

# Christian Platonism

Rediscovering Ancient Wisdom

## St. Bonaventure: Contemplation of Creation's Sevenfold Splendor

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FROM these visible things, therefore, one rises to consider the power, wisdom and goodness of God as existing, living, intelligent, purely spiritual, incorruptible and unchangeable. This reflection can be extended according to the sevenfold properties of creatures — which is a sevenfold testimony to the divine power, wisdom and goodness — if we consider the origin, magnitude, multitude, beauty, fulness, activity and order of all things.

1. The *origin* of things, according to their creation, distinction and embellishment, as the work of the six days, proclaims the divine power that produces all things from nothing, the divine wisdom that clearly distinguishes all things, and the divine goodness that lavishly adorns all things.

2. The *magnitude* of things, in the mass of their length, width and depth; in their great power extending in length, width and depth as appears in the diffusion of light; in the efficiency of their operations which are internal, continuous and diffused as appears in the operation of fire — all this clearly manifests the immensity of the power, wisdom and goodness of the triune God, who by his power, presence and essence exists uncircumscribed in all things.

3. The *multitude* of things in their generic, specific and individual diversity in substance, form or figure, and efficiency — beyond all human calculation clearly suggests and shows the immensity of the three previously mentioned attributes in God.

4. The *beauty* of things, in the variety of light, shape and color in simple, mixed and even organic bodies such as heavenly bodies, and minerals (like stones and metals), and plants and animals clearly proclaims the three previously mentioned attributes.

5. The *fulness* of things by which matter is full of forms because of seminal principles, form is full of power because of its active potency, power is full of effects because of its efficiency, clearly declares the same attributes.

6. The *activity*, multiple inasmuch as it is natural, artificial and moral, by its manifold variety shows the immensity of that power, art and goodness which is “the cause of being, the basis of understanding and the order of living”

7. The *order* in duration, position and influence, that is, before and after, higher and lower, nobler and less noble, in the book of creation clearly indicates the primacy, sublimity and dignity of the First Principle and thus the infinity of his power. The order of the divine law, precepts and judgments in the book of Scripture shows the immensity of his wisdom. And the order of the divine sacraments, benefits and recompense in the body of the Church shows the immensity of his goodness. In this way order itself leads us most clearly into the first and highest, the most powerful, the wisest and the best.

Whoever, therefore, is not enlightened by such splendor of created things is blind;  
whoever is not awakened by such outcries is deaf;  
whoever does not praise God because of all these effects is dumb;  
whoever does not discover the First Principle from such clear signs is a fool.

Therefore, open your eyes,  
alert the ears of your spirit,  
open your lips  
and apply your heart

so that in all creatures you may see, hear, praise, love and worship, glorify and honor your God lest the whole world rise against you. For because of this the whole world will fight against the foolish. On the contrary, it will be a matter of glory for the wise, who can say with the Prophet: You have gladdened me, Lord, by your deeds and in the works of your hands I will rejoice. How great are your works, Lord! You have made all things in wisdom; the earth is filled with your creatures.

Source: Cousins, Ewert H. (tr.). *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God*. Paulist Press, 1978; pp. 64–68.

Latin: S. Bonaventurae, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* 1.1. In: S. Bonaventurae opera omnia, Vol. V, Fathers of the Collegii S. Bonaventura (eds.), Florence: Quaracchi, pp. 295-316.

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