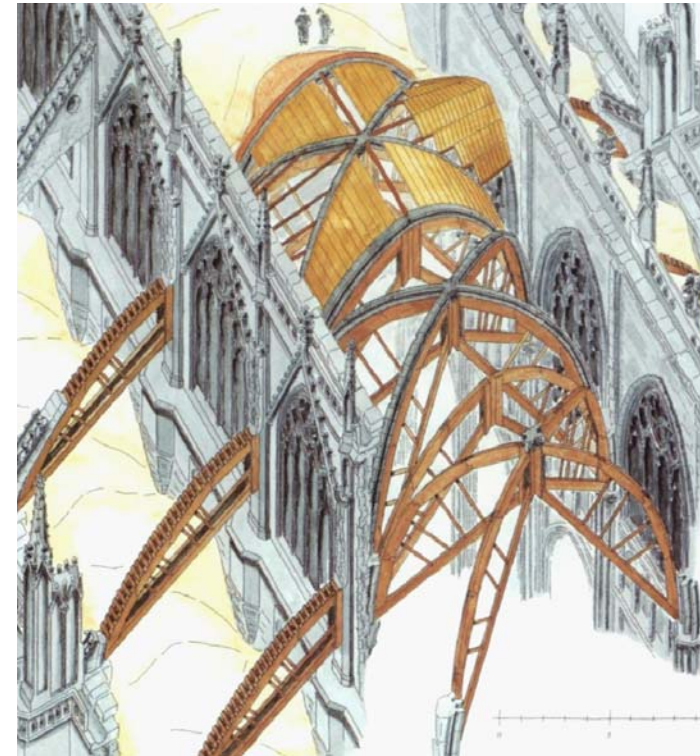


Bonaventure, Masonry, and The Soul's Journey into God

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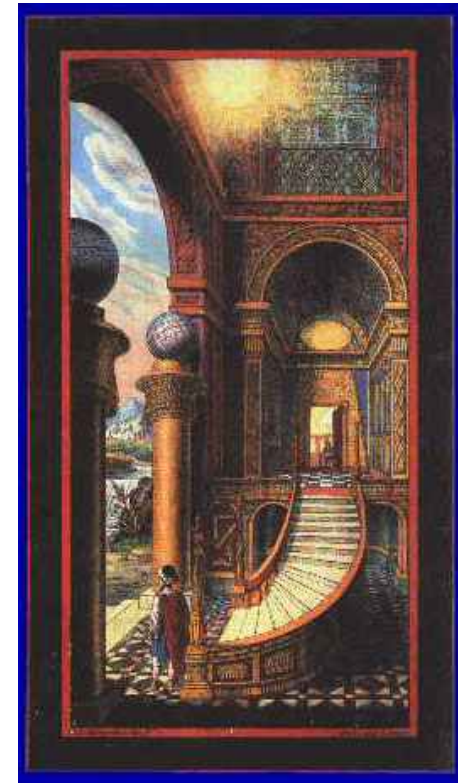
A Medieval Spiritual Allegory

- In 1259, Giovanni di Fidanza, a Franciscan Friar had a mystical vision
- He taught at the University of Paris across the Seine River from Notre Dame.
- Both Notre Dame and Chartres (a few miles away) were under construction
- It was a time of increased mysticism as Masters in charge of construction sought to understand the Sacred Geometry need to design these stately edifices.
- He described his vision in an allegory:
“The Journey of the Soul Into God”
- This Friar would later on become Saint Bonaventure



A Medieval Spiritual Allegory

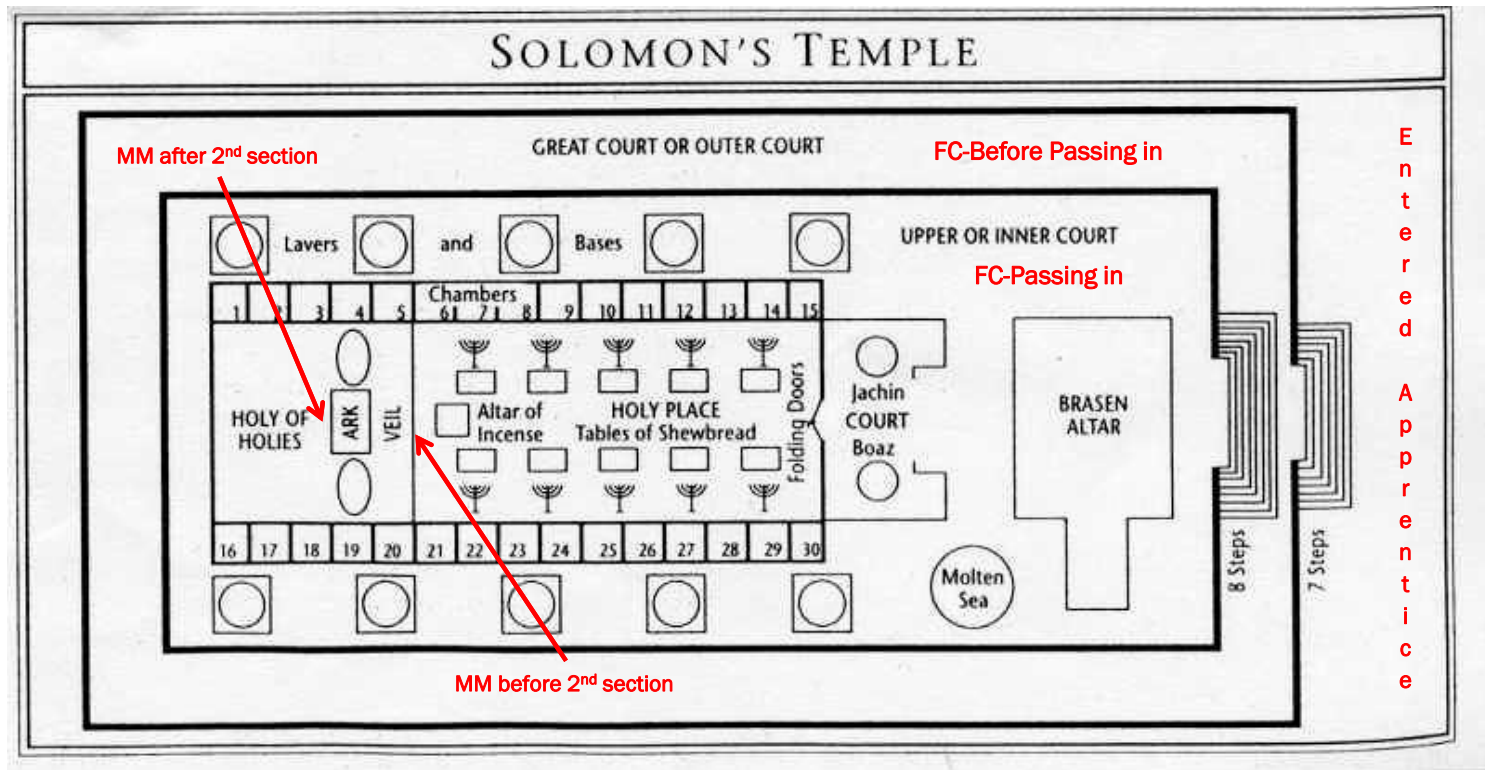
- Bonaventure's allegory involved seven steps in King Solomon's Temple
- His allegory was symbolically divided into 3 major steps:
 - Outer court yard (Growing from step 1 to step 2)
 - Inner courtyard (Growing from step 3 to step 4)
 - Sanctuary (Growing from step 5 to step 6, then to step 7)
- Allegory demonstrates the spiritual beliefs of the masons, architects and clergy who built the great Cathedrals of Europe
- We will use Bonaventure's journey as a way of exploring the Fellowcraft's journey



Bonaventure's Journey of the Soul into God

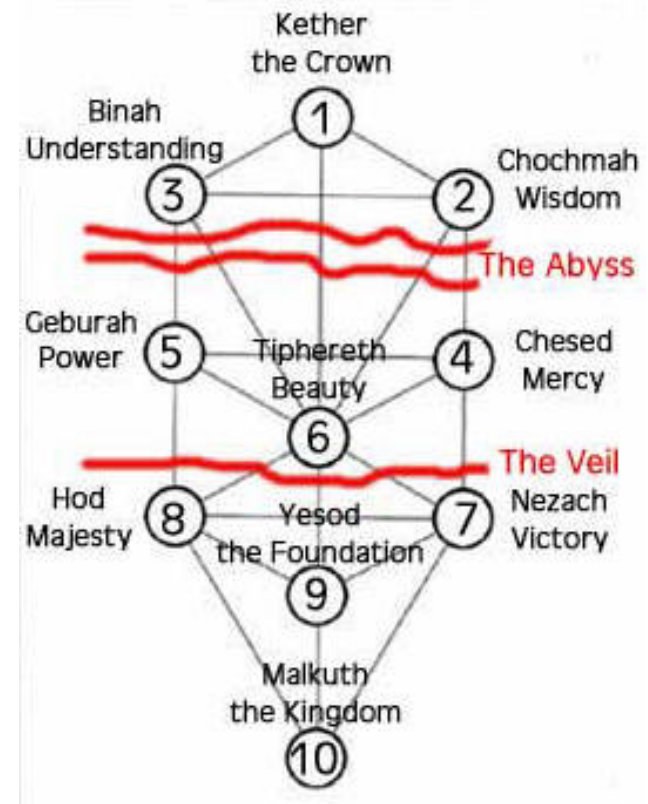
Seeing God	Alpha	Omega	Solomon's Temple
Outside Ourselves	Step 1: Seeing God in Nature: Wisdom, Strength and Beauty of God An illusion to the Trinity		Outer Court
Inside Ourselves	Step 3: Seeing His Image marked in Us: Our outward observations of nature build an internal image in our minds of God	Step 4: His image reformed by Grace: Fallen-man is undeserving, but God leads us to a perfect knowledge of Him	Inner Court
Above Ourselves	Step 5: Seeing the God by his name: "Being": Understanding the timeless, infinite, limitless nature of God who pervades all nature		Holy of Holies
Passing Over into God	Step 6: Seeing God by the Trinity: -The Wisdom of the Creator, -Christ our exemplar leading the way; -The Holy Spirit strengthening our souls.		Mercy Seat
Step 7: Soul Passing over into God: Abandoning intellect & theology and surrendering the soul to the mysteries of the Divine presence (Dying to self)			

Symbolic representation of Masonic Degrees



Comparison to The Tree of Life

"Frater FP ¹ " Interpretation of Bonaventure's Journey of the Soul into God			
Bonaventure's Steps	Location in the Temple	Rosicrucian	Kabbalist Tree of Life
First	Outer Court	Zelator	Malkuth
Second	Outer Court	Theoricus	Yesod
Third	Inner Court	Practicus	Hod
Fourth	Inner Court	Philosophus	Netzach
Fifth	Threshold of Holy of Holies	Adeptus Minor	Tiphareth
Sixth	Threshold of Holy of Holies	Adeptus Major	Geburah
Seventh	Mercy Seat	Adeptus Exemptus	Chesed
Passing Over into God	One with God	Magister Templi	Binah
Passing Over into God	One with God	Magus	Chockmah
Passing Over into God	One with God	Ipssismus	Kether



¹Frater FP; Jerusalem's Furnace: The Souls Journey into God, by St. Bonaventure, attributed to the Tree of Life; www.sacred-magick.com

Step 1: Seeing God in Nature:

- Our first concept of God is through the observation of the world
- Bonaventure calls this the Macrocosm
- God is first revealed to us in nature as a Vestige
(Vestige is Latin for footprint)
- We see God's wonders in the footprints of His marvelous creation
- If we follow these footprints, it will lead us to the God

Step 1: Seeing God in Nature:

- He says we cannot see these signs without Divine assistance:
“...the Divine Assistance [that] accompanies those who seek it from their heart humbly and devoutly...”
- Bonaventure believes the Trinity assists us:
“...From these visible things, therefore, it rises up together to consider the Power, Wisdom, and Goodness [Beauty] of God....”
- The Trinity of Wisdom, Strength and Beauty are the three great supports in life:
 - Strength means you have the resources to make it happen (God the Father)
 - Wisdom helps us plan and design (God the Son)
 - Beauty (Goodness) a task done with the highest skill and craftsmanship (God the Holy Spirit)

Seeing God in Nature:

There are three qualities that allow us to observe God in nature:

1. We notice God's Power:

- Earthquakes, thunder, lightning, fierce storms, a large waterfall, a volcano
- Give us a sense of power/energy/awesomeness of the Almighty God the Father

2. We notice God's Wisdom:

- The order you see in nature
- The cycles of the season, balance of resources for animals and plants

3. We notice God's Goodness:

- Our emotions well up inside us when we view the Beauty of Nature.
- God has implanted this Goodness in us through the Spirit of God



Step 2: Seeing God with our five senses

- We transition now from observation of the outer world to internalizing God in our minds
- Bonaventure refers to this as going from the Macrocosm to the Microcosm of the mind.
- We perceive the whole world through our five senses:
Hearing, seeing, feeling, tasting, and smelling
- By our senses we begin to develop a concept of God.
- The senses are the doorways to the mind.
- We take in a mental image and abstract it into memories
- Bonaventure calls this universe of memories *Apprehension*.

Seeing God with our five senses

Bonaventure: A Trinity of forces turns observations into ideas:

- Apprehension (understanding or wisdom) by the Father
- Delight in the object of interest by the Son
- Beauty by the Spirit

He sees a Trinity inside us when we name an object in the universe:

- Father: who is the source of all Creation
- Son: who is God's Word among us
- Holy Spirit: guides us in making judgements and creating words to talk about the object in mind.
- Because I have a word for the object, I now understand it

Advancing to the Seven Stairs

- We are almost ready to advance to a focus on God within us
- Passing from the outer courtyard into the Inner Courtyard of the Temple will require further preparation
- Bonaventure assumed you had mastered: *The Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences* or you wouldn't be reading his allegory
- Bonaventure will next take us into a world of philosophical and theological discourse
- This requires us to have a mastery of the Seven Liberal Arts & Sciences

Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences

The Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences are broken into two parts:

- The Trivium which covers Grammar, Logic and Rhetoric
- The Quadrivium which covers Arithmetic, Geometry, Music and Astronomy

Trivium:

- **Grammar:** Ancient and Medieval philosophy is difficult to understand for those who have not mastered of grammar
- **Logic** is the language of philosophy and is the language in which Bonaventure frames his explanations.
- **Rhetoric:** Various methods of persuasion
 - Ancient and medieval philosophers used various rhetorical schema to convince others.
 - Ignorance of the use of rhetorical devices has led to incorrect interpretation

Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences

Quadrivium: Arithmetic, Geometry, Music, Astronomy

- The subjects that make up the Quadrivium appear to be courses taught in high schools and college
- To Bonaventure and the ancient philosophers, it was a form of sacred theology.
- Iamblichus the Pythagorean wrote the “The Theology of Arithmetic”
- It tells the sacred meanings of “The Monad,” “Dyad,” etc.
- Sequences of numbers can create sacred geometrical forms that reveal God’s handiwork in the world

Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences

- Sacred Arithmetic: the Fibonacci sequence

$$1+1=2,$$

$$1+2=3,$$

$$2+3=5,$$

$$3+5=8,$$

$$5+8=13,$$

$$8+13=21,$$

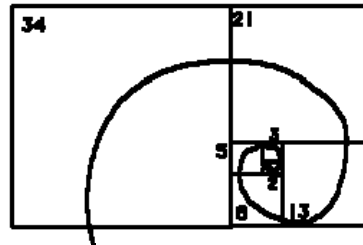
$$13+21=34$$

$$F_n = F_{n-1} + F_{n-2}$$

- This just seems like another math algorithm
- But it can be used to form a spiral that is found extensively in nature:

Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences

- When the Fibonacci sequence is tiled in a two dimensional pattern (i.e. the number is squared), it leads to a spiral form:



- This spiral form is found extensively in nature: Nautilus shells, sunflowers, pine cones, proportions of the human body, etc.



Ready to begin Journey to Inner Courtyard

- To Master the Quadrivium was to know how God made the world and the cosmos
- It would typical take over four years to master the Trivium and Quadrivium—it was the main theme of college in 1250
- Now that we properly educated,
- We are now ready to pass into the Inner Chamber of King Solomon's Temple
- We will further our spiritual journey by seeing God's image within ourselves.

Step 3: The world within us: Finding God in ourselves

- We now move from the light outside of us to the light inside
- This is the inner world where the light of God shines.
- We begin to see in whose image we are made in.
- We are not only vestiges of God but we are made in the image of God.
- If we look carefully, we will see traces of the Holy Trinity in each of us.

Step 3: The world within us: Finding God in ourselves

Bonaventure cites three human powers that lead us to God:

- **An Intellect that seeks Truth:**
 - Our minds are designed for truth
 - We seek Truth and it pleases us to find it
 - We are disappointed when we find something isn't true or even worse we've been lied to
- **Toward the Good:**
 - We can discern between good, better, best.
 - We call the Best a thing of **Beauty**.
 - We are naturally attracted to Beauty.
- **Memory:**
 - We transcend the present because we can go back through the past.
 - Our accumulated memories allows us to have foresight into the future
 - Memory, knowledge, and love are all based in the will to choose.
 - We choose to love based in freedom and the exercise of free-will
 - Love requires a knowledge of the thing we love
 - Knowledge relies on our memories.

Step 4: The human person touched by Grace

- Man could not see God in the complete fullness without God's Grace.
- Fallen man is undeserving but God leads us to a more perfect knowledge
 - Bonaventure describes man's state of affairs as causing us to be bent over.
 - Man is weak and bent over toward the ground because he is focused on himself
- Bonaventure says we cannot stand "upright" because of:
 - The distractions of life keep us from meditating enough to access the memories of our soul.
 - We are clouded by the images from our senses. We fail to use our intellect to discern
 - The Will is distorted by sin, bent on a desire to accumulate things for the Self when the Will was built for Charity and Love for others:

Step 4: The human person touched by Grace

- Bonaventure says:

“When one is fallen down, he will continue to stumble unless someone will help. The one comes to help actually lies down beside us to help raise us out of our state; he acts as a ladder to replace the one broken by Adam to lift us out of our condition.”
- God’s grace allows us to walk uprightly before God and Man—upright as the Plumb
- Receiving this Grace is more a matter of the heart than the head
- When we talk about the things of the heart, we need scripture to guide us
- It is the study of Theology that leads us further

Step 4: The human person touched by Grace

- We become like a house for divine wisdom:
 - Our soul becomes a dwelling place for God
 - A Temple erected to God and dedicated to His Holy Name.
 - It is grounded in Faith, Raised up by Hope, and expressed in our lives by Charity (Love).
 - We know this only through the inspiration of God's spirit within us.
- Now that we are grounded in Love, Bonaventure invites us to comprehend with all the Saints:
 - The Length of Eternity
 - The Breadth of Generosity
 - The Height of Majesty
 - The Depth of Wisdom of God
- Having examined the world inside us, it is now time to look at the world above us; to look upward to God

Where we have been and where we are going

- We have went from the world outside us to the world inside us
- We are now closer to the Sanctuary; the place where God and man commune
- Bonaventure tells us that:
 - The light of the **outside** world is like the dim light of dust when the sun is in the **West**
 - The **light inside** us is like the dim light of dawn when the sun is in the **East**—that light that rises to Open and Adorn the Day
 - The light that comes from Above is like the sun at Midday, which is the beauty and glory of the day
 - The light at midday is the light of our Exemplar: Jesus Christ; the model for our humanity.
- We will need the help of the one sent by God's Son, the Holy Spirit, to lead us in the next two steps as we approach the Holy of Holies

Approaching the Holy of Holies

- We now approach the threshold of the Holy of Holies by Grace and Christ
- As the folding doors are opened,
 - We are presented with a view of the Ark of the Covenant with its golden Cherubim on each side of the Ark
 - Their wings outspread over the Ark
 - Between the two outspread wings is the Mercy Seat, where God resides when he communes directly with mankind



Approaching the Holy of Holies

In Ancient Israel, this happened only once a year at Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement,

- The high priest would go into the Holy of Holies to offer up a sacrifice
- He would call upon the personal name of God: יהוה or “YHWH”
- This name was too holy to pronounce in any other manner or at any other occasion.



Approaching the Holy of Holies

- Bonaventure uses these two angels to ascend into a theosophical discourse of God's nature
- One cherub is contemplating the Unity of the Divine, expressed by the term *Being*
- The other is contemplating the Triune nature of God:
 - Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three entities but in one
- In the fifth step, we will focus on God as Being



Step 5: The world above us: Seeing God by his name: “Being”

- Moses asked God, “What shall I tell the people your name is?”
- God’s reply is: “I am who I am” or “I am that I am”
- ***God is Being:***
 - Physical things are “Becoming;” rocks erode, people are born, grow up, grow old and die
 - We are always transitioning from one state to another to “Become” something else
 - Theosophically, **God is pure Being**, existing eternally

Step 5: The world above us: Seeing God by his name: “*Being*”

- God was here before the physical universe and will be here after the physical universe dissolves—he is unchanging. [Bonaventure]
- God created the physical universe and pervades it with his presence.
- This concept of *Being* has been since the time of Plato and Socrates.
 - For example, the Corpus Hermeticum [100-300 CE] explores this concept of Being.
 - Being has always been, will always be; it is the opposite of non-being – nothingness.
- It is important to us but we cannot see it.
- “The Being is an intelligible sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere” [Bonaventure]
- God is not bounded; he has no limits.

Step 6: Seeing God as Three: the Highest Goodness

- Our attention is directed to a God
- The God who cares so much for mankind that he would extend the ultimate gift of Love.
- We journey next to the other Cherub contemplating the Trinity and God's Grace toward mankind.



Step 6: Seeing God as Three: the Highest Goodness

- Contemplating God's Goodness in the form of the Trinity
- Bonaventure reminds us that on the sixth day:
 - God said “Let us make man in our image” (Genesis 1:26)
 - “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7)
- He tells us that God's ultimate gift of Grace is the greatest example of The Good, the ultimate example of Beauty
- Bonaventure says,
“The good has as its characteristic that it is self-diffusive; generous expression outward that one has within.”
- In other words, God's love extends without limits and pervades all nature

Step 6: Seeing God as Three: the Highest Goodness

- Bonaventure explores the Trinity in the form of Love:
 - There is some highest Good which is love itself (God the Father)
 - This Love generated a perfect image we call the Beloved. (The Father and the Son)
 - Joining them is the Co-Beloved (Holy Spirit)
- The center of the Universe is the Son, the Beloved, who will become flesh in order to share God's love
- It is the ultimate expression of Love

Step 6: Seeing God as Three: the Highest Goodness

- Bonaventure then pushes our minds to exhaustion
- He asks us to contemplate how God is One Essence (Being) yet really three natures in the Trinity:

“In this Trinity, there is the greatest communicability with individuality of person, there is the greatest consubstantiality, but with plurality of hypostasy; the greatest co-equality with order the, relation of the Father to the Son and the Son and Spirit; the greatest mutual intimacy; yet there is the sending out of the Son or WORD out of Love for man.” [Bonaventure]
- Bonaventure proclaims that we are exhausted mentally by attempting to understand God intellectually:
 - We must now turn from matters of the mind to matters of the heart
 - He now tells us that the six days of work are over
 - Seventh is a day of rest—we rest our study and reason
 - Surrender our soul to the mysteries of the Divine Presence

Step 7: Passing Over: from six days journey to Sabbath rest

- Bonaventure now leads us into the Holy of Holies to witness the “Mercy Seat” between the two Cherubs
- There he sees the image of Christ crucified—the ultimate gift of Love for mankind
- But how do we cross over to join with the Divine—to be One with God?:
 - Bonaventure says we must Passover into God by joining Christ in the grave
 - This is not a physical death
 - It is surrendering one’s selfish Will to God
 - To be raised spiritually as a new person

Step 7: Passing Over: from six days journey to Sabbath rest

- Bonaventure says this about our Raising out of our former self:
 - “The mind rises on high, passing beyond that which is sensed, now the mind is passing beyond itself”
 - “In this kind of passing over, all intellectual operations should be abandoned”
 - “If we abandon intellectual operations on the other side, the whole height of our affections is going to be transferred and transformed in God.”
- He says this deep love is a state of pure ecstasy

Step 7: Passing Over: from six days journey to Sabbath rest

- He can't explain it for it is too mystical; only those who have experienced this hidden mystery can understand it
- “Nature can do nothing here and effort (trying) can accomplish little:
- Little attention should be given to investigating but should give great attention to anointing,
 - Little attention should be given to speaking but much attention to inner joy;
 - You should pay little attention to writing rather, pay attention to the gift of God, the Holy Spirit,
 - [Do]not pay attention to creatures but focus attention on creative BEING, the creator not the creatures.” [Bonaventure]

Step 7: Passing Over: from six days journey to Sabbath rest

- Bonaventure concludes with these thoughts:
 - “If you ask how these things happen:
 - Ask Grace, do not ask instruction
 - Ask Desire, do not ask to understand
 - Ask the cry of prayer; not the pursuit of study
 - Ask the spouse (Christ), not the teacher
 - Ask God, not man
 - Ask Darkness, not clarity,
 - Ask not light but the burning flame which will carry you to God with burning affection.”

Step 7: Passing Over: from six days journey to Sabbath rest

“Because the Fire is God,

- The furnace is in Jerusalem
- Christ kindles it in his burning Passion
- Let us then die and pass over into darkness, pass over with the Crucified Christ from this world into the Father:
 - We can say with Phillip (John 14:8): ‘When we see the Father it is enough for us’
 - Let us hear with Paul (2 Corinthians 12:9): ‘My Grace is sufficient for you’
 - Let us rejoice with David (Psalm 72:26): ‘For you, my flesh and my heart have fainted. You are the God of my heart, the God who is my portion forever’

Thus completes our Journey of the Soul into God

Conclusions: The Journey of the Soul into God

- Bonaventure's subsequent allegory is one man's attempt to explain his path into the presence of the Divine
- It is a decidedly Trinitarian Christian view of his vision:
 - Bonaventure was a leader in the Roman Church
 - Mysticism was viewed with suspicion by orthodox leaders
 - Most of whom believed in theology, doctrine and ceremony above anything of the heart
 - Mysticism without a doctrinal base was considered heresy
 - Bonaventure's allegory provided a doctrinal cover for his seventh step

Conclusions: The Journey of the Soul into God

- Bonaventure's allegory had considerable influence well into the twentieth century
 - Hinrich Susso used portions of Bonaventure's work in the defense of Meister Eckhart, a Benedictine mystic on trial for heresy
 - Centuries later, two Spanish Franciscan mystics Francisco de Osuna and Bernadine de Loreda, would write works inspired by Bonaventure's book:
 - These two mystics would be heavily influential in European mystical thought
 - Their work influenced many Christian mystics as well as Kabbalists
 - Professor Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) authored a book entitled: "Deo Verbum" based on Bonaventure's work

Conclusions: The Journey of the Soul into God

- I chose Bonaventure's work primarily because of its proximity to the zenith of European cathedral construction
- It was an example of the spiritual, mystical and esoteric thought that encompassed the minds of operative masons
- Cathedral builders were cognizant of the two edifices made by God's command:
 - King Solomon's Temple
 - The proportions of the human body (aka. Vitruvian man)

Conclusions: The Journey of the Soul into God

- I found many familiar echoes between Masonic Ritual and Bonaventure's allegory
- I hope you did too
- I found Bonaventure's journey is similar to my own spiritual journey over the years
- I remember distinctly when I took the mystical Seventh Step
- I believe his seven steps are worth considering by any person seeking spiritual alchemy
- It is one path to a Soul's Journey into the presence of God

Conclusions: The Journey of the Soul into God

I have relied heavily on Friar William Short's audio course as a guide to understanding Bonaventure's work:

Br. William Short, OFM, STL, STD; *Saint Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God*; Audible audiobook, 2017

Thank you for your attention