in the *cognitio experimentalis* in various ways: His truth, holiness, and goodness. God is an entity that can only be encountered by "spiritual senses," not through physical senses, imagination, or intellect (*sensus spiritalis*). The *cognitio experimentalis* is not formed by concepts that have been created (*sapientia nulliformis*). When the soul is given the "present" of God's presence, it withdraws and becomes "a stranger to exterior sensations" (*alienatio a sensibus*). It's likely that physical sensations will be lost as a result of these events. However, this "estrangement" primarily refers to a separation of wants, particularly with regard to everything that is not holy. *Amor sequestrativus* is a mystical love in which a person's entire might is channelled towards the heavenly reality. That is why this individual transcends himself as well as everything else created, since God is above all (*supra omnia haec*).³⁷⁰

The knowledge of God, which tends to draw us beyond ourselves, eventually leads us to abandon intellect and understanding in favour of 'desire, the fire of the Spirit within;' here, the mind yields to the heart, and we are drawn to the One whom we will never fully comprehend but whom we desire from the depths of our being. God gives us an overpowering sensation of divine love in this 'ecstatic union,' an encounter that no words can really explain.³⁷¹ Therefore the *notitia excessiva* is marked by a paradox: the person is

³⁶⁹ See in: Bettoni, Saint Bonaventure, p. 115.

³⁷⁰ See in: Marianne Schlosser. "ecstasis/excessus mentis/ raptus/unio" p. 391.

³⁷¹ See in: Ilia Delio. *Crucified Love*. Pp. 65,66.

led beyond himself in knowing 'non-knowledge'; into obscurity and ecstasy, because the intellect's action is left behind. Ecstasy is a specific kind of knowing, not pure 'non-knowledge'. The intellect does not comprehend, but the joy that is felt is true knowledge. Bonaventura illustrates it using Psalm 139 as an example: 'the night was my illumination in my delight.' The above mentioned *Notitia excessiva* is equivalent to "being awake when sleeping" (*sopor cum vigilia*). This is not the same as inaction or unconsciousness. The spirit is centred in an exceptional way since all activity and centrifugal inclinations are resting. The heart, the love, that is, the will (*affectus*) of a person is awake; all other sections of the soul are entirely calm. When God's love is felt, all of the soul's powers are silenced. This "sleep" can be compared to "death" in an extreme sense (*mors*). Death is associated not only with a separation from all worldly things, but also with the deepest "silence"; it is a type of Beatific Vision (*visio beatifica*) of God.³⁷²

3. 2. 3. Mystical Union and the *mens pacifica*

Ecstatic contemplation, which might be defined concretely as 'Peace,' is the experienceable aim of Bonaventure's spiritual journey. Bonaventure's quest for contemplative peace is depicted in *Itinerarium*, which is based on Francis' experience on Mount La Verna. Bonaventure became convinced that Francis was truly a man of peace during his retreat at La Verna, where he acquired the inspiration to write *Itinerarium*.³⁷³ Bonaventure regards Francis as a model of peace, as seen by his statement in *Itinerarium*:

His (Jesus') message of peace our father Francis ever repeated, announcing 'Peace' at the beginning and at the end of all his sermons, making every greeting a wish for peace, making every prayer a sigh for ecstatic peace, like a citizen of that Jerusalem, about which the Man of Peace, who was peaceable with those that hated peace, exhorts us concerning it: *Pray for the things that are to the peace of Jerusalem*. For He knew indeed that only in peace was the throne of Solomon established, as it is written: *In peace is his place and his abode in Zion*.³⁷⁴

For Bonaventure, a profound longing for peace cannot be achieved without a deep desire for God, and hence peace can only be sought in the background of a mystical journey. Peace is a characteristic that can be attained through interpersonal relationships, and ultimately through a unified relationship with God that is founded on pure love.³⁷⁵ "Although Bonaventure teaches that all three theological virtues are important in the ascent into God, he does say that charity is the most excellent in that it renders the soul a divine

³⁷² See in: See In: Marianne Schlosser. "ecstasis/excessus mentis/ raptus/unio. p.392.

³⁷³ See in: Ilia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, p. 145.

³⁷⁴ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, p.1.

³⁷⁵ See in: Ilia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, p. 146.

similitude through the unitive power proper to love," explains Timothy Johnson.³⁷⁶ According to Bonaventure, Trinitarian love is linked to peace: It is a gift from the Father to the Son, which Christ then gives to his disciples to share with others in order to restore the triad of love in history.³⁷⁷

Bonaventure refers *Pax* at the very beginning of the Prologue of the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, "...He (God) may enlighten the eyes of our mind to guide our feet into the way of that peace which surpasses all understanding..." (Prologue 1). From this statement it is clear, which we have already seen previously, that for Bonaventure the mind is not to be understood as a mere rational entity. We read again in the prologue, "...while I meditated on the ascent of the mind to God ..." (pro.2).³⁷⁸ Here, the mind is related to the process of meditation/ contemplation. As the root of the word "meditation" indicates, one can say that for Bonaventure "Mind" is not merely discursive or synthetic reasoning and this suggestion is supported further by his statement:³⁷⁹ : "...contemplation which leads to mental elevation..." (pro.3).³⁸⁰ Therefore, the peace, the experienceable goal of the mystical journey, is to be seen in a wholistic sense, that which affects the whole person, in all its dimensions. I would like to say that it is an experience of "tasting," a regaining of the inner tranquility that the human being had at its origin in creation as result of the 'deformation'.

It is already known, the formation of the *Itinerarium* is footed on the presupposition that the reader is a follower of Christ who is already inclined, by the re-direction of his will, to search and taste God. The mind is the part of the person who is focused on God's Divine Illumination. There are three elements in it that deal with the three aspects of life—external, internal, and eternal—but all of them, under the Divine Illumination revealed to the individual in Christ, point to the highest aim of mind—knowledge of God Himself.³⁸¹ It is only through the mystical knowledge that a human is able to transcend himself. The soul is dissatisfied with some "good" that may be grasped and felt, because such things are never the 'utmost good.' It is only by a "good" which is spiritually comprehend (a beatific vision) and loved, by which the soul is affected by itself in an insight transcending everything and through which it is driven beyond itself, can the soul achieve true 'peace.'³⁸² Bonaventure

³⁷⁶ See in: Johnson Timothy J, *The Soul in Ascent*, p. 164.

³⁷⁷ See in: Ilia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, p. 146

³⁷⁸ Bonaventure. *Mind's road to God*, trans. Boas, p. 3.

³⁷⁹ See in: Charles N Foshee. "St. Bonaventure and the Augustinian Concept of Mens," p.171.

³⁸⁰ Bonaventure. *Mind's road to God*, trans. Boas, p.4.

³⁸¹ See in: Charles N Foshee. "St. Bonaventure and the Augustinian Concept of Mens, p. 171, 72.

³⁸² See In: Marianne Schlosser. "ecstasis/excessus mentis/ raptus/unio , p. 391.

eloquently defines this ultimate goal of the mind in *Itinerarium*, “Now that these six considerations have been studied as the six steps of the true throne of Solomon by which one ascend to peace, where the truly peaceful man reposes in peace of mind as if in the inner Jerusalem; ...”³⁸³ (7.1).

According to Bonaventure the experienceable goal of the mystical journey, the “*Pax*” is attainable only in the Crucified Word, which he knew from the experience of Francis, his master. In contemplation, i.e., through the mystical experience, the human participates in the transforming power of the cross of Christ in a specific way: One experiences the intimate, loving unity with the Redeemer. The person feels the joy of being at peace (*pax ecstatica*) with God, a peace that came as a result of Jesus' death on the cross. For those who believe in Christ, the only way to achieve this mystical peace - that is beyond all imagination - to this knowledge of wisdom is through intense love for the Crucified. The perfect form of knowledge is *pax ecstatica* because it is “peace” that corresponds to “wisdom” when the seven beatitudes are assigned to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. For the mystical lift and the hoisting of Christ on the cross, Bonaventura employed the same word, or rather, the same root words: *suspensio*. Francis of Assisi, for example, is the most original depiction of such a lifting in connection with the Crucified (who is Himself our “peace,” Eph. 2, 14), where the inner conformity was obvious through the outside indications of ‘stigmata.’³⁸⁴

Francis was a man of peace, according to Bonaventure, and the source of Francis’ tranquilly was Christ Crucified. Such peace, according to Bonaventure, resulted from the peaceful reconciliation inside Francis' own being, that is, the union of his body and soul with the Christ Crucified, the son of God.³⁸⁵ Francis' unique kind of experience with the Christ crucified offers a framework for everyone who wishes to cross over into ‘ecstatic-peace’ with him.³⁸⁶ This inner peace, which he attained through Christ's union with God, enabled him to be reconciled with everything else in the universe, including wild animals. The concept that Francis restores to the state of primordial innocence (through different stages of his life) in union with Christ, the New Adam, underlines the section on animal tales that Bonaventure recounts in *Legenda maior*.³⁸⁷

³⁸³ Bonaventure. *Mind's road to God*, trans. Boas, p. 43.

³⁸⁴ See In: Marianne Schlosser. “ecstasis/excessus mentis/ raptus/unio, p. 392.

³⁸⁵ See in: Johnson Timothy J. *The Soul in Ascent*, p. 174.

³⁸⁶ See in: Ilia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, p- 147.

³⁸⁷ See in: Ilia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, p. 156.

To conclude this part of the chapter, the wayfarer achieves peace of mind at the point of *unio* with the divine, which is clearly associated with *apex mentis* and *excessus mentis*. This is the goal of Bonaventure's mystical journey, which he embarked on for himself and which he intends for his readers in *Itinerarium*. This is what Francis saw on Mount Laverne, and it is what God invites all spiritual men to:³⁸⁸

That was shown to the blessed Francis when, in the transport of contemplation on the high mountain-where I thought out these things which I have written-there appeared to him the seraph with the six wings nailed to the cross, as I and several others have heard from the companion who was with him when he passed over into God through the transports of contemplation, just as previously he had been of action; as another Jacob is changed into Israel, so through him all truly spiritual men have been invited by God to passage of this kind and to mental transport by example rather than by word³⁸⁹ (7,3).

The *mens pacifica*, according to Bonaventure, can only be accomplished via "unio" of soul in man and the Divine – a union brought about by Christ. The entirety of reality in man and nature acts as a medium for that visionary experience when seen through the lens of the Divine Illumination. It is his theory of mind that assists Bonaventure in organizing the mind's journey to God in *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*. The Aspect of 'Illumination' in the experience of peace will be more evident to us when this study enters into the aspect of grace and union.

³⁸⁸ See in: Charles N Foshee. "St. Bonaventure and the Augustinian Concept of Mens, p. 173,74.

³⁸⁹ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Boas, p.44.

CHAPTER IV

THE ROLE OF GRACE IN THE MYSTICAL JOURNEY

According to Bonaventure, the mystical Journey of the Soul involves purgation, illumination, and perfective union, culminating in heavenly Jerusalem. The prologue of Saint Bonaventure's writing, *The Triple Way*, establishes the processes of 'hierarchy' of which is stated above: "purgation, illumination, and perfective union. Purgation leads to Peace, illumination to truth, and perfective union to love."³⁹⁰ But Bonaventure stresses that this journey into heavenly Jerusalem, in its various stages, is only made possible by grace. This section of the work deals with Bonaventure's teaching on grace and the role, grace plays, in the process of the mystical Journey and mystical union. In *Journey of the Mind to God* Bonaventure writes, "When these things have been attained, our spirits are made hierarchical so that it may continue upward to the degree that it is in conformity with the heavenly Jerusalem. For into this heavenly Jerusalem no one enters **unless it first comes down into his heart by grace**, as St. John beheld in the Apocalypse,"³⁹¹ (4.4).

The first part of this chapter deals with the theology of grace in general based on the works of Bonaventure especially in *Breviloquium*, Part V. It covers the process of "deforming" of the Soul through "*influentia*," ("inflowing,"), "*illuminare*" and "*hierarchizare*," which could be considered as the medium of the working of grace in the believer. Another section of this chapter will inquire into the relationship of grace in particular with the mystical union and mystical experience as envisaged in *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*. And the last section of the chapter is concerned with the disposition and effort of the wayfarer to receive this "gift"/grace from the triune God so that he/she may get united with Him.

1. Theology of Grace in the Writings of St. Bonaventure

As it is already stated elsewhere, Bonaventure believes that the soul has a corrupted nature due to its proclivity for evil. Because of the unique nature of the repercussions of original sin, man cannot undo them on his own. Only God's tremendous goodness allows

³⁹⁰ Bonaventure. "The Triple way, or Love enkindled". In *Mystical Opuscula*, vol. 1, trans. Jose de Vinck, p. 63.

³⁹¹ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the mind to God*, p. 24.

Him to choose to save particular human beings. However, salvation will always remain a ‘gift’ that He is under no obligation to grant to anybody. “The very name for this divine gift, *gratia* (grace), taken from Latin, simply means “gift.”³⁹² Now I shall try to analyze the understanding of grace in a general sense basing on *Breviloquium* of Bonaventure.

1. 1 Grace in General

In *Breviloquium*, Part V, chapter 1, Bonaventure defines grace ‘as a gift divinely given,’ and further ‘grace is a gift bestowed and infused directly by God.’ In *Breviloquium*, Part V, chapter 2, Bonaventure considers the word ‘grace’ in three-fold sense: in general, in a special, and in a proper sense. Firstly, his consideration of grace in general sense, “Grace, in general sense, is understood as being the assistance freely and liberally granted by God to creatures performing any of their acts. Without such concurrence, we could do nothing; could not even continue to EXIST.”³⁹³

It is the assistance freely and liberally granted by God to creatures for performing any of their acts. Here, grace is the concurrence without which no created thing could do anything, even continue to exist. It is worth noting that Bonaventure categorizes God’s permitting the continued existence of the creature, to be a ‘grace.’ He regards even this most fundamental of acts as something to which the creature can lay no claim in justice. “No one has a strict right to such grace...” (*Breviloquium*, V. 2. 2). Here, again, Bonaventure stresses the contingency of creation. Indeed, his view on this matter parallels his stress on the nothingness out of which the creature is made and on the dependency of the creatures on the divine will for continued existence. He says in his discussion of grace that the creature is nothing of itself and ‘whatever it has, it is indebted to its creator.’ ‘Thus, it is the creature, because of its deficiency, always remains dependent upon its Principle,’ (*Breviloquium*, V. 2. 3).³⁹⁴ It is God’s constant presence, clemency, and influence that maintain the creature in existence, “Such concurrence, although it applies to all creatures, is called a grace, for it derives, not from any obligation, but from the liberality of divine bounty” (*Breviloquium*, V. 2. 3). Secondly, Bonaventure speaks of grace in a special sense, in the same part of his writing, “Grace, in a special sense, is concerned with that particular assistance which helps the soul prepare itself for receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is called “gratuitously

³⁹² Christopher M Cullen. *Bonaventure*, p. 153.

³⁹³ Bonaventure. *Breviloquium*, Part V. The Works of Bonaventure II, p.181.

³⁹⁴ See in: Christopher M Cullen. *Bonaventure*, p. 153

given grace". In its absence, no man, try as he might, could ever MAKE HIMSELF WORTHY OF SALVATION."³⁹⁵

Grace, in this second definition, is the special assistance that aids the soul and prepares it to receive the Holy Spirit's gift. "Gratuitously given grace" (*gratia gratis datum*) or "real grace," as it is most usually rendered, what this is.³⁹⁶ Lastly, Bonaventure considers grace in its general/proper sense in *Breviloquium* as :

Grace, in its proper sense, consists in the divinely given assistance toward the actual acquiring of merit. This is the gift of "sanctifying grace" (*gratia gratum faciens*), without which no one may ACQUIRE MERIT, ADVANCE IN GOOD; OR ATTAIN ETERNAL SALVATION. This grace, the root of all meriting, proceeds any actual acquiring of merit.³⁹⁷

In its proper sense, grace is this gift that makes the soul pleasing to God and able to attain beatitude, without which the human being can perform no action deserving of eternal reward. "Merit, therefore, is rooted exclusively in sanctifying grace" (*Breviloquium*, V. 2. 3). Furthermore, sin defaces the Image of God in the soul; grace is "a *deiforming* (God-forming) disposition" that restores that image. The likeness of God in its *deformed* perfection is "the image of the second creation (*Imago recreationis*)," (*Breviloquium*, V. 1. 3). Bonaventure speaks of grace as a gift that cleanses, enlightens, and perfects the soul; it reforms the soul and makes the soul to its original "likeness" to God, simultaneously uniting the human being with him.³⁹⁸

Commenting on the same theme in Bonaventure, Elizabeth Dreyer says that because we are "bent" or "curved," grace is required. There are three steps in the spiritual journey that lead one from "bent over" nature to 'perfection or "deification":' 1) *rectificare* is concerned with the three theological virtues as well as the four cardinal virtues; 2) *expedire*³⁹⁹ is concerned with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and 3) *perficere* is concerned with the beatitudes as well as the condition of joy and repose. Knowledge progresses from faith through intelligence/ understanding to the pure 'knowledge of the heart' ('a quasi-direct experience of the invisible').⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁵ Bonaventure. *Breviloquium*, V. 2. 2, p.185.

³⁹⁶ See in: Christopher M Cullen. *Bonaventure*, p. 153.

³⁹⁷ Bonaventure. *Breviloquium*, V. 2. 2., p.185.

³⁹⁸ See in: Christopher M Cullen. *Bonaventure*, p. 153-54

³⁹⁹ This is given in the Collations on "Seven gifts of the Holy Spirit" by Bonaventure.

⁴⁰⁰ See in: Elizabeth Dreyer. "Affectus in St Bonaventure's Theology." In: *Franciscan Studies*, Vol. 42, 1982, p. 11.

But it is important to note here that Bonaventure does not speak of a ‘deification’ or *theosis* (divinization) in the manner of understanding salvation in Eastern Christianity. The spirituality of the East and West agree that salvation involves a transformation and not merely a juridical affirmation, but they disagree about how this change comes about. The eastern spirituality holds that salvation is a ‘participation in the Divine Being’ through the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul. But this idea of the East about salvation is not found in the thoughts of Bonaventure. Instead, Bonaventure speaks about “created grace” and union. The idea of an ‘ontological change’ effected in man in relation to grace is particularly associated with the period of High Scholasticism and the development of the concept of ‘created grace.’ God is present in all his creatures, but only some (i.e., those who are justified) may be said to possess him. Bonaventure precisely treats grace as a ‘created gift.’⁴⁰¹

Commenting on the theology of grace in the writings of Bonaventure in general, F. Edward Coughlin says:

“Grace is a “divinely given gift.” It “comes from God, conforms to God, and leads to God.” Its primary purpose is to “lead the soul back to its origin” (*reductio*) to the extent that it is possible in this life in anticipation of the full enjoyment of God in glory (*beatitudo*). No one is worthy to attain this blessed state unless the soul is lifted above itself “through the action of God coming down to it” through the noble gift of the divine *influence* - grace.”⁴⁰²

The term *reductio* was employed by Bonaventure to indicate the reduction of all reality to its fundamental principle, namely, the triune God. Only in an ‘illumination’ of the human creature, created in the image and likeness of God, in which one recognizes God in the signs of creation and responds with praise, reverence, and thanks, does the ‘exemplary world’ of creation that flows out of God's kindness have meaning and purpose. According to Bonaventure, the human being possessed knowledge of created things in his or her condition of innocence at the beginning of human history, and as a result, worshipped, revered, and adored God. This is the reason for creation, and all creatures are drawn back to God in this way. The essential role of the human person in creation, for Bonaventure, was not only the coming into existence of created reality, but also the recognition of the divine imprint in everything and the giving of praise and glory to God.⁴⁰³ This *reductio* is made possible through the gift of grace in the human soul.

⁴⁰¹ See in: Christopher M Cullen. *Bonaventure*, p. 154-55.

⁴⁰² F. Edward Coughlin (ed.). “Introduction.” In: *Writings on the Spiritual Life*. Works of St. Bonaventure, Vol. X. Franciscan Institute, 2006, p. 37.

⁴⁰³ See in: Illia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, p. 158,59.

After having seen the general notion of Grace in Bonaventure's theology, the next part of the chapter tries to inquire into the ways how grace effects the human person (soul) to the goal of "deiforming" and union.

1. 2. Grace and 'Godlikeness'

The restoration of the human soul by grace, according to Bonaventure, is a process of "deiformity" (God-formed). And this rehabilitation entails the human soul's conformity to God.⁴⁰⁴ Sin has damaged and soiled the divine image that is contained in the human soul. Grace purifies and restores the image, shaping and restoring it to its original image, the 'resemblance of God'. Bonaventure writes in *Breviloquium*:

For truly, together with grace and by means of grace, we receive the Holy Spirit, the uncreated Gift, the good and perfect Gift coming down from the Father of lights through the Word made flesh...grace is a gift that cleanses, enlightens, and perfects the soul; that vivifies, reforms, and strengthens it; that lifts it up, makes it like to God, and unites it with Him, thus rendering it acceptable to Him.⁴⁰⁵

To understand better the process of "deiforming", at this juncture, it may be apt to analyse two important concepts used by Bonaventure in his *Sentences* as well as in *Breviloquium*, namely, *Hierarchy and Influentia*. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, in *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* Bonaventure speaks about the processes of "spirit becoming hierarchical". Scholars of the Seraphic Doctor have long recognized the importance of the three "hierarchical activities" of purgation, illumination, and perfection for interpreting his theology and spirituality. Several scholars have likewise noted a close connection between this "threefold way" and his doctrine of grace:⁴⁰⁶ commenting on the concept 'hierarchy' Cullen comments that the 'hierarchization' of the soul, or reformation of the soul, is one of grace's primary functions. Bonaventure adopts the definition of 'hierarchy' as a sacred order, which he derived from Pseudo-Dionysius. The human soul must be brought into a 'sacred order,' which is accomplished through a 'hierarchization' process.⁴⁰⁷ The Seraphic Doctor uses the term "*influentia*," or "inflowing," to explain how a rational being processes and returns to its origin in God through the 'hierarchies,' in his books (*Hexameron* and *1.Sentences*) in relation to Grace. It is Bonaventure's expression for Christ's all-encompassing presence, or the share of God's inner life supplied to everyone in

⁴⁰⁴ See in: Christopher M Cullen. *Bonaventure*, p. 155.

⁴⁰⁵ Bonaventure. *Breviloquium*, V. 1. 2, p. 181,82.

⁴⁰⁶ See in: Katherine Joan Wrisley Shelby. "The Vir Hierarchicus: St. Bonaventure's Theology of Grace." PhD diss., Boston College, 2018, p. 1.

⁴⁰⁷ See in: Christopher M Cullen. *Bonaventure*, p. 158.

the person of Christ, which has its beginning in the triune God and descends first upon the 'celestial hierarchy' and then eventually upon the 'terrestrial hierarchy.'⁴⁰⁸

1. 2. 1. The Concept "Hierarchy"

The introduction to the ninth distinction of his *commentarium in Librum Secundum Sententiarum* and the twenty-first collation in the *Collationes in Hexameron* contain the Seraphic Doctor's clearest formulations of 'hierarchy.' Both texts use Pseudo-Dionysius' concept from *The Celestial Hierarchy's* third chapter which defines "hierarchy" 'as a 'sacred order', 'a condition of comprehension,' and an 'action' that approaches the divine as closely as possible.' Following the Areopagite, Bonaventure interprets the term as a dynamic, structured action through which 'non-God'/ungodly creatures might become more like God, with the objective of a hierarchy to "deiform" (make into the "similitude" of the Trinity") the creatures.⁴⁰⁹ The Seraphic Doctor's teachings on grace are packed with terminology from the original Dionysian notion of "hierarchy," to the point that it would be impossible to correctly appreciate his theology of grace without first understanding what he means by "hierarchy."

... a "hierarchy," as it was originally conceived by the Areopagite, was "a sacred order, a state of understanding, and an activity"⁴¹⁰ through which rational creatures could relate to God and other rational creatures within both the celestial and ecclesiastical hierarchies. For Pseudo-Dionysius, this process of deification was likewise a means through which rational creatures within the hierarchies could relate to other rational creatures in a holy way, as well, specifically through the three hierarchical activities of "purification, illumination, and perfection."⁴¹¹

All of reality, according to Bonaventure, is made up of three hierarchies: 'the divine hierarchy,' or the Trinity; the 'celestial hierarchy,' which includes the saints and the nine orders of angels described by Pseudo-Dionysius in *The Celestial Hierarchy*; and the 'earthly hierarchy,' which includes the Church in *via Domini*. As per Bonaventure, every hierarchy and its members become "deiform," or as similar to God as possible, in so far as they are linked to God via Christ, whose Incarnation in the flesh connects the 'hierarchies' with the Triune God.⁴¹² According to Glenn Davis, the figure of the seraph in *Itinerarium* is significant for Bonaventure, not only for the enumerative possibilities of its six wings, but

⁴⁰⁸ See in: Katherine Joan Wrisley Shelby. "The Vir Hierarchicus: St. Bonaventure's Theology of Grace," p. 131.

⁴⁰⁹ See in: Katherine Wrisley Shelby. "Bonaventure on Grace, Hierarchy, and the symbol of Jacob's Ladder." In: *Ordo et Sanctitas: The Franciscan Spiritual Journey in Theology and Hagiography*, vol. 15., (2017), p. 210.

⁴¹⁰ See in: *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid, ed. Paul Rorem.: Paulist Press, 1987), p. 153. Quoted in: Katherine Joan Wrisley Shelby. "The Vir Hierarchicus: St. Bonaventure's Theology of Grace, p. 101

⁴¹¹ Katherine Joan Wrisley Shelby. "The Vir Hierarchicus: St. Bonaventure's Theology of Grace, p. 101.

⁴¹² See in: J. A. Wayne Hellmann. *Divine and Created Order*, p. 123.

also for its pre-eminence in the “angelic hierarchy” found in the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite. The ‘seraphim’ are described as “carriers of warmth” by Dionysius in *The Celestial Hierarchy*, which the subsequent medieval scholars interpreted to mean “fullness of love.”⁴¹³

In his Commentary on the Second Book of *Sentences*, Bonaventure makes the first attempt to define “hierarchy.” He provides three meanings for the word here, which when read together lay the groundwork for understanding what he means by “hierarchy” in all of his subsequent works, including his application of the notion in his doctrine of grace. Firstly: “A hierarchy is divine beauty, as well as simple, the highest good, and consummative.”⁴¹⁴ This term, as explained by the Seraphic Doctor, refers to the “uncreated hierarchy of God.” Secondly: “A hierarchy is a sacred order, knowledge, and activity assimilating as much as possible to “deiforme,” and ascending proportionally into a likeness of God toward the lights that have flowed into it from above.”⁴¹⁵ While Bonaventure contends that the “first” description of hierarchy refers to God’s “uncreated hierarchy,” he asserts that the second and third definitions apply to the “created” hierarchy. Thirdly, “A hierarchy is a likeness and unity to God as far as is possible, holding itself to sacred understanding and action as its guide, and fixing itself unchangeably to its own most divine beauty; and as far as possible, reforming its worshippers.”⁴¹⁶ The last two definitions for Bonaventure differ in that the first is largely concerned with the procession from God, whilst the second is primarily concerned with the return to God, despite the fact that both are addressed. In Bonaventure’s metaphysics, we meet the “intelligible circle” of reality, which, when combined with his claim that the initial definition of hierarchy relates to God, reinforces the Dionysian theological enterprise’s tripartite pattern of ‘remaining,’ ‘procession,’ and ‘return.’⁴¹⁷ In other words it is about the return of the soul into original *ordo*.

All of creation, according to Bonaventure, reflects the Triune God’s *ordo* at three separate levels of being: (1) the ‘vestige,’ (2) the ‘image,’ and (3) the ‘likeness,’ better known

⁴¹³See in: Robert Glenn Davis. Hierarchy and Excess in Bonaventure’s *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*. In: *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 95, No.4 (October 2015), p.434, 435.

⁴¹⁴Bonaventure. II *Sent.* d. 9, prologue (*Opera Omnia*, 2: 461-462): quoted in: Katherine Joan Wrisley Shelby. “The Vir Hierarchicus: St. Bonaventure’s Theology of Grace,” P.111.

⁴¹⁵ Bonaventure. II *Sent.* d. 9, prologue (*Opera Omnia*, 2: 461-462): quoted in: Katherine Joan Wrisley Shelby. “The Vir Hierarchicus: St. Bonaventure’s Theology of Grace,” P. 115

⁴¹⁶ Bonaventure. II *Sent.* d. 9, prologue (*Opera Omnia*, 2: 461-462): quoted in: Katherine Joan Wrisley Shelby. “The Vir Hierarchicus: St. Bonaventure’s Theology of Grace,” P. 122.

⁴¹⁷ See in: Katherine Joan Wrisley Shelby. “The Vir Hierarchicus: St. Bonaventure’s Theology of Grace,” P. 116.

as the ‘similitude.’⁴¹⁸ In the third, the rational beings "return" to the Triune God through its participation in a hierarchy insofar as: (a) the hierarchy bestows the ability to be united to God through the gift of the ‘similitude;’ (b) the rational creature is actually united to God through the sacred knowledge and activity of the hierarchy; (c) the rational creature is immutably united to God by beholding God's beauty through the hierarchy; and (d) Being enabled to "help others" in the hierarchy, makes the rational creature fruitful. Rational creatures are bound to God through "hierarchy" in the sense that their involvement in these processes causes them to become "as godly as possible," or "deformed," when they are filled with the fruitfulness of “plenitude” (fullness) of God.⁴¹⁹

In addition to the use of words from the Areopagite's literal definition of ‘hierarchy’ in his theology, Bonaventure also has his own terms for ‘hierarchy’ that he uses through most of his works; the words, *influentia*, or "inflowing," *illuminare* and *hierarchizare* had a hierarchical connotation for Bonaventure, who often used these words to express how "the far-reaching and all-embracing presence of Christ" could flow into every created hierarchy to illumine it and get united with God.⁴²⁰

1. 2. 2. The Terms “*influentia*,” “*illuminare*,” and “*hierarchizare*”

The Seraphic Doctor states that a soul ascends to God inside a ‘hierarchy’ in order to acquire a likeness of God in the twenty-first chapter of the *Collationes in Hexameron*. Furthermore, this ascension of the soul is facilitated by an *influentia*, as he describes it.⁴²¹ The word *influentia*/"inflowing" is one of Bonaventure's words for demonstrating the existence of the Father's power within the Son or for describing how the Father and the Son interact to each other in the "uncreated hierarchy."⁴²² Hellmann emphasizes the significance of this word in the Seraphic Doctor's theology, claiming that it is Bonaventure's term for indicating Christ's ‘far-reaching and all-encompassing presence,’ or the share of God's inner life offered to everyone in the person of Christ, which has its origins in the Trinity and descends first upon ‘the celestial hierarchy,’ then upon the ‘terrestrial hierarchy.’⁴²³

⁴¹⁸ See in: J. A. Wayne Hellmann. *Divine and Created Order in Bonaventure's Theology*, p. 107

⁴¹⁹ See in: Katherine Joan Wrisley Shelby. “The Vir Hierarchicus: St. Bonaventure's Theology of Grace,” P.122.

⁴²⁰ Katherine Joan Wrisley Shelby. “The Vir Hierarchicus: St. Bonaventure's Theology of Grace,” p. 5.

⁴²¹ See in: Katherine Wrisley Shelby. “Bonaventure on Grace, Hierarchy, and the symbol of Jacob's Ladder,” p. 211.

⁴²² Katherine Joan Wrisley Shelby. “The Vir Hierarchicus: St. Bonaventure's Theology of Grace, p. 131.

⁴²³ See in: J. A. Wayne Hellmann. *Divine and Created Order*, p. 126.

In Bonaventure's description of 'hierarchy,' as illustrated in the Hexameron, the word *influentia* retains its Christological connotation: just as the Son processes from the Father and returns to the Father through an *influentia*, so do rational creatures process and return from the Triune God through Christ's *influentia* in the celestial and ecclesiastical hierarchies. Further, he uses the term "*influentia*," to describe how the Trinity's 'uncreated hierarchy' relates to the angelic and ecclesiastical 'hierarchies' through the person of Christ, the mediator between God and creation through whom God's power flows throughout the hierarchies, uniting them all to the Trinity.⁴²⁴ Sanctifying grace, according to the Seraphic Doctor, is the *influentia* that makes the human soul "as like as possible to God,"-hierarchizing it for the purposes of linking it to God, neighbour, and the rest of creation. He explains this process with the symbol of 'ladder' that by becoming a "Jacob's Ladder," a *spiraling* soul conformed to the Trinity through an inflowing of light from above, the soul "returns" to and ultimately "remains" in God through grace.⁴²⁵ The books of Bonaventure, *The Commentary on the Sentences* and Part V of the *Breviloquium* provide systematic accounts of grace, with explicit definitions of 'sanctifying grace' as a created "*influentia*" and explanations of how this *influentia* works in and with the soul in order to "return" it to the Trinity.

Bonaventure took over the term *illuminare* from Dionysius which is based on the letter of St. James: "...every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights," and he used the metaphor of light to depict how the 'created hierarchies' flow from and back to God like a ray of light from the sun. According to him, the Trinity's uncreated hierarchy 'illuminates' the created hierarchies in the same way that the sun illuminates creation.⁴²⁶

Bonaventure uses the word "*hierarchizare*" to express the process by which the rational soul become sanctified through divine "illuminations." In the same way that a human body can become warm when exposed to the sun's rays, and thus a mind might become "hierarchical" in Bonaventure's view by receiving 'illuminations' from the uncreated hierarchy, or the Trinity. The closer a mind is to the Sun, as Angels and blessed souls in glory are, the more the light it will receive. These "hierarchical" souls then pass on these heavenly 'illuminations' to others in the hierarchies who have yet to achieve glory.

⁴²⁴ See in: Katherine Wisley Shelby. "The Vir Hierarchicus: St. Bonaventure's Theology of Grace, p.132

⁴²⁵ See in: Katherine Wisley Shelby. "The Vir Hierarchicus: St. Bonaventure's Theology of Grace, p. 150.

⁴²⁶ See in: Katherine Wisley Shelby. "Bonaventure on Grace, Hierarchy, and the symbol of Jacob's Ladder," p. 213.

These 'hierarchical minds' emanate with the "created hierarchies," whether angelic or ecclesiastical, through whom the Light of God streams forth. In Bonaventure's perspective, to be "hierarchized" is to be made "deiform" in order to receive this Light: Christ's *influentia* connects all such "hierarchical" souls in communion.⁴²⁷

To conclude, for Bonaventure, the human individual must have two 'hierarchies,' one outward and one within. Firstly, the person is to be re-positioned in the ladder of creation by external hierarchization. And then the human spirit will be reordered through internal hierarchization, making it capable of loving God, above all else, and one's neighbour as oneself. This "inside" hierarchy corresponds to grace's threefold activity in justifying the human soul: purification, enlightenment, and perfection.⁴²⁸ In *Itinerarium*, Bonaventure discusses the triple acts of grace in justifying the human soul: "Then [grace] descends into the heart when through the reformation of the Image, through the theological virtues, and through the delights of the spiritual senses and the ecstatic uplifting, our spirit is made hierarchical, that is to say, purified, illuminated, and perfected."⁴²⁹ For Bonaventure, the 'hierarchization' process allows the soul to rise to the celestial Jerusalem and become 'deformed.' The above terms are used by Bonaventure to express the process of becoming "hierarchized" and "deformed" by grace.

1. 3. Effects of Grace on the Process of Mystical Union in *Itinerarium*

In *Collations on the Six Days*, Bonaventure writes that no experiential knowledge of God/ the perfect wisdom which is the result of mystical experience is possible without grace:

Only the affective power keeps vigil and imposes silence upon all the other powers; then man becomes foreign to his senses: he is in **ecstasy** and hears *secret words that man may not repeat*, because they are only in the heart. Hence, because nothing can be expressed unless it is conceived, or conceived unless it is understood, and [here] the intelligence does not speak: it follows that a man can hardly speak or explain anything. And that is a fact. And because this wisdom is attained only **through grace**, a wise writer attributes all hidden and unforeseeable things to the Holy Spirit and to the Word Himself, as having to be revealed by them,⁴³⁰ (2nd *Collations* 30).

Even though God created man in His image, his divine image was damaged by his first parents' sin. Bonaventure dramatizes in his writings the character of man in his sad state of sin. He describes a fallen man who is laying on the ground and needs someone to help

⁴²⁷ See in: Katherine Wrisley Shelby. "Bonaventure on Grace, Hierarchy, and the symbol of Jacob's Ladder," p. 213.

⁴²⁸ See in: Christopher M Cullen. *Bonaventure*, p. 158.

⁴²⁹ Bonaventure: *The Journey of the mind to God*, p. 24,25.

⁴³⁰ Bonaventure. *Collations on the Six Days*. Accessible at in: http://www.john114.org/Docs/SB_Hex_Page.htm, stand on: 02.05.2022.

him up. He also talks about a weird intellectual blindness that precludes a human being from perceiving God's presence. The human being, accustomed to the darkness of feelings, is like a bat in the daylight, seeing nothing.⁴³¹ And as a result, Bonaventure writes in *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, "The result is that man, blinded and bent over, sits in darkness, and does not see the light of heaven, unless grace comes to his aid-with justice to fight concupiscence, and with knowledge and wisdom to oppose ignorance. These effects are brought about through Jesus Christ,"⁴³² (1.7).

Only Christ can restore the genuine light of truth and lead us to God via mercy. Christ, according to Bonaventure, is the source of grace by which the soul is purified, enlightened, and completed. The divine image is transformed and restored in its likeness to God as one grows deeper in interaction with Christ. The term "hierarchy" is used by Bonaventure to describe how the soul is reordered in unity with Christ.⁴³³ Through the mystical voyage, the individual becomes more open to divine self-communication, which enters into the depths of the person and initiates a process of major transformation with the assistance of grace, allowing it to progress higher on the measure in the hierarchy of Godlikeness.

Commenting on the structure of *Journey of the Mind to God*, in their introduction to *Itinerarium* Boehner and Hayes write:

It has been said that [the *Itinerarium*'s] proper place is in the perfective way, but we believe that it belongs rather to the illuminative way, reaching at the end the contemplation of the unitive way and merging with it. For throughout the six chapters of the *Itinerarium* we are concerned with six *illuminationum suspensiones* (uplifting illuminations) as the Prologue (n. 3) says ... The six steps of the *Itinerarium*, as expressly stated by Bonaventure, precede perfective or unitive contemplation.⁴³⁴

Chapter Seven of *The Itinerarium* is the point in the text where the soul that has been illuminated by the previous six phases comes at its *fructus*, where it is connected fully in love to the Trinity. However, without sanctifying grace, neither this 'lift/ascent' nor the union that follows would be conceivable, and thus we arrive back at Chapter Four of the *Itinerarium*. In terms of the overall organization of the book, Chapter Four is in the middle, serving as a link between the '*primum*' (Chapters 1-3) and the '*optimum*' (Chapters 5-7). In as much as Bonaventure begins Chapter Four by referring to Christ's role in restoring the

⁴³¹ See in: Ilia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, p. 101.

⁴³² Bonaventure: *The Journey of the mind to God*, p. 7.

⁴³³ See in: Ilia Delio. *Simply Bonaventure*, p. 107.

⁴³⁴ Bonaventure. *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum. Works of Bonaventure*, Vol. II, Ed. Philotheus Boehner and Zachary Hayes. Franciscan Institute, 2002, p. 24.

"image" of the rational mind that has fallen due to sin, it is also the text's Christological centre. Though Adam's sin caused the "ladder" between heaven and earth to be broken, the Incarnate Christ "becomes a ladder" to heal what has been damaged. The rational mind must be healed by Christ in order to traverse the fifth and sixth steps on Bonaventure's illuminative route, or to progress from knowledge of created realities (Chapters 1-3) to knowledge of and unity with God (Chapters 5-7). Consequently, this is the main schema of Chapter Four. In order to express this re-formation of the soul as the "image" of God, Bonaventure's theology of 'hierarchy' comes almost immediately. He argues there that the rational soul will be mended when it is "clothed over with the three theological virtues, by which the soul is cleansed, illuminated, and perfected," or when it loves with confidence, hopes, and believes in Jesus Christ, who is the Incarnate, Uncreated, and Inspired Word, the soul will be spiritualised.⁴³⁵ In the fourth chapter of the *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, we have the main clue how grace is connected to the process of mystical union in the 'pilgrim journey' of the wayfarer:

When we have arrived at these things, our spirit is made hierarchical for the purposes of rising to conformity with the heavenly Jerusalem, in which no one enters unless **through grace** descending into his heart, as John saw in his Apocalypse. It then descends into the heart when through the reformation of the image, through the theological virtues, through the delights of the spiritual senses, and the ecstasy of rapture, our spirit is made *hierarchical*, namely, purified, illuminated, and perfected. For then the nine levels of orders are marked within it, insofar as they are interiorly disposed in our spirit in an ordered way: *announcing, dictating, leading, ordering, strengthening, commanding, receiving, revealing, anointing*, steps which correspond to the nine orders of Angels, so that the first three of the aforesaid steps consider *nature* in the human mind, the following three steps consider *industry*, and the last three consider **grace**. Through these habits, the soul, by entering into itself, enters into the heavenly Jerusalem, where, considering the orders of the Angels, it sees in them God, who is dwelling in them and working all things in them,⁴³⁶ (4.4).

Here, in the text, we see that insofar as the soul has been likened to the nine orders named in Pseudo-Celestial Dionysius' Hierarchy, Bonaventure explicitly claims that grace causes the soul to become "hierarchical." Rather than simply identifying the three hierarchical activities of 'purification,' 'illumination,' and 'perfection' with the work of sanctifying grace in the soul, Bonaventure suggests that the soul is "purified, illuminated, and perfected" through grace. Grace is thus that which "hierarchizes" the soul in the

⁴³⁵ See in: Katherine Joan Wrisley Shelby. "The Vir Hierarchicus: St. Bonaventure's Theology of Grace," P. 222,23.

⁴³⁶ Bonaventure: *The Journey of the mind to God*, p. 24, 25.

Itinerarium. The connection between his theology of hierarchy and his theory of grace is thus most explicitly expressed in the fourth chapter of the *Itinerarium*.⁴³⁷

God resides in a person as *gratia increata* (uncreated grace), re-creating the human person with *gratia creata* (created grace). Grace brings God and the soul closer together. This distinct unity can be experienced in *cognitio experimentalis*, which is a unique sort of grace. The more powerful this experience is, the more the person learns about the aspect of grace, which is a gift of gratitude (*donum gratuitum*) that cannot be created by human effort: Within the mystical experience, human effort takes a back seat, and grace takes centre stage. As a result, Bonaventure frequently employs the term "elevation"/"suspension" (*sursumactio, elevatio mentis*) to describe this type of experience.⁴³⁸ Through a more perfect union with God, Christ brings hope and assistance to the soul. Man increases his cries of prayer, enkindles his longing, and pleads for this supreme union via grace, encouraged by Christ Crucified. The will searches for what the mind cannot, opening itself to the bliss and intoxication of ecstasy, an ineffable state that no one who has not experienced it, can comprehend.⁴³⁹

In the writings of Bonaventure, the deepest union with God in Christ, is the Gift of Grace. His reflection on the soul as an image of God has led us to contemplate thoroughly the mystery of our own interior world, to recognize its potential and also its limited existence, and to see, it is miraculously healed by God's mercy and grace to become a 'likenesses' of the divine.

1. 4. The Effort of the Graced-Wayfarer in Achieving the Union

It is already stated that contemplation, the mystical journey, and the experience of mystical union is a gift of grace, and the wayfarer has no claim whatsoever. But the person who wishes to undertake this journey, and wish to have a special experience of God, will become merely a passive receiver of it? Do his efforts have no value before God? Here I am not taking into consideration of the question of free will in detail and its relationship to grace, rather the mystical union and human effort apart from grace. As we have already seen in Bonaventure's writings, at least in *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, that he is not very much

⁴³⁷ See in: Katherine Joan Wrisley Shelby. "The Vir Hierarchicus: St. Bonaventure's Theology of Grace," P. 226,-229.

⁴³⁸ See In: Marianne Schlosser. "ecstasis/excessus mentis/ raptus/unio pp. 390, 391.

⁴³⁹ Efrem Bettoni. *Saint Bonaventure*, trans. Gambatese, p.115.

concerned with mystical experience like St. Paul's Raptus for a special mission, rather the case of an ordinary wayfarer who wishes to "taste" God. It is very evident, according to Bonaventure, that the wayfarer has to prepare himself/herself for the reception of the grace on his journey. In this context one may ask, what can, or should, a person do now to strengthen his spiritual life? Can he, in a sense, prepare himself for the encounter of God? Is contemplation pure grace, an antonym of human effort? This section of the chapter mainly relies on the study of Marianne Schlosser, "*Cognitio et amor*".

Bonaventure's observations on the actuality of grace in general apply to the "grace of contemplation." This is a deeper encounter with God in the sense that it is a particularly intense form of graced life, an exceedingly elevated level of grace. It is important here to separate contemplation from unique graces like apparition and prophetic inspiration, which have a different purpose in God's plan of salvation. The "specialness" of contemplation, according to Bonaventure, does not appear to be attributable to the fact that God did not desire to grant it to everyone, but rather to the reality that only those who ascend to "*vera sapientia*" (true wisdom) do so.⁴⁴⁰ "But few walk along that way of wisdom, hence few ever reach it."⁴⁴¹ Again, "for the souls that are not lifted up are as it were in winter, those lifted up to a mediocre level of contemplation are as it were in spring, while those lifted up to ecstatic raptures are as it were in summer, tasting the fruits of autumn, for they are in repose,"⁴⁴² Schlosser comments that according to Bonaventure, in principle, any justified person can and should strive for the degree of "*gartia excellens*," in which God becomes present to the believer through contemplation.⁴⁴³

As can be seen, Bonaventure views grace as primarily a gift, and the subject of gifts is linked to the Trinity and, in particular, to the Holy Spirit. In his presentation of the Trinity, St. Bonaventure draws on Pseudo-Dionysius' concept of the diffusiveness of the "good." There are two ways to communicate with this 'abundance.' The first is by nature, in which plenitude manifests itself as generation—the Father's Son. The second modality is through the will (*voluntas*) or love, in which plenitude manifests as "spiration" (spiral movement) - the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son. The name Gift is given precedence by St. Bonaventure since it alludes to the "second communication of the will." In his writings on the Holy Spirit, Bonaventure uses the terms will (*voluntas*) and liberality (*liberalitas*)

⁴⁴⁰ See in: Marianne Schlosser. „*Cognito et amor*, p. 217.

⁴⁴¹ Bonaventure. *Collations in Hexaemeron, Reportio B*, ii. 3, p. 22.

⁴⁴² Bonaventure. *Collations in Hexaemeron*, xx, 9, p. 288.

⁴⁴³ See in: Marianne Schlosser. "*Cognito et amor*," p. 217.

interchangeably.⁴⁴⁴ In *Collations in Hexaemeron*, Bonaventure says, “Now this contemplation comes about through grace, and yet personal effort is helpful, for it separates self from anything that is not God, and if possible, from itself.”⁴⁴⁵ Interpreting this statement Schlosser writes that grace acts constantly on and with the wayfarer's core of being, the “*liberum arbitrium*.” The connection of grace and free will becomes more intimate as the habit of grace becomes more intense. This can also happen when the will does not operate “actively” in the conventional sense, but instead surrenders completely to grace. This propensity, this habit of not fighting against grace's operation, is far from natural or self-given. It is also not the result of a simple self “emptying;” this attitude rather implies an active purification process in the stage of original sin.⁴⁴⁶

The more a person wishes to participate in God's work, the more he is “drawn” to Him. Allowing oneself to be ‘dragged’/ moved at all, however, involves more than passivity, as one must overcome one's own ego's resistance. This is the first reason why Bonaventure claims that “*indutria*” (personal efforts) must still accomplish a great deal on lower levels, but “*gratia*” has higher weight as the journey progresses upward. Only with the participation of the gifted/graced creature can that *habitus deiformitatis* be developed more deeply, and this is the condition for the “easiness / lightness” (*habilitas*) with which a person is drawn into the deeper experience of God.⁴⁴⁷

It is hard to talk about spiritual life without mentioning grace, which elevates the soul to a supernatural degree. Only then can the soul progress from a simple foundation of faith to the heights of mystical contemplation in a hierarchical manner. However, it presupposes not just faith, but living faith. It includes prayer, the practice of virtues, and the soul's journey toward a loving relationship with God.⁴⁴⁸ In *the Journey of Mind into God*, 4.3, we read:

The soul, therefore, now believes and hopes in Jesus Christ and loves Him, who is the incarnate, uncreated, and inspired Word—the Way, the Truth, and the Life-- when she by **faith** believes in Christ as in the uncreated Word, who is the Word and the brightness of the Father, she recovers her spiritual hearing and sight to view the splendors of that Light. When the soul longs with hope to receive the inspired Word, she recovers, because of her desire and affection, the spiritual sense of smell. When she embraces with love the Incarnate Word, inasmuch as she receives delight from Him and passes over to Him in ecstatic love, she recovers her sense of taste and touch.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁴ See in: Elizabeth Dreyer. “*Affectus* in St Bonaventure’s Theology.” In: *Franciscan Studies*, Vol. 42, 1982, p. 10,11.

⁴⁴⁵ Bonaventure. *Collations in Hexaemeron*, ii .30, p. 35.

⁴⁴⁶ See in: Marianne Schlosser. “*Cognito et amor*”, p. 218.

⁴⁴⁷ See in: Marianne Schlosser. “*Cognito et amor*,” p. 218.

⁴⁴⁸ See in. Elizabeth Dreyer. “*Affectus* in St Bonaventure’s Theology,” p. 15.

⁴⁴⁹ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Boehner, p.24.

Commenting on the above text, Dreyer, holds that Prayer and meditation are two of the most significant practices for preparing for contemplation. "By so praying, we are given light to discern the steps of the soul's ascent to God," (*Itinerarium*, I. 2). The soul obtains the grace that will transform it through prayer, and the wisdom that will lead to perfection through meditation. The purgative, illuminative, and unitive levels of the mystical path are all affected by this meditation that leads to loving wisdom. The meditation path starts with a prick of conscience and concludes with a sense of inner bliss. It is used in bereavement and is completed in love. St. Bonaventure employs the idea of "fire of wisdom" to represent that which must be carefully nourished, set ablaze, and then brought to the highest level in the soul.⁴⁵⁰

Showing the importance of the human effort in the process of spiritual growth. in *Collations in Hexaemeron*, II. 32, Bonaventure says:

And he affirms that this ascent comes about through the power and the strongest motion of the Holy Spirit, as it is said of Elias: *A great and strong wind overthrowing the mountains and breaking the rocks in pieces*. It is not for us to have this fire within our power; but if God gives it from above, **it is the priest's duty to nourish it and to throw wood on it by means of prayer.**⁴⁵¹

Whoever wishes to meet God in contemplation should be aware that, on the one hand, he is asking for an undeserved gift and should place his complete trust in God's generosity, for God is the decisive factor; on the other hand, he should be aware that God does not work above man's head: the fire falls from heaven, but it is man's responsibility to provide wood.⁴⁵² Therefore the wayfarer must understand that to become "deiformed" and getting united with God, is a reciprocal process between the person and God. "Experience alone can tell the wonder of this obscure, delightful light; divine grace alone can procure such experience; and those alone who strive for it may receive such grace."⁴⁵³

Now one can ask, what is meant by striving for mystical experience and what must a wayfarer do in concrete to accomplish in his striving for "union". Based on *Itinerarium* Schlosser holds that by deepening one's love for God in various levels man can strive towards union :

By deepening the love for God, from which the fruit of "tasting" grows. Love, in turn, is awakened by "knowledge": in contemplating internalization, it is nourished. In the prologue of the *Itinerarium* it is said that the goal of this itinerary is "*magis exercitatio affectus quam eruditio intellectus*"(the exercise of affection more than the instruction of the mind). This is

⁴⁵⁰ See in: Elizabeth Dreyer. "Affectus in St Bonaventure's Theology," p. 17.

⁴⁵¹ Bonaventure. *Collations in Hexaemeron*, p. 36,37.

⁴⁵² See in: Marianne Schlosser. "*Cognito et amor*", p. 218,19.

⁴⁵³ Bonaventure. *Breviloquium*, V.6,7, p. 206.

again due to the fact that love unites to a greater degree than knowledge. Thus, Bonaventure sometimes compares the components of knowledge with the gaze of the eye, but it is love with its feet (journey) on which one really approaches. *Walking presupposes voluntary self-movement*; one must, more than with seeing, look for the proximity and at the same time only certain proximity makes it possible to see something at all. On the other hand, it is precisely this promotion of the “*affectus*” that takes place through “speculation”. For this reason, both the affective and the intellective spheres must be instituted.⁴⁵⁴

In this context of ‘voluntary self-movement’ of the wayfarer it would be helpful for us to refer to Boehner’s introduction to *The Journey of the Mind to God*, in which he speaks about a third form of ascent that Bonaventure mentions in his *Sermon I on Holy Saturday* (IX, 269),

A third form of ascent to God, and one to which Bonaventure gives a great deal of consideration, is the contemplative model provided by Saint Francis’ third follower, Giles of Assisi. According to Brother Giles, the soul who wants to attain peace must climb the following steps: 1) he must forget himself and burn with the most ardent desire for union with God; 2) he must be anointed by the consoling balm that is poured on fervent souls by the Holy Spirit to heal the loss he feels for things he surrendered; 3) he must achieve the kind of ecstasy that abandons the things of sense and turns to God Who is found within; 4) he then must be open to the presence of eternal light through contemplation;⁴⁵⁵

Coming back to Schlosser, the “gathering” (recollection) of ‘all thoughts and wills’ toward God is required for the inner unity and suppleness of the soul. It becomes “pure” in its thoughts and has “peace” in itself as a result of recollecting (“purity of heart” and “peace of heart”- beatitudes). Bonaventure proposes these two attitudes to those who seek contemplation, based on Jesus’ teachings, which promise the vision of God to those who are pure in heart and the acquisition of the good things they seek to those who are full of peace. He connects the Dionysian “stage of purification” (purgation) with the biblical beatitude of “purity of heart,” of which Francis also speaks frequently. It has two aspects: purity of thought and purity of flesh. It is a matter of getting free from attachment to earthly things - in which the *affectus* plays a crucial part and the spirit is made able to gaze upon God;⁴⁵⁶ in turn this may cause the disposition of “devotion” in the person which is an affective feeling toward God and the crucified Christ. Devotion fulfils the soul’s relationship with God. It is a God-ordained inclination that draws the soul closer to Him. When devotion is perfect, it leads to mystical communion very instantly. Thus, in reality, ecstasy is caused by three factors: ‘devotion,’ ‘admiration,’ and delight.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁴ See in: Marianne Schlosser. “*Cognito et amor*,” p. 220.

⁴⁵⁵ Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Boehner, p. xiv.

⁴⁵⁶ See in: Marianne Schlosser. “*Cognito et amor*,” p. 222.

⁴⁵⁷ See in. Elizabeth Dreyer. “*Affectus* in St Bonaventure’s Theology,” p.18.

In the same way that the soul freed itself from "*curiositas*" and gained clarity of vision in the arena of cognition, it has to free itself from unworthy aspirations and goods that will never satisfy its craving in the realm of affect. Mind achieves peace with herself by devoting her love to God and being at peace with Him. Purification of thought and emancipation from striving should go hand in hand with a focus on achieving what is genuinely good. *Aversio* from insufficient things and *conversio* to God are mutually reliant. In this context the spirit of Poverty plays a key role for Bonaventure. That is why the "mystical journey" becomes a pilgrimage of a 'poor man in the desert'.⁴⁵⁸

Though it is an admirable way of living, Saint Bonaventure does not view that chosen poverty is the key to comprehending Francis of Assisi's notion of poverty. "Here begins the speculation of the Poor Man in the Desert," so writes Bonaventure at the start of Chapter One of *Itinerarium*. Bonaventure's depiction of poverty is more than a sketch of the 'nobleness' of a life lived without worldly possessions. In Saint Bonaventura's appreciation of the vocation or calling to the Franciscan understanding of the Gospel life, Saint Francis teaches us to discern a deeper meaning for the "poor man in the desert." 'The poor in the desert' is someone who understands a deeper poverty, the poverty of all creatures and humans in relation to God's goodness. This deeper spiritual poverty is significant because it makes us aware of a spiritual poverty that cannot be resolved by our own efforts or even by a chosen life of poverty. Following a historical tradition, Bonaventure would write that one is bent away from seeking the true riches of God two ways: our mind by ignorance and our flesh by concupiscence. Throughout his work Bonaventure is trying to draw our attention to this other level of poverty.⁴⁵⁹ This ontological dependence on God must be a true disposition of the wayfarer in the mystical journey.

⁴⁵⁸ See in: Marianne Schlosser. "*Cognito et amor*", pp. 222-225.

⁴⁵⁹ See in: Bonaventure. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Boehner, p. xiv.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

As we have arrived at the conclusion of this study, let me recall that this study was initiated in view of finding answer to some of the questions that were related with my spiritual journey. A church, which is very much blessed with the presence of great mystics, can in no way underestimate the mystical experiences and the consequent witnessing presence of these mystics. They throw open before every Christian a way for deep spiritual experience. Hence, I did take keen interest to find out some literature on mysticism and the related topics. Finally, I was drawn to the writings of St. Bonaventure. And this explains the caption of my thesis "*The Nature of Mystical Experience, Mystical Union, and the Influence of Grace in the Mystical Journey: an Inquiry into the Writings of St. Bonaventure,*" and I was mainly concerned with *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*. I must acknowledge that this study has given clarity and precision to the notion of "mysticism", especially the Franciscan way of looking at this phenomenon.

In the light of the entire works of St. Bonaventure and very particularly basing on his work "*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*", the main concern of this study was to articulate the nature of mystical union. According to Bonaventure, in the mystical journey, the mind passes through the three phases/ levels which consists of six stages, spirally towards God with three 'ascents' or 'lifts' of which the final stage is called "apex mentis" of the mind. At this final stage of the journey, the soul is transformed in *apex affectus* through grace into a continued experience of "deformity" or Godlikeness, which will bring back its original bliss. It can be opined that Bonaventure's thought has an incorporated aspect, that the transcendent love of *unitas spiritus* includes a 'transformation' of its intellectual foundation, because the '*apex mentis*,' the sixth and final stage of the ascent, transcends the level of *intelligentia* that can know the "divine unity" identified with 'esse' (God's unity through Being) and the Trinity as a '*bonus*,' (Trinity as Good). The second term is more accurate, yet 'goodness' does not deny 'being.' In chapters five to seven of *Itinerarium*, Bonaventure refers and quotes Dionysius multiple times, although he does not adopt his interpretations of Plato's "good beyond being." He admits that being is subordinated to goodness, but he reconciles the two as mutually inclusive. As "Being" (esse), God revealed to Moses (Exodus 3, 14) and sums up Israel's wisdom, whereas the "Good" sums up the New Testament teaching, (Mt 28, 19;

Luk 18, 19).⁴⁶⁰ As a result, ecstasy, also known as *excessus mentis*, is a type of "intellectualized affectivity." It is defined by "profound affection" and goes beyond the 'traditional knowledge of God effected in faith' and the scholars (like Bonaventure) name it as "experiential knowledge of God, "or "experimental cognition."

In this spiral movement of the soul to God, grace becomes a constituent element by which the 'image' is reformed that makes the journey possible for the one who desires it. The way to prepare for this summit, is the desire that drives all stages of the journey, yet even this is a gift of the Spirit, who inspires human history. God's own spirit inflames the human heart through the "natural desire" that governs all human ways. The grace effects the mystical union through the medium of *influentia* of Christ and the soul becomes 'hierarchized' through the process of 'illumination'. In this process of illumination, the cardinal virtues of faith, hope and love plays a significant role.

Although Bonaventure teaches that all three theological virtues are important, in the ascent to God, he claims that charity is the best since it transforms the soul into a divine likeness through the unitive power of love. While faith and hope aid in the soul's union with God, only charity brings the ascent into God to fruition; faith offers a vision of God as the Highest Truth, hope reaches out in trust to God as the Most Generous, only charity, however, can satisfy the contemplative's need to embrace and cling to God as the Greatest good.⁴⁶¹ Affectivity, in the form of *caritas*, goes beyond intellect and science; it reaches the infinite and simultaneously feels the depths of God and humanity. Beyond the dialectic of affirmations and negations (the mystical path), the self is established in the secret of the eternal in confidence, hope, thankfulness, peace, pure happiness, and real love. The soul enters into its own intimacy and thus reaches its summit.⁴⁶² "And that is the supreme union of love. And the Apostle says that it comes about through love alone: So that, being rooted and grounded in love, you may be able to comprehend Such love transcends every intellect and every science," (*Hexaameron* 2, 30). And through this "closeness" the

⁴⁶⁰ See in: Adriaan T. Peperzak. "Bonaventure's Contribution to the Twentieth Century Debate on Apophatic Theology," Faith and Philosophy: In :*Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers*: Vol. 15 : Issue. 2, (1998), pp. 188-89.

⁴⁶¹ See in: Timothy J. Johnson. *The Soul in Ascent: Bonaventure on poverty, prayer and union with God*, p. 164.

⁴⁶² See in: Adriaan T. Peperzak. "Bonaventure's Contribution to the Twentieth Century Debate on Apophatic Theology," Faith and Philosophy: In :*Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers*: Vol. 15 : Issue. 2, (1998), p. 187

wayfarer comes to the experience of tranquillity and peace at the bottom of his being and existence.

At the beginning of the sixth chapter of *Journey of Mind into God*, Bonaventure speaks about *Mens pacific* of the wayfarer, gained at the end of the completion of the six stages of contemplation (7.1). According to Peperzak:

This peace is not the peace of heaven, but rather participation in a final passage or transition (*transitus*) to God in company with Christ (*Jtin.* 7, 1). Once the stages of intellectual speculation have purified the mind, it is able to fully concentrate on the reconciliatory "sacrament that was hidden for ages" (*a saeculis abscollditum*, Eph. 3, 9): the man, who is God, hanging on a cross.⁴⁶³

Bonaventure aids the redirection of human desire to its proper objective, as the God who is Peace himself, by exhorting Christians to emulate and conform themselves to Christ's crucified humanity. Participating in Christ's life by imitation and conformity, restores real human desire, the longing for peace and joy, found only in God. Peace is a result of love for Bonaventure. Without love, he claims, true peace cannot be achieved.⁴⁶⁴ Bonaventure writes in *Triple Way, II. 11*, "As soon as we acquire charity, all that pertains to perfection becomes easy: acting or suffering, living or dying. We must therefore endeavour to advance in Love, for perfect love leads to perfection in all else."⁴⁶⁵

Furthermore, Bonaventure believes that the pinnacle of love, which leads to peace, is realized in communion with Christ crucified, which means that one is to become like the crucified, nailed to the cross. The phrase 'nailed to the cross' may appear to be a severe exhortation, but what it really means is to place those things that stand in our way of unity with God (personal fortune, family, nation, authority, etc.) in appropriate perspective. The consequence of Bonaventure's meditation on the stigmatized Francis was his road to peace through the Crucified. By conforming to the crucified, the impoverished man of Assisi transformed from power and wealth to suffering and compassionate love, becoming a man of peace.⁴⁶⁶

Further, in Bonaventure's writings, one can note that there is a relation between the "desire" and peace. According to Delio, the beginning of violence is related to the perversion of desire; thus, the question is: 'what do we desire?' This is because sin is the result of turning

⁴⁶³ See in: Adriaan T. Peperzak. "Bonaventure's Contribution to the Twentieth Century Debate on Apophatic Theology," Faith and Philosophy: In :Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers: Vol. 15 : Issue. 2, (1998), P. 190,91.

⁴⁶⁴ See in: Iliia Delio. Crucified Love: Bonaventure's Mysticism of the Crucified Christ, p.148.

⁴⁶⁵ Bonaventure. "Triple Way". In: *Mystical Opuscula*, I, trans. Jose de Vinck, p.78.

⁴⁶⁶ See in: Iila Delio. *Crucified Love: Bonaventure's Mysticism of the Crucified Christ*, p. 149.

away from God: desiring to be like God (in a negative sense) and longing for what our neighbours have. If our desire isn't primarily for the "Good," then all of our desires will be twisted – "broken" desires that will eventually lead to violence inside ourselves and in our relationship with others. Bonaventure sees desire as the foundation of our proper relationship with God and the universe and consequently the mastery over 'what to desire' is a constituent of achieving true peace. In the prologue to *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, he makes this point noticeably clear.⁴⁶⁷

According to Kenan Osborne, it is to be borne in mind that Bonaventure's writings contain a significant phrase that he utilizes as a foundation for comprehending God: *bonum est sui diffusivum* - goodness is diffusive of itself; and this phrase is relational and therefore, for Bonaventure, God is always a relational entity. He takes Dionysius' notion and runs with it. Goodness is self-diffusive, implying "free giving" rather than "necessitated giving." God's free gift is the creation of the universe as well as humanity. Again, God's free gift is the incarnation of the logos in Jesus' person. God's grace is abundantly available everywhere, here and now. In other words, the womb of creation is *bonum est sui diffusivum*: God loved us into existence,⁴⁶⁸ and in turn, a person who is in ecstatic union with God, is more capable to be relational with the whole creation.

Commenting on the concept of a "relational God" in the writings of Bonaventure by Pope Benedict, Keith Douglass writes:

Being (*Summum Ens*) itself is good and relational. Bonaventure's approach to metaphysics reflects his trinitarian theology: God is good, and God is relational; therefore, being is good and relational; Therefore, all reality is good and relational. Trinitarian life finds expression in the structure of the universe, from macrocosm to microcosm.⁴⁶⁹

The world originates from God, remains as God's expression, and returns to God in Bonaventure's three-stage explanation of the economy of creation. The first step in the process is the interpersonal love of the Trinity, in which the Father creates the Son and the Son and Father both produce the Spirit and love one another in the Spirit. According to the doctrine of the Trinity, all of creation 'exists as the outer representation of God, reflecting Him through recapitulating in material beings and in man the interior dynamism of the Trinity.' Therefore, creation presents an almost endless array of correspondences between

⁴⁶⁷ See in: Iila Delio. *Crucified Love: Bonaventure's Mysticism of the Crucified Christ*, p. 150-153.

⁴⁶⁸ See in: Kenan Osborne. "Our Relational World Today: Exploring the Wisdom of St. Bonaventure." In: *Franciscan Studies*, Volume 71, (2013), pp. 533-34.

⁴⁶⁹ Keith Douglass Warner. "Bonaventure in Benedict: Franciscan Wisdom for Human Ecology," pp. 6-7. Available at: <https://webpages.scu.edu/ftp/kwarner/Warner%20Bonaventure%20in%20Benedict.pdf>. Accessed on 20.05. 2022.

Beings and God and among creatures. Man, who was formed in God's image and likeness, stands at the pinnacle of creation, and by his discernment and love of God, the created world returns to God. Man must therefore continually conform to the Trinity, which is inherently relational, in order to accomplish his calling as a man and himself as the Image of God.⁴⁷⁰ Therefore, I propose that the person who has pursued the mystical journey and experienced the mystical union to a certain degree will be in a better position to be more relational in its different dimensions. Because, according to Bonaventure, the mystical experience of union is basically a deep trinitarian experience of oneness, even though the Christ crucified plays a crucial role in this experience. In mystical union a deep conformation in love with the Trinity takes place as well as an integration with oneself (body and mind), and consequently better relationship with other humans and the rest of the creation. This eventually brings Peace in the surrounding environment of the wayfarer.

The underlying truth about what it is to be a human can be expressed as follows: a human being develops, realizes, and fulfils himself through relationships with other people, with God, with creation, and with himself. The basis and guiding concept for all of our interactions with and toward other people is our connection with God.⁴⁷¹ This true connection or communication is established in a special way by the experiential knowledge of God in mystical union. According to Bonaventure, Saint Francis attained such holiness through the mystical way, in that, he persuaded God that his flesh was in admirable harmony with his mind and his mind with God and consequently with the whole of creation, especially with the whole of humanity. This led him to establish a universal brotherhood, concretely the Franciscan brotherhood.

One of the most striking reflections emerging from this study on Bonaventure's writings is the image of relational God who is being experienced in the mystical union. We live in a 'relational environment' in the religious world, at least according to Bonaventure, and the God we worship is a 'relational' God; and this relationship is best manifested in the mystical union with God in a special way. God cares for all men and women, not just you and me. God is related to everything in Bonaventure's book of creation because everything is a residue of God. Every human being has a relation to God, and this in turn, fosters

⁴⁷⁰See in: Krzysztof Kukulka. "The Human Person as Relational Being." In :*Studia Antyczne i Mediewistyczne*, 2015, p. 78. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/43779784/THE_HUMAN_PERSON_AS_RELATIONAL_BEING. Accessed on 05.07. 2022.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., p. 79.

humanity to be related to each other. The desire to journey the mystical way, in this sense of Bonaventure's writings, is a desire to be united to the humanity too. Therefore, the mystical concept of God in Bonaventure, is intimately linked to the deepest aspects of our thinking and loving. This is a God notion that people today may believe in, one that will assist humanity in creating a new unified world which would eventually lead to peace and joy on our planet right now.

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THE ABSTRACT

The Diploma Thesis “*The Nature of Mystical Experience, Mystical Union and the Influence of Grace in the Mystical Journey: an inquiry into the writings of St. Bonaventure*” is a study, mainly concerned with *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, a mystical work written by St. Bonaventure. The primary concern of this study is to analyse the nature of the mystical union with God which is taking place in the *Itinerarium*. It is also the contention of this Thesis that for Bonaventure the goal of the mystical journey is “ecstatic union” leading to “ecstatic peace.” The study recalls that this mystical journey will be impossible unless grace is poured into the soul of the wayfarer. Hence special attention is given to examine how grace influences the processes of this mystical journey. In this regard two questions become significant: if someone wants to go along this path and experience God, can he /she be merely a passive receiver? Will the disposition of the wayfarer affect the journey? The end result is that even though grace causes the mystical experience and mystic union, the disposition of the wayfarer is not less important as envisaged by Bonaventure. This is the focus of the last segment of this study.

DER ABSTRACT

Die Diplomarbeit *"Die Natur der mystischen Erfahrung, die mystische Vereinigung und der Einfluss der Gnade auf die mystische Pilgerreise: eine Untersuchung der Schriften des heiligen Bonaventura"* ist eine Studie, die sich hauptsächlich mit dem *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* beschäftigt, einem mystischen Werk des heiligen Bonaventura. Das Hauptanliegen dieser Studie ist die Analyse der Natur der mystischen Vereinigung mit Gott, die sich im *Itinerarium* vollzieht. Es ist auch die These dieser Arbeit, dass für Bonaventura das Ziel der mystischen Pilgerreise die "ekstatische Vereinigung" mit Gott ist, die zum "ekstatischen Frieden" führt. Die Studie weist darauf hin, dass diese mystische Pilgerreise unmöglich ist, wenn die Gnade nicht in die Seele des Pilgers ausgegossen wird. Daher wird besonders darauf geachtet, wie die Gnade die Vorgänge auf dieser mystischen Reise beeinflusst. In diesem Zusammenhang sind zwei Fragen von Bedeutung: Wenn jemand diesen Weg gehen und Gott erfahren will, kann er dann nur ein passiver Empfänger sein? Wird die Veranlagung des Pilgers den Weg beeinflussen? Das Endergebnis ist, dass, obwohl die Gnade die mystische Erfahrung und die mystische Vereinigung bewirkt, die Veranlagung des Pilgers nicht weniger wichtig ist, als Bonaventura es sich vorgestellt hat. Dies ist der Schwerpunkt des letzten Abschnitts dieser Studie.