Introduction

Atop a full-page miniature divided into three framed rectangular registers, a disembodied face with downward-cast eyes floats against a deep blue background (fig. 1). The busts of five angels emerge from scalloped clouds along the border to gaze upon the face and bathe in the golden flames and rays of silver (now oxidized), orange, and white that it emits. On the left, a nude man wearing a mitre is presented to the face by two angels, his hands clasped in prayer as he, too, witnesses this dazzling display. The rays emanating from the face frustrate the strip of parchment that divides this register from the one below it; along with the tips of a few golden flames, they cascade onto two kneeling figures set against a patterned rose background evoking a woven textile. On the left, a man dressed in the habit of a monk glances upward, holding a crozier in his left hand and pointing down with his right. Opposite him, a bearded man with a halo raises his hands and face toward the source of light, while his sword stands in front of him, its tip, along with the figure’s foot, plunging into the strip of parchment beneath him. This final divider filters the rays cast by the face, allowing only white ones to penetrate the lowest register. Here, against a golden background, a man and woman dressed in lay attire kneel on either side of a diagram of the cosmos, at the center of which is the tree of knowledge, framed by Adam and Eve, who touch the tree and point to their eyes.
This perplexing image appears after a cycle of 109 biblical scenes on folio 16r of the *Omne Bonum*, an encyclopedia compiled in London between 1359 and 1375 (London, British Library Royal 6 E VI-VII).¹ The first known work to organize knowledge from various fields in alphabetical order, the *Omne Bonum*’s 1092 folios, measuring 46 by 31.2 centimeters, contain hundreds of articles on topics ranging from canon law, natural history, and moral instruction to theology, biblical history, and hagiography. Assembled in three distinct campaigns by a single scribe, James le Palmer, the manuscript was left unfinished at his death in 1375.² A relatively wealthy man who served as the king’s clerk in the Exchequer, James enlisted the help of four illustrators to embellish his manuscript with over 750 miniatures and historiated initials.³

The text opposite this image, on folio 15v, offers some assistance in deciphering its subject matter, allowing the figure in monastic robes to be identified as St. Benedict, his companion as St. Paul, and the naked mitred figure as Germanus, the bishop of Capua (fig. 2). Quoting the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great, the text begins by reporting how St. Benedict, while in prayer, “beheld a flood of light shining down from above more brilliant than the sun,” and saw the “whole world … gathered up before his eyes in … a

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² In the preface to the manuscript, the scribe refers to himself as James and expresses hesitance to identify himself further (“Ego Jacobus … cuius cognomen alios volo ex causa latere, presens opus cum magno labore ac iugi mentis desiderio compilavi”). Sandler has identified the compiler as James le Palmer by comparing the handwriting in the *Omne Bonum* to James le Palmer’s personal copy of the Gospel Commentary of William of Nottingham (Oxford Bodleian MS Laud Misc. 165) (Sandler, *Omne Bonum*, 16-19).

³ James left marginal instructions for his illuminators, and after his death, twenty-three historiated initials were inserted in spaces that had been left empty. He also employed four craftsmen who executed the penwork initials. See Lucy Freeman Sandler, “Notes for the Illuminator: The Case of the *Omne Bonum*,” *The Art Bulletin* 71 (1989): 551-564.
single ray of light” as the soul of Germanus was “carried by angels up to heaven in a ball of fire.” Benedict’s vision is coupled with one described by Paul in II Corinthians 12:2-4, in which a man is “rapt up to the third heaven,” where he “saw and heard inexpressible things.” Paraphrasing the *Glossa ordinaria* on the Pauline Epistles and Augustine’s *De Genesi ad litteram*, the text explains that Paul is speaking here of his own vision, in which he saw God in himself, and “not in any semblance.”

Identified alternately as a depiction of the beatific vision—the deceased soul’s face-to-face encounter with God—and as the visions of Saints Paul and Benedict, this image is often cited as an example of the growing confidence in vision in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, particularly as a means of knowing God. This paper suggests instead that folio 16r can be described most accurately as a diagram of both the potentials and limitations of human vision. Comparing the image to its likely source, it will argue that the *Omne Bonum* illumination situates imperfect human vision in relation to its most

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5 “Scio hominem in Christo ante annos quattuordecim sive extra corpus sive extra corpus nescio Deus scit raptum eiusmodi usque ad tertium caelum et scio huiusmodi hominem sive in corpore sive extra corpus nescio Deus scit quoniam raptus est in paradisum et audivit arcana verba quae non licet homini loqui” (II Corinthians 12:2-4).

6 “Superquibus verbis apostoli beatus augustinus in glosa ibidem & similiter super genesim ad literam liber xii versus finem exponendo dicit beatum apostolum raptum id est contra naturam elevatum usque ad terciunm celum id est ad cognicionem deitatis ut non solum audiret arcanam sed ut videret ipsa deum … deum in se non in aliqua figura videret” (BL Royal 6 E VI, fol. 15v), transcribed by Sandler, “Face to Face,” 230, n. 28.

perfect form, unachievable by the manuscript’s reader in this life, and that this was an exercise crucial to the presentation of the manuscript’s ambitious contents.

**Face-to-Face with God? A Pictorial Source for the *Omne Bonum***

In I Corinthians 13:12, Paul famously states: “Now we see only puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we shall see face to face. My knowledge now is partial; then it will be whole, like God’s knowledge of me.” Discussing this passage, Ambrose explains that as long as man is “enveloped in the thick substance of the body and covered over by the stains and pollutions of the flesh,” he cannot see God “with clarity.” The bishop of Milan assures his readers, however, that immediately upon its separation from the body, the soul “will be allowed to look upon the glory of God, and His face will be revealed.”

Ambrose’s conviction that souls would enjoy an unmediated experience of the divine essence upon purification and before the Last Judgment and Resurrection was a matter of debate, but by the eleventh century, the majority of western theologians concurred that the beatific vision would be immediate, an opinion affirmed by Bishop William of Auvergne at the 1241 Condemnations of Paris. On 1 November 1333 in the

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10 In general, Greek exegetes such as Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Cyril of Alexandria argued that the beatific vision would occur after the Last Judgment, while Western exegesis, including Ambrose, Jerome, and Gregory the Great held that it would be immediate. Augustine is an exception to this generalization: he interpreted Job 19:26 (“and in my flesh I shall see God”) to mean that the beatific vision would only occur after the resurrection (Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York: Random House, 1950),
cathedral of Avignon, however, Pope John XXII delivered a sermon in which he expressed his opinion that purified souls would have to wait until after the Last Judgment and General Resurrection to experience this face-to-face encounter with God. To support his view, John cited the exegetical tradition associating the altar in Revelation 6:9 with Christ, and stated that before the Resurrection, purified souls are placed “under the altar,” where they are “under the consoling protection” of Christ’s humanity. Only after the Last Judgment and Resurrection, once finally reunited with their bodies, could the souls, now “on the altar,” gaze with beatitude on the divine essence. At this point, “they will see not only the humanity of Christ, but also His divinity. They will see the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

John’s concept of the deferred beatific vision was given pictorial form in a miscellany compiled between 1325 and 1335 by Roger of Waltham, a secular canon of St. Paul’s and the author of an influential political treatise, the *Compendium morale* (Glasgow, University Library MS Hunter 231 U.3.4). Consisting of 485 pages on

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12 “Merces Sanctorum ante Christi adventum erat sinus Abrahae. Post adventum vero Christi et eius passionem et ascensionem in caelum merces Sanctorum est et erit usque ad diem iudicii esse sub altari, i.e., sub protectione et consolatione humanitatis Christi. Sed postquam Christus venerit ad judicium erunt super altari, i.e., super Christi humanitate, quia post diem iudicii videbunt … non solum humanitatem Christi, sed etiam eius divinitatem, ut in se est. Videbunt etiam Patrem et Filium et Spiritum Sanctum.” For the entire sermon, see Marc Dykmans, ed., *Les sermons de Jean XXII sur la vision béatifique*, M.H.P., 34 (Rome: P.U.G., 1973), 96. Bernard of Clairvaux’s commentary on this passage was particularly influential for John’s reading of Revelation 6:9 (see Bernard’s *Fourth Sermon of All Souls in PL* 183, col. 471C-475D).

vellum, Roger’s manuscript begins with 98 pages of devotional texts, including writings by Anselm, Hugh of St. Victor, Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Benedict, as well as anonymous meditations, hymns, and prayers to the Virgin. The remainder of the manuscript is devoted to philosophical texts: pages 99 to 274 consist largely of works excerpted from Seneca, and the final pages present a compilation of Aristotle’s writings.

On page 85, included among the devotional texts and following several hymns to the Virgin, is a full-page illustration strikingly similar in form and content to the *Omne Bonum*’s folio 16r (fig. 3). In the upper register of a page also divided into three sections, a disembodied face once again appears, its crystalline blue eyes directed out toward the viewer, with orange rays emanating from it in every direction. A cruciform orange halo frames the face, which is surrounded by a ring of golden flames. As in the *Omne Bonum*, angels appear from clouds along the register’s border and present the soul of Germanus to the face. In the middle register, Benedict and Paul, here identified by an inscription dividing the two registers, are shown kneeling once more against a rose, textile-inspired background, their faces directed toward the source of light. Both figures adopt gestures similar to those taken by their counterparts in the *Omne Bonum* manuscript: Paul clasps his hands together, his sword in front of him, while Benedict holds a crozier and points to the cosmos below, identifying it as the object of his vision.

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*Renaissance Illuminated Manuscripts from Glasgow University Library* (New York: Harvey Miller, 1987), no. 27. Otto Pächt was the first to associate the manuscript with Roger of Waltham (see Young and Aitken, *Catalogue*, 183, n. 5).

14 This correspondence was noted as early as 1908 in Young and Aitken, *Catalogue*, 180.


A second inscription serves as a divider between the middle and lower registers, which contains two identical male figures, both portraits of Roger, one dressed in blue and one in red, kneeling on either side of a diagram of the cosmos. The figure cloaked in blue holds two scrolls, one stating “All creating I beg, as I hope, have mercy on Roger” that ascends to unite with the inscription above Benedict, and the other circling the cosmos: “May all things created by God be my medicine.” Unlike the *Omne Bonum*, labels identify the twelve concentric circles of the cosmos as water, air, fire, the planets, and the firmament, but Adam and Eve, now in the act of eating fruit from the tree of knowledge, once again occupy its core. As in the *Omne Bonum*, citations from Gregory the Great’s *Dialogues*, Augustine’s *De Genesi ad litteram*, and the *Glossa ordinaria* are included on an accompanying text page to further explicate the image’s contents.

As John XXII stipulated, the object of Germanus’s vision on ascending into heaven is the face of Christ, pictured here as a variant on the English iconographic tradition associated with the *Veronica*, the cloth bearing a miraculous imprint of Christ’s face. After the relic suddenly turned upside down during a 1216 procession—an event that Pope Innocent III interpreted as a sign of divine displeasure—the pope composed the *Salve sancta facies*, a prayer in honor of the image, and conceded ten days’ indulgence for its recital. Pictorial copies of the *Veronica* subsequently spread throughout Europe,

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17 The inscription dividing the two registers is not recorded by Young and Aitken and, given the quality of this reproduction, is mostly illegible. It appears to quote directly from the *Dialogues*: “videnti Creatorem angusta est omnis creatura” (*PL* 66, col. 0198D).


19 “Primum mobile; Firmamentum; Spera saturni; Spera iouis; Spera martis; Spera solis; Spera ueneris; spera mercurij; Spera lune; Ignis; Aer; Aqua.” Transcribed in *Ibid.*, 183.

20 Matthew Paris records this event on folio 49v of the *Chronica Majora* (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 16), along with an image of the *Veronica* (see Suzanne Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris in the*...
and appear in several English manuscripts accompanied by the prayer. The first instance of this image-text pairing is found in a Psalter likely made by Matthew Paris around 1240 for an Augustinian house in or near Oxford (London, British Library Arundel MS 157) (fig. 4). The similarities between this face and the one in Roger’s manuscript are evident: in both, Christ looks out at the viewer, his face set against a blue background, he is given long brown hair and a cruciform nimbus, and his beard is parted in the center.

While the features of Christ’s face in Roger’s manuscript bear many resemblances to English images of the Veronica, the face’s departures from this iconographic tradition are equally revealing. An image like Matthew Paris’s makes explicit that its depiction of Christ is an earthly likeness: showing Christ en buste, it implies that Christ has a body, and its matte coloring similarly suggests that the figure depicted is of this world. The face of Christ in Roger’s manuscript is, in contrast, disembodied, thus signaling its status


23 Similar comparisons might be made to the Veronica in the Westminster Psalter (London, BL MS Royal 2.A.XXII, fol 221v), in the Lambeth Apocalypse (Lambeth Palace, MS 209, fol 53v), in Matthew Paris’s Chronica Majora, fol 49v, and in the Evesham Psalter (London, BL MS Add 44874).

24 On the significance of showing Christ’s face as either disembodied or part of a bust-length portrait, see Wolf, “From Mandylion to Veronica,” 153ff.
as divine apparition rather than earthly portrait. Its fiery halo, furthermore, removes it from an image such as Matthew Paris’s, asserting Christ’s divinity as it portrays him in his human aspect.

The *Salve sancta facies* accompanying English images of the *Veronica* reminds the beholder that the direct view of Christ offered by the image is only a preview of the beatific vision. Lacking the text of this prayer, Roger’s manuscript makes Innocent’s caveat apparent through visual means. Engaging with the common trope associating Christ with light, rooted in Christ’s statement “I am the light of the world,” the blazing face identifies Christ as light, an association also employed by Innocent, who describes the Holy Face as “shining with the vision of divine splendor.” In equating divinity with light, Roger’s manuscript also suggests the means by which knowledge of the divine is gained: namely, through the emanation of light.

By portraying the mechanism of the beatific vision itself, Roger’s manuscript enters into a broader theological dialogue pre-dating the Avignon debates. While the disputes in the 1330s centered around the question of when the beatific vision would be

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25 Unlike Matthew Paris’s *Veronica*, furthermore, Christ here appears to have slightly differently-sized eyes, recalling the icon of Christ from the Monastery of St. Catherine’s at Mount Sinai.

26 The prayer as recorded by Matthew Paris reads: “... Deus qui signatis lumine Vultus tui memoriale tuum ad instanciam Veronicae sudario impressam imaginem relinququere voluisti, per passionem et crucem tuam tribue nobis quaesumus ut ita nunc in terries per speculum et in enigmate ipsam adorare et venerari valeamus ut facie ad faciem venientem judicem Te securi videamus. Qui vivis et regnas cum Deo Patre ...” (Transcribed in Mangoux, “Les Offices de la Sainte Face,” 29). Matthew Paris took further steps to express the status of the Veronica image as a “preview.” In the Arundel manuscript, he includes an addendum to the text of the *Salve sancta facies* that acknowledges the importance of images in stimulating devotion, explaining: “Et ut animus devotius excitetur, facies Salvatoris per industiam artificis expresse figuratur,” while in the *Chronica Majora*, he painted the *Veronica* on a separate piece of paper and then pasted into the manuscript, asserting its status as an image. See Lewis, *Art of Matthew Paris*, 126-31.

experienced, these were the last in a series of discussions over the course of a century in which the question of how the beatific vision could be experienced—that is, how the created intellect of man could comprehend the uncreated and infinite divine essence—was the more pressing concern for theologians.28

In his *Summa Theologiae* (1265-1274), Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274) affirms the ability of the human intellect to experience the divine, but only with the assistance of a mediating species. To explain how the beatific vision might occur, he compares it to the process of natural, corporeal vision:

In order to see, whether with the senses or the mind, two things are needed: there must be a power of sight, and the thing to be seen must come into sight. For we do not see unless the thing seen is somehow in us … if one and the same thing were both the thing seen and the source of the power of sight, then the one who sees would receive from that thing both the power of sight and the form by which it sees. Now it is clear that God is the author of the power of understanding and can also be an object of understanding. The power of understanding in a creature (since it is not itself God’s essence) must, therefore, be a sharing by likeness in the one who is the primordial intelligence. We therefore call it a sort of intelligible light derived from the primordial light … In order to be capable of seeing God at all, therefore, the power of sight needs to receive a certain likeness of him…29

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28 On these debates, see especially H.-F. Dondaine, “L’objet et le ‘medium’ de la vision béatifique chez les théologiens du XIIIe siècle,” *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 19 (1952): 60-129 and Trottmann, *La vision béatifique*, 367-417. A major issue related to this debate was whether the resurrected body was required to see God, and thus what role the body played in vision and the *visio Dei*. On this question, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 229-317.

29 “Respondeo dicendum quod ad visionem, tam sensibilem quam intellectualem, duo requiruntur, scilicet virtus visiva, et unio rei visae cum visu, non enim fit visio in actu, nisi per hoc quod res visa quodammodo est in vidente. Et in rebus quidem corporalibus, apparat quod res visa non potest esse in vidente per suam essentiam, sed solum per suam similitudinem, sicut similitudo lapidis est in oculo, per quam fit visio in actu, non autem ipsa substantia lapidis. Si autem esset una et eadem res, quae esset principium visivae virtutis, et quae esset res visa, oporteret videntem ab illa re et virtutem visivam habere, et formam per quam videret. Manifestum est autem quod Deus et est auctor intellectivae virtutis, et ab intellectu videri potest. Et cum ipsa intellectiva virtus creaturae non sit Dei essentia, relinquitur quod sit aliqua participata similitudo ipsius, qui est primus intellectus. Unde et virtus intellectualis creaturae lumen quoddam intelligibile dicitur, quasi a prima luce derivatum, sive hoc intelligatur de virtute naturali, sive de aliqua perfectione superaddita gratiae vel gloriae. Requiritur ergo ad videndum Deum aliqua Dei similitudo ex parte visivae potentiae, qua scilicet intellectus sit efficax ad videndum Deum. Sed ex parte visae rei, quam necesse est aliquo modo uniri videnti per nullam similitudinem creatam Dei essentia videri potest.” Translated in Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Questions on God*, trans., ed., Brian Davies and Brian Leftow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Question 12, Article 2.
This likeness, Thomas concludes, is the *lumen gloriae*, an elevating medium that prepares and strengthens the mind for comprehension of the divine essence. God is infinitely knowable, however, and Thomas cautions that even though the blessed souls know God more perfectly because they are filled with *lumen gloriae*, they can never comprehend him in his entirety.

Thomas’s reliance on optical and light metaphors to explain the process of the *visio Dei* was not unique; similar discussions surfaced earlier that century in the emerging science of optics. Robert Grosseteste (1168-1253), chancellor of Oxford University and later bishop of Lincoln, used the behavior of light emanating from a luminous body as a means of explaining all forms of natural causation, including the process of vision. Following such neoplatonists as Pseudo-Dionysius, Grosseteste considered light (*lux*) to be the first corporeal form, which multiplies and diffuses itself through the radiation of visible light, or *lumen*. Grosseteste extended this discussion to the divine essence, which, he argued, “is a light of most perfect lucidity” and thus operates in the same manner as natural light. Grosseteste’s concept of the multiplication of the species therefore provides a mechanism for the acquisition of both terrestrial and divine knowledge: by studying an object’s species, it is possible to observe the principles of

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31 “Ac per hoc, cum divina essentia sit lux lucidissima, omnis cognitione eius per similitudines, quam per se ipsam obscurior, in rationibus vero aeternis creaturarum in mente divina lucidissimis, quae sunt creaturarum exemplar lucidissimum, omnis creaturae cognitione certior et purior et manifestior est, quam in se ipsa.” Robert Grosseteste, *De veritate*, in Ludwig Bauer, ed. Die Philosophischen Werke des Robert Grosseteste, Bischofs von Lincoln (Münster: Aschendorff, 1912), 142.
nature, and by studying the likeness of the divine through *lumen*, one can achieve knowledge of him as *lux*. Building on Grosseteste’s theory of the multiplication of the species, the perspectivist Roger Bacon (c. 1220-1292) similarly used the behavior of light to explain the process of visual cognition as a multiplication of likenesses or “natural signs” emanating from a source and imprinting itself on a recipient. Like Grosseteste, Bacon, too, justified his study of optics by arguing that it could be used to understand the divine, stating: “celestial things are known by means of mathematics.”

While such Franciscans as Bonaventure offered the concept of knowing God through love, the Scholastic argument ultimately found more supporters. The mechanism of the beatific vision was discussed at length during the Council of Vienne in 1311-1312, and the Acts of the Council, promulgated in 1317, asserted the indispensability of the Thomist concept of the *lumen gloriae*, denying the possibility “that the soul does not require the light of glory to elevate it to seeing God.”

Roger’s manuscript appears to acknowledge this recent declaration. Separated from his body, the soul of Germanus is able to acquire knowledge of the divine through the rays of light streaming from Christ’s face. But, perhaps with the assistance of the now obligatory *lumen gloriae*, he is also able to gaze upon the face itself. While the accompanying text reports that they achieved visions of the divine in this life, however,

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33 The Franciscans were divided on this issue. See Trottmann, *La vision béatifique*, 197-208.

Benedict and Paul are shown separated from the source of light by inscriptions that identify the two figures as in the midst of their visions. Instead of gazing directly upon Christ’s face as Germanus does, their visions are effected only by the orange rays issuing from the face that enter their eyes.

This distinction between degrees of vision of the divine was an important one in discussions of the nature and medium of the beatific vision. Although theologians disagreed on whether the beatific vision would occur with or without the mediation of species, it was agreed that humans could only see the divine essence through its likeness. In his influential Sentences (c. 1150), Peter Lombard (c. 1100-1160) follows Augustine, writing that in his original state, Adam could see God without any intervening medium; in his fallen state, however, such a direct vision is unattainable. In his 1225 commentary on the Sentences, for example, Alexander of Hales (c. 1185-1245) concurred, explaining that just as one cannot look at the sun at its source, it is similarly impossible to see the source of divine light; instead, humans can only see it per similitudinem.

Roger of Waltham’s manuscript identifies Benedict and Paul’s visions on similar terms, as experiences of the likeness of Christ achieved through the physical senses: rays, or lumen, emanate from Christ (lux), propagating their likeness along a direct path and entering into the eyes of the two saints. If understood as representing the Thomist concept of the lumen gloriae, these light rays strengthen the minds of the saints, preparing them to

36 “Tripliciter est videre essentiam: per se, per speciem, per similitudinem. Primo modo videt solum Deus essentiam divinam: est enim lux inaccessibilis. Lux autem dupliciter sumi potest: ut est in aere, pati potest oculus eius aspectum. Sic divina essentia in se est invisibilis; ut autem in unoquoque nostrum per gloriam est, sic est visibilis, et hoc appellatur species. Vel potest videri per similitudinem quae est creatura.” Alexander of Hales, Glossa in quatuor libros Sententiarum Petri Lombardi, Book I, Distinction 1, Number 18 (Florence: Quaracchi, 1951). For an overview of the differing views in this discussion, see Trottmann, La vision béatifque, 115-416.
contemplate the divine essence, but not to the point at which they might gaze upon the face itself.

Elevated to a register literally between heaven and earth, the saints are placed closer to Christ than the two figures of Roger below. The nature of their vision is not, however, depicted as fundamentally different from Roger’s, who similarly receives uninterrupted rays of light streaming from Christ’s face into his eyes. But, unlike the saints, the two figures of Roger frame a representation of the Fall, the reason for mankind’s alienation from God and inability to see him as lux. Shown in a perpetual act of transgressing as they greedily shovel apples into their mouths, the actions of Adam and Eve require the two Rogers to perform a similarly perpetual act of penitence in the hopes of obtaining redemption that will lead to a vision of Christ as pictured above. Indeed, rather than articulating a desire to see the divine face as in the Salve sancta facies, the text in Roger’s scrolls express instead his hope for mercy and salvation. The possibility of seeing the Holy Face in heaven, then, is here predicated less on an act of contemplation than on penitence, devotion, and divine mercy.

The constant appearance of Roger’s portrait throughout the devotional portion of his manuscript evidences the prominent role he ascribed to images as a means of achieving salvation.37 In each instance, Roger appears as in this image: kneeling in

37 Sandler discusses several of these portraits as part of a larger study on manuscript patronage: Lucy Freeman Sandler, “The Image of the Book-Owner in the Fourteenth Century: Three Cases of Self-Definition,” in England in the Fourteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1991 Harlaxton Symposium, ed. Nicholas Rogers, 58-80 (Stamford: P. Watkins, 1993). In addition to this manuscript, Roger founded a chantry chapel in St. Paul’s in 1325 dedicated to the Virgin, St. Lawrence, and All Saints, for which he provided rich decoration and gave a set of jeweled and gold-embroidered vestments to be used on the anniversary of his death and on important feasts. In endowments made in 1325 and 1326, he provided for a first and then a second priest to recite the daily office and the office of the dead, as well as other prayers, both before and after his death. Surviving documents indicate that he continued to embellish the chapel’s decoration over the course of the 1330s. On this commission, see idem., “The Chantry of Roger of Waltham in Old St. Paul’s,” in Harlaxton Medieval Studies 10, ed. J. Backhouse, 168-190 (Donington,
profile, tonsured, with red or blue garments typical of a secular canon, his hands raised in supplication, and his gaze directed either toward the object of his devotion or toward the text in scrolls that express his hope for heavenly favor. In the full-page miniature of the Coronation of the Virgin on page 83, for example, Roger actually enters into a mandorla formed by text scrolls that enclose the Virgin and Christ (fig. 5). He looks up toward Christ, but the scroll in his hand addresses the Virgin and enters her ear: “Ruling with your Son, let a realm be prepared for Roger.”\(^{38}\) He also appears in any number of historiated initials: in an initial beginning Augustine’s “On the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary,” Roger is separated from the heavenly scene by his scroll, which reads: “Gentle lady ascending to the heavenly realms which I seek, plead for Roger,” while in an initial accompanying Stephen Salley’s Meditations on the Fifteen Joys of the Blessed Virgin, he kneels before the Virgin nursing the Child in her lap and holds a scroll imploring her: “Be merciful to Roger, Virgin Mary with your Son” (figs. 6 and 7).\(^{39}\)

Like many of the other images in this manuscript, then, page 85 serves a devotional purpose. With their faces directed toward Christ, the two portraits of Roger express visually, and through the texts in their hands, the patron’s wish to ascend to the “heavenly realms” and experience the vision of Christ enjoyed by Germanus. Receiving knowledge of Christ through \textit{lumen}, furthermore, their position outside the cosmos visualizes the inscription above them, which, quoting Gregory, reminds the viewer that

\begin{footnotesize}
Lincolnshire: Shaun Tyas, 2003). The license for the mortmain exists in two copies, Guildhall Lib. MSS 25241/13 and 25241/23.
\(^{38}\) “Regnans cum nato, Rogero regna parato.” Transcribed in \textit{Ibid.}, 73 n. 73.
\(^{39}\) “Celica que quero scandens pia posce Rogero” and “Sis Rogero pia cum nato, virgo Maria.” Transcribed in \textit{Ibid.}, 73, n. 71 and 74.
\end{footnotesize}
“all creation is bound to appear small to a soul that sees the Creator.”\textsuperscript{40} This statement is also fulfilled by the viewer’s own act of looking. Christ’s outward gaze calls for the viewer—and therefore Roger’s—active participation, inviting him to reflect on this face as the anticipation of the vision he hopes to receive upon his death. Engaging in this form of meditation, he, too, is thus granted an elevated view of the cosmos.

**The Beatific Vision in the *Omne Bonum***

It is highly likely that James or one of his illustrators consulted Roger’s Miscellany when designing folio 16r: not only are their shared formal and textual features striking, but James’s position would have afforded him access to the library at St. Paul’s, where Roger’s Miscellany was probably preserved.\textsuperscript{41} Although certainly related to one another, the two images make different claims about the nature of human vision that is evident already in the depiction of Germanus’s vision of the divine face.

While the face in Roger’s Miscellany draws on a well-known iconographic tradition to offer a recognizable portrait of Christ that serves both as the object of Germanus’s vision and as a meditative image for the viewer, the *Omne Bonum* face bears no resemblance to such images of the Holy Face, beyond the central part in his beard. The conspicuous absence of a cruciform nimbus and the complete unrecognizability of the face complicate attempts by scholars to refer to it as Christ, and its refusal to grant eye contact with the viewer further distances it from contemporary depictions of the

\textsuperscript{40} The passage from the *Dialogues* reads: “Fixum tene, Petre, quod loquor: quia animae videnti Creatorem angusta est omnis creatura” (*PL* 66, col 0198D).

\textsuperscript{41} Sandler, “Face to Face,” 231-2.
Veronica, whose efficacy and power, it has been seen, lies in the direct encounter they offer between Christ and the viewer.\textsuperscript{42}

These differences can be understood by considering the two manuscripts in relation to their respective historical and theological contexts. While Roger’s image has never been associated with John XXII’s proclamations concerning the beatific vision, its representation of Germanus’s vision upon his ascent into heaven as one of Christ allows for no other interpretation. John’s view that Christ’s humanity was the object of the soul’s vision before the Last Judgment was not a popular one—among other things, it suggested that Christ’s divinity could be separated from his humanity—and it was debated fiercely in Avignon and throughout Europe.\textsuperscript{43} Roger himself, or his illuminator, appears to have taken issue with the implications of John’s claim, as well: Christ’s fiery halo and disembodied face assert the impossibility of such a separation of Christ’s two natures.

John eventually capitulated on his deathbed in 1334, and the immediacy of the beatific vision was affirmed in 1336 by his successor, Benedict XII, who issued an \textit{ex cathedra} constitution, the \textit{Benedictus Deus}, stating:

\begin{quote}
... souls [after purification] even before the resumption of their bodies and the general judgment ... have been, are, and will be in heaven ... and have seen and see the divine
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{43} The issue of the separability of Christ’s divinity from his humanity was dangerously close to the Nestorian and Cathar heresies. The topic was disputed in Paris, Munich, at the court of Robert d’Anjou in Naples, and almost certainly in Oxford. For overviews of the debates, see especially Trottmann, \textit{La vision béatifique}, 417-812 and Marc Dykmans, \textit{Pour et contre Jean XXII en 1333: deux traités avignonnais sur la vision béatifique} (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1975).
essence by intuitive vision, and even face to face, with no mediating creature but divine essence immediately revealing itself plainly, clearly and openly.\textsuperscript{44}

Recognizing Roger’s adherence to John’s beliefs, albeit with some qualifications, allows his Miscellany, or at least this image, to be dated more specifically to the period between 1 November 1331 and John’s death on 4 December 1334, but it also has important implications for the identity of the face in the upper register of the \textit{Omne Bonum}. After 1336, the view expressed by John and visualized in Roger’s Miscellany stood in opposition to the Church’s official ruling on the beatific vision, and the \textit{Omne Bonum} illustrator was clearly aware of this. Avoiding any reference to established modes of representing Christ’s face, the illustrator depicts the object of the soul’s vision upon ascent into heaven as one of God rather than Christ, while simultaneously emphasizing God’s unknowability to the manuscript’s viewer through the face’s unrecognizability and downward-cast eyes that deny him the very face-to-face encounter enjoyed by Germanus. The flames emanating from the face that transcend the frame above it further contribute to this message: hinting at the immeasurability and uncontainability of the divine, they recall earlier theological discussions concerning the \textit{lumen gloriae} and the impossibility for a created intellect to comprehend something as infinite as the divine essence. Far from

\textsuperscript{44} John’s capitulation is recorded in an apostolic letter: “Fatemur siquidem et credimus quod anime purgata separate a corporibus sunt in celo, celorum regno et paradiso et cum Christo in consortio angelorum congregatae, et vident Deum de communi lege ac divinam essentiam facie ad faciem clare,” with the reservation: “in quantum status et conditio compatitur anime separate.” The letter is recorded by N. Valois, “Jacques Duëse, Pape sous le nom de Jean XXII,” in \textit{Histoire littéraire de la France} II, ed. M. Tourneux, 551-627 (Paris: A. Colin, 1910), 620. The \textit{Benedictus Deus} reads: “… ac quod animae puerorum eodem Christi baptismate renatorum et baptizandorum cum fuerint baptizati, ante usum liberi arbitrii decedentium, mox post mortem suam et purgationem praefatam in illis, qui purgatione huismodi indigebant, etiam ante resurrectionem suorum corporum et iudicium generale post ascensionem Salvatoris Domini nostri Iesu Christi in caelum, fuerunt, sunt et erunt in caelo, caelorum regno et paradisio caelestis cum Christo, sanctorum Angelorum consortio congregatae, ac post Domini Iesu Christi passionem et mortem viderunt et vident divinam essentiam visione intuitive et etiam faciali, nulla mediante creatura in ratione obiecti visi se habente, sed divina essentia immediate se nude, clare et aperte …” The constitution in its entirety is recorded in Denzinger, \textit{Enchiridion}, 296-7.
inviting contemplation on the part of the viewer, as the Holy Face in Roger’s manuscript does, this face thus categorically denies the possibility of viewer interaction, and, in so doing, requires him to take a different approach to gaining knowledge of the divine—one exemplified by the saints in the register below.

**Saintly Vision in the *Omne Bonum***

Like Roger’s Miscellany, the *Omne Bonum* distinguishes Germanus’s vision of the deity from Benedict and Paul’s through the behavior of light. Giving pictorial form to an unimaginable vision of the divine essence, however, the *Omne Bonum* illustrator pushes the light metaphor employed in Roger’s Miscellany further. While in Roger’s manuscript, orange rays issuing from Christ’s face transgress the page’s framing devices to enter indiscriminately into every register of the manuscript, in the *Omne Bonum*, a strip of blank parchment both separates the two saints from the face of God and interrupts the rays emanating from his face. Denied a direct view of the deity, the saints are nonetheless showered in silver, white, and orange rays that continue beneath the boundary, passing over their heads and onto their bodies while avoiding contact with their faces.

An explanation for this allocation of rays—identified by the *Benedictus Deus* as “divine essence” itself and not a “mediating creature” such as the *lumen* depicted in Roger’s Miscellany—may lie in contemporary optical theory employed during the Avignon debates. Integrating Euclidean geometry with a physical and physiological discussion of optics, the eleventh-century Arabic philosopher Alhazen proposed that every point on the surface of an object issues visual rays in all directions. To explain how such a scenario would not result in chaos, he posited that only rays that reach the eye’s
convex surface directly, that is, at an angle perpendicular to it, are responsible for sight, while other rays are “refracted … on the surface of the eye and pass through … the eye along lines that are oblique with respect to the eye’s surface.” As part of this argument, he explains that the “effect of light arriving along perpendiculars is stronger than the effect of light arriving along oblique lines.”

Drawing on Alhazen, several western theorists offered theological interpretations to accompany this distinction between direct and refracted vision. Roger Bacon, for example, wrote that God, by virtue of his omniscience, possessed direct vision (indicated in the *Omne Bonum* by his downward gaze that surveys creation), that angels had refracted vision, and that human vision, weakest of all, was reflected. Within this reflected vision are three more distinctions: direct in those who are “perfectly good,” refracted in those whose imperfections prevent grace from continuing in them an “altogether straight course,” and reflected in those “who are in mortal sin” and “reflect and repel from them the grace of God.”

Bacon offers a second interpretation more suggestive for the present context. He explains:

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46 “… Nam in bonis perfectis infusio gratiae comparatur luci directe incidenti et perpendiculiari, quoniam non reflectunt a se gratiam, nec frangunt per declinationem ab incessu recto, qui attenditur secundum viam perfectionis vitae. Sed infusion gratiae in imperfectos, licet bonos, comparatur luci fractae; nam propter imperfectiones eorum non tenet gratia in eis incessum omnino rectum. Peccatores autem, qui sunt in peccato mortali, reflectunt et repellunt a se gratiam Dei, et ideo gratia apud eos comparatur luci repulsae seu reflexae …” Bacon, *The Opus Majus*, Part IV, Distinction IV, Chapter 16, 216-7. Translated in Bacon, *Opus Majus*, 239.
Man has a threefold vision; one perfect, which will come in a state of glory after the resurrection; the second in the soul separated from the body in heaven until the resurrection, which is weaker; the third in this life, which is the weakest, and this is correctly said to be by reflection. As the apostle says, “We now see by means of a glass darkly, but in glory face to face,” and after the resurrection in perfect directness, and before it in a deviation from that directness of vision in our soul.47

Peter of Limoges also employed this analogy, making its relationship to the behavior of visual rays more explicit. In his Tractatus moralis de oculo (c. 1280), an exemplum book for preachers that exists today in over 220 manuscript copies, Peter compares direct, refracted, and reflected vision, writing that direct vision is the face-to-face vision of God achieved “in the state of glory after the final resurrection,” refracted vision is that experienced by the soul separated from the body before the final resurrection, and reflected vision, as “seen in a mirror,” is achieved during this life by corporeal vision.48

This analogy was incorporated in the Avignon debates, and it appears that a similar distinction is visualized on folio 16r.49 While the concept of refraction when

47 “Et homo habet triplicem visionem, unam perfectam, quae erit in statu gloriae post resurrectionem; aliam in anima separata a corpore in coelo usque ad resurrectionem, quae debilior est; tertiam in hac vita, quae debilissima est, et haec est recte per reflexionem. Secundum quod dicit apostolus, ‘videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate, sed in gloria a facie ad faciem,’ et post resurrectionem secundum plenam rectitudinem, et ante eam in anima secundum obliquationem ab illa rectitudine.” Bacon, The Opus Majus, Part V, Distinction III, Chapter 2, 163. Translated in Bacon, Opus Majus, 580.

48 Peter of Limoges, Tractatus moralis de oculo (Augsburg, 1475), III.1: “Doctores perspectiue distinguunt triplicem oculi visionem. Prima est per lineas rectas, secunda per lines fractas, tercia per reflexas. Quarum prima perfectior est aliiis, secunda certior quam tercia, et tercia minus certa. Modo consimili spiritualiter loquendo possimus in homine visionem triplicem designare. Unam perfectam que erit in statu glorie post resurrectionem ultimam. Alia est in anima seperata [sic] a corpore vsque ad resurrectionem in cello empireo, diuinam essenciam contemplante et hec visio debilior est quam prima. Tercia est in hac vita que est omnium debilissima et habet hic fieri per reflexionem sicut et visio qui aliquid videtur in speculo, habet fieri mediantibus reflexis lineis.” Transcribed by Dallas G. Denery, Seeing and Being Seen in the Later Medieval World: Optics, Theology and Religious Life (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 104, n. 76. Like Bacon, Peter continues on in this chapter to discuss Paul, citing Corinthians 13:12.

49 The analogy was introduced by William of Chatton, quoting Peter’s Tractatus: “…quod dicit actor Oculi moralis quod secundum perspectives tres sunt visiones, quedam per lineam rectam, quedam per fractam, que(dam) per reflexam, et que habetur in presenti, quedamque per lineam fractam, ut quam habent nunc in celo anime sanctorum, sed quedam quasi per lineam rectam, ut quam habebunt sancti post resurrectionem corporum, et illa est perfectissima. Quod autem est illud speculum Deus novit et multiplex fecisse potuit.” (Transcribed in Marc Dykmans, “Les frères mineurs d’Avignon au début de 1333 et le sermon de Gautier de Chatton sur la vision béatifique,” Archives d’histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge 38 (1971): 105-48, 415). An Anonymous Carmelite author similarly stated: “Auctores perspective distinguunt triplice
applied to light implies a bending or change in direction of rays, the Latin word for “refraction” is formed from the verb *frango, frangere*, “to break.”\(^{50}\) In literally breaking the rays emanating from the face of the deity, the strip of parchment dividing the saints from the object of their vision enacts just this process of refraction, defining the saints’ vision or experience of the divine essence as refracted, separated from the source, and thus weaker than the direct vision enjoyed by Germanus and the angels.

Although the parchment that breaks the rays of divine essence appears at first to be blank, closer examination reveals the faint shadow of the flames that issue from the face and continue in full form in the middle register. This effect, perhaps achieved by the divider’s having been coated with paint the color of parchment, gives it a quality of permeability, asserting a continuity in form between the divine essence perceived through direct visual rays above and through refracted rays below.\(^{51}\)

The rays falling on the saints’ heads and bodies are not direct continuations of the rays originating from the face in the upper register, and it must therefore be acknowledged that if the behavior of the rays of divine essence on folio 16r was intended to relate to optical analogies concerning refracted vision, they do so on a metaphoric

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51 This distinction was essential for perspectivists: refraction interferes in the chain of the multiplication of the species that extends from the object to the subject, but this results in a weakening of the species, not a total dissociation between an object and its species. See, for example, Bacon, *Opus Majus*, Book III, Distinction II, Chapter 3.
rather than literal level. Considering the complexity of the diagram, there is certainly no reason to assume that the *Omne Bonum* illustrator would have felt obliged to work in such an explicit fashion; regardless, the break in the rays of light caused by the divider was not the only pictorial means by which the illustrator thematized the saints’ state of vision.

While Bacon and Peter of Limoges reserve refracted vision for the soul separated from the body, a state they assign to the souls of the deceased awaiting their resurrected bodies, these are precisely the terms with which theologians spoke of Paul and Benedict’s visions. In Corinthians, Paul describes his vision as an out-of-body experience, repeating twice that whether this rapture was “in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows.”\(^52\) For the theologians, this total alienation from the bodily senses was a prerequisite for a living being to enjoy the divine essence. Augustine explains:

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\ldots \text{no man beholds Him while living this mortal life in the senses of the body. This vision is granted only to him who in some way dies to this life, whether he quits the body entirely or is turned away and carried out of the bodily senses, so that he really knows not (to use the words of St. Paul) whether he is in the body or out of the body when he is carried off to this vision.}^{53}
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This distinction was essential for several contemporary theologians, including Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, and Robert of Anjou, all of whom in discussions

\(^52\) II Corinthians 12:2-3: “sive in corpore nescio sive extra corpus nescio Deus scit.”
of the beatific vision explained Paul’s encounter as a result of his complete abstraction from bodily sensation.54

For Augustine, Paul’s experience thus constituted the highest possible form of human vision, the *visio intellectualis*, in which man is elevated

… to the region of the intellectual or intelligible, where transparent truth is seen without any bodily likeness … There the brightness of the Lord is seen … through a direct vision and not through a dark image, as far as the human mind elevated by the grace of God can receive it. In such a vision God speaks face to face to him whom He has made worthy of this communion. And here we are speaking not of the face of the body but of that of the mind.55

And for Grosseteste, this intellectual knowledge of the divine is achieved through light.56

In his *Commentary on the Posterior Analytics*, he writes:

'I therefore say that there is a spiritual light that floods over intelligible objects and over the mind’s eye – [this is a light] that is related to the interior eye and to intelligible objects just as the corporeal sun relates to the bodily eye and to corporeal visible objects. Therefore, the intelligible objects that are more receptive of this spiritual light are more visible to the interior eye…And so things that are more receptive of this light are more perfectly penetrated by the mind’s gaze that is likewise a spiritual irradiation, and this more perfect penetration is greater certitude.'57


55 “Porro autem, si quemadmodum raptus est a sensibus corporis, ut esset in istis similitudinibus corporum, quae spiritu videntur, ita et ab ipsis rapiatur, ut in illam quasi regionem intellectualium vel intelligibilium subvehatur, ubi sine ulla corporis similitudine perspicua veritas cernitur; nullis opinionum falsarum nebulis offuscatur: ibi virtutes animae non sunt operosae ac laboriosae … Ibi videtur claritas Domini, non per visionem significantem, sive corporalem, sicut visa est in monte Sina, sive spiritualem, sicut vidit Isaias, vel Joannes in Apocalypsi: sed per speciem, non per aenigmatam, quantum eam capere mens humana potest, secundum assumptis Dei gratiam, ut os ad os loquatur ei quem dignum tali Deus colloquio fecerit; non os corporis, sed mentis” (*PL* 34, col. 0476), translated in Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Book XII, Chapter 26, 54.


57 “Dico ergo quod est lux spiritualis, que superfunditur rebus intelligibilius et oculo mentis, que se habet ad oculum interiorum et ad res intelligibiles sicut se habet sol corporalis ad oculum corporalem et ad res corporales visibles. res igitur intelligibiles magis receptibiles huius lucis spiritualis magis visibles sunt oculo interiori, et magis sunt huius lucis receptibiles que nature huius lucis magis assimilantur. res itaque
Just as corporeal eyes cannot “gaze on the light of the sun itself,” Grosseteste reminds his readers in *De veritate*, the eyes of the mind similarly “cannot gaze on the supreme truth itself.” With rays of divine essence showering the head of Paul and avoiding contact with his eyes, the *Omne Bonum* thus depicts his vision as an intellectual one. Separated from heaven by his body—figured here as a strip of parchment, literally animal flesh—Paul can only perceive the rays of divine essence in the eye of the mind.

The nature of St. Benedict’s vision as described by Gregory the Great in his *Dialogues* was, in contrast, a topic of debate among theologians. In a 1269 quodlibetal statement, Thomas Aquinas responded to the question “Utrum beatus Benedictus viderit divinam essentiam” in the negative, reiterating that

… it is impossible for a human mind united to a body to see God’s essence unless … a man is entirely dead to this mortal life or is so separated from his senses that he does not know whether he is in or outside his body, as we read concerning Paul in II Corinthians 12:3.

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58 “Sed quemadmodum infirmi oculi corporis non vident colorata corpora, nisi superfusso lumine solis, ipsam autem lucem, solis non possunt contueri in se, sed solum superfusam coloratis corporibus, sic infirmi oculi mentis ipsas res veras non conspiciunt nisi in lumine summae veritatis; ipsam autem veritatem summam in se non possunt conspicere, sed solum in conjunctione et superfusione quadam ipsis rebus veris.” Grosseteste, *De veritate*, in *Die Philosophischen Werke*, 138.


60 Scholastics were particularly critical concerning this question. See J-P Müller, “La vision de saint Benoît dans l’interprétation des théologiens scolastiques,” in *Mélanges bénédictins publiés à l’occasion du XIVe centenaire de la mort de saint Benoît par les moines de l’Abbaye de Saint-Jérôme de Rome* (Saint-Wandrille: Éditions de Fontenelle, 1947), 145-201.
In Gregory’s narrative, St. Benedict calls out to a disciple, inviting him to come and see the vision, thus indicating that he could not have been in “such ecstasy.” Some argued, however, that Benedict had achieved a direct and unmediated vision of God: the Franciscan Matthew Aquasparta (1240-1302), for example, suggested that Benedict had two successive visions, one completely removed from the senses in which he saw God face to face, and then one in which he regained his sensitive faculties and called out to his companion.

Depicting Benedict receiving divine illumination passively rather than through his eyes, the *Omne Bonum* asserts that his vision, like Paul’s, was achieved through intellectual rather than corporeal vision. The status of the two saints as suspended between their corporeal bodies and a pure, heavenly vision is similarly thematized by the textile background against which they kneel: pierced with light, it evokes the biblical metaphor of the veil as a membrane dividing and mediating between this world and the next.

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62 “Ad 9 dicendum, quod beatus Benedictus fuit elevatus usque ad contuitum divinae essentiae, ut videtur Gregorius insinuare in illa ecstasy sive raptu; dico, tamen, quod visio divinae essentiae momentanea exstitit et modicum fuit in ca immoratus; in illo autem momento totum mundum sub se conspicere potuit, dum autem fuit in illa visione, pro illo momento fuit abstracta mens eius ab omni actu virium sensitivum, nec tunc aut vidit aut vocavit diaconum, sed visione elapsa quia adhuc remanerat lux corporea, in qua vidit animam illius sancti episcopi ferri in caelum, ad testimonium miraculi vocavit illum suum diaconum Servandum” (Matthew Aquasparta, *Quaestiones disputatae de gratia*, ed. Victorinus Doucet (Florence: Quaracchi, 1935), 391).

The historiated initials accompanying the description of the two visions on folio 15v do, however, suggest a distinction between them. In the initial introducing Benedict’s vision, the saint sees the soul of Germanus and points down, presumably once again to indicate his vision of the cosmos (figs. 2, 8). He does not, however, see God, neither directly nor through any medium. The initial accompanying the description of Paul’s vision, in contrast, emphasizes his removal from sensory experience (figs. 2, 9). Rather than depict Paul’s vision of God at the moment of being rapt into the third heaven, it highlights a different moment from his life: his conversion on the way to Damascus. The three accounts of this story in the Acts of the Apostles vary in details, but they agree on certain points, one being that Paul first saw a brilliant light from heaven, and was then struck down and blinded for three days.⁶⁴ While the biblical narrative places Paul’s vision before his blinding, the initial conflates the two events, showing light streaming from a facial apparition of Christ, while Paul, struck down, has already closed his eyes.⁶⁵ Linking Paul’s two encounters with God, the initial thus emphasizes that both were achieved through intellectual rather than corporeal vision.⁶⁶

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⁶⁵ The illustrator’s decision to portray the face of Christ rather than God corresponds to the description in Acts, in which Christ speaks to Paul. Peter of Limoges similarly discusses the status of Paul’s vision on the road to Damascus as an intellectual one. In Chapter 4 of the Tractatus he states that spiritual sight requires that the soul receive virtues and grace from God, but that the soul has to operate in conjunction with them through its own virtue. As proof of this, he cites biblical passages in which conversion comes to the blind, using Paul’s conversion on the way to Damascus as his prime example (Peter of Limoges, Tractatus IV.4).
⁶⁶ This distinction between the visions of the two saints might also account for the absence of Benedict’s halo, an unusual omission.
Fallen Vision and Contemplative Ascent

The parchment dividing the saints from the laypeople does not have the same permeability to the divine essence as the upper frame: only a few thin rays of white light pass through this second fleshly barrier to illuminate the cosmos. The ability of St. Paul’s foot to traverse the boundary does, however, suggest the possibility for the figures to enter into Paul’s realm and experience a similar intellectual vision of the divine essence. This is made explicit in the text on folio 15v, which states that the visions of Benedict and Paul are offered as meditative models for the viewer, who can “join with them [the saints] in these same visions” and be “brought to a level of contemplative devotion in order to meditate on celestial matters.” The lowest register on folio 16r provides the viewer with a visual enactment of this ascent that begins with an acknowledgment of the nature of fallen vision, as demonstrated by Adam and Eve.

While Roger’s manuscript shows Adam and Eve in the act of sinning, here, with the two figures pointing to their eyes and touching the tree, the precise moment depicted is ambiguous. As Suzannah Biernoff has noted, the role of sight in the events leading to the Fall became a topic of increasing interest for medieval commentators. Gerald of Wales, for example, wrote in a thirteenth-century guide for the clergy that Eve “first gazed upon it [the tree] heedlessly,” and only then touched it. Considering this exegetical tradition, it might be tempting to suggest that Adam and Eve point to their eyes

67 “Sic igitur in istorum duorum patrum contemplativis visionibus per duos sensus principales visum, id est, et auditum in visionibus ipsis sibi convenientes ad contemplatium devocionem extendi possunt fidelium mentes ad celestia meditanda” (BL 6 E VI, fol. 15v), transcribed and translated in Sandler, “Face to Face,” 230, n. 29.
to emphasize that the Fall began with a desirous gaze rather than with the act of picking the fruit. Such a reading is, however, untenable, in part because Adam and Eve’s mirrored poses would appear to assign equal culpability for the Fall, an interpretation that is not continued in the manuscript: in his article on *Femine*, James notes that Adam was led astray by Eve, and this argument is visualized on two occasions. In the preceding cycle of biblical scenes, Eve plucks an apple from the tree while the serpent addresses her, singling her out as the one who first succumbs to temptation (Adam, meanwhile, gazes to the right, absentmindedly snacking on an apple) (fig. 10). In a historiated initial with God as Christ Logos accusing Adam and Eve, Eve once again picks an apple from the tree and stands closer to her accuser, who points to her and looks at the serpent, identifying the two culprits (fig. 11).

In contrast to these two miniatures, and to the depiction of the Fall in Roger’s Miscellany, the figures of Adam and Eve in the *Omne Bonum* are oddly calm, the emphasis on stasis rather than movement. This is, perhaps, because the figures are meant to depict the result of the Fall rather than the act itself.

While Adam and Eve once enjoyed an unmediated and intuitive vision of God, as several commentators noted, in man’s fallen state, knowledge of the divine could only be gained indirectly. With the rediscovery of Aristotle in the thirteenth century came an increasing acknowledgment of the epistemological potential of the physical senses to acquire this indirect knowledge. In his treatise on sensation, *De Sensu*, Aristotle privileged sight and touch above the other senses, and it appears that James le Palmer did,

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as well: explaining the organization of his compendium to his reader, he highlights their importance, stating that the information contained in the manuscript should “come plainly … to the hands and eyes.”

Alienated from direct rays of divine illumination, Adam and Eve thus point to the two senses that, in the absence of the beatific vision, allow them to gain knowledge of the world in which they live. If this is the state of human vision, however, the question of how to elevate one’s mind to the contemplation of “celestial matters” as exhorted by the text on folio 15v is still unclear. An answer is offered by Richard FitzRalph (c. 1300-1360), a thinker deeply influenced by Robert Grosseteste, Henry of Ghent, and William of Auvergne. Successively chancellor of Oxford, dean of Lichfield, and archbishop of Armagh, FitzRalph was a frequent contributor to the Avignon debates, a preacher, and, most importantly, a figure well known to and in contact with James le Palmer. In his Commentary on the Sentences, written at Oxford in 1331 and cited in the beatific vision debates, FitzRalph offers an extended discussion of the contemplation of the divine.

Operating under the premise that all illumination comes from God, whose active intellect

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72 “… dum ad ipsorum legencium manus & oculos quasi sine labore …” (BL 6 E VI, fol. 18v), transcribed and translated in Sandler, Omne Bonum, 177.


74 FitzRalph’s Lectura on the Sentences survive in seven manuscripts, with three additional fragmentary versions; Gordon Leff argues that the manuscript in Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale, Latin 15853) is the most reliable (see Leff, Richard FitzRalph, Appendix I).
actualizes humans’ potential intellect, FitzRalph explains that there are two types of knowledge: external knowledge achieved through the senses and mediated by species, and intelligible knowledge accessible only through inner illumination and independent of species. FitzRalph argues that the only way to know God is by turning away from the outside world as a source for knowledge, and he describes a process of ascent achieved through meditation and the disengagement from the senses.\(^75\) Through contemplation, he states, the soul can slowly dispense with the senses and thus intensify illumination from the active intellect.\(^76\)

This movement away from knowledge gained externally toward an internal knowledge independent of the senses is enacted by the two lay figures kneeling on either side of the cosmos: while the woman looks directly at the cosmos, suggesting her

\(^75\) “Sed dico quod ista cogitatio est habitualis, sed non percipitur ab anima, primo propter passionem naturalem quam habet a corpore sicut dicit Philos [Aristotle]…;” (Paris Latin 15853 I, q. 6, 38 vb, transcribed in Leff, Richard FitzRalph, 85, n. 1) and “Sed bico paulatim de crescentibus turbulationibus naturaliter causatis in anima a corpore per exercitium speculationis crescit ista illustratio et coniunctio cum hoe lumine primo, scilicet cum intellectu agente et paulatim intelligit anima per istum tanquam per representans quicquid intelligit per aliquid alius in ipsa” (Paris Latin 15853 I, q. 6, 39 ra, transcribed in Ibid 85, n. 3). Like Augustine, FitzRalph defines three levels of vision: corporeal, spiritual and intellectual. Corporeal and spiritual revelation, like vision, constitute sensory knowledge derived from sensory experience, one directly from corporeal objects and the other internally through corporeal images in the mind, but intellectual revelation is achieved independently of corporeal images: “Alio modo accipitur revelatio proprie pro ostensione facta aliucui respectu futuri contingentis naturaliter. Et sic loquendo de revelatione quia sic maxime est ad propositum istius articuli et argumentorum, dico quod revelatio est triplex sicut visio vel cognitio actualis … sicut dicit Augustinus 12 Super Genesim ad Litteram capitulis 10, 11 & 17 est visio corporalis, visio spiritualis et visio intellectualis” (Paris Latin 15853 I, q. 14, 91 va, transcribed in Ibid. 43, n. 2) and “visio intellectualis secundum ipsum ibi est cognitio actualis qua intellectus cognoscit aliquid absque imagine corporali, ciusmodi est cognitio cuiuslibet rei existentis in intellectu” (Paris Latin 15853 I, q. 14, 91 va, transcribed in Ibid., 44, n. 1).

\(^76\) FitzRalph links the necessity for the disengagement from the senses explicitly to the Fall: Had he remained in a state of innocence, man would have remained free of a mortal body and thus independent of material objects for his knowledge, but now his vision is clouded and the ability to discern truth varies from individual to individual, according to the intensity of the light of the active intellect, which is in inverse proportion to the senses: “tenet expresse quia mens habet actualum notitiam sui semper et ante omnem actum intelligendi qui sit ab exteriori motione sicut enim istum actum impressum naturaliter sibi ab illustratione lucis eternae … et ista splendor naturalis anime in aliquo minor est, in aliquo major, secundum quod plus vel minus est abstractus a fantasmibus. Et iste modus cognoscendi ut dicit [Doctor Solempnis], est anime naturalis, ut est intelligentia quedam naturalis quam [ms. quem] recipisset homo si stetisset in statu innocentie valde intense. Sed postquam anima est coniuncta corpori corruptibile quod aggregat animam huius splendor in ipso tenebris et plus cum fantasmatibus involuitur et per amorem inheregit cognitis imaginatio in intellectu” (Paris Latin 15853 I, q. 1, 38va, transcribed in Ibid., 83, n. 1).
contemplation of worldly things, the man looks up, his eyes meeting the weakened divine rays that manage to pass through the barrier. The differing degrees of vision experienced by the two figures are also indicated by the behavior of the rays falling on them. In Roger’s Miscellany, the two saints are spread apart from one another to accommodate the direct passage of *lumen* from Christ to the cosmos, but here the saints are concentrated in the center of the register, serving as further impediments to the rays of divine essence. While some rays manage to pass between the two figures and onto the cosmos, the ones descending upon the woman’s head are triply removed from their source: after crossing the barrier above the saints, they are reflected off Paul’s once-silver sword before finally passing through the second barrier and onto her head. The rays falling on the man’s head, in contrast, though appearing as if out of nowhere, are parallel to the rays falling on Benedict’s head. Subject to two rather than three stages of weakening, the rays falling on the man’s head suggest that he is one step closer to knowledge of the divine essence than his female companion. Unlike the female figure, transfixed by carnal sight, the man has thus begun the contemplative ascent necessary to achieve a vision such as Paul or Benedict’s.  

Although FitzRalph’s close connection to James le Palmer makes his writings particularly compelling for a study of the *Omne Bonum*, it is important to note that his

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77 The decision to show the man rather than the woman as higher in this process of ascent was likely not benign. One of the longest articles in the *Omne Bonum* is dedicated to *Femine*, and, as Sandler has discussed, is rife with misogynistic sentiments. Quoting Bartholomeus Anglicus’s encyclopedia of natural history, James discusses the moral flaws of women, noting that they are more lustful and consumed by carnal desires than men. He also emphasizes that man, not woman, is the glory of God, and that man is an intermediary between woman and God and should “guide and instruct woman for the glory of God”: “Tribus de causis vir dicitur gloria dei & non femina. Primo quia potencior & gloriosior apparuit deus in creacione viri quam femine, nam precipue per hominem manifestata est gloria dei cum eum fecerit per se & de limo terre contra naturam, sed femina facta est de homine. Secundo quia homo factus est a deo nullo medianti, quia nec est de femina. Tercia quia deum glorificat principaliter idest nullo medio sed femina mediante viro, quia vir ipsam feminam docet & instruit ad gloriam dei” (BL 6 E VII, fol. 114v), transcribed by Sandler, *Omne Bonum*, 170, n. 63. On James’s attitude toward women, see *Ibid.*, 115-119.
advocacy of a shift from external to internal contemplation was not especially unique. Similar concepts were frequently discussed by thirteenth and fourteenth-century writers, in part due to the circulation of the Latin translation of the Arabic philosopher Avicenna, who posited five internal senses that completed the perceptual processes begun by the external ones. In a chapter titled “Concerning the usefulness of converting exterior rays to interior sight,” for example, Peter of Limoges advocates meditation as a means for man to “shift his eye’s gaze from exterior things to interior things.” This concept, in turn, was visualized earlier that century in a historiated initial of a c. 1220 English Psalter, in which two kneeling nuns frame the Throne of Mercy (Cambridge, Trinity College Library, MS B.11.4) (fig. 12). In this Trinitarian image, one nun looks forward, directly at the Incarnate Christ on the cross, while the other, gazing up, acknowledges the Trinity invisible to corporeal sight, its inaccessibility figured here by a golden quatrefoil petal that replaces the face of God.

The viewer of the *Omne Bonum* is invited to engage in this process of ascent. Just as St. Paul’s foot extends the possibility for the lay people to enter into his space and join him in his vision, the legs of the woman and the foot of the man that overlap the bottom frame of the image encourage the viewer to enter into the diagram, and thus into this process of vision. In Roger’s Miscellany, the lower register is actually larger than the

80 My argument is thus the opposite of Michael Camille’s. While acknowledging that the *Omne Bonum* page engages with questions of the invisibility of God, Camille suggests that this initial illustrates a fundamentally different attitude toward accessing the divine than the *Omne Bonum* page: “…devotion to Christ crucified in the Throne of Mercy was carefully censored so as to keep God’s face unseen by the two kneeling nuns and the beholder … A century later, when questions of seeing God’s face became a matter of theological controversy, such qualms were laid aside.” (Camille, *Gothic Art*, 126). On the initial, see also Kessler, “Speculum,” 6 and Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *Rothschild Canticles: Art and Mysticism in Flanders and the Rhineland circa 1300* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 134-6.
upper register, giving prominence to the portrait of Roger and inviting the viewer to contemplate both creation and the creator. The saints, meanwhile, are wedged between the two spaces, serving more as mediating figures than as models of contemplative meditation. In the Omne Bonum, in contrast, the lowest register is the smallest of the three, with the saints’ register slightly larger, and the heavenly realm the largest of all. The lowest register thus offers a point of entry, but it by no means commends itself as the ultimate goal of the viewer’s contemplative process.

The lustrous golden background of the lower register issues a similar call to inner contemplation by reminding the viewer of the “reflected” nature of corporeal sight, as described by such figures as Roger Bacon and Peter of Limoges. Discussing reflections in mirrors, perspectivists acknowledged that the weakened species responsible for this type of sight could be misleading. John Pecham (c. 1230-1292), for example, concedes that an object seen in a mirror can be “misapprehended in position and sometimes in number.”81 Describing such visual errors as a constant feature of human vision, Peter of Limoges reminds his readers that mirrors reverse reality: “the eye should not judge something seen in a mirror because the right appears on the left and vice versa …” For him, this distortion can be combated by internal contemplation, in which the eye’s perception of external things is processed by the internal “eye of consideration.” At that point, “those things that seem to be on the left, that is, what we call adversities, appear to be on the right, that is, prosperities; and vice versa …”82 Similar metaphors were employed by

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82 Peter of Limoges, Tractatus, VI.10: “Oculo respicientis in speculo facies apparent prepostere et altitudines videntur euerse. Iudicat non oculus dum res in speculo cernit quod dextrus est esse sinistrus est
theologians, as well. Sparking a long-standing exegetical tradition, Augustine describes
the image of God in the soul as a mirror clouded by sin, stating that the *imago Dei* can
only be recovered by a turn inward. As Herbert Kessler has recently discussed, art, too,
could be understood on these terms: an image of Christ seen with corporeal eyes might be
reflected to the eye of the mind, where vision can be completed, leading the viewer to an
understanding of God. Thematizing the reflected nature of fallen vision, the background
of the lower register, like the figures occupying it, thus exhorts the viewer to turn inward
in order to contemplate knowledge received externally.

**Folios 15-16: Approaching a Vision of God?**

While Roger’s Miscellany offers a meditational image and expresses a hope for
salvation fitting for a personal devotional manuscript, then, the *Omne Bonum* borrows
several compositional elements from Roger’s image to make entirely different claims
about the nature of human vision. Folio 16r is but one in a cycle of images related to
visions of the divine, however, and it is necessary to consider its function within this
cycle, albeit briefly, before concluding.

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sinistrus et econverso et quod est superius esse inferius et quod deorsum esse sursum. Sic et si
considerationis nostre oculus secundum doctrine sacre speculum de rebus iudicet, ea que videntur esse
sinistra id est adversa dicit esse dextra id est prospera: et e contrario, vi titatem aduersitatis et prosperitatis
periculum attendendo.” Transcribed and translated by Denery, *Seeing and Being Seen*, 106. Slightly earlier
in the same chapter, he also refers to an “eye of faith” (oculo fidei) that allows for the contemplation of the
divine (Peter of Limoges, *Tractatus*, VI.7).

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Book 15, Chapters 9, 11, and 23. On the theological
tradition stemming from Augustine’s statement, see Jeffrey F. Hamburger, “Speculations on Speculation:
Vision and Perception in the Theory and Practice of Mystic Devotion,” in Deutsch Mystik im
abendländischen Zusammenhang. Neu erschlossene Texte, neu methodische Ansätze, neue theoretische
The cycle begins on folio 15r, directly following the biblical scenes, with a full-page assembly of the *Arma Christi* divided into 38 compartments (fig. 13). Following the diagram of vision, a transcription of the *Benedictus Deus* is recorded on folio 16v (fig. 14). Beneath the text, a rectangular compartment contains a second disembodied face, this time framed by a cruciform nimbus (fig. 15). In either corner, the busts of three angels emerge from clouds, and beneath them are gathered six men on the left and six women on the right, all kneeling with their gazes directed toward the face.

This cycle has traditionally been understood as depicting “three different degrees of approach to the vision of God.” By illustrating Christ’s humanity, the *Arma Christi* offers the “most accessible” vision; folio 16r represents one that “can be attained through piercing contemplation;” the final image, the face on folio 16v, is then understood as the beatific vision itself, “reserved to the souls of the righteous.” The reading of folio 16r suggested by this paper complicates this understanding of the cycle. Instead of a vision of God attainable in this life, the upper register of folio 16r represents precisely the opposite: a vision attainable only in death, its very impossibility made explicit by the face’s refusal to make eye contact with the viewer. This theme similarly emerges in the *Arma Christi* on folio 15r and the *Benedictus Deus* on folio 16v.

As a series of motifs or signs intended for meditation, the *Arma Christi* invites the viewer to recreate in his mind the events of the Passion, a form of devotion that, the

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85 On this page, see most recently David Areford, *The Viewer and the Printed Image in Late Medieval Europe* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 232-234.
86 This reading of the ensemble is offered by Bertelli, “Image of Pity,” 53 and has been accepted by subsequent scholars, including Sandler, “Face to Face,” 230-1; Hamburger, *Rothschild Canticles*, 136; Camille, *Gothic Art*, 126; and Hahn, “*Visio Dei*,” 189.
accompanying text states, will be rewarded by an indulgence of three years.\(^7\) Despite this summons to contemplation, the fragmentation and compartmentalization of Christ’s body along the central axis hints at the incomplete vision of God offered by these relics of Christ’s humanity. Just as folio 16r emphasizes the limitations of human vision by denying the viewer eye contact with God, here Christ, too, refuses eye contact: as the Man of Sorrows on the bottom register, his eyes are closed; on the cross, above, he looks down; as the \textit{Veronica}, he looks up to the next scene, where, mocked, he looks to the side. Above these physical apparitions of Christ is the Host, which, in making no claims to simulate Christ’s physical appearance, is available to the viewer for ocular consumption.\(^8\)

The \textit{Ave facies preclara}, an indulgenced prayer to the Holy Face composed shortly after the \textit{Salve sancta facies} and often recited along with it during the liturgy, appears below the \textit{Arma Christi} and thus references the tradition of English \textit{Veronica} images discussed above.\(^9\) Reciting the prayer, the viewer voices the hope of contemplating the face of God in the hereafter: “Ut post hanc vitam cum beatis contemplare voluptatis, possum vultum deitatis in perhennium gloria.”\(^9\) This desire is not visually satisfied by the present page, however: although a small image of the \textit{Veronica} does appear, the viewer is not granted a full-page reproduction of the relic as in

\footnotesize{\textit{87} The text states that whoever recites the prayer \textit{Ave facies preclara} and looks at the image with devotion will receive an indulgence of 3 years from Pope Innocent IV (1243-1254): “Quicunque arma superius descripta sive insignia domini nostri iesu christi devote inspexerit, a summis pontificibus subscriptam indulgenciam consequentur” (BL 6 E VI, fol. 15), transcribed by Sandler, “Face to Face,” 230, n. 30. The text below this is 4 columns of verses itemizing the days and years of indulgence granted by all the Popes from Peter to Innocent IV, amounting to 9,035 days.


\textit{89} Innocent IV (1243-53) also added a further indulgence of forty days for reciting the two hymns together. See Mangoux, “Les Offices,” 31-4.

\textit{90} BL Royal 6 E VII, fol. 15r, transcribed in Sandler, “Face to Face,” 230, n. 31.}
earlier manuscripts. Only after recognizing the limitations of his own vision, as diagrammed on folio 16r, is the viewer finally able to turn to the transcription of the Benedictus Deus and contemplate the image of the Veronica included beneath the text.

As the *Ave facies preclara* states, the Veronica on folio 16v is only a prelude to the beatific vision. Its textile-like background makes this explicit, evoking the image’s status as a cloth relic, while the angels emerging from behind the veil allude to the future divine vision.91 Shown here with a neck, this face of Christ furthermore implies that it is an earthly likeness, distanced from the disembodied divine apparition in heaven seen on folio 16r. The face of Christ himself encourages this understanding. Looking up, he directs the viewer’s attention to the text of the Benedictus Deus, itself streaked with shadows of the rays of divine essence that emanate from the face on folio 16r, thus reminding the viewer of Christ’s divinity as he joins the laypeople—who presumably enact the process of viewing diagrammed by their counterparts directly behind them on folio 16r—in gazing upon this relic of Christ’s humanity.92

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91 Its woven pattern finds a precedent in English art in the Veronica on folio 53v of the Lambeth Apocalypse (MS 209). The presence of angels is traditionally understood as situating the scene in heaven, with the lay figures as “living believers” affirming their belief in the immediacy of the beatific vision (see Sandler, “Face to Face,” 229, and, more recently, Kessler, “Face and Firmament,” 154).
92 The formal similarities between the two scenes suggest such a correspondence: both are rectangular and feature kneeling figures framing a circular form in the center. This reading is further supported by the iconography used to depict the serpent on folio 16r. Fixed to the tree of knowledge, it may have been intended to recall the brazen serpent from Numbers 21:6-10, a bronze serpent God ordered Moses to create and erect on a rod to cure the Israelites. Frequently cited by exegetes as an example of the Old Testament advocating the use of images, it was also understood as prefiguring the Crucifixion: according to John 3:14, “This Son of Man must be lifted up as the serpent was lifted up by Moses in the wilderness, so that everyone who has faith in him may in him possess eternal life.” With a *suppedaneum* beneath it that recalls images of the crucifixion, the serpent may refer to this typology. This connection was essential to Christian arguments for images: the Jews worshiped the serpent as an idol because for them, God had remained invisible. Because Christians recognized that the word became flesh in Christ, however, they could use images to access the divine, an action performed by the figures adoring the Holy Face. On the brazen serpent, see Herbert L. Kessler, “The Function of *Vitrum Vestitum* and the Use of *Materia Saphirorum* in Suger’s St.-Denis,” in *Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God’s Invisibility in Medieval Art*, 190-206 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 195-7. On the motif of the *suppedaneum* in
Conclusion: Presenting Human Knowledge in the *Omne Bonum*

Paul’s promise that the future face-to-face encounter with God will result in “whole” knowledge reminds his readers that their “knowledge now is partial.” This statement is articulated visually on folio 16r of the *Omne Bonum*. Rather than glorify the potential of human vision, the image carefully circumscribes and delimits its possibilities. Understood as part of a larger cycle of images, the page takes part in what might be characterized as a staging of the desire to see the divine essence: first evoked by the *Arma Christi* and *Ave facies preclara* on folio 15r, it can only be satisfied after acknowledging the imperfect nature of human vision and the importance of inner contemplation. Even then, the image of the divine rewarded to the viewer is but a shadow of the vision to come.

Such a message might seem unusual as prefatory material for a compendium of human knowledge, described by its title as literally “all that is good.” These pages deal not only with the vision of God as achieved through the contemplation of images, however: they can be understood as a pictorial caveat to the knowledge offered by the manuscript’s contents. In the charged atmosphere surrounding the Condemnations of Paris in the late thirteenth century, in which attempts were made to establish the boundaries between theology and science, many recognized the need to justify scientific inquiry by emphasizing its theological value, an impulse found in the writings of both...

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Bacon and Peter of Limoges. A century later, it would seem, the importance of this exercise had not diminished.

Before embarking on a project unprecedented in its scale or ambition to compile all knowledge gained by human inquiry, then, it was imperative to qualify this knowledge by issuing a warning on the limitations of the epistemological potential of vision. Just as one might shift from exterior to interior contemplation in order to attain knowledge of the divine, the viewer is asked to enact a similar movement from exterior consumption to interior meditation upon encountering the manuscript’s hybrid contents. Only then might he, to quote Bonaventure, “behold God in the mirror of his visible creation,” as set forth in the pages to follow. It must be this very process that James had in mind when, in his preface, he warns his audience of reading the manuscript with carnal eyes: “let those lukewarm and remiss men blush, who, overcome by wearying ignorance, and polluted by the flux of carnal delights, neglect and omit to grasp in their despair this book of honey and the excellent sweetness of the honeycomb.”

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94 Bonaventure, Itinerarium mentis in deum, ed., trans., Philotheus Boehner (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1956), Chapter 2, 51-61. This concept, based in Romans 1:20, was frequently employed by theologians. On this tradition, see Hamburger, “Speculations on Speculation,” 368-379.

95 “Erubescent e contrario tepidi & remissi qui hunc librum mellis & favi dulcedinem precellementem impericet sue consternati languare ac carnalium delectacionum fluxu polluti apprehendere desperabiliter necgligent & omittunt” (BL Royal 6 E VI, fol. 18v), transcribed and translated in Sandler, Omne Bonum, 176.
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