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## The Vision of God

### God granted Moses' request by denying it

And the bold request which goes up the mountains of desire asks this: to enjoy the Beauty not in mirrors and reflections, but face to face. The divine voice granted what was requested in what was denied, showing in a few words an immeasurable depth of thought. The munificence of God assented to the fulfilment of his desire, but did not promise any cessation or satiety of the desire.<sup>1</sup>

### The vision of God is never to be satisfied in the desire

This truly is the vision of God: never to be satisfied in the desire to see him. But one must always, by looking at what he can see, rekindle his desire to see more. Thus, no limit would interrupt growth in the ascent to God, since no limit to the Good can be found nor is the increasing of desire for the Good brought to an end because it is satisfied.<sup>2</sup>

### To see God means to follow Him

So Moses, who eagerly seeks to behold God, is now taught how he can behold Him: to follow God wherever he might lead is to behold God. His passing by signifies his guiding the one who follows, for someone who does not know the way cannot complete his journey safely in any other way than by following behind his guide. He who leads, then, by his guidance shows the way to the one following. He who follows will not turn aside from the right way if he always keeps the back of his leader in view.

For he who moves to one side or brings to face his guide assumes another direction for himself than the one his guide shows him. Therefore, he says to the one who is led, *My face is not to be seen*,<sup>3</sup> that is, "Do not face your guide." If he does so, his course will certainly be in the opposite direction, for good does not look good in the face, but follows it.

What is perceived to be its opposite is face to face with the good, for what looks virtue in the face is evil. But virtue is not perceived in contrast to virtue. Therefore, Moses does not look God in the face, but looks at his back; for whoever looks at him face to face shall not live, as the divine voice testifies, *man cannot see the face of the Lord and live*.<sup>4 5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Life of Moses* 2.232 (p.114)

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Moses* 2.239 (p.116)

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 33:23

<sup>4</sup> Exodus 33:20

<sup>5</sup> *Life of Moses* 2.252-4 (pp.119-20)