Works of St. Bonaventure

Writings on the Spiritual Life

Introduction and Notes by F. Edward Coughlin, O.F.M.
WORKS of
ST. BONAVENTURE  X

WRITINGS
ON THE SPIRITUAL LIFE
CONTENTS

Preface ..................................................................................................................... VII
Foreword ................................................................................................................ XI
Introduction
  The Journey of the Heart Into Wisdom ......................................................... 1
Bonaventure: Disciple, Teacher, Mystical Theologian ............................... 3
The Human Person: Made in the Image of God ....................................... 7
  The Human Person: Formed Right and Upright ........................................ 8
The Rational Spirit: An Image of the Triune God .................................... 12
The Soul, Deformed by Sin ............................................................................. 30
The Soul, Reformed by Grace ....................................................................... 37
Some Conclusions .......................................................................................... 40
The Threefold Journey Into Wisdom ............................................................. 41
  Hierarchy, The Meaning of the Concept .................................................... 43
  The Three Hierarchizing Activities ......................................................... 47
    The Purgative Way .................................................................................. 47
    The Illuminative Way ............................................................................. 54
    The Perfective/Unitive Way ................................................................. 59
Conclusion ......................................................................................................... 66
The Texts In Translation ................................................................................... 69
  The Interpretation of Classical Texts .......................................................... 69
  The Translation, Technical Notes ............................................................... 71
Reading the Texts in Different Historical Contexts ................................... 74
Some Conclusions ............................................................................................ 76
Selected Texts in Translation
Translated by Dr. Girard Etzkorn

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Threefold Way</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the Perfection of Life</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressed to the Sisters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Governing the Soul</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soliloquium</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outline of the Soliloquium</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix: Four Supplemental Texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commentary on Book II of the Sentences,</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prologue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translated by Dr. Girard Etzkorn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“On the Way of Life”</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translated by Dr. Oleg Bychkov</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“On Holy Saturday”</td>
<td>369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translated by Robert J. Karris, OFM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The Monday After Palm Sunday”</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translated by Robert J. Karris, OFM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indices .......................................................................................... 389

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index of Sacred Scripture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index of Ecclesiastical Writers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index of Philosophical Writers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This volume contains selected spiritual and theological texts by St. Bonaventure. The texts included are: The Threefold Way, On the Perfection of Life, On Governing the Soul, The Soliloquium: A Dialogue on the Four Spiritual Exercises. An appendix includes four additional texts that provide some important and helpful clarifications on aspects of the Seraphic Doctor's theology of the spiritual life found in this volume. It includes: the prologue to the Commentary on Book II of the Sentences of Peter Lombard and three short sermons: “On the Way of Life,” “On Holy Saturday,” and “On the Monday after Palm Sunday.”

In keeping with the original intention of the series, this volume makes available important Bonaventurian texts in English-language translations. The general introduction to this volume limits itself to providing a summary overview of the theology of the spiritual life as articulated by St. Bonaventure. In addition, each text is preceded by a brief introduction. Notes that explain or define some of Bonaventure’s key concepts as well as cross-references to related passages in other Bonaventurian texts are provided. Presuming that many of those who would be most interested in these texts may not have facility with a variety of languages, English-language sources and scholarship have been used wherever possible.

Bonaventure: The Soul’s Journey into God, The Tree of Life, and The Life of St. Francis was published in 1978 in the Classics of Western Spirituality Series. Translated and edited by Dr. Ewert Cousins, the volume included an introduction to the life of St. Bonaventure and the works of Bonaventure in general as well as the three texts. The goals and size limits imposed by the Classics
of Western Spirituality Series forced Cousins to select a limited number of texts that “clearly qualified as classics both because of their content and because they have been acknowledged as such by their acceptance and influence.”¹ Cousins presented the volume with the expressed hope that the three texts selected would “together present an integral picture of Franciscan Spirituality as Bonaventure perceived it.”² In realizing his goal, Dr. Cousins made an invaluable contribution to the retrieval of important texts from the Franciscan-Bonaventurian spiritual tradition.

In a sense, this present volume continues the work begun by Ewert Cousins. It begins with a translation of The Threefold Way, the one addition Cousins would have liked to include in the Bonaventure volume.³ As Cousins put it: “The Threefold Way qualifies as a classic since it contains one of the most significant studies of the three stages of spiritual development ... which have become accepted in Western spirituality as the classical way of formulating the dynamics of spiritual growth.”⁴

Within the Franciscan tradition in particular, other texts of Bonaventure have long been recognized as classics. They have been afforded a certain normative status in that they “disclose a compelling truth” about the human spirit and the journey into God within the tradition inspired by St. Francis.⁵

Each of these texts invites the reader to a deeper understanding of Bonaventure’s thought. Addressed to individuals in differing contexts – a professed friar-priest, a community of Poor Clares, a laywoman, or individuals who had no theological training – all the texts reflect his theology of the spiritual life in different but interrelated ways. Read in the light of each other, the different texts clarify and demonstrate the depth as well as the breadth of his thought. They also reflect Bonaventure’s desire to encourage every man and woman, friar or lay person, to respond personally to the gift of grace and make the spiritual journey into God. Considered as a whole, the texts demonstrate Bonaventure’s creative capacity to invite others to strive for the perfection of love.

In conjunction with Cousins’s Bonaventure volume, all of Bonaventure’s primary works addressing his theology of the spiritual life are now available in English-language translations. Readers who are unfamiliar with Bonaventure’s theology of the spiritual life are encouraged to read Zachary Hayes’ essay entitled “Bonaventure” in The History of Franciscan Theology and Dominic Monti’s introduction to the Writings Concerning the Franciscan Order. A more extensive, helpful, and in-depth treatment of Bonaventure’s Christology and many of the interrelated dimensions of the Seraphic Doctor’s theology of the spiritual life may be found in The Hidden Center: Spirituality and Speculative Christology in St. Bonaventure by Zachary Hayes. Bonaventure: Mystical Writings by Zachary Hayes is also highly recommended.

The publication of this volume affords members of the Franciscan family a unique opportunity to express a word of thanks to Kevin Lynch, CSP, former President and Publisher of the Paulist Press, as well as to the Editorial Board of the Classics of Western Spirituality Series. In addition to the Bonaventure volume, the Series has included Francis and Clare: The Complete Works (1982), Jacopone da Todi (1982), Francisco de Osuna: The Third Spiritual Alphabet (1981), and Angela of Foligno: The

² Cousins, 12.
³ Cousins, 16.
⁴ Cousins, 16.
Complete Works (1993). While the series as a whole has contributed a great deal toward a better understanding of a wide variety of sources, Franciscans are deeply grateful for the gift this series has been toward the ready availability of a rich variety of sources from their own spiritual tradition. In the English-speaking world, these volumes have served as the primary door though which many, at long last, have access to these texts.

Zachary Hayes, OFM
2005

I would like to thank Dr. Girard (Jerry) Etzkorn for his “labor of love” in completing these translations. After many years of dedicated work as a member of the Franciscan Institute’s research team that completed the critical edition of Ockham’s theological and philosophical works as well as began work on the critical edition of Scotus’s philosophical works, he responded graciously to my request to undertake this translation project as the first of the many projects he had waited patiently to pursue through the “gift of his freedom” in retirement. It is but one of the many projects he has completed as he continues his, as yet, elusive search for a hole in one!

In the preparation of these texts for publication Jerry and I frequently turned to Zachary Hayes, OFM, for his advice and suggestions in an effort to find a better or more adequate way to express Bonaventure’s thought in English to individuals in significantly different times. As always, Zachary responded with great generosity and patience. He made many helpful suggestions with gracious good humor. I acknowledge gratefully the assistance of Giles Bello, OFM, Michael Blastic, OFM, and Dr. Timothy J. Johnson in particular for reviewing and making helpful suggestions as this work progressed and evolved. I want to thank Dr. Oleg Bychkov for his translation of one of the sermons included in the Appendix. I want also to acknowledge gratefully Robert Karris, OFM, for his very generous assistance in translating Bonaventure’s quotations of Sacred Scripture from the Latin Vulgate text, in locating innumerable references, and for his translation of two of the sermons included...
in the Appendix. The knowledge, experience, generosity, and insightful critiques of these and other individuals contributed much to this volume. For any of the volume's inadequacies or limitations, I take full responsibility.

In Bonaventure's Franciscan vision of Gospel life, I have found inspiration, guidance, consolation, many challenges both academic and personal, as well as the encouragement to continue my personal search for wisdom, to better understand the demands of Gospel love, and to hope joyfully for those things for which my heart yearns.

I pursued this project with the sincere hope that many in the English-speaking world would have more ready access to the Seraphic Doctor’s theology of the spiritual life. Along the way, I found great encouragement and assistance, for which I am deeply grateful, from three friends in particular, Kathleen Moffatt, OSF, Elise Saggau, OSF, and Noel Riggs. I also hope that, despite the challenges of completing this work, a variety of men and women, Franciscan brothers and sisters in particular, will have an opportunity to learn more of the enduring wisdom in the works of St. Bonaventure found in this volume.

F. Edward Coughlin, OFM
July 15, 2006

ABBREVIATIONS

ACW Ancient Christian Writers
CCSL Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina.
CSEL Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum.
CFS Cistercian Fathers Series
CSS Cistercian Studies Series
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Title and Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FC</td>
<td>Fathers of the Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GGHG</td>
<td>Gregory the Great's Homilies on the Gospel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LChC</td>
<td>Library of Christian Classics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAB</td>
<td>New American Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opera Omnia</td>
<td>S. Bonaventurae Opera Omnia. Edited by PP. Collegii a S. Bonaventura. Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi): Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1882-1902. There are nine volumes of text in the series and one volume of indices. The volume number is followed by the page number, e.g., V: 24.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QuarEd</td>
<td>The editors who produced the text and the notes for Bonaventure's Opera Omnia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WBC</td>
<td>Works of St. Bernard of Clairvaux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSA</td>
<td>Works of St. Augustine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSB</td>
<td>Works of St. Bonaventure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

The Journey of the Heart
into Wisdom

In her memoir Ordinary Time, Nancy Mairs describes herself as a “wanton Gospeller.”¹ She asserts that her essays are a “search into the ways one woman deals with God’s presence day after day.” Throughout her slim book, Mairs focuses her attention on a few practical questions: “What does it mean to live in the presence of God? Present to God? What responsibilities do I bear for the creation of my life? What choices must I make to sustain it?” While she sets out to write a kind of spiritual-autobiography, she also flatly states that, among other things, her book is not a “cookbook for conversion.” After all, she says, “in describing life’s ambiguities, each of us is bound to get at least one point wrong.” One can assume that Mairs’ book will never achieve anything near the perennial significance of Augustine’s Confessions or the contemporary popularity of Thomas Merton’s Seven Storey Mountain. Rather, the significance of her work lies in her willingness to explore honestly the central questions of every woman or man’s spiritual life – the journey of the heart into God. While some have written insightfully of their personal struggles and experience, others have written to encourage, instruct, and assist those who were wrestling with those questions.

In the person of St. Bonaventure, the Franciscan spiritual tradition has been blessed with a gifted guide

¹ Nancy Mairs, Ordinary Time: Cycles of Marriage, Faith and Renewal (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), see pages 7-12 in particular.
Writings on the spiritual life

IntroductIon

Writings on the spiritual life toward understanding what it means to live in the presence of God day after day. Each of his works, whether they are categorized as works of theology, asceticism, spirituality, or mysticism invite the reader to make the spiritual journey into the wisdom that comes through true experience as envisioned by the Seraphic Doctor. Despite the diversity of these works, the variety of forms they take, and the different audiences to which they were first addressed – friars, sisters, laity – the Seraphic Doctor seems always to be urging everyone to believe, to understand, to contemplate, and to become enflamed with the love of the triune God.

The introduction to this volume of Bonaventurian texts in translation will seek to provide: (I) a brief introduction to the person of St. Bonaventure, (II) a sense of his understanding of how the human person is made in the image of God and is empowered to become a greater likeness to Christ, (III) an overview of Bonaventure’s understanding of the threefold journey of the heart into wisdom, (IV) comments on the challenges of interpreting spiritual classics as well as information on the methodology used in the preparation of this volume of texts in translation, and (V) summary comments on the implications of Bonaventure’s theology of the spiritual life as a resource for spiritual pilgrims in different ages.

Parts II and III of this introduction were written with the intention of providing some basic information and foundational orientations for readers who may be unfamiliar with Bonaventure’s theology of the spiritual life. A deliberate effort has also been made to use the words of the Seraphic Doctor himself to acquaint the reader with his language and style as an aid to reading the texts and better grasping his intended meaning.

Bonaventure’s conceptual categories and classical world-view are steeped in the richness of the Christian tradition. It is a tradition to which he made a significant and creative contribution. Later generations of scholars and spiritual pilgrims would subsequently find in the Seraphic Doctor “a significant theologian of the past to be a partner in conversation; a partner whose efforts may help shed light on our present situation.”

I: Bonaventure: Disciple, Teacher, Mystical Theologian

Bonaventure played a significant role in the early development of the Franciscan theological tradition. Given the more extensive treatments of his life, work, and significance within the Order and the Church that are available elsewhere, a few summary observations will suffice here.

First, he entered the Franciscan Order in Paris sometime between 1238 and 1243. He was quickly recognized as one of the most intellectually outstanding followers of the poor man from Assisi. In a rare personal reference, he indicated that what “made me love St. Francis’ way of life” was the belief that, as in the early Church, the Order grew and “proved to be God’s doing” when wise men – illustrious and learned doctors – joined the company of “simple folk.”

---

Second, Bonaventure was an outstanding teacher and preacher. Following in the footsteps of some of the Franciscan Order's earliest masters that included among others Alexander of Hales and John of La Rochelle, Bonaventure began lecturing on the Bible in 1248 and later on the Sentences of Peter Lombard. Although the dates are difficult to determine precisely, it is probable that Bonaventure received the license to teach in 1254/55 and served as regent master at the Franciscan house in Paris from 1254 until the time of his election as Minister General. In his capacity as magister, Bonaventure would have been charged with the threefold responsibility of “reading’ Sacred Scripture, ‘disputing’ theological questions, and ‘preaching’ before the university body.” His formal teaching career abruptly ended in 1257, however, when he was elected the seventh minister general of the Order.

Third, Bonaventure was a creative pastoral leader. He put the depths of his own faith experience and the theology of the schools in the service of the pastoral needs of the rapidly growing Franciscan movement. For example, as Minister General, he played a significant role in the organization and subsequent chapter approval of the Constitutions of Narbonne (1260). As Dominic Monti notes, he organized the Constitutions “around topical quotations from the Rule.” It was a practical way of encouraging the friars to “approach their constitutions not simply as a random bunch of laws, but as the systematic application of the Order’s foundational document in concrete terms for their current situation.” These constitutions and his Major Life of St. Francis (1263) would, in fact, according to Monti, shape the “ideals and life of the brotherhood for generations to come.”

From another perspective, the Disputed Questions on Evangelical Perfection (1257) and the Defense of the Mendicants (1269) are two examples of Bonaventure’s ability and readiness to address those external critics who questioned openly the Order’s Mendicant-Franciscan identity and even its existence. In a similar way, works like The Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit (1268) and the unfinished Collations on the Six Days of Creation (1273) demonstrate his willingness to involve himself in some of the most significant theological-philosophical questions of his time with clarity and theological insight.

Bonaventure’s creative pastoral leadership is perhaps most evident in his works of spiritual, ascetical, and mystical theology. As the texts found in this volume demonstrate, he seemed eager to take advantage of different opportunities to instruct and encourage a friar, the sisters, a lay woman, and others to open themselves to God’s graced-filled presence in their lives, to know through experience God’s Wisdom, and to strive to live in the love which is God as best they could. Many of these texts were afforded normative status as classic texts toward which

---

5 Due to controversies at the university, Bonaventure was not formally awarded the doctoral degree and given full recognition as a master until October 23, 1257, a few months after his election as Minister General.


7 “Constitutions of Narbonne,” Writings Concerning the Franciscan Order, 73-74.

8 Writings Concerning the Franciscan Order, 71.
successive generations of Franciscans and others turned in search of understanding and wisdom.
II: The Human Person
Made in the image of God …
Called to become a greater likeness to Christ

In his fifth admonition, Francis of Assisi challenges everyone to “Consider … in what excellence the Lord God has placed you for [God] created you and formed you to the image of [God’s] beloved Son according to the body, and to [God’s] likeness according to the Spirit.” He concludes the admonition by inviting all women and men to “glory in our infirmities and in bearing daily the holy cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The ancient wisdom at the heart of this admonition became a central theme in the Franciscan theological tradition. It played a prominent role in the theology of Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure, John Duns Scotus, and others. Through the ongoing theological reflection of these and other early theologians within the tradition, this doctrine acquired some distinctively Franciscan characteristics. In Bonaventure’s theology of the spiritual life, for example, a correct understanding of the noble dignity of the person “made in the image of God” is a key to understanding how “God is so present to [the soul] that it actually grasps God and potentially ‘has the capacity for God and the ability to participate in God.’”

In this section, attention will be focused on Bonaventure’s medieval-Franciscan understanding of what it means to be “made in the image of God” – an embodied and rational soul. A measure of familiarity with

---

10 Francis of Assisi, The Fifth Admonition (FA:ED I, 131). Paul’s letter to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 12:5) provides the key scriptural reference for interpreting Francis’s understanding of human infirmity (infirmitas), physical weakness.

some of his conceptual categories and distinctions will provide the basis for better grasping his understanding of the dynamic and ongoing processes through which the person as an image of God, in cooperation with grace, is invited and empowered to become a greater likeness to Christ through knowledge, love, and free choice. To put it another way, a measure of familiarity with some of his conceptual categories and distinctions will provide the necessary foundation for better understanding how the rational soul, “of its own accord,” is made to “praise God, serve God, find delight in God, and be at rest in God.” This section is divided into three parts to offer a working knowledge of key aspects of the Seraphic Doctor’s understanding of (A) the nature of the embodied and rational creature, (B) the reality of sin, and (C) the gift of grace.

The Human Person: Formed Right and Upright

The human person – rational creature – was fashioned by God from “two natures that were the maximum distance from each other,” that is, a body (caro) that is a corporeal substance and a soul (mens) that is a spiritual and immaterial substance. Formed right and upright, the human person “stands midway” between those things that are “most distant” from God (traces and vestiges – that which is corporal/temporal) and those that are “closest” to God (angelic natures – those which are incorporeal and spiritual).

The body was endowed with existence, life, intelligence, and freedom of choice. It was both “proportioned” and “subject” to the soul. The body was understood to be “proportioned” to the soul in that it possessed a “well-balanced physical constitution, a beautiful and highly complex structure, and upright posture.” The physical “uprightness of the body’s carriage” was “to bespeak the rectitude of its mind.” The body was “united with the soul as its perfective principle, so that it might move toward and attain” the blessedness for which it was made.

The soul (anima/mens/homo interior), the spiritual dimension of the human person, was created “in the image of the Trinity” in its trinity of powers – memory (memoria), understanding (intelligentia), and will (voluntas). Bonaventure understood these three powers to be “consubstantial, coequal and coeval, and mutually interpenetrating.” Thus, Bonaventure can assert that when “one considers the order, origin, and relation of person: intellectualibus seu spiritibus rationalibus (Breviloquium, II, ch. 12); anima rationalis (Breviloquium, II, ch. 9).

14 Breviloquium, pt. II, ch. 10, n. 3, in Works of St. Bonaventure, vol. IX, trans. Dominic V. Monti (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2005), 90. A more complete discussion of Bonaventure’s understanding of the human person can be found in chapters 9 and 12. In this instance, mens refers to the whole “rational soul” in its threefold powers of memory, understanding, and will. Bonaventure uses a variety of terms and phrases to describe the nature of the human person. When he says “stands midway” between those things that are “most distant” from God (traces and vestiges – that which is corporal/temporal) and those that are “closest” to God (angelic natures – those which are incorporeal and spiritual).

15 See Breviloquium, pt. II, ch. 12, n. 4 and ch. 6 (Monti, 77-79); and Commentary on Book II of the Sentences, Prologue, found in the Appendix of this volume.

16 Breviloquium, pt. II, ch. 10, n. 1 and n. 5 (Monti, 84 and 87).

17 Breviloquium, pt. II, ch. 10, n. 1 (Monti, 89). It may be helpful to recall that, according to Bonaventure, “the judgment that a thing is beautiful or pleasant or wholesome lies in the proportion of harmony” (proportio aequalitatis); see Itinerarium, ch. II, n. 6 (Hayes, 69). It refers to his whole understanding of aesthetics.


20 Itinerarium, ch. III, n. 5 (Hayes, 91).
these faculties (potentia) to one another, one is led to the most blessed Trinity itself.\(^{21}\)

As the “most noble form of the body,” the soul was designed to serve as the principle through which the rational spirit was made capable of being “led back, as if in an intelligible circle, to its beginning in which it is perfected and beatified.”\(^{22}\) The body was, therefore, created “subject,” that is, “to be obedient to the soul...”\(^{23}\)

In the initial state of creation, the embodied and intelligent creature was “granted the possibility of blessedness” (beatitudo), the fullness of life conformed by grace to God in glory.\(^ {24}\) The creature so made was gifted with an inner orientation of spirit (anima) to strive for an always greater measure of its perfection in the state of human pilgrimage through the “two-fold rectitude” of its nature, that is, the “rectitude of conscience” for

\(^{21}\) Itinerarium, ch. III, n. 5 (Hayes, 91).

\(^{22}\) Breviloquium, pt. II, ch. 4, n. 3 (Monti, 70-71).

\(^{23}\) Breviloquium, pt. II, ch. 10, n. 1 (Monti, 89). In the state of original innocence, the human person was “free from misery and guilt” (p. II, ch. 9, n. 1 (Monti, 84); see also ch. 10, n. 5 (Monti, 91-92)). He also states that the “body was to conform to the soul as the principle of its ascension toward heaven” (n. 4). He assumed that God created a human “body so completely obedient that it was free from all hostility and rebellion, all propensity to lust... enfeeblement... moral dissolution... yet liable to fall into suffering”(n. 5).

In his description of the embodied soul “in the initial state of creation,” Bonaventure develops a positive, even overly idealized, understanding of human nature that serves as an important counterpoint to his description of the state of fallen humanity. For a contrasting and very negative but nonetheless influential and popular description of the human person in 1195, see Lothario Dei Segni (Pope Innocent III), The Misery of the Human Condition: De Miseria Humane Conditionis, Donald Howard, ed. (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc., 1969).

\(^{24}\) Breviloquium, pt. II, ch. 9, n. 2 (Monti, 85). In the state of glory, he assumed that grace stabilized the rational soul’s free will in right choice and fully enlightened its intellect. See his discussion of the “confirmation of the good angels” in Breviloquium, pt. II, ch. 8 (Monti, 81-84).

“Judging correctly” and the “rectitude of right willing, which is synderesis, warning against evil and prompting toward good.” In addition to the twofold assistance of humankind’s created nature, the supremely bountiful God also provided the twofold assistance of actual grace and sanctifying grace.\(^ {25}\)

Bonaventure acknowledges readily, however, that the human person, “because of its precarious nature, formed from nothing and not yet confirmed by glory” was “liable to fall.”\(^ {26}\) He also believed that, as a consequence of the failure to use freedom rightly, the first human turned away from higher/spiritual goods and turned toward the self through disordered desire (concupiscientia)\(^ {27}\) and the desire for temporal goods (cupiditas), that is, sinned. Therefore, as the Seraphic Doctor imaged it, the human person became bent over (incurvatus) as opposed to being right and upright (rectus) as created originally. All human nature was described consequently as being “infected” with ignorance in the mind (ignorantia mentis) and with disordered desire in the flesh (concupiscientia carnis) as a consequence of the original sin of the first human.\(^ {28}\) The right order found in the original state of creation became disordered. Humankind’s lower faculties were no longer subject, that is, obedient to the higher faculties – the sense appetites did not submit to reason, the desires of the flesh opposed reason, the powers of the soul disobeyed the law of love.\(^ {29}\) Rectitude was lost but “not the tendency to

\(^{25}\) Breviloquium, pt. II, ch. 10, n. 6 (Monti, 96).

\(^{26}\) Breviloquium, pt. II, ch. 10, n. 6 (Monti, 95).

\(^{27}\) The meaning of concupiscence can be somewhat ambiguous in that it sometimes refers to the concupiscible appetite’s orientation to desire the good naturally. More typically, it is understood negatively as disordered desire which arises from the inordinate desire for carnal pleasure, curiosity, or vanity. See Threefold Way, ch. I, n. 5.

\(^{28}\) Itinerarium, ch. I, n. 7 (Hayes, 51).

\(^{29}\) See The Evening Sermon on St. Francis, 1262 (FA:ED II, 725).
Rectitude. Rectitude and uprightness serve, therefore, as appropriate metaphors for imaging the challenge each individual faces in the struggle to be conformed to Christ “in as far as possible in this pilgrim state” through the imitation of Christ.

The Rational Spirit (anima rationalis):
An Image of the Triune God

Created in the image of the triune God, the nature of the human person is perhaps best grasped both in terms of the meaning of “rationality” and/or in terms of the soul’s three powers.

“Rationality” provides a twofold philosophical framework through which the Seraphic Doctor describes the cognitive power’s orientation to infinite truth and the affective power’s orientation to infinite goodness. One should also be mindful of his assumption that if

the intellectual and affective powers of the rational soul are never brought to rest except in God and in the infinite good, this is not because the soul comprehends God, but because nothing is sufficient for the soul unless it exceeds the soul’s capacity. Therefore, it is true that the intellect and affectivity of the rational soul are directed to the infinite good and truth.

This twofold framework of rationality implies memory, understanding and will, a threefold understanding of the powers of the soul. This threefold description of the soul’s powers provides an alternative and interrelated framework through which Bonaventure can describe the human capacity for and inner orientation to infinite truth and goodness – God – as well as how the rational spirit is led back to (reductio) God. While the threefold framework is used below, a sense of both of these frameworks is helpful for grasping the rich complexity of Bonaventure’s thought on this topic of utmost importance.

Memory (memoria)

“The function of memory is to retain and to represent not only things present, corporal, and temporal, but also things that are successive, simple, and eternal“ according to Bonaventure.34 In this abbreviated description of the function of memory, one can see something of our modern and more didactic sense of memory as the faculty through which we are capable of retaining, recollecting, and representing what has been learned, grasped, or experienced. One can also see something of memory’s role in the comprehension of intelligible things as well as in the reception and retention of sense knowledge. What may not be so readily apparent to the contemporary reader is Bonaventure’s understanding of memory as the power of the soul through which a human person is open and oriented to the triune God – “successive, simple, and eternal” things.

Bonaventure’s understanding of the power and function of memory relies heavily on the thought of

---

12 Commentary on Book II of the Sentences, prol. 13, in the Appendix of this volume.
13 Itinerarium, ch. VII, n. 1 (Hayes, 133). In The Earlier Rule, ch. 22, n. 26, Francis of Assisi begs his brothers “in the holy love which is God” to overcome “every impediment and putting aside every care and anxiety, to serve, love, honor and adore the Lord God with a clean heart and a pure mind in whatever way they are best able to do, for this is what He wants above all else.” (FA:ED I, 80).
15 Breviloquium, pt. II, ch. 6, n. 2 (Monti, 77).
16 Itinerarium, ch. III, n. 2 (Hayes, 81-82).
Augustine. In the Confessions, for example, Augustine describes the “faculty of memory as a great one, O my God, exceedingly great, a vast, inner recess.... This is a faculty of my mind, belonging to my nature, yet I cannot comprehend all that I am.”

As Philip Cary observes: “In developing his understanding of memory, Augustine drew on the biblical notions of seeking and finding and on philosophical notions of inquiry and discovery.” This led Augustine to “think of memory as the place where the intelligible things that the lovers of Wisdom seek may be found.”

Memory, in the deepest sense of the word, has many dimensions and embraces a number of interrelated ideas in the thought of Bonaventure. While these ideas are not easily and neatly separated, a sense of four different meanings will be helpful for grasping the Seraphic Doctor’s understanding of the soul’s power of memory.

First, the power of memory (memoria) may be correlated with the highest point of the mind (apex mentis). As Augustine puts it, memory is “the mind and this is nothing other than my very self.”

Thus memory (memoria/mens) refers to the innermost dimension of the self (homo interior), “what I am.”

Second, the memoria/mens is the place where God has chosen to dwell within the human person. As the place “where eternal truth resides,” memory may be described as the “light of the divine countenance” which the soul bears “within itself, from its origin.” The presence of this truth functions, as TitusSzabo put it more recently, as a kind of “secret font of the innate ideas of spiritual things.” Thus, following Augustine, Bonaventure could hold that “certain a priori elements [e.g., eternal laws] are present in memory.” Memoria/mens may be described, therefore, as “the ground of the soul which reflects the presence of God.” In this sense, memory is “the locus of a sort of preconscious contact with God,” as Hayes

---


37 Augustine, Confessionum, (book X: 14, 21). See Boulding, Confessions, 210, where the text reads: “mind and memory ... are one and the same.” In book X, 17,26 (Boulding, Confessions, 213) Augustine says that “memory ... is the mind, and it is nothing other than my very self.” In On The Trinity (book XIV: 8,11), Augustine discusses how in the “highest part of the mind” we “discover therein an image of God.” Book Fourteen of On the Trinity is found in Augustine of Hippo: Selected Writings, CWS, trans. Mary T. Clark (New York/Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1984), 342.

38 Confessionum (book X, 17,26); see also book X, 14,21 (Boulding, 213 and 210).
describes it. It is one of the places where one can hope to “see God.”

Third, memory may be described as “the source of the whole intellectual life of the soul.” According to Bernard McGinn, memory is the “ground of the soul prior to the discrimination of the powers of knowing and loving.” In this sense, it was possible, as Augustine put it, for the human person to discover within a “mental trinity” wherein “memory provides the source from which the thinker’s sight receives its form ... with the will or love as the agency by which the two are linked.” As Bonaventure expressed it:

[The mind (mens) loves itself most fervently. But it cannot love itself if it does not know itself. And it would not know itself unless it remembered itself, for we do not grasp anything with our understanding (intelligentia) if it is not present to us in our memory.

In a general way, then, both Augustine and Bonaventure indicate how this trinity of powers, in their order, origin, and interrelationship unfold from within the highest/deepest part of the self, the mens/memoria.

Fourth, in the depths of its innermost being (mens/memoria), the creature made in the image of God is capax Dei, that is, “capable of God” and “can actually grasp God.” The creature endowed with intelligence is, therefore, capable of “grasping not only the created essence, but even the creating essence.” Thus, all human beings, “however little” a person might be “partake in light, has been made to attain God through knowledge and love...”

Given this understanding of memory, Bonaventure expects the human person who is made “in the image” of the triune God to make the best possible use of the soul’s capacity for God, that is, to exercise the powers of the soul in cooperation with grace – “the God likening flow” – so one might merit a greater measure of likeness to and union with God. Thus Bonaventure can claim that in the measure the soul partakes of the gift of grace, the human person becomes more like God, it sees God clearly through the intellect, and loves God through the will, and retains God forever through the memory. The soul is then wholly alive, totally transformed in its three...
faculties, wholly conformed to God, fully united to God, completely at rest in God.54

Through the soul’s worthy and faithful participation in the life of grace then, a person may begin to attain a measure of the “eternal happiness” of which every person is made “worthy.”55 In “the proximity of similitude to the Creator,” the soul becomes more fully itself. This is not to suggest, however, that the creature can ever be “identified with the Creator.”56

There are obviously a number of important, at times subtle but nonetheless significant, theological and philosophical assumptions embedded in the thought of Bonaventure with respect to the power of memory in the deepest sense of the word. A measure of sensitivity to the different meanings and aspects of memoria is critically important, therefore, for grasping how the soul is empowered to make the spiritual journey of the soul (mens) into God through knowledge and love.

The Power to Know (Intelligentia)

The intellective power refers to the human capacity for knowing. It is oriented toward the discernment of truth, the “truth in itself, or the truth as a good.”57 In an effort to describe the nature of this power, Bonaventure makes use of a variety of speculative and philosophical categories.

Here, attention will be limited to a description of reason (ratio).58 It will serve to demonstrate one important aspect of the human capacity to know – an aspect of the cognitive power that holds a central place in Bonaventure’s articulation of the ways in which the human intellect is designed to rise gradually and be led back into “Truth itself, and this is God,” the principle of all knowing.59

Reason (ratio), broadly speaking, refers to the whole range of activities that pertain to the intellectual life.60


55 Breviloquium, pt. V, ch. 1, n. 3 (Monti, 170-71).

56 In Divine and Created Order Hellmann discusses how Bonaventure understood the soul to be conformed to the Trinity under three different aspects, namely as, the ordered soul (anima ordinata), the hierarchical soul (anima hierarchizata), and the contemplative soul (anima contemplativa). (See Hellmann, 152-60). See also Breviloquium, pt. V, ch. 1, n. 3 (Monti, 170-71).
Following Augustine, Bonaventure makes a distinction between lower/inferior reason (ratio inferior) and higher/superior reason (ratio superior). This distinction is used to describe the different ways the mind is able to see (speculatio/contemplatio) things. The terms refer to a diversity of function rather than to a diversity of powers.

“Lower” reason is oriented toward temporal things, things outside the self, the world of sense reality. It refers to the mind’s capacity to “apprehend” what is in the sensible world, the first operation of the intellect. Once something is brought to the attention of the mind, reason has the potential to give it further consideration. More complex kinds of consideration (e.g., reasoning, judging, abstracting, and the like) are considered, however, to be functions of higher, not lower reason. Thus, one can say that lower reason does not “understand” what is apprehended. It “never reaches the ultimate significance of what it knows.”

Reason may be described as “higher” in the sense that the human mind has the capacity to look at things from different perspectives. In this sense of the word, reason refers to the mind’s inclination to seek to know and understand as well as its potential to discover the spiritual significance of what is known. The diverse capacities of higher reason are explained in terms of the distinction that can be made between ratio (reason/understanding), intellectus (understanding/intellect), and intelligentia (understanding/intelligence).

In the Latin, each word suggests a nuanced understanding of the intellect’s capacity to know and understand things in different but interrelated ways. Unfortunately, the distinctions are difficult to convey in the English language since the meanings of the words are close; the words may even be used interchangeably in certain contexts.

Ratio, as an aspect of higher reason, points to the human capacity to comprehend what comes into consciousness. It specializes in abstraction and the logical organization of abstracted information. In this sense of the term, reason implies the human capacity for higher kinds of knowing or understanding.

Intelectus – understanding or more properly speaking, the “intellect” – refers to an intermediate kind of knowing. It is the cognitive power’s capacity to turn through reason (1) to know things outside itself (temporal things), (2) to consider universal abstract reasons, (3) to turn within itself as an image of God, and/or (4) to begin to know spiritual substances, that is, how all things bear a divine imprint as either a vestige or an image of God. In a more restricted sense, intellectus may be understood to refer primarily to the human person’s capacity to know itself and spiritual substances – what is within. The intellect has the potential, therefore, to detect the “latent mark of God and knows that the objects to which they refer ... display a higher sense than what reason could discern: a resemblance to God imprinted on them.” Thus, the intellect enables the human person to understand what

---

61 Knowledge of Christ, q. IV, concl.; q. IV, n. 29, and Hayes’s introduction (Hayes, 135, 123-24, and 59) See also Tavard, 65.
62 Breviloquium, pt. II, ch. 9, n. 7 (Monti, 88); Itinerarium (Hayes, note 8, pp. 160-61).
63 Tavard, 84.
64 Tavard, 83; Itinerarium, ch. III, nn. 4-6 (Hayes, 89-93).
65 Bonaventure, Collations ... Six Days, col. 5, n. 24 (de Vinck, 86-87).
66 See, for example, Itinerarium, ch. III, n. 3 (Hayes, 85-89); also On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology, nn. 3-4 for Bonaventure’s description of both sense and philosophical knowledge (Hayes, 39-43 and Hayes’s introduction, 17).
67 Tavard, 85.
truth can teach “as long as unruly desires and sense images do not stand as impediments becoming like clouds between [the person] and the ray of Truth” – God.68

Intelligentia – understanding/intelligence – is the third aspect of higher reason. It is the highest part of the soul and refers to the human person’s potential to perceive “divine displays” and to “savor” divine favors. It refers to the human person’s capacity to strive consciously to understand the spiritual significance of what is grasped. As Tavard put it, intelligentia refers to higher reason’s capacity to “read inside (inter-legere)” what it comes to know.69

Intelligentia is the aspect of higher reason that is “destined to see God [face to face]."70 It is “destined to know God, the Supreme Good."71 It is the mens in the most restricted sense of that word.72 Intelligentia points consistently to the highest level of understanding toward which the rational soul may aspire. It refers to the mind’s potential to experience contemplative knowing, that is, wisdom.

Bonaventure’s distinctions are important. They demonstrate how a thirteenth-century thinker described the human capacity for knowing and understanding. He offers a detailed, even if complicated and foreign way to understand how the intellect may choose to see things from two widely divergent perspectives, that is, either in

“the light of the divine significance” or apart from it.73 Bonaventure assumes, therefore, that everyone will train (exercito) and make the best possible use of the intellect’s capacities. In terms of spiritual development, those choices are crucial, he says:

When our reason (ratio) is turned to higher things, it is purified, illumined, and brought to perfection; and, in so far as it turns to the eternal laws and to the immutability of the divine power and justice, it is strengthened and enlivened in the good.... Therefore, while the higher and inferior reason are of the same nature, they differ in terms of the degree of their strength and weakness.74

The Seraphic Doctor’s theory of knowledge – his understanding of the rational creature’s capacity to know (epistemology) – is closely related to his theory of divine illumination, his assumption that a human person can attain “certitude at least in some areas of knowledge”75 as well as his understanding of the various modes of God’s revelation and the role of Christ in all human knowing. While these other aspects of his thought are important, they are beyond the scope of this introduction and are only acknowledged here.

The limited description of one aspect of the cognitive power provides hopefully a sense of the richness and complexity of the Seraphic Doctor’s thought. In considering this, or other aspects of the cognitive power, one should not lose sight of his assertion, however, that “no matter how enlightened one may be by the light of natural or acquired knowledge one cannot enter into oneself to delight in

References:
68 Itinerarium, ch. III, n. 3 (Hayes, 88-89).
69 Tavard, 87.
71 Bonaventure, De Regno Dei, n. 9 (Opera Omnia V, 542a), quoted in Tavard, 86.
72 Itinerarium, ch. I, n. 4 (Hayes, 47-48 and the notes on pp. 143-44). See also Bonaventure’s discussion of intelligentia as the “divine power” in the Collations ... Six Days, col. 5, n. 24 (de Vincck, 87).
73 Tavard, 83.
74 Commentarius in ll librum Sententiarum d. 24, p. I, a. 2, q. 2 (II, 564), quoted in Itinerarium, (Hayes, prologue notes on page 144).
75 Hayes, Introduction, Knowledge of Christ, 57.