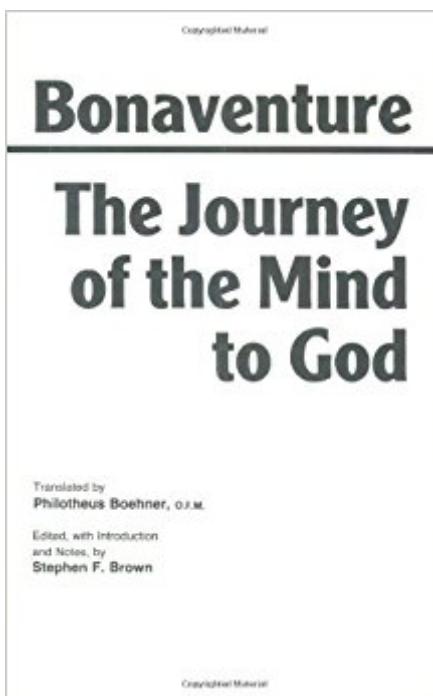


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The Journey Of The Mind To God (Hackett Classics)



Synopsis

The Hackett edition of this classic of medieval philosophy and mysticism--a plan of pilgrimage for the learned Franciscan wishing to reach the apex of the mystical experience--combines the highly regarded Boehner translation with a new introduction by Stephen Brown focusing on St. Francis as a model of the contemplative life, the meaning of the *Itinerarium*, its place in Bonaventure's mystical theology, and the plan of the work. Boehner's Latin Notes, as well as Latin texts from other works of Bonaventure included in the Franciscan Institute Edition, are rendered here in English, making this the edition of choice for the beginning student.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is an exceptionally good translation with a wonderful Introduction. --Mary Sirridge, Louisiana State University

Text: English (translation) Original Language: Latin --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

I bit "heavy" for sure but I'm wading through it...taking my time.

The book has the form of a philosophical-mystical literature. The language is metaphorical and allegorical. For instance, he uses the imagery of the Seraph, a biblical six-winged creature, which

wings represents the six steps that the mind has to travel to reach God. Still, he makes an allegorical statement, "creatures of this visible world signify the invisible things of God (II.12). The book is an articulated way of integrating the spirituality of the monastic life and the scholasticism of his time. Yet, Bonaventura was against the equating of Aristotle's philosophy with Christian's authorities, a common practice among the scholars of his time, although, he was not against the use of Aristotle, for he himself uses it. For instance, one obvious idiosyncratic Aristotelian usage is his statement that the power to ascend to God is already "implanted within us by nature" (I.6), and the emphasis on moderation (or the mean) as better than the extremes (II.5). Likewise, he uses Aristotle's 'trinitarian' view of the soul as the paradigm for his argumentation of the three steps of the soul's contemplation. For Bonaventura, divine revelation, not human reason, is the highest way to achieve the correct understanding of God. God is to be revealed, not reasoned. Indeed, contemplation is the word that better can express his thought, as he says, "man was created fit for the quiet of contemplation." (I.7). Therefore, even the material world is not a hindrance to attain the soul's greatest desire, i.e., to contemplate God. He says, "The material universe itself is a ladder by which we may ascend to God." (I.2). But, interestingly, Christ is also called "our ladder" (I.3). Thus, he clearly shows that any God/World antagonistic dualism is not acceptable. Bonaventura's emphasis on revelation does not mean that he had not made use of reason; note the way he reasons the three-motif throughout the book. Besides reason, Bonaventura relies mainly on Scripture, Church tradition, and experience. One of Bonaventura's intentions is to demonstrate that spirituality can be possible without the excess of the so called "Spirituals", or "Zelanti", but also without the mitigations and innovations desired by the "Relaxti", the two factions within the Franciscan Order. The obsessive analysis based on numbers, which pervades the entire work and on which Bonaventura develops his argumentation, is due to his assumption that "number is the principal exemplar in the mind of the Creator." (II.10). Presupposition that is actually borrowed from the Roman philosopher Boethius, and also exposed in the teachings of Aristotle who used mathematics to illustrate his idea of the mean. Founded on that premise, Bonaventura evolves his book in an 'arithmetical manner'. Therefore, there are "three steps" or the "triple way of seeing" (I.3), which is expanded into six (I.5). There is also a "sevenfold distinction" (II.10). There are five senses (IV.3). There are "nine degree of orders", which correspond to "nine orders of angels" (IV.4). The scholastic way, which was the main characteristic of Bonaventura's time, is subserviently used by him to achieve the higher goal of the monastic life, i.e., the revelation or contemplation of God. In the prologue of his book, Bonaventura plainly demonstrates that devotion has to be prior to mere intellectualism. He says, "He may come to think that mere reading will suffice without fervor,

speculation without devotion, investigation without admiration, observation without exultation, industry without piety, knowledge without love, understanding without humility, study without divine grace, the mirror without the divinely inspired wisdom." (P.4). On the other hand, Bonaventura is cautious in how he treats the theme of spirituality, because he was also aware of the excesses found in his own monastic order in this regard. Therefore, Bonaventura knew and was attentive to the problems of his generation. He tried to be well-balanced in his argumentations, that is, being scholastic without leaving the realm of monasticism; being spiritual but also intellectual. Thus, according to Bonaventura's view, the analysis based on a numerical system serves to equate both sides, because through such analysis one can find the mean term, or the equilibrium, desired by him. He says, "therefore, since all things are beautiful and in some way delightful, and since beauty and delight do not exist without proportion, and since proportion exists primarily in numbers, all things are subjected to numbers." (II.10). Even though there is a great emphasis on numerical analysis, I believe that what Bonaventura intended was that they might only be a resource to awake the rational soul to one reality: there is a kind of organized system; something greater than the human soul itself. Reason has to be conquered by revelation. Contemplation can not stop on the first step, i.e., the contemplation of the outer world, for it would only give an inaccurate revelation of who is God. Neither it should stop on the second step, which is the rational soul contemplating itself but recognizing that it is not complete in itself. The soul has to see that it is a better way of contemplating God than the outer world, but it is only the intermediate level. The true and final contemplation is when the soul sees beyond the outer world and itself, when it ascends above itself. How can this be achieved? Bonaventura himself answers, "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 on into God..." (VII.6) Besides of being a great book, the notes provided are very helpful. Enjoy it!

Perfect for the course on Christian spirituality I am teaching this semester.

Thoroughly enjoying this book. Read it slow, great example of a old contemplative. Would highly recommend it.

Caused much deep thinking and challenge of the mind. If you want to get closer to the Lord, read this book.

Truly inspired and will encourage and revive the reader.

I found it very deep but very meaningful. required re-reading for me. I do admire how earnestly he worked on behalf of the Church

I use it for a resource but I need to finish reading this book and it is difficult to read and understand.

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