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St. Bonaventure's *Fontalis Plenitudo* and the intimate anthropological relationality

La Fontalis Plenitudo en san Buenaventura y la relacionalidad antropológica íntima

ALESSANDRO MANTINI¹

Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (Italia)

ID ORCID 0000-0002-5099-6745

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RESUMEN: El trinitarismo y la cristología de san Buenaventura ofrecen importantes elementos de reflexión para recuperar, particularmente en la época contemporánea, una teología y una metafísica capaces de fundar y estructurar una antropología coherente. Presenta una metafísica coherente capaz finalmente, por un lado, de dar razón del sentido de la Creación y de su naturaleza profunda, y por el otro, de despertar

¹ (alessandro.mantini@unicatt.it) Alessandro Mantini both graduated in Electronic Engineering with specialization in Sensors and Robotics for Biomedical Applications, and in Theology, earning a PhD in Dogmatic Theology. The last publications are: (2023). Sustainability as Centering: a biblical-theological reading of space-time, in *Reviews in Science, Religion and Theology*, ISSR – ESSSAT, 2-4, pp. 27-39; (2022). *Evangelizzare lo spazio cosmico...e Ritorno. Nuove frontiere, nuove sfide e nuova Razionalità per la Teologia cattolica*, Aracne Editrice, Roma, 504 pp.; (2022). Christology: a simulating model for the Quantum Origination Theories and Cosmology, in D. Evers - M. Fuller - A. Runehov (ed.), *Creative Pluralism? Images and models in science and theology*, *Studies in Science and Theology (SSTh)*, Biennial Yearbook of the European Society for the Study of Science and Theology (ESSSAT), Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg, Institute for Systematic Theology, Halle (Saale), Germany, 18 (2021-2022), pp. 91-103.

esa centralidad antropológica que ve al ser humano precisamente desde la perspectiva de una visión ontológica. relacionalidad. Éste sería entonces el fundamento de la interioridad humana. Por lo tanto, este trabajo resaltaría principalmente la estructura relacional íntima de la interioridad de la persona humana y, en consecuencia, su estrecho vínculo con el dinamismo de la Creación, considerando su fundamento trinitario y cristológico en el pensamiento de San Buenaventura.

PALABRAS CLAVE: antropología, Buenaventura, cristología, interioridad, metafísica, relacionalidad.

ABSTRACT: St. Bonaventure's Trinitarianism and Christology offer important food for thought to recover, particularly in the contemporary era, a theology and metaphysics that founds and structures a strong anthropology. It presents a consistent metaphysics finally capable, on the one hand, of giving a reason for the meaning of Creation and its profound nature, and on the other, of reawakening that anthropological centrality that sees the human being precisely from the perspective of an ontological relationality. The latter would then be the foundation of human interiority. This work would therefore primarily highlight the intimate relational structure of the interiority of the human person, and consequently its close link with the dynamism of Creation, considering its Trinitarian and Christological foundation in St. Bonaventure's thought.

KEYWORDS: anthropology, Bonaventure, Christology, interiority, metaphysics, relationality.

1. INTRODUCTION

St. Bonaventure's Trinitarianism and Christology, which are closely linked, offer important food for thought to recover, particularly in the contemporary era, a theology and metaphysics capable of founding and structuring a consistent anthropology.

In his view, Christ, as *Medio*, *Centrum* and *Ordo* in the Trinity, is consequently *Mediator* of the Trinitarian relationality in the entire dynamism of Creation and in particular in the intimate of the human person, which is enriched with original depths and novelties that gush forth (cf. Jn 4) from the image of God the Father as *Fontalis Plenitudo*.

The resulting anthropology then participates in the movement of *exitus* and *reditus*, in turn becoming part of the intimate *communicatio* of the Trinitarian God recognised as *Bonum sui diffusivum*. In this context, the Incarnation of Christ offers us the exemplary model of this movement that Bonaventure defines in three decisive passages: *emanatio*, *exemplaritas*, *consummatio*. It is then possible to interpret the Pauline text of Rom 8:19-23, recognising the intimate structural relationality of the human person with the Holy Trinity, as the determining motor of the entire evolutionary process of Creation. St. Bonaventure, in fact, as the Franciscan school, sees the Incarnation as logically preceding Creation itself, of which the human person, consequently, represents the apex precisely within this communal dimension.

The result is a consistent metaphysics finally capable, on the one hand, of giving a reason for the meaning of Creation and its profound nature, and on the other, of reawakening that anthropological centrality that sees the human being precisely from the perspective of an ontological relationality. The latter would then be the foundation of human interiority, which draws on the definition of conscience as the “most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, whose voice echoes in his depths” (Vatican Council II, 1965, n. 16).

Another aspect that emerges from this approach refers to a distinctive feature of St. Bonaventure's metaphysics, which proposes a radical shift from the centrality of causality in the dynamism of the cosmos, to that of relationality. Indeed, even before being characterised by causal connections, Creation draws on a relational structure that determines its dynamism, founded on Trinitarian relationality. In this way, every causality would then be justified metaphysically and, above all, theologically, starting from the very intimacy of the Holy Trinity, determining that close connection which St. Bonaventure highlights between microcosm and macrocosm, where the human being is called *minor mundus* or *microcosmos* because he is the highest point of the whole of Creation, called *major mundus* or *macrocosmos*.

This work would therefore primarily highlight the intimate relational structure of the interiority of the human person, and consequently its close link with the dynamism of Creation, considering its Trinitarian and Christological foundation in St. Bonaventure's thought.

2. BONAVENTURE'S TRINITARIAN RELATIONALITY

Bonaventure's Franciscan sensibility doesn't introduce a sharp distinction between knowledge according to pure intelligence, and that according to pure faith, because the truths communicated by the revelation are indeed approachable by the human reason, placing less attention on the Greek *logos*, than to the Christian *Logos*, and not forgetting, together with the "thinking thought", the importance of being creatures.

Bonaventure underlines the importance of both will and affection in the relation with the created world, considered as an intelligible *ordo*, and an expression of a rationality deriving from the «*ens ordinatissimum*». In this way the creatures are inserted in an "intelligible circulus" (Bonaventure, 1891a, q. III, a. I, concl., p. 70b; q. VIII, ad 7, p. 115b) in which it is necessary, on the one hand, the *liber creationis* with all the *vestigia Dei*, and on the other, the human rationality according to the *Imago Dei*.

From a philosophical point of view (in Bonaventure's thought, theology, philosophy, and metaphysics, are in fact interconnected in a more meaningful and complete way), the concept of "analogy" is not anymore, an instrument for abstraction, but a support for *contuitus*, that is the perception of reality as a communication of the Good, and therefore in its reference to God, according to the relational traits. Theology is then oriented to recognizing the *reductio* (in the sense of reconducting not of reducing) of Creation as a movement and dynamism towards the source, as a tension towards the Goodness of the horizontal *ordo*, which reflects the Trinitary *ordo*. It derives the central importance for Bonaventure of the concept of *exemplarism*: the creatures show the generosity and fecundity of God, who is "order" in His own internal life, while His Trinitary presence is perceivable in the whole cosmos, thanks to the *vestigia*, the creatureal traces, according to the *proportio* (harmony, beauty, good), coming from the Trinity (this order is primarily present in man, *imago Trinitatis*). This is the ecstatic and diffusive character of the Supreme Good, the very key of Bonaventure's Trinitarian theology (Cozzi, 2009, 541-551).

Going more into detail, Bonaventure starts writing of God as one, "*Utrum sit unus tantum Deus*", and after a few pages he points instead to the main question: "*Utrum in Deo ponenda sit personarum pluralitas*" (Bonaventure,

1882, d. 2, a. I, q. I, p. 50; d. 2, a. I, q. II, p. 53). He considers indeed as given the existence of God, highlighting, differently from Thomas, that “our intellect falls short in the thought of the divine Truth as far as knowledge of what it is, yet it does not fall short as far as knowledge, if it is... Because then our intellect never falls short in the knowledge of God, if it is, therefore it cannot ignore, it simply is, nor it can think it is not”², opening therefore to a great trust in the human intellect and will, correctly used. Furthermore:

The *De Deo uno* or the “what” of essence responding to the divine *quid* certainly counts, but the *De Deo trino* echoing the “how” or *quomodo* of persons matters more. In contrast to Aquinas, the Seraphic Doctor gives priority to the plurality of persons over the unity of essence, or the triune God over the one God. The so-called “essential” unity is to be “saved” according to Bonaventure, only in the sense that it is to be safeguarded and not forgotten. But the distinction of persons is what makes the divine God, or better still the Christian God, in his way of emanating, proceeding or generating (Falque, 2018, 16).

Bonaventure thus explains the plurality in God using four pillars depicting his Trinitarian theology: *simplicitas* (communicable essence), *primitas* (the ability to produce as *innascibilitas* and *fontalis plenitudo ad omnem emanationem*), *perfectio* (immediate and readily available presence to another, and perfect relationship of love), and *beatitudo et caritas* (related to will) (Osborne, 2011, 115), highlighting that free will (love) and intellect are considered strictly connected. Bonaventure’s position is that: “relationship is the basis for a trinitarian theology of God, not vice versa.

God is not first trinitarian and then relational. Rather, God is relational, and therefore we can speak of God as trinitarian... the very nature of God in itself is relational” (Osborne, 2011, 116); therefore he stresses an important positive connotation of *innascibilitas* that is *fontalis plenitudo* and *primitas*, connoted in a forward gaze fullness: “The Father is the principle of the whole

² “*Intellectus autem noster deficit in cogitatione divinae Veritatis quantum ad cognitione, quid est, tamen non deficit quantum ad cognitionem, si est ... Quia ergo intellectus noster nunquam deficit in cognitione Dei, si est, ideo nec potest ignorare, ipsum esse simpliciter, nec cogitare non esse*” (Bonaventure, 1882, d. 8, p. I, a. I, q. II, respondeo, p. 154b).

deity, because he is from no one³; and thus in the principal intellect it is a relation in a privative sense, from the consequent in a positive sense; and so it is not a negation which posits nothing³.

This is a crucial point for Bonaventure, because it determines a radical shift from having causality at the very center, towards favouring instead, beyond it, the attention to search and to recognize in the structure of the reality itself this positive Trinitarian living source (*fontalis plenitudo*) reflected an ever deeper level, because the Trinity is exactly relational (Hayes, 2007, 75):

Bonaventure concludes that God is more than the first efficient or final cause, or the first principle, because God the Father does not “cause” either the Son or the Spirit. Non-causal productivity in God indicates something far more than causality. Nor does production refer only to creation, which is finite, contingent, and temporal. Relationality is intrinsic to God’s nature in ways that cannot be explained by causality, but it can be described through the infinite *fontalis plenitudo* of the *summum ens* (highest being) (Osborne, 2011, 117).

Referring to *simplicitas*, Bonaventure speaks of actuality and diffusion/communication (*communicabilis*) (Bonaventure, 1882, d. 8, p. 2, q. I, respondeo ad 1, p. 166a), and, finally, *beatitudo et caritas* are important pillars highlighting the very core of Bonaventure’s originality, in conceiving ‘love’ in God as a verb. He first affirms that there is a *voluntas* in God: “The will is the power according to which the highest liberality is observed –for all liberality comes from love, but it is clear that love is an act of the will– it is in God to place the highest liberality: therefore both love and will⁴, and in the strict bond between love and *actus voluntatis*, it follows the production of everything from *bonitas*, which exits in a movement of love, diffusing and causing (*ratio causandi est bonitas*) (Bonaventure, 1882, d. 45, a. 2, q. I, respondeo, p. 804b).

³ “*Pater est principium totius deitatis, quia a nullo est*; et ita in principali intellectu dicit relationem privative, ex consequenti positive; et ita non dicit negationem quae nihil ponit” (Bonaventure, 1882, d. 28, a. I, q. I, respondeo, p. 498ab).

⁴ “*Voluntas, est vis, secundum quam attenditur summa liberalitas – omnis enim liberalitas venit ex amore, sed constat, quod amor est actus voluntatis – in Deo est ponere summam liberalitatem: ergo et amorem et voluntatem*” (Bonaventure, 1882, d. 45, a. 1, q. I, p. 798b-799a).

We therefore are allowed to underline how strong is the richness of the relational dimension of God the Trinity that, in his oneness (one, only one, one nature, one essence, one substance, immutable, and *summe simplex*), is also: “ability to produce, eternal production, emanation, communicability, powerful, fontal fullness, infinitely free love, positive relationship, primal fountain, greater than primary/final causality, non-causal productivity, highest actuality which includes *summa diffusio et communicatio*, and *caritas*” (Osborne, 2011, 119).

In Bonaventure's proposal, the essence of God, that is its being, is (1) to be essential Good as *fontalis plenitudo* and (2) to be communicable, relational; its unity is relational too, and the introduction of the reality of *bonum diffusivum sui* in the Trinitarian theology constitutes, according to Olegario González de Cardedal, Jaques Guy Bougerol, Zachary Hayes, Kenan B. Osborne et al., the very novelty of his interpretation with respect to the position of Richard of St. Victor and Augustine:

He does not base his theological argument for a Trinity on a definition of person, whether the definition comes from Boethius, Richard of St. Victor, or Alexander of Hales. Nor does he base his theological argument for a Trinity only on an analysis of paternity, filiation, and spiration. What is amazing and unique is his constant return to the relational nature of God and to the four divine characteristics of *primitas* or *innascibilitas*, *simplicitas*, *perfectio prompta et apta*, and *beatitudo et caritas* (Osborne, 2011, 119-120).

3. RELATIONALITY IN THE CREATION

Moving now to the *ad extra* dimension, that is the Creation, Bonaventure proposes the same metaphysics, but “created”, and therefore related to the *ad intra* dimension not in the sense of “first cause” as traditionally intended. Instead, it is a “relational cause”, in the sense of *diffusivum sui*. It, therefore, changes the way of reasoning, from the idea of causality and of first causality, to a trinitarian communication of Goodness. In this context Bonaventure refers to three expressions: *vestigium*, *imago* and *similitudo* (Bonaventure, 1891b, 2, 12, p. 230a). What refers to the whole Creation is thus the term *vestigium*, as a “personal reflection of the trinitarian God”, in the strict and

indivisible interconnection between the three *ad extra* operations of the Trinity, defining in this way the very metaphysical framework of the cosmos: (1) the Creation; (2) the Incarnation of the *Logos*; (3) the sending of the Spirit. This framework is constituted not by causal links, but by relational links referred to the Trinity in its self-relational being (Osborne, 2011, 121-122). In this regard, it is worth noting the position of Henry of Ghent:

Henry's own approach to creation informs his distinction between philosophy and theology [...] a proper understanding of the Trinity should be the basis of a proper understanding of creation. In this regard, Henry is critical not only to Avicenna, but also of Aquinas and anyone else who does not sufficiently account for what is posterior through what is fundamentally prior, namely the emanations of the Son and the Spirit ... Creation depends on these emanations [...] since they are God's inner life [...] The being of the creature is its relation to divine intellect and will, since the creature has essence through the divine intellect and existence through the divine will (Flores, 2015, 540).

Bonaventure's metaphysics is structured in fact according to three important passages and concepts: (1) emanation, because all beings derive from the Trinity; (2) exemplarity, arguing that Creation reflects and expresses the Trinity itself, and (3) consummation, that refers to the return of the whole Creation to God: "This is the metaphysical medium that leads back (to God) and this is all of our metaphysics: emanation, exemplarity, consummation, that is, being illuminated by spiritual rays and being led back to the highest and thus you will be a true metaphysician"⁵.

This text represents a reference point with regard to Christ as *centrum and medio*, in order for us to depict the metaphysical framework for an anthropological reading of human interiority as inhabited because intimately in relation with the Trinity through Christ. Jesus Christ is in fact *Medio* and *Mediator* ("For there is one God. There is also one mediator between God and the human race, Christ Jesus", 1Tm 2:5), where the latter needs the former, and the

⁵ "*Hoc est medium metaphysicum reducens et haec est tota nostra metaphysica: de emanatione, de exemplaritate, de consummatione, scilicet illuminari per radios spirituales et reduci ad summum. Et sic eris verus metaphysicus*" (Bonaventura, 1891c, 1, 17, p. 332b).

mediation can be exerted thanks to the two divine and human natures, thus participating to both the extremes. Therefore, Christ as *Medio* (in the order of being) and as *Communicatio* (the existence of a sort of relation between two extremes) is the basis for describing Christ as *Mediator* (that is in the order of doing), concerning the work of redemption and *Reconciliatio*. Christ is thus *Medio Universale* in the intimacy of God the Trinity, and in the relation with the created world (Wozniak, 2017, 328), and He “*Reducat ad unitatem et concordiam Deum et hominem*” (Bonaventure, 1887, d. 2, a. 2, q. 3, concl., ratio 2, 42b-43a).

The vision of Christ as an *absolute Medio* acquires a transcendent dimension, which can be considered “Christocentrism without limits”. The Word, center of the Trinity, is not only a *Mediator* (precisely as man) of reconciliation between sinners and God, but he is *Medio* (like God and man), in which all natural and supernatural realities acquire their meaning and value, even to the point of concluding that the Word in the Incarnation realizes for everyone, as a *Centrum* or *Medio* that illuminates and leads back, the full meaning of every existence and activity and relationality.

Bonaventure also uses the term *medium congruentiae* (connected to the Bonaventure's Christological concept of congruity in the union between the Word and the human nature) to express a non extrinsic (such as in the case of a *medium colligantiae*) but relational view, especially, as its summit, in hypostatic union, because Incarnation is a mystery of relation (God's creative activity) (Hayes, 1981, 70.73).

Christ, in His hypostatic union, is (1) mediator, because he is *medium*, *persona media*, of the Trinity, the *medium* of God's creative and redemptive activity, sharing and reconciling the extremes, structuring the relationship between two orders; (2) hierarchy, to underline the relation with all things in Creation:

As Grace is a divine influence on creatures which forms creatures into degrees of God-likeness thus effecting hierarchy among creatures, when Christ is named hierarchy, He is designated as the one who, by virtue of His structure as God-man, exercises the supreme hierarchy-forming power of grace in the world (Hayes, 1981, 88).

Being *Medio* means then, for Christ to be the starting point for the reality, as the center of everything, because He is: “first medium in the eternal generation, second in the incarnation, third in the passion, fourth in the resurrection, fifth in the ascension, sixth in the future judgment, seventh in the eternal reward or beatification”⁶.

With the Incarnation, as *Verbum incarnatum* Christ has become the “center” of the temporal order, as *Verbum increatum* He is the “center” of the eternal order, and this is a hierarchization not only on the metaphysical level but also on the historical one (Gambetti, 2015, 132). “The idea of the universal centrality of Christ is connected in Bonaventure with the concept of intra-Trinitarian order” (Wozniak, 2017, 331), in fact, speaking of Christ as center and order in the cosmos, Bonaventure also deals with the meaning of the history.

The concept of *ordo* in Bonaventure has two main dimensions, having both the character of a *primus* and a *ultimus*: (1) *ordo verticalis*, that regards the relations between the Creator and the creatures, embraces all the cosmos (*ultimus*) putting it in the relation with God (*primus*), and attesting that the creature is ordained by God; (2) *ordo horizontalis*, concerning the internal Trinitarian relationships, where the Father is *Primus*, and the Spirit is *Ultimus* (Bonaventure, 1885, d. I, p. I, a. 1, q. 2, fund. 2, p. 21a).

Emanation, or expression, is thus first connected with the special name of God that is Good, according to Pseudo-Dionysius (Bonaventure, 1891d, V, 2, p. 308b). Therefore, the Good, being *sui diffusivum*, emanates like self-expression, perfectly in the inner life of the Trinity, where the Father is *Fontalis Plenitudo*, and the Son is Image, Word, Exemplar, and perfect expression of the Father⁷. This is the first movement of emanation, exemplarity, and consummation in the internal love of the Trinity. The second movement is caused by the explosion “into a thousand forms” (Gerken, 1970, 132), in the Creation, through the Son, who as Word, is:

⁶ “*Primum medium ... in aeterna generatione; secundum in incarnatione; tertium in passione; quartum in resurrectione; quintum in ascensione; sextum in futuro examine; septimum in sempiterna retributione sive beatificatione*” (Bonaventure, 1891c, Collatio I, 11, p. 331a).

⁷ For more details see Ames (2016).

Locus of the divine ideas the *rationes aeternae* [...] Since the Son expresses and represents the infinite creative power of the Father, he also represents all possible things: indeed the infinite variety of things is given unified expression in him [...] the divine ideas are themselves *expressive* and give rise to the created world ... the eternal reasons are called the Eternal Art, *ars aeterna* they are dynamic causes [...] So the eternal ideas in the Word, which are the expression of the Father, become themselves expressive, causing a world that represents the life of the Trinity in a way analogous to the Word's representing the Father ... second cycle of emanation, exemplarity and consummation originates not from the nature of God, necessarily, as does the Son; it comes forth freely from the will of God ... fountain fullness (Bowman, 1975, 181-183).

The Creation is thus defined in reference to the concept of exemplarity, that is, as a doctrine of the relation of expression between God and the creatures (Bissen, 1929, 4). Bonaventure's originality is to consider this relationality not according to the classic scholastic concept of *efficient causality*, but introducing an *exemplar causality*, where the exemplar is "the pattern or the model for the form of the thing made" (Bowman, 1975, 184) in relations of expression. It is important to underline that the exemplar is active in its expression as an "imitation by way of expression" (Gilson, 1965, 199), resulting in a true resemblance. Moreover, divine ideas are expressive and fecund, at every level of Creation: "Because in eternal wisdom there is the cause of fecundity to conceive, produce and give birth to anything concerning the universality of laws. In fact all exemplary causes have been conceived from eternity in the womb of eternal wisdom"⁸.

Stating the radical difference between the Creator and the creature, the analogy is required, drawing from the internal structure of the Trinity, as the creative source of all creatures (Bowman, 1975, 184), while the latter participate in the Trinity (mainly the intellectual creatures). The above-mentioned levels of reality are considered as an ascending hierarchy among creatures (also called 'great order'), which are respectively *umbra*, *vestigia*, *imago*, as a

⁸ "In sapientia aeterna est ratio fecunditatis ad concipiendum, producendum et pariendum quidquid est de universitate legum. Omnes enim rationes exemplares concipiuntur ab aeterno in vulva aeternae sapientiae seu utero" (Bonaventure, 1891c, Collatio XX, 5, p. 426a).

very different idea than the hierarchy with degrees of participation in being (Neoplatonism) (Bonaventure, 1882, d. 3, p. I, q. II ad 4, p. 73ab). In Bonaventure's thought "every single creature ... has its direct model and foundation in the Word himself, in the eternal reasons ... each being is equally close to God, though the mode of relationship with God differs according to the capacity of the creature" (Bowman, 1975, 187).

The consummation or return, as we have seen, is also called *reductio* to the first principle, because the world comes from God, exists as God's expression, and returns to God, considering that the material world participates through man in this return to God:

The beginning of the process is the inner life of the Trinity itself, wherein from all eternity the Father, the fountain fullness, in expressing himself generates the Son, and Father and Son in their love breathe forth the Spirit. Through this overflowing love, the Trinity becomes a fountain fullness and in expressing itself freely creates the world, which is patterned after the Word in whom the multitude and variety of all possible creatures is a unity in the eternal ideas. The world then exists as the outward expression of God, reflecting him by recapitulating in material beings and in man the inner dynamism of the Trinity, and so presenting an almost unlimited series of correspondences between creatures and God and among creatures. As the expression or sign of God, the created world returns to God through man's discerning and loving God in this created expression. The entire process, both within the Trinity and in the world, is achieved, expressed, and fulfilled in the figure of Christ, the center of the economy of exemplarism [...] The fountain fullness of the Trinity expresses itself outwardly in the multitude of created things, and so every creature has its exemplary idea in the Word, and every creature exists as a sign of the creative Trinity (Bowman, 1975, 189-190).

Bonaventure thus intends that *umbra* are a confused reflection of God, while the *vestigia* are a distinct reflection, with a pattern or form "echoing" one, true, good; mode, species, order; measure, number, weight, according to the above-mentioned exemplar causality, in a dynamic process of emanation and return, highlighting truth, form, species, number and beauty (Bonaventure, 1891d, I, 14, p. 299ab; II, 10, p. 302b).

The important role of man in the process of consummation, or *reductio*, is referred to the possibility he has to know God:

The concept of contuition, the act by which man is capable of seeing things in God and God through things, brings us into the context of Bonaventure's theories of knowledge, of philosophic certitude, and of illumination [...] Judgment is not the forming of a proposition or statement, but simply the act of forming an idea of a sensible thing, an idea which transcends place, time, and change [...] the basis of an ideal knowledge of a material thing is ... the presence to the mind of the Eternal Art as a kind of light which gives guidance and direction to our knowledge of the material creature [...] it is the comprehension of a thing in terms of its relationships to its causes, especially to its exemplary cause, its idea in the Eternal Art [...] [contuition refers to] "a simultaneity of form in the created thing or mirror and in the Eternal Exemplar ... an awareness of the ontological presence of God attained in the consciousness of being" [...] The direct object of knowledge is the thing. The eternal idea is not clearly and directly known but is that by which and in the light of which the thing can be truly and fully known [...] *Contuition* then would be a concrete vision of the ultimate significance of things in the economy of exemplarism [...] (Bowman, 1975, 197-198).

Contuition (*contuitio*) is different from intuition, because: "Good is the main foundation for the contemplation of divine emanations"⁹, and God has a relational essence. Speaking of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, Bonaventure uses different terms: (1) for the Father: *unitas, aeternitas, ratio principiandi, omnipotentia*; (2) for the Son: *veritas, species, ratio exemplandi, omniscientia*; (3) for the Holy Spirit: *bonitas, usus, ratio finiendi, voluntas seu benevolentia* (Bonaventure, 1891b, p. I, c. 6, p. 214-215; 1882, d. 31, p. II, p. 539; d. 34, q. 3, p. 592-593); 1891c, *Collatio* 21, n. 4-15, p. 432-433). There is an intradivine order where the Goodness supposes the Truth, and the Truth supposes Unity, but also the Will supposes knowledge, and this supposes Potency: "therefore it is possible to refer them in a differentiated way to the Trinity, where the procession of the Holy Spirit supposes the generation of the Word,

⁹ "*Contemplationis emanationum ipsum bonum est principalissimum fundamentum*" (Bonaventure, 1891d, VI, 1, p. 310b).

and both emanations suppose the originating fullness of the Father” (León-Sanz, 2016, 243). The latter is not just initial, but it is continuous over time, maintaining the contingent creatures in being, governing them through the inscribed laws, and accompanying them in their development: “The divine operation therefore took on a triple form in the production of the world: the creation which, by appropriation, responds to omnipotence, the distinction which responds to wisdom, the ornament which responds to very generous goodness”¹⁰. The Creation has its relation with the Father as its first origin of existence; with the Son as its process of distinction and its government, through the wisdom containing the exemplarity of the forms of the created reality (distinguishing), and of their laws; with the Holy Spirit as a loving gift from the Father and the Son. The exemplarity of the Son is connected with the formal causality with respect to the effect: “the creature proceeds from God as modelled by the model, and thus the model implies formal causality with respect to the modelled”¹¹. However, every peril of confusing or composing God with the created reality is avoided, in fact, Bonaventure’s idea of divine art excludes every pantheism (León-Sanz, 2016, 244-245).

The final thought is to apply the exemplaristic approach to the concrete behaviour of material things, considering the material world ordered, “weighted” with reference to the concepts of seminal reasons and plurality of forms: “matter is full of forms according to seminal reasons; the form is full of power according to the active power; virtue is full of effects according to efficiency”¹². The seminal principles or reasons, whose reference or exemplarity is to the Word, are:

Active and positive potentialities [...] inserted by God into matter. They are the essences or forms of all things which can be produced out of matter [...]

¹⁰ “*Et ideo triformis fuit operatio divina ad mundarum machinam producendam, scilicet creatio, quae appropriate respondet omnipotentiae; distinctio, quae respondet sapientiae; et ornatus, qui respondet bonitati largissime*” (Bonaventure, 1891b, p. II, c. 2, p. 220).

¹¹ “*Creatura procedit a Deo tanquam exemplatum ab exemplari, et sic exemplar importat causalitatem formalem respectu exemplati*” (Bonaventure, 1882, d. 6, q. 3 concl., p. 129).

¹² “*Materia est plena formis secundum rationes seminales; forma est plena virtute secundum activam potentiam; virtus est plena effectibus secundum efficientiam*” (Bonaventure, 1891d, I, 14, p. 299a).

incomplete and awaiting completion [...] actuality. The actuation of a seminal principle is analogous to the blooming of a rose from a bud: what is already there implicitly is made explicit; what is there in repose is awakened. Bonaventure's concept of matter is therefore a dynamic and positive one: matter is not a passive potentiality, but it is pregnant with a multiplicity of positive possibilities and bears within itself a kind of dim mirror image of the Eternal Art (Bowman, 1975, 195).

A very short synthesis could be addressed saying that (1) the foundation, that is, the Mystery of the Trinity (Bonaventure, 1891a, q. I, a. 2, p. 51-58), plus (2) the centre of reality, that is Christ (Bonaventure, 1891c, Collatio 1, 1, p. 329a), represents the two roots of faith (Bonaventure, 1891c, Collatio 8, ad 9, p. 370b).

4. INTIMATE ANTHROPOLOGICAL RELATIONALITY

The Franciscan school considers a strict connection between Incarnation and Creation (Battaglia, 2019) arguing that Incarnation is the reason for Creation itself. If Jesus Christ (*Summum Opus Dei*) is the cause, the reason and the end of Creation, then the Incarnation is the hermeneutic key of Creation, considering that "the Incarnation consumes within itself the mystery of God's love which is communicated to the outside world, exactly as it is the love which is communicated with the Creation of the world" (Ghisalberti, 1996, 353).

In fact, in Christ the finality of every creature is realized, because the order of intention (*ordinate volens*) is realized in the historical order, and Christ is the final cause being the first cause. Consequently, we can say that ontologically the Incarnation comes before Creation, because the latter is ordered to the Incarnation *in mente Dei*:

If, according to the scansion of events, creation took place first and then the incarnation, however ontologically first the incarnation, and then the creation must be considered, because creation has always been oriented toward the incarnation, God wanting to have a body for his Son to love him not only ad intra, but, so to speak, from the outside. In this way Jesus Christ is the first fruit of creation and model of the *ordo amoris* with which God has always

willed the world; in him every man becomes capable of loving God as he wants to be loved, and with humanity also all creation, which in history “is groaning in labor pains even until now” (Rom 8:22) (Dezza, 2016, 151-163).

It is possible therefore to highlight that there is a strict intimate connection, in the Trinity and consequently in the Creation, but primarily in the creation of the human person, between:

ordo amoris ↔ ordo relationis

The above-mentioned basic relational structure of Creation, dynamically sustained through the mediation of Christ, primarily recovers an integral reading of reality, considering and re-evaluating the novelty and the complexity of the event “Revelation of God” in history. This is the source of knowledge and intelligibility, also if declined in a multiplicity of events, which has its source and its culmination in the logical precedence of the Incarnation over Creation, in which this intelligibility has made itself available to knowledge and experience.

Christ being the centre recalls His being the *medio* and the *mediator* (used in the metaphysical and cosmological framework), and for this reason is from the person of Christ that we have to start along the adventure of the intelligibility of the Creation: “[The Holy Spirit] ... teaches where one must begin: because from the middle, which is Christ; that means, if it is neglected, nothing is considered”¹³. Therefore, starting from the Trinitarian structure in which: “The father is the originating principle, the son is the middle exemplar, the Holy Spirit is the terminating point”¹⁴, it is possible to say that:

Jesus Christ, by reason of his identity as true God and true man, works and guarantees the relationship between God and man, in that he unites the extremes by eliminating all the separating distance. Moreover, as the source of true wisdom, he possesses in himself all the qualities of the sciences, so that he not only unifies them, but each of them reveals an aspect of his unfathom-

¹³ “[*Spiritus Sanctus*]... docet, ubi debet incipere: quia a medio, quod est Christus; quod medium, si negligatur, nihil habetur” (Bonaventure, 1891c, Collatio 1, 1, p. 329a).

¹⁴ “*Pater in ratione originantis principii; Filius in ratione exemplantis medii; Spiritus sanctus in ratione terminantis complementi*” (Bonaventure, 1891c, Collatio 1, 12, p. 331b).

able mystery, full of truth and grace. The explanation, therefore, also highlights the twofold movement of expansion/diffusion and attraction/concentration, motivated precisely by the use of the noun medium, a movement that eloquently states the universal extension, in time and space, but also the incidence in depth, of the mediating action of Jesus Christ (Battaglia, 2019, 83).

We can then take up the Pauline text of Romans 8:19-23, to recognise how everything becomes legible from the truth of the intimate relational structure of Creation with the Trinity, which is realised in Christ:

19 For creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God; 20 for creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but because of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. 22 We know that all creation is groaning in labour pains even until now; 23 and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

This profound nature of Creation, as we have seen, “sustains”¹⁵, we might say, the much more structural and fundamental and constitutive relationship of the human person with the Trinity itself, and in this sense verse 19 can be understood, in which this “expectation” aims to re-establish the very order of Creation.

It is then a question of reawakening the anthropological centrality precisely because it is placed in that special and personal relationship with Christ and therefore with the Trinity, which is capable of regenerating, in “truth and grace” the whole of Creation. As we have seen, this relationality has the characteristics of an inhabited interiority, which the human person is called to discover in the horizon of a *vocatio continua* addressed to him by his Creator, as in the parallel of the *creatio continua* proper to the Theology of Creation. The “to groan within ourselves” contains all the “labor pain” of free response to the calling, and of listening, recognizing and filially obeying to this loving appeal, that is to say, of discernment and thus of conversion.

¹⁵ This is, in my opinion, the very meaning of the term “Sustainability”, as I dare to describe in Mantini (2023).

We can say that in the personal relationship with the human person, Christ is the centre thanks to his mediation without confusion between human nature and divine nature, from which a new *ordo creationis* always springs forth in Christ, in the aforementioned dynamism between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, involving the beginning and the fulfilment. The inhabited interiority in spiritual terms takes the name of “inhabitation”, that is, the presence of the Three Persons “without interruption” in our life understood as the Temple of the Holy Spirit. This is how the mystic Itala Mela (1904-1957) expresses herself in this regard:

To live the inhabitation is to live one’s baptism. It would be a grave error to believe that calling souls to nourish their lives with this adorable mystery is to call them to a special “devotion”: it is rather an invitation to them to live the grace that baptism has given them, to penetrate the divine reality promised by Jesus: “*veniemus et apud eum mansionem faciemus*” (Jn 14:23) [...] St. Paul incessantly repeated to his disciples his admirable “*templum Dei estis*” (1Cor 3:16-17) and commented on it in his epistles, without fear of enlightening souls, albeit induced and just “initiated”, on the sweetest dogma, in possession of the Lord, one and triune, in their spiritual sanctuary. It thus happens that many religious themselves, many pious people and I would go so far as to say many priests, practically ignore the “inhabitation” [...] God wanted to live in the closest intimacy with us. He was not content to leave us in the Eucharist the possibility of receiving the Incarnated Word in our hearts for a few moments but He wanted that, once the physical presence of Christ had disappeared, the soul should not remain empty and alone, but enjoy the presence of the Three Persons without interruption (Mela, 2002, 93-94).

The link with the Eucharist makes the theological-metaphysical approach proposed by Bonaventure even stronger and more solid, whereby the centrality of Christ in his Mediation opens wide the doors of the very Trinitarian indwelling also admirably expressed by the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council: “Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, Whose voice echoes in his depths” (Vatican Council II, 1965, n. 16).

This indwelling has precisely the traits of an inhabited interiority, exactly as in a Sanctuary that characterises us as Persons in Relation with God. The original Greek version of John’s Gospel (14:23) expresses this reality in a very

strong way by literally saying “and room (house, dwelling) with him, we shall make” emphasising the work of building a relationship, the work of an everydayness, of an intimacy to be built.

The redemption of our body (Rom 8:23) is expressed precisely in the context of a rediscovered inner and outer identity that makes us a Sanctuary of the Trinity. The verb “to do” highlights precisely this work that is fully within the horizon of God’s will, as we have seen, by placing it in the theological and metaphysical context proposed by St. Bonaventure and the Franciscan school, for a well-defined intimate anthropological relationality.

5. CONCLUSION

In St. Bonaventure’s thought, if we consider the Incarnation as logically preceding Creation in the horizon of an anthropological centrality in Christ, the whole Trinity relationally structures the cosmos as *creatio continua* and as *vocatio continua* with the human person. St. Bonaventure’s Trinitarian theology, as we have seen, posits the Father as *fontalis plenitudo*, that is, as a positive Trinitarian living source, and emphasizes this relational dimension through the intratrinitarian dynamism of the *bonum sui diffusivum*, which is then expressed *ad extra* in Creation.

In this way, there is a shift from causality to relationality in the very structure of the cosmos. The latter, consequently, finds in Christ the expression of this relational causality, in the logic of *emanatio*, *exemplaritas*, *consummatio*. Creation is thus defined with reference to the concept of exemplarity, in which Christ is the model and form of all that exists, in its being created from the womb of the Trinity, in its subsistence, and in its recapitulation in God.

Christ therefore plays not only a decisive theological role but also a metaphysical one, being *centrum*, *medio* and *mediator*, and *ordo* in the Creation and in the Incarnation in view of an intimate relationship with humanity. The close connection between the *ordo amoris* and the *ordo relationis* highlights the fundamental passage for the foundation and sustainability of a theological anthropology, where this sustainability takes on a much more solid and consistent meaning in reference to the Father who, precisely as *fontalis plenitudo*,

sustains and drives Creation and man in particular, in its dynamism from *exitus* to *reditus*. It is therefore this intimate anthropological relationship with the Trinity which, on the one hand, defines the human person and, on the other, nourishes his interiority in the full sense of a Trinitarian indwelling.

It derives a new light shed on our inhabited interiority which is strictly relational and includes the dynamism between origin and fulfilment in which the Holy Trinity lives in us as the fruit and gift of Baptism to inhabit each human person deeply loved. Creation itself will benefit from this awareness, which we are called to recognise and express in a finally re-enlightened anthropology of relationality with God the Trinity.

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