Chapter 7

The Relationship between God and Man
St. Bonaventure, the eminent thinker of the middle ages and an outstanding mystic has concerned himself very much about the relationship between God and man. For a Christian thinker the relationship of creatures to God is very important since Christianity maintains that God created everything out of nothing. Here one needs to avoid pantheism on the one hand and an independent world on the other hand. This problem of one and many is solved by Bonaventure by ingeniously employing the doctrine of exemplarism. The world ‘exemplarism’ is derived from the Latin word ‘exemplum’ meaning a pattern or model. Etymologically it can generally be described as that in imitation of which something is made. Exemplarism as an epistemological principle makes use of the term exemplar, of which something is imitated, and as an ontological doctrine it explains how the divine ideas are the expression of all kinds of created beings. Bonaventure explains the relationship between creatures and God by affirming that God is the exemplar cause of all thing. It is an important doctrine for he considers it as one of the three pillars of his whole system of his metaphysics: ‘... this is our whole metaphysics: emanation, exemplarity, and consummation ... ’¹ He even goes to the extent of declaring that a true metaphysician must consider these
three aspects. Exemplarism plays a pivotal role in the metaphysics of Bonaventure, because creation is nothing but an exemplaristic expression and consummation is returning through exemplaristic ascent. Though exemplarism is put to an extensive usage by Bonaventure his effort is a successful synthesis on the lines of Plato, Plotinus, and more explicitly of St. Augustine.

7.1 Historical Perspective

Pre-socratic philosophers attempted to explain this universe in terms of material principle. They thought that change and permanence are incompatible and that reality had to be one or many, either ever changing or completely permanent. Plato's metaphysics was an effort to reconcile these two divergent views of Heraclitus and Parmenides. He achieved this reconciliation by accepting two worlds, namely the world of archetype and the world of replica. The world of archetype is permanent, perfect and truth is achievable. The world of replica is changing, imperfect and here truth is difficult to achieve. In the world of archetype there are only forms which are the objective essence of every things we find in this world. In the world of replica we find only the individual things which are the
copies of the forms. In the dialogue *Timaeus* the world of replica is said to be fashioned by the creator or Demiurge, i.e. artificer, after the patterns of forms. This Demiurge is depicted as being good and wishing to communicate his goodness, fashioned the universe after an ideal pattern. The Demiurge was conceived as an agent who brings together the matter and forms, because the things of the sensible changing world are modelled after the likeness of the real existence of form. The 'real existence' to which Plato refers are the abstracted class concepts, otherwise known as forms. The forms are hypostatised by Plato and regarded as co-cause with material elements in the original production of things.

The system of Plotinus has as its highest form 'the One, an indefinable ultimate principle. By an overflow of emanation from itself, the One creates the second order, *nous*; this level in its turn generates the level of soul. Thus the neo-platonic world-scheme arises with this three divine hypostases, namely the One, the world mind (*nous*), and the world soul. Each reality except the One, according to Plotinus, emanates from the preceding reality and gives rise to the succeeding lesser entities. The reality of a thing is determined by the presence of unity.
The more unity anything possesses, the more reality it has. For neo-platonic, the one, or the idea of Good has the highest form of unity. Since, from it the world-mind and the world-soul emanated they have only as much reality. The exemplary ideas are contained in the second hypothesis, *nous*. This universe was conceived as a 'great chain of Being starting with the completely real Being, the One. The One overflowed into the next lower level of reality which overflowed producing the next and so on. The process continued down the 'great chain of Being until the stream of reality produced matter which had the lowest unity and almost unreal.

The Christian philosophy in the middle ages was greatly influenced by Plotinus. St.Augustine, by situating the Platonic ideas in the divine mind, paved the way for Christian exemplarism. Though St.Augustine inherited this notion of exemplarism from Plotinus, he differs from the great Neo-platonist in ascribing being to the first principle of the universe. In creation of the universe Plotinus posited a trinity of universal causes: The One, the world-mind, and the world-soul. St.Augustine’s idea of Trinity, inspired by the sacred scripture, is quite different. The persons of the Trinity - the Father, the
Verb or the Logos (the Son) of the Father, and the Holy Spirit - are one in substance, i.e. they share the same being. The second person of the Trinity, the Word, the Logos contains the exemplary ideas. St. Augustine in his De Ideas explained that the divine ideas are stable and unchangeable and they exist in the divine mind eternally. They neither arise nor pass away. The corollary of this is that creatures have ontological truth in them in so far they embody or exemplify the model in the divine mind. There is also one more difference. While for Plotinus the universe necessarily emanates from the One through the eternal diffusion, for St. Augustine God created the universe freely out of nothing.

7.2 Trinity: The Ground of Exemplarism

Bonaventure in continuing this Platonic as well as Augustinian tradition of exemplarism to explain the relationship between the finite self and the infinite self, probe deeply into the problem and comes out with a satisfactory explanations. Bonaventure bases himself and draws scriptural support for his exemplarism from the Biblical text which calls God by the name of 'I am who am.' By
proclaiming that God is the only one who is ultimately real, this title indicates that all things are dependent on Him. Since, God is the ground of everything, He is the first principle. This first principle of Being, the Trinity, is dynamic and expressive in the inner life. The Father, in his self-diffusiveness, expresses himself in generating the Son, who is the perfect image of the Father. In generating the Son, the Father produces in the Son the eternal ideas of *rations aeternae* of all that he can create. These *rations aeternae* existing in the second person of the Trinity forms the ontological foundation of creation outside Trinity. These eternal ideas, which are infinite in number, expresses all actual and possible things. Since, the ideas are existing in the second person of the Trinity, the Son stands midway between Trinity and the created universe. So, Bonaventure, therefore, calls the Son as the centre of metaphysics (*medium metaphysicum*), who can only relate the creatures to the creator as exemplified to the exemplar. Affirming the Son as the centre of metaphysics, Bonaventure states clearly in *Hexameron*: "This must necessarily be the centre of the person; for if there is a person who produces and is not produced (the Father) and a person who is produced and does not produce (the Holy Spirit), there must necessarily be a central person
who is produced and produces. So as *medium metaphysicum* the Son becomes the medium through which the Father expresses all things that are in the universe. Thus, creation is only an outflow of the fecundity of the Father. The creatures are modelled after the eternal ideas in the Son. So the Trinity, more specifically the Word, is the basis of Bonaventure's doctrine of exemplarism. The things of the universe have their exemplaristic grounding in the Word. The universe is like a mirror reflecting God or like a stained glass window in which light is reflected in its various color or a statue depicting a person. Bonaventure divides creatures into various levels of representing God: shadow, vestige, image, and similitude.

### 7.3 Coincidence of Unity and Multiplicity

As to the important question how can a God-head considered as a single unity contain the ideas of all creatures and possible and actual. This problem was explained by Bonaventure through the presence of eternal reasons in the divine mind. These *rationes aeternae* present in the second person of the Trinity can be viewed in two different perspectives. When these ideas are perceived in the
divine mind, they represent unity, and while they stand as originals to the creatures they indicate multiplicity. When they exist in the Son as the divine ideas, they reflect the Father's Word in the creation, they form the exemplary causes of creatures. Because of this two-fold reference, these rationes aeternae resolve the problem of unity and multiplicity. As divine ideas within the Son, they are not distinct from the reality and are not really distinct among themselves. Hence they provide the divine ground of unity. At the same time they are the source for extra-divine multiplicity of existence. When it is said that there are infinite number of ideas present in the Word, it is not meant that the ideas are really distinct in God. Though in God-head there is the distinction of persons considered as existent in God, these three persons, namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are not distinct from one another or from the divine essence. Among the three divine persons, there cannot be any hierarchy, since they share in the same essence of Being. However, the ideas are ontologically one and there is no real distinction among them in the divine mind, they are differentiated on the criterion of one understanding many. The distinction cannot be real in the Trinity or in the divine essence. There is no real relation between the ideas.
But from the side of the creatures there is a real relation among the ideas. From the anthropomorphic point of view the things signified or connoted, the ideas are distinct from one another. From the human point of view the *rationes aeternae* stand in between God and the things they represent in this universe. The distinction among the ideas are not a distinction in what they are, but a distinction in what they connote.

### 7.4 Expressive Analogy

All creatures, the *exemplata*, resemble God, their exemplar. The resemblance between creatures and their creator, and the creatures themselves, is the foundation to form a community where relation is possible to exist. This community of beings is expressed by analogy. Since, analogy permits both likeness and difference, the relationship is best expressed by it. Bonaventure uses two kinds of analogies, namely, analogy of exemplarity between creatures and God, and analogy of proportionality between beings of different genera. Before venturing into a detailed analysis of these two kinds of analogies it may be possible to examine what is opposed to analogy, namely, equivocal and univocal. It is to show that these
two, viz. equivocal and univocal, are not good in explaining the relationship between creatures and creator. By an equivocal denomination two beings are designated to be qualified by the epithet or bear the same name, even though there is no real relation between them. This kind of equivocal consideration is not applicable to describe the relationship between God and creatures. Likewise the relationship cannot be expressed in univocal terms, for there is no common term between God and the creatures. If there is a common term, a third one, apart from God and creatures, and the two participate in it, then creatures would be God and as a result pantheism would result. Bonaventure also excludes the resemblance existing between the three divine persons, each of whom is identical with the other in their divine nature. Even in using the notion of proportion, Bonaventure distinguishes between proportion in a wider sense and proportion in a strict sense. Proportion in the strict sense of the term means proportion between the members of the same class, for example, between arithmetical numbers and in this sense it cannot be used to explain the relationship between God and creatures for it is rigid and exact. Proportion in a wider sense includes proportionality, which exist between sets of things belonging to different genera,
for example, a monastery superior is analogous to a pilot in order of proportionality in relation to the objects they direct. It must be noted that in case of relationship between creatures and God, it is only the creatures who is a member a generic class.

Bonaventure using the analogies divides the creatures into two large groups as vestiges and images: "some created things are vestiges, others images; some are material, others spiritual; some are temporal, others everlasting; some are outside us, others within us." From the first Book of Commentary on the Sentences by Bonaventure, Professor Ewert Cousins enumerated, in a remarkably precise form, four principles that differentiates vestiges from images. They are:

1) the manner of representing God, whether from a distance and obscurely or from near at hand and distinctly,

2) the aspect of God that is involved whether as general cause, or as efficient, formal and final cause, as the object of memory, understanding and will,

3) whether general aspect of God are grasped or personal properties, and
4) the classes of creatures, namely, all creatures reflect God as cause, but only rational creatures have God as an object.\(^6\)

Both the analogies apply to every creature. The analogy of exemplarity applies to every creature inasmuch as every creature is the effect of God and is confirmed to God inasmuch as the creatures also produce an effect, though not in the same way as God produces His effect.

In the light of analogy of exemplarity every creature, whether rational or irrational, is a *vestigium Dei*, though this general conformity of every creature to God is superseded by another type of likeness which is closer to God and expresses more clearly as such a conformity. All the creatures are ordered to God, that is to say the creatures are all arranged in relation to their strength of resemblance to God. While rational creatures alone are directed to God immediately without any intermediary, the irrational creatures are directed to God mediately only. Apart from this closeness, the rational creatures alone can know God, praise God and serve God consciously and so have a greater conformity to God. This close resemblance is designated by Bonaventure as image. Every creature is then a *vestigium Dei*, but only the rational creatures
are an *imago Dei*. A similar difference between rational creatures and irrational creatures can be observed by considering the analogy of proportionality as well. Here a comparison between God and creatures, rational as well as irrational is attempted by considering the effects of their actions. The relation between the cause and effect, in case of every creature is extrinsic to the agent. But in case of rational creatures the relation between cause and effect is intrinsic in proportion to that of the relation between cause and effect in the case of God. In God there is a unity of nature in the Trinity of the three persons, in man there is a unity of essence with the trinity of power. Due to this expressed resemblance in proportionality also merits the rational creatures as images of God. Among these two analogies, the analogies of exemplarity and proportionality, the analogy of exemplarity is more fundamental than the analogy of proportionality. The latter should be treated in relation to the former one and it does not carry any concrete value when considered apart from the analogy of exemplarity.

Though the creatures are categorized into two principle groups, viz. *vestigium Dei* and *imago Dei*, they are distinguished more subtly by considering the ways accord-
ing to which God is expressed by these creatures: “first in terms of essence, considering whatever a thing is, and in whatever genus, be it substance or accident; second in terms of actuated essence, and this applies to substance alone; third in terms of essence made in the likeness of God, and such is spiritual creatures.” By considering the difference in degrees of analogy, the creatures are classified further and arranged in the following ascending order: shadows, vestiges, images, and similitude. Bonaventure in his magnus opus The Souls Journey into God considers these four groups separately in the first chapters consecutively.

7.5 Shadowy World

In one place Bonaventure compares the creatures to a stained glass window and light to the divine ideas. As the window is illuminated by a ray of light myriad of different colours shine forth according to the conglomeration of glasses. Likewise, the divine rays reflected by each and every creature is different in ways and in properties. When the distance between an object and mirror is far the image will be blurred or not clear, in the case of few creatures while reflecting God, because of the properties
they reflect the images are confused and are not clear. A creature is known as a shadow of God when it is related to him without specification of the class of cause under which it is considered. The shadow leads man only to the knowledge of the attributes of God which are common in the same sense to the three divine persons, such as power, wisdom, and goodness.

At the bottom in the material world, the creatures reflect the creator's supreme power, wisdom, and goodness through their three basic characters of weight, number, and measure. In fact, this reflection can be seen in all the seven properties of creatures - the origin, magnitude, multitude, beauty, fullness, activity, and order of all things. In the origin of things the attributes of divine power, divine wisdom, and divine goodness are reflected according to their creation, distinction, and embellishment. The magnitude of things is in their name, power, efficiency clearly manifests the immensity of the power, wisdom and goodness of the triune God. The material creatures are of so multiple in number that they are innumerable in substance, form and efficiency. The beauty of things consisting in the variety of light, shape, and colour also proclaims the above mentioned attributes. The fullness
of things, for matter is full of forms and in turn form is full of power and also power is full of effects, declares the above three attributes. The activities of the creatures which are also of three kinds, viz. natural artificial, and moral, show the immensity of power, wisdom, and goodness of God. The order of creatures reflects the power of God in their duration, position, and influence; wisdom is reflected in the order of divine law, precepts and judgments; and the order of divine sacraments, benefits recompense reflects the goodness of the triune God. This detailed analysis of how creatures at the lowest level reflects God in a vague manner clearly merits them to be branded them as shadows of God. All creatures when considered separately, not in relation to other genus, are shadows, because they all exhibit the same properties as mentioned above.

7.6 Vestigial Creatures

The creatures, which are shadows, when relates themselves to rational creatures through the senses trigger three processes which reflect God. The sense-objects cause apprehension, enjoyment and judgment in the perceiver. The creatures which are characterized by light,
sound, odour, taste, and touch, and also the common objects having number, size, shape, rest and motion are grasped by the sense organs. They are apprehended not through their substance, but through their likeness. The sensible objects, through their likeness, produce images in the medium and from the medium they pass onto exterior organs which transmit these images into the internal organs. From these the apprehensive faculty of the soul grasps the sensible external objects. In the operation of apprehension the likeness of creatures which is generated in the medium is impressed upon the organ itself. This impression to be veridical must reflect or confirm to the likeness of the *rationes aeternae* of God. As all things that can be known generates a likeness of themselves, which is similar to that of co-substantial and coeternal likeness generated by the eternal light, it is clear that they mirror the eternal generation of the Word, the image and Son, eternally generating from God the Father.

From apprehension follows pleasure. When a creature is perceived through an abstracted likeness either because of its beauty, as in sight or because of its sweetness as in smell and hearing, or because of its wholesomeness as in touch and taste brings delight to the soul. All enjoyment
is based on proportion. First proportion involves form, for beauty can be viewed as arrangements of parts with pleasing colour; secondly it involves power and potency for beauty calls for an agreeableness; thirdly it can be viewed as productive and impressive for beauty strengthens or fills the need of a recipient. So the creatures through the operation by which they produce a pleasure also reflects God distinctly. The creatures by their beauty, pleasantness, and wholesomeness suggests that these are present eternally in God. In God only they exist in the highest degree because only in God beauty is united in truth intimately and in a fullness that fulfills every need. By this way also creatures reflect the attributes of God by proportion.

Once the sense objects are apprehended and are distinguished as pleasant and unpleasant, then comes the judgments by which these objects are determined as such and such. In judgments which belong to the interior senses, not only the nature of the objects are determined, but also the reason why something are pleasurable and are also determined. Some objects are pleasurable because of harmony, that is, the object is an instance of a pleasing combination of related things present in them.
This harmony is not affected by the colour or permanence or change of the objects. On judgment harmony is abstracted from place, time, and motion and consequently unchangeable, unlimited and endless and is completely spiritual. Sensible objects through the process of purification and abstraction enter the intellectual faculty of the soul. Judgments are possible only when our reason is unchangeable, unlimited and endless. Through this reason the soul abstracts from place, time, and mutability and thus form dimension, succession and change. If reason has three characteristics then, it must be eternal. Everything that is eternal is either God or in God. So judgments about sensible objects are not made but are from God. In God they exist uncreated and eternally. So judgments are passed about sensible objects in view of the eternal God, by whom the things of the world are produced, conserved and also distinguished. The sense objects which enter our souls through the sense organs, by their very nature bring about in man apprehension, pleasure and judgment. These three processes clearly show how the reflection of God in them is traceable. The traces are comparatively prominent than those of shadows, and Bonaventure designates them as vestiges.
7.7 Man as the Image of God

The soul as an image of God is an analogous to the divine life. It is not a mere effect of God as vestige, but the imitation of God by way of direct expression, because of the proximity to the creator, an image is a distinct form and a close representation of the creator. The imitation of a model can take place in two different ways, by way of quantity and of quality. This is based up on relation of an order or of configuration of parts. The rational creatures are considered as images of God because through their faculties - memory, intellect, and will - they reflects the Trinity.

Memory has got three activities, namely, retention of temporal things, principles, and everlasting light. Bonaventure says that memory retains the temporal things by remembering the past, receiving the present and foreseeing the future. By retaining the principles, the memory holds the principles and axioms of the science which cannot be perceived by means of sensible images. To remember the immutable truths, it has retained the unchangeable light. This triple activity represents a likeness to the triune God.
The soul through its intellectual faculty understands the meaning of terms, proposition and inferences. All these three functions on analysis reveal that they are copies of God. They are meaningful only if they reflect a likeness which resemble the one present in God. The meaning of a term is understood only when it is comprehended in a definition. Since definitions are constructed with universal terms, the understanding of a term leads to God where we find the most pure, most actual and most complete universal terms. Likewise, propositions to be true should be reflected by the unchangeable light of God. Inferences also come from the God because inferences are also possible even when we consider things non-existent. The power of choice also has triple functions as deliberation, judgment, and desire. Deliberation is deciding what is better comparatively. In deciding something better, one shows that the notion of the highest good or the best is imprinted on Him. To make a judgment one must follow a law which is right. To judge something we apply a certain law, then the law must be judged by a law higher than the law. The higher law should conform to the divine law. Since desire tends towards the best, human soul must love the highest good or that which leads him to the likeness of it. So all the three processes
show that the soul is reflecting God as memory reflects the eternity; understanding reflects the truth; the power of choice the highest good. In view of their order, origin and inter-relatedness, through these three terms - memory, intellect, and will - the soul mirrors the Trinity most clearly. As in the Trinity, the generating mind, the Word, and love are in the soul as the three faculties. Since these three faculties are related to one another, as in the Trinity, where the three persons are related to one another as co-substantial, co-equal, and co-eval, they closely represent God and is fit to be called as the image of God.

Not only the faculties reflect a triune God but also what man studies also reflects God in a three-fold way. All philosophy is divided into three as natural, rational or moral. Natural philosophy deals with the cause of being and, therefore, leads to the power of the Father; the rational philosophy deals with the basis of understanding and, therefore, leads to the wisdom of the Word and moral philosophy deals with the order of living and, therefore, leads to the goodness of the Holy Spirit. All these three disciplines in turn divided into three and Bonaventure shows how these also reflect the triune God.
7.8 Similitudous Self

Similitude refers to the rational creatures transformed by grace. It designates an eminent mode of participation in the divine essence, the most immediate mode compatible with the condition of creatures. Similitude is purely qualitative. It does not suppose identity, indeed, it formally excludes it since resemblance can only exist between distinct beings, but it supposes that these distinct beings possess the same quality in common. The image of our soul can be transformed only through the theological virtues, namely faith, hope and charity. Theological virtues lead the soul to purification, illumination, and perfection. When the soul believes in Christ, by faith, as the uncreated Word, it recovers its spiritual senses. With the restored inner senses, the image is reformed into similitude because at this stage the soul is able to see the highest beauty, to hear the best harmony, to smell the highest fragrance, to taste the highest sweetness and to apprehend the highest delight. These spiritual senses prepare the soul for enjoying the mystical ecstasies. These mystical ecstasies are, as Bonaventure cited from the Canticle of Canticles, through devotion, admiration, and exultation. When the soul recovers its spiritual sens-
es and attains its mystical ecstasies through the theological virtues.

The mystical experience is divided into nine levels and arranged in following order: announcing, declaring, leading, ordering, strengthening, commanding, receiving, revealing, and anointing. Among the nine the first three are at the level of human effort. The last three, to grace. Having reformed through grace, the soul sees God in all these operations. Not only the soul which is transformed by grace reflects the likeness to a higher degree, but also the scriptures, which are revealed to the mankind, also reflects the Trinity in the process of purgation, illumination, and perfection. In the scriptures, the law of Moses leads the soul to purification, the divine revelation to illumination, and gospel teachings to perfection. In this stage the similitude is apparent through the infused theological virtues, spiritual sense, and mystical ecstasies.

The radiance of God is mirrored by the creatures in four different phases. In each phase the relationship varies because of the creature concerned in that particular phase. At the bottom lies the creatures which represents God in a general manner, they are known as shadows.
And, in the next phase the creatures represent God in the activities they undertake through the senses, they are like the footprints of God or vestiges of God. In the third phase the creatures mirror the image of God through the mind's activities. And, in the fourth stage similitude between God and the creatures transformed by grace is reflected in the self itself.