

In What Sense God Is Humble According to St Bonaventure (On the 800th Anniversary of Bonaventure's Birth)

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Abstract

The author tries to interpret the issue of humility in the works of Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (1217–1274) and especially the question of the humility of God. Based on analysing a number of the master's works the author concludes that humility as self-depreciation cannot have a place in God, but humility of truthfulness, which is the basis of community, is mysteriously present, according to Bonaventure, in the immanent Trinity.

Keywords: scholastic theology, history of theology, Bonaventure, Franciscan spirituality, humility

Introduction

To begin with let me state that in 2017, when a whole number of important rounded anniversaries are being commemorated, it is probably 800 years since the great Christian philosopher, theologian and mystic Bonaventure of Bagnoregio was born, which calls for commemoration and celebration. We know nothing at all about the exact date when the Seraphic Doctor's life began. But it is known that at the University of Paris at that time the title of Master in the field of theology was not awarded to anyone who had not reached forty years of age. Since this year's celebree attained that scientific and teaching degree in 1257 and since there is no record of him being dispensed from anything, it is easy to calculate the year when he could have been born at the very latest, namely 1217. This does not exclude, however, that Bonaventure saw the light of this world somewhat earlier.

For completeness's sake let me inform the reader that on 14th–16th November 2017 a long and rigorously prepared three-day world Bonaventurian congress at the Roman Gregoriana, at which the author of this study lectured on Bonaventure's soteriology and theology of the cross. In early June of this year a large three-day international Bonaventurian symposium took place in Polish Cracow, where the author of this study lectured on a similar topic. In the Czech milieu commemorations of this date, which is for all Christian philosophers and theologians significant, were somewhat more modest. At the Sts. Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology of the Palacký University in Olomouc a course on Bonaventure's theology of the cross was offered in the win-

ter term of 2017–2018 to students and all interested persons. Moreover, at the beginning of that term a Bonaventurian academy was held at the Sts. Cyril and Methodius Faculty in cooperation with colleagues from the Faculty of Philosophy with the attendance of the university's Rector and the Archbishop of Olomouc. A programme for Radio Proglas was successfully prepared. The publishing house Krystal contributed to this anniversary with the third edition of the Czech translation of Bonaventure's most famous text called *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* (*Journey of the Mind into God*). This third edition is referenced in the footnotes below. The present study is another initiative of this kind.¹ Let us hope that the little that the author of this paper is able to offer will arouse even in Czech minds more interest in the magnificent treasure which is concealed in the field of Bonaventure's intellectual legacy.

Considering the role humility played in Franciscan spirituality and consequently also in Christology and theology, it seems appropriate on the 800th anniversary of Bonaventure's birth to focus attention precisely in this direction. Of course, it is not merely a matter of Franciscan spirituality and theology, which can be perceived as mere theory by some, since humility is the cornerstone of every authentic Christian spirituality and practice. As the reader will see below, the issue of humility must of course closely concern pastoral care, and charitable and social work, because it is one of the basic ways of accessing others. Furthermore, the issue of God's humility is in no way separated from the issue of human humility. For between theology in the narrow sense of the word and anthropology there is a relationship comparable to communicating vessels. Are we not created in the image of God (cf. Gen 1:26) and are we not to strive to be as perfect as our heavenly Father (cf. Matt 5:48)? And precisely this gives meaning and genuinely Christian and authentic human motivation to all our effort. Wishing to delve into the topic announced above, we must first note that the term 'humility' (*ta-peinotes*, *humilitas*) can take on markedly distinct meanings. For example, ancient philosophers perceived humility as modesty, weakness, even as ignorance. For example, according to Aristotle, a humble human being is the opposite of a magnanimous human being, i.e., someone low-minded. There is therefore no wonder that the abovementioned philosopher did not perceive humility in a positive way.² The Jewish and Christian tradition views humility in a very different way. It is primarily the true awareness of a human being regarding his or her own createdness, dependence on the Creator. Those who elevate themselves find themselves in the situation of being indisposed to being endowed by God. The opposite of self-elevation is being elevated by the Lord. However, this state of being raised by another, namely by the Supreme, does not contradict humility. Church Fathers, such as, for example, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Basil, Hilary of Poitiers, Ambrose, and John Chrysostom, emphasised that humility is a basic Christian virtue and therefore is to a certain extent a distinguishing mark of a true Christian.³ The most emphatic of them all in this respect was Augustine of Hippo.⁴

Now it should already be clear that the question whether and especially in what sense God is humble according to Bonaventure of Bagnoregio will principally be inseparably linked to the issue of conceiving humility, or with distinguishing between different kinds of humility. The answer given will determine whether the treatise on humility belongs exclusively to ethics and spirituality, or whether it also has a full-fledged theological status in the narrow sense of the word.

1 It is somewhat bewildering that the Czech Franciscans did fundamentally nothing to commemorate the anniversary.

2 Cf. *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1123b–125a 30.

3 Cf. Pierre ADNÈS, *Humilité*, in: *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité Ascétique et Mystique VII*, ed. Marcel VILLER, Ferdinand CAVALLERA and Joseph DE GUIBERT, Paris, 1969, pp. 1136–1187, at pp. 1152–1153.

4 Cf. Deborah W. REDDY, *Umiltà*, in: *Agostino. Dizionario enciclopedico*, ed. Allan FITZGERALD, Luigi ALICI and Antonio PIERETTI, Città Nuova: Roma, 2007, pp. 1414–1422, at p. 1415.

In the first section of this study we will focus on how earlier interpreters of Bonaventure's thought approached the issue of humility. Then we will briefly review how the question was answered by Church Fathers, masters of emerging scholasticism, and St Francis of Assisi. In the second part of the paper we will first focus on what kinds of humility Bonaventure distinguished and then we will attempt to solve the question of God's humility in his interpretation, in works written before 1259. In the third part of this study we will do the same, focusing on the Seraphic Doctor's works written 1259–1274. In the conclusion we will answer the question whether God is humble according to Bonaventure, and if so, in what sense this assertion is to be understood.

1. Prerequisites of investigating Bonaventure's conception of humility

We will first review the state of the question in secondary literature, because the authors are not unanimous in this. In the second subsection we will recall how God's humility was viewed by some Church Fathers, masters of emerging scholasticism, and St Francis of Assisi.

1. 1. *Status questionis*

Limiting the consideration to what is most fundamental, it is quite easy to state that the main protagonist of the opinion that Bonaventure was an advocate of God's humility is Alexander Gerken.⁵ Gerken's interpretation is also endorsed by W. Hülsbusch⁶ and Z. Hayes⁷. But it must be quite openly acknowledged that Gerken bases his fundamental claim of God's humility almost exclusively on passages where Bonaventure is speaking about the humility of the incarnate God's Son. He then concludes that God is humble because in the Incarnation the Son of God manifested himself as humble,⁸ the supreme and definitive revelation of God's humility being the cross of Jesus Christ.⁹ But in this context it is certainly not insignificant that nothing is known of a more detailed study devoted directly to the issue of the conception of humility in Bonaventure's work, besides the earlier attempts of the author of the present study.¹⁰

But it is also necessary to openly acknowledge that it is not easy to find places clearly testifying to God's humility in Bonaventure's work, as evinced among others by the fact that the prestigious French dictionary of spirituality the Seraphic Doctor is not mentioned as endorsing God's humility.¹¹ But on the other hand a person familiar with Bonaventure's work intuitively affirms Gerken's claim also because the founder of the Franciscan order and movement made a clear statement about God who is humility. However, Bonaventure's hesitation is easy to understand when one realises that the renowned authorities of his time were not quite unanimous in this matter.

5 Cf. Alexander GERKEN, *Theologie des Wortes: Das Verhältnis vom Schöpfung und Inkarnation bei Bonaventura*, Düsseldorf, 1963, pp. 315–334.

6 Cf. Werner HÜLSBUSCH, *Elemente einer Kreuzestheologie in den Spätschriften Bonaventuras*, Düsseldorf, 1968, pp. 182, 184.

7 'Not only is God a mystery of love, but even more, He is a mystery of humble love. The movement of God's love is not only a descendent, but a condescension; for He takes the reality of humankind so seriously that He assumes human reality with its pain and misery to Himself.' Zachary HAYES, *The Hidden Center: Spirituality and Speculative Christology in St. Bonaventure*, Paulist Press, New York, Ramsey and Toronto, 1981, p. 136.

8 In der Inkarnation wird also die Demut Gottes sichtbar, die in seiner Ewigkeit als Sinngrund dafür lebt, dass er sich überhaupt nach außen verschenken will.' GERKEN, *Theologie...*, pp. 319–320.

9 '... das Kreuz ... Es ist die letzte Manifestation der göttlichen Demut, der Bewegung in das Leere hinein, ein unüberbietbares Zeugnis der göttlichen, sich neigenden Liebe, ...' GERKEN, *Theologie...*, p. 320.

10 This paper not only summarises but also significantly deepens what its author had written years ago on the conception of humility in the works of Seraphic Doctor in the monographs: Ctirad Václav POSPÍŠIL, *Soteriologie a teologie kříže Bonaventury z Bagnoregia*, Nakladatelství L. Marek: Brno, 2002; *La salvezza dell'uomo e la teologia della croce di Bonaventura da Bagnoregia*, Paolo Gaspari editore: Udine, 2010.

11 Cf. ADNÈS, *Humilité...*, pp. 1136–1187 (1168–1169).

1. 2. Different opinions of God's humility in Bonaventure's time

Already in the introduction to this whole paper we have pointed out that ancient philosophers evaluated humility very differently from what is encountered in the Bible and subsequently how humility was perceived by Church Fathers, who regarded it as a basic characteristic of an authentic Christian mentality and spirituality. If Christian authorities were unanimous in this, they were not as unambiguously unanimous regarding God's humility.

The main and most radical proponent of God's humility was without doubt St Augustine, whose statements regarding the exemplarity of divine humility,¹² of the humble God¹³ and of God's humility¹⁴ must have been known to Bonaventure. The Bishop of Hippo quite understandably speaks of God's humility in a close connection with the act of Incarnation¹⁵ and with the event of Jesus Christ's crucifixion.¹⁶ It has already been mentioned that Augustine presented humility as a basic distinguishing mark of Christianity, by which those who confess it differ from heathen philosophers.¹⁷ It is therefore no wonder that interpreters of Augustine's work are absolutely unanimous in that the Bishop of Hippo really ascribed humility to God,¹⁸ since it is the opposite of pride and thus of all sin. If God is omnipotent and omniscient, then asserting his humility sounds provocative and paradoxical. Of course, at the same time it unprecedentedly deepens our conception of humility as such. This humility of God is closely linked to the kenosis of the Word,¹⁹ in which it is definitively revealed and becomes the paradigm for new, gospel-oriented thought.

No one will certainly doubt the claim that Bonaventure's second source of inspiration was Francis of Assisi, who did not hesitate to invoke the Lord directly as humility and as patience²⁰ in his prayers based on his intuition.

But there was also the opposite view, according to which humility can only be ascribed to the human nature assumed by the incarnate Word, not to God as such. That was, for example, St Anselm's position.²¹ God's Son became humble exclusively because the human being sinned by pride, which is why he decided to save him by his human humility. Thus, the fundamental problem consists in whether the theologian ought to ascribe humility to the person of the Word as its perma-

12 Cf., for example, AUGUSTINE, *Epist.* 118, 3, 17; PL 33, pp. 440–441.

13 Cf. AUGUSTINE, *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus*, 25, 16; PL 35, p. 1604. AUGUSTINE, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 33, I, 4; PL, 36, p. 302.

14 Cf. AUGUSTINE, *De Trinitate*, IV, 2, 4; PL 42, p. 889. *De Trinitate*, XIII, 17, 22; PL 42, p. 1031. AUGUSTINE, *De civitate Dei*, IX, 20; PL 41, p. 273. AUGUSTINE, *Sermo* 184, 1, 1; PL 38, p. 995.

15 'First grasp God's humility. Deem to be humble because of yourself, because God has deemed to be humble precisely because of you, certainly not because of himself. Grasp therefore the humility of Christ, learn to be humble and do not be proud.' AUGUSTINE, *Sermo* 117, 10, 17; PL 38, p. 671. – 'Cape prius humilitatem Dei. Dignare esse humilis propter te, quia Deus dignatus est humilis esse propter eumdem te; non enim propter se. Cape ergo humilitatem Christi, disce humilis esse, noli superbire.'

16 Cf. Otto SCHAFFNER, *Christliche Demut. Des hl. Augustinus Lehre von der Humilitas*, Würzburg 1959, p. 106.

17 Cf., for example, AUGUSTINE, *Epist.*, 118, 22; PL 33, p. 442. *Sermo* 160, 4; PL 38, p. 875. *Sermo* 151, 4; PL 39, p. 1538. *De civitate Dei*, 14, 13; PL 41, p. 421.

18 Cf. REDDY, *Umiltà...*, p. 1416; cf. also Vittorio MAURO, *Umiltà*, in: *Lexicon – Dizionario Teologico Enciclopedico*, ed. Vito MANCUSO and Luciano PACOMIO, Casale Monferrato, 1993, pp. 1090–1092.

19 When commenting on *De Trin.*, IV, 2, 4, Jean Plagnieux notes: 'C'est là qu'on trouve cette expression étonnante: une *humilitas Dei*, qui constitue avec *sanguinis iusti* la rançon de notre salut. *Humilitas Dei*! Et ce n'est pas simple communication des idiomes; il s'agit bien de la *kénose* affectant la divinité. Quel accent neuf dans une contemplation d'allure volontiers philosophique et quel scandale pour des oreilles néoplatonicennes!' Jean PLAGNIEUX, *Influence de la lutte antipélagienne sur le De Trinitate ou: Christocentrisme de saint Augustin*, in *Augustin Magister. Congrès International Augustinien, Paris 21.–24. 9. 1954 II*, Paris, 1955, pp. 817–826, at 821.

20 'You are love, You are wisdom, You are humility, You are patience.' *Laudes Dei Altissimi* 4, in Kajetan ESSER, *Gli scritti di s. Francesco d'Assisi*, Padova: Messaggero, 1982, p. 171. – 'Tu es amor, caritas, tu es sapientia, tu es humilitas, tu es patientia, ...' This issue in Francis' writings and the main legends dealing with his life is well mapped by Johannes Baptist FREYER, *Der demütige und geduldige Gott. Franziskus und seine Gottesbild – ein Vergleich mit der Tradition*, Roma, 1989, pp. 230–233.

21 Cf., for example, ANSELM, *Cur Deus homo*, I, 8, in: ed. SCHMITT, *S. Anselmi Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi Opera Omnia II.*, Romae, 1940, pp. 38–133, at 59–60.

nent characteristic, and therefore to perceive it as a property of God himself, or whether it ought to be ascribed only to the human nature assumed by the Word. Two basic streams of thought in the Christian tradition correspond to this. One can be characterised as ‘descendingly kenotic’ and originates in Origen and Basil, who ascribe Christ’s humility and patience to the person of the Word, thus regarding Christ’s mentality as a revelation of God’s humility and patience. The other stream, which can be described as ‘ascendingly soteriological or ascetic’, perceives Christ’s humility merely as a reaction to human sin, which is why it ascribes the characteristics in question only to the assumed human nature. The basic representatives of this other current are John Cassian, St Benedict, St Bernard of Clairvaux, St Anselm of Canterbury, Alain de Lille, and others.²²

2. Humility in the works of the first period of Bonaventure’s work, that is, before 1259

Investigating how Bonaventure conceived humility is certainly not an easy enterprise, because the term ‘humility’ appears on almost every page of his spiritual writings and writings devoted to St Francis of Assisi,²³ especially those written after 1259,²⁴ and also because surprisingly, so far, there is no systematic study focusing on the issue.²⁵ We will therefore examine the most important texts in which the Franciscan Master deals with this issue one by one.

2. 1. Different kinds of humility in *De perfectione evangelica*, QD I

These public disputations took place and the editing of the text was completed while Bonaventure was active at the University of Paris in 1255–1256,²⁶ thus allowing us to become acquainted with Bonaventure’s opinions in the period before he was elected Minister General of the Franciscan order. One must also note that the disputation took place at the time when mendicants and secular university masters first clashed over the ideal of gospel poverty, which is why Giovanni Fidanza had to be very cautious and carefully consider each word.

The decisive question is whether humility has an eternal exemplar in God. Bonaventure answers – as was his habit – in a prudent and differentiated manner:

As to whether each virtue has an exemplar in God, it is necessary to say with respect to what its content, namely not exceeding one’s limits, it has an exemplar in God, but with respect to what relates to deficiency and submission to another it does not have an exemplar in God, who has no deficiency, or anyone above him. But in order for the human being not to ne-

22 For distinction between the idea currents and classification of the individual authors cf. FREYER, *Der...*, pp. 222–229.

23 Cf. Noel MUSCAT, *The Life of Saint Francis in the Light of Saint Bonaventure’s Theology on the “Verbum Crucifixum”*, Roma, 1989, p. 92.

24 Here it is not possible to prove that the year 1259 represents a fundamental dividing line between the first and second period of the Seraphic Doctor’s work, which is intimately linked to *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*. Cf. POSPÍŠIL, *La salvezza...*, pp. 191–238; POSPÍŠIL, *Soteriologie...*, pp. 167–206; Ctirad Václav POSPÍŠIL, *La via della salvezza nell’Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, *Antonianum*, 1997(78), vol. LXXII/1., pp. 53–77. For the sake of information, I permit myself to point out the existing Czech translation of *Itinerarium*: SVATÝ BONAVENTURA. *Putování mysli do Boha*, translation, comments and introductory study by Ctirad Václav POSPÍŠIL, Praha: Krystal OP, 1997, 3. vydání 2017.

25 Cf. GERKEN, *Theologie...*, pp. 315–334. MUSCAT, *The Life...*, pp. 92–93; 211–214. Ambroise NGUYEN VAN SI, *La théologie de l’imitation du Christ d’après saint Bonaventure*, Roma: Antonianum, 1991, 105–108. The authors just mentioned cite no other study dealing with the issue of humility in Bonaventure’s work and, since they follow the basic issues of their studies, they do not attempt to provide a complete treatment of the issue of humility in Bonaventure. The difficulty of the topic is further witnessed by the fact that FREYER, *Der demütige...*, seems to avoid Bonaventure in his work and says nothing at all regarding his conception of humility.

26 Cf. Balduinus DISTELBRINK, *Bonaventurae scripta authentica dubia vel spuria critica recensita*, Roma: Istituto Storico Cappuccini, 1975, p. 11; Jacques Guy BOUGEROL, *Opere di San Bonaventura – Introduzione generale*, Roma: Città nuova, 1990, p. 209.

glect humiliating himself for lack of exemplar, God was pleased to take on himself the form of a servant and humiliate, despise and depreciate himself in it, in order to inflame others by such an example to perfect self-depreciation.²⁷

Humility as '*vilificatio sui*' cannot have an exemplar in God. According to Bonaventure, humility as being subordinated to someone higher also does not have an exemplar in the Lord, because God himself is absolutely supreme. There is a substantial difference between the humility of the incarnate Son of God and the humility of God, for the eternal exemplar of humility contains nothing that is due to human subordination, and of course there is no place in God for what is due to human sin. Fundamental, however, is the statement that certain features of humility do have an exemplar in God, namely not exceeding one's limits, being loyal to one's identity, accepting one's place in community – all of this is found in the immanent Trinity in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Thus, the Son of God by his Incarnation not only reveals what is contained in God, but also in a way supplements therapeutic elements of humility which are merely transitory in character.²⁸ This difference between the humility of the Incarnate Word and the humility of God is therefore not due to a lack of humility in God, but to the state into which humanity has fallen as a result of sin. This fundamental distinction will remain a permanent characteristic of Bonaventure's conception of God's humility.

It is very important that in the analysed work the basic definition of humility is '*vilificatio sui*' – 'self-depreciation'.²⁹ Since the Lord is supremely perfect and deeply and truthfully knows and evaluates himself, he simply cannot depreciate himself.³⁰ In order for a human being to truthfully depreciate himself, he must have sufficient motives, because self-depreciation stands in opposition to his entirely natural inclinations.

To those who first object that virtue accords with nature and that nature always wants to move forward it is necessary to say that even though according to its outer appearance an act of humility, which is self-depreciation, appears to be in discord with the inclination of nature, but according to truth and according to inner direction it is in greatest accord with this nature, regarding both [its] origin and [its] conservation, as well as [its] profit.... It is profitable in that [nature] wants to receive influence from a superior nature, to which it subjects itself, in order to be able to be completed by it. Since therefore humility means

27 *Perf. ev.*, QD I, resp. 11. 12.; V, 124b. 'Ad illud, quod omnis virtus habet exemplar in Deo; dicendum, quod humilitas quantum ad hoc quod est completio in ipsa, scilicet non excedere metas suas, exemplar habet in Deo; quantum ad hoc autem, quod respicit defectum et subiectionem ad alterum, non habet exemplar in Deo, qui nullum habet defectum, nullum habet superiorem. Ut tamen homo propter defectum exemplaris non negligeret humiliari, placuit Deo assumere formam servi et in illa humiliari, contemni et vilificari, ut ceteri ex tanto exemplari inflammerentur ad vilificationem sui perfectam.'

28 'To the one who objects that virtues are habits consisting in being in the middle it is necessary to answer that ... self-depreciation is not so much an act of virtue forming the nature, but rather a renewing example, which is why it is rather therapeutic than complete in character.' *Perf. ev.*, QD I, resp. 3; V, 123ab. – 'Ad illud quod obiicitur, quod virtus est habitus in medietate consistens; dicendum, quod ... vilificatio sui non tantum est actus virtutis informantis naturam, sed exemplum etiam reparantis; unde plus tenet rationem medicativam quam complete.'

29 'In order to understand what has been said above it must be noted that the sum of all Christian perfection consists in humility, of which the external and internal act is self-depreciation.' *Perf. ev.*, QD I, resp.; V, 120b. – 'Ad praedictorum intelligentiam est notandum, quod summa totius christianae perfectionis in humilitate consistit, cuius actus est exterior et interior vilificatio sui. ulterius' Cf. *dāle Perf. ev.*, QD I, resp.; V, 122; *Perf. ev.*, QD I, resp. 2; V, 123°; *Perf. ev.*, QD I, resp. 7; V, 124a.

30 'Granted there is no humility in God, in so far as it means despising oneself.' *Comp. virt. hum.*, III, 1; VIII, 661a. – 'Licet enim in Deum non cadat humilitas, prout sui contemptum dicit, ...' To what has been said the following must be added. Even though it is not certain today, whether the work was written by the Seraphic Doctor, it cannot be denied that the thinking contained in it is Bonaventurian. The editors of the critical edition and B. Distelbrink agree on this. Cf. *Op. Om.* VIII, Prolegomena, p. CIIa. DISTELBRINK, *Bonaventurae...*, p. 102. In this study we will use this work merely as a supplementary source.

acknowledging one's deficiency, returning to some kind of unifying smallness, chasing away the scattering spirit of insolence and pride, subjecting and opening oneself to the influence of grace from above: all that therefore truly accords with natural acts and inclinations.³¹

Thus, self-depreciation is not an end in itself and is also not a genuine reason of humility as a virtue. Self-depreciation must have a positive purpose; it must correspond to the natural inclination to growth and progress. Self-depreciation is the disposition by means of which the human being opens up to the influence of God and his grace. That is also why humility enables the human being to truly enjoy the fact that he participates in the divine nature.³² This orientation to God and to becoming ever more similar to God is deeply rooted in human nature. That is why humility is linked to a whole number of fundamental spiritual benefits. But at the same time it is clear that natural human intellect unilluminated by faith cannot understand this. In this connection one thinks of St Paul's text regarding human wisdom and God's foolishness, which ultimately turns out to be much wiser than all human cunning (cf. 1 Cor 1:18–31).

*Humility is therefore the gate of wisdom, the foundation of justice and the dwelling place of grace.*³³

But, will not the human being be fully decorated with these virtues only in his homeland, that is, when the work of salvation has been completed? Is not therefore also humility by its deepest essence a path leading to God as the Source of wisdom and grace? Is not humility a journey towards the deification of the human being and the basic disposition for receiving the self-gift of God?

When Bonaventure wants to define '*vilificatio sui*' as a moral virtue, he understandably encounters numerous difficulties, and therefore attempts an alternative solution.

One could therefore also say that a definition of moral virtue is based in the order of nature. But this act of humility is based in faith in Jesus Christ, which is an act surpassing reason and exceeding the limitations of nature.³⁴

Humility would thus not be a moral virtue but – so to speak – an evangelical virtue, since its foundation would be faith in Jesus Christ. Humility is truly something mysterious and is highly difficult to define in an exhaustive way. It is therefore no wonder that it is almost impossible to introduce it satisfactorily into the catalogue of moral virtues.³⁵ It is evident that humility as the attitude of human openness to the self-gift of God cannot be reified without serious consequences.³⁶ For this basic attitude is not intended so much for defining, as for practical experiencing,

31 *Perf. ev.*, QD 1, resp. 1; V, 122b–123a. – 'Ad illud quod primo obiicitur, quod virtus consonat naturae, et natura semper appetit promoveri; dicendum, quod etsi secundum exteriorem faciem actus humilitatis, qui est vilificatio sui, dissonare videatur ab instinctu naturae, secundum veritatem tamen et intrinsecam rationem plurimum ipsi naturae consonat et quantum ad originem et quantum ad conservationem, quantum ad profectum. ... Proficit autem in hoc, quod appetit suscipere influentiam a natura superiore, cui se subiicit, ut ab illa possit compleri. Quoniam ergo humilitas est suum defectum recognoscere: ad quandam parvitatem unitivam se ipsum redigere, spiritum inflationis et superbiae tanquam dispersivum a se repellere; influentiae supernae gratiae se subiicere et offerre: hinc est, quod ipsa secundum veritatem consonat actui et instinctui naturali.'

32 Cf. *Comp. virt. hum.*, II, 1; VIII, 659a.

33 *Perf. ev.*, QD I, resp., V, 120b. – 'Est enim humilitas ostium sapientiae, fundamentum iustitiae et habitaculum gratiae.'

34 *Perf. ev.*, QD I, resp. 1; V, 123a. – 'Posset etiam aliter dici, quod illa definitio est virtutis moralis, quae radicatur in naturali dictamine. Hic autem actus humilitatis fundatur in fide Iesu Christi, qui est actus super rationem et excedit terminos naturae.'

35 That is also why in the *Hexaameron* Bonaventure does not classify humility among the moral virtues. Cf. *Hex.*, coll. VI, 6–32; V, 361b–364b.

36 Note that substantialising humility is not free of problems, since in fact it is an accidental determination of a substance called human.

since it is the most fundamental characteristic of imitating Jesus Christ.³⁷ There is therefore no wonder that the mystery of humility is closed to those who lack the gift of faith, who lack a deep personal relationship to the Master of Nazareth.³⁸

Let us now return to humility as '*vilificatio sui*'. This self-depreciation tending towards a full communion with God must seek basic motivation in one's own deficiency, as full knowledge of God is enabled by deeply truthful self-knowledge.³⁹ In the case of a human being this motive can take two basic forms: one derives from being aware of one's own createdness, giftedness and dependence on God, this is so-called 'humility of truthfulness'; the other has to do with one's own imperfection with respect to God's sanctity, it is therefore an awareness of one's own sinfulness and in this case Bonaventure speaks of 'humility of strictness'.

And according to this humility, which comes from considering one's own nothingness, or which considers it, is of two kinds. One can be called humility of truthfulness, which arises from considering nothingness in opposition to the being of nature; and this is found not only in humans but also in angels, not only in pilgrims but also in the blessed. The other can be called humility of strictness, which arises from considering sin.⁴⁰

Since humility of truthfulness is found even in angels and in those who have already reached the definitive fullness of community with God, it is not merely a transitory matter. Therefore, this layer of humility is not merely therapeutic in its purpose. This attitude therefore belongs among the basic values of God's Kingdom, as being aware of one's own createdness comprises self-acceptance and coming to terms with one's place in community. Since this type of humility is a constitutive feature of community, it ought to be found in one way or another in the supreme model of every community, viz. in the Most Holy Trinity, where Father, Son and Holy Spirit each accept their place in the community, the truth regarding themselves. It is not without interest that in the case of humility of truthfulness Bonaventure does not underline self-depreciation as the basic act of such an attitude.

But humility of strictness is found exclusively in a contrite sinner and is therefore a merely transitory matter with an expressly therapeutic purpose. This form of humility has no exemplar in God and the Incarnate Son of God assumed it in a certain sense of the word out of love for the human being afflicted with sin and separated from God, in order to manifest his solidarity and become the way leading human beings to God out of the miserable state of sin. This version of sin is some sort of anti-sin, an antidote to the plague of all-destroying pride.

2. 2. Pride in *Breviloquium*, p. II, c. VII

In order to understand how Bonaventure conceived humility, it is appropriate to analyse also the opposite of this evangelical virtue, viz. pride. In the second part of the *Breviloquium* Bonaven-

Nowhere is there humility as such, but we can encounter humble, or non-humble, human beings.

37 It is definitely no accident that Bonaventure begins his answer in *Perf. ev.*, QD I, resp.; V, 120b by quoting the text of Matt. 11:25-29: 'At that time Jesus declared, I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will. All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.'

38 Cf. 'Cristo crocifisso stoltezza ... per i pagani,' Marco ADINOLFI, *Il Verbo uscito dal silenzio*, Roma: Dehoniane, 1992, pp. 143-155.

39 Cf. *Perf. ev.*, QD I, resp.; V, 120b-121a.

40 *Perf. ev.*, QD I, resp.; V, 122a. - 'Et secundum hoc humilitas, quae est per considerationem vel quae est considerata nostrae nihilitatis, duplex est: una quidem dici potest humilitas veritatis, quae consurgit ex consideratione nihilitatis per oppositionem ad esse naturae; et haec non tantum reperitur in hominibus, verum etiam in Angelis, non tantum in viatoribus, verum etiam in Beatis. Alia potest dici humilitas severitatis quae consurgit ex consideratione culpae; ...'

ture speaks of the fall of the evil spirits and claims that their major offence was pride. It must be underlined that the *Breviloquium* concludes and to some extent crowns the first period of Bonaventure's work, for it was only written in 1257. Introducing the following analysis at this point is also justified in that the *Breviloquium*⁴¹ is later than the preceding disputation on evangelical perfection. In our interpretation we therefore also follow the maturation of Bonaventure's opinions of the present topic.

And since free will could either tend to the supreme good, or turn to the proper good, [so] Lucifer, in whom the consideration of his own beauty and dignity aroused self-love and [a tendency to] his own good, came to appropriate his dignity and embrace his own superiority, as if he had not received it. As a result of this appropriation he made himself into the originator, glorified himself and strove to make himself the highest good for himself, to be his own final purpose. But since he was neither the highest origin nor the supreme good, it was necessary that he should fall as a result of his inordinate self-exultation and that for the same reason those who thought like him should [fall] too. And since there is no disgrace of sin without the dignity of justice, that is why once he had fallen into sin he immediately had to leave the highest place, viz. the highest heaven, together with those who adhered to him, and had to descend into the lowest [place], viz. into the dark air, or hell, so that just as the fall into guilt had been due to a free decision, the fall into punishment occurred due to a divine decree.⁴²

Focusing exclusively on one's own good, making oneself into one's own origin and regarding oneself as the highest good and as the ultimate purpose of all one's effort, all that with respect to community stands in a blatant contradiction to God, but also to all others. Pride as a false self-deification disrupts community, which is also why Lucifer had to lose his place in the community, or – as Bonaventure would say – in the hierarchy. Humility as the opposite of pride must be an orientation to the living God, to the true supreme good, to the real ultimate end. And precisely as a result of that humility it also secures a place in the hierarchy, an incorporation into the community. Humility therefore is – so to speak – constitutive of community and at the same time a prerequisite of truth.⁴³ Thus pride is essentially nothing other than not accepting the truth of oneself, not accepting one's own place in community, which is closely linked to a deeply fallacious self-deification. That is also why Lucifer's pride culminates in him requiring others to worship him as if he were a god.⁴⁴

41 Perhaps it is appropriate to point out the existing translation of this work into Czech, also considering that it has few parallels in other Slavonic languages: BONAVENTURA, *Breviloquium – Kompendium scholastické teologie*, introductory study, translation, notes – Ctirad Václav POSPÍŠIL, Praha: Vyšehrad, 2004.

42 *Brevil.*, p. II, c. VII; V, 225a. – 'Et quoniam per liberum arbitrium voluntatis poterat tendere in bonum summum, vel converti ad bonum privatum; lucifer, suae pulcritudinis et altitudinis consideratione excitatus ad se diligendum et suum privatum bonum, praesumpsit de altitudine habita et ambivit excellentiam propriam, non tamen obtentam; ac per hoc praesumendo constituit se sibi principium, in se ipso gloriando; et ambiendo constituit se sibi summum bonum, in se ipso quiescendo. Cum autem ipse nec summum esset principium nec summum bonum; necesse fuit, quod inordinato ascensu rueret; pari ratione et omnes in hoc consentientes. – Et quia »non est dedecus peccati sine decore iustitiae«; ideo statim, cum cecidit in peccatum, cum ceteris adhaerentibus sibi perdidit locum summum, scilicet empyreum, descendens ad imum, scilicet caliginosum aërem, vel infernum, ita quod lapsus in culpam fuit per liberum arbitrium, lapsus vero in poenam per divinum iudicium.'

43 'It is therefore evident that that [humility] is the root and mother of all order, measure and moderation; and further that, when we think correctly, it is also the mother of all truthfulness.' *Comp. virt. hum.*, I, 8; VIII, 658b. – 'Patet igitur, quod ipsa est radix et mater omnis ordinis, mensurae et moderationis; et ultra hoc, vere sentiendo, mater est omnis veritatis.'

44 'And because all that is in disorder due to a will distorted by pride, so all that [again] contributes to the growth of his pride, [when] he requires people to honour him and worship him as a god.' *Brevil.*, p. II, c. VII; V, 225ab – 'Et quia haec omnia deordinata sunt per

At this point the following question is in place: Does God not accept his place in community with creatures? For already by the act of creation he becomes the God of someone else besides himself, which is not self-evident. It is also not self-evident that God gives himself to creatures as the last end, that he makes a gift of himself to creatures. God also accepts the fact that an imperfect likeness of him is found in creatures, which holds especially of human ideas of Him. He bows down to the human being and communicates with him at a level at which the created image is able to communicate. All that points towards God's condescension to the human being and the world.⁴⁵ Is not all that a manifestation of God's benevolence, God's condescension to creatures, God's eternal humility?⁴⁶ Yes, it is a matter of God's behaviour to creatures, but is God not strictly truthful? If he behaves in this way to the world and to us, then he must eternally be like that. Let us not forget that we are still speaking of the humility of truthfulness.

If humility is an orientation to God, is it not true that God is also oriented to himself as to the true supreme good? Does not God according to Bonaventure truly respect himself?⁴⁷ He certainly does. Since humility always belongs to a certain person, it is quite in place to perceive the mystery of God's humility in a Trinitarian manner, as we have indicated several times already. Do not the individual persons of the Trinity eternally accept their own proper place in this most perfect of communities? Is not Trinitarian life in fact total non-self-centredness, when the Father transcends himself and gives the Son all he has, except his uncreatedness? And to give everything means in a certain sense to offer one's own life for the Son. The Son then does exactly what he sees the Father do. It can even be said that in the Trinity no person points towards itself, but always towards the other two, whom he glorifies. In a certain sense of the word Bonaventure's intuition that God worships himself could be expressed so that the Father is the Son's only God, precisely because the Father's only God is the Son.⁴⁸ Thus this absolutely free respect for the other is none other than the Holy Spirit. Is not this coming out of oneself, surpassing oneself, thus in a certain sense renouncing oneself, this total freedom from oneself in fact the highest form and exemplar of humility of truthfulness? And the Holy Spirit as God's nature as a gift is principally that absolute freedom from oneself, humility of truthfulness personified. And that is precisely why a human being who is not humble cannot participate in grace, which is given to us in the Holy Spirit. That freedom from oneself is personalistically speaking the most radical transcendence and self-transcendence, and that is precisely why humility is so mysterious and hard to grasp for us.

Since in the Godhead all of this is an expression of deep truthfulness, it is not possible to speak of pride, since that consists in false self-deification. Humility, on the other hand, is a truthful self-acceptance and taking the appropriate place in community. There is no other option than to

voluntatem depravatam per superbiam; ideo haec omnia convertit ad fomentum suae superbiae, quaerens ab hominibus coli et adorari ad modum Dei.

45 The mystery of God's 'condescension' is cogently mapped by Jan HELLER, *Bůh sestupující*, Praha: Kalich, 1994, pp. 65–84.

46 'Thus there is no humility in God, insofar as it consists in self-contempt, but by clear consideration we can recognise in him the most voluntary condescension, as it is fitting for God, to all his creatures. For there is so much condescension in God that he does not refuse to be close even to the lowliest of creatures, even to worms, immediately bringing everything to himself, containing and conserving it, and diffusing his likeness and goodness into all according to their capacity.' *Comp. virt. hum.*, III, 1; VIII, 661a. – 'Licet enim in Deum non cadat humilitas, prout sui contemptum dicit, tamen in eo liberalissimam condescensionem, prout decet Deum, ad omnes eius creaturas, limpida consideratione cognoscere possumus. Deus enim tantae condescensionis est, ut non dedignetur assistere infimis creaturis, etiam vermiculis, immediate in se omnia portans, continens et conservans, in omnibus suam similitudinem et bonitatem pro earum capacitate diffundens.'

47 'And according to these three God is a pious worshipper of himself, a true confessor of himself and a holy lover of himself, and each person relates piously, truthfully and in a holy way to itself, as well as to the other [persons] ...' *Hex.*, coll. XXI; n. 7; V, 432b. – 'Et secundum haec tria Deus est pius cultor sui, verus professor sui, sanctus amator sui; et quaelibet persona habet se ad se pie, vere, sancte et ad alteram ...'

48 Cf. Ctirad Václav POSPÍŠIL, *Jako v nebi, tak i na zemi. Náčrt trinitární teologie*, 2nd ed., Praha: Krystal OP; Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 2010, pp. 181–186.

state that the orientation of the human being by means of humility in the Son and in the Holy Spirit to the Father ultimately cannot be but a reflection of what eternally 'takes place' in the immanent Trinity. And that is precisely why Scripture repeats so many times that the Lord will eventually raise the humbled and let them participate in his own glory, the glory of the eternal humility of truthfulness, which is, as we know, according to Bonaventure, found even in angels and those human beings who have reached the fullness of celestial beatitude. Yes, this community-constitutiveness cannot but have a place in God, since the Trinity is an exemplary community, a model ideal hierarchy.⁴⁹ Accepting the other, giving oneself to him without reservation, renouncing oneself out of love for the other, as it is between the Father and the Son, are not all these the opposite of pride and self-centredness? If all these attitudes and kinds of thinking are based on humility of truthfulness, then it is unthinkable that the Triune God is not humble in this sense. But once we tried to think of the mystery of eternal humility in a non-Trinitarian way, viz. based on a notion of a unipersonal God or rather god, we would hardly be able to find the true root of humility. If someone is not humble, then there is no other option than to say that he is proud. There is no third option. Let us not forget that a sinner heavily distorts or even destroys the image of God in himself and pride is the root of all sin, which therefore stands in radical contradiction not only to the image of God in the human being, but also to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who are the exemplar of perfect humility of truthfulness.

3. Humility that brings everything to the Originator of good in the second period of Bonaventure's work, viz. after 1259

While so far we have been engaged with how the mystery of humility is reflected in the works of the first period of Bonaventure's work, now we will focus on works written after 1259. First, we will consider how Bonaventure discusses humility in the work *De perfectione vitae ad sorores*, II. Then we will examine one of Bonaventure's last works, namely the *Conferences on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit*.

3. 1. The triple path of humility according to *De perfectione vitae ad sorores*, II

The work mentioned in the title of this section came about around 1260, probably after *De triplici via*, and was addressed to Blessed Isabelle of France, sister of King Louis IX, who was an abbess in Longchamp. The work is divided into eight chapters and deals with the basic themes of regular religious perfection. The second chapter presents a brief treatise on humility.⁵⁰ Like the *Breviloquium* and the *Soliloquium* the work is concluded with a quotation from Anselm's *Proslogion*. Our attention ought to be captured early by the claim found in the introduction to the second chapter, namely that the one who wants to be really humble must walk the triple path of humility.⁵¹ Humility is a secure path to perfection, because it is the opposite of the root of every sin, that is, pride, and also the foundation of every virtue.⁵² Although Christ himself is the teacher and model of humility,⁵³ the first path of humility surprisingly leads upwards to God, who gives all that is

49 Cf. *Brevil.*, Prol., § 3; V, 204b.

50 Cf. DISTELBRINK, *Bonaventurae...*, p. 20.

51 'If therefore, most beloved mother, you want to attain perfect humility, you must walk a triple path.' *Perf. vit.*, II, 2; VIII, 110a. – 'Si igitur, mater dilectissima, ad perfectam humilitatem vis pervenire, oportet te per triplicem semitam incedere.'

52 'Thus as pride is the beginning of every sin, so humility is the foundation of every virtue.' *Perf. vit.*, II, 1; VIII, 110a. – 'Sicut enim principium omnis peccati est superbia, sic fundamentum omnium virtutum est humilitas.'

53 'You must learn this virtue most of all from the Son of God, mother devoted to God, for he himself says (cf. Matt. 11:29): »Learn from me, for

good.⁵⁴ That fully corresponds to the direction of the six-level ascent in illumination according to the *Itinerarium*. During this ascent the image of God in the human being is reformed, so that at its end the deformation caused by original sin is removed.⁵⁵ The second path of humility is characterised, like in the seventh chapter of the *Itinerarium*, by gazing downwards at the mercy seat of the Cross and descending into the depths with Christ.⁵⁶ The third path of humility elaborates on the motives of human finitude and sinfulness, and therefore has nothing in common with the scheme of the *Itinerarium*.⁵⁷ But immediately afterwards we encounter a text indicating a return to the Lord by means of descent:

And as water flows down into a valley, so the grace of the Holy Spirit flows down on the humble. And as the intensity of water-flow increases as it goes down, so [also] the one who progresses in humility with his whole heart comes closer to the Lord in order to obtain grace.⁵⁸

In his works Bonaventure more than once uses the image of water that rises as high as it has previously gone low. If humility is a descent, and yet it is at the same time a paradoxical path to God, it evokes Bonaventure's favourite circle scheme (cf. Jn 16:28). After the ascent of the first path and the descent with Christ on the second path of humility in the conclusion of the second chapter of *De perfectione vitae ad sorores*, II, the theme of the circle of grace, as we know it from the paradigm of the *Itinerarium*, returns again. It can thus be said that Bonaventure now perceives humility not as '*vilificatio sui*', but preferentially as a path leading the human being to God, or into God, if we take the relationship with the *Itinerarium* into account.

3. 2. Humility in *Collationes de septem doni Spiritus Sancti*

With respect to the date of writing, the last of Bonaventure's works presented here are the *Conferences on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, written probably around 1268 as a record of Bonaventure's evening lectures at the University of Paris.⁵⁹ A highly important testimony to how the Franciscan master conceived humility is found here:

Who is humble? Certainly the one who ascribes all the goods he has to his first origin. On the other hand the one who is proud ascribes everything to himself. The humble one continues with his origin, while the proud one departs from it, as if he was saying: I did not get

I am gentle and humble of heart.' *Perf. vit.*, II, 1; VIII, 110a. – 'Hanc virtutem maxime a Filio Dei, mater Deo devota, discere debes, quia ipse dicit »Discite a me, quia mitis sum et humilis corde«.'

54 'The first path is being aware of God. For you must be aware that God is the originator of all goods; ... And because that is the way he is, you must attribute all goods to him, and not to yourself, ...' *Perf. vit.*, II, 2; VIII, 110ab. – 'Prima semita est consideratio Dei. Debes enim considerare Deum ut auctorem omnium bonorum; ... Et quia talis est, ideo sibi omne bonum debes tribuere et nihil tibi, ...'

55 Here it is not possible to prove that the year 1259 is the fundamental dividing line between the first and second periods of the Seraphic Doctor's work, which is intimately connected with the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*. There, Bonaventure discovered a totally new paradigm of the mind's journey into God. After a six-step linear ascent of the mind to God in the form of enlightenment there follows in the seventh chapter a descent with Christ based on the circle paradigm, which proceeds from the Father and returns back to the Father again, because that is how Bonaventure understood John 16:28. Subsequently, this element had a marked impact on all of his thought in works written after 1259. Cf. POSPÍŠIL, *La salvezza*..., pp. 191–238; POSPÍŠIL, *Soteriologie*..., pp. 167–206; POSPÍŠIL, *La via*..., pp. 53–77.

56 'The second way is recalling Christ. You must recall that Christ humbled himself down to the most disgraceful kind of death and that he became so lowly that he was regarded as if he were leprous...' *Perf. vit.*, II, 4; VIII, 111a. – 'Secunda semita est rememoratio Christi. Rememorari debes, quod Christus humiliatus fuit usque ad vituperabilissimum genus mortis et in tantum factus est humilis, ut quasi leprosus reputaretur – ...'

57 Cf. *Perf. vit.*, II, 5; VIII, 111b.

58 *Perf. vit.*, II, 6; VIII, 111b. – 'Et sicut aqua confluit ad valles, sic gratia Spiritus sancti confluit ad humiles; et sicut aqua tanto fortius fluit, quanto magis descendit, sic qui toto corde humiliatus procedit magis propinquat ad Dominum, ut impetret gratiam.'

59 *Collationes de donis Spiritus Sancti*. According to historical data, Bonaventure delivered these conferences in Paris between 25th February and 7th April of 1268. Cf. DISTELBRINK, *Bonaventurae*..., p. 55.

this from you. And that is why Lucifer became dark, when he withdrew from his first origin. On the other hand Christ restored himself to his first origin through humility, and thus was bright.⁶⁰

The oppositeness of Christ's humility and Lucifer's pride is evident at first sight, which can serve as evidence that the preceding reflections were in the Seraphic Doctor's spirit. While humility secures community and connection with God, pride leads the one who falsely makes himself into the origin of good to solitude. The terminology used by Bonaventure in the quoted passage is very expressive; especially the word '*reducit*' points towards reduction, that is, to the return of everything to God and into God.

4. Conclusion – the deepest exemplar of the paths of humility is the dynamics of intra-divine relationships

It is generally known that Bonaventure represents the mission of the Incarnate Word by means of a circular scheme, which he derives from his own reading of John 16:28. He describes Trinitarian perichoresis by means of the image of a circle, of which the first and last point occupy the same point, indicating unity. But between these two points there is also the maximum difference of the circle's entire circumference, which points to the personal difference between the Father and the Son, from whom as from a single principle the Holy Spirit, who investigates the depths of God (cf. 1 Cor 2:10–11), circularly proceeds, whereby this mysterious depth of God is revealed in Creation by the cross of the incarnate Son. As mentioned above, the basic problem consists in whether the humility in Jesus Christ is to be ascribed to the assumed human nature, or to the person of the Word. If the latter were the case, then it is not difficult to guess that humility would concern the Son as the eternal Word, and therefore all the persons of the immanent Trinity.

We have devoted ample time to this issue with the result that in Bonaventure's works indications are not lacking based on which it is possible to reconstruct the circular Trinitarian scheme, where the circular representations of the missions of the Son and the Spirit in the history of salvation have their eternal exemplar in the circular conception of the Son's procession from the Father and the Holy Spirit's procession from the Father and the Son,⁶¹ whereby both the Son and the Spirit perfectly, that is, circularly, eternally return to their Origin. In Bonaventure's mind the circle is associated with perfection.⁶² Christ's cross is found at the bottom turning point of his circular pilgrimage from the Father to the Father and reveals the eternal depth of which is from eternity present in the immanent Trinity thanks to the Son's procession from the Father and his return to the Father. That is the eternal exemplar of Jesus' humility that has revealed itself in the cross. Let me also point out that a sketch of this circular Trinitarian scheme is available in Appendix 1.

But saying 'God is humble' is not as easy as it might seem to be at first glance, because humility as '*vilificatio sui*' as a transitory and therapeutic form of humility cannot have an exemplar in God. This eternal exemplar of humility in God concerns only humility of truthfulness, humility

60 *De donis*, coll. I, 10; V, 459ab. – 'Quis est humilis? Certe, qui omnia bona, quae habet, attribuit suo originali principio; sed superbus attribuit omnia sibi ipsi. Humilis continuatur cum sua origine, sed superbus discontinuatur et quasi dicit: hoc non accepi a te. Et ideo lucifer factus est obscurus, quia recessit a suo originali principio; sed Christus reduxit se in suum originale principium per humilitatem, et ideo clarus fuit.'

61 Here it appears appropriate to point out that in Bonaventure's circular representation of the Trinitarian mystery all possible and thinkable ways of the procession of the Holy Spirit paradoxically hold: he proceeds from Father and Son, from Father through Son, from Father to Son, from Son to Father. Cf. POSPÍŠIL, *Soteriologie...*, pp. 214ff.; POSPÍŠIL, *La salvezza...*, pp. 247ff.

62 Cf. POSPÍŠIL, *Soteriologie...*, pp. 207–227; POSPÍŠIL, *La salvezza ...*, pp. 239–259.

as community-constitutiveness. Thus, humility of truthfulness is revealed in Jesus Christ on the cross, which is a manifestation of the mysterious depth of God, in a painful form marked by our sin, and in that way becomes for us an exemplar even of that humility of strictness, as Bonaventure spoke of it even in the first period of his work.

It can thus be concluded that Bonaventure tends to perceive the exemplar of humility in the immanent Trinity when he speaks of the cross as the depth of God. However, he is afraid of the misunderstanding that would consist in ascribing humility as self-contempt to God, which he holds to be false. Thus, regarding humility he stays as if precisely in the middle between St Augustine on the one hand and St Anselm on the other, thereby at the same time testifying to the fact that both were right from a certain point of view.

We will conclude this discussion with a quote from Bonaventure, which indicates his endorsement of the claim that God is humble:

And the Word became flesh, the first of [Gospel according to] John [cf. John 1:14]. With these words the heavenly mystery and astonishing sacrament is revealed, that splendid work and infinite goodness consisting in that the eternal God humbly bowed down and assumed the slime of our nature into a unity with his person.⁶³

The act of incarnation is a work of God himself, not yet a divine-human act of the incarnate Son. Thus, it is the Lord himself who humbly bows down to the human being. But if the Lord himself behaves humbly, then he cannot but be humble. The one who is Truth simply cannot behave differently in the history of salvation than he eternally is, that is, after all, the foundation of all our Trinitarian theology in the sense of our mental ascent from the economic Trinity to the eternal immanent Trinity. Thus, God is humble, albeit it must again be underlined that in the sense of humility of truthfulness. Further, if Bonaventure holds that humility likens us to God, then it again leads to the conclusion that the living God is not unhumble.⁶⁴

The humility of strictness experienced by us, which has no direct exemplar in God, is nothing other than humility of truthfulness experienced in the situation of sinfulness and distance from God. Is humility of strictness not ultimately also based in truthfulness, on acknowledging the sorry fact how we really stand face to face with God? Once sin is overcome, that same truthfulness is transformed from humility of strictness into humility of simple truthfulness, which is the basic construction block of the community of saints.

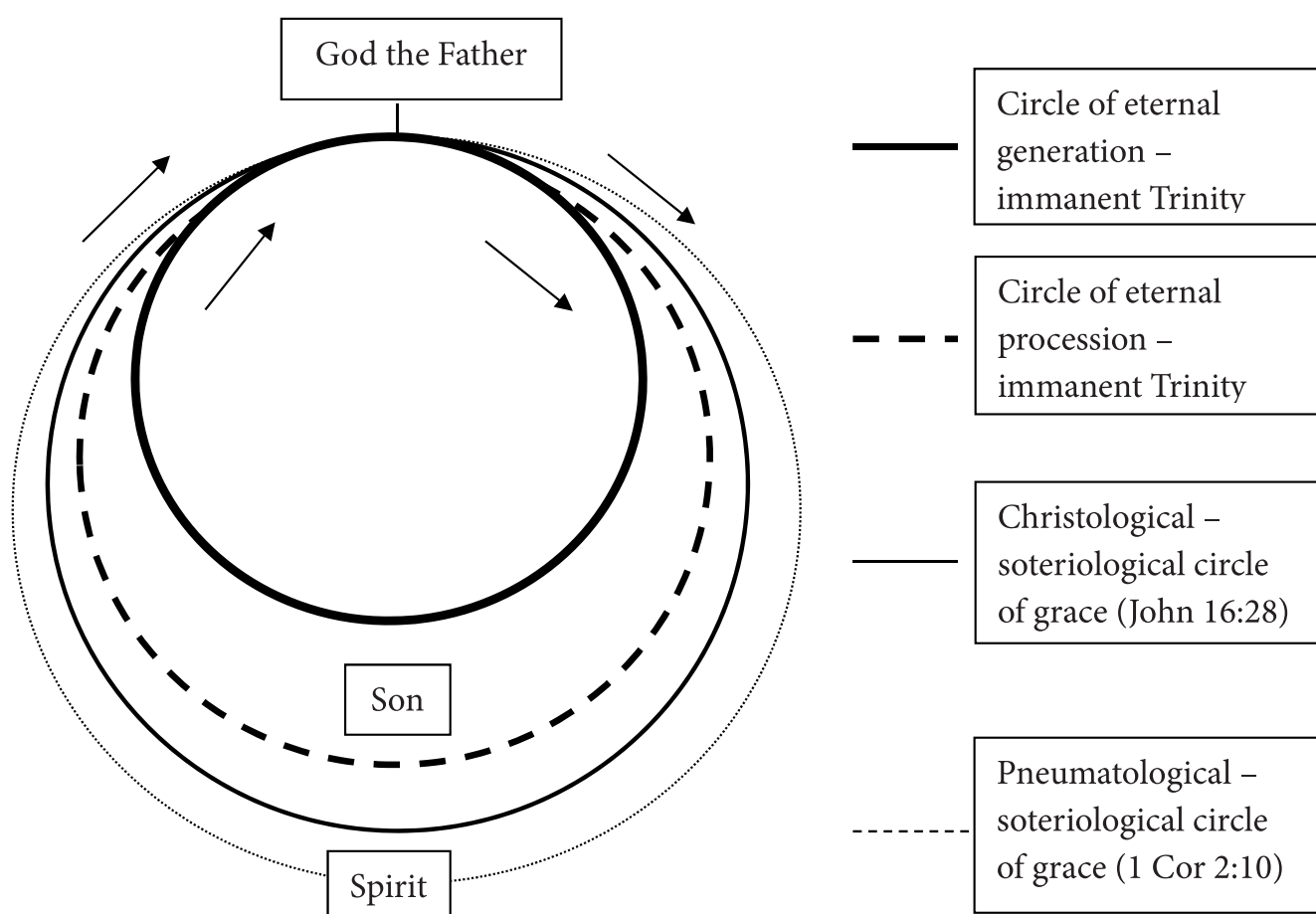
The goal of theology according to Bonaventure is understandably to know the mystery of faith, which seems to be heading to the heights. But ultimately that effort ought to lead to a knowledge focused on the quality of our thought, behaviour, and life, that is, to directing our gaze as if in a downward direction, into the mundaneness of everyday life. Let the reader not take offence, but medieval theologians sometimes spoke quite naturalistically, as evinced by the following expressive statement: 'A good theologian ought to be like a cow grazing in heavens but giving milk on earth.' We will certainly agree that unreflected humility is not attractive for the contemporary, especially young, human being who wants to assert himself and walk towards success. But the situation changes radically when we find ourselves in a disadvantageous position as those who are

63 *Nat. Dom. Sermo II*, BOUGEROL, *De Div.* 3, 1; 98; *Op. Om.* IX, 106b. – 'Verbum caro factum est Ioannis 1. Exprimitur in his verbis caeleste mysterium et admirabile sacramentum, istud opus magnificum et beneficium infinitum, quod Deus aeternus humiliter se inclinans limum nostrae naturae in suae assumpsit unitatem personae.'

64 Cf. *Comp. virt. hum.*, III, 1; VIII, 661a.

unsuccessful, ill, or old, because then we want others to treat us respectfully, kindly, to perceive us, which are evidently manifestations of humility as community-constitutiveness. The most fundamental spiritual motivation to striving to approach others on the basis of Christian humility, that is, to fulfil what clients and entrusted persons request from us, is of course a reflection on the sense in which the Triune God is humble. It must further be noted that the very knowing of the Triune God is not possible without the humility of truthfulness, which inevitably also takes the form of humility of strictness, or just self-evaluation. For without a truthful and painful self-knowledge there is no liberating and to a new existence motivating knowledge of the Triune God in light of supernatural faith. I therefore hope that this study will be beneficial to all those who work with others in various spheres of pastoral care and charitable and social activities, so that they will reflect on the issue and perhaps see it in a whole new light. And precisely this orientation on life and practice is – incidentally – one of the characteristic features of the theology of Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, who was born eight centuries before this year.

Appendix 1 Reconstruction of Bonaventure's scheme of the Trinitarian mystery



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