

GOD:

HIS KNOWABILITY, ESSENCE, AND ATTRIBUTES

A DOGMATIC TREATISE

PREFACED BY A BRIEF GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF DOGMATIC THEOLOGY

BY

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO DOGMATIC THEOLOGY

NOTION, RANK, AND DIVISION OF DOGMATIC THEOLOGY

1. GENERAL DEFINITION OF THEOLOGY.—Dogmatic theology forms an essential part of theology in general, and therefore cannot be correctly defined unless we have an adequate notion of the latter. Theology, then, generally speaking, is the science of faith (*scientia fidei*).

a) Theology is a science. Every science deduces unknown truths from known and certain principles, by means of correct conclusions. The dogmatician receives, and believingly embraces as his principle, the infallible truths of Revelation, and by means of logical construction, systematic grouping, and correct deductions, erects upon this foundation a logical body of doctrine, as does the historian who works with the facts of history, or the jurist who is occupied with the statutes, or the scientist who employs bodies and their phenomena as materials for scientific construction.

It is true that some Scholastics, *e. g.*, Durandus and Vasquez, have denied theology the dignity of a science, because it affords no intrinsic insight into the *How* and *Why* of Catholic dogmas, particularly the mysteries of the Most Holy Trinity, the Hypostatic Union, etc.¹ But neither do the profane sciences afford us always and everywhere an insight into their highest principles. Euclidian geometry, for instance, stands and falls with the axiom of parallels, which has never yet been satisfactorily proved;—so much so that of late years there has been made an attempt to establish a “non-Euclidian geometry” independent of that axiom. To this should be added the consideration that there are sciences which derive their basic principles as lemmata from some higher science. Such, for example, is metaphysics, which is quite generally admitted to be a true science. Hence it is plain that the notion of a science, while of course it includes certainty, does not necessarily include evidence on the part of its principles. According to the luminous teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas,² *“Duplex est scientiarum genus. Quaedam enim sunt, quae procedunt ex principiis notis lumine naturalis intellectus, sicut arithmetica, geometria et huiusmodi; quaedam vero sunt, quae procedunt ex principiis notis lumine superioris scientiae, sicut perspectiva procedit ex principiis notificatis per geometriam et musica ex principiis per arithmetica notis. Et hoc modo sacra doctrina [i. e., theologia] est scientia, quia procedit ex principiis notis lumine superioris scientiae, quae scilicet est scientia Dei et beatorum. Unde sicut musicus credit principia tradita sibi ab arithmetico, ita doctrina sacra credit principia revelata sibi a Deo.”*³

b) Its specific character theology derives from the fact that it is the science of faith, taking faith both in its objective and in its subjective sense. Objectively considered, theology comprises all those truths (and those truths only) which have been supernaturally revealed and are contained in Scripture and Tradition, under the care of the infallible Church (*depositum fidei*). Hence all branches of sacred theology, including canon law and pastoral theology, are bottomed upon supernatural Revelation. Subjectively considered, theology as a science presupposes faith; for, though reason is the theologian’s principle of knowledge, yet not pure reason, but reason carried as it were beyond itself, borne, ennobled, and transfigured by supernatural faith. It was in this sense

¹ Cfr. Hebr. 11:1: “*Fides ... argumentum non apparentium.*”

² *Summa Theol.*, 1a, qu. 1, art. 2.

³ Cfr. P. Schanz, *1st die Theologie eine Wissenschaft?* Tübingen 1900.

that the Fathers ⁴ insisted on the proposition: “*Gnosis super fidem aedificatur*,” just as Scholasticism was founded on St. Anselm’s famous axiom, “*Fides quaerit intellectum*.”

Hence a sharp distinction between philosophy and theology. Philosophy, too, especially that branch of it known as Theodicy, treats of God, His existence, essence, and attributes; but it treats of them only in the light of unaided human reason; while theology, on the other hand, derives its knowledge of God and divine things entirely from Revelation, as contained in Sacred Scripture and Tradition, and proposed to the faithful by the infallible Church. To elicit the act of faith demanded by this process, requires an interior grace (*gratia fidei*). While philosophy never transcends the bounds of pure reason, and therefore finds itself unable to prove the mysteries of faith by arguments drawn from its own domain, theology always and everywhere retains the character of a science founded strictly upon authority.

2. THE HIGH RANK OF THEOLOGY.—Theology must be assigned first place among the sciences. This appears:

a) From its immanent dignity. While the secular sciences have no other guide than the flickering lamp of human reason, theology is based upon faith, which, both objectively as Revelation, and subjectively as grace, is an immediate gift of God. St. Paul emphasizes this truth in 1 Cor. 2:7 sqq.: “*Loquimur Dei sapientiam in mysterio, quae abscondita est, ... quam nemo principum huius saeculi cognovit ... nobis autem Deus revelavit per Spiritum suum*—We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery [a wisdom] which is hidden, ... which none of the princes of this world knew, ... but to us God hath revealed by his spirit.” St. Thomas traces theology to God Himself: “*Theologiae principium proximum quidem est fides, sed primum est intellectus divinus, cui nos credimus*.”⁵

b) From its ulterior object. The secular sciences, apart from the gratification they afford to man’s natural curiosity and love of knowledge, aim at no other end than that of shaping his earthly life, beautifying it, and perhaps perfecting his natural happiness; while theology, on the other hand, guides man, in all his different modes of activity, including the social and the political, to a supernatural end, whose delights “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard.”⁶

c) From the certitude which it ensures. The certitude of faith, upon which theology bases all its deductions—a certitude that is rooted in the inerrancy of Divine Reason, rather than in the participated infallibility of a finite, and consequently fallible, mind—excels even that highest degree of human certitude which is within the reach of metaphysics and mathematics.

This threefold excellence of theology supplies us with sufficient motives for studying it diligently and thoroughly. There does not exist a more sublime science. Theology is the queen of all sciences,—a queen to whom even philosophy, despite its dignity and independence, must pay homage. Hence the oft-quoted Scholastic axiom: “*Philosophia est ancilla theologiae*.”⁷ The more directly a science leads up to God, the nobler, the sublimer, and the more useful it necessarily is.

⁴ Cfr. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.*, VII.

⁵ *In Boeth. De Trin.*, qu. 2, art. 2, ad 7.

⁶ 1 Cor. 2:9.

⁷ On the true meaning of this dictum, see Clemens, *De Scholasticorum sententia philosophiam esse theologiae ancillam*, Monasterii 1856.

But can any science lead more directly to God than theology, which treats solely of God and things divine?

We should, however, beware lest our study of theology degenerate into mere inquisitive prying of the sort against which St. Paul warns us: "*Non plus sapere quam oportet sapere, sed sapere ad sobrietatem*—Not to be more wise than it behooveth to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety."⁸ Let us not forget that it is punishable temerity to attempt to fathom the mysteries, strictly and properly so called, of faith. (Cfr. *Ecclus.* 3:25.) More than any other study that of theology should be accompanied by pious meditation and humble prayer.⁹

3. DEFINITION OF DOGMATIC THEOLOGY.—The notion of dogmatic theology is by no means conterminous with that of theology as the science of faith. Moral theology, exegesis, canon law, etc., and indirectly even the auxiliary theological disciplines, are also subdivisions of theology. Nevertheless, dogmatic theology claims the privilege of throning as a queen in the center of the other branches of theology. From another point of view it may be likened to a trunk from which the others branch out like so many limbs. We shall arrive more easily at the true notion of dogmatic theology, in the modern sense of the term, by enquiring into the manner in which theology is divided.

a) On the threshold we meet that most popular and most important division of theology into *theoretical* and *practical*, according as theology is considered either as a speculative science or as furnishing rules for the guidance of conduct. Theoretical theology is the science of faith in its proper sense, or dogmatics; practical theology is ethical or moral theology.

Although it will not do to tear these disciplines asunder, because they are parts of one organic whole, and for the further reason that the main rules of right conduct are also dogmatic principles; yet there is good ground for treating the two separately, as has been the custom since the seventeenth century. A glance into the *Summa* of St. Thomas shows that in the Middle Ages dogmatic and moral theology were treated as parts of one organic whole. Upon the subdivisions of either branch, or the manner in which historical theology (either as Biblical science or Church history), is to be subsumed under the general subject, this is not the place to descant.

b) Dogmatic theology naturally falls into two great subdivisions, *general* and *special*. General dogmatics, which defends the faith against the attacks of heretics and infidels, is also known by the name of *Apologetics*, or, more properly, *Fundamental Theology*, for the reason that, as *demonstratio christiana et catholica*, it lays the foundations for special dogmatics, or dogmatic theology proper.¹⁰ Of late it has become customary to assign to fundamental theology a number of topics which might just as well be treated in special dogmatics, such as, *e. g.*, the rule of faith, the Church, the papacy, and the relation between faith and reason. This commendable practice grew out of the necessity of fairly dividing the subject-matter of these two branches of theology, but is chiefly due to the consideration that the topics named really belong to the foundations of dogmatic theology proper, and besides, being doctrines in regard to which the various denominations differ, they require a more detailed and controversial treatment.

⁸ Rom. 12:3.

⁹ On this subject, cfr. Contenson, *Theologia mentis et cordis*. Prol. 1:2. Lugduni 1673.

¹⁰ Cfr. Ottiger, S. J., *Theol. Fundamentalis*, I, 1 sqq. Friburgi 1897.

We purpose to follow this practice and to exclude from the present work all those subjects which more properly belong to general dogmatics. We define special dogmatics, or dogmatic theology proper, after the example of Scheeben,¹¹ as “the scientific exposition of the entire domain of theoretical knowledge, which can be obtained from divine Revelation, of God Himself and His activity, based upon the dogmas of the Church.” By emphasizing the words *theoretical* and *dogmas*, this definition excludes moral theology, which is also based upon divine Revelation and the teaching of the Church, but is practical rather than theoretical. A dogma is a norm of knowledge; the moral law is a standard of conduct; though, of course, both are ultimately rooted in the same ground, *viz.*, divine Revelation as contained in Holy Scripture and Tradition, and expounded by the Church.

c) Another division of dogmatic theology, that into *positive* and *Scholastic*, regards method rather than substance. Positive theology, of which our catechisms contain a succinct digest, limits itself to ascertaining and stating the dogmatic teaching contained in the sources of Revelation. Among its most prominent exponents we may mention: Petavius, Thomassin, Liebermann, Perrone, Simar, Hurter¹² and others. Thomassin, and especially Petavius, successfully combined the positive with the speculative method. When positive theology assumes a polemical tone, we have what is called *Controversial Theology*, a science which Cardinal Bellarmine in the seventeenth century developed against the so-called reformers.

Dogmatic theology is called *Scholastic*, when, assuming and utilizing the results of the positive method, it undertakes: (a) to unfold the deeper content of dogma; (b) to set forth the relations of the different dogmas to one another; (c) by syllogistic process to deduce from given or certainly established premises so-called “theological conclusions;” and (d) to make plausible, though, of course, not to explain fully, to our weak human reason, by means of philosophical meditation, and especially of proofs from analogy, the dogmas and mysteries of the faith. These four points, since St. Anselm’s day, constituted the specific programme of mediaeval Scholasticism.¹³ In order to do full justice to its specific task, dogmatic theology must combine both methods, the positive and the Scholastic; that is to say, it must not limit itself to ascertaining and expounding the dogmas of the Church, but, after ascertaining them and setting them forth in the most luminous manner possible, must endeavor to adapt them as much as can be to our weak human reason.

The great mediaeval Scholastics, notably St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure, treated what are called dogmatic truths as generally known data;—a safe procedure in those days because collections of Biblical and Patristic proofs for each separate dogma were then in the hands of every student.¹⁴ As the most useful instrument for the speculative treatment of dogma, they seized upon, not the Platonic philosophy, but the system elaborated by the great Stagirite. In preferring Aristotle, Scholasticism did not, however, antagonize the Fathers and early

¹¹ *Dogmatik*, I, 3; Wilhelm-Scannell, *A Manual of Catholic Theology Based on Scheeben’s “Dogmatik,”* I, 1 sqq., London 1899.

¹² Hurter’s admirable *Compendium* has been adapted to the needs of English-speaking students by the Rev. Sylvester Joseph Hunter, S. J., in his *Outlines of Dogmatic Theology*, three volumes, London 1894, and, still more succinctly, for the use of colleges, academies, and high schools, by the Rev. Charles Coppens, S. J., in his *Systematic Study of the Catholic Religion*, St. Louis 1903.

¹³ Cfr. J. Kleutgen, *Theologie der Vorzeit*, 2nd ed., V, 1 sqq. Münster 1874.

¹⁴ Cfr. Pesch, S. J., *Praelectiones Dogmaticae*, Vol. I, 3rd ed., p. 24. Friburgi 1903.

ecclesiastical writers, who, as is well known, had a strong penchant for Plato. Both Plato and Aristotle may be said to lean on their common master, Socrates, who had grasped with rare acumen the fundamentals of natural religion, wherefor Socratic philosophy, despite its incompleteness, has justly been extolled as the "*Philosophia perennis*."¹⁵ It cannot be denied, however, that theology in its various branches, not excepting dogma, owes a wholesome impulse to modern philosophy, in so far as modern philosophy, especially since Kant (d. 1804), sharpened the critical spirit in method and argumentation, deepened the treatment of many dogmatic problems, and made "theoretical doubt" the starting-point of every truly scientific inquiry. Since the Protestant Reformation threw doubt upon, nay even denied the principal dogmas of the Church, dogmatic theology has been, and still is compelled to lay stress upon demonstration from positive sources, especially from Holy Writ. A fusion of the positive with the Scholastic method of treatment was begun as early as the seventeenth century by theologians like Gotti and the Wirceburgenses, whose example has found many successful imitators in modern times (Franzelin, Scheeben, Chr. Pesch, Billot, and others). To the works of these authors must be added the commentaries on the writings of Aquinas by Cardinal Satolli, L. Janssens, and Lépiciér. For reasons into which it is not necessary to enter here, the series of dogmatic text-books of which this is the first, while it will not entirely discard the speculative method of the Scholastics, which postulates rare proficiency in dialectics and a thorough mastery of Aristotelian metaphysics, as developed by the Schoolmen, will employ chiefly the positive method of the exact sciences.¹⁶

Mystic theology is not an adversary but a sister of Scholastic theology. While the latter appeals exclusively to the intellect, mysticism addresses itself mainly to the heart. Hence its advantages, but also its perils, for when the intellect is relegated to the background, there is danger that unclear heads will drift into pantheism, as the example of many of the exponents of later mysticism shows.¹⁷ It must be remarked, however, in this connection that the greatest mystics, like St. Bonaventure, Richard and Hugh of St. Victor, and St. Bernard, were also thorough-going Scholastics.¹⁸

4. SUBDIVISION OF SPECIAL DOGMATIC THEOLOGY.—The principal subject of dogmatic theology as such is not Christ,¹⁹ nor the Church,²⁰ but God. Now, God can be considered from a twofold point of view: either absolutely, in His essence, or relatively, in His outward activity (*operatio ad extra*). Dogmatic theology is accordingly divided into two well-defined, though quantitatively unequal parts: (1) the doctrine of God *per se*, and (2) that of His operation *ad extra*.

The first part may again be subdivided into two sections, one of which treats of God considered in the unity of His Nature (*De Deo Uno secundum naturam*), the other of the

¹⁵ Cfr. E. Commer, *Die immerwährende Philosophie*, Wien 1899.

¹⁶ As helpful aids we can recommend: Signoriello, *Lexicon peripateticum philosophico-theologicum*, Neapoli 1872; L. Schütz, *Thomas-Lexikon*, 2nd ed., Paderborn 1895. On the subject of the "*philosophia perennis*," see especially O. Willmann, *Geschichte des Idealismus*, 3 vols., 3rd ed., Braunschweig 1908.

¹⁷ Cfr. *Proposit. Ekkardi a. 1329 damn. a Ioanne XXII*, apud Denziger-Stahl, *Enchird.*, ed. 9, n. 428 sqq., Wirceburgi 1900.

¹⁸ Cfr. J. Zahn, *Einführung in die christliche Mystik*, Paderborn 1908; A. B. Sharpe, *Mysticism: Its True Nature and Value*, London 1910.

¹⁹ Cfr. 1 Cor. 3:22 sq. "*Omnia enim vestra sunt, ... vos autem Christi; Christus autem Dei*—for all things are yours, ... and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

²⁰ Cfr. Kleutgen, *l. c.*, pp. 24 sq.

Trinity of Persons (*De Deo Trino secundum personas*). His operation *ad extra* God manifests as Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier, and Consummator. Divine Revelation, so far as it regards the created universe, includes not only the creation of nature, but also the establishment of the supernatural order and the fall from the supernatural order of the rational creatures—*i. e.*, men and angels. The treatise on the Redemption (*De Verbo Incarnato*) comprises, besides the revealed teaching on the Person of our Saviour (Christology), the doctrine of the atonement (Soteriology), and of the Blessed Mother of our Lord (Mariology). In his rôle of Sanctifier, God operates partly through His invisible grace (*De gratia Christi*), partly by means of visible, grace-conferring signs or Sacraments (*De Sacramentis, in genere et in specie*). The dogmatic teaching of the Church on God the Consummator, is developed in Eschatology (*De Novissimis*). Into this framework the entire body of special dogma can be compressed.

READINGS:—S. J. Hunter, S. J., *Outlines of Dogmatic Theology*, I, 1 sqq.—Wilhelm-Scannell, *A Manual of Catholic Theology*, London, 1899, I, xvii sqq.—Schrader, S. J., *De Theologia Generatim*, Friburgi 1861.—Kihn, *Enzyklopädie und Methodologie der Theologie*, Freiburg 1892.—C. Krieg, *Enzyklopädie der theol. Wissenschaften, nebst Methodenlehre*, 2nd ed., Freiburg 1910.—J. Pohle, “Die christliche Religion” in *Die Kultur der Gegenwart*, I, 4, 2, pp. 37 sqq.—Cfr. also D. Coghlan in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. V, s. v. “Dogma;” J. H. Newman, *The Idea of a University*, Disc. 2 sqq. New edition, London 1893. Hettinger-Stepka, *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian*, pp. 351 sqq., St. Louis 1902.—T. B. Scannell, *The Priest’s Studies*, pp. 63 sqq., London 1908.—F. J. Hall (Anglican), *Introduction to Dogmatic Theology*, New York 1907.

GOD: HIS KNOWABILITY, ESSENCE, AND ATTRIBUTES

PREFATORY REMARKS

Here below man can know God only by analogy; hence we are constrained to apply to Him the three scientific questions: *An sit*, *Quid sit*, and *Qualis sit*, that is to say: Does He exist? What is His Essence? and What are His qualities or attributes? Consequently in theology, as in philosophy, the existence, essence, and attributes of God must form the three chief heads of investigation. The theological treatment differs from the philosophical in that it considers the subject in the light of supernatural Revelation, which builds upon and at the same time confirms, supplements, and deepens the conclusions of unaided human reason. Since the theological question regarding the existence of God resolves itself into the query: Can we know God?—the treatise *De Deo Uno* naturally falls into three parts: (1) The knowability of God; (2) His essence; and (3) The divine properties or attributes.

PART I
THE KNOWABILITY OF GOD

CHAPTER I

HUMAN REASON CAN KNOW GOD

Human reason is able to know God by a contemplation of His creatures, and to deduce His existence from certain facts of the supernatural order.

Our primary and proper medium of cognition is the created universe, *i. e.*, the material and the spiritual world.

In defining both the created universe and the supernatural order as sources of our knowledge of God, the Church has barred Traditionalism and at the same time eliminated the possibility of Atheism, though the latter no doubt constitutes a splendid refutation of the theory that the idea of God is innate.

SECTION 1

MAN CAN GAIN A KNOWLEDGE OF GOD FROM THE PHYSICAL UNIVERSE

ARTICLE 1

THE POSITIVE TEACHING OF REVELATION

In entering upon this division of our treatise, we assume that the reader has a sufficient acquaintance with the philosophic proofs for the existence of God, as furnished by theodicy and apologetics.¹ As against the attempt of atheists and traditionalists to deny the valor and stringency of these proofs, Catholic theology staunchly upholds the ability of unaided human reason to know God. Witness this definition of the Vatican Council:² “*Si quis dixerit, Deum unum et verum, creatorem et Dominum nostrum, per ea quae facta sunt, naturali rationis humanae lumine certo cognosci non posse, anathema sit*—If any one shall say that the one true God, our Creator and Lord, cannot be certainly known by the natural light of human reason through created things; let him be anathema.” Let us see how this dogma can be proved from Holy Scripture and Tradition.

1. THE ARGUMENT FROM SACRED SCRIPTURE.—a) Indirectly the possibility of knowing God by means of His creatures can be shown from Rom. 2:14 sqq.: “*Cum enim gentes, quae legem*

¹ Cfr. Hontheim, S. J., *Theodicaea s. Theol. Naturalis, Friburgi* 1893; Fr. Aveling, *The God of Philosophy*, London 1906; C. Gutberlet, *Theodicee*, 2nd ed., Münster 1890; B. Boedder, S. J., *Natural Theology*, 2nd ed., London 1899; J. T. Driscoll, *Christian Philosophy: God*, New York 1904.

² *Sess. III, de Revel., can. 1.*

non habent,³ naturaliter ea quae legis sunt faciunt,⁴ eiusmodi legem non habentes ipsi sibi sunt lex: qui ostendunt opus legis,⁵ scriptum in cordibus suis, testimonium reddente illis conscientia ipsorum et inter se invicem cogitationibus,⁶ accusantibus aut etiam defendentibus, in die cum iudicabit Deus occulta hominum secundum Evangelium meum, per Iesum Christum—For when the Gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature those things that are of the law; these having not the law are a law to themselves: who shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to them, and their thoughts between themselves accusing, or also defending one another, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.”

The “law” (*lex*, νόμος) of which St. Paul here speaks, is identical in content with the moral law of nature⁷ the same which constituted the formal subject-matter of supernatural Revelation in the Decalogue. Hence, considering the mode of Revelation, there is a well-defined distinction, not to say opposition, between the moral law as perceived by unaided human reason, and the revealed Decalogue. Whence it follows, against the teaching of Estius, that “*gentes*,” in the above-quoted passage of St. Paul, must refer to the heathen, in the strict sense of the word, not to Christian converts from Paganism. For, one who has the material content of the Decalogue “written in his heart,” so that, without having any knowledge of the positive Mosaic legislation, he is “a law unto himself,” being able, consequently, to comply “naturally” with the demands of the Decalogue, and having to look forward on Judgment Day to a trial conducted merely on the basis of his own conscience,—such a one, I say, is outside the sphere of supernatural Revelation.⁸

From this passage of St. Paul’s letter to the Romans we argue as follows: There can be no knowledge of the natural moral law derived from unaided human reason, unless parallel with it, and derived from the same source, there runs a natural knowledge of God as the supreme lawgiver revealing Himself in the conscience of man. Now, St. Paul expressly teaches that the Gentiles were able to observe the natural law “*naturaliter*”—“by nature”—*i. e.*, without the aid of supernatural revelation. Since no one can observe a law unless he knows it, St. Paul’s supposition obviously is that the existence of God, *qua* author and avenger of the natural law, can likewise be known “*naturaliter*,” that is to say, by unaided human reason.

b) A direct and stringent proof for our thesis can be drawn from Wisdom 13:1 sqq., and Rom. 1:18 sqq.

α) After denouncing the folly of those “in whom there is not the knowledge of God,”⁹ the Book of Wisdom continues (13:5 sq.): “*A magnitudine enim speciei et creaturae¹⁰ cognoscibiliter¹¹ poterit creator horum videri.¹² ... Iterum autem nec his debet ignosci; si*

³ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα.

⁴ φύσει τὰ τοῦ νόμου ποιῶσιν.

⁵ ἔργον νόμου.

⁶ τῶν λογισμῶν.

⁷ Cfr. Rom. 2:21 sqq.

⁸ Cfr. the commentaries of Bisping and Aloys Schäfer on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans. On the exegetical difficulties raised by St. Augustine and Estius, see Franzelin, *De Deo Uno*, thes. 4.

⁹ “*In quibus non est scientia Dei.*”

¹⁰ By hendyadis for “beauty of the creature.”

¹¹ ἀναλόγως.

¹² θεωρεῖται.

enim tantum potuerunt scire, ut possent aestimare saeculum,¹³ quomodo huius Dominum non facilius¹⁴ invenerunt?—For by the greatness of the beauty, and of the creature, the creator of them may be seen, so as to be known thereby.... But then again they are not to be pardoned; for if they were able to know so much as to make a judgment of the world, how did they not more easily find out the Lord thereof?" A careful analysis of this passage reveals the following line of thought: The existence of God is an object of the same cognitive faculty that explores the visible world,—*i. e.*, human reason. Hence the medium of our knowledge of God can be none other than that same material world, the magnitude and beauty of which leads us to infer that there must be a Creator who brought it forth. Such a knowledge of God is more easily acquired than a deeper knowledge of the creatural world; in fact, absence of it would argue unpardonable carelessness. As viewed by the Old Testament writer, therefore, nature furnishes sufficient data to enable the mind of man to attain to a knowledge of the existence of God, without any extraneous aid on the part of Revelation or any special illumination by supernatural grace.

β) We have a parallel passage in the New Testament,—Rom. 1:18 sqq., which reaches its climax in verse 20: "*Invisibilia enim ipsius [scil. Dei] a creatura mundi per ea, quae facta sunt, intellecta conspiciuntur¹⁵ sempiterna quoque eius virtus et divinitas, ita ut sint inexcusabiles¹⁶*—For the invisible things of him [God] from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; his eternal power also, and divinity: so that they are inexcusable." In other words:—God, Who is *per se* invisible, after some fashion becomes visible to human reason (νοούμενα καθορᾶται). But how? Not by positive revelation, nor yet by the interior grace of faith; but solely by means of a natural revelation imbedded in the created world (τοῖς ποιήμασιν). To know God from nature appears to be such an easy and matter-of-fact process (even to man in his fallen state), that the heathen are called "inexcusable" in their ignorance and are in punishment therefor "given up to the desires of their heart unto uncleanness."¹⁷

c) By way of supplementing this argument from Holy Scripture we will briefly advert to the important distinction which the Bible makes, or at least intimates as existing, between popular and scientific knowledge of God. The former comes spontaneously and without effort, while the latter demands earnest research and conscientious study, and, where there is guilty ignorance, involves the risk of a man's falling into the errors of polytheism, pantheism, etc. We find this same distinction made by St. Paul in his sermons at Lystra and Athens, and we meet it again in the writings of the Fathers, coupled with the consideration that, to realize the existence of a Supreme Being men have but to advert to the fact that nations, like individuals, are plainly guided and directed by God's Providence. In his sermon at Lystra, after noting that God had allowed the Gentiles "to walk in their own ways," that is to say, to become the prey of false religions, the Apostle declares that He nevertheless¹⁸ "left not Himself without testimony, doing good from heaven, giving rains and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."¹⁹ Before the

¹³ στοχάσασθαι τὸν αἰῶνα, *i. e.*, to explore the visible world.

¹⁴ τάχιον.

¹⁵ τοῖς ποιήμασι νοούμενα καθορᾶται.

¹⁶ αναπολόγητοι.

¹⁷ Rom. 1:18, 24 sqq.

¹⁸ καίτοι γε = *nihilominus*.

¹⁹ Acts 14:16.

Areopagus at Athens, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, pointing to the altar dedicated “To the Unknown God,” said: “God, who made the world, ... and hath made of one [Adam] all mankind, to dwell upon the whole face of the earth, determining appointed times and the limits of their habitation, that they should seek God, if happily they may feel after him or find him,²⁰ although he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and are.”²¹ In the following verse (29) he calls attention to the unworthy notion that the Divinity is “like unto gold, or silver, or stone, the graving of art, and device of man.” Both sermons assume that there is a twofold knowledge of God: the one direct, the other reflex. The direct knowledge of God arises spontaneously in the mind of every thinking man who contemplates the visible universe and ponders the favors continually lavished by Providence. In the reflexive or metaphysical stage of his knowledge of God, on the other hand, man is exposed to the temptation wrongly to transfer the concept of God to objects not divine, and thus to fall into gross polytheism or idolatry.²² We have, therefore, Scriptural warrant for holding that the idea of God is entirely spontaneous in its origin, but may easily (though, it is true, only by an abuse of reason), be perverted in the course of its scientific development.²³

2. The Patristic argument may be reduced to three main propositions.

a) In the first place, the Fathers teach that God manifests Himself in His visible creation, and may be perceived there by man without the aid of supernatural revelation.

Athenagoras calls the existing order of the material world, its magnitude and beauty, “pledges of divine worship”²⁴ and adds: “For the visible is the medium by which we perceive the invisible.”²⁵ Clement of Alexandria, too, insists that we gain our knowledge of Divine Providence from the contemplation of God’s works in nature, so much so that it is unnecessary to resort to elaborate arguments to prove the existence of God. “All men,” he says, “Greeks and barbarians, discern God, the Father and Creator of all things, unaided and without instruction.”²⁶ St. Basil²⁷ calls the visible creation “a school and institution of divine knowledge.”²⁸ St. Chrysostom, in his third homily on the Epistle to the Romans (n. 2), apostrophizes St. Paul thus: “Did God call the Gentiles with his voice? Certainly not. But He has created something which is apt to draw their attention more forcibly than words. He has put in the midst of them the created world and thereby from the mere aspect of visible things, the learned and the unlearned, the Scythian and the barbarian, can all ascend to God.” Similarly St. Gregory the Great teaches:²⁹ “*Omnis homo eo ipso quod rationalis est conditus, debet ex ratione colligere, eum qui se condidit Deum esse*—By the use of his reason every man must come to the conclusion that the very fact that he is a rational creature proves that his Creator is God.”

²⁰ “*Si forte attrectent eum out inveniant.*”

²¹ Acts 17:24–28.

²² Cfr. Wisdom 13:6 sqq.

²³ Hieron. *In ep. ad Tit.* I, 10. For a further elucidation of the subject, see J. Quirnbach, *Die Lehre des hl. Paulus von der natürlichen Gotteserkenntnis und dem natürlichen Sittengesetz*, Freiburg 1906.

²⁴ ἐνέχυρα τῆς θεοσεβείας.

²⁵ *Legat. pro Christ.*, n. 4 sq.

²⁶ *Strom.*, V, 14.

²⁷ *In Hexaëm.*, hom. 1, n. 6.

²⁸ διδασκαλεῖον καὶ θεογνωσίας παιδευτήριον.

²⁹ *Moral.* xxvii, 5. Cfr. Sprinzl, *Die Theologie der apostolischen Väter*, pp. 110 sqq., Vienna 1880.

b) The Fathers further teach: From even a superficial contemplation of finite things there must arise spontaneously, in every thinking man, at least a popular knowledge of God.

To explain how natural it is to rise from a contemplation of the physical universe to the existence of God, some of the Fathers call the idea of God “an innate conviction, planted by nature in the mind of man,”³⁰ a knowledge which is “not acquired,”³¹ but “a dowry of reason,”³² and which, precisely because it is so easy of acquisition, is quite common among men. Tertullian calls upon “the soul of the Gentiles” to give testimony to God,—not the soul which “has learned in the school of wisdom,” but that which is “*simplex, rudis, impolita et idiotica.*”—“*Magistra natura*” he says, “*anima discipula*—Nature is the teacher, the soul a pupil.”³³ St. Augustine says that the consciousness we have of God blends with the very essence of human reason: “*Haec est vis verae divinitatis, ut creaturae rationali ratione iam utenti non omnino ac penitus possit abscondi; exceptis enim paucis [sc. atheis] in quibus natura nimium depravata est, universum genus hominum Deum mundi huius fatetur auctorem*—For such is the energy of true Godhead, that it cannot be altogether and utterly hidden from any rational creature. For with the exception of a few in whom nature has become outrageously depraved, the whole race of man acknowledges God as the maker of this world.”^{33a} Seeking a deeper explanation, several Fathers (e. g., Justin Martyr and St. Basil) have raised the rational soul to the rank of an essential image of the Eternal Logos, calling it a λόγος σπερματικός, which irresistibly seeks out and finds God in the universe.

c) The Fathers finally teach that human reason possesses, both in the visible world of exterior objects, and in its own depths, sufficient means to develop the popular notion of God into a philosophical concept.

The Greek Fathers, who had to combat paganism and the heresy of the Eunomians, generally relied on two arguments as sufficient to enable any man to form a philosophical concept of God; viz., the cosmological and the teleological. Augustine’s profounder mind turned to the purely metaphysical order of the true, the good, and the beautiful, to deduce therefrom the existence of Substantial Truth, Goodness, and Beauty.³⁴ This trend of mind did not, however, prevent him from acknowledging the validity of the teleological and cosmological argument. “*Interroga mundum, ornatum coeli, fulgorem dispositionemque siderum, ... interroga omnia et vide, si non sensu suo tamquam tibi respondent: Deus nos fecit. Haec et philosophi nobiles quaesierunt et ex arte artificem cognoverunt.... Quod curiositate invenerunt, superbia perdiderunt.*”³⁵

ARTICLE 2

THE IDEA OF GOD NOT INBORN

³⁰ δόξα ἔμφυτος, ἔννοια ἔμφυτος πρόληψις φυσική.

³¹ χρῆμα οὐ διδακτόν, αὐτομαθές.

³² πᾶσι σύμφυτος λόγος.

³³ *De Testim. An.*, c. 2 et 5.

^{33a} *Tract. In Ioa.*, 106, n. 4.

³⁴ Cfr. *Confess.*, VIII, 17; *DeLib. Arbit.*, II, 12.

³⁵ *Serm.* 141. Cfr. Schiffini, *Disput. Metaphysicae Specialis*, II, 61 sqq. Aug. Taurin. 1888. Copious references from the Greek Fathers will be found in Petavius, *De Deo*, I, 1 sq.—Cfr. also on the whole subject: Van Endert, *Der Gottesbeweis in der patristischen Zeit*, Freiburg 1861; K. Unterstein, *Die natürliche Gotteserkenntnis nach der Lehre der kappadozischen Kirchenväter*, Straubing 1903–4.

1. THE THEORY THAT OUR IDEA OF GOD IS INBORN.—Several of the Fathers insisted so strongly on the original and spontaneous character of our knowledge of God, that a number of theologians³⁶ were led to claim Patristic authority for the theory of innate ideas evolved by the famous Descartes. According to the teaching of these theologians, the Patristic concept of God is not based upon a conclusion of human reason (*idea Dei acquisita*), but is inborn (*idea Dei innata*). Our “consciousness of God,” says *e. g.* Kuhn, is but part and parcel of our “self-consciousness,” that is to say, it is “a knowledge of God founded upon His revelation to the human mind.”³⁷ It is a plausible enough theory. For as, *e. g.*, Justin Martyr terms the idea of God “ἔμφυτον τῇ φύσει τῶν ἀνθρώπων δόξαν,—an opinion implanted in the nature of men,”^{37a} so also Tertullian teaches: “*Animae enim a primordio conscientia Dei dos est, eadem nec alia et in Aegyptiis et in Syris et in Ponticis*—From the beginning the knowledge of God is the dowry of the soul, one and the same amongst the Egyptians, and the Syrians, and the tribes of Pontus.”³⁸

2. REFUTATION OF THIS THEORY.—The theory that the concept of God is inborn in the human mind, cannot stand the test of either philosophy or theology. Without entering into its philosophical weaknesses, we will only remark that aside from the danger of idealism which it incurs, the very possibility of atheism renders this theory improbable. While not perhaps deserving of formal theological censure, it cannot escape the note of “hazardous,” inasmuch as it is apt to endanger the dogmatic truth that the existence of God is strictly demonstrable on rational grounds.³⁹ At any rate it can be shown beyond a peradventure that the Patristic teaching of the primordial character of human belief in God, is by no means identical with the theory of Descartes, and cannot be construed as an argument in favor of the proposition that the idea of God is inborn.

a) In the first place, the assumption that it can be so construed does not square with the noetic system of those very Fathers who speak of our knowledge of God as “innate.” Clement of Alexandria, Athanasius, Gregory Nazianzen, Augustine and John of Damascus, uniformly teach that all our concepts, including those we have of God and divine things, in their last analysis are drawn from experience by means of a consideration of the material universe; hence they cannot possibly mean to say that our idea of God is inborn.⁴⁰

b) A careful comparison of all the Patristic passages bearing on this subject shows that the Fathers nowhere assert that our idea of God is innate, though they frequently insist on the spontaneity with which, by virtue of an unconscious syllogism, this idea springs from

³⁶ Thomassin, Tournely, Klee, Drey, Kuhn.

³⁷ “*Ein Wissen von Gott auf Grund seiner Offenbarung im Geiste.*”

^{37a} *Apol.*, II, n. 6.

³⁸ *Adv. Marcion.*, I, 10. Cfr. Otten, *Der Grundgedanke der Cartesianischen Philosophie*, Freiburg 1896.

³⁹ Cfr. Chr. Pesch, S. J., *Praelect. Dogm.*, t. II, 3rd ed., Friburgi 1906.

⁴⁰ Tertullian seems to offer an exception; but, like the rest, he concludes “*ex factitamentis ad factorem*” and explains the phrase “*a primordio*,” which might give rise to a misunderstanding, as follows: “*Deus nunquam ignotus, ideo nec incertus, siquidem a primordio rerum conditor earum cum ipsis pariter compertus est, ipsis ad hoc prolati* [He created them for the purpose] *ut Deus cognosceretur.*” Cfr. G. Esser, *Die Seelenlehre Tertullians*, pp. 166 sqq., Paderborn 1893.

any, even the most superficial, consideration of nature. What is inborn in our mind is not the idea of God as such, but rather the faculty readily to discover God in His creatures.⁴¹

3. THE NECESSITY OF PROVING THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.—If the idea we have of God is not inborn, but owes its origin to a consideration of the cosmos, it necessarily follows that the existence of God must be demonstrated syllogistically.

a) The knowableness of God, as taught by Holy Scripture and the Church, ultimately resolves itself into His demonstrability. To question the validity of the ordinary proofs for the existence of God, and to say, as *e. g.* W. Rosenkranz says:⁴² “The so-called metaphysical proofs, which theology has hitherto employed, have one and all failed when put to a critical test,”—is to advocate scepticism and to miss the meaning intended by the Church. If no conclusive argument for the existence of God had yet been found, it would be safe to say that none such exists, and that the case is hopeless. Gregory XVI obliged Professor Bautin, of Strasbourg, to assent to the thesis: “*Ratiocinatio Dei existentiam cum certitudine probare potest.*” (Sept. 8, 1840.) Fifteen years later the S. Congregation of the Index ordered Bonnetty to subscribe this proposition: “*Ratiocinatio Dei existentiam, animae spiritualitatem, hominis libertatem cum certitudine probare potest.*”⁴³ (Dec. 12, 1855.)

b) If we inquire into the nature of the middle term that is indispensable to a valid syllogistic argument for the existence of God, we find that Sacred Scripture and the Fathers agree that we must ascend to God *a posteriori*, *i. e.*, from the material world that surrounds us. This fact alone would explain the distrust which theologians have ever shown towards the *a priori* or ontological argument of St. Anselm.⁴⁴ Of the other proofs for the existence of God, it may be noted that two, namely, first, that which from the consideration of possible or contingent beings passes on to the conclusion that at least one necessary being exists; and, secondly, that commonly called teleological, which draws this conclusion from order and beauty in the physical universe, are imposed on us both by Holy Writ and the teaching of the Fathers. Nor, as the example of St. Paul shows,⁴⁵ can the moral and historical proofs (conscience, providence) be brushed aside as lacking cogency. Whence it appears that these arguments cannot easily be improved, except perhaps with regard to method, and by formulating them with greater precision. Since it is not the object of Revelation to furnish an exhaustive course of proofs for the existence of God, such other arguments as that of St. Augustine based upon the metaphysical essences, and the one drawn from man’s desire for happiness, must also be accepted as valid, provided, of course, they do not move in a vicious circle.

c) The *a posteriori* demonstrability of God is confirmed by the great theological luminaries of the Middle Ages. Thus St. Thomas Aquinas, the Prince of Scholastic theologians, teaches: “*Simpliciter dicendum est, quod Deus non est primum quod a nobis cognoscitur; sed magis per creatures in Dei cognitionem venimus, secundum illud Apostoli ad Romanos (1:20): Invisibilia Dei per ea, quae facta sunt, intellecta conspiciuntur. Primum autem quod intelligitur a nobis secundum*

⁴¹ Gregory of Nazianzus, *e. g.*, says: “*Ratio a Deo data et omnibus congenita et prima in nobis lex omnibusque conserta ad Deum nos deducit ex visibilibus*” (*Orat.* 28, n. 6), which is in perfect accord with the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas: “*Dei cognitio nobis dicitur innata esse, in quantum per principia nobis innata de facili percipere possumus Deum esse*” (*In Boëth. De Trin.*, prooem., qu. 1, art. 3, ad 6). Cfr. Kleutgen, *Philosophie der Vorzeit*, Abhandl. 1 and 9; Franzelin, *De Deo Uno*, thes. 7; Heinrich, *Dogmat. Theologie*, Vol. III, § 140.

⁴² *Die Prinzipien der Theologie*, p. 30, München 1875.

⁴³ Cfr. St. Thomas, *Contra. Gent.*, I, 12.

⁴⁴ Cfr. St. Thomas, *De Verit.*, qu. 10, art. 12.

⁴⁵ Rom. 2:14 sqq.; Acts 14:16; 17:24 sqq.

statum praesentis vitae, est quidditas rei materialist."⁴⁶ That St. Anselm's view, apart from his ontological argument, was in substantial agreement with that of St. Thomas, has been established by Van Weddingen.⁴⁷

READINGS:—Cfr. the compendiums of Hurter, Jungmann, Bautz, Einig, Heinrich-Huppert, Wilhelm-Scannell, and Hunter.—Also, in particular, *Card. Franzelin, *De Deo uno*, ed. 3a, Romae 1883.*—Kleutgen, *De Ipso Deo*, Ratisbonae 1881.—Heinrich, *Dogmatische Theologie*, Vol. III, Mayence 1883.—*Scheeben, *Katholische Dogmatik*, Vol. I, Freiburg 1873.—*De San, *De Deo uno*, 2 vols., Lovanii 1894–97.—*Stentrup, *De Deo uno*, Oeniponte 1878.—*L. Janssens, O. S. B., *De Deo uno*, 2 tomi, Friburgi 1900.—A. M. Lépiciér, *De Deo uno*, 2 vols., Parisiis 1900.—Ronayne, S. J., *God Knowable and Known*, 2nd ed., New York 1902.—D. Coghlan, *De Deo Uno et Trino*, Dublinii 1909.—P. H. Buonpensiere, O. P., *Comment, in 1 P.* (qu. 1–23) *S. Th. Thomae Aquinatis*, Romae 1902.—Chr. Pesch, S. J., *Prael. Dogmat.*, Vol. II, ed. 3a, Friburgi 1906.—R. F. Clarke, S. J., *The Existence of God*, London 1892.—Of the Scholastics, especially St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.* 1a, qu. 1 sqq. and *Summa contra Gentiles*, 1. I, cap. 10 sqq. (Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures*, London 1905, pp. 9 sqq.); also the treatises of Suarez, Petavius, and Thomassin, *De Deo uno*, and Lessius, *De Perfectionibus Moribusque Divinis*, ed. nova, Parisiis 1881.—The teaching of Franzelin and Palmieri is summarized in English by W. Humphrey, S. J., in "*His Divine Majesty,*" or *the Living God*, London 1897.—Other references in the text.⁴⁸

SECTION 2

OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AS DERIVED FROM THE SUPERNATURAL ORDER

In relation to our knowledge of God the facts of the supernatural order may be viewed from a twofold point of vantage: either as premises for a syllogism demonstrating the existence of God from the standpoint of human reason; or as a preamble to supernatural faith in God (*actus fidei in Deum*), which, being a *cognitio Dei per fidem*, differs essentially from the *cognitio Dei per rationem*.

ARTICLE 1

THE FACTS OF THE SUPERNATURAL ORDER CONSIDERED AS PREMISES FOR UNAIDED REASON

1. STATE OF THE QUESTION.—Both nature and the supernatural order,—the latter even more convincingly than the former,—tell us that there is a God. The arguments which can be drawn from the supernatural order—the fulfilment of prophecies, miracles (in the Old and the New Testament), Christ and His mission,—are historical, and therefore appeal

⁴⁶ *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 84, art 7.

⁴⁷ *Essai critique sur la philosophie de S. Anselme*, chap. 4, Bruxelles 1875. See also Heinrich, *Dogm. Theologie*, Vol. III, § 137; A. König, *Schöpfung und Gotteserkenntnis*, Freiburg 1885; and E. Rolfes, *Die Gottesbeweise bei Thomas von Aquin und Aristoteles*, Köln 1898.

⁴⁸ The asterisk before an author's name indicates that his treatment of the question is especially clear and thorough. As St. Thomas is invariably the best guide, the omission of the asterisk before his name never means that we consider his work in any way inferior to that of others. There are vast stretches of dogmatic theology which he scarcely ever touched.

most forcibly to the student of history, though scarcely any thinking mind can escape their force.

We must call particular attention to the fact that the proofs for the existence of God drawn from the supernatural deeds of the Almighty Himself, are really and truly arguments based on reason, and hence do not differ essentially from others of the same class. All of them depend for their validity upon the law of causation. But the proofs here under consideration possess the twofold advantage of being (1) more perfect and (2) more effective. They are (1) more perfect, because the supernatural effects wrought by God far surpass those of the purely natural order, inasmuch as greater effects point to a more perfect cause. They are (2) more effective, because they are based, not upon everyday phenomena constantly recurring in accordance with Nature's laws, but upon rare and startling facts (such as prophecies and miracles) which cannot fail to impress even those who pay little heed to the glories of Nature.

2. SKETCH OF THE ARGUMENT.—From the mass of available material we will select three prominent phenomena, which prove the existence of a Supreme Being.

a) The first is the history of the Jews under the Old Covenant. As the Chosen People of God for two thousand years they led a religious, social, and political life radically different from that of the heathen nations around them. It was not due to a racial predisposition, such as *e. g.* a monotheistic instinct, that the Jewish people, encompassed by pagan nations, were able to preserve their peculiar belief, constitution, and discipline; for was not the inclination to practice idolatry one of their chief faults? The true explanation is that all their peculiarities were bottomed upon supernatural causes,—a long, unbroken chain of prophecies and miracles, visible apparitions of a hidden Power to individuals (Moses) and to the whole people (the legislation given on Mount Sinai). The entire Old Testament is a most wonderful revelation of God and His attributes, and furnishes cogent proof for the existence of an almighty and gracious sovereign.¹

b) Secondly, there is the person of Jesus Christ. Cfr. Heb. 1:1, 2: "*Multifariam multisque modis olim Deus loquens patribus in prophetis, novissime diebus istis locutus est nobis in Filio, quem constituit haeredem universorum, per quem fecit et saecula*—God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke, in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all, in these days hath spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the world." The Old Testament was plainly a mere preparation for the New. In the person of the Messiah, God appeared bodily on earth. His wondrous conception, His miracles and prophecies, His superhuman teaching, His instituting the Church, His resurrection and ascension, triumphantly prove Christ to be what He claimed to be: the true Son of God. Hence God exists. Historians and philosophers are constrained to acknowledge in the words of the Evangelist (John 1:14): "And we saw His glory, the glory as it were of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Like the two hands of a clock, universal history, before and after Christ, gives testimony of Jesus: antiquity pointing forward as a "*paedagogus ad Christum,*" while the Christian era points backward to indicate fulfilment. The Incarnation represents the climax and culmination of God's

¹ Cfr. F. H. Reinerding, *Theologia Fundamentalis*, pp. 112 sqq., Monasterii 1864.—Frederick Delitzsch's recent attempt (*Babel und Bibel*, Leipzig 1902), to trace the genesis of Jewish monotheism and the Mosaic revelation back to the civilization and culture of ancient Babylon was promptly frustrated by a number of eminent Assyriologists. For information on this intricate subject, which has called forth a veritable flood of books and pamphlets, the reader is referred to J. Nikel, *Genesis und Keilschriftforschung*, Freiburg 1903.

self-revelation to humankind. Thus Christ is in very truth the axis of the universe and of universal history, the living proof of Theism.³

c) A third argument is derived from the wonderful religious and moral regeneration of the Mediterranean races wrought by the influence of Christianity in the first three centuries of its existence. Oppressed by the “shadow of death,” the Gentiles before Christ walked in the ways of evil and darkness, or, as St. Paul puts it, God “in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.”⁴ The fourth century of the Christian era found these same nations radically changed—they had become “a new generation” walking in “the way of the cross,” “burning what they had previously adored.” The bloody persecutions of the Cæsars had proved so ineffective in stamping out the new religion, that Tertullian was able to exclaim: “*Sanguis martyrum semen Christianorum.*” Leaving aside all other considerations, from the purely historical point of view alone such a radical transformation of the family, and of economic and political life, the conversion of the masses, and their preservation, even at the risk of life, in a state of moral purity such as the world had never known before, demands an adequate explanation. Where are we to seek for this explanation? Surely not in the circumstances, either extraneous or internal, of the regenerated masses themselves. For both in doctrine and morals Christianity was the antithesis of paganism, and therefore could not possibly have developed from it. All attempts to derive the Christian religion from remnants of Oriental beliefs or the philosophic theories of the Greeks (Stoicism, Neo-Platonism, Philo) have utterly failed. Far from aiding in the regeneration of the corrupt masses under the Roman Empire, philosophy made common cause against Christianity with a fanatical Jewry and a paganism already struggling in the grip of death. Nor did the new religion owe its final triumph to force. The rulers of the mighty Empire, far from favoring Christianity and advancing its spread with the powerful means at their command, turned these engines against it as a deadly foe, and sought to drown the new faith in the lifeblood of its adherents.⁵ It was not until the day of Constantine that a change set in. There is no satisfactory explanation for all this except that a superhuman Being guides the destinies of men and lets the gentle sun of His providence shine upon the weak and the strong alike. Filled with a conviction of this great truth, the unknown author of the Epistle to Diognetus⁶ writes: “*Ista non videntur hominis opera, haec virtus est Dei, haec adventus eius sunt demonstrationes.*”⁷

ARTICLE 2

THE SUPERNATURAL FACTS AS A PREAMBLE TO OUR BELIEF IN THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

1. STATE OF THE QUESTION.—The supernatural facts described in the previous article are more than mere arguments of reason for the existence of God. Inasmuch as they prove the Christian religion to be divine, they are also a *praeambulum* to the supernatural act of faith in the existence of God. To work out this argument in detail is the business of apologetics.⁸

³ Cfr. Didon, *Jesus Christ*, London 1897; Bougaud, *The Divinity of Christ*, New York 1906.

⁴ Acts 14:15.

⁵ Cfr. P. Allard, *Ten Lectures on the Martyrs*, London 1907.

⁶ *Epist. ad Diogn.*, n. 7.

⁷ Cfr. B. Jungmann, *De Vera Religione*, pp. 197 sqq., Brugis 1871; F. Bole, *Flavius Josephus über Christus und die Christen in den jüdischen Altertümern*, Brixen 1896.

⁸ Cfr. Schanz, *Apologie des Christentums*, 3rd ed., Vol. II, Freiburg 1905. The English translation of the first edition of this work, while several times reprinted, has not kept pace with the thoroughly

There is another consideration that must be emphasized. While the Revelation made through Jesus Christ, in spite of its demonstrability on rational grounds, does not necessarily compel supernatural faith, but may leave the unbeliever entirely unconvinced, it produces in the mind of him who receives it willingly the act of faith. Inasmuch as, with regard to their contents, the *praeambula fidei* form an essential part of divine Revelation, they enter as a necessary ingredient into this *actus fidei*. From a mere outwork of (subjective) faith they become a part of its essence; what was previously an historic and apologetic certainty, is transformed into the certainty of faith. Nature gives way to the supernatural in the heart of man. Objectively, purely rational demonstration cedes its place to the infallible authority of God's word, while subjectively, a supernatural light instead of the natural light of reason becomes the source of faith.⁹ Like the "preamble" itself, the existence of God becomes a formal dogma, to be embraced and held with the supernatural certitude proper to faith.

2. THE EXISTENCE OF GOD AS AN ARTICLE OF FAITH.—The knowableness of God being an article of faith, His existence must be a dogma *a fortiori*. Although, as Heinrich says,^{9a} supernatural faith is an impossibility unless in the very act of faith itself we believe with supernatural certainty in the existence and veracity of God, inasmuch as a revelation postulates the existence of a revealer; nevertheless, the fact that there is one who reveals constitutes a separate and independent article of the "*depositum fidei*." "*Si quis unum verum Deum, visibilium et invisibilium creatorem et Dominum negaverit, anathema sit*—If any one shall deny one true God, Creator and Lord of all things visible and invisible, let him be anathema."¹⁰

a) In his Epistle to the Hebrews, St. Paul declares belief in the existence of God to be an indispensable condition of salvation. Hebr. 11:6: "But without faith it is impossible to please God. For He that cometh to God, must believe that He is, and is a rewarder to them that seek Him." Here belief in the existence of God is coördinated, separately and independently, with belief in the truth that He rewards those that seek Him. Both these truths are based not only on philosophical arguments, but likewise on that supernatural faith which is the foundation of man's justification. "*De hac dispositione [ad justificationem] scriptum est: Credere oportet accedentem ad Deum, quia est et inquiringibus se remunerator sit*—Concerning this disposition it is written: 'He that cometh to God, must believe that He is, and is a rewarder to them that seek Him.'"¹¹ The examples of faith which St. Paul gives in Hebr. 11:1 sqq., where he concludes with a reference to Christ as "the author and finisher of faith,"¹² admit of no other interpretation.

b) The Fathers reecho this teaching of St. Paul, so much so that Suarez¹³ was able to state it as the conviction of the Schoolmen that "*Fide catholica tenendum est, Deum esse*." We have the most succinct proof for this proposition in the first article of the Apostles' Creed: "*Credo in Deum—πιστεύω εἰς Θεόν*." The paraphrase which the Vatican Council

overhauled second and third editions of the German original. Recently a fourth edition has begun to appear under the editorship of Prof. Koch of Tübingen.

⁹ Cfr. Fr. Hettinger, *Fundamental-theologie*, 2nd ed., pp. 853–892, Freiburg 1888.

^{9a} *Dogm. Theol.*, 2:21.

¹⁰ *Conc. Vat., Sess. III de Deo, can. 1.*

¹¹ *Conc. Trid., Sess. VI, cap. 6.*

¹² Hebr. 11:1 sqq.; 12:2.

¹³ *In 1. p. S. theol.* I, 1.

gives of this article¹⁴ shows clearly that “God” here means not the first person of the Most Holy Trinity (*i. e.*, the Father), but God in His absolute essence and inasmuch as He is apt to be the object of a sure knowledge attainable by unaided reason. There can be no mistake about this; else how account for the fact that the canons attached to this proposition expressly condemn, not some anti-Trinitarian heresy, but atheism, materialism, and pantheism. If Atheism is a heresy, the existence of God must necessarily be a dogma,—the fundamental dogma upon which all others rest. This explains why, as early as 1679, Pope Innocent XI condemned the proposition: “*Fides late dicta ex testimonio creaturarum similive motivo ad justificationem sufficit*—Faith in the wide sense, that is faith as based upon the testimony of creatures or some similar motive, suffices for justification.”¹⁵

3. KNOWLEDGE VS. FAITH.—It may be objected that if the natural cognoscibility of God and the necessity of supernatural faith are both supernaturally revealed, these dogmas would seem to exclude each other, inasmuch as no man can know God for certain by his unaided reason, and at the same time firmly believe in Him on authority. At the root of this objection lies the assumption that we cannot know a thing and believe it at the same time, because, what we believe on the authority of another we do not know, and what we know we do not and cannot believe. It is true St Thomas¹⁶ seems to have held that an evident knowledge of God is incompatible with belief in Him; but Estius confessed himself unable to reconcile this opinion with the teaching of St. Paul in Hebr. 11:6; while St. Bonaventure,¹⁷ De Lugo,¹⁸ Suarez,¹⁹ and others, openly defended the contrary. Some theologians, like Cardinals De Lugo and d’Aguirre, interpreted St. Thomas in favor of their own dissenting view.

Whatever may have been the Angelic Doctor’s theory as to the subjective compatibility of knowledge with faith, it seems certain that we are not free to doubt the necessity, much less the possibility, of a co-existence of both modes of cognition in the same subject, especially since St. Paul and the Tridentine Council condition the justification of each and every man, whether he be learned or ignorant, upon a belief in the existence of God. The Vatican Council expressly defines both the knowableness of God from the consideration of the physical universe, and the necessity of supernatural faith in God, as dogmatic truths. Hence we must conclude that both modes of cognition can co-exist in the same subject without conflicting. Such teaching involves no contradiction, for it does not oblige us to hold that we can know and believe the same truth under the same aspect or from the same point of view. Manifestly the material object of both acts (*scientia—fides*) is the same: “God exists.” But between the formal object of the one and the formal object of the other, there is this essential difference, that rational knowledge depends on the degree of evidence in the argument, while faith flows from the authority of God Himself testifying to His own existence.²⁰ There is this further difference, that to know God by purely natural means does not require supernatural grace, while faith, on the other hand, is conditioned by the supernatural assistance of the Holy Ghost (*gratia actus fidei*), without which no man can have that belief in God which is necessary for salvation.²¹

¹⁴ *Conc. Vatican., Constit. de fide*, c. 1.

¹⁵ Denzinger-Bannwart, *Enchiridion*, n. 1173.

¹⁶ *S. Theol.* 2a 2ae, qu. 1, art. 5; *De Veritate*, qu. 14, art. 9.

¹⁷ *In 3 dist.*, 24, art. 2, qu. 3.

¹⁸ *De Fide*, disp. 2, sect. 2.

¹⁹ *De Fide*, disp. 3, sect. 9.

²⁰ Cfr. W. Humphrey, S. J., *The Sacred Scriptures*, ch. XIII, London 1894.

²¹ For a fuller treatment of this point we must refer the student to the treatise on Grace, which is to form Volume V of this English edition of Pohle’s dogmatic course.

READINGS:—Alb. a Bulsano, *Instit. Theolog. Dogm. Specialis*, ed. Graun, t. I, pp. 16 sqq., Oeniponte 1893.—Heinrich, *Dogmat. Theologie*, Vol. III, § 149.—Franzelin, *De Deo Uno*, thes. 8 sq.—W. Humphrey, S. J., “*His Divine Majesty*,” pp. 28 sqq., London 1897.

SECTION 3

TRADITIONALISM AND ATHEISM

ARTICLE 1

TRADITIONALISM A FALSE SYSTEM

1. THE TRADITIONALIST TEACHING.—a) Reduced to its simplest formula, the teaching of Traditionalism is this: Tradition and oral instruction (language) are absolutely essential to the development of the human race, so much so, that without them man can attain to no knowledge whatever, especially in the domain of religion and morality. Consequently, the knowledge of truth is propagated among men solely by oral tradition, and the source and fountainhead of all knowledge must be our first parents, or rather God Himself, who in what is called Primitive Revelation committed to Adam and Eve the treasure of truth to be kept and handed down to their descendants. Inspired by the best of intentions, *i. e.*, to destroy Rationalism, the Traditionalists depreciate the power of human reason and exaggerate the function of faith.

b) In its crudest form¹ Traditionalism asserts that a man can no more think without language than he can see without light,—that without language reason would be dead and man a mere brute. Hence the Creator had to endow man with the gift of speech before He could impress upon his mind the ideas of God, immortality, liberty, virtue, etc.; and it was only by means of language that Adam and Eve were able to transmit to their offspring the system of natural religion and ethics based upon these ideas. Hence faith is the foundation not only of supernatural knowledge and life, but likewise of purely human science and reason. De Lamennais,² the inventor of the “*sens commun*” as the supreme criterion of truth, insisted even more emphatically than De Bonald on the necessity of Primitive Revelation, from which alone, he says, all man’s religious and moral knowledge is derived. Traditionalism reappears in a somewhat moderated form in the writings of Bonnetty (1798–1879) and P. Ventura (1792–1861).³ Bonnetty admits that human reason is able to deal with the truths at least of the material order independently of language and instruction, but that for the fundamental doctrines of metaphysics and ethics we are dependent on Revelation. Ventura goes so far as to admit that unaided reason can form the basic notions of being, substance, causality, virtue, and so forth, but his Traditionalistic bent moves him to insist that these basic notions must needs remain unfruitful, so far as our natural knowledge of God is concerned, were it not for the aid of language and instruction, that is to say, ultimately, Primitive Revelation. Traditionalism was still further attenuated by the Louvain school of Semi-

¹ Cfr. De Bonald, *Recherches philosophiques sur les premiers objets des connaissances morales*, Paris 1817.

² *Essai sur l’Indifférence en Matière de Religion*, Paris 1817.

³ *La Tradition*, Paris 1856.

Traditionalists, whose chief representative, Ubaghs,⁴ expressly admits the revealed teaching that human reason can acquire a knowledge of God from the consideration of the physical universe, though he hastens to offset his own concession by explaining that the full use of reason (in a child) depends essentially on education and instruction in divine things, and that the concept of God which it is the business of education to convey, is derived from the Primitive Revelation given to our first parents in Paradise. This theory is calculated to raise anew the question as to the extent of the cognitive power of human reason, and traces the notion of God back to Tradition as its sole source. Were it not for its admission that reason can *subsequently*, by its own powers, perceive the existence (and essence) of God from nature, Traditionalism would openly contradict itself.

2. WHY TRADITIONALISM IS UNTENABLE.—The different systems of Traditionalism are philosophically and theologically untenable.

a) Philosophically, the fundamental fallacy of Traditionalism lies in the false assumption that language engenders ideas, while in matter of fact it is quite plain that, on the contrary, language necessarily presupposes thought and ideas already formed. Man must first have ideas before he can express them in words. "*Verbis nisi verba non discimus,*" to quote St. Augustine,⁵ "*imo sonum strepitumque verborum.... Nescio tamen verbum esse, donec quid significet sciam. Rebus igitur cognitis, verborum quoque cognitio perficitur.*" It is quite true that language and instruction play an important, nay, a necessary part in the formation of ideas, but only in so far as the spoken word of parent and teacher leads the child to think for himself and supports and aids him in such independent thinking. We may also concede that without the family and society no child can *fully* develop his mental faculties.

b) From the theological point of view Traditionalism is open to the following objections. Inasmuch as it denies that reason can attain to a knowledge of God from a consideration of nature, and asserts that all our knowledge of God is derived from language, human tradition, and Primitive Revelation, exaggerated Traditionalism manifestly contradicts the teaching of the Vatican Council. The milder form usually called Semi-Traditionalism runs counter to dogma only in so far as it questions the certainty of the knowledge of God acquired by unaided reason. It can therefore be squared with the dogmatic definition of the Council on condition that it be expressly understood that the knowledge of God handed down among men from generation to generation is derived not from Primitive Revelation in the strict sense of that term, but from an infused primitive *knowledge*.⁶

Of the different Traditionalist schools only one, that of Louvain, has made an attempt to interpret Sacred Scripture and Tradition in accordance with its teaching. Its representatives endeavored to persuade themselves that the Bible and the Fathers refer to man as he grows up among his fellowmen, and converses with them by human methods, and consequently, when they employ the phrase "natural knowledge of God," do not mean that concept of God which each individual human being forms anew under the influence of parents and instructors, but that concept which, derived from human instruction and tradition, has its roots in Primitive Revelation and can at most be confirmed and deepened by individual consideration of nature. If this explanation were true, we should have to interpret Wisdom 13:1 sqq., and Rom. 1:20, thus: A man is inexcusable if he does not know God, for the reason that all men derive a knowledge of God from Primitive Revelation and are, besides, able to perceive Him in nature. Is this the sense of

⁴ Cfr. his *Institutiones Philosophicae*. Ubaghs was directly inspired by Malebranche. Cfr. J. L. Perrier, *The Revival of Scholastic Philosophy*, New York 1909, p. 215.

⁵ *De Magistro*, c. 11.

⁶ Cfr. Granderath, S. J., *Constit. Dogmaticae SS. Oecum. Concilii Vaticani ex ipsis eius Actis Explicatae*, pp. 36 sqq., Friburgi 1892.

Holy Scripture? We are at liberty to assume an elision only when there is reason to think that a writer has omitted something which, being self-evident, did not require express mention. Is the indispensableness of tradition, oral instruction, and Primitive Revelation self-evident in the passages under consideration? Certainly not; hence the sacred writers can not have meant to pass this point over *per ellipsin*. This becomes still plainer when we reflect that the Traditionalist interpretation is a modern innovation, excogitated for the purposes of a philosophical system that was entirely unknown in the past. Nor can the teaching of the Fathers be quoted in favor of Traditionalism. True, the Fathers admit the existence, in Paradise, of a Primitive Revelation upon which the human race is perpetually drawing; but they never regarded this Primitive Revelation as an absolutely necessary instrument of education: they merely advert to it as an accidental fact with which it is necessary to reckon. They insist that the original purity of Primitive Revelation was tarnished among the heathen nations, and that the genuine knowledge of God had to be constantly rejuvenated in the perennial purity of the springs of nature.⁷

READINGS.—*Kleutgen, *De Ipso Deo*, p. 1, qu. 1, art 3.—Chastel, S. J., *De la Valeur de la Raison Humaine*, Paris 1875.—Denzinger, *Vier Bücher von der religiösen Erkenntnis*, Vol. I, pp. 149 sqq., Würzburg 1856.—For a philosophical appreciation of Traditionalism, see Schiffini, S. J., *Disput. Metaphys. Specials*, Vol. I, n. 338 sqq.; B. Boedder, S. J., *Natural Theology*, pp. 149 sqq., New York 1891; Jos. Hontheim, S. J., *Theodicaea*, pp. 33 sqq., Friburgi 1893.

ARTICLE 2

THE POSSIBILITY OF ATHEISM

1. DEFINITION OF ATHEISM.—Negative Atheism (Agnosticism, Criticism, Scepticism) holds that the existence of God is “unknowable,” because there are no arguments to prove it. By positive Atheism we understand the flat denial of the existence of a supreme being apart and distinct from the cosmos. Its chief forms are the different varieties of Materialism (Sensualism, Positivism, Mechanical Monism) and Pantheism, which constantly assumes new shapes, and has therefore been justly likened to Proteus of ancient classic mythology. Polytheism and Semi-Pantheism (*e. g.*, the “Pantheism” of Krause) cannot, however, be branded as Atheism. For though both systems logically culminate in the denial of God, their champions in some fashion or other hold to the existence of a supra-mundane and absolute being⁸ upon which all other beings depend.

2. THE POSSIBILITY OF ATHEISM AND ITS LIMITS.—Seeing that Holy Scripture, Tradition, and the teaching of the Church emphatically insist on the easy cognoscibility of God, our first question, in coming to treat of Atheism, naturally is: Is Atheism possible, and how is it possible?

a) We must, in the first place, carefully distinguish between atheistic systems of doctrine and individual professors of Atheism. The history of philosophy shows beyond a doubt that there exist philosophic systems which either expressly deny,⁹ or in their ultimate principles virtually exclude,^{9a} the existence of God. It must be noted, however, that by a happy inconsistency the atheistic tendency of these systems often remains more

⁷ Cfr. St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, lib. VI sq.; Lactantius, *Divin. Institut*, II, 8.

⁸ The Homeric Zeus, Vedic henotheism, etc.

⁹ Materialism, Pantheism.

^{9a} Scepticism, Criticism.

or less latent, inasmuch as their adherents, in spite of atheistic (or pantheistic) premises, seek to uphold a belief in God.¹⁰

In considering the case of individuals who profess themselves atheists, the first question to suggest itself is not: Are there *practical* atheists? (that is to say, men who live as if there were no God), but rather: Can there be *theoretical* atheists in the *positive* sense of the term? It is certain that no man can be firmly and honestly convinced of the non-existence of God. For, in the first place, no human being enjoying the full use of reason can find a really conclusive argument for the thesis that there is *no* God. In the second place, the consciousness that there *is* a God, is so deeply ingrained in the human heart, and has such a tremendous bearing upon life and death, that it is impossible for any man to rid himself of it for any considerable length of time. Not even Agnosticism can plead extenuating circumstances. For every thinking man is constrained by the law of causality, consciously or unconsciously to form the syllogism: Where there is order, some one must exist who produced it; now, nature evinces a wonderful order; therefore there must exist a superhuman power that produced it, namely, God. The premisses of this simple syllogism must be self-evident to every thinking man, no matter whether he be learned or unlettered; and the conclusion flowing from these premisses forces itself with absolute cogency on the mind of every one who realizes that there can be no effect without a cause. Hence it is held as a *sententia communis* by theologians that no thinking man can be permanently convinced of the truth of Atheism. This does not, of course, imply that there may not exist here and there feeble-minded, idiotic, uncivilized human beings who know nothing of God. *Their* ignorance is due to the fact that they are unable to reason from effect to cause, which is a necessary condition of acquiring a knowledge of God from His creatures.

b) As we have intimated above, even learned men may, from quasi-conviction, temporarily harbor a species of unbelief; though, of course, this always involves grave guilt. "*Dixit insipiens in corde suo: Non est Deus*—The fool hath said in his heart: There is no God."^{10a} Not scientific acumen nor a desire for truth, but folly is the source and fountain-head of Atheism. In most cases such folly is traceable to a corrupt heart, as St. Paul plainly intimates in his Epistle to the Romans, and as St. Augustine^{10b} repeats in his commentary on the Psalms: "*Primo vide illos corruptos, ut possint dicere in corde suo: Non est Deus.... Dixerunt enim apud se non recte cogitantes. Coepit corruptio a mala fide, inde itur in turpes mores; inde in acerrimas indignitates: gradus sunt isti.*" The psychological process of apostasy from the faith may be described as follows: First a man loses his faith; then comes a period of practical unbelief, nourished sometimes by sensuality, sometimes by pride, until finally he is deluded into theoretical Atheism. Not infrequently moral corruption precedes infidelity as a cause. Cfr. Eph. 4:18: "*Tenebris obscuratum habentes intellectum, alienati a vita Dei per ignorantiam, quae est in illis propter caecitatem cordis ipsorum*—Having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts."¹¹

¹⁰ Ontologism is an example in point.

^{10a} Ps. 13:1.

^{10b} *In Ps.* 53, n. 2.

¹¹ On the psychology of unbelief, see X. Moisant, *Psychologie de l'Incroyant*, Paris 1908. Cfr. also Hettinger-Bowden, *Natural Religion*, pp. 1 sqq.

3. WHY ATHEISM IS INTRINSICALLY POSSIBLE.—Since the idea of God is spontaneous and forces itself almost irresistibly upon the human mind, purely moral causes do not suffice to explain Atheism; there must in each instance exist an intellectual factor also. This intellectual factor must be sought partly in the fallibility of human reason, which is controlled by the will, and partly in the circumstance that the proofs for the existence of God do not produce immediate certainty. On the one hand man has it in his power to disregard the more or less cogent features of these arguments and by concentrating his thoughts on the manifold objections raised against them, to delude himself into the notion that there is no God. On the other hand, these arguments, as we have said, carry no immediate, but only a mediate certainty, inasmuch as the conviction which they engender depends upon a long chain of middle terms.

The number of real atheists is impossible to ascertain. It depends on conditions of time, of *milieu*, of degree and method of education, and on various other agencies. Our age boasts the sorry distinction of being immersed in a flood of Atheism which it may take a social revolution to abate.¹²

READINGS:—Segneri, S. J., *L'Incredulo senza scusa*, Venezia 1690.—W. G. Ward, *Essays on the Philosophy of Theism*, 2 vols., London 1884.—Kaderavek, *Der Atheismus*, Wien 1884.—L. v. Hammerstein, *Edgar, or From Atheism to the Full Truth*, St. Louis 1903.—W. M. Lacy, *An Examination of the Philosophy of the Unknowable*, Philadelphia 1883.—A. W. Momerie, *Agnosticism*, London 1889.—ID., *Belief in God*, London 1891.—G. J. Lucas, *Agnosticism and Religion*, Baltimore 1895.—G. M. Schuler, *Der Pantheismus*, Würzburg 1881.—ID., *Der Materialismus*, Berlin 1890.—E. L. Fischer, *Die modernen Ersatzversuche für das aufgegeben Christentum*, Ratisbon 1903.—H. Schell, *Der Gottesglaube und die naturwissenschaftliche Welterkenntnis*, Bamberg 1904.—F. Aveling in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. II, s. v. "Atheism."—F. Hettinger, *Natural Religion*, New York 1890.—W. S. Lilly, *The Great Enigma*, 2nd ed., New York 1893.—L. A. Lambert, *Notes on Ingersoll*, Buffalo 1883.¹³—T. Finlay, S. J., "Atheism as a Mental Phenomenon" in the *Month* (1878), pp. 186 sqq.

CHAPTER II

THE QUALITY OF MAN'S KNOWLEDGE OF GOD ACCORDING TO DIVINE REVELATION

The arguments for the existence of God not only prove His existence, but at the same time reveal each some one or other aspect of the Divine Essence.¹ Whatever knowledge of the Divine Essence we may thus acquire from a consideration of finite things, is sure to be

¹² Cfr. C. Gutberlet, *Theodicee*, 2nd ed., § 2, Münster 1890; B. Boedder, S. J., *Natural Theology*, pp. 76 sqq., New York 1891; J. T. Driscoll, *Christian Philosophy: God*, 2nd ed., pp. 15 sq., New York 1904.

¹³ Father Lambert's *Notes on Ingersoll* has been published in numerous editions and shall be mentioned here, though it is, of course, perfectly true that popular speakers and writers of the type of Robert G. Ingersoll, while they "may create a certain amount of unlearned disturbance, ... are not treated seriously by thinking men, and it is extremely doubtful whether they deserve a place in any historical or philosophical exposition of Atheism." (Aveling in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, II, 42.)

¹ Cfr. S. Thomas, *In Boeth. De Trinitate*, qu. 2, ord. 6, art. 3: "*De nulla re potest sciri 'an est,' nisi quoquo modo de ea sciatur 'quid est' vel cognitione perfecta vel cognitione confusa.*"

stamped with the birth mark of the creature. It may be ennobled and transfigured by Revelation and faith, but they cannot change its substance. Not until we are admitted to the beatific vision in Heaven, does the abstractive and analogous knowledge of God acquired here on earth give way to that intuitive and perfect knowledge which enables us to see the Blessed Trinity as It is. Such are the limitations of the created intellect that it cannot even enjoy the beatific vision except by means of a specially infused light, called "*lumen gloriae*."

We shall treat of the two modes of knowing God, the earthly and the heavenly, in the next two sections, reserving a third section for the consideration of Eunomianism and Ontologism.

SECTION 1

OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AS IT IS HERE ON EARTH

In this section we shall consider, (1) the imperfection of our knowledge of God here below; (2) the threefold mode by which man can know God, *viz.*: (a) affirmation or causation, inferring the nature of His attributes from the nature of His works; (b) negation or remotion, excluding the idea of finite limitation; (c) intensification or eminence, ascribing every perfection to God which is consistent with His infinity, to the exclusion of all quantitative and temporal measures and comparisons;² and (3) certain theological conclusions flowing therefrom.

ARTICLE 1

THE IMPERFECTION OF OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IN THIS LIFE

1. PRELIMINARY REMARKS.—The perfection or imperfection of any act of cognition depends upon the manner in which we acquire our concepts. These may be, on the one hand, either abstractive or intuitive; or, on the other, either analogous or univocal.

a) We form an intuitive concept, when consciousness and intellect put us into direct communication with objective truth (such is, *e. g.*, the concept of a tree). A concept is abstractive—this term must not be confounded with "abstract"—when its compound elements are derived from some other object or objects, and transferred to the object under consideration (*e. g.*, the concept of a golden calf). Whence it follows, that every intuitive concept is an immediate one (*conceptus immediatus*), while an abstractive concept is always mediate (*conceptus medius*), because it can be gained only by means of other concepts or of syllogistic conclusions. It follows also that an abstractive concept can never represent its object adequately, while an intuitive concept may, though it must not do so.

b) An analogous (*conceptus analogus*) differs from a univocal concept (*conceptus univocus*) in the same way that a metaphorical differs from a proper concept (*conceptus improprius—proprius*). A univocal or proper concept is one which applies to every individual comprehended under it in the same sense, as for example the concept "man" applies to Peter, Paul, John, etc. An

² Cfr. G. M. Sauvage in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, art. "Analogy," Vol. I, pp. 449 sq.

analogous concept, on the other hand, is predicated of a number of objects partly in the same and partly in a different sense, as *e. g.*, “healthy” of the human body, the color of one’s face, the climate, etc.³

c) Here we shall have to borrow from philosophy two important truths. The first is, that all rational knowledge is grounded on sense perception, so that the material objects of the senses must be said to be the primary, proportionate, and adequate object of our intellect. The second truth is based upon the first: Our earthly knowledge of God is not the fountain-head and source, but the consummation and climax of human cognition.⁴ This gives us the *status quaestionis* of the problem we are studying. If it is true that in this life we can acquire a knowledge of God only from the contemplation of nature, it follows that our concept of Him is not intuitive (immediate, adequate) but abstractive (mediate, inadequate). And if the concept we form of God does not represent Him as He is in Himself, but only analogically, it follows further that our knowledge of God cannot be univocal, but must be analogous. Being abstractive and analogical, then, it must be very imperfect—and this imperfection not even supernatural belief in God (*fides in Deum*) can remove.⁵

2. THE DOGMA IN SACRED SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION.—The imperfection of man’s knowledge of God here below may be said to be included in the dogma of God’s incomprehensibility or inscrutability (ἀκαταληψία). “*Deus ... incomprehensibilis*”;⁶ “*Ecclesia credit ... Deum verum et vivum ... incomprehensibilem*.”⁷ How the term “incomprehensible” is to be understood, and in what the essence of incomprehensibility consists, the Church has never defined.

a) The Scriptural argument, drawn from the Old and New Testaments, covers both our natural and our supernatural knowledge of God (*i. e.*, that based on faith and grace). In the Old Testament, besides the Book of Job,⁸ it is especially the Sapiential Books which insist that we cannot comprehend God while we are wayfarers on this earth; nay, that He remains incomprehensible to our mind even in the hereafter, when we enjoy the light of glory.⁹

The principal text in proof of our thesis is drawn from the New Testament, *viz.*, 1 Cor. 13:12: “*Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate, tunc autem facie ad faciem; nunc cognosco ex parte, tunc autem [i. e. in coelo] cognoscam, sicut et cognitus sum*—We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known.” St. Paul here makes a sharp distinction between two modes of knowing God, the one earthly, the other heavenly, which are opposed to each other (*nunc—tunc*, ἄρτι—τότε). Limiting ourselves to the former (the latter will engage us later), human knowledge of God here below is characterized by three essential marks. It is represented first as a “seeing through a glass,”¹⁰ a mode of perception directly opposed to intuitive vision “face to face.” As in Rom. 1:20, so here St. Paul describes our earthly

³ For further details consult any good text-book of logic.

⁴ Cfr. Egger, *Propaed. Philosophicotheol.*, 6th ed., pp. 146 sqq., Brix.1903.

⁵ Cfr. 2 Cor. 5:7 “διὰ πίστεως γὰρ περιπατοῦμεν, οὐ διὰ εἶδους—For we walk by faith and not by sight.”

⁶ Cfr. *Conc. Lat. IV*, A. D. 1215, cap. “*Firmiter*.”

⁷ *Conc. Vat.*, Sess. III, cap. 1.

⁸ Job 11:7 sqq.

⁹ Cfr. Wisdom 9:13 sqq.; Ecclus. 42:23 sqq.; Prov. 25:27.

¹⁰ *Per speculum*, δι’ ἐσόπτρου.

knowledge of God as an abstractive, mediate, inadequate knowledge, which remains a vision *per speculum* even if a man “should have all faith.”¹¹ The second mark is “enigmatic,”¹² which means that the human mind on earth can conceive God only by analogy drawn from His creatures; for a proper and univocal concept of God could not be designated as enigmatical or compared to seeing “in a dark manner.” This characteristic is completed by the third mark, *viz.*, partiality (*ex parte*, ἐκ μέρους), which clearly designates our knowledge of God as being a knowledge “in part.” All three of these notes prove the imperfection of our earthly knowledge of God as conclusively as they establish God’s incomprehensibility by the human mind so long as man lingers in “this vale of tears.”¹³

b) The Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries defended this dogma against the Eunomians, who claimed that the human mind is able to comprehend God adequately here below. They defended it first as mere witnesses to the ancient Tradition, and secondly as philosophers discussing the *How* and *Why*.

α) One of the first of these witnesses is St. Justin Martyr, who insists both on the incomprehensibility of God and the spontaneousness of our concept of Him. He says: “That same Being, which is beyond all essence,¹⁴ I say, is unutterable, and inexplicable, but alone beautiful and good, coming suddenly into souls well-dispositioned, on account of their affinity to and desire of seeing Him.”¹⁵ Gregory of Nyssa appeals to the Bible to give testimony against Eunomius: “All those Scriptural expressions which have been invented to glorify God, designate something which belongs to God,¹⁶ ... whereby we are taught, either that He is almighty, or insusceptible of corruption, or immense.... His own essence, however, since it cannot be comprehended by reason, nor expressed in language, He has not exposed to curious searching, inasmuch as He commanded [men] to venerate silently that which He withheld from their certain knowledge.”¹⁷ “By the very act of confessing our ignorance,” according to Cyril of Jerusalem, “we profess a deep knowledge of God.”¹⁸ Of special importance in this connection are the five homilies of St. Chrysostom against the Eunomians, entitled: “Of Him Who is Inscrutable.” We hear the same string faintly vibrating in the writings of the last of the Greek Fathers, for John of Damascus teaches: “The supreme, unutterable, impenetrable Being is alone in knowing Himself. True, it is manifest to all creatures *that* God exists; but they are utterly ignorant of *what* He is according to His substance and nature.”¹⁹ To quote at least one representative of the Latins, St. Augustine says beautifully: “*Verius enim cogitatur Deus quam dicitur, et verius est quam cogitatur*—For God is more truly thought than He is uttered, and exists more truly than He is thought.”²⁰

β) In their capacity as metaphysicians, the Fathers seek to refute Eunomianism partly by a close analysis of the elements that enter into the human conception of God, partly by opposing to it a complete theory of knowledge.

¹¹ 1 Cor. 13:2.

¹² *In aenigmate*, ἐν αἰνίγματι.

¹³ Cfr. T. J. Gerrard, *The Wayfarer’s Vision*, pp. 1 sqq., London 1909.

¹⁴ ἐπέκεινα πάσης οὐσίας.

¹⁵ *Contra Tryph.*, 4.

¹⁶ τὰ περὶ Θεόν—attributes of God.

¹⁷ *Contr. Eunom.*, 12.

¹⁸ *Catech.*, VI, n. 2.

¹⁹ *De Fide Orthod.*, I, 4.

²⁰ *De Trinit.*, VII, 4, 7.—For further references, cfr. Petavius, *De Deo*, I, 5 sqq.

In regard to the first point, the Fathers involved in the Eunomian controversy, especially the Cappadocians, prove the impossibility of man's having an intuitive, adequate knowledge of God here below, by an analysis of the logical constituents of the various concepts we are able to form of God. Their argument may be summed up as follows: A careful classification of all these different concepts shows some of them to be affirmative, while others are negative in quality. The affirmative concepts connote some perfection, either concrete (*e. g.*, God is wise), or abstract (*e. g.*, God is wisdom). In the case of the former (affirmative), the human mind forms the concept of a being in which "being wise" inheres after the manner of an accidental form; in the case of the latter (negative) notions, we conceive a form abstracted from its subject,—a form, therefore, which does not exist as such. Now, this mode of conception is proper to creatures, but not to God; for God, as Infinite Being, is neither the subject of accidental forms of perfection, nor Himself an abstract form of perfection. He is Substantial Wisdom, which is really identical with every other perfection, though it does not enter into any composition, either physical or metaphysical. On the other hand, the negative concepts we form of God deny the existence in Him of any imperfection of the kind common to creatures (*e. g.*, God is incorporeal), and hence do not express God's essence such as it is in itself. But a concept which, in order to be a true concept, must first shed all imperfections, cannot possibly claim to be adequate, intuitive, or univocal.^{20a}

The theory of knowledge elaborated by the Fathers, assumes that all our concepts are derived from sense perception, and concludes that a concept of God drawn from such a source must needs be imperfect. Thus, *e. g.*, Gregory of Nyssa argues: "God's epithets are based upon the things He works in us.... But His essence is anterior to its operations, and we derive our knowledge of these operations from the things we perceive by our senses."²¹ The great Basil²² and John of Damascus²³ express themselves in like manner. Several of the Fathers go into the subject more deeply, anticipating as it were the Scholastic axiom: "*Cognitum est in cognoscente non ad modum cogniti, sed ad modum cognoscentis,*" and emphasizing the truth that "the measure (τὸ μέτρον) of our knowledge of God is immanent in man, who is a synthesis of spirit and matter;" that is to say, the more perfect the power of cognition, the nobler is the resultant act or knowledge. Man, ranking midway between angels and brutes, apprehends the material things below him according to a higher, *i. e.*, the notional, mode of being; but his apprehension of the things that are above him (the angels, God) is cast in a more imperfect mould.²⁴ Consequently, our idea of God is necessarily imperfect.

γ) There are on record certain utterances of the Fathers which appear to contradict or at least to weaken the doctrine we have just propounded. But in reality they confirm it. The oft-repeated phrase, We know that God exists, but we do not know His essence,²⁵ does not mean that we can have no knowledge of God whatever, but merely that our knowledge of His essence is imperfect. Nor can the Patristic dictum that we merely know what God is *not*, but do not know what He *is*, be cited in support of the Neo-Platonic teaching of a purely negative cognoscibility,²⁶ or of Mr. Herbert Spencer's Philosophy (bless the mark!) of the Unknowable. St. Augustine, *e. g.*, insists: "*Si*

^{20a} For the necessary references, see St. Basil, *Contra Eunom.*, lib. I, n. 13 sqq.; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orat. theolog.*, 2; Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunom.*, lib. XII. Cfr. K. Unterstein, *Die natürliche Gotteserkenntnis nach der Lehre der kappadozischen Kirchenväter*, Straubing 1903–04.

²¹ *Contr. Eunom.*, 1. XII.

²² *Ep.*, 234.

²³ *De Fide Orth.*, I, 4.

²⁴ Cfr. Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunom.*, lib. I.

²⁵ Cfr. Hilary, *In Ps.*, 129:—"Humanae infirmitatis religiosa confessio est, de Deo solum hoc nosse, quod est."

²⁶ Θεὸς βυθὸς ἄγνωστος.

non potestis comprehendere, quid sit Deus, vel hoc comprehendite, quid non sit Deus; multum profeceritis, si non aliud quam est de Deo senseritis—If ye are not able to comprehend what God is, comprehend at least what God is not: you will have made much progress, if you think of God as being not something other than He is.²⁷ We have his own authority²⁸ for explaining, that he merely intends to define the sublimity of the divine Essence as surpassing all categories of human thought; that is to say, he merely emphasizes the purely analogical and abstractive character of our knowledge of God. Therefore Gregory Nazianzen admonishes us: “It is not enough to state what [God] is *not*; but he who would discover the nature of Him Who is (τοῦ ὄντος), must also define what He *is*. For he who defines only what God is *not*, is like unto a man who would answer the question: How much is twice five? by saying: It is not one, nor two, etc., omitting to tell his questioner that it is ten.”²⁹

c) The dogma here under consideration is supported also by the authority of the great Scholastic theologians, notably St. Thomas Aquinas.³⁰

Following in the footsteps of the Fathers, the Schoolmen worked out a theory of knowledge which conforms not only to the psychology of the thinking mind, but likewise to the principles of revealed religion. As the foundation of their system they adopted the philosophy of Aristotle, for the reason that this system—at least in its fundamental lines—fitted in best with both the nature of the human intellect, and supernatural Revelation. Inasmuch as Sacred Scripture and the Fathers favor the basic principles of the Aristotelian theory of knowledge, this theory can claim our unconditional assent, and we must admit that in its essential features, aside from incidental details, it cannot be false. In making this assertion, we do not, of course, wish to advocate a slavish restoration of the ancient psychology, nor to condemn every effort at originality in stating and developing its principles. Our sole object is to impress upon the reader that not every system of psychology can be fitted into the framework of revealed theology. Thus, *e. g.*, the critical Idealism of Kant, based as it is upon radically false premises, cannot be harmonized with Revelation. It is a mistake to believe that, by clinging to Scholastic Aristotelianism, the Church puts a brake upon theologians who endeavor to clear up special questions. On the contrary, was not, for instance, the psychology of Albertus Magnus, a heteroclite amalgam of omnigenous philosophical elements, which it required the master mind of an Aquinas to sift and transfuse into a coherent system, by eliminating all extraneous ingredients?³¹

ARTICLE 2

THE THREEFOLD MODE OF KNOWING GOD HERE ON EARTH

1. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.—Our previous article will receive confirmation from the detailed exposition, which we now undertake, of the manner in which man acquires such

²⁷ *Tract. in Ioa.*, XXIII, n. 9.

²⁸ *De Trinit.*, V, 1.

²⁹ *Orat. Theol.*, 2.—See also Article 2, *infra*.

³⁰ *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 12, art. 12.

³¹ Cfr. J. Bach, *Des Albertus Magnus Verhältnis zu der Erkenntnislehre der Griechen, Lateiner, Araber und Juden*, Wien 1881.—For a digest of “the traditional theory of knowledge,” see Heinrich, *Dogm. Theol.*, III, § 141. Cfr. also M. Schneid, *Aristoteles in der Scholastik*, Mainz 1875; A. Otten, *Allgemeine Erkenntnislehre des hl. Thomas*, Paderborn 1882; De Wulf-Coffey, *History of Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 304 sq., London 1909; *Id.*, *Scholasticism Old and New*, pp. 124 sqq., Dublin 1907.

knowledge of God as is vouchsafed him here below. He attains to it in a threefold manner: *viâ affirmationis seu causalitatis* (θείσις), *viâ negationis* (ἀφάρεσις), and *viâ superlationis seu eminentiae* (ὑπεροχή). Every one of these methods is exceedingly imperfect. As we do not perceive God in his own form (*in specie propria*), but in that of some other being (*in specie aliena*), that is to say, by means of analogous concepts derived from His creatures, it is plain that our knowledge of Him must involve many imperfections, notably a certain inaccuracy in the notion of God, which calls for incessant correction if the judgments we formulate of God and divine things are not to be entirely wrong. When we affirm some divine perfection, such as, *e. g.*, wisdom, we are immediately constrained to eliminate from this perfection, by an act of negation, every species of imperfection common to creatures (*e. g.*, human wisdom), and furthermore to raise the perfection thus purged by a series of negations to its superlative degree and into the domain of the infinite (*e. g.*, superhuman, absolute wisdom). This threefold process of affirmation, negation, and intensification, is therefore merely a natural and necessary result of the abstractive and analogous character of our conception of God.³²

It appears, then, that we may indeed claim to have a knowledge of the divine Essence, but only in a certain limited sense. As our earthly knowledge of God is neither intuitive nor univocal, we do not apprehend the divine Essence in the manner claimed by the Eunomians; though, on the other hand, as the Fathers insisted against the Gnostics and Neo-Platonists (who would admit the possibility of none but a purely negative knowledge of the divine Essence), it must be held that our cognition of God comprises more than merely His abstract existence (ὅτι ἔστιν), inasmuch as we are able, by means of affirmative (positive) concepts of quality in a limited measure to conceive the Divine Essence and to differentiate it distinctly from all other objects (τὰ περὶ Θεόν). The doctrine that we know God by mode of affirmation is held by theologians to be "*fidei proxima*," because Holy Scripture applies positive as well as negative attributes to the Godhead.

2. THESE THREE MODES OF COGNITION ARE INSEPARABLE.—The three modes of knowing God which we have just explained, are like parts of a cripple's crutch—the human mind cannot proceed by means of one of them alone, it must employ all three simultaneously.

a) The positive predicates at which we arrive by means of the *via affirmationis*, express either a simple or a mixed divine perfection.³³ The difference between the two classes is, that the concept of a simple perfection (*e. g.*, sanctity), does not include any sort of imperfection, while a mixed perfection always connotes some defect (*e. g.*, syllogistic reasoning). Now it is obvious that no mixed perfection can be affirmed of God that has not previously been subjected to a process of logical purification. We may not even apply our notions of simple perfections unconditionally to God, except with the express restriction that such and such a quality exists in God not after the manner of the creature (negation), but in an infinitely higher mode, in what is called the eminent sense.

b) With regard to the *via negationis* we must observe that this method is able to impart more than a purely negative knowledge of God; for inasmuch as it eliminates defects or limitations, it is essentially a negation of a negation, and thus attains to the dignity of an affirmation.³⁴ Thus the infinity of God, being essentially a denial that there are limitations in Him, postulates the

³² Cfr. Sauvage, art. "Analogy," in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*; Gerrard, *The Wayfarer's Vision*, ch. 1; Humphrey, *His Divine Majesty*, pp. 42 sqq.

³³ *Perfectio simplex, perfectio mixta*.

³⁴ Cfr. S. Maxim., *In Dionys. de Divin. Nomin.*, c. 4: "*Sunt efficaces positiones.*"

plenitude of all being in God; which implies not only an affirmation, but also a *modus eminentior*, a more eminent mode of being. Hence there is no reason why, after the example of the Calvinist theologian, John Clericus, we should reject the *via negationis* as unfruitful and meaningless.

c) Inasmuch as the superlative degree is merely the positive degree intensified, the *via superlativis*, or mode of eminence, naturally entails affirmations. But the process also implies a negation which serves the purpose of complement and correction. And for this reason, since even the purest perfections in God differ radically from those proper to creatures, in applying to God the notion of any created perfection, we must exclude every species of limitation. Language has three terms for three different forms of the superlative: First, abstract terms; *e. g.*, God is goodness (*ipsa bonitas*—ἀὐταγαθότης); second, terms compounded with the adverbs “all” or “alone”; *e. g.*, God is all-powerful or, “God alone is powerful” (cfr. the “*Tu solus altissimus*” of the “*Gloria*”); and third, terms compounded with the prefix “super” (*e. g.*, God is super-temporal, *i. e.*, above time, independent of it).

The Scotist Frassen³⁵ appropriately compares these three modes of cognition with the *modus procedendi* peculiar to the three arts of painting, sculpture, and poetry. The painter produces a portrait as it were “affirmatively,” by brushing his colors upon the canvas; the sculptor may be said to proceed “negatively” in carving a statue; while the poet treats his subject “superlatively,” by applying to it all sorts of tropes, metaphors, and hyperboles.³⁶

3. HOW THIS THREEFOLD MODE OF COGNITION ACCORDS WITH DIVINE REVELATION.—The three modes by which the mind of man conceives God, as explained above, are clearly indicated in Holy Scripture and Tradition, and their existence and objective fitness must be admitted to be certain from a theological point of view.

a) We have a plain Scriptural argument in Ecclus. 43:29–32, a text which picturesquely describes the works of God, winding up as follows: “*Consummatio autem sermonum* [*i. e.*, briefly stated]: *Ipse [scil. Deus] est in omnibus* [τὸ πᾶν ἐστὶν αὐτός, *i. e.*, He contains all created perfections = *via affirmationis s. causalitatis*]. *Gloriantes ad quid valebimus? Ipse enim omnipotens super omnia opera sua* [the Septuagint has: αὐτὸς γὰρ ὁ μέγας παρὰ πάντα τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ, *i. e.*, He is nothing of the things He has made = *via negationis*].... *Glorificantes Dominum, quantumcunque potueritis, supervalebit enim adhuc* [ὑπερέξει γὰρ καὶ ἔτι *i. e.*, He is high above every thing = *via eminentiae*].” St. Thomas Aquinas finds the three modes or stages indicated also in Rom. 1:20: “*‘Invisibilia Dei’ cognoscuntur per viam negationis; ‘sempiterna virtus’ per viam causalitatis; ‘divinitas’ per viam excellentiae.*”³⁷

b) The most famous and the best known formula that has come down to us from Patristic times, is that of the Pseudo-Dionysius: Θεὸς ... πάντων θέσις καὶ πάντων ἀφαίρεσις ἢ ὑπὲρ

³⁵ *Scotus Academicus*, “De Deo,” disp. I, art. 2, qu. 1.

³⁶ “The three ways may be likened to the methods of the fine arts. Just as a painter produces his picture by putting paint on his canvas, so I use the positive way of forming my shadows—I take qualities from creatures and I transfer them to God. Just as a sculptor produces his statue by chipping off pieces from a block of marble, so I use the negative way of forming my shadows—I think of qualities in creatures and I remove the limitations. And just as a poet makes his word-picture more by metaphorical suggestion than by exact description, so I use the more eminent way in forming my shadows—I take the qualities of creatures and knowing that they are all realized in infinite degree in God, I conclude that any mutual exclusiveness which they have in creatures must be transcended in the simplicity of God.” (Gerrard, *The Wayfarer’s Vision*, pp. 8 sq.)

³⁷ *In Ep. ad Rom.*, c. I, lect. 5.

πᾶσαν θέσιν καὶ ἀφαίρεσιν αἰτία.³⁸ The same early writer, whoever he may have been, sailing in the wake of the Neo-Platonists, cultivated with a certain predilection the *via superlationis*: “*Nihil eorum, quae sunt ... explicat avcanum illud omnem rationem et intellectum superans superdeitatis superessentialiter supra omnia superexistentis* (τῆς ὑπὲρ πάντα ὑπερουσίας ὑπερούσης ὑπερθεότητος).³⁹ He is equally familiar with the *via negationis*, though in employing this mode he does not adopt the one-sided view of the Neo-Platonists. “God”—he says—“is not substance, not life, not light, not sense, not spirit, not wisdom, not goodness, not divinity, but something that is far higher and nobler than all these,”⁴⁰ Summing up the teaching of the Greek Fathers, St. John of Damascus says: “It is more becoming to speak of God negatively, denying all things about Him. Not as if He were nothing Himself, but inasmuch as He is *above* everything which exists, nay, above being itself.”⁴¹ For many other confirmatory passages, see Thomassin, *De Deo*, IV, 7–12.

As every negative conception of God essentially involves affirmations and intensifications, the negative mode of apprehending God is not quite so striking as one might conclude from the manner in which it was urged by the Fathers. Far from employing it for the purpose of proving the (Gnostic) “incognoscibility” of God or the (Neo-Platonic) “purely negative cognoscibility” of God, the Fathers rather strive by means of it to throw light both on the super-substantiality (ὑπερουσία) of God, and on our (relative) ignorance of things divine. For as Pseudo-Athanasius correctly remarks, Θεὸς γὰρ καταλαμβανόμενος οὐκ ἐστὶ θεός. This explains why ever since the days of the Pseudo-Areopagite, the mystics have defended the principle that “The highest knowledge we can have of God is that we do not know Him.”⁴² Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa devoted an entire book to the development of this thought. “*In rebus divinis scire est scire, nos ignorare,*” he writes.⁴³ In speaking, as they often do, of a “mystic night,” in which God’s obscurity reveals itself to us most clearly, the medieval mystics merely vary the dictum of the Apostle of the Gentiles: [*Deus*] “*lucem ... inhabitat inaccessibilem, quem nullus hominum vidit, sed nec videre potest*—[God] inhabiteth light inaccessible, whom no man hath seen, nor can see.”⁴⁴

ARTICLE 3

THEOLOGICAL CONCLUSIONS

1. GOD’S INEFFABILITY.—a) Language is merely the expression of thought, and therefore, if God is incomprehensible, it follows that He must also be ineffable or unutterable. “*Deus ... ineffabilis,*” says the Fourth Lateran Council.⁴⁵ And St. Augustine beautifully observes: “*Quid quaeris, ut ascendat in linguam, quod in cor hominis non ascendit?*”⁴⁶ As God alone comprehends Himself, so He alone can utter Himself adequately. It is in this sense that the Fathers designate God as the “ineffable” or “nameless” one (ἀνώνυμος).

b) Nevertheless man is able to conceive God, though inadequately, by a series of concepts representing His different attributes; and consequently can utter Him in a variety of names. Hence the Patristic term πολυώνυμος, “He of many names,” and the still larger

³⁸ *Myst. Theol.*, c. 2.

³⁹ *De Div. Nom.*, 13.

⁴⁰ *Myst. Theol.*, c. 3

⁴¹ *De Fide Orth.*, I, 4.

⁴² Cfr. Pseudo-Dionysius, *Myst. Theol.*, cap. I, § 3: “τῷ μηδὲν γινώσκειν ὑπὲρ νοῦν γινώσκειν.”

⁴³ *De Docta Ignorantia*, I, 26.

⁴⁴ 1 *Tim*, 6:16.

⁴⁵ *Caput “Firmiter.”*

⁴⁶ *In Ps.* 85, n. 12.

term employed by some of the Fathers, πανώνυμος, *i. e.*, “all-names,” “He to Whom all names apply.” In his sublime “Hymn to God,” Gregory Nazianzen beautifully sums up these conceptions: “Σὺ πάντων τέλος ἔσσι καὶ εἷς, καὶ πάντα, καὶ οὐδέν· οὐχ ἔν ἑών, οὐ πάντα. Πανώνυμε, τί σε παλέσσω, τὸν μόνον ἀκλήϊστον.”^{46a} St. Augustine expresses himself in a similar manner: “*Omnia possunt de Deo dici et nihil digne dicitur de Deo. Nihil latius hac inopia. Quaeris congruum nomen? Non invenis. Quaeris quoquo modo dicere? Omnia invenis*—All things can be said of God, and nothing is worthily said of God. Nothing is wider than this poverty of expression. Thou seekest a fitting name for Him; thou canst not find it. Thou seekest to speak of Him in any way soever; thou findest that He is all.”⁴⁷

c) A comparison of the logical elements of the various names applied to God, shows that all taken together yet fall far short of expressing the fulness of his infinite and supernotional Being; hence the Patristic term ὑπερώνυμος. We need not call attention to the fact that this threefold mode of appellation (πολυώνυμος, πανώνυμος, ὑπερώνυμος) corresponds exactly to the threefold mode of our apprehension of God, as explained above.⁴⁸

2. THE COMPOSITE CHARACTER OF OUR CONCEPTION OF GOD IN RELATION TO HIS SIMPLICITY.—The three modes by which we apprehend God produce in the human mind a great variety of concepts expressing attribution; hence the inevitably composite character of our conception of God. We have a typical example of such composition in the “Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith” adopted by the Vatican Council: “*Ecclesia credit et confitetur, unum esse Deum verum et vivum, Creatorem ac Dominum coeli et terrae, omnipotentem, aeternum, immensum, incomprehensibilem, intellectu ac voluntate omnique perfectione infinitum, etc.*—The Holy Catholic Apostolic Roman Church believes and confesses that there is one true and living God, Creator and Lord of heaven and earth, almighty, eternal, immense, incomprehensible, infinite in intelligence, in will, and in all perfection.”⁴⁹ There naturally arises the question: How can a composite conception of God be harmonized with the absolute simplicity of the Divine Essence?

Already the Eunomians raised the objection that the doctrine of the abstractive and analogous character of our knowledge of God must necessarily lead to an (impossible) piecing together of the Divine Essence, though it is quite evident that the supremely simple Being can be conceived only by the agency of an equally simple concept, and that consequently the various names applied to God are mere synonyms. The Fathers, in particular Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, solved this cunning objection by pointing out that though our knowledge of God is very imperfect, the Divine Essence comprises all perfections and consequently cannot be compressed into a finite concept. While our abstractive analogical mode of cognition compels the intellect to conceive God by a series of partial concepts, the infinite fulness of the Divine Being renders it impossible for us to exhaust that Being by means of conceptions formed in our finite mind.⁵⁰

^{46a} Thou art at once One, All, and None, and yet Thou art not all or one. All-name! by what name can I call Thee, nameless One, alone of all.

⁴⁷ *Tract. in Ioa.*, 13, n. 5. Cfr. St. Thomas, *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 13, art. 1.

⁴⁸ Cfr. Gerrard, *The Wayfarer's Vision*, p. 7.

⁴⁹ *Conc. Vatic., Const. De Fide*, c. 1. Denzinger-Bannwart, *Enchiridion*, n. 1782.

⁵⁰ For a more detailed explanation of this difficulty, see Part II. Cfr. also St. Thomas, *De Pot.*, qu. 7, art. 7.

3. OUR CONCEPTION OF GOD IS A TRUE CONCEPTION, DESPITE ITS IMPERFECTIONS.—Our inability to form an adequate conception of God is apt to make us suspect that the conception we do arrive at is false. Eunomius expressly declared it to be so, insisting that, in order not to be misled into forming wrong notions of God, it must necessarily be in man's power to construct an adequate notion of Him. Proceeding from the axiom that no conception can be true that represents a thing otherwise than it is, this heretic insisted that man must have the ability to form an adequate concept of God; because otherwise he would be doomed to form inadequate notions, and consequently to be deceived.

a) In undertaking to refute this specious objection, we must stress the fact that the truth and correctness of the concept which man forms of God by the agencies of reason and revelation, is a dogma coinciding with that of the cognoscibility of God.⁵¹ Among the divine predicates that human reason gathers from the consideration of nature, St. Paul⁵² expressly mentions two: ἡ ἀίδωσ αὐτοῦ δύναμις, *i. e.*, the eternal power manifested in the creation of the universe, and θεϊότης, *i. e.*, a Divine Essence differing from all created things. As a third predicate the Book of Wisdom⁵³ adds the attribute of divine "beauty." Elsewhere the Bible refers to God as "He who is," *i. e.*, Who has the plenitude of being; the Eternal, the Allwise, the Immense, etc.,—all predicates which, if they were incorrect or untrue, would belie the Word of God.

b) The Eunomian contention, that unless we assume the possibility of man's forming an adequate idea of God, we are placed before the alternative of forming either a false conception of Him or no conception at all,—is met by the Fathers with the retort that it rests upon a confusion of the separate and distinct notes of "imperfect" and "incorrect" on the one hand, and their contradictories, "perfect" and "correct," on the other. The Fathers insist that there is such a thing as a true though imperfect concept of God; that our knowledge of God, in spite of its inevitable defects, is true and remains true for the very simple reason, among others, that we are fully aware, and do so judge, that the perfections we ascribe to God exist in Him in a quite different way than they exist in His creatures and in the concepts of the human mind; that, whatever wrong elements may enter into our conception of God, are eliminated by an express judgment; while on the other hand the Eunomians themselves are open to the charge of counterfeiting the notion of God when they pretend to be able to conceive God and to comprehend Him as He is, though in matter of fact they derive their conceptions of Him from analogy.⁵⁴

READINGS:—Suarez, *De Divina Substantia eiusque Attributis*, lib. I, cap. 8–12.—Thomassin, *De Deo*, lib. IV, cap. 6–12.—Franzelin, *De Deo Uno*, thes. 10–13.—Chr. Pesch, S. J., *Der Gottesbegriff*, Freiburg 1886.—M. Glossner, *Der spekulative Gottesbegriff in der neuen und neuesten Philosophie*, Paderborn 1894.—Simar, *Lehrbuch der Dogmatik*, 4th ed., Vol. I, pp. 113 sqq.—W. Humphrey, S. J., "His Divine Majesty," pp. 16 sqq., London 1897.—M. Ronayne, S. J., *God Knowable and Known*, 2nd ed., New York 1902.—T. J. Gerrard, *The Wayfarer's Vision*, London 1909.

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⁵¹ *Supra*, Ch. 1.

⁵² Rom. 1:20.

⁵³ Wisd. 13:5.

⁵⁴ Cfr. Franzelin, *De Deo Uno*, thes. 13.

MAN'S KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AS IT WILL BE IN HEAVEN

When we arrive in the abode of the Blessed, our knowledge of God will change. It will be different from, and far more perfect than the knowledge we have here below. Our mediate abstractive knowledge of God will give way to immediate intuition, while at the same time analogical will be transformed into univocal knowledge, inasmuch as we shall see God as He is.

In this section we therefore propose to treat three important questions, *viz.*: (1) the reality and the supernatural character of the intuitive vision; (2) the necessity of the light of glory to the intellect of the Blessed; and (3) the relation between the intuitive vision of God and His incomprehensibility.

ARTICLE 1

THE REALITY AND THE SUPERNATURAL CHARACTER OF THE INTUITIVE VISION OF GOD

1. PRELIMINARY REMARKS.—The expression “intuitive vision of God” is based on a metaphor which likens the human intellect to the eye. Bodily vision has two peculiarities: first, the eye sees a material object immediately, and, second, it perceives it clearly and distinctly. Analogously we may say that the intuitive vision of God means, first, that we know Him immediately, without depending on the created universe as a medium or mirror; and secondly, that our knowledge of Him is clear and distinct—an apprehension in the proper sense of the word. The quality corresponding in God to our intuitive vision of Him, is His visibility (*visibilitas Dei*), which some dogmaticians treat as a separate divine attribute.

If we take the term “vision” in its more extended sense, we shall be able to distinguish *in abstracto* a fourfold visibility, corresponding to the four different kinds of intuitive vision in God. There is (a) bodily vision (*visio oculis corporeis*), which, being metaphysically impossible when applied to God, can never take place, not even in Heaven; (b) that mode of spiritual vision by which we see God through the cosmos, or by an act of faith (*visio abstractiva*); this constitutes the sole mode of seeing God natural to all rational creatures, angels and men; (c) that mode of spiritual vision by which we envisage God immediately in His essence (*visio intuitiva s. beatificia*); it is in this the beatitude of angels and men consists; (d) the comprehensive or exhaustive vision of God (*visio comprehensiva s. exhaustiva*), which is denied even to the Blessed in Heaven, being reserved to the Almighty Himself.¹

Corresponding to this fourfold manner of seeing God, we may distinguish a threefold invisibility. (To the bodily eye, both in its natural and in its glorified state, God is absolutely invisible). Since the created mind has no means of knowing God other than the abstractive-analogical apprehension proper to its limited faculties, God's essence and substance must ever remain invisible to the created intellect, except supernaturally, by means of the “*lumen gloriae*.” But even in the light of glory God cannot be adequately conceived by His creatures, and therefore under this aspect, too, must ever remain invisible, *i. e.*, incomprehensible, even to the holy Angels and the Elect in Heaven. God alone “sees” Himself fully and adequately to the limit of His essence and cognoscibility.

2. DOGMATIC THESES.—The subject-matter propounded in the above preliminary remarks may be reduced to three problems, which we shall endeavor to solve in as many theses;

¹ *Vide infra*, Article 3.

viz.: (1) the absolute impossibility of a bodily vision of God; (2) the natural impossibility of an intuitive vision of God; and (3) the supernatural reality, and consequent possibility, of the intuitive (beatific) vision of God in Heaven.

First Thesis. To the bodily eye, even in its glorified state, God is absolutely invisible

This thesis is partly of faith, and partly represents a theological conclusion.

Proofs. To enable us to see God bodily, either God would have to appear in a material vesture, or our own corporeal organ of sight would have to be capable of attaining by supernatural means to a bodily vision of purely spiritual substances. Both these suppositions are inadmissible.

a) God, being a pure spirit, has no material body, and therefore cannot be visible to the human eye. This sort of invisibility, conceived as incorporeity, is a dogma clearly taught in Holy Scripture, partly in those passages which teach that God is a pure spirit,² partly in those texts that insist on His invisibility in terms which exclude every possibility of bodily vision. Cfr. 1 Tim. 6:16: “Ὁ μόνος ἔχων ἀθανασίαν, φῶς οἰκῶν ἀπρόσιτον, ὃν εἶδεν οὐδεὶς ἀνθρώπων, οὐδὲ ἰδεῖν δύναται—Who only hath immortality, and inhabiteth light inaccessible, whom no man hath seen, nor can see.” Cfr. John 1:18: “*Deum nemo vidit unquam*—No man hath seen God at any time.” Asserting as they do the spiritual invisibility of the Divine Essence, these texts must *a fortiori* be understood as denying the corporeal visibility of God. In the light of these Scriptural texts it is not to be wondered at that the Fathers and the infallible magisterium of the Church have always considered the invisibility of God, as just explained, to be a revealed dogma and have defended it expressly and vigorously against the Audians and the Anthropomorphites, who attributed to God a material body and human limbs.³

b) Another question here presents itself: Would it be possible for the human eye, by means of some supernatural light *sui generis*, to attain to a bodily vision of God’s spiritual substance? Leo Allatius⁴ held that while the Elect in Heaven will not see the Divine Essence (he means the Divinity itself, not the human nature of Christ) until after the resurrection of the body, Mary, the Mother of God, with glorified eyes sees it already now. When, many centuries before Allatius, St. Augustine⁵ undertook to denounce this view as “*insipientia et dementia*,” his Catholic contemporaries were so scandalized by his harsh strictures that the great Bishop of Hippo in his little treatise *De Videndo Deo*,⁶ found himself constrained to admit that it would require a more careful investigation than any one had yet made of the question whether, in virtue of the metamorphosis of man from an “earthly” into a “heavenly” being, his spiritualized eye after the resurrection will be enabled to envisage the Divine Substance. While his offended opponents appealed to Job 19:26: “*In carne mea videbo Deum meum*—In my flesh I shall see my God,” it seems St. Augustine personally never changed his belief that such a spiritualization of the flesh was impossible.

In spite of the passage quoted from Job, the impossibility of the bodily eye being so highly spiritualized as to be able immediately to see God, while not an article of faith, is to-day generally

² Cfr. John 4:20 sqq.

³ Cfr. Epiphanius, *Haeres.*, 70. See also Part III of this work, on the Incorporeity of God.

⁴ *De Consensu Eccles. Orient.*, II, 17.

⁵ *Ep. 22 ad Italicam*.

⁶ *Ep. 147 ad Paulinam*.

received as a well established theological conclusion. St. Augustine himself trenchantly refuted the construction which his adversaries put upon Job 19:26, and other similar texts. With regard to the effatum of Job, he says: “*Non dixit Job: per carnem meam, quod quidem si dixisset, posset Deus Christus intelligi, qui per carnem in carne videbitur. Nunc vero potest et sic accipi: in carne mea videbo Deum, ac si dixisset: In carne mea ero, cum videbo Deum*—Job does not say ‘by the flesh.’ And, indeed, if he had said this, it would still be possible that by ‘God’ Christ was meant; for Christ shall be seen by the flesh. But even understanding it of God, it is only equivalent to saying, ‘I shall be in the flesh when I see God.’”⁷ The spiritualization of the risen body, of which St. Paul speaks in 1 Cor. 15:44 (σῶμα πνευματικόν), by no means consists in the transmission to the material body of spiritual powers and qualities—for this would be tantamount to an impossible evolution of matter into spirit—but in a clarification or transfiguration of the flesh enabling it to foster and support the activity of the soul, instead of pulling it down to the level of the senses. “*Erit spiritui subdita caro spiritualis,*” St. Augustine says, “*sed tamen caro, non spiritus; sicut carni subditus fuit spiritus ipse carnalis, sed tamen spiritus, non caro*—The flesh shall then be spiritual, and subject to the spirit, but still flesh, not spirit.”⁸ At bottom the whole question appertains to philosophy rather than theology. Philosophy, needless to remark, cannot admit the possibility of an intuitive vision of God’s spiritual substance by a material organ, for such a concession would imply that flesh could be changed into spirit without ceasing to be material flesh. The argument is strengthened by another theological conclusion, *viz.*: It is metaphysically certain that the bodily eye can see none but corporeal substances; on the other hand, it is *de fide* that the glorified bodies of the Elect after the resurrection will be and remain bodies of real flesh; hence it is theologically certain that the bodily eye, even in its transfigured state, can perceive only what is corporeal—consequently, that it cannot see God, Who is a pure spirit.

Second Thesis. No created spirit (angel or man), can by his purely natural faculties attain to the immediate vision of God

So far as it applies to existing spirits, this proposition is an article of faith.

Proof. The supernatural character of the *visio beatifica* on the part of such rational creatures as exist under the present economy, was defined as early as A. D. 1311, by the Council of Vienne.⁹ But we have not the certitude of faith as to the question whether God might not create a spirit—say, an angel of the highest possible order—which would have a right to the vision of God in virtue of the perfection of its nature, this point having never been defined by the Church. A few of the Schoolmen (Durandus, Becanus, Ripalda) believed themselves free to hold the view that in some other universe than ours God could create a spirit which, in virtue of its very nature, might claim beatific vision as a right. Ripalda¹⁰ in speaking of such a hypothetical spirit, calls it “*substantia intrinsece supernaturalis.*” However, since Sacred Scripture and Tradition trace the *natural* invisibility of God to His innermost essence, the hypothesis of the possibility of a “supernatural substance” must be rejected as false and involving a contradiction.¹¹ Hence our present thesis must be made to embrace all possible spiritual beings; and in that sense it is certainly true, because the proofs drawn from Revelation are applicable to all created or creatable intellects.

⁷ *De Civit. Dei*, XXII, 29.

⁸ *De Civit. Dei*, XXII, 21. Cfr. Petavius, *De Deo*, VII, 2.

⁹ Cfr. also *Propos. Baji damn.*, 3–5, 9, *apud* Denzinger-Bannwart, nn. 1003 sqq.

¹⁰ *De Ente Supernaturali*, t. I, disp. 23; t. II, disp. ult., sec. 40.

¹¹ For further details, see Palmieri, S. J., *De Deo Creante et Elevante*, thes. 39, Romae 1878.

a) Apropos of the Scriptural argument for our thesis, it must be noted:

α) The natural inaccessibility of the Divine Essence is expressly taught in 1 Tim. 6:15–16: “*Beatus et solus potens rex regum et Dominus dominantium, qui solus habet immortalitatem et lucem inhabitat inaccessibilem, quem nullus hominum vidit, sed nec videre potest*—The Blessed and only Mighty, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, and inhabiteth light inaccessible, whom no man hath seen, nor can see.” It appears from this enumeration of such attributes as “blessedness,” “omnipotence,” and “immortality,” (attributes every one of which is quite invisible to the bodily eye), that the Apostle had in view not so much the bodily as the intellectual invisibility of God. Such expressions as “whom no man hath seen nor can see,” and “inhabiteth light inaccessible,” must therefore be taken as referring mainly to the understanding. Now if this light is inhabited by God alone, it follows that all who are outside of it—and all rational creatures both existing and possible *are* outside of it, because it is “inaccessible” to all except God—neither “see” nor “can see” the Godhead. Nor is this conclusion in the least affected by the circumstance that invisibility is here predicated of God only in relation to man (“*nullus hominum*”); for the decretory principle—*viz.*, inaccessibility—is so positive and universal that it comprises not only the angels but all spirits in general (even those which have no existence). That, on the other hand, St. Paul did not consider it impossible for finite rational beings to be admitted into the divine “light” *by the favor of grace*, is quite plain from his teaching in regard to the reality of the supernatural vision of God in Heaven.¹²

Rom. 1:20, Τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ ... τοῖς ποιήμασι νοούμενα καθορᾶται—For the invisible things of him ... are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made”—can be quoted in support of the same truth. For “the invisible things of Him” (*i. e.*, of God) are here contrasted with His visibility, that is to say, His knowableness in the light and by means of the created universe. That the contrast is intentional appears from the use of the words ἀόρατα—καθορᾶται, which are calculated to convey the idea that without the medium of created things, the Godhead is in itself “invisible,” *i. e.*, cannot be envisaged in its essence. This invisibility is defined not as a bodily but as an “intellectual” attribute (*intellecto*—νοούμενα). Though St. Paul in the passage under consideration means to refer primarily to the *human* understanding, as the context shows, it is quite plain that he looks upon “invisibility” as such a characteristic attribute of the Godhead *per se* (τὰ ἀόρατα), and that we are not at liberty to make an exception in favor of any rational being, either actually existing or merely “creatable.”¹³

β) There are a number of Scriptural texts in which the intuition of the Divine Essence is described as the exclusive privilege of the Godhead, or of the three Persons in the Most Holy Trinity, implying that God’s intuition of Himself can be communicated to creatures, even those endowed with reason, only by way of supernatural grace. Cfr. Matth. 11:27: “*Nemo novit Filium nisi Pater, neque Patrem quis novit* (ἐπιγινώσκει) *nisi Filius, et cui voluerit Filius revelare* (ἀποκαλύψαι)—No one knoweth the Son, but the Father: neither doth any one know the Father, but the Son, and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal him.” Similarly in John 6:46: “*Non quia Patrem vidit quisquam* (ἐώρακέ τις) *nisi is, qui est a Deo [scil. Filius]: hic vidit Patrem*—Not that any man hath seen the Father; but he who is of God, he hath seen the Father.” The same thought is still more sharply brought

¹² Cfr. 1 Cor. 13:8–12.

¹³ Cfr. the commentators on Rom. 1:20.

out in John 1:18: “*Deum nemo vidit unquam* (οὐδεὶς ἐώρακε πώποτε); *unigenitus Filius, qui est in sinu Patris, ipse enarravit* (ἐξηγήσατο)—No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” Besides the Father and the Son, there is only the Holy Ghost Who intues¹⁴ the inner essence of the Divinity. Cfr. 1 Cor. 2:11: “*Quae Dei sunt, nemo cognovit* (ἔγνωκεν) *nisi Spiritus Dei*—The things that are of God no man knoweth, but the Spirit of God.” Whence it follows that no created intellect can, by virtue of its own power, penetrate into the Divine Essence. If the revelation to believing men of the mystery of the Blessed Trinity is a supernatural favor, the intuitive “face-to-face” vision of the same must *a fortiori* be a grace, and a much greater one. From all of which we may validly conclude that, according to the teaching of the Bible, the Divine Essence is absolutely invisible to any created being except through the operation of supernatural grace.

b) The Fathers formulated their teaching along the lines of the Biblical texts just quoted.

α) Those of the Fathers in particular, who did not content themselves with merely stating the dogma and showing it to be founded in Holy Writ, tried to bottom the natural invisibility of God on the metaphysical axiom that “the Uncreated cannot become visible to a created being.”¹⁵ They regarded solely the natural mode of cognition, as is evidenced by the fact that they did not hesitate to ascribe to the Elect in Heaven a supernatural intuition of God. Gregory of Nazianzus insists that an intuitive vision of the Divine Essence is possible only “in virtue of a special indwelling of God in the intellect and of the latter’s being penetrated through and through with a divine light,”¹⁶—a divine act which St. Chrysostom designates more succinctly as συγκατάβασις, *i. e.*, a condescension on the part of the Almighty.

β) The teaching of St. Irenaeus is deserving of special mention because of its unmistakable clearness. He assumes that we can attain to a knowledge of God naturally, by contemplating the created universe, and then proceeds to distinguish three stages in the supernatural knowledge which man can have of God: (1) the “symbolical” vision implied in the Old Testament theophanies; (2) the “adoptive” vision exemplified in the Incarnation of the Logos; and (3) the “paternal” vision of the Elect in Heaven, which alone deserves the name of intuition. The principal passage is *Adv. Haeres.* IV, 20, 5, where St. Irenaeus says: “*Homo etenim a se [per naturalia sua] non videt Deum, ille autem volens videtur [ab] hominibus, quibus vult et quando vult et quemadmodum vult; potens est enim in omnibus Deus. Visus quidem tunc [i. e., in V. T.] per spiritum prophetiae, visus autem et per Filium adoptive, videbitur autem et in regno coelorum paternaliter*—For man does not see God by his own powers; but when He pleases He is seen by men, by whom He wills, and when He wills, and as He wills. For God is powerful in all things, having been seen at that time [in the Old Testament] indeed, prophetically through the Spirit, and seen, too, adoptively through the Son, and He shall also be seen paternally in the kingdom of Heaven.”¹⁷ He sharply differentiates between the natural invisibility and the supernatural visibility of God, when he says: “*Qui vident Deum, intra Deum sunt, percipientes eius claritatem.... Et propter hoc incapabilis* (ὁ ἀχώρητος) *et invisibilis* (ἀόρατος) *visibilem se et comprehensibilem et capabilem hominibus praestat*

¹⁴ “We will ... use the word ‘intue’ as corresponding in every respect with the substantive ‘intuition’ and the adjective ‘intuitive.’ ” (W. G. Ward, *Nature and Grace*, I, 40, London 1860.)

¹⁵ Cfr. Chrysost. *Hom. 5 de Incomprehens.*: Οὐσία γὰρ οὐσίαν ὑπερέχουσαν οὐκ ἂν δυναθεῖν καλῶς εἰδέναι.

¹⁶ Or. 34: Διὰ τὸ πλησίον εἶναι Θεοῦ καὶ ὄλω τῷ φωτὶ καταλάμπεσθαι.

¹⁷ Iren., *Adv. Haer.*, IV, 20.

(ὁρώμενον ἑαυτὸν καὶ καταλαμβάνομενον καὶ χωρούμενον)—And for this reason, He [although] beyond comprehension, and invisible, rendered Himself visible and comprehensible to men.”¹⁸

Third Thesis. The Blessed in Heaven, through grace, see God face to face, as He is in Himself, and are thereby rendered eternally happy

This thesis embodies an article of faith.

Proof. “*Ab esse ad posse valet illatio.*” The very fact that Sacred Scripture describes the beatific vision as the supernatural recompense with which God rewards virtue in angels and men, proves the possibility of such vision, although, despite the existence of Revelation, human reason cannot demonstrate either the intrinsic possibility or the reality of the beatific vision, which is consequently reckoned among the absolute theological mysteries by nearly all theologians.¹⁹ The fact itself has been defined as an article of faith in the Constitution “*Benedictus Deus*” of Pope Benedict XII (A. D. 1336), which says: “*Definimus quod [animae sanctorum] post Domini Nostri Jesu Christi passionem et mortem viderunt et vident divinam essentiam visione intuitiva et etiam faciali, nulla mediante creatura in ratione objecti visi se habente, sed divina essentia immediate se nude, clare et aperte eis ostendente, quodque sic videntes eadem divina essentia perfruuntur, necnon quod ex tali visione et fruitione eorum animae, qui iam decesserunt, sunt vere beatæ et habent vitam et requiem æternam.*”²⁰ This definition clearly sets off both the reality and the supernatural character of the beatific vision. The fact itself is established in part (negatively) by the exclusion of every other medium of cognition, and in part (positively) by insistence on the immediateness of the act of vision. Its supernatural character appears from the fact that its beginning is traced back to the death of Christ and that it is described as the consummation of the theological virtues of faith and hope.²¹ All possible doubt as to whether or not the vision of the Blessed Trinity is included in the beatific vision, has been removed by the Florence decree of 1439, which says: “*Definimus ... [illorum animas] ... in coelum mox recipi et intueri clare ipsum Deum trinum et unum, sicuti est.*”²²

a) Holy Scripture promises to the just in the hereafter boundless bliss, which it calls “eternal life,” “the kingdom of Heaven,” “the marriage feast of the Lamb,” etc.,²³ and describes as a state in which tears stop flowing, pain ceases, pure joy and happiness reign supreme.²⁴ Now, in what does this heavenly bliss consist?

α) In 1 Cor. 13:8 sqq., we read: “*Sive prophetiæ evacuabuntur sive linguæ cessabunt sive scientia destruetur; ex parte enim cognoscimus et ex parte prophetamus. Cum autem venerit quod perfectum est, evacuabitur quod ex parte est.... Videmus nunc per speculum in ænigmate, tunc autem facie ad faciem; nunc cognosco ex parte, tunc autem*

¹⁸ Iren., *I. c.* Cfr. St. Thomas, *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 12, art. 4.

¹⁹ Cfr. Chr. Pesch, *Praelect. Dogm.*, II, 43 sqq., Friburgi 1899.

²⁰ Denzinger-Bannwart, *Enchiridion*, n. 520.

²¹ “*Ac quod visio et fruitio actus fidei et spei in eis evacuant, prout fides et spes propriae theologicae sunt virtutes.*” *Const. “Benedictus Deus,” I. c.*

²² “καὶ καθαρῶς θεωρεῖν αὐτὸν τὸν ἕνα καὶ τοιοῦτόστατον Θεόν, καθὼς ἐστίν” Cfr. Denzinger-Bannwart, n. 693.

²³ For further information on this point we must refer the reader to Eschatology.

²⁴ Cfr. Apoc, 7:16; 21:4. etc.

cognoscam, sicut et cognitus sum—Whether prophecies shall be made void, or tongues shall cease, or knowledge shall be destroyed; for we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come,^{24a} that which is in part shall be done away.^{24b} We see now through a glass in a dark manner, but then face to face.^{24c} Now I know in part;^{24d} but then I shall know even as I am known.”^{24e} As we have already observed on a previous page, the Apostle here contrasts the piecemeal, enigmatic, and *per speculum* vision of God that is vouchsafed us here below, with the radically different one which we shall enjoy hereafter, and which possesses the two distinctive marks of immediateness²⁵ and perfect clearness.²⁶ Man’s knowledge of God in Heaven is a vision “face to face,” or “person to person,”²⁷ which is opposed to the vision “through a glass”²⁸ that we have on earth. Again, the “*perfectum*” (τὸ τέλειον) is contrasted with the *cognitio ex parte* (τὸ ἐκ μέρους), and the perfect clearness of the beatific vision is illustrated in this wise: “As God sees me, even so shall I see Him;” that is to say, immediately, intuitively, clearly, without veil or medium, no longer by means of analogy derived from the created universe.²⁹

β) The teaching of St. John accords perfectly with that of St. Paul. Cfr. 1 John 3:2: “*Carissimi, nunc filii Dei sumus et nondum apparuit, quid erimus. Scimus, quoniam, cum apparuerit* (ἐὰν φανερωθῆ), *similes ei erimus, quoniam videbimus eum sicuti est*—Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know, that, when he shall appear, we shall be like to him, because we shall see him [*i. e.*, Christ in His Divinity] as he is.” As in 1 Cor. 13, so here our knowledge of God on earth is contrasted with our knowledge of Him in Heaven. Here below, until it will “appear what we shall be,” we are “children of God” in an imperfect way only; but in Heaven “we shall be like to God,³⁰ because we shall see Him as He is.”³¹—In the light of these explanations we are able to understand the deeper meaning of the Saviour’s dictum: “*Beati mundo corde, quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt*—Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.”³² The angels, too, enjoy the beatific vision of God the Father, and consequently of the whole Divine Trinity. “*Angeli eorum [sc. infantium] in coelis semper vident faciem*

^{24a} τὸ τέλειον, *i. e.*, the beatific vision.

^{24b} καταργηθήσεται τὸ ἐκ μέρους, *i. e.*, abstractive, knowledge shall cease.

^{24c} πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον = *visio facialis*.

^{24d} ἐκ μέρους.

^{24e} τότε δὲ ἐπιγνώσομαι, καθὼς καὶ ἐπεγνώσθην.

²⁵ *Sine speculo, non in aenigmate*.

²⁶ *Non ex parte*.

²⁷ Cfr. Exodus 33:11: **וַיִּרְאֵהוּ אֱלֹהִים**.

²⁸ *Cognitio per speculum = abstractiva et analogica*.

²⁹ Cfr. Al. Schäfer, *Erklärung der beiden Briefe an die Korinther*, pp. 268 sqq., Münster 1903. On man’s dark and enigmatical vision of God here on earth, its purpose, and the bearing of St. Paul’s teaching on the present-day error of “Pragmatism,” cfr. T. J. Gerrard, *The Wayfarer’s Vision*, London 1909.

³⁰ ὅμοιοι αὐτῷ.

³¹ ὁψόμεθα αὐτὸν καθὼς ἐστίν.

³² Matth. 5:8.

Patris mei,³³ *qui in coelis est*—Their [the children’s] angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.”³⁴

b) The Patristic argument for our thesis offers some difficulties, though these difficulties appear to be hermeneutical rather than dogmatic. Vasquez contends that such eminent authorities among the Fathers as Chrysostom, Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, Cyril of Alexandria and Cyril of Jerusalem, Ambrose and others, deny that the denizens of Heaven enjoy the beatific vision of God. But even if this somewhat strange contention could be proved, it would not destroy the argument based upon the unanimous consensus of the majority of the Fathers. For, be it remembered, this dogma was not defined until much later, and its history shows a turning-point in the fourth century, when the Eunomian heresy began to influence considerably the tactics of the Fathers.

α) The pre-Eunomian Fathers simply teach, in full accord with the Bible, that the angels and saints in Heaven are vouchsafed a real “face to face” vision of God. We have already adverted to the admirably lucid teaching of St. Irenaeus. Corroborative passages can be cited from the writings of Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Cyprian, and others.³⁵

β) The rise of the Eunomian heresy led to a change of tactics, though the doctrine remained unchanged. Whenever the Fathers of Eunomius’s time were not engaged in controversy, they employed the traditional phraseology with which the Christians of that era were so familiar.

It is important to exonerate especially St. John Chrysostom from the charge of material heresy made against him by Vasquez.³⁶ Treating of the Transfiguration of Christ on Mount Tabor, Chrysostom says:³⁷ “If the bliss produced by a dark vision of the future was sufficient to induce St. Peter to cast away everything, what will man say when once the reality bursts upon him; when the doors of the royal chamber are thrown open, and he is permitted to look upon the King Himself—no longer enigmatically as in a mirror, but face to face; no longer in the faith,³⁸ but in reality.”³⁹ Again he says:⁴⁰ “The just, however, dwell there with their King, ... not as in a vestibule,⁴¹ not in the faith, but face to face.”⁴² It is only when he combats Eunomianism, or at least when he has this heresy in view, that St. Chrysostom uses expressions which might strike the careless reader as a denial of the beatific vision in Heaven, or a limitation of it to the Blessed Trinity. Vasquez points especially to *Hom. de Incompreh.*, 3, n. 3: “*Nulli creatae virtuti Deum esse comprehensibilem*,⁴³ *et a nulla plene*⁴⁴ *videri posse.*” To understand this and similar passages correctly, we must consider in the first place,⁴⁵ that in St. Chrysostom’s time the distinction between such terms as knowing (γνώσις), seeing (θεωρία), and comprehending (κατάληψις) was

³³ βλέπουσι τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ πατρός μου.

³⁴ Matth. 18:10.

³⁵ Cfr. Petavius, *De Deo*, VII, 7.

³⁶ *Comment. in S. Th.*, 1 p., disp. 37, cap. 3.

³⁷ *Ad Theod. Laps.*, n. 11.

³⁸ διὰ πίστεως.

³⁹ διὰ εἴδους.

⁴⁰ *Hom. in Phil.*, 3, n. 3.

⁴¹ διὰ εἰσόδου is probably a more correct reading than διὰ εἴδους.

⁴² ἀλλὰ πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον.

⁴³ κατάληπτον.

⁴⁴ μετὰ ἀκριβείας.

⁴⁵ Cfr. Kleutgen, *De Ipso Deo*, p. 238.

not yet clearly defined, and that the Saint was not minded to deny the simple *visio intuitiva*, but merely combated the *comprehensio adaequata* asserted by Eunomius. Hence such guarded phrases as these: “γνώσις ἀκριβῆς ἀκριβῆς, κατάληψις τῆς οὐσίας, ἀκριβῶς γινώσκειν,” etc. An adequate comprehension of God, such as that taught by Eunomius, is plainly not granted to either angels or men, but, as St. Chrysostom himself elsewhere explains, is proper only to the three Divine Persons.⁴⁶ By putting a different construction on St. Chrysostom’s teaching, we should not only muddle the sense and violate the context of his writings, but make him contradict himself.⁴⁷

γ) Vasquez’s accusations against certain other Fathers must be appraised in the light of this typical example. If St. Basil asserts that “the angels do not see the Godhead as It sees Itself,” he expresses no doubt as to the beatific vision, but merely wishes to emphasize the dogma of God’s absolute incomprehensibility, which makes Him inscrutable even to the Elect in Heaven. “The face to face vision and the perfect cognition of the incomprehensible majesty of God,”⁴⁸ he says, “is promised to all who are worthy of it as a reward in the hereafter.”⁴⁹ Such was also the teaching of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, who, after declaring that “the angels do not see God as He is,”⁵⁰ immediately adds: “They see Him according to the measure of their ability, ... the Thrones and Powers [see Him] more perfectly than the [mere] angels, yet short of His excellency;⁵¹ only the one Holy Ghost, besides the Son, can see Him in a becoming manner.”⁵²

δ) We can spare ourselves the trouble of defending the other Fathers who have been attacked by Vasquez, because it is quite plain to any one who reads their writings carefully and without bias, that they teach just the contrary of what Vasquez imputes to them. If the one or other of them does here and there appear to deviate from the orthodox view (as, e. g., Gregory of Nyssa), they must be interpreted in the same way as St. Chrysostom. There is no solid reason for charging a single one of these Fathers with heterodoxy. St. Augustine already showed⁵³ how certain utterances of St. Ambrose and St. Jerome can be construed in a perfectly orthodox sense.⁵⁴ The only false note in the harmonious concert is an expression of Theodoretus in regard to the Angels, who, he says, “do not see the Divine Essence, but only a certain lustre,⁵⁵ which is adapted to their nature.” It is likely that this passage is the source of the heresy of the fourteenth century Palamites,⁵⁶ who alleged that the divine attributes can be contemplated separately from the divine Substance in the form of a “garb of light” enveloping the Godhead.⁵⁷

⁴⁶ *Hom. in loa.*, 15, n. 2: “γνώσις γὰρ ἐνταῦθα (Ἰησοῦς) τὴν ἀκριβῆ λέγει θεωρίαν τε καὶ κατάληψιν, καὶ τοσαύτην, ὅσην ὁ πατὴρ ἔχει περὶ τοῦ παιδός—For by knowledge He here means an exact idea and comprehension, such as the Father hath of the Son.”

⁴⁷ Cfr. Wirceburgenses, *De Deo Uno*, nn. 99 sqq.

⁴⁸ τὸ μὲν γὰρ πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον καὶ ἡ τελεία ἐπίγνωσις.

⁴⁹ Basil, *Serm. de Imp. et Potest.*

⁵⁰ οὐ καθὼς ἐστὶν ὁ Θεός.

⁵¹ ἔλαττον δὲ τῆς ἀξίας.

⁵² ὡς χρή. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech.*, 6, n. 6.

⁵³ Ep. 148, *alut.* 111; Migne, *P. L.*, XXXIII, 622.

⁵⁴ For St. Augustine’s own teaching the reader is referred to *De Civ. Dei*, XI, 29. XXII, 29, and *De Trinit.*, XIV, 16.

⁵⁵ δόξαν τινα.

⁵⁶ On the heresy of the Palamites (from Gregory Palamas), cfr. *Hergenröther’s Handbuch der Allgemeinen Kirchengeschichte*, 4th ed. by J. P. Kirsch, vol. II, pp. 804 sqq.; Blunt, *Dictionary of Sects, etc.*, pp. 191 sq.

⁵⁷ Possibly Gregory the Great alluded to Theodoretus when he wrote (*Moral.* XVIII, nn. 90 sq.): “*Fuere nonnulli, qui Deum dicerent etiam in illa regione beatitudinis in claritate quidem sua*

ARTICLE 2

THE LIGHT OF GLORY A NECESSARY MEDIUM FOR THE INTUITIVE VISION OF GOD

1. WHAT THE LIGHT OF GLORY IS.—The term “light” (*lumen*), like “vision” (*visio*), has been transferred from the material world to the realm of intellectual cognition. As material light is the condition and the cause of bodily vision, so intellectual light is necessary for intellectual vision, *i. e.*, cognition. As there are three states: that of nature, that of grace, and that of glory; so there are three specific modes of cognition, with as many different “lights” adapted and proportioned to each; *viz.*: the “light of reason” (*lumen rationis*), which comes from the Creator; the “light of grace” (*lumen gratiae, fidei*), which comes from the Sanctifier, and the “light of glory” (*lumen gloriae*), which comes from the Divine Remunerator.

Here we have to deal with the light of glory. What is the light of glory? Like the light of reason and the light of grace, the light of glory must be immanent in the human intellect, and hence cannot be objectively identical with the majesty or splendor of God (*lumen quod videtur*). Nor can it be the *actus videndi* of the Elect, inasmuch as this act, though immanent in the human intellect, is impossible without the light of glory, just as cognition depends of necessity on the light of reason, and faith on the light of grace. The theologians accordingly define the light of glory as a supernatural force or power imparted to the intellect of the Blessed in Heaven, like a new eye (or principle of vision), enabling them to see God as He is.⁵⁸

2. THE DOGMA.—The Council of Vienne (A. D. 1311) defined the necessity (and hence implicitly the existence) of the *lumen gloriae*, when, through the mouth of Clement V, it condemned the heresy of the Beguines and Beghards,⁵⁹ that “*Anima non indiget lumine gloriae ipsam elevante ad Deum videndum et eo beate fruendum.*”⁶⁰

a) The necessity of the light of glory flows as a corollary from what we have said above. If the order of grace and salvation instituted for all rational creatures is a strictly supernatural state, absolutely unattainable by purely natural means; if, in particular, the natural power of the created intellect is not sufficient to enable it to attain to an intuitive vision of God’s essence because He “dwells in light inaccessible;” —then manifestly the cognitive faculty of rational creatures must, in virtue of the *potentia obedientialis* latent therein, be elevated to the supernatural sphere and endowed with the supernatural power necessary for it to see God. Whoever denies this conclusion must perforce accept the heretical antecedent that the created intellect is able by its own natural powers to arrive at an intuitive vision of God.⁶¹

conspici, sed in natura minime videri. Quos nimirum minor inquisitionis subtilitas fefellit; neque enim illi simplici essentiae aliud est claritas et aliud natura, sed ipsa ei natura sua claritas, ipsa claritas natura est.” On the whole subject, see Franzelin, *De Deo Uno*, thes. 19, Romae 1883.

⁵⁸ Cfr. W. Humphrey, “*His Divine Majesty*,” pp. 48 sqq.

⁵⁹ On the Beguines and the Beghards, see E. Gilliat-Smith in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. II, pp. 389 sq.

⁶⁰ *Clement.*, 1. V, tit. 3, cap. 3.

⁶¹ Cfr. *Supra*, Article 1, No. 2.

b) The necessity of the light of glory can be proved even more cogently from its relation to the *habitus* of theological faith. For while the supernatural *habitus* of love (*habitus caritatis*) will continue in the beyond,⁶² faith, on the other hand, will cease, being changed into vision.⁶³ Now, if the supernatural life of faith here on earth is supported by a special *habitus*, viz., theological faith, it is plain that the light of glory, too, which takes the place of faith in Heaven, requires a *habitus* for its foundation; the more so because the beatific vision is far superior to the knowledge of faith, representing, as it does, the summit which grace makes it possible for any created intellect to attain. Cfr. Apoc. 22:4 sqq.: “*Et videbunt faciem eius;*⁶⁴ ... *et nox ultra non erit; et non egebunt lumine lucernae, neque lumine solis, quoniam Dominus Deus illuminabit illos,*⁶⁵ *et regnabunt in saecula saeculorum*—And they shall see his face; ... and night shall be no more: and they shall not need the light of the lamp, nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall enlighten them, and they shall reign for ever and ever.”

3. SCHOLASTIC CONTROVERSIES REGARDING THE NATURE OF THE LIGHT OF GLORY.—While no Catholic is allowed to doubt the existence and the necessity of the light of glory—in the sense of “supernatural assistance”—we are free to discuss the question, in what the essence of this light consists, and what are its qualities; provided, of course, that the dogma itself is duly safeguarded.

a) Three Scholastic theories on the matter must be rejected as partly erroneous and partly inadequate.

α) We must reject as incorrect in the first place the opinion of that school which holds that a mere extrinsic elevation (*elevatio extrinseca*) is sufficient⁶⁶ for the supernatural equipment of the human intellect, or that it is at least possible.⁶⁷ The essence of this *elevatio extrinseca* is held by its champions to consist not in any intrinsic strengthening of the cognitive faculty, but in the exercise by God Himself of an immediate influence on the natural intellect, enabling it to attain to supernatural vision. Some theologians, as, e. g., Cardinals Cajetan and Franzelin, regard this opinion as theologically unsound, and as involving a philosophic contradiction, on the ground that no vital potency can produce a supernatural act without undergoing an intrinsic alteration.⁶⁸ Whatever view one may take of the possibility or impossibility of the *elevatio extrinseca*, this much appears to be certain: the theory does not accord with the *spirit* of the Clementine decision, because the term “*lumen gloriae elevans animam ad Deum videndum*” implies just as much of an intrinsic (qualitative) change in the principle of cognition as does the phrase, “*lumen fidei elevans animam ad credendum.*”

β) There is a second theory, which accords somewhat better with the sense of the dogma. It postulates an intrinsic strengthening of the soul by the agency of an unbroken chain of actual graces (*gratae actuales*). If it is true that in Heaven faith gives way to vision, while charity remains, and both are of the same species, i. e., habitual virtues, then should we not expect a corresponding *habitus visionis* to replace the former *habitus fidei*? But this *habitus visionis* would be identical with the *lumen gloriae*. Hence, if the latter is at all to be compared to supernatural

⁶² Cfr. 1 Cor. 13:8: ἡ ἀγάπη οὐδέποτε ἐκπίπτει.

⁶³ Cfr. 1 Cor. 13:10: ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ τὸ τέλειον, τὸ ἐκ μέρους καταργηθήσεται.

⁶⁴ ὄψονται τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ.

⁶⁵ ὁ Θεὸς φωτιεῖ ἐπ’ αὐτούς.

⁶⁶ Durandus, *Comment. in Quatuor Libros Sent.*, IV, dist. 49, qu. 20.

⁶⁷ Cfr. Suarez, *De Deo*, II, 13; Toletus, *Comment. in S. Theol.*, I, qu. 12, art. 5, concl. 3.

⁶⁸ Cfr., however, G. B. Tepe, S. J., *Instit. Theol.*, II, pp. 137 sqq., Paris 1895.

grace, it must be compared not to actual grace (*gratia actualis*), but to sanctifying grace (*gratia habitualis*), which inheres in the soul of the justified as a permanent quality, a *habitus infusus*.

γ) Thomassin and several other theologians⁶⁹ held that the beatific vision of God consists in a direct participation by the Elect in the Divine Vision itself, *i. e.*, in an actual transfer of the divine act of intuition to the intellect of the Just. Thomassin says:⁷⁰ “*Videtur Deus a beatis non alia specie intelligibili quam Verbo ipso mentem informante.*” Nay, he does not shrink from identifying the light of glory with the Holy Ghost, falsely drawing from Ps. 35:10: “*In lumine tuo videbimus lumen,*” the conclusion: “*Ideoque lumen gloriae, quo videtur Deus, est Spiritus sanctus.*” Such a confusion of the beatific vision with the uncreated Logos, and of the light of glory with the Person of the Holy Ghost, deserves to be called adventurous. While it is quite certain that God cannot transfer His own vital act of self-contemplation to any extraneous being, it is equally certain that the Blessed in Heaven behold Him in virtue of a vital act of vision proper to, and immanent in, their own intellects. Can I see with the eyes of another? True, the Holy Ghost elevates and strengthens the intellect *per appropriationem*; but He is not the subjective principle of energy from which the supernatural act of vision vitally emanates. Pursued to its logical conclusion this theory leads directly to Pantheism.

b) From what we have said in refutation of these false theories the reader can easily formulate the true view. According to the *sententia communis*, the light of glory consists in that “supernatural power which inheres in the intellect of the Blessed as a permanent *habitus*, enabling them to see the Divine Countenance.” This definition possesses the twofold advantage of being in full accord with the Clementine decree, and of satisfying the scientific dogmatician.⁷¹

ARTICLE 3

THE BEATIFIC VISION IN ITS RELATION TO THE DIVINE INCOMPREHENSIBILITY

1. STATE OF THE QUESTION.—The incomprehensibility of the Divine Essence must not be conceived as merely relative. God is incomprehensible to us not only in the natural condition of our intellect here below, but likewise in the supernatural state of glory in Heaven. Holy Scripture⁷² and Tradition both define incomprehensibility as an absolute attribute, by which the Divine Essence is, and ever remains, impenetrable to every created and creatable intellect, even in the state of transfiguration and elevation produced by the light of glory. The Fourth Lateran Council enumerates “*incomprehensibilis*” among God’s absolute and incommunicable attributes.⁷³ Now there arises a difficult problem. It has been defined by Benedict XII (1336) and by the Florentine Council (1439), that the beatific vision of the Blessed in Heaven is directed to the infinite substance of God, nay, to the Blessed Trinity itself, which the Elect intue *immediate, nude, clare et aperte*. If this is true, how can the Divine Essence remain incomprehensible to those who enjoy the beatific

⁶⁹ Mentioned by Lessius, *De Summo Bono*, II, 2.

⁷⁰ *De Deo*, VI, 16.

⁷¹ On some of the deeper problems concerning the *species impressa and expressa*, cfr. G. B. Tepe, *Instit. Theol.*, pp. 145 sqq. Chr. Pesch, S. J., treats the same subject more briefly in his *Praelect. Dogmat.*, vol. II, 3rd ed., pp. 41 sqq. Friburgi 1906.

⁷² Cfr. Job 11:7; Ps. 144:3.

⁷³ Cfr. Denzinger-Bannwart, *Enchirid.*, n. 428.

vision? In other words: How can the dogma of the absolute incomprehensibility of God be reconciled with the dogmatic teaching of the Church that the Just in Heaven are happy in the intuitive vision of the Divine Essence?

2. UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPTS AT HARMONIZING THE TWO DOGMAS.—It is plain that no attempt to harmonize these two dogmas by attenuating either the one or the other can prove successful or acceptable. The incomprehensibility of God and the reality of the beatific vision must both be accepted in their true meaning and to the full extent of their logical bearing. Because they fail in this the theories enumerated below are all defective.

a) By excepting from the beatific vision several divine attributes, and positing the essence of God's incomprehensibility precisely in the concealment of certain unseen divine perfections, Thomassin and Toletus manifestly minimize the dogma of the *visio intuitiva*. Toletus insists that "*Decem attributa distincte percipere, maioris est virtutis quam octo; ergo infinita percipere infinitae est virtutis. Divinae perfectiones sunt infinitae: ergo impossibile est, omnes ab intellectu creato percipi.*"⁷⁴ But to distinguish between seen and unseen attributes is contrary to the absolute simplicity of the Divine Essence. That some of God's attributes remain hidden to the Elect, in contradistinction to others which they do see, is a theory which can be entertained only on the assumption that the Divine Essence is split up into an infinite multiplicity of objectively distinct perfections, of which one might become visible while the others remained hidden. But the essence of the Godhead is physically and metaphysically indivisible. Hence, whoever enjoys an intuitive vision of this most simple Being, must envisage either all its perfections or none. To the objection of Toletus that in that case "*sequeretur quod omnia Dei iudicia, omnes voluntates occultae essent beatis manifesta, quia omnia talia sunt formaliter in Deo,*" we retort that God's occult decrees and counsels involve an extrinsic relation, *i. e.*, a relation to something which is not God. As little as the intuition of the Divine Essence *eo ipso* entails a knowledge of all real and possible creatures—for these do not form a part of the Divine Essence as such—just so little does a vision of the Divine Essence in its entirety necessarily imply knowledge of God's free decrees, which have their terminus outside of the Godhead, and, therefore, remain hidden even to the Elect in Heaven, unless God sees fit to disclose them by a special revelation.

b) The second theory under consideration detracts from the dogma of God's incomprehensibility. Its champions (notably Ockham and Gabriel Biel) assert that no concept formed of any object is complete, unless to the *comprehensio intrinseca* (*i. e.*, an exhaustive notion of its objective cognoscibility), there is joined a *comprehensio extrinseca*, which implies that the subjective mode of cognition is the most perfect possible. This view does not necessarily deny the incomprehensibility of God, because after all it is only God's contemplation of Himself which is entitatively and noëtically infinite, inasmuch as only the infinite Being Himself is capable of performing an infinitely perfect vital act. But the underlying shallow conception of God's incomprehensibility involves certain insoluble antinomies. It implies, on the one hand, that the Blessed in Heaven might enjoy a true and full comprehension of the Divine Essence without infringing on the "*ἀκαταληψία*," inasmuch as, subjectively and from the noëtic standpoint, there would still remain an unbridgeable chasm between God's divine apprehension of Himself and the vision which He vouchsafes to His creatures in Heaven. It implies, on the other hand, that the attribute of incomprehensibility cannot be limited to the Divine Essence, but must be extended to all things without exception, even the smallest and most easily knowable. Not only God, but every truth (*e. g.*, the Pythagorean theorem), nay, every material object (*e. g.*, a blade of grass) would

⁷⁴ *Comment, in S. Theol.*, I, qu. 12, art. 7.

then be incomprehensible even to the highest angelic intellect, for the simple reason that an infinitely perfect mode of knowledge is possible only to an infinite being.⁷⁵

3. THE TRUE THEORY.—St. Thomas Aquinas strikes at the root of the problem by reducing the incomprehensibility of God to His infinity.

“*Ens et verum convertuntur.*” Therefore God’s knowableness, like His Essence, must be infinite. Infinite cognoscibility, however, can be exhausted only by an infinite power of cognition, and this no creature possesses. Hence it is in the infinite, absolute Being only that cognoscibility and cognition, being and thought, can be really identical. “Everything that is comprehended by any knowing mind, is known by it as perfectly as it is knowable.... But the Divine Substance is infinite in comparison with every created intellect, since every created intellect is bounded within the limits of a certain species. It is impossible, therefore, that the vision of any created intellect can see the Divine Substance as perfectly as it is visible.”⁷⁶ In the light of this explanation we can understand why the Elect in Heaven, though they envisage the entire Substance of God (including all His attributes and the Divine Persons), nevertheless do not and cannot comprehend this Substance either intensively, to the limits of its content, nor yet extensively, in its totality. They intue the whole Godhead (*totum*), but they do not intue it fully (*totaliter*); they envisage the Infinite Being Himself (*infinitum*), but they do not envisage Him in an infinite manner (*infinite*). As a keen eye, says Richard of Middletown,⁷⁷ perceives the same color more distinctly than a weak eye, so the saints’ supernatural power of vision is proportioned to the measure of their merits, that is to say, to the different degrees of the light of glory vouchsafed to each, although they all behold the same object.⁷⁸

READINGS:—Lessius, S. J., *De Summo Bono et Aeterna Beatitudine Hominis*, Antwerpiae 1616.—Kleutgen, *De Ipso Deo*, pp. 222 sq., Ratisbonae 1881.—Bautz, *Der Himmel, spekulativ dargestellt*, Mainz 1881.—*Franzelin, *De Deo Uno*, thes. 14–19.—Th. Conefry, *The Beatific Vision*, Longford 1907.—W. Humphrey, S. J., “*His Divine Majesty*,” pp. 46 sqq., London 1897.—IDEM, *The One Mediator*, pp. 296 sqq., London 1890.—Schnütgen, *Die Visio Beatifica*, Würzburg 1867.—*G. B. Tepe, S. J., *Institut. Theol.*, Vol. II, pp. 103 sqq., Parisiis 1895.—Scheeben, *Die Mysterien des Christentums*, 2nd ed., pp. 583 sqq., Freiburg 1898.—St. Thomas, *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 12, and the commentators.

SECTION 3

EUNOMIANISM AND ONTOLOGISM

The dogmas expounded in the two foregoing Sections have been attacked by two classes of opponents: (1) by those who deny the incomprehensibility of God, either here on earth or in Heaven; and (2) by those who allege that the intuitive vision of God is proper to man already here on earth. To the first-mentioned class belong the Eunomians, who arrogated to themselves an *adequate* comprehension of God here below (*a fortiori*,

⁷⁵ On the unsatisfactory theory of Vasquez (*De Deo*, disp. 53, cap. 2), see Franzelin, *De Deo Uno*, thes. 18, Romae 1883.

⁷⁶ S. Thom., *Contr. Gent.*, III, 55. (Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures*, p. 227. London 1905.)

⁷⁷ *Comment. in Quatuor Libros Sent.*, III, dist, 14, qu. 14.

⁷⁸ Cfr. St. Thom., *Comp. Theol.*, cap. 216.

of course, in Heaven). Prominent among the latter class are the Ontologists, who claim that man has an immediate, intuitive knowledge of God already in this world.

ARTICLE 1

THE HERESY OF THE EUNOMIANS

1. THE TEACHING OF EUNOMIUS.—Eunomius, a pupil of Aëtius, about A. D. 360, espoused the cause of strict Arianism and became the leader of the so-called Anomoeans, who, in order to emphasize their belief that the Logos was a creature, substituted for the “ὁμοιούσιον” of the semi-Arians the harsher term “ἀνόμοιον” (unlike). In the interest of Arianism, whose premises he carried to their legitimate conclusions, Eunomius soon added to his *Trinitarian* heresy a *theological* one by asserting that there is nothing in the Godhead which can elude the grasp of human reason.¹ The Eunomian heresy may be condensed into the following propositions:

a) Human reason conceives God as adequately as He comprehends Himself. According to St. Chrysostom,² Eunomius declared: “*Deum sic novi, ut ipse Deus seipsum,*” which is merely a more pregnant formulation of the teaching of his master Aëtius: “*Tam Deum novi, sicut meipsum, imo non tantum novi meipsum, quantum Deum.*”³

b) We acquire an adequate knowledge of the Divine Essence by forming the notion of “ἀγεννησία” (uncreatedness), which perfectly expresses that Essence. By sophistically interchanging the terms “ἀγέννητος” (*uncreated*, derived from “γίγνομαι”) and “ἀγέννητος” (*not generated*, derived from “γεννάω”) Eunomius infected the unsuspecting masses with two heretical errors. On the one hand, he discredited the Logos, Who, (he said), being “γέννητος,” *i. e.*, generated, is a mere creature of the Father; on the other hand, he employed the handy equivocation as a means to confuse the “ἀγεννησία” (*innascibilitas*) of the Father with the fundamental attribute of God, aseity (“ἀγεννησία”), thus poisoning the minds of his hearers with Arianism.

c) Besides “ἀγεννησία” (uncreatedness), he said, there is no other divine attribute. All the other so-called attributes are mere synonyms comprised in the one notion of “ἀγεννησία.” A composite concept of God would necessarily imply composition in the Divine Essence, and therefore could not possibly be true. There is but one simple conception of God that corresponds to the simplicity of the Divine Essence, and that is “ἀγεννησία.”^{3a}

2. REFUTATION OF EUNOMIANISM.—Though the Church never formally condemned Eunomius, his teaching as to the absolute intelligibility of the Divine Essence has always been held to be quite as heretical as his decidedly Arian view of the Logos. In refuting him the Fathers of his time insisted chiefly on the dogma of the divine incomprehensibility, though they did not neglect to combat this heretic, who was well versed in the writings of Aristotle, with the sharp weapons of philosophy also. It was, as we have already shown on

¹ Cfr. Alzog, *Manual of Universal Church History*, English ed., vol. I, p. 540, Cincinnati 1899.

² *Hom. 2 De Incompr.*

³ Quoted by Epiphanius, *Haer.*, 76. Cfr. also Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.*, IV, 7.

^{3a} On the history and use of the term ἀγέννητος, see Newman, *Select Treatises of St. Athanasius*, Vol. II, pp. 347–9, 9th ed., London 1903.

a previous page, especially Basil,⁴ Gregory of Nazianzus,⁵ Gregory of Nyssa⁶ and Chrysostom⁷ who refuted this heresy. After what we have said on the subject in an earlier chapter, we need not enter into a detailed argument here.

READINGS:—Klose, *Geschichte und Lehre des Eunomius*, Kiel 1883.—Hefele, *Conciliengeschichte*, 2nd ed., Vol. I, pp. 644 sqq., Freiburg 1873.—Schwane, *Dogmengeschichte*, 2nd ed., Vol. II, pp. 19 sqq., Freiburg 1895.—*Fr. Diekamp, *Gotteslehre des hl. Gregor von Nyssa*, Münster 1896.—E. Myers in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. V, pp. 605 sq., art. "Eunomianism."—Bardenhewer-Shahan, *Patrology*, pp. 239 sq., Freiburg 1908.—Newman, *Arians of the Fourth Century*, pp. 335 sqq., New Impression, London 1901.—Blunt, *Dictionary of Sects*, pp. 151 sq., New ed., London 1903.

ARTICLE 2

WHY ONTOLOGISM IS UNTENABLE

1. EXPOSITION OF THE ONTOLOGICAL SYSTEM.—The system of Ontologism consists of two main propositions: (a) the human intellect already in this life enjoys an immediate intuition of the Divine Essence; (b) this intuition, which is the source and principle of all other human knowledge, is natural to the human understanding, because the Absolute is not only the highest object of our cognition (*veritas prima ontologica*), but also the first thing that we actually perceive (*veritas prima logica*). The human intellect can conceive nothing whatever until it has conceived God, because it can apprehend created things only in God, who is their archetype. Sense-perception serves merely to make us reflexively conscious of the ideas which we perceive directly though unconsciously in Him who is Truth itself. The name Ontologism was invented by Vincenzo Gioberti,⁸ for the purpose of indicating, first, that all rational cognition takes place not by the agency of concepts, but of real entities (τὸ ὄν), and, secondly, that as God is first in the order of being (*primum ontologicum*, τὸ ὄντως ὄν, ὃ ὄν), so He is also first in the order of knowledge (*primum logicum*).

2. HISTORY OF ONTOLOGISM.—The germ of Ontologism may be traced back to the time of St. Thomas Aquinas, who himself at first favored the theory, in his Commentary on the *Liber Sententiarum* of Peter Lombard, but combated it vigorously in his later writings.^{8a} In the fifteenth century Ontologism had an exponent in Marsilio Ficino, an ardent neo-Platonist, who went so far

⁴ *Contra Eunom.* On St. Basil's attitude towards Eunomianism, cfr. Bardenhewer-Shahan, *Patrology*, pp. 282 sq.

⁵ *Or. Theol.*, 1–4.

⁶ *Contra Eunom.*

⁷ *Hom. contra Anomoeos*, especially 1–5, περὶ τοῦ ἀκαταλήπτου.

⁸ + 1852. For a sketch of his life and a brief account of his philosophy, see U. Benigni's article, "Gioberti," in vol. VI of the *Catholic Encyclopedia*.

^{8a} On this point, cfr. M. Schumacher, *The Knowableness of God*, Ch. II, § 1, no. 3: "Innatism of Aquinas," pp. 109 sqq., Notre Dame, Ind. 1905. See also Msgr. Ferré, *St. Thomas of Aquin and Ideology*, English transl. by a Father of Charity, 3rd ed., London 1881.

as to demand that Plato should be read in the churches, and who kept a light burning before the great philosopher's bust in his room at Florence.⁹

a) Nicolas Malebranche first developed the theory into a philosophical system and may therefore be justly called the Father of Ontologism. He tells us in his famous *Recherche de la Vérité* (published in 1675): God is as it were the Sun in the center of a world of thinking spirits. He is ever present to our minds, into which He pours the light of His eternal ideas. It is only by peering into this intellectual Sun, *i. e.*, by an immediate intuition of God, that we perceive all things and truths. "*Nous voyons toutes choses en Dieu.*"¹⁰ Malebranche's theory was adopted and defended by Cardinal Gerdil in his *Défense du Sentiment du P. Malebranche sur la Nature et l'Origine des Idées*; but it is said the learned Cardinal renounced Ontologism in his later years. In the nineteenth century, Vincenzo Gioberti¹¹ endeavored to strengthen Ontologism by drawing his famous distinction between direct and reflex perception. Direct perception, according to him, consists in the immediate intuition of God, though not of God *per se*, but in His creative influence on the world. Hence the celebrated principle: "*L'ente crea le esistenze*—Being creates existences." In virtue of reflexive perception we realize, though indistinctly and in a limited way, what we see clearly and definitely, though unconsciously, in the *intuitus Dei*. The essence of Gioberti's system lies in the assumption that direct intuition of God, though only as "creating existences"—*Ens creans existentias, i. e.*, in so far as He exercises an influence upon the cosmos,—is the starting-point of all human knowledge.

b) The Ontological system of Antonio Rosmini (died 1855) created quite a stir, especially in his native Italy. The controversy reached its climax in the condemnation, on December 14, 1887, of forty propositions taken from Rosmini's writings.¹² The condemnation was pronounced by the Holy Roman and Universal Inquisition by command of Pope Leo XIII. Rosmini, who began his philosophical career as a defender of the theory of "inborn ideas,"¹³ later entered the camp of the Ontologists, and finally ascribed to the *idea entis* certain qualities which belong only to the Absolute, *i. e.*, God.¹⁴ By hopelessly confusing the notion of indefinite, general, abstract being (τὸ ὄν) with that of the infinite, concrete, divine Being (ὁ ὢν), he gave the Ontological system a decidedly Pantheistic turn.¹⁵

Among the theistic champions of Ontologism Professor Ubaghs of Louvain (died 1854), whom we have already met with as a defender of Traditionalism, was perhaps the most prominent. "Ubaghs thinks that we are born with the idea of the infinite God, and that this idea is in the beginning unformed, but becomes formed by reflection, to which we are led by our education in

⁹ Cfr. M. Schumacher, C.S.C., in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. VI, s. v. "Ficino." Among Ficino's several works, the *Theologia Platonica de Animarum Immortalitate* deserves mention. Cfr. also De Wulf-Coffey, *History of Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 468 sq., London 1909.

¹⁰ For a succinct account of Malebranche's system, see W. Turner, *History of Philosophy*, pp. 464 sq., Boston 1903.

¹¹ *Introduzione allo Studio della Filosofia*. On Gioberti, cfr. Benigni in Vol. VI of the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, pp. 562 sq.

¹² For a list of the condemned doctrines, consult *Rosminianarum Propositionum Trutina Theologica*, Romae, Typis Vaticanis, 1892. A *Life of Rosmini* was written in English by Fr. Lockhart (London 1901). Cfr. Turner, *History of Philosophy*, pp. 631 sq.

¹³ *Nuovo Saggio sull' Origine delle Idee* (1830).

¹⁴ *Il Rinnovamento della Filosofia* (1836); *Teosofia* (1859).

¹⁵ Cfr. *Propos. Rosmini damn.*, 1–5.

human society.”¹⁶ Ontological errors were also propagated by Père Gratry,¹⁷ Abbé Branchereau,¹⁸ Bishop Hugonin of Bayeux,¹⁹ Abbé Fabre,²⁰ by an unknown author under the pseudonym “Sans-Fiel,”²¹ and by a number of other writers in France, Belgium, and Italy. There is also, or was until recently, a small school of Ontologists in the United States.²² German writers, with the sole exception of P. Rothenflue, S. J.,²³ never grew enthusiastic over Ontologism; but such among them as were tainted with it (notably Krause and Baader) drifted straightway into Pantheism, which is after all only a logical—if covert—sequel of Ontologism.

c) How could so many learned and pious men deceive themselves so egregiously? For a psychological explanation let us turn to the leading arguments of the Ontologists. Some of these arguments are very specious. Thus, one of them, based upon the doctrine of universal ideas, concludes: A universal concept must have a real object (*universale in re*). Now there can be no *universale in re* either in the contingent things of this world, which are in a constant flux, nor in the activity of the human mind. Not in the contingent things of this material world, because the universals are as necessary, as eternal, and as unchangeable as Truth itself. Not in the human mind, because the mind does not, by thinking, create truth, but presupposes it and bows before its majesty. Now, necessity, eternity, unchangeableness, etc., can be predicated of God alone; hence in perceiving truth we see the Godhead. Again, it is only on the basis of Ontologism that we can account for the notion of infinity, inasmuch as “the finite is a limitation of the infinite,” and consequently must in thought come *after* it. The idea of infinity cannot be gained by abstraction, because the finite contains nothing infinite which could be abstracted. Consequently, the concept of the infinite is derived from an immediate intuition of the Infinite Being itself.

Gioberti bottoms one of his favorite arguments on the postulate of a parallelism supposed to exist between the (ontological) order of being and the (logical) order of thought. The order of cognition, he argues, must correspond to the order of being. Therefore we perceive all things in the rank and sequence in which they *are*. Now, God is the very first thing in the order of being (*ens primum*); consequently He must also be the first which we apprehend (*primum cognitum*). The traditional practice of placing the material objects of the senses first, and God last, among the objects of human cognition, he says, destroys the harmony between being and thought (between the ontological and the logical order), and fails to take due account of the unique dignity of God.

With a contemptuous sneer at “German philosophy,” some of the leaders of Ontologism attempted to raise their system into the exalted place of “the only accepted Catholic philosophy.” In endeavoring to explain the origin of our ideas, they argued, we must choose between Cartesian Psychologism and Ontologism. In other words: We must draw our ideas either from the mind that conceives them, or from the object of perception (ȫv = being). If we derive them from the mind, we shall depreciate their objective content, deify reason as the sole source of truth, throw open

¹⁶ Boedder, *Natural Theology*, p. 14.

¹⁷ *De la Connaissance de Dieu*, 2 vols. Paris 1853. On Gratry and his teachings, see G. M. Sauvage’s article *s. v.* in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. VI.

¹⁸ *Instit. Philos.*

¹⁹ *Études Philosophiques; Ontologisme*.

²⁰ *Défense de l’Ontologisme*.

²¹ *Discussion Amicale sur l’Ontologisme*.

²² Its most distinguished representative was Orestes A. Brownson. (Cfr. W. Turner, *History of Philosophy*, pp. 636 sq., Boston 1903). Driscoll (*Christian Philosophy: God*, p. 56) says that “To-day Ontologism counts no defenders among Catholic writers,” but is “most strenuously advocated by many non-Catholic writers” (e. g., Harris, Knight, Luthardt, C. M. Tyler, T. H. Green, E. Caird). “This recent form of Ontologism is due to the influence of Hegel.”

²³ *Instit. Philos.*

the door to Pantheism, and drift into the shoals of Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. Ontologism is the only alternative.²⁴

3. PHILOSOPHICAL CRITIQUE OF THE ONTOLOGIST SYSTEM.—To refute Ontologism thoroughly, we shall have to demonstrate, first, the falsity of its principle of knowledge, and, secondly, the pernicious consequences to which it logically tends.

a) A close examination of the nature of our universal concepts (*ideae universales*) shows convincingly that God cannot be the principal nor (in point of time) the first object of human knowledge here on earth. We first apprehend the visible world, and thence ascend to a knowledge of God as its Creator. Our knowledge of God is the arch or keystone of science. Furthermore, our conception of the infinite is vitiated by an incurable negation,—which could not be were we endowed with an immediate intuition of that Being which is in reality the Infinite. If Ontologism were right, how should we explain the notorious fact that man can know of the existence of God by no other than the syllogistic method? How comes it that we are forced to define the Essence of God by means of concepts that express quality, and to employ the methods of negation and eminence? How is it that theodicy is built up on cosmology and psychology (the sciences of the world and of the soul)? Why do all our apprehensions and judgments contain an admixture of phantasms?²⁵ Why, if we have an immediate intuition of God, are we not conscious of it? All these questions Ontologism finds itself unable to answer.

The fact last referred to, *viz.*, that we are not conscious of possessing an intuitive knowledge of God, is alone sufficient to disprove Ontologism. If our consciousness (*sensus intimus*) faithfully reports all the interior facts both of sense perception and of spiritual life,—which it must if we are to accept it as a reliable source of true and certain knowledge,—then it is simply impossible that it should tell us nothing whatever of what, if it existed, would manifestly be the most fundamental of all the facts of our consciousness, namely, the intuitive knowledge of God. Yet conscience is silent on this point, and therefore those who affirm that the human mind enjoys such an intuitive knowledge of its Maker, must evidently be deceiving themselves.

b) The falsity of Ontologism further appears from the circumstance that it entails wrong conclusions. Logic tells us that where there is a false consequent, there must be a false antecedent. The worst feature of the Ontologist system is its immanent Pantheistic bias. We do not, of course, mean to charge all Ontologists, most of whom were well-meaning, learned, and honorable men, with consciously advocating Pantheism, though several of them, like Gioberti and Rosmini, seem to have quite frankly drawn the last conclusions from their premises. What we mean to say is, that the system as such, in its logical deductions, inevitably runs into the marshes of Pantheism. This is most plainly apparent in those forms of Ontologism which identify abstract being (*esse universale*) with Divine Being (*esse infinitum*), and confuse knowledge of the one with an intuition of the other. For if abstract being is really identical with Divine Being, then everything that can be subsumed under the universal notion of being is God; in other words: *Everything is God*. But even the more moderate defenders of the Ontologist system, who put the purely negative necessity, eternity, and unchangeableness of our universal ideas on the same plane with the corresponding positive attributes of God, are guilty of a deification of finite essences and tumble hopelessly into the pit of Pantheism.

4. THEOLOGICAL ESTIMATE OF ONTOLOGISM.—So much for the philosophical aspects of Ontologism. To ascertain its status before the bar of dogmatic theology, we will first examine the judgments pronounced upon it by the Church.

²⁴ For a refutation of all these fallacies, see the text-books on philosophy; cfr. also No. 3, *infra*.

²⁵ Cfr. Aristotle, *De Memor. Rem.* 1: “Νοεῖν οὐκ ἔστιν ἄνευ φαντάσματος.”

a) The first in the series of these judgments is a decree of the Holy Office, dated September 18, 1861, in which seven Ontologist propositions are indirectly censured by the remark: “*Tuto tradi non possunt.*” Chief among them are: “*Immediata Dei cognitio, habitualis saltem, intellectui humano essentialis est, ita ut sine ea nihil cognoscere possit, siquidem est ipsum lumen intellectuale*” (prop. 1). “*Esse illud, quod in omnibus [est] et sine quo nihil cognoscimus, est esse divinum*” (prop. 2). “*Universalia a parte rei considerata a Deo realiter non distinguuntur*” (prop. 3). The Ontologists tried to make it appear that this decree was aimed directly against Pantheism; but when Branchereau in 1862 submitted his theistic Ontologism to the judgment of the Roman authorities, he was advised that the fifteen theses into which he had cast it fell under the decree of the Holy Office.²⁶ The Vatican Council did not enter into a discussion of this aberration, but one of its dogmatic definitions²⁷ plainly strikes at Ontologism, in so far as Ontologism leads logically to a Pantheistic identification of God with the universe.²⁸

Even more telling and important is the condemnation, in A. D. 1887, by the Congregation of the Holy Office, of forty propositions of Antonio Rosmini, “*in proprio sensu auctoris,*” —a decision which Pope Leo XIII expressly ordered to be observed throughout the universal Church. Several of these forty propositions embody a frank statement of the principles of Ontologism. Thus, *e. g.*: “*Esse indeterminatum, quod procul dubio notum est omnibus intelligentiis, est divinum illud, quod homini in natura manifestatur*” (prop. 4). “*Esse, quod homo intuetur, necesse est ut sit aliquid entis necessarii et aeterni, causae creantis ... atque hoc est Deus*” (prop. 5).²⁹

b) In appraising the theological value of these official decisions the first question that suggests itself is: If Ontologism contradicts two dogmas, that of the mediate character of our knowledge of God here below,³⁰ and that of the *lumen gloriae*,³¹ why was it not condemned as a heresy?

α) There is a vast difference between the Ontologists and those earlier writers who denied the dogmas just mentioned. The latter were outright heretics, while the Ontologists, on the contrary, disavow the heretical consequences of their doctrine and profess loyal adherence to the faith. They deny in particular that the intuition of God which they teach implies the “*visio beatifica,*” admitting that the latter can only take place in Heaven and by virtue of the “*lumen gloriae.*” In explaining this distinction they have recourse to various subterfuges, which, while elucidating nothing, at least prove that those who seek shelter under them are not and do not desire to be regarded as heretics.

β) But the laws of logic are inexorable, and Ontologism cannot escape the heretical conclusions that flow from its principles. It is for this reason that the Church dealt the whole system a mortal blow. An immediate intuition of God, —no matter whether we consider Him as the Absolute Spirit or as the Creator, —necessarily implies an intuitive knowledge of the Most Holy Trinity, and also beatific bliss. He who excludes the visible world as an indispensable medium of cognition, must needs admit that man, if he sees God, Who is simplicity itself, must see Him as He is. Now if, as Ontologism alleges, an intuitive knowledge of the Divine Essence is “*natural,*” nay “*essential*” to the human intellect, it is impossible to escape the conclusion that an intuitive knowledge of the Most Holy Trinity, and consequently also beatific vision, are likewise natural and essential to the mind of man.³²

²⁶ See Kleutgen, *Verurtheilung des Ontologismus*, Münster 1868.

²⁷ “*Praedicandus est [Deus] re et essentia a mundo distinctus.*” —Denzinger-Bannwart, n. 1782.

²⁸ Cfr. Granderath, *Constit. Dogmat. SS. Conc. Vaticani ex ipsis eius Actis Explicatae*, p. 75, Friburgi 1892.

²⁹ The full text of the decree is given by Schiffini, *Disput. Metaph. Spec.*, Vol. I, pp. 432 sqq.

³⁰ V. *supra*, Chapter II, § 1.

³¹ V. *supra*, Chapter II, § 2, Art. 2.

³² Cfr. Kleutgen, *De Ipso Deo*, pp. 76 sqq.

y) For a positive dogmatic justification of the Roman decrees against Ontologism it suffices to revert to the two dogmas which we have already proved above. For, the fact that our knowledge of God is necessarily inferential and imperfect, of itself excludes the possibility of an immediate intuitive vision of the Divine Essence. This teaching being so clearly contained in the sources of Divine Revelation, it is plain that the Ontologists cannot base their claims on the Bible. They adduce Ps. 4:7: “*Signatum est super nos lumen vultus tui, Domine*—The light of thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us,” in favor of their contention, that we see God directly here below; but the context makes it plain that the Psalmist merely meant to praise the benevolence of God Who watches over him.³³ And if St. John (1:9) speaks of “the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world,” he clearly means supernatural enlightenment by faith and grace through the Divine Logos. Nor has Ontologism been successful in its attempts to found its teaching upon the Fathers. Its opponents were able to show that not a single one of the Fathers ever taught that man enjoys an intuitive vision of God here on earth; no, not even St. Augustine, on whom the Ontologists chiefly rely.

5. ST. AUGUSTINE NO ONTOLOGIST.—More emphatically than any other Patristic writer has St. Augustine insisted on the difficulty of acquiring a metaphysically correct conception of God here on earth.

a) Cfr. *De Genes. ad Lit.*, lib. IV: “*Mens itaque humana prius haec, quae facta sunt, per sensus corporis cernit eorumque notitiam pro infirmitatis humanae modulo capit; et deinde quaerit eorum causas, si quomodo possit ad eas pervenire principaliter et incommutabiliter permanentes in Verbo Dei, ac si invisibilia eius per ea, quae facta sunt, intellecta conspiciuntur. Quod quanta tarditate ac difficultate agat et quanta temporis mora ... quis id ignoret?*” It is to be noted, however, that St. Augustine applies to every species of cognition the term “vision,” of which he distinguishes three kinds: “*visio corporalis*” (by means of the bodily eyes), “*visio spiritualis*” (by means of the imagination), and “*visio intellectualis*” (by means of the intellect). The “*visio intellectualis*” he subdivides into natural and supernatural, according to the power which performs it (nature or grace). Grace enables us to see God either through faith (“*per fidem*”) or by revealing to us the Divine Essence (“*per speciem*”).” Cfr. *Enarr. in Ps.*, 149, n. 4: “*Est quaedam visio huius temporis, erit altera visio futuri temporis. Visio, quae modo est, per fidem est; visio, quae futura erit, per speciem erit. Si credimus, videmus; si amamus, videmus*—There is a kind of sight belonging to this present time; there will be another belonging to the time hereafter; the sight which now is, is by faith; the sight which is to be, will be by the [Divine] Essence. If we believe, we see; if we love, we see.” But the only real and true vision of God is that enjoyed by the angels and the just in Heaven. Cfr. *De Trin.* I, 13: “*Ipsa visio est facie ad faciem, quae summum praemium promittitur iustis*—That sight is face to face that is promised as the highest reward to the just.”

b) It is in conformity with this fundamental teaching of St. Augustine that we must interpret those passages of his writings in which he speaks of God as the “*intelligibilis lux*” of things, and even describes him as the “*lumen mentium*.” *Solil.*, cap. 1, n. 3: “*Deus intelligibilis lux, in quo et a quo et per quem intelligibiliter lucent omnia*—God is the intelligible light, in which and from which and through which all things are intelligible.” *De Civit. Dei*, VIII, 7: “[*Deus est*] *lumen mentium ad discenda omnia*—[God is] the light of our understanding, by which all things are learned by us.” In the first of these passages his purpose is to raise created things to the rank of copies of the divine original, “incorporated thoughts of God,” as it were; while in the second passage he evidently means that the light of reason in man is a reflection as well as an effect of the Divine Light. Cfr. *De Trin.*, XIV, n. 15: “*Mens humana non sua luce, sed summae illius lucis participatione sapiens erit... Sic enim dicitur ista hominis sapientia, ut etiam Dei sit ... verum non ita Dei, qua sapiens est Deus,*

³³ Cfr. Ps. 30:7; Numbers 6:25.

... quemadmodum dicitur etiam iustitia Dei non solum illa, qua ipse iustus est, sed quam dat homini, cum iustificat impium—The human mind then will be wise, not by its own light, but by participation of that supreme Light.... For this wisdom of man is so called, that it is also of God ... yet not so of God, as is that wherewith God is wise ... as we call it the righteousness of God, not only when we speak of that by which He Himself is righteous, but also of that which He gives to man when He justifies the ungodly.” This teaching has nothing in common with the Ontologism condemned by the Church; else the Schoolmen would surely not have incorporated it into their treatises on God.³⁴

c) The genius of Augustine ascended to heights into which only the profoundest mystic can follow. It is his mystic utterances that the Ontologists adduce in favor of their theory, especially his teaching that we envisage the truths of the metaphysical order “*in rationibus aeternis,*” nay, “*in ipsa, quae supra mentes nostras est, incommutabili veritate.*”³⁵ Vercellone and others, from the fact that St. Augustine was favorably inclined towards Platonism, inferred that he postulated an intuitive vision of the archetypal ideas in God Himself. This would stamp him an Ontologist. But the assumption is altogether unfounded. Despite his predilection for Plato,—he himself towards the end of his life retracted the exaggerated encomiums he had heaped upon the ancient Greek philosopher,—St. Augustine never shared the errors of Platonism. St. Thomas assures us³⁶ that “*Augustinus, qui doctrinis Platoniorum imbutus fuerat, si qua invenit fidei accommodata in eorum dictis, assumpsit; quae vero invenit fidei nostrae adversa, in melius commutavit.*” Besides, the Ontologist claim cannot be harmonized with Augustine’s well-known theory of knowledge. For he not only insists that the conception of God which men have here below, is a cognition “*per speculum*” and “*in aenigmate,*” derived from the consideration of the material universe; but he also teaches that we can not argue *a priori* from ideal truth to real truth, or to the Divine Archetype.³⁷ Interpreting the above quoted passages by their context, therefore, and in the light of the author’s ordinary teaching, their meaning must be that the Author of all things, in creating them, stamped them with the seal of ontological truth, at the same time imprinting upon the human intellect the eternal and necessary laws that govern thought, *i. e.*, logical truth. That man has an immediate intellectual intuition of all truths in God, is a teaching quite foreign to the mind of St. Augustine, as interpreted by St. Thomas Aquinas and the Schoolmen generally; and the Ontologist construction, which was unknown before the seventeenth century, has no claim to truth or probability.³⁸

We have shown that Ontologism has no basis either in Sacred Scripture or Tradition. Its principle runs counter to the teaching of Revelation, in spite of all attempts that have been made to deny or to veil this opposition. In its consequences it leads partly to Pantheism, partly to other heretical doctrines. Hence the Church was fully justified in condemning it.

READINGS:—*A. Lepidi, *Examen Philosophico-Theologicum de Ontologismo*, Lovanii 1874.—Schiffini, S. J., *Disput. Metaphysicae Spec.*, Vol. I. pp. 476 sqq., Taurini 1888.—*Kleutgen, S. J., *Verurteilung des Ontologismus durch den hl. Stuhl (Beilagen zur Theol. und Philos. der Vorzeit)*, Münster 1868.—*Zigliara, *Della Luce Intellettuale e dell’ Ontologismo*, Romae 1874.—Karl Werner, *Antonio Rosmini und seine Schule*, Wien 1884.—IDEM, *Der Ontologismus als Philosophie des nationalen Gedankens*, Wien 1885.—IDEM, *Die kritische Zersetzung und speculative Umbildung des Ontologismus*, Wien 1885.—Boedder, S. J., *Natural Theology*, 2nd ed., pp. 12 sqq., London 1899.—M. Schumacher, *The Knowableness of God*, pp. 136 sqq.,

³⁴ Cfr. S. Thom., *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 84, art. 5; *De Verit.*, qu. 10, art. 11, ad 12.

³⁵ *Confess.*, XII, 25.

³⁶ *S. Theol.*, I. c.

³⁷ Cfr. *supra*, Chapter I, Art. 1.

³⁸ Cfr. Schütz, *Divum Augustinum non esse Ontologum*, Monasterii 1867,

Notre Dame, Ind. 1905.—J. T. Driscoll, *Christian Philosophy: God*, pp. 56 sqq., 2nd ed., New York 1904.—W. Turner, *History of Philosophy*, pp. 228, 367, 632 sqq., Boston 1903.—Rosmini's *Short Sketch of Modern Philosophies and of His Own System*, trans. by Lockhart, London 1882.—For the ecclesiastical decisions in the matter, see the *Resolutiones Congr. S. Officii et Indicis de Traditionalismo, Ontologismo, etc.*

PART II

THE DIVINE ESSENCE

Having demonstrated the knowableness of God, we proceed to inquire into His Essence.

Our knowledge of the Divine Essence is gained from attributive notions. A more perfect mode of apprehension is impossible on account of the defectiveness of our cognitive faculties, which enable us to perceive God only in an abstractive and analogical manner. But His infinite perfection offers us a supereminent equivalent for an infinite number of separate perfections, which the human mind can grasp. While in the creature, existence, essence, and attributes are separate and distinct entities, in God they are all identical (Existence = Essence = Attributes). To define the Divine Essence scientifically, therefore, we must try to discover among God's many attributes the one which is the root and principle of all the rest. This particular attribute is *Aseity* or *Self-existence*. As the names applied to God in Holy Scripture afford us valuable indications for determining the Divine Essence, we shall begin by studying the substantive names of God in the Bible.

CHAPTER I

THE BIBLICAL NAMES OF GOD

SECTION 1

THE "SEVEN HOLY NAMES OF GOD" IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.—We scarcely need to premise that in speaking of names, or nouns, a distinction lies between proper and common nouns (*nomen proprium—nomen commune s. appellativum*). Since God does not belong to any species, and since there are no other individuals like Him, He cannot strictly speaking be designated either by a proper or a common noun (hence the predicate *ἀνώνυμος, ἄρρητος, ineffabilis*). Consequently the names attributed to God in Holy Scripture are not to be taken as adequately expressing His essence or nature; they are merely imperfect, inadequate, analogical appellations.

Scheeben¹ has ingeniously divided the so-called "seven holy names" of God in the Old Testament into three classes, of which the first (containing three names) elucidates the relation of God *ad extra, i. e.*, to man; while the third (comprising also three names) sets off the "three aspects of His intrinsic perfection." In the center of both groups stands *Yahweh*, which is essentially a proper name, because it expresses the Divine Essence, and which is related to the other six names as a cause to its effects.

2. THE THREE CLASSES OF DIVINE NAMES.—As we have already explained, the proper name of God, describing His Essence, is יהוה (*Yahweh*). The three aspects of His intrinsic perfection are denoted by שַׁדַּי (*Schadai*), the Strong, Mighty; עֶלְיוֹן (*Elion*), the High,

¹ *Dogmatik*, Vol. 1, § 66 (Wilhelm-Scannell's *Manual*, pp. 170 sqq.)

Sublime, the Most High; and קָדוֹשׁ (*Kadosch*), the Holy. God's relation *ad extra* is characterized by אֵל (*El*), the Strong, אֱלֹהִים (He who is worthy of veneration), and אֲדֹנָי (*Adonai*), Commander, Lord.

a) God Himself revealed to Moses the *Tetragrammaton ineffabile* (יהוה) as the proper name signifying His Divine Essence.² Owing to a misunderstanding of Lev. 24:16: "*Qui pronuntiaverit [= blasphemaverit] nomen Domini, morte moriatur*—He that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, dying let him die," the Jews did not dare to pronounce the "Four Letters" (τετραγράμματον), and in consequence it long remained uncertain whether the Tetragrammaton was to be pronounced "Jehovah" (a word still in use), or "Yihve," or "Yehave," or "Yahweh." In the Jewish synagogues יהוה was always pronounced *Adonai*, according to the Rabbinical precept: "*Dixit Deus: non legor, sed scribor. Scribor et legor Adonai.*"³ This uncertainty as to the proper pronunciation of יהוה explains the interesting fact that the Tetragrammaton found its way even into Greek Bible codices, where it was changed by ignorant copyists into ΠΙΠΙ (= πινιν). To indicate that יהוה was always to be pronounced אֲדֹנָי (*Adonai*), it was written with the vowel signs of the latter word, thus: יְהוֹה (*chateph-patach* being altered into *shwa mobile*). This gave rise—probably no earlier than the sixteenth century—to the wrong pronunciation "*Jehova.*" To-day it seems pretty certain that the word must be written יְהוָה and pronounced *Yahweh*.⁴

More important than the question of its grammatical form, is the meaning of the Tetragrammaton. Its root is undoubtedly הָיָה, an older form of הִיָּה, *i. e.*, *to be*. Hence יְהוָה means: *He Who Is*. God Himself attached this meaning to the word when he replied to Moses who had asked Him for His name: "I am who am."⁵ It is therefore *God's proper name*, denoting His very essence, and can never, even catachrestically, be applied to other beings besides Himself, *e. g.*, to false gods.⁶

Exegetes have often discussed the question, whether the Tetragrammaton was known to the antediluvian Patriarchs and to Abraham, or whether it was first revealed to Moses. In attempting to solve this problem, we must distinguish carefully between the word as a vocal sound, and its meaning. The pre-Mosaic origin of the word is probable: (1) from the archaic verbal root הָיָה, *to be*, from which was formed יְהוָה (the root is not הִיָּה, *to be*, which was in use in Moses' time); (2) from the use of the Divine Name among the Patriarchs;⁷ (3) from the pre-Mosaic verbal compounds with יְהוָה (abbreviated יָה), like Abja, Achja, Jochabed, Morja, etc. The assumption of a prolepsis does not appear to be justified in view of the fact that the name occurs 150 times in Genesis and that Moses introduces himself to the Israelites as one sent by Yahweh.⁸ It is quite certain that the Tetragrammaton in its deeper meaning and full sense (as a *nomen proprium*) was first revealed to Moses. Cfr. Ex. 6:3: "*Ego יהוה et apparui Abraham et Isaac et Iacob ut אֵל שַׁרְיָי, sed (quoad) nomen meum יְהוָה non notus fui illis.*" This fact is well established and cannot be affected by Delitzsch's theory⁹ that the name of God was familiar to the ancient Babylonians.

² Ex. 3:13 sqq.; 6:3.

³ Cfr. Raym. Martini, *Pugio Fidei*, p. 649, Lips. 1687.

⁴ Cfr. Broglie, "Elohim et Jahweh" (*Annales de Phil. Chrétienne*, pp. 537 sqq., 1891).

⁵ Ex. 3:14. Vulg., "*Sum qui sum*"; Septuagint, ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν; Hebrew, אֲהִיָּה אֲשֶׁר אֲהִיָּה.

⁶ Cfr. Is. 42:8: "*Ego Jahve, hoc est nomen meum; gloriam meam alteri non dabo*—I the Lord, this is my name: I will not give my glory to another." (Cfr. also Deut. 6:4; 2 Kings 7:22.)

⁷ Cfr. Gen. 4:1, 26; 5:29; *et passim*.

⁸ Cfr., however, Himpel, *Kirchenlexikon*, 2nd ed., VI, 1281 sq.

⁹ *Bibel und Babel*, Leipzig 1902.

b) Among the names of the third class, which, as we have said, express the intrinsic (transcendental) perfection of God, **שָׁדַי** (*Schadai*), usually enforced by the article **אֱלֹהֵי שָׁדַי** or **אֱלֹהֵי שָׁדַי**, is the most frequent and also the most ancient.¹⁰ Derived from the etymon **שָׁדַד**, *i. e.*, *to be violent, employ force*, it designates the intrinsic might or power of God, thus: the Allpowerful; Sept., παντοκράτωρ; Vulg., *omnipotens (i. e., fortis)*.—The majesty and sublimity of God find expression in the name **עֶלְיוֹן** (from **עָלָה** = *ascendit*): the Most High; Sept., ὁ ὑψιστος; Vulg., *altissimus*.—The word **קָדוֹשׁ**, found chiefly in the Prophets, and among these especially in Isaias, means the Holy One, and denotes the sanctity and purity of the Divine Essence. These three words, although originally adjectives, have been developed into substantive appellations of the Deity and enjoy the prerogative of being applied exclusively to the one true God.

c) The same cannot be said of the first two names of the remaining group, which describe God in His relation to man. The first and most ancient of these, current among all Semitic nations, **אֱל** (from **אָוַל**, *to be strong*), *i. e.*, *the Strong, the Mighty* (Sept., ὁ ἰσχυρός, παντοκράτωρ), is sometimes *per abusum* applied also to pagan gods.¹¹ When applied to the one true God, it is emphasized thus: **הָאֵל** (ὁ Θεός), or **אֱלֵהִי** (*Deus vivus*), or **אֱלֵהֶשְׁמַיִם** (*Deus coelorum*), or **אֱלֵהֶדְרוֹתַיִם** (*Deus deorum*).¹² The plural form **אֱלֹהִים** (the singular, **אֱלֹהֶה**, is chiefly poetical), occurs no less than 2,500 times, and is probably related to **אֱל**. Its primary root is supposed to be **אָוַל**, *to be strong*, its derived root **אָלַף**, *to swear, to venerate, to fear*. The fundamental meaning of the word, therefore, is *power*, inasmuch as it strikes fear, or challenges adoration.¹³ *Elohim* is a majestic plural, or a veiled indication of the Most Holy Trinity, and by no means represents a rudiment of polytheism. For not only is the word almost invariably construed with the verbal singular, but we must remember that God Himself took special care to preserve Monotheism pure among the Jews. *Elohim* is quite frequently applied to the false gods of the Gentiles, and likewise to angels and kings, that is to say, to rational beings that reflect the power and adorableness of God.¹⁴ In all such cases, however, **אֱלֹהִים** is always a true plural.¹⁵ To describe the true God, it is often combined with appositions such as **אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת** (*Elohim Sabaoth = dominus exercituum*), or *Elohim Abraham, Isaac, Jacob*, etc. Unlike **יְהוָה**, *Elohim* is consequently not a proper name of God, but rather a *nomen appositivum*, which sometimes even takes the place of a predicate, *e. g.*, “Yahweh is the Elohim.” A further difference lies in this that *Elohim* is used preferably to designate the God of nature, while *Yahwe* more often describes God in His relation to the supernatural order of salvation.—The most significant and most important name of this group is the third, **אֲדֹנָי** (*Adonai*), from **דָּן**, *to judge*; hence: *Judge, Lord (Dominus, ὁ κύριος)*. In spite of its plural form (= “my lords;” *cfr. monsieur, monsignore*) *Adonai* is always singular in meaning and is applied only to the one true God. It is closely related to **יְהוָה**, not only because it loans its vowels to that word, but also for the reason that it is to be considered as a quasi-proper name of God.¹⁶

¹⁰ Cfr. Ex. 6:3.

¹¹ Dan. 11:37 sqq.

¹² Cfr. Zschokke, *Theologie der Propheten*, pp. 12 sqq., Freiburg 1877.

¹³ Cfr. the Arabian *Allah*, Syrian *Aloho*, Babylonian *Jl, Jlu*.

¹⁴ Cfr. Ps. 81:6: “*Ego dixi, dii estis—I have said: You are gods.*”

¹⁵ Cfr. St. Thomas, *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 13, art. 9.

¹⁶ Cfr. Gesenius, *Thesaur.*, 1:328 sq.

SECTION 2

THE NAMES APPLIED TO GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND IN PROFANE LITERATURE—THE SYMBOLIC APPELLATIONS

1. The New Testament adopted the nomenclature of the Old by translating the Hebrew names of God as literally as possible into Greek. It did not, however, succeed in adequately rendering the profundity of the Hebrew appellations with their wealth of meaning. We also note that New Testament usage in this regard is characterized by an almost slavish dependence on the Greek Septuagint.

On the whole Θεός (Vulg. *Deus*), corresponds to the Hebrew *El* and *Elohim*, while *Yahwe* (and also *Adonai* and *Schadai*) is generally translated by κύριος (Vulg. *Dominus*). Hence it is not too much to say that from the point of view of the comparative science of languages the fact that Christ is constantly called ὁ κύριος (Lord) is presumptive evidence in favor of His Divinity. On the other hand there comes to the foreground in the New Testament a new name of God, viz.: πατήρ, *pater* (Father), which is characteristic of the spirit of love and mercy exemplified in the Incarnation. Since, however, this name also occurs repeatedly in the Old Testament,¹ there is no objective reason for accepting the Gnostic theory of a clean-cut opposition between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New.

2. If we abstract from the old Hellenic Ἰάω (same as ἦϚ, an abbreviation for ἦϚἦϚ), the Indo-Germanic languages have coined altogether different names for the Deity than the Semitic.

The derivation of Θεός from θέειν (run) or αἶθειν (burn) or θεᾶσθαι (behold), which the Fathers of the Church adopted from Plato,² and which was approved by the Schoolmen,³ is no longer considered probable, since there has been found in the Sanskrit root *dyu* (*div*), *to shine*, *shed luster* (applied to the firmament), a common verbal stem for all the divine names current among the Aryan nations.⁴ Max Müller refers to the discovery of the etymological equation (Sanskrit) *Diaus-Pitar* = (Greek) Ζεὺς-πατήρ = (Latin) *Jupiter* = (old Nordic) *Týr*, as “the most important discovery of the nineteenth century,” inasmuch as it proves not only that our own ancestors and the ancestors of Homer and Cicero spoke the same tongue as the nations of India, but also that they all at one time had the same faith and for a while adored the same deity under exactly the same name—“Father of Heaven.”⁵

¹ Deut 32:6; Is. 63:16; Mal. 2:10.

² *Cratyl.*, c. 16, p. 397 D.

³ Cfr. John Damascene, *De Fide Orth.*, I, 9: “Θεὸς λέγεται ἐκ τοῦ θέειν καὶ περιέπειν τὰ σύμπαντα· ἢ ἐκ τοῦ αἶθειν, ὃ ἐστὶ καίειν· ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεᾶσθαι τὰ πάντα.” Cfr. S. Thom., *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 13, art. 8.

⁴ Cfr. Max Müller, *Essays*, IV, 444. The Sanskrit word *Dyaus* (Persian *devs*), formed from this root, appears not only in the Latin language as *Deus* (cfr. *dies*, *sub divo*) and in Greek as Θεός and Ζεὺς, but it also occurs in Lithuanian as *devas* and in the ancient Nordic Edda as *Tý-r* (genit. *Tý-s*, accus. *Tý*), whom the ancient Teutons venerated as their supreme god. In Old High German this god was called *Zio*, in Anglo-Saxon, *Tiw*; hence our English *Tuesday*, the same as “*Ziestag*” in the Alemannic dialect. The highest deity of the Romans, *Jupiter* (*Dispiter*) is identical with the ancient Greek Ζεὺς-πατήρ. Cfr. J. T. Driscoll, *Christian Philosophy: God*, pp. 42 sqq., and ed., New York 1904.

⁵ Max Müller, *Anthropological Religion*, p. 82. London 1892.

The origin of the Germanic *Gott* (English *God*) is far more uncertain, in fact, it has not been cleared up. Some have derived the word from the Sanskrit *jut = dyut (shining)*; others from *ghu, to hail*; others from the Greek *ἀγαθός (good)*, while again others have traced it to the Persian *khoda* (old Persian *godata = "ens a se"*).⁶

The Slavic tongues have the name *bogu*, Polish *bog*, derived from the Sanskrit root *bhag = to apportion, order, venerate*.⁷

3. The symbolic names applied to God in Holy Scripture (light, lion, fire, etc.), must be understood metaphorically. To interpret them literally would be heretical.

Adapting itself to man's way of thinking and speaking, the Bible applies to God many appellations known as anthropomorphic or anthropopathic, which describe Him as if he were a man, attributing to Him eyes, ears, arms, a heart, feet, etc., and purely human emotions such as passions, either concupiscible (as joy, desire, etc.) or irascible (*e. g.*, anger, revenge, hate). That these are metaphors appears clearly from the Scriptural teaching that God is an absolutely invisible spirit, and in particular from the fact that some of the symbols used to describe Him are derived from irrational, lifeless creatures. Thus God is called a "lion," a "fire,"⁸ a "sun,"⁹ a "light,"¹⁰ and so forth. St. Thomas Aquinas tells us the purpose of these symbolic appellations: "*Nomen leonis dictum de Deo nihil aliud significant, quam quod Deus similiter se habet, ut fortiter operetur in suis operibus, sicut leo in suis.*"¹¹ The Church has always declared it to be heretical to apply these words literally to God, as did, *e. g.*, the Anthropomorphites of the fifth century.

READINGS:—Scholz, *Handbuch der Theologie des Alten Bundes*, Vol. 1, § 25.—Scheeben, *Dogmatik*, Vol. I, § 66 (Wilhelm-Scannell's *Manual*, Vol. 1, pp. 169 sqq.).—S. J. Hunter, S. J., *Outlines of Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. II, pp. 40 sqq.—Franzelin, *De Deo Uno*, thes. 22.—Chr. Pesch, *Praelect. Dogmat.*, Vol. 1, 3rd ed., pp. 53 sqq., Friburgi 1903.—Reinke, *Beiträge zur Erklärung des Alten Testaments*, Münster 1855.—De Lagarde, *Bildung der Nomina*, Göttingen 1889.—F. Vigouroux, *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, Paris 1891 sqq.—J. T. Driscoll, *Christian Philosophy: God*, pp. 42 sqq., 2nd ed., New York 1904.—Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, s. v. "God (in O. T.)."—F. J. Hall, *The Being and Attributes of God*, pp. 227 sqq., New York 1909.—A. J. Maas, S. J., art. "Jehovah" in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. VIII, pp. 329 sqq.

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⁶ Cfr. Kluge, *Etymol. Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* s. v. "Gott;" Dr. Murray's *New English Dictionary*, Vol. IV, p. 267, Oxford: 1901.

⁷ Cfr. on the subject of this section, Max Müller, *Lectures on the Science of Language*, Vol. I, pp. 421 sqq., London 1880; also O. Schrader, *Sprachvergleichung und Urgeschichte*, Chapter VIII, Jena 1883.

⁸ Cfr. Heb. 12:29.

⁹ Mal. 4:2.

¹⁰ John 1:9; 1 John 1:5.

¹¹ *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 13, art. 6. St Thomas's teaching on the application of terms of human thought to the Deity is that of all Catholic theologians and philosophers. For a defence of it against Herbert Spencer, see Boedder, *Natural Theology*, pp. 106 sqq. Cfr. also Driscoll, *Christian Philosophy: God*, pp. 335 sq. (against J. Fiske); J. J. Fox, art. "Anthropomorphism" in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. I; and M. Schumacher, *The Knowableness of God*, pp. 161 sqq., Notre Dame, Ind. 1905.

SECTION 1

FALSE THEORIES

When we speak of the essence of a thing, we commonly mean not its physical but its metaphysical entity, as expressed in its definition (τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι), giving the proximate genus and the specific difference; e. g., “*homo est animal rationale*.” With the essence thus constituted we contrast the essential properties or attributes of the thing, which emanate from the essence as their ontological principle. As we begin to enquire into the relation that God’s Essence bears to His divine attributes,—leaving aside for the nonce the question in what His metaphysical essence consists,—we find that such relation must needs depend on the distinction between them. Ontology teaches us that there are two distinct categories of difference, real and logical. The latter can be subdivided into two kinds: virtual (*distinctio rationis ratiocinatae s. cum fundamento in re*), and purely logical (*distinctio rationis ratiocinantis s. pure mentalis*). The attempt of the Scotists to construe another distinction, called *formalis*, intermediary between the real and the virtual, must be looked upon as futile. It is the business of dogmatic theology to ascertain precisely how the Essence of God differs from His attributes.

ARTICLE 1

THE HERESY OF GILBERT DE LA PORRÉE AND THE PALAMITES

1. HERETICAL REALISM AND THE CHURCH.—That well-known champion of extreme Realism, Gilbert de la Porrée,¹ taught that there is and needs must be a real distinction between God and Divinity, and between essence and person in God. Opinions differ as to whether Gilbert applied his Realism also to the Essence and the attributes of God. Some writers exonerate him from this charge, while St. Bernard² declares him guilty. It is certain, at any rate, that the Synod of Rheims, A. D. 1148, in the presence of Pope Eugene III, condemned as heretical the error of the extreme Realists when it decreed: “*Credimus et confitemur, simplicem naturam divinitatis esse Deum nec aliquo sensu catholico posse negari quin divinitas sit Deus et Deus divinitas. Si vero dicitur, Deum sapientia sapientem ... aeternitate aeternum ... esse, credimus non nisi ea sapientia, quae est ipse Deus, sapientem esse ... i. e., seipso sapientem, magnum, aeternum, unum Deum.*”³ Gilbert readily submitted to this decision, and also his friend, Otto von Freising.

Two centuries later there arose among the schismatic Greeks the heresy of the Palamites—so called from its author, Gregory Palamos. This heresy two Constantinopolitan synods (A. D. 1341 and 1347) did not blush to proclaim as a schismatic dogma. The quintessence of the Palamite error may be stated as follows: Between the essence (οὐσία) and the activity (ἐνέργεια) of God there is a real distinction, inasmuch as the latter radiates from the former as something inferior, though still, in a sense, divine

¹ Bishop of Poitiers from about 1142 to his death in 1154. His principal work is the *Liber Sex Principiorum*. For a concise statement of his philosophical views, see De Wulf-Coffey, *History of Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 194 sqq.

² *Serm. 80 in Cant.*

³ Hardouin, *Coll. Conc.*, t. VI, p. 2, col. 1299.

(θεότης). God's different attributes are merely radiations of the Divine Essence, and they solidify as it were by taking on the shape of an uncreated but visible light, which the Blessed in Heaven perceive by means of bodily vision. It is the same light that the disciples beheld on Mount Tabor. Here on earth this heavenly bliss is possible *per anticipationem* only, as the fruit of severe mortification, in the ἡσυχία, that is, the repose of contemplative prayer. Hence the name Hesychasts; hence also the contemptuous nickname ὀμφαλόψυχοι or Umbilicans, given to these heretics by Barlaam, the learned Abbot of St. Saviour's at Constantinople.⁴

2. HERETICAL REALISM REFUTED.—Except between the Divine Hypostases, no real distinction can be admitted to exist in the Godhead, because if there were in it any sort of real distinction, the Divine Essence would consist of distinct parts, which is repugnant. St. Bernard of Clairvaux⁵ justly traces this erroneous view to Polytheism: "*Multa dicuntur esse in Deo et quidem sane catholiceque, sed multa unum; alioquin si diversa putemus, non quaternitatem habemus, sed centeneitatem: habebimus multiplicem Deum.*"

The dogma that God's Essence is absolutely identical with His attributes, is taught, at least by implication, in all those passages of Holy Writ in which the divine attributes are conceived substantively rather than adjectively. Cfr. 1 John 4:8: "*Deus caritas est—God is charity.*" John 14:6: "*Ego sum via et veritas et vita—I am the way, and the truth, and the life.*"⁶ The Fathers never took these passages for rhetorical figures of speech, but interpreted them literally. Augustine condensed the entire dogmatic teaching of the Church on this subject into one pregnant axiom, *viz.*: "*Deus quod habet, hoc est—God is what He has.*"⁷ When the Fathers distinguish between Θεός and τὰ περὶ Θεόν, they simply mean to emphasize that there is room for a *virtual* distinction between the Divine Essence and attributes.⁸

ARTICLE 2

THE HERESY OF EUNOMIUS AND THE NOMINALISTS

1. NOMINALISM AND THE CHURCH.—The Eunomian heresy,—that man can form an adequate conception of God here below by means of the ἀγεννησία,⁹ paved the way for another error, *viz.*: that all the names and attributes of God are synonymous; in other words, that the distinction between God's essence and His attributes is purely logical

⁴ Cfr. Alsog, *Manual of Universal Church History*, II, 812 sq., Cincinnati 1899; von Stein, *Studien über die Hesychasten*, Wien 1874; Hergenröther, *Kirchengeschichte*, 4th ed., Vol. II, pp. 804 sqq., Freiburg 1904. The doctrine of the sight of the divine light has been retained in the theology of the schismatic Greeks and gained new power with the revival in that body in the nineteenth century. A work on the "spiritual prayer" which leads to the vision of light, was published at Athens as lately as 1854, under the title of "Spiritual Synopsis," by Sophronios, an archimandrite of Mt. Athos. Cfr. Ph. Meyer in the *New Schaff-Hersog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Vol. V, pp. 256 sqq., New York 1909.

⁵ *De Consid.*, V, 7.

⁶ ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἡ ζωή.

⁷ *De Civit. Dei*, XI, 10.

⁸ Cfr. S. Anselm., *Monol.*, cap. 16.

⁹ *Supra*, p. 114.

(*distinctio pure mentalis s. rationis ratiocinantis*). The medieval Nominalists (Ockham, Gregory of Rimini, Gabriel Biel) revamped this same error, with this difference that they held that the only ground we have on which to base distinctions between the attributes of God (which are *per se* synonymous), is the difference in the modes by which God manifests His power *ad extra* (*distinctio cum connotatione effectuum*). Both the Eunomians and the later Nominalists insisted that the absolute unity and simplicity of the Divine Essence allowed of no distinctions, not even a virtual one.¹⁰

That the various names and attributes of God correspond to as many objective aspects of the Divine Substance, and are consequently not synonymous, is "*vix non de fide.*"¹¹ It was because he had exaggerated the concept of unity that Master Eckhart had to submit to the condemnation, by Pope John XXII, of the following propositions extracted from his writings: "*Deus unus est omnibus modis et secundum omnem rationem, ita ut in ipso non sit invenire aliquam multitudinem in intellectu vel extra intellectum*" (prop. 23). "*Omnis distinctio est a Deo aliena, neque in natura neque in personis; probatur: quia natura ipsa est una et hoc unum, et quaelibet persona est una et id ipsum unum, quod natura*" (prop. 24).¹²

2. REFUTATION OF NOMINALISM.—a) Gregory of Nyssa^{12a} already called attention to the many attributes ascribed to God in various parts of the Bible. If the Eunomian hypothesis were correct, he insisted, these attributes would be meaningless and the Sacred Writers guilty of insufferable pleonasm. Basil ridicules the patent absurdities implied in the Eunomian theory as "*manifeste insania, ridiculum.*" The intrinsic unity and simplicity of God does not justify us in timidly denying all virtual distinctions in the Godhead. Far from infringing on the simplicity of God, the distinctions drawn by the human intellect "rather have their roots in, and grow out of, the unity of the Divine Essence."¹³ "*Hoc ipsum ad perfectam Dei unitatem pertinet,*" says St. Thomas, "*quod ea quae sunt multipliciter et divisim in aliis, in ipso sunt simpliciter et unite.*"¹⁴ The simplicity of God not only consists, like the simplicity of a mathematical point, in the absence of all composition, but also in an infinite wealth of unnumbered perfections. But since our finite intellect is unable to exhaust this wealth of perfection in one concept, we are compelled to form successively a number of varying attributive notions, which correspond to as many different *momenta* (not elements) in the Divine Being. It is only by this method that our limited understanding can take account of the plenitude of Divine Perfection.

b) The *connotata* tentatively suggested by the Nominalists do not make their theory acceptable. For God is called good and wise, not only because He communicates His goodness and

¹⁰ Cfr. Gotti, *De Deo, tract. 2*, qu. 4. § 5.

¹¹ Kleutgen.

¹² Cfr. Denzinger-Bannwart, n. 523 sq. The Bull of John XXII ("*Dolentes referimus*") is dated March 27, 1329. On Eckhart's life and writings, cfr. A. L. McMahon in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. V, art. "Eckhart;" also De Wulf-Coffey, *History of Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 453 sqq.

^{12a} *Or. 12 contr. Eunom.*

¹³ Scheeben.

¹⁴ *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 13, art. 4, ad 3.

wisdom to His creatures, but likewise because He is in Himself really good and wise, regardless of His *imitabilitas ad extra*.¹⁵

c) The pernicious conclusions which follow from the teachings of Eunomianism and Nominalism become most glaringly apparent in their treatment of the Most Holy Trinity. For if we hold that there is only a logical distinction (*distinctio pure mentalis*) between God's Essence and His attributes, how can there be a *virtual* distinction between the essential and the notional acts of the intellect and will, such as is postulated in the dogmatic principle: "The Father generates, but the divine Essence does not generate—*Pater generat, essentia divina non generat*"? Thus we see how the error of Eunomius and the Nominalists logically involves a Sabellian Modalism.

ARTICLE 3

THE FORMALISM OF THE SCOTISTS

1. THE SCOTIST THEORY.—"Formalism" plays a very important rôle in the philosophy and theology of the Scotist school, quite as important as the concept of "*praemotio*" in the Thomist system. By "Formalism" we understand that peculiar theory which posits distinctions that are neither real nor virtual, but are said to lie midway between these two as "*formalitates ex natura rei*." Formal distinctions are not real, because they are related to one another not as object is related to object, but only as "formality" is related to "formality." At the same time, however, they are more than virtual distinctions, because the various "*formalitates*" are rooted in the things themselves, independently of the human intellect; that is to say, they are antecedently present in things not merely *fundamentaliter*, but *actu*, as *e. g. animalitas* and *rationalitas* are present in man before the mind ever draws a distinction between them. Only in this way, say the Scotists, are we able to explain why the various "formalities" postulate each an essentially different note, so that it is necessary to deny their mutual identity (*e. g., animalitas non est rationalitas*). By applying their Formalism to the Godhead, the Scotists—Scotus himself must perhaps¹⁶ be excepted from this indictment—arrived at the notion that the distinction between the Essence and the attributes of God, and also that between the various divine attributes, while not real, is more than virtual, namely, formal. For inasmuch as the Divine Intellect must be defined differently from the Divine Will, it is possible to deny the one of the other, *e. g.:* "The intellect is not the will;" "Justice spares not, mercy spares," etc.¹⁷

2. CRITICAL ESTIMATE OF FORMALISM.—Although the Church has never officially pronounced against it, the formal distinction invented by the Scotists must be rejected as hair-splitting, unjustified, and dangerous.

a) It is unjustified because it is an inconceivable hybrid which eludes every attempt of the mind to grasp it. The dichotomy of real and logical distinction has its roots deep down in the very principle of contradiction, for every true distinction must be conceived either

¹⁵ Cfr. S. Thom., *Comment. in Quatuor Libros Sent.*, I, dist. 2, qu. 1, art. 3: "*Neque enim ex hoc, quod [Deus] bona facit, bonus est; sed quia bonus est, bona facit.*"

¹⁶ Cfr. *Comment. in Quatuor Libros Sent.*, I, dist. 8, qu. 4.

¹⁷ Cfr. Kleutgen, *Philos. d. Vorseit*, Vol. I, Abh. 2; Stöckl, *Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, Vol. II, Mainz 1865; J. Rickaby, *General Metaphysics*, pp. 107 sqq. (Stonyhurst Series).

as real or as not-real (*i. e.*, existing only in the thinking subject); and therefore it is as impossible to find room for a third member between the two, as it would be to establish an intermediary link between *Yes* and *No*.

b) But even if the logical possibility of a formal distinction were, for argument's sake, conceded, what would theology gain thereby? Would not Formalism lead,—though not perhaps so straightway nor so evidently as Realism,—to the same end, *viz.*: the destruction of God's simplicity? For if, independently of and antecedently to the action of the mind, the justice of God is not His mercy, this proposition, carried to its ultimate logical consequences, can only mean that the attribute of mercy is founded upon a different "reality" in God than the attribute of justice. What the Scotists call a "*formalitas*" thus *ex subjecta materia* becomes a reality. Different formalities, therefore, suppose as many varying realities. We will not here inquire into the applicability of Formalism to such creatures as are physically and metaphysically compound; in theology it plainly has no place, because the unique simplicity of the Divine Essence forbids all attempts to dissolve it.

c) Finally, the arguments of the Scotist school, in so far at least as they apply to the dogmatic treatise on the nature and attributes of God, are absolutely unconvincing. For the logical necessity of *defining* mercy otherwise than justice, or necessity otherwise than liberty, and so forth, only proves that there co-exist in God perfections which, in spite of their concentration in one indivisible monad, offer to the thinking mind a basis for distinguishing separate, nay, even opposite excellencies (= *distinctio virtualis*). For the same reason the divine attributes cannot be negated absolutely of one another, or of the Divine Essence, but must be predicated of each other in the same identical sense. St. Augustine exemplifies this truth as follows: "*Una ergo eademque res dicitur, sive dicatur aeternus Deus, sive immortalis, sive incorruptibilis, sive immutabilis.... Bonitas etiam atque iustitia, numquid inter se in natura Dei, sicut in eius operibus distant, tamquam duae diversae sint qualitates Dei, una bonitas, alia iustitia? Non utique; sed quae iustitia, ipsa bonitas; et quae bonitas, ipsa beatitudo*—It is one and the same thing, therefore, to call God eternal, or immortal, or incorruptible, or unchangeable.... Or do goodness, again, and righteousness, differ from each other in the nature of God, as they differ in His works, as though they were two diverse qualities of God—goodness one, and righteousness another? Certainly not; but that which is righteousness is also itself goodness; and that which is goodness is also itself blessedness."¹⁸ The younger Scotist school has diluted its Formalism so much that it now approaches the virtual distinction theory of the Thomists. It is not worth while to enter into a more detailed discussion of these subtleties.

SECTION 2

¹⁸ S. Aug., *De Trinit.*, XV, 5, n. 7; Haddan's translation, *On the Trinity*, pp. 384, 385, Edinburgh 1873.—Cfr. Peach, *Praelect. Dogmat.*, Vol. 1, 3rd ed., pp. 79 sqq. For a sharp critique of Formalism, v. Gersen, *Contra Vanam Curiositatem*, lect. 1.

THE VIRTUAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN GOD'S ESSENCE AND HIS ATTRIBUTES

1. Having rejected the Realistic, the Nominalistic, and the Scotistic theories with regard to the distinction of God's Essence from His attributes, as well as of these attributes among themselves, there remains but one other, *viz.*: that which asserts the *distinctio virtualis*. This is the theory of St. Thomas Aquinas, which has become *sententia communis*. Inasmuch as the extremes, Realism and Nominalism, both lead to heresy, or at least come dangerously near it, Catholic theology must plainly seek a *via media*. We have seen that Scotistic Formalism cannot claim to be the golden mean. Hence we must adopt the Thomist view, which postulates a virtual distinction between God's Essence and His attributes. What this means will be reasonably clear to the student who has read the first section of this chapter carefully. The subjoined quotation from St. Thomas¹ will elucidate the point even better: "*Quod Deus excedat intellectum nostrum, est ex parte ipsius Dei propter plenitudinem perfectionis eius, et ex parte intellectus nostri, qui deficienter se habet ad eam comprehendendam. Unde patet, quod pluralitas istarum rationum non tantum est ex parte intellectus nostri, sed etiam ex parte ipsius Dei, inquantum sua perfectio superat unamquamque conceptionem nostri intellectus. Et ideo pluralitati istarum rationum respondet aliquid in re, quae Deus est; non quidem pluralitas rei, sed plena perfectio, ex qua contingit, ut omnes istae conceptiones ei aptentur.*"

2. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the Thomistic *distinctio virtualis*, let us remember that it can be conceived in a twofold manner. Either the objective concept of one perfection, which is (really) identical with its object, excludes that of another, which is also identical with the same object (as *e. g.* "sensuality" and "rationality" in man), and then we have a *distinctio virtualis perfecta s. cum praecisione objectiva*. Or the objective concept of one perfection includes the objective concept of the other, either *formaliter* or *radicaliter* (as *e. g.* "sensitive being" and "substance," the latter being contained formally in the former; or "rational soul" and "intellect," of which the latter is contained radically in the former), and then the two are related to each other as an "*includens*" to an "*inclusum*," and we have a *distinctio virtualis imperfecta s. cum praecisione formali*. The *distinctio virtualis perfecta*, inasmuch as it implies real composition in its object (the notional indifference of the one perfection towards the other being an infallible index of their potentiality), cannot possibly be applied to God, Who is purest actuality (*actus purissimus*). Hence there must be posited between His Essence and His attributes a *distinctio virtualis imperfecta*; which means that each separate attribute of God includes within itself formally His Essence, that His Essence includes within itself each separate divine attribute, and, finally, that each separate attribute notionally includes every other attribute.²

¹ *Comment, in Quatuor Libros Sent.*, I, dist. 2, qu. 1, art. 3.

² Suarez tried to demonstrate this mutual inclusion from God's infinity. "*Nam sapientia, v. gr., vel includitur in essentiali conceptu Dei vel non,*" he says (*De Deo*, I, II, 5). "*Si includitur, ergo praedicatur essentialiter de illo, eademque ratio est de quolibet alio attributo vel perfectione absoluta, quae in Deo formaliter existat. Si vero non includitur, ergo illud ens quod essentialiter est Deus, ex vi suas essentiae non est summe perfectum neque infinitum ens, quia non includit in suo esse essentiali omnem perfectionem possibilem.*" For a more detailed treatment of this point, see Tepe, *Instit. Theol.*, Vol. II, pp. 69 sqq., Paris 1895.

READINGS:—*S. Thom., *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 13, art. 4–5, 12.—IDEM, *Contra Gent.*, I, 31–36 (Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures*, pp. 24 sqq., London 1905).—Suarez, *De Div. Sub. eiusque Attrib.*, I, 10–14.—Petavius, *De Deo* I, 7–13.—*Gillius, *De Essentia Dei*, tr. 6, cap. 6 sqq.—*Kleutgen, *Theol. der Vorzeit*, 1. T., 2. Abh., 3. Hpst.—W. Humphrey, “*His Divine Majesty*,” pp. 57 sqq., London 1897.—Wilhelm-Scannell, *Manual of Catholic Theology*, Vol. I, pp. 164 sqq., 2nd ed., London 1899.

CHAPTER III

THE METAPHYSICAL ESSENCE OF GOD

In order to come at the metaphysical essence of God, we must try to find among His many attributes one which fulfils four distinct requirements: 1. It must be the first to be perceived (*primum in cognitione*). 2. It must signify God’s very being, not merely the status or mode of His being. 3. It must present a clear-cut distinction, after the analogy of an ultimate or specific difference, between God and everything that is not God. 4. It must be the taproot or a *priori* source of all the other divine attributes. As the Church has never defined in what the metaphysical essence of God consists, differences of opinion are permissible,—a right of which philosophers and theologians have liberally availed themselves.

SECTION 1

UNTENABLE THEORIES

1. SURVEY OF THE FIELD.—Leaving aside for the moment aseity or self-existence, we find that three theories have been elaborated to solve the problem of defining the Divine Essence.

a) The Nominalists held that the Essence of God was simply “the sum of His perfections” (*cumulus omnium perfectionum*), that is, the sum of all His attributes and perfections, whether known or unknown, quiescent or active, transcendental or predicamental, whether qualities of the intellect or of the will. They excluded only the divine Relations and Hypostases and argued that, inasmuch as there are in God no accidents (συμβεβηκότα), His attributes being strictly identical with His Essence,¹ whatever is divine must *eo ipso* be part of the Divine Essence.

b) The Scotists pitched upon God’s infinity as that one among His attributes from which all others flow. They argued that since no attribute can be a truly divine perfection unless it is stamped as it were with the seal of infinity, infinity must be the one attribute in which all others are contained. By positing a radical instead of a formal infinity, several writers of

¹ V. *supra*, Chapter II.

this school managed to bring their theory into substantial accord with that which makes self-existence (*aseitas*) the fundamental attribute of God.²

c) A considerable number of theologians of the Thomist school assigned intellectuality as the metaphysical Essence of God, some conceiving this attribute as “absolute spirituality” (*esse spiritum*), others as formal intellectual activity (*intellectio subsistens*). It must be said in favor of this view that we can hardly imagine a more serviceable principle of distinction than absolute reason, inasmuch as this attribute neatly marks off the Divine Essence from matter and from created reason, and is at the same time the root from which all other vital attributes logically grow.

2. CRITICISM OF THESE THEORIES.—Nevertheless these theories must all be rejected, either because they do not meet the question squarely, or because they assume as God’s fundamental attribute some property which is not really the basic principle of His Divine Essence, but points to another still more fundamental.

a) The Nominalist solution does not solve the problem at all. The “sum of all divine perfections” merely constitutes God’s *physical* essence. The question to be solved is, Which of the many qualities that make up God’s physical essence is the foundation or root of all the rest? Those writers of the Thomist school who take God’s metaphysical essence to be absolute spirituality, likewise evade the question, because absolute spirituality (including cognition and volition) formally constitute God’s *Nature* rather than His *Essence*. The essence of any thing is prior to its nature, nature being merely another name for essence viewed as the principle of operation.

b) The remaining theories fail to comply with one or other of the four conditions laid down in the introductory paragraph of this Chapter.

α) The Scotistic theory, which regards infinity as God’s fundamental attribute, conforms to several of these conditions, but not to all. For infinity is neither the fundamental attribute of God, nor is it the one which our mind perceives first (*primum in cognitione*). It is not the fundamental attribute, because aseity builds the logical bridge to infinity; and it is not the *primum in cognitione*, because infinity has its source elsewhere, namely, in the notion of aseity, ἀτύτουσία, *actus purus*. True, aseity can be logically deduced from infinity, but only by an *a posteriori* argument, concluding from the consequent to the antecedent, rather than *vice versa*. Now, it is plain that any attribute which must be conceived as the sequela rather than the source of other divine attributes, cannot claim to be the root principle of all others.

β) There remains the theory of those Thomists³ who define the metaphysical Essence of God as the activity or operation of the Divine Intellect (*intellectio subsistens*). It cannot be denied that God differs radically from all created beings by His absolute act of cognition. But He differs from them just as radically by several other absolute attributes, e. g., His eternity, immutability, immensity. Yet none of these can be said to constitute His metaphysical Essence. Hence underlying all these attributes there must manifestly be still another, from which the whole series derive their incommunicability. Besides it is an error to look upon *intellectio subsistens* as the basic attribute of God from which all others spring. For while it may be possible to derive from it *a priori* a whole group of new

² By “*infinitas radicalis*” they understood that fundamental attribute, in virtue of which God must necessarily enjoy all other perfections, real and possible.

³ Gonet, Billuart, Salmanticenses.

properties, such as omniscience, wisdom, etc.; yet there are other necessary attributes of the divine Essence that cannot be derived from *intellectio subsistens*, and which in turn must therefore be conceived as the fruit of a most comprehensive perfection of being, (*viz.*: the *actus purus*), rather than as the fount and origin of all other attributes. The *intelligere subsistens* necessarily presupposes the *esse subsistens* as its ontological and logical principle.⁴

SECTION 2

ASEITY THE FUNDAMENTAL ATTRIBUTE OF GOD

1. THE NOTION OF ASEITY.—Aseity (*aseitas*, from *ens a se*) is that divine attribute in virtue of which God exists by Himself, in Himself, and through Himself. In English it is generally called “self-existence.”¹ Opposed to the *ens a se* as its contrary is the *ens ab alio*, *i. e.*, a being which has the reason for its existence and essence not in itself, but in another, extraneous being. Since the created universe, as a whole and in all its parts, is thus conditioned, we might, if we were allowed to coin a new word, designate as its fundamental quality “abaliety,”—that notion of created being which is most directly contrary to the metaphysical Essence of God the Creator.²

a) In its purely etymological sense, aseity denominates not the divine Essence, but its mode or status, *viz.*: that it has no cause (*ens a se = ens non ab alio*). But we need only to analyze the concept of aseity or self-existence to find that besides this negative it also contains a positive note, in virtue of which aseity expands and develops into the notion of being pure and simple (*esse simpliciter, esse subsistens, ipsum esse*) or pure actuality (*actus purissimus*),—all synonymous terms, denoting the absoluteness of the divine being. Thus aseity becomes ἀΰτουσία pure and simple, *i. e.*, identity of existence and essence. For in Him who does not derive His being from another but possesses it of Himself, existence and essence must coincide.³

Here the enormous difference between Divine Being and created being again becomes manifest. God *is* being, the creature *has* being,—either this or that, such or another. God is pure transcendent being; the creature is limited to the one or other category of being. If we hold them together, they are not only not commensurable, but, strictly speaking, cannot even be compared, inasmuch as the notion of being is predicated of God in an entirely different sense than of His creatures. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) defines: “*Inter creatorem et creaturam non potest*

⁴ Cfr. S. Thom., *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 4, art. 2: “*Deus est ipsum esse per se subsistens, ex quo oportet quod totam perfectionem essendi in se contineat.*” For more detailed information, consult Kleutgen, *De Ipso Deo*, pp. 125 sqq., Ratisbonae 1881.

¹ Cfr. Hunter, *Outlines of Dogmatic Theology*, II, pp. 54–55, London 1894.

² Cfr. Pohle-Preuss, *God the Author of Nature and the Supernatural*, to be soon published as the third volume of this series.

³ Cfr. S. Thom., *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 18, art. 3, ad 2: “*Deus est ipsum suum esse.*”

tanta similitudo notari, quin inter eos maior dissimilitudo sit notanda."⁴ Hence being does not represent a common genus in which God and creatures coincide. The concept of being in its proper sense (*proprie et principaliter*) applies to God alone; to the creatures only improperly and analogically (*improprie et analogice*)—a relation which finds its most pregnant expression in the Biblical designation of the creature as "something which is not" or "non-being" (μη ὄν).⁵

b) In order to gain a deeper understanding of aseity, it is necessary to avoid two serious misconceptions into which even a trained thinker is liable to fall, *viz.*: confounding self-existence with self-realization on the one hand; and, on the other, absolute being with abstract being.

α) It is a mistake to take aseity or αὐτουσία to mean self-realization.⁶ This misconception was probably occasioned by the Scholastic use of the phrase "*causa sui*," as synonymous with "*ens a se*." The phrase was ill chosen. The Schoolmen do not mean that God causes Himself (*causa sui efficiens*), but, on the contrary, they use the term *causa sui* precisely for the purpose of denying that the first cause is in need, or capable, of being caused by some other, ulterior cause, extrinsic or intrinsic (*causa sui formalis*). St. Jerome says: "*Deus ipse sui origo est suaeque causa substantiae*,"⁷ but he speaks metaphorically, as does St. Anselm when he declares: "*Quomodo ergo tandem esse intelligenda est per se et ex se [divina substantial], si nec ipsa se fecit nec ipsa sibi materia extitit nec ipsa se quolibet modo, ut quod non erat esset, adiuvit, nisi forte eo modo intelligendum videtur, quo dicitur, quia lux lucet per seipsam et ex seipsa?*"⁸ The theory here under consideration runs counter to both the law of causality and the principle of contradiction. The law of causality, far from demanding that it be applied to God, halts before the *causa prima incausata*. He Who carries the reason for (not the cause of) His existence within Himself, neither requires an extrinsic cause, nor does he produce Himself; for either the one or the other would presuppose a potentiality towards a reality not yet (logically) existing, which would contradict the notion of aseity.⁹ The notion that God causes Himself is likewise repugnant to the principle of contradiction. For, in order to cause itself a being would have to be conceived as *being* in order to be able to posit itself; that is to say, it would exist before it had caused itself; in other words, it would exist before it came into existence, which is absurd.¹⁰

β) A second error, far worse than the first, is to confuse absolute being (*ens a se*) with abstract being (*ens universale*), to which the philosophers sometimes apply the name of "pure being." According to Hegel "pure being" is that which, as yet absolutely vacuous and undetermined, awaits its realization; it is only when the dialectical process reaches its apex that *nothing* develops

⁴ *Conc. Lateran. IV, cap. "Damnamus."*

⁵ Cfr. Wisdom 11:23; Is. 40:15.

⁶ Günther, Kuhn, Schell.

⁷ *In Eph.*, III, 14.

⁸ St. Anselm, *Monol.*, cap. 6.

⁹ Cfr. Henry of Gent, *Summa*, IIa, art. 21, qu. 5: "*Cum arguitur, quod Deus non habet esse a se, quia [secus] esset causa sui ipsius, dicendum quod verum est, si haberet esse a se principiative [= efficienter]; hoc enim est impossibile, quia nihil est principiativum sui ipsius; formaliter tamen bene est possibile aliquid habere esse a se, ut dictum est. [Habet enim esse ex hoc, quod est forma et actus purus.]*"

¹⁰ Cfr. Glossner, *Dogmatik* I, 64, Ratisbon 1874. Also Gill, *De Essentia atque Unitate Dei*, lib. II, tract. 1, c. 3: "*Deus non est a se causaliter ullo genere causalitatis; nam nihil potest esse sibi causa essendi: omnis quippe causa est prior causato, at idem se ipso prius et posterius esse repugnat.*" For further details, consult Chr. Pesch, 1. c., pp. 64 sqq.; IDEM, *Theologische Zeitfragen*, Freiburg 1900; L. Janssens, O. S. B., *De Deo Uno*, t. I, pp. 229 sqq. Friburgi 1900.

into the plenitude of being. Now, the pure being of God must not be confounded either with Hegel's "pure being" or with the abstract being which forms the subject-matter of ontology. A comparison will bring out the difference between them. Pure being in God, and abstract being as a metaphysical conception, are logically distinct both in comprehension and extension. Absolute Being, though the smallest in extension, has the widest and fullest comprehension. Abstract being has no comprehension at all outside of the nude note of abstract being (*esse*), and for this reason the term is exceedingly wide in extension, as it can be predicated of every sort of possible and real being. The two notions differ also with regard to the manner of their origin. While the concept of abstract being is formed by simple abstraction, that of Divine Being is the result of a syllogistic process. They differ thirdly in their mode of existence. Divine Being is concrete, individual, personal; while abstract being has no formal existence except in the abstracting mind; in the things themselves it exists only fundamentally, and hence it is no real being at all, still less a personality. They differ finally in their properties. True, "simplicity" and "transcendence" are predicated of both, but in an essentially different sense. Abstract being, like a mathematical point, is simple only by virtue of its vacuity and logical incompositeness; while Absolute Being is called simple, because, though possessed of an infinite plenitude of being, it is ontologically indivisible. Again, abstract being is merely a transcendental *concept*, while God is a transcendental *being*, *i. e.*, a substance existing far above all genera, species, and individuals.¹¹

c) To prepare the ground for a scientific division of the divine attributes, to be made later, it will be useful to turn our attention to the twofold aspect presented by aseity in its full signification of *ἀτύτουσία* or *actus purus*. We distinguish in it a static and a dynamic side, each of which can be taken as the source of a number of divine attributes. As *ens a se*, God is not only pure being, but also pure activity; not only profound repose, but also sheer motion. Both these *momenta* mysteriously coincide in the concept of *actus purissimus*, and our mind is led up to them spontaneously by the same logical process by which it ascends to a knowledge of the existence of God from the contemplation of nature. The argument from the contingency of the cosmos and that called *argumentum ex gradibus* point mainly to the absolute *being*, while the argument from motion, that from causality, and that called teleological, accentuate rather the absolute *life* of the First Cause. It is in these two aspects of aseity that we have the underlying foundation for two classes of divine attributes, *viz.*: attributes of being and attributes of life.

2. ASEITY A TRUE ATTRIBUTE OF GOD.—Both Holy Scripture and Tradition teach that aseity is an attribute proper to God, and to God alone.¹²

a) The argument from Sacred Scripture is based upon the revealed name of God, *Yahwe*. Ex. 3:14 sqq.: "*Ego sum qui sum.... Sic dices filiis Israel: Qui est (ὁ ὢν), misit me ad vos.... Dominus יהוה, Deus patrum vestrorum ... misit me ad vos: hoc nomen mihi est in aeternum*—I am who am.... Thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel: He who is, hath sent me to you.... The Lord God of your fathers ... hath sent me to you: This is my name for ever."¹³ Modern exegetes take יהוה as merely expressing God's fidelity in keeping His promises. But this view is contradicted by Jehovah's own interpretation of His name, and runs counter to the whole Jewish and Christian Tradition. Of course, fidelity necessarily follows from self-existence. But God is not called יהוה because He is faithful; He is faithful because He is *ens a se*.¹⁴ Numerous paraphrases of aseity are found in the Apocalypse.

¹¹ Cfr. *Conc. Vatican., Sess. III, De Fide, can. 4*

¹² Cfr. *Conc. Vatican., Sess. III, De Fide, cap. 1.*

¹³ Cfr. Is. 42:8: "*Ego יהוה, hoc est nomen meum.*"

¹⁴ Cfr. Kleutgen, *De Ipso Deo*, p. 120.

Cfr., e. g., 22:13: “*Ego sum α et ω, primus et novissimus, principium et finis* (ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος, ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος)—I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”¹⁵

b) Tradition elucidates and confirms the above-quoted texts from Holy Scripture. Gregory of Nazianzus explains the appellation ὁ ὢν as follows: “*Quia totum esse (ὄλον τὸ εἶναι) in ipso collocandum est, a quo cetera habent, ut sint*—The totality of Being must be embodied in Him from Whom everything else derives its being.” Gregory’s famous description of aseity as “an immense ocean of being”¹⁶ was taken over literally by St. John of Damascus into his treatise *De Fide Orthodoxa*.¹⁷ Hilary gives us a beautiful paraphrase of αὐτουσία, when he says: “*Ipse est, qui quod est non aliunde est, in sese est, secum est, ad se est, suus sibi est.*”¹⁸

3. ASEITY THE FUNDAMENTAL ATTRIBUTE OF GOD.—The more general and more ancient opinion among theologians favors the view that aseity constitutes the metaphysical essence of God. Hence we shall act prudently in adopting this theory, especially since it is well founded in Holy Scripture and Tradition, and can be defended with solid philosophical arguments.

a) Sacred Scripture defines יהוה as ὁ ὢν, and it would seem, therefore, that this definition is entitled to universal acceptance. Now, God Himself (Ex. 3:14) interprets His proper name יהוה as “*Sum qui sum—ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ὢν,*” that is, I am He who is, *i. e.*, I am Being itself.¹⁹ Consequently being, αὐτουσία, self-existence, is the signature of the Divine Essence. This interpretation, based as it is upon the literal meaning of יהוה, explains not only the ineffability of the Tetragrammaton,²⁰ but likewise its absolute incommunicability to creatures, inasmuch as the essential proper name of a person is of its very nature incommunicable. Hence aseity denotes the very essence of the Godhead and differentiates it sharply from every thing that is not divine.²¹ The Old Testament definition of יהוה also proves the statement, made a little further up in our text, that the aseity of God must not be conceived as inert or dead being, but as living, personal activity. For God does not say: Ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ ὄν, but ὁ ὢν = “He Who is,” not “That which is.” The Hebrew text brings out the idea still more vividly. After explaining His Essence and His name by declaring: “*Ego sum qui sum*” (יהוה אֲשֶׁר אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי), He commands Moses to tell the children of Israel, not: “He who is (Sept., ὁ ὢν; Vulg., *qui est*) has sent me to you,” but far more trenchantly: “The ‘I am’ (the יהוה אֲנִי) has sent me to you.”²² This ἅπαξ λεγόμενον has led not a few Scholastics to entertain the false notion that the verbal form used here as a substantive is another divine name quite distinct from יהוה. “It is perfectly proper and

¹⁵ Cfr. Is. 41:4: “*Ego יהוה!, primus et novissimus ego sum*—I the Lord, I am the first and the last.” Detailed Scriptural proof *apud* Franzelin, *De Deo Uno*, thes. 22.

¹⁶ *Or.*, 45: “οἷόν τι πέλαγος οὐσίας ἄπειρον καὶ ἀόριστον.”

¹⁷ *De Fide Orth.*, I, 9.

¹⁸ *Tract. in Ps.*, 2, n. 13. Additional texts quoted by Heinrich, *Dogemat. Theologis*, I, §160.

¹⁹ Cfr. Ex. 3:13 sqq.

²⁰ *V. supra*, pp. 135 sq.

²¹ Cfr. Deut. 32:39 sqq.; Is. 44:6.

²² Ex. 3:14.

quite correct,” observes Oswald,²³ “to designate God’s essence as τὸ ὄν or τὸ ὄντως ὄν; but it is more appropriate to call Him ὁ ὢν, because by this term He is described as a personal and intellectual being; besides, ὁ ὢν (ὦν) gives the best and most complete answer to the question: What is God?”

b) The Fathers, too, treated aseity, or self-existence, as a real and fundamental attribute of the Divine Essence. Contemplating the profundity of the name *Yahweh*, Hilary exclaims: “*Admiratus sum plane tam absolutam de Deo significationem.... Non enim aliud proprium magis Deo quam esse intelligitur.*”²⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, arguing against Eunomius, insists upon ἀτύτουσία as a divinely revealed note of God’s essence (in contradistinction to ἀγεννησία): “If Moses has incorporated in the Law an essential note of true Divinity, it is to know of God that He is Being; as is proved by the effatum: I am who am.”^{24a} St. Jerome succinctly declares: “*Deus solus essentialiae vere nomen tenet ... ego sum qui sum.*”²⁵ Profoundly as is his wont St. Augustine observes: “*Non est ibi nisi est.... Ego sum qui sum. Tu diceris: Ego sum, quis? Caius. Alius, Lucius.... Ego [Deus] sum. Quis? qui sum. Hoc est nomen tuum, hoc est totum quod vocaris.*”²⁶ No one has described the fundamental attribute of God more graphically than St. Bernard: “*Quid est Deus? Non sane occurrit melius quam qui est. Hoc ipse de se voluit respondere: qui est, misit me ad vos. Merito quidem.... Si bonum, si magnum, si beatum, si sapientem vel quidquid tale de Deo dixeris, in hoc verbo instauratur, quod est Est.*”²⁷

c) Philosophy supports the Scriptural and Traditional argument by demonstrating that aseity alone among all of God’s attributes complies with the four conditions enumerated above.²⁸

To begin with, aseity or self-existence, as theodicy shows, is the first of the divine attributes to be perceived by the thinking mind. Secondly, taken in its full comprehension as ἀτύτουσία, aseity reveals to us not only the mode or state of God’s Essence, but that Essence itself. “*Quum esse Dei sit ipsa eius essentia,*” observes Aquinas,²⁹ “*manifestum est quod inter alia nomina hoc [scil.: qui est] maxime proprie nominat Deum*” In the third place, unlike the so-called communicable attributes, aseity differentiates God primarily and essentially from every thing that is not-God, while the other incommunicable attributes are incommunicable to creatures precisely because they are rooted in aseity. Finally, aseity is the fount and origin of all the other divine attributes. St. Thomas deduces all divine perfections from the concept of the *actus purus*.³⁰

4. ATTRIBUTES DERIVED IMMEDIATELY FROM GOD’S ASEITY are all those divine perfections which refer to God’s mode of existence and His knowability.

a) God’s inoriginateness, independence, and necessity, are merely different names for His aseity or self-existence. The first-mentioned perfection (not to be confounded with the

²³ *Dogmat. Theologie*, Vol. I, p.76.

²⁴ *De Trin.*, 1. I, n. 5.

^{24a} *Contr. Eunom.*, I, 8.

²⁵ *Ep. 15 ad Damasum*, n. 4.

²⁶ *In Ps.*, 101, serm. 2.

²⁷ *De Consid.*, V, 6. Cfr. also S. Anselm., *Monol.*, c. 3 sq.; S. Thom., *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 13, art. 11.

²⁸ *Supra*, p. 159.

²⁹ *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 13, art. 11.

³⁰ Cfr. Hontheim, S. J., *Theodicaea*, pp. 283 sqq., Friburgi 1893; Stentrup, *Synopsis de Deo Uno*, pp. 51 sqq., Oeniponte 1895.

innascibilitas of the Father as the first Person of the Blessed Trinity) results from the fact that God, in virtue of His self-existence, has no efficient cause outside Himself (*ens non ab alio*). In this same fact are also rooted His independence (*independentia*) from all extrinsic factors, and His necessity (*necessitas*), which flows from aseity in so far as a Being that exists by virtue of its own essence, exists necessarily (*non potest non esse*).

b) The three attributes of invisibility (*invisibilitas*), incomprehensibility (*incomprehensibilitas*), and ineffability (*ineffabilitas*), which have reference to the knowableness of God, are likewise founded upon his aseity or αὐτουσία. Scheeben says: "Precisely because the notion of essential being penetrates to the very depth of the Godhead, its mode of expression is the most imperfect, and its content, more than that of any other human concept, remains ἄρρητος, *ineffabilis*, unutterable. Hence the holy dread which surrounded the name Jehova among the Jews and kept them from employing it or giving it utterance."³¹ For the same reason the Fathers referred to God not only as the αὐτούσιος and the ὑπερούσιος, but likewise as the ἀνούσιος or essence-less one.

READINGS:—S. Thom., *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 13, art. 11.—IDEM, *Contra Gentiles*, I, 21–24 (Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures*, pp. 16 sqq. London 1905).—Thomassin, *De Deo*, 1. III, cap. 21–24.—Petavius, *De Deo*, 1. III, cap. 6.—D'Aguirre, *Theologia S. Anselmi*, disp. 24.—Kleutgen, *Philosophie der Vorzeit*, Bd. I, Abh. 5, Bd. II, Abh. 9.—IDEM, *Theologie der Vorzeit*, T. 1, Abh. 2, Hpst. 6.—*Gillius, *De Essentia atque Unitate Dei*, Lugdun. 1610.—D. Coghlan, *De Deo Uno et Trino*, pp. 106 sqq., Dublinii 1909.—W. Humphrey, S. J., "His Divine Majesty" pp. 59 sqq., London 1897.

³¹ *Dogmatik*, I, 502.

PART III

THE DIVINE PROPERTIES OR ATTRIBUTES

In our imperfect human way of thinking we are led to conceive the divine properties or attributes as forms enveloping the already constituted essence after the manner of qualities. But our judgment proceeds to correct this inadequate conception by insisting on the absolute identity of God's attributes with His Essence.¹ The Fathers speak of the divine attributes as *proprietates* (ιδιώματα) or *ea circa Deum* (τὰ περὶ Θεόν), as *dignitates* (ἀξίαι, ἀξιώματα), Or *rationes* (νοήματα, ἐπιλογισμοί), or as *virtutes* (ἀρεταί) or *mores* (ἐπιτηδεύματα).

More important than this nomenclature is the question how these attributes are to be divided. The most common classifications are: First, negative attributes (*attributa negativa*, ἀφαιρετικά, ἀποφατικά), and affirmative attributes (*attributa affirmativa*, *s. positiva*, καταφατικά). This division is based on the different modes in which we acquire a knowledge of these attributes, some being conceived by the negative method,² others by the positive method or that of supereminence.³ This classification has its roots deep down in our creatural knowledge of God, and must therefore be considered fundamental. There is a second classification, *viz.*: into incommunicable (*attributa incommunicabilia*) and communicable attributes (*attributa communicabilia*). This coincides materially with the first, inasmuch as the negative qualities of God, expressing as they do a fundamental contrast between Him and His creatures, cannot be communicated to any being outside of God; while in His affirmative perfections (both in the order of nature and of grace), creatures may be allowed to share. Since, however, it is more difficult to draw a hard and fast line between communicability and incommunicability, than between affirmation and negation (even certain negative attributes, as, *e. g.*, unchangeableness, are communicable, in a degree, by grace; the only really and absolutely incommunicable attribute is aseity), we do not consider it advisable to classify the divine attributes according to this principle of division.

A favorite division is that into quiescent (*attributa quiescentia*, ἀνεργητικά) and operative attributes (*attributa operativa*, ἐνεργητικά), according as we conceive God in His being or in His operation (nature). In making this distinction, however, we must never forget that God's Essence is pure actuality and His actuality is pure being.⁴ As this classification brings out the two aspects of aseity already referred to, *viz.*: the static and the dynamic, we consider it better adapted than any other to facilitate a scientific study of the divine attributes. We therefore divide the divine attributes into attributes of being and attributes of operation.

All being may be reduced partly to the five transcendental categories, *viz.*: *ens, unum, verum, bonum, pulchrum*; partly to the ten predicables: substance, quality, quantity, relation, place, time, posture, habilitment, action and passion.⁵ Accordingly we shall divide the divine attributes into transcendental, and categorical or predicamental.

¹ V. *supra*, Part II, Ch. II, § 2,

² V. *supra*, p. 70.

³ V. *supra*, p. 69 sqq.

⁴ V. *supra*, p. 170.

⁵ Cfr. any text-book on Ontology.

CHAPTER I

GOD'S TRANSCENDENTAL ATTRIBUTES OF BEING

SECTION 1

ABSOLUTE PERFECTION AND INFINITY

The term being (*ens*) includes in its signification both existence (*existere*) and essence (*esse, essentia*). We have treated of the existence of God in the first part of this volume. Here we are considering the Divine *Ens* in its essence. God's proper essence (*essentia metaphysica*), as we have seen, consists in aseity (αύτουσία) or self-existence. Therefore there remain to be considered only perfection and infinity, as special attributes flowing from the divine *ens*.

ARTICLE 1

GOD'S PERFECTION

1. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.—“Perfect” etymologically means that which is finished, to which nothing can be added (τέλειον, from τέλος = an end accomplished). In this sense perfection connotes *fieri*, development. More specifically, perfection signifies the accomplished end or state itself (τελειότης), as the possession and enjoyment of goods obtained. It is in this narrower sense that we apply the term to God.¹

But even within these circumscribed limits the concept of perfection admits of degrees. In the first place all being, considered as being, is necessarily perfect. The degree of a thing's being is also the measure of its perfection, while, conversely, not-being furnishes the measure of imperfection.² In a higher sense, however, perfection denotes the sum total of all those excellences which a being ought to have in consideration of its nature and end. The absence of even one of these (essential or integral) excellences constitutes a privation (*privatio*, στέρησις), a concept which coincides with that of evil (*e. g.*, blindness, eternal damnation). In its highest sense, lastly, perfection means the possession and fruition of all the aforementioned excellences, not only in a large, but in an extraordinary measure. Thus supernatural or eternal bliss means, for man, the state of highest consummation or achievement, and Mary, the Mother of God, is the *beau, idéal* of a human being, surpassed only by Christ Himself (in His human nature).

It goes without saying that between divine and created perfection—even taking the latter in its highest sense—there yawns a chasm as immense as that which separates the *ens a se* from the *ens ab alio*. For, while the creature acquires all its perfections through creation and development, God possesses His own of, from and through Himself. He is αύτοτελής, essentially and originally perfect. Again, while creaturely perfection is limited to certain well-defined categories, God, on the other hand—as παντελής, all-perfect—unites within Himself every existing and every conceivable perfection. Finally, while the measure and end of creaturely perfection is outside of and above the creature, God carries the measure and end of His perfections within His own Essence, as a centre from which He communicates excellencies to His creatures; in other words, He is ύπερτελής, more-than-perfect.

¹ Cfr. S. Thom., *Contra Gent.*, I, 28.

² Cfr. S. Thom., *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 5, art. 1: “*In tantum est perfectum unumquodque, in quantum est actu.*”

2. THE DOGMATIC PROOF.—That God is originally perfect, all-perfect, and more-than-perfect, is an article of faith. “*Deum ... intellectu ac voluntate omnique perfectione infinitum*—Infinite in intelligence, in will, and in all perfection.”³

a) We find all three of the characteristic modes of perfection attributed to the Deity in Sacred Scripture. That God is original or archetypal perfection, follows not only from the name אֱלֹהִים which He Himself has revealed as signifying His essence,⁴ but is expressly taught in the Gospel of St. Matthew: “Ἔσεσθε οὖν ὑμεῖς τέλειοι, ὡσπερ ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος τέλειός ἐστιν—Be ye therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect,” which the Fourth Lateran Council interprets as follows: “*Estote perfecti perfectione gratiae, sicut Pater vester coelestis perfectus est perfectione naturae.*”⁵ Note also those passages of Holy Writ which emphasize the divine self-sufficiency, as, e. g., Rom. 11:35: “*Quis prior dedit illi et retribuetur ei?*—Who hath first given to him, and recompense shall be made him?”⁶—Being all-perfect, God is the exemplar and the cause of all created perfections, which He comprises within Himself in their highest purity. Ecclesus. 43:29: “Τὸ πᾶν ἐστὶν αὐτός—The sum of our words is: He is all.” Rom. 11:36: “Ὅτι ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα—For of him, and by him, and in him, are all things.”

Out of His inexhaustible fund of being, therefore, God draws the concepts of created things and bestows upon them all the perfections of their being. Ps. 93:9: “*Qui plantavit aurem non audiet, aut qui finxit oculum non considerat?*—He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? or he that formed the eye, doth he not consider?”⁷ The superabundance of divine perfection, finally, so glowingly described in Ecclesus. 43:29 sqq., is apt to inspire rational creatures with fear: “*Terribilis Dominus et magnus vehementer et mirabilis potentia ipsius*—The Lord is terrible, and exceeding great, and his power is admirable.” Here no univocal comparison between the Creator and the creature is possible, because we have no common standard by which to measure their respective perfections. Cfr. Is. 40:17: “All nations are before him as if they had no being at all, and are counted to him as nothing and vanity.”

b) The Fathers resolved divine perfection into its various *momenta*, and found that it contains all creatural perfections in their most highly sublimated form.

Hence the golden rule formulated by St. Ambrose:⁸ “*Quidquid religiosius sentiri potest, quidquid praestantius ad decorem, quidquid sublimius ad potestatem, hoc intelligas Deo convenire*” St. Bernard has the following beautiful passage:⁹ “*Non quod longe ab unoquoque sit, qui esse omnium est, sine quo omnia nihil. Sane esse omnium dixerim, non quia illa sunt quod ille, sed quia ex ipso et per ipsum et in ipso sunt omnia.*” The philosophical proof for God’s perfection rests partly on aseity as the taproot of all divine perfections, and partly on the arguments for God’s existence. Among these the profound *argumentum ex gradibus perfectionum*, unfortunately too much neglected now-a-days,¹⁰ shows God to be the *ens perfectissimum*. St.

³ *Conc. Vatic., Sess. III, De Fide, cap. 1.*

⁴ Cfr. our remarks on His aseity, *supra*.

⁵ *Conc. Lateran. IV, cap. “Damnamus.”* (Denzinger-Bannwart, *Enchiridion*, n. 432.)

⁶ Cfr. Is. 40:13; Ps. 15:2; Acts 17:25.

⁷ Cfr. Is. 66:9.

⁸ *De Fide*, I, 16.

⁹ *Serm. In Cant.*, 4.

¹⁰ *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 3, art. 3: “Quarta via;” *Contra Gent.* II, 15.

Thomas¹¹ proves this as follows: “*Deus est ipsum esse per se subsistens, ex quo oportet quod totam perfectionem essendi in se contineat.... Secundum hoc enim aliqua perfecta sunt, quod aliquo modo esse habent, unde sequitur quod nullius rei perfectio Deo desit.*”¹²

3. HOW THE CREATED PERFECTIONS ARE CONTAINED IN GOD.—All creaturely perfections must be somehow contained in God, because He is the all-perfect and more-than-perfect Being. But *how* are they contained in the Divine Essence? It is quite plain that finite perfections cannot be attributed to God until they have been put through a refining process.

Since the time of St. Anselm,¹³ theologians have been wont to distinguish two classes of divine perfections—*viz.*: pure or simple, and mixed perfections (*perfectiones simplices—perfectiones mixtae s. secundum quid*). The former in their form and concept exclude all imperfection, so that they contain nothing but “pure” perfection (as *e. g.*, spirituality, wisdom); while the latter are perfections with an admixture of imperfection (as, *e. g.*, matter, the faculty of drawing conclusions). St. Anselm appropriately defines a pure perfection as “*melius ipsum quam non ipsum*” a mixed perfection as “*melius non ipsum quam ipsum*” Thus, measured by the absolute standard, spirit is better than non-spirit or body; while, conversely, corporeity is “not-better” than, *i. e.*, inferior to, spirituality.

a) These considerations furnish the key to the question how both kinds of perfection are contained in the Divine Essence. The pure perfections, inasmuch as they can be notionally intensified to an infinite degree, are contained in God formally; the mixed perfections, on the other hand, are in Him virtually and eminently only.¹⁴

It is easy to see the reason for this. For, as the formal attribution of the pure perfections is founded in the circumstance that they signify nothing but perfection, so the concept of a mixed perfection postulates that it be first put through a process of logical refinement (which takes place by means of negation) before it can be applied to God. *E. g.*, if there were such a thing as infinite contrition, we should not be justified in predicating it *formaliter* of God, because the very concept of contrition implies sin, which is an imperfection.

b) It remains to be determined how one thing may be virtually and eminently contained in another.

God contains all mixed perfections virtually or equivalently (*virtus = valor*), inasmuch as He is their ideal or exemplar (*causa exemplaris*). But He also contains the mixed perfections after the manner of a cause containing its effects, inasmuch as He creates them, or is able to create them, out of nothing (*virtus = potentia activa*). Thus material light is contained in God virtually, because He is both its exemplary and its creative cause. Eminent containment involves three elements: first, the necessity of previous purification by means of negation; second, elevation to a different and higher mode of being; and third, absolute identification of one perfection with all the others. A mixed perfection cannot be formally predicated of God, unless it has been properly refined by negation (*e. g.*, God is incorporeal). But even after it has been so purified, a form cannot exist in God in its creatural mode (*e. g.*, as filling space); but must be elevated to a higher mode of existence (*e. g.*, omnipresence). Since, however, this divine attribute is not to be conceived as an

¹¹ *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 3, art. 2.

¹² Cfr. S. Schiffini, S. J., *Disput. Metaphys, Spec.*, Vol. I, disp. 2, sect. 1, August. Taur. 1888.

¹³ Cfr. *Monol.*, c. 14; *Proslog.*, c. 5.

¹⁴ Hence the theological axiom: “*Perfectiones simplices sunt in Deo formaliter, mixtae autem tantum virtualiter et eminenter.*”

accident, but as a substance, it must in the last analysis be identical not only with God's essence, but with all His other perfections, the pure as well as the mixed.—It is easy to see that there is an intrinsic connexion between the two modes of presence, the virtual and the eminent. They partly complement and partly condition each other. Eminent presence is no doubt the more comprehensive of the two, wherefor some theologians¹⁵ confine themselves to the thesis: "The mixed perfections are contained in God *eminenter*." It is in this sense that we must interpret the following curious proposition taught by Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa: "*Deus est complicatio omnium*" (namely, *non formaliter, sed eminenter*).

c) The proposition that the mixed perfections are in God *virtualiter et eminenter* only, must not, however, be taken to mean that the pure perfections are *not* so contained in Him. In matter of fact the pure perfections no less than the mixed, are virtually and eminently in Him, the only difference being that the former are formally attributable, while the latter are not.

But even this is not true without some limitation. For inasmuch as the *perfectio simplex*, too, is invariably an abstractive and analogical conception derived from created things, it is congenitally affected by a creatural mode involving imperfection. This can be removed only by way of negation or intensification.¹⁶ On the other hand, it would be a serious mistake were we to rely for our knowledge of God solely upon an analysis of the simple or pure perfections, neglecting the *perfectiones mixtae*. The mixed perfections are equally helpful to a true knowledge of God, first, because they are *ektypa* or likenesses, and secondly, because they are effects (*effectus*) of God. As *ektypa* or likenesses they suggest a corresponding archetype (*causa exemplaris*), while as effects they point to an efficient cause. It is in intimate connexion with these truths that the Schoolmen teach, that all creatures bear the stamp of God's likeness; though not, of course, in the same manner or to the same extent. The irrational creatures are as it were God's footprints (*vestigia*), while those endowed with reason are true images of Him.¹⁷

4. A PANTHEISTIC OBJECTION.—Against the doctrine set forth above Pantheists object that "God plus the universe" must obviously be more perfect than "God minus the universe."

If this objection means that God and the universe are two separate and distinct beings (*plura entia*), Pantheism simply reverses itself. If, contrariwise, it means that from an addition of creaturely perfections and divine perfections there results a higher degree of being (*plus entis*), the Pantheists forget that God and the universe cannot be added together, because divine Being belongs to an altogether different order than creatural being. It is only homogeneous things, objects of the same kind, that admit of addition. Now, the concept of being applies to God in its proper sense, to creatures only analogously. Therefore, "God plus the universe" is a Sum that can not be added. Besides, all creatural perfections, both pure and mixed, are in matter of fact already present in God, either *formaliter* or *virtualiter et eminenter*, in a plenitude which is infinite, and with a reality concentrated in the highest degree. Were we to attempt, *e. g.*, to blend the corporeal perfections of the material world with the immanent perfections of God, in order to obtain a third being superior to God Himself, the attempt would not result in a

¹⁵ Among them Lessius and Kleutgen.

¹⁶ V. *supra*, pp. 70.

¹⁷ Cfr. S. *Theol.*, 1a, qu. 93; and Janssens' commentary, *De Deo Uno*, tom. I, p. 250, Friburgi, 1900. On "The Vestiges of God in Creation," see M. Ronayne, S. J., *God Knowable and Known*, Chap. IV, 2nd ed., New York 1902.

higher form of perfection, just as little as if we should try to “improve” human reason by amalgamating it, by some intrinsic process, with what is wrongly called animal intelligence. In either case we should simply deteriorate the grade of perfection. As little as “Dante plus the *Divina Commedia*,” or “Michelangelo plus The Last Judgment,” constitute a higher perfection than either Dante or Michelangelo alone—a work of art obviously derives *all* its merits from the artist—just so little, and even less, can “God plus the universe” be said to constitute a higher degree of being than God alone minus the world of creatures.¹⁸

READINGS:—*Scheeben, *Dogmatik*, Vol. I, § 71 (summarized in Wilhelm-Scannell’s *Manual*, pp. 177–179).—Heinrich, *Dogmat. Theologie*, Vol. I, § 163.—*Kleutgen, *De Ipso Deo*, pp. 163 sqq.—S. Thom., *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 4.—IDEM, *Contra Gentiles*, I, 28, 29 (Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures*, pp. 22 sq.).—Petavius, *De Deo*, VI, 7.—W. Humphrey, “*His Divine Majesty*,” pp. 74 sqq., London 1897.—F. Aveling, *The God of Philosophy*, pp. 101 sqq., London 1906.

ARTICLE 2

GOD’S INFINITY

1. THE NOTION OF INFINITY.—“Finite” we call that which has limits or an end (*finis*, ὄρος); “infinite” (*infinitum*, ἄπειρον) is that which is unlimited or endless.

a) A being can be infinite in one of two ways; either potentially (*infinitum potentiale*) or actually (*infinitum actuale*). The latter is called *infinitum categorematicum*, the former, *infinitum syncategorematicum*. Infinity of the last-mentioned kind is merely the susceptibility of being multiplied or increased indefinitely (*indefinitum*). What is indefinite, is not therefore infinite, but merely, in the phrase of the Schoolmen, “*sine fine finitum*.” That which is actually infinite (*infinitum categorematicum*), on the other hand, is absolutely limitless; it is really infinite in the proper sense of the term. Leaving aside the vagaries of Hegel,¹⁹ we must say that, although the actually infinite (*infinitum categorematicum*) is the only real infinite, the potentially infinite (*infinitum syncategorematicum s. indefinitum*) is not a mere figment, but a real, objective concept. Aristotle and the Schoolmen attributed a true (though potential) infinity to primordial matter (*materia prima*, ὕλη πρώτη), because its determinability is unlimited.²⁰ Similarly they conceived the created intellect as potentially infinite, because of its unlimited capacity for knowledge.²¹ At the same time, however, they held that no created intellect can actually know all things knowable. And even the few things that the human mind does know, it knows not like God, of and in itself, but either by means of infused forms (as the angels), or (as man) by a process of abstraction from material things.

b) We must furthermore draw a sharp line between quantitative infinity (*infinitum quantitate*) and infinity of being (*infinitum perfectione s. essentiâ*). Quantitative infinity belongs to mathematics; infinity of being or perfection, to theology.

¹⁸ Cfr. Suarez, *Metaphys. Disput.*, 28, sect. 3; J. Uhlmann, *Die Persönlichkeit Gottes und ihre modernen Gegner*, pp. 56 sqq., Freiburg 1906.

¹⁹ Cfr. *Enzyklopädie*, pp. 90 sqq.

²⁰ “*Materia prima est potentiâ omnia.*”

²¹ “*Intellectus fit quodammodo omnia.*”

The mathematician reckons with “infinitely large” and “infinitely small” quantities, leaving it to philosophy to determine whether these magnitudes are actually infinite or only potentially so.²² Even if the quantities with which mathematics deals were actually infinite, they would yet retain their character of accidents, and could not, therefore, form a connecting link with God, Who is infinitely perfect. In the domain of the finite we should have at most an *actu infinitum secundum quid*, never an *actu infinitum simpliciter*.

The term infinite in the strict sense always denotes infinity of being and substance, and therefore must, be *objectively* identical with the absolutely perfect, though *formally* there may be drawn between them a threefold distinction: first, because absolute perfection is an affirmative, while infinity is a negative attribute of God; secondly, because absolute perfection is related to infinity in the same manner in which the universal is related to the particular, or the whole to any one of its parts; and thirdly, because absolute perfection emphasizes God’s intrinsic plenitude of being, while infinity rather accentuates the extrinsic magnitude of His being and attributes.

2. THE DOGMA.—The Church has repeatedly defined infinity to be an attribute of God. The first definition of this dogma was uttered by the Second Council of Nicaea (A. D. 787);²³ the last by the Vatican Council.²⁴

a) In order to prove the dogma from Sacred Scripture, we will not repeat the texts already quoted in establishing the attribute of divine perfection,²⁵ but confine ourselves to such passages as bear directly on the infinity of the Divine Substance. Ps. 144:3: “*Magnus Dominus et laudabilis nimis et magnitudinis eius non est finis*—Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised: and of his greatness there is no end.” Inasmuch as there can be no accidents in God (quantity is an accident), “magnitude” in the foregoing passage must refer to the Divine Substance. Nor can the infinity which the Psalmist ascribes to God’s magnitude, be an *infinitum potentiale*, because potentiality in an *ens a se* would involve contradiction. Manifestly the meaning of the passage is that God is actually infinite. There are other texts which ascribe infinity to the one or other of God’s attributes. For instance, Ps. 146:5: “*Magnus Dominus noster et magna virtus eius, et sapientiae eius non est numerus*—Great is our Lord, and great is his power, and of his wisdom there is no number.” All such passages prove the infinity of the divine Essence, which is identical with each divine attribute. The infinity of the divine Essence is furthermore taken for granted in all those Scriptural texts which contrast God as the absolute Being (ὁ ὢν, הַיְהוָה) with His creatures, which are often described as mere shadows of zeroes (אֵין). Also whenever the Bible distinguishes God in an especial manner by superlative predicates.²⁶

b) It is hardly necessary to develop the argument from Tradition. The Fathers of the Church invariably postulate God’s infinity whenever they discuss His incomprehensibility. Gregory of Nyssa expressly excludes from God potential infinity when he says: “He becomes neither larger nor smaller by addition or subtraction, because in the Infinite there can be no such addition as takes place in creatures, when they grow larger.”²⁷ St. Hilary gives a beautiful description of God’s infinity in his commentary on the 144th Psalm: “*Haec Dei prima et praecipua laudatio est, quod*

²² Cfr. Pohle, “Das Problem des Unendlichen,” in the *Katholik*, Mainz, 1880; *Idem*, “Das unendlich Kleine,” in the *Philosoph. Jahrbuch der Görresgesellschaft*, 1888, 1893.

²³ Θεὸς ἀνεπίγραφος.

²⁴ “*Omni perfectione infinitum.*”

²⁵ *Supra*, pp. 182 sq.

²⁶ Cfr. Is. 40:17; Ecclus. 43:32.

²⁷ *Contr. Eunom.*, 1. 12.

nihil in se mediocre, nihil circumscriptum, nihil emensum et magnitudinis suae habeat et laudis... Finem magnificentia eius nescit."²⁸

c) Scholastic theology deduces God's infinity directly from the concept of His self-existence. It is in this sense that St. Bonaventure writes: "*Ipsium esse purissimum non occurrit nisi in plena fuga τὸ ἔν non esse*"²⁹ St. Thomas Aquinas argues trenchantly in this fashion: "*Secundum modum, quo res habet esse, est suus modus in nobilitate.... Igitur si aliquid est, cui competit tota virtus essendi, ei nulla nobilitas deesse potest, quae alicui rei conveniat. Deus autem sicut habet esse totaliter, ita ab eo totaliter absistit τὸ non esse.*"³⁰ By the *a posteriori* method the infinite perfection of the divine Essence can be deduced from the concept of God as the cause of all being.³¹

READINGS:—S. Thom., *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 7.—*Contra Gent.*, I, 43 (Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures*, pp. 30 sqq.).—Suarez, *De Deo*, II, 1.—Aguirre, *Theol. S. Anselm.*, disp. 32.—*Gutberlet, *Das Unendliche*, pp. 130 sqq., Mainz 1878.—Lépicier, *De Deo Uno*, t. I, pp. 263 sqq., Paris 1902.—Boedder, S. J., *Natural Theology*, pp. 100 sqq.—Wilhelm-Scannell, *Manual of Catholic Theology*, Vol. I, pp. 185.

SECTION 2

GOD'S UNITY, SIMPLICITY, AND UNICITY (OR UNIQUENESS)

The essence of oneness (*unum*, τὸ ἔν) lies in this that it is intrinsically undivided. Hence the Scholastic definition of *unum* as "*id quod est indivisum in se.*" A being which is not merely undivided, but indivisible, possesses simplicity (*unitas indivisibilitatis s. simplicitas*). Unicity (or uniqueness) differs from both unity and simplicity in that it superadds to the concept *one (unum)* the further note of "exclusion of all other beings from the possession of some attribute or quality." Hence uniqueness is no more a transcendental attribute of being, than mathematical unity, which is the principle of numbers or quantity.

As a pure perfection, metaphysical or transcendental unity, raised to infinite power, must be predicable of God both as *indivisio* and *indivisibilitas*. Thus understood, the uniqueness of God is plainly a postulate of reason. While created units exist as individuals, the uncreated Being must of necessity be sole and unique. Hence from the concept of *unum* there are deducible three additional attributes of God, *viz.*: His intrinsic unity (*unitas Dei*); His simplicity (*simplicitas*); and His uniqueness (*unicitas*).

ARTICLE 1

GOD'S INTRINSIC UNITY

1. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.—The concept of metaphysical (transcendental) unity adds the note of indivision to the general notion of being. Whatever is undivided in itself is one.

²⁸ *Tract. in Ps.* 144, n. 66. For other Patristic testimonies, cfr. Aguirre, *Theol. S. Anselmi*, disp. 32.

²⁹ *Itin. Mentis*, c. 5.

³⁰ *Contr. Gent.*, I, 28. Cfr. also Toletus, *Comment. in S. Th.*, I, qu. 7

³¹ Cfr. *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 4, art. 2. The philosophical arguments are developed systematically by Gutberlet, *Das Unendliche*, Mainz 1878.

Consequently, the essence of unity consists in the negation of division. Nevertheless, unity is a *positive* predicate of being; first, because *ens* remains the fundamental concept; and secondly, because to deny that there is division is at bottom only a negation of a negation, and therefore an affirmation or position.

a) There is a distinction to be made between things that are undivided. Some are incapable of being divided (indivisible), and therefore simple, while others are composite. Hence, beside *unitas indivisionis*, we must distinguish two other kinds of unity, *viz.*: unity of indivisibility (simplicity) and unity of composition (*unitas compositionis*). The latter may be *unitas per se* (e. g., a man) or *unitas per accidens* (e. g., a house). It follows that unity must be co-extensive with being: “*Ens et unum convertuntur.*” For every being is either simple or composite. If simple, it is indivisible and therefore surely *indivisum in se*; if composite, it has no being so long as its parts are not united into one, receiving its indivision, *i. e.*, its unity, at the moment when composition sets in.¹

b) Over against this metaphysical unity we have to distinguish sharply between two cognate concepts that do not represent transcendental determinations of being, *viz.*: mathematical unity and unicity. Mathematical unity (one), as the “principle of numbers,” has its place in the category of (discreet) quantity, and therefore is not a general determination of being as such. Unicity, on its part, connoting as it does “the exclusion of others from the possession of some perfection,” also belongs to the class of determined beings, although, of course, in their quality of beings, both mathematical unity and unicity embody the notion of metaphysical or transcendental unity.

c) The opposite of one (*unum*) is many (*multa*). Over against simple unity as mere *indivisio*, we have multiplicity as division into parts, unities, or monads. But the contrary of indivisibility or simplicity is not multiplicity (*multiplex*)—God, though absolutely one, is threefold in person—but composition (*compositum*). Inasmuch as both division and composition involve imperfection (στέρησις), they are contrasted with unity in a privative manner (as “seeing,” and “blind”). Mathematical unity is related to multiplicity as a part is related to its whole, inasmuch as “one” is both the first in the series of numbers, and likewise one of that series; and this opposition must be conceived as a relative one (e. g., “father” and “son”). And as, finally, the notion of unicity (*unicum*) directly excludes every species of multiplicity within the same genus, the two concepts are related to each other as contradictories (as “yes” and “no”).

From God every species of multiplicity, as opposed to unity, must be rigorously excluded, so far as His divine nature, substance, or essence is concerned; though in respect of personality, there is a real Trinity. The Divine Essence more particularly excludes every kind of intrinsic division, every species of composition, all multiplicity of like beings. On the other hand, it necessarily includes intrinsic unity, absolute simplicity, and unicity. We shall devote separate chapters to the two last-mentioned attributes. Here we have to consider God’s intrinsic unity,—an attribute which, it is hardly necessary to remark, is virtually implied in His simplicity.

2. THE DOGMA OF GOD’S INTRINSIC UNITY.—In view of the fact that the subjoined propositions merely paraphrase dogmatic definitions of the Church (aseity, simplicity, etc.) they must be received as substantially *de fide*.

a) If we consider God’s unity in connection with His self-existence, it is plain that He is *unus a se*. Hence He must be conceived as the primarily One,² or, in the language of the Fathers, as unity itself (*ipsa unitas*, ἡ μονάς, ἐνάς). Of course, this unity is not, like abstract being, a vacuous unity devoid of content. It is rather “the smallest kernel of being that can possibly be conceived, and smaller than which nothing can be conceived”; and, on the other hand, because of its plenitude of

¹ Cfr. *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 11, art. 1.

² We adapt this English term from Wilhelm-Scannell (*Manual*, Vol. I, p. 203).

being it is also “the largest being that can possibly be conceived, and larger than which nothing can be conceived.”³ The description which St. Bernard gives of the divine primordial *monas*, may be cited here as a gem of both theological and rhetorical exposition: “*Est qui est, non quae est.... Purus, simplex, integer, perfectus, ... non habens quod ad numerum dividat, non quae colligat ad unum. Unum quippe est, sed non unitum: non partibus constat ut corpus, non affectibus distat ut anima.... Tam simplex est Deus quam unus est. Est autem unus et quomodo aliud nihil, si dici possit, unissimus est.... Quid plus? Unus est etiam sibi: idem est semper et uno modo. Non sic unus est sol, non sic una luna: clamat uterque—ille motibus, illa et defectibus suis. Deus autem non modo unus sibi, et in se unus est; nihil in se nisi se habet: non ex tempore alterationem habet, non in substantia alteritatem.... Compara huic uni omne quod unum dici potest, et unum non erit.*”⁴

b) Inasmuch as God is one in an infinitely higher sense than all created entities, He may be said to be Super-Unity, with which created unities are absolutely incomparable. Concentrated in the very smallest focus, as the minutest possible unity, the super-fulness of His infinitely great and various perfections coalesces into a “super-one *monas*, which in its simplicity is the most narrowly contracted and therefore the richest and also the purest being.”⁵ From this concept of super-unity, St. Thomas Aquinas⁶ deduces the proposition that God is not only *unum*, but *maxime unum*. That is *maxime unum*, he says, which has the greatest fulness of being and the largest measure of undividedness. Now, God as the *actus purus* is very being, and as the absolutely simple He is that being which is most undivided in itself; hence He is *maxime unum, i. e.*, one in a supreme and unique sense.⁷

READINGS:—Kleutgen, *De Ipso Deo*, pp. 177 sqq.—Scheeben, *Dogmatik*, Vol. I, § 82.—Picus a Mirandola, *De Ente et Uno*.—Thomassin, *De Deo*, II, 1 sq.—Jos. Görres in Sepp’s *Leben Jesu*, Vol. I (Preface, pp. 18 sqq.), 2nd ed., Ratisbon 1853.—Boedder, *Natural Theology*, pp. 85 sqq.—J. T. Driscoll, *Christian Philosophy: God*, pp. 209 sqq., 2nd ed., New York 1904.

ARTICLE 2

GOD’S ABSOLUTE SIMPLICITY

1. STATE OF THE QUESTION.—In treating of the relation of God’s Essence to His attributes,⁸ we drew a virtual distinction between them, basing it on the simplicity of the Divine Nature. This we shall now endeavor to explain more exactly. Since a contrary opposition lies not between the simple and the multiplex, but between the simple and the composite,⁹ we can define simplicity as “the absence of composition.”¹⁰

a) Now, composition is twofold, physical and metaphysical, according as a being contains within itself parts that are really distinct, or parts that are merely notionally or metaphysically distinct. Physically composite beings are those in which there is substantial

³ J. v. Görres, Preface to Sepp’s *Leben Jesu*, Ratisbon 1853.

⁴ *De Consid.*, V, 7.

⁵ Görres, *l. c.*

⁶ *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 11, art. 4.

⁷ For Scriptural proofs, consult Gregor. de Valentia, *Comment. in 1 P.*, qu. 11, art. 4. Kleutgen shows that the unutterable super-unity of God is not affected by the dogma of the Trinity (*De Deo Ipso*, p. 185).

⁸ *Supra*, pp. 144 sqq.

⁹ *V. supra*, Art. 1, No. 1.

¹⁰ “*Simplicitas est carentia compositionis.*”

composition (*e. g.*, of matter and form, body and soul), and also those in which there is a composition of accidents (*e. g.*, substance and accident). Metaphysical compounds are those whose parts (*e. g.*, genus and specific difference), though really identical, are nevertheless represented by objectively distinct concepts. Every compound consists of parts. "Part" signifies "an incomplete being, requiring to be complemented by another." It follows from what we have so far explained, that the parts which enter into any compound mutually complement and perfect one another, giving completeness to the compound and in their turn receiving completion from the whole.

b) While this conclusion is evidently true of physical compounds, the complementary function of metaphysical parts is not quite so clear, for the reason that in God virtually distinct perfections can easily be mistaken for metaphysical parts. Yet the dogma of the absolute simplicity of God forbids the assumption that there is in the divine Essence any sort of composition, even though it be a mere composition of logically distinct parts. The essential difference between metaphysical and virtual composition lies in this, that the latter is founded on a distinction purely subjective, while the former is based upon truly objective differences. The metaphysical parts of any creature, even though it be the most indivisible of all creatures, an angel, bear the same objective relation to each other which potentiality (*potentia*) bears to actuality (*actus*). Hence, where there is objective composition in a being, this is certain proof that such being is contingent. Moreover, in the creature the determinable element (*e. g.*, *animal*) appears to stand in need of being determined by another (*e. g.*, *rationalis*); while at the same time both these elements are mutually indifferent to such a degree that either can be realized without the other (*e. g.*, brute, angel). In God, on the other hand, there is neither a determinable nor a determining element. He is pure act, and His perfections are anything but mutually indifferent. None of them can exist apart from the others.

2. THE DOGMA OF GOD'S ABSOLUTE SIMPLICITY.—The Fourth Lateran Council (A. D. 1215) defined the Blessed Trinity as "One absolutely simple essence, substance, or nature—*una essentia, substantia, seu natura simplex omnino*."¹¹ The Vatican Council as "one ... absolutely simple and immutable spiritual substance—*simplex omnino et incommutabilis substantia spiritualis*."¹²

a) The Bible teaches God's absolute simplicity (a simplicity which does not even admit of metaphysical composition) in all those passages where it speaks of God's attributes substantively, that is to say, where it identifies them *really* with the Divine Essence. Thus God not only "hath life in himself"¹³. but He "*is* life itself,"¹⁴ and, therefore, is the only one who hath immortality.¹⁵ As God possesses within Himself "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,"¹⁶ so He is wisdom itself,¹⁷ and, therefore, "alone wise."¹⁸ He is a God of charity, because He has charity; but it is still more correct to say that He "*is* charity

¹¹ *Conc. Lateran. IV, cap. "Firmiter."*

¹² *Conc. Vatican., Sess. III, De Fide, cap. 1.*

¹³ John, 5:26.

¹⁴ John 1:4; 14:6; 1 John 1:2.

¹⁵ 1 Tim. 5:16.

¹⁶ Col. 2:3.

¹⁷ Prov. 1:20; Wisdom 7:21; 1 Cor. 1:24.

¹⁸ Rom. 16:7.

itself,"¹⁹ and, in so far, "alone good."²⁰ Although He is "full of truth,"²¹ He is more properly "the truth."²² In a word, according to the teaching of Sacred Scripture, God is purest actuality without any qualification. His attributes are identical with His substance. This is merely another way of saying that God is pure actuality without any admixture of potentiality, and that there is in Him no sort of composition, not even of the kind called metaphysical.²³

b) We proceed to formulate the argument from Tradition.

α) That the simplicity of the Divine Essence is *real*, can easily be shown to have been the belief of the Christian Church through all the centuries of her existence. Origen mentions it among the earliest dogmas.²⁴ Irenæus asserts against the Gnostic teaching of emanation that "*Deus simplex et non compositus, totus έννοια et totus νοῦς et totus λόγος.*"²⁵ Cyril of Alexandria says this truth is testified to by the whole human race.²⁶ The opposing error is branded by the Fathers in terms so harsh that they must plainly have meant to strike at a heresy: "*absurdum et nefarium*" (Maximus), "*summa impietas*" (John of Damascus), "*blasphemia*" (Athanasius). The Fathers repeatedly employed this dogma as a weapon against the Arians, who, whatever errors they may have taught with regard to the relation existing between God the Father and the Son, never denied the divine simplicity.²⁷

β) The simplicity of God as taught by the Fathers is to be taken not only as a real, but also as a necessary quality, because of the absolute identity between God's Essence and existence, His attributes and Essence, and between His separate attributes. "Not only as seeing partially, and partially as not seeing, but in His whole substance He is all eye and all hearing and all spirit (ὄλος νοῦς)," says St. Cyril of Jerusalem.²⁸ Hence the Augustinian axiom:^{28a} "*Deus quod habet, hoc est,*" and its Patristic conversion: "*Creatura non est, sed habet sapientiam, etc.*" In the words of St. Gregory the Great: "*Sapientia Dei est et sapit, nec habet aliud esse, aliud sapere. Servi autem sapientiae [i. e., homines], quum habent vitam, aliud sunt et aliud habent, quippe quibus non est hoc ipsum esse quod vivere.*"²⁹ The technical phrase of the Schoolmen, which is so familiar to us, viz.: that God is pure act without any potentiality, dates back to the time of St. Maximus the Confessor, who wrote: "God exists actually, not potentially (ένεργεία έστιν, ού δυνάμει), as if He were originally not wisdom (άφροσύνη) and then in reality became reason; therefore He is only pure reason (νοῦς μόνον καθαρός), possessing cognition not as something additional, but He

¹⁹ 1 John 4:8.

²⁰ Math. 19:17; Luke 18:19.

²¹ John 1:14.

²² ή αλήθεια. John 14:6; 1 John 5:6.

²³ Cfr. 1 John 1:5: "*Quoniam Deus lux [=actus] est, et tenebrae [=potentia] in eo non sunt ullae—* God is light [actuality], and in Him there is no darkness [potentiality]."

²⁴ *De princ.*, I, 1, 6.

²⁵ *Adv. Haer.*, II, 13.

²⁶ *Thesaur.*, 31.

²⁷ Cfr. Athanasius, *De Synod.* 34: "*Dixistis ex Deo esse filium, ergo iam ex substantia Patris (έκ τής ούσίας πατρός) esse dixistis: άπλή γάρ έστιν ούσία, έν ή ούκ έστι ποιότης.*"

²⁸ *Catech.*, VI.

^{28a} *De Civit. Dei*, XI, 10.

²⁹ Gregor. M., *Moral.*, II, 27.

thinks only through Himself (παρ' ἑαυτοῦ νοεῖ)."³⁰ Petavius has collected a large number of additional passages from Patristic literature bearing on this subject.³¹

c) The philosophical explanation of the dogma must proceed on the assumption that God's perfect simplicity does not consist merely in His indivisibility (*i. e.*, the absence of parts)—for else the “monads” of Leibnitz, the “Realen” of Herbart, the “atoms” of the chemists, and the “points” of the mathematicians would *eo ipso* be endowed with supreme perfection—but primarily in the simultaneous plenitude of God's positive perfections of being. From this point of view the argument by which we prove God's simplicity from His aseity or self-existence is a most cogent one. St. Thomas³² luminously formulates it as follows: “*In omni composito oportet esse potentiam et actum, quod in Deo non est, quia vel una partium est actus respectu alterius, vel saltem omnes partes sunt sicut in potentia respectu totius.*” An equally stringent argument is that based upon the absolute causality of God:³³ “*Omne compositum causam habet; quae enim secundum se diversa sunt, non conveniunt in aliquod unum, nisi per aliquam causam adunantem ipsa. Deus autem non habet causam, cum sit prima causa efficiens.*”³⁴

3. DOGMATIC CONCLUSIONS.—In virtue of His simplicity (which we have proved) there must be excluded from God all manner of composition, and all parts, both physical and metaphysical. We begin with the cruder forms of composition, gradually ascending to the higher ones.

Thesis I: God is not composed of matter and form (ex materia et forma)

Proof. Matter (ὑλη πρώτη) is mere potentiality (δύναμις); but God is pure actuality (ἐνέργεια, ἐντελέχεια), without a trace of potentiality. In the words of St. Thomas: “*Deus est actus purus, non habens aliquid de potentialitate. Unde impossibile est quod Deus sit compositus ex materia et forma.*”³⁵ Therefore St. Bernard says: “*Ipse sibi forma, ipse sibi essentia est. Non est formatus Deus, forma est. Non est compositus Deus, merum simplex est. Tam simplex Deus, quam unus est.*”³⁶ Materialism alone believes in a material God.

Thesis II: God is not composed of substance and accidents (ex substantia et accidentibus)

Proof. It is the function of an accident to perfect the substance in which it inheres, by giving it something which it does not possess of itself. Substance and accident are consequently related to each other in the same manner as the potential is related to its actuation. As ὁ ὢν, God is incapable of being perfected. In other words, while the created substance possesses and supports its properties, which in turn are possessed and supported by their substance (*ratio habentis et habiti*), God is what He *has*. Hence there can be no accidents in Him.³⁷

³⁰ *Comment, in Dionys. De Div. Nom.*, c. 5.

³¹ Petav., *De Deo*, II, sq.; cfr. also Thomassin, *De Deo*, IV, 4.

³² *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 3, art 7.

³³ *S. Thom.*, *l. c.*

³⁴ Other philosophical arguments in St. Anselm's *Monol.*, c. 16., 17. Cfr. also Sokiffini, *Metaph. Special.*, Vol. II, disp. 2, sect. 2.

³⁵ *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 3, art. 2.

³⁶ *De Consid.*, V, 7.

³⁷ Cfr. St August., *De Trinit.*, V, I.

Thesis III: There is in God no composition of faculty and act (ex facultate et actu)

Proof. If God were not immutable actuality from everlasting, there would have taken place, or there would still be taking place within His Essence a transition from potentiality to actuality (*a potentia ad actum*), and the resulting act would inhere in the Divine Substance after the manner of an accident. This is repugnant to God's pure actuality and the absence of accidents in His Essence. Consequently, in the words of St. Thomas, "*Deus est sua operatio et actio.*"³⁸

Thesis IV: There is in God no composition of really distinct activities (ex actu et actu)

Proof. If knowing and willing and transient operation in God were really distinct activities, there would exist in the Divine Essence three acts, none of which would be identical with either of the others. In other words, the Godhead would consist of a *real trinity of acts*, culminating in some sort of "organic unity," as Günther taught. To hold this would be to deny the identity of God's Essence with His attributes, and also His aseity, His absolute perfection, and His infinity. It follows that the divine Nature must exercise its activity in one *simple* act. There can be no reasonable objection to this thesis so far as it applies to God's necessary operation *ad intra* (cognition, volition). It is only when it is applied to God's free operation *ad extra* (e. g., creation, sanctification) that difficulties arise. Yet, when we consider the question carefully, we find that creation and sanctification do not add to the perfection of God, but merely to that of the creature. It is not the divine operation as such that undergoes an intrinsic change, but solely the product of this operation. Hence God's free operation *ad extra* furnishes no objective reason why His operation and nature should be split up and His simplicity endangered.³⁹

Thesis V: There is in God no composition of subject and essence, or of nature and person (ex subjecto et essentia; ex natura et hypostasi)

Proof. According to the teaching of Aristotle,⁴⁰ it is only in material things that individual determination lies outside of specific determination, so that the production of an individual requires a principle of individuation—the ὕλη πρώτη or *materia signata*. Of the "pure forms" (angels) St. Thomas asserts⁴¹ that their specific coincides with their individual determination, so that every individual *eo ipso* constitutes a separate species. Regardless of what one may think of this theory (which is not entirely unobjectionable from the view-point of philosophy) it is certain that in God individuality (in the sense of *singularitas*) must coincide absolutely with essence. To assume composition in the Deity, even if it were a merely metaphysical composition of subject and essence, would be to attribute to the Divine Essence potentiality, and consequently to deny its aseity. Therefore Eugene III, at Rheims, in 1148, laid down against Gilbert de la Porrée's heretical proposition, "*Divinitate Deus est, sed divinitas non est Deus,*"⁴² the dogmatic declaration:

³⁸ *Contr. Gent.*, II, 10. For Patristic testimonies, see Petavius, *De Deo*, V, 10–11.

³⁹ For a more detailed treatment of this subject, see Suarez, *Metaph.*, disp. 30, sect. 9; cfr. also *supra*, Chapter II, § 4.

⁴⁰ *De Anima*, III, 4.

⁴¹ *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 4, art. 3.

⁴² See St. Bernard, *Serm. in Cant.*, 80, n. 6.

“Ne aliqua ratio in theologia inter naturam et personam divideret, neve Deus divina essentia diceretur, ex sensu ablativi tantum, sed etiam nominativi.” Whence it is plain that the Divine Essence absolutely excludes a composition of nature and hypostasis. We are therefore bound to profess, not only *“Pater est Deus,”* but likewise, *“Pater est divinitas,”* and conversely.⁴³

But how does the mystery of the Blessed Trinity affect the absolute simplicity of the Divine Essence? Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, though really distinct as Persons, do not subsist in three different natures (Tritheism), but in one and the same divine nature. *“Quaelibet trium personarum est illa [summa] res, vid. substantia, essentia s. natura divina.”*⁴⁴ We conceive this threefold subsistence of the one *“summa res”* by drawing a virtual distinction between nature and person,—a distinction which does not imply objective composition.⁴⁵ Hence the theological axiom: *“In divinis omnia sunt unum, ubi non obviat relationis oppositio.”*⁴⁶

Thesis VI: There is in God no composition of genus and specific difference (ex genere et differentia)

Proof. A genus (*e. g., animal*) is something abstract, capable of being determined, and therefore potential. The specific difference (*e. g., rationale*) lies outside the genus and determines it more nearly, though it does not posit it *ex vi notionis*. Now, in God there can be neither a *determinatum* nor a *determinans*, because He is *actus purus*; and therefore each separate divine perfection logically postulates every other divine perfection, because all His perfections are identical among themselves and with His essence and existence. *“Ex genere enim habetur quid est res, non autem rem esse; nam per differentias specificas constituitur res in proprio esse. Sed hoc, quod Deus est, est ipsum esse. Impossibile est ergo, quod sit genus.”*⁴⁷ As a thing is defined by giving the class (or proximate genus) to which it belongs, and the characteristic (or specific) quality which differentiates it from the other members of the same genus,⁴⁸ it is evident that, strictly speaking, God cannot be defined. Hence the proposition *“Deus est ens a se,”* while absolutely correct so far as it goes, is no true definition, but merely an analogous substitute for a definition. The undefinable Divine Being has its place above and beyond all genera and categories, because it cannot be univocally subsumed under any common genus with created beings.

Thesis VII: There is in God no composition of essence and existence (ex essentia et existentia)

Proof. The Divine Essence, which exists with metaphysical necessity, cannot be conceived as non-existing. The notion of a merely possible God, or of a God real indeed

⁴³ Cfr. *Conc. Lateran. IV, cap. “Damnamus.”*

⁴⁴ *Conc. Lateran. IV, l. c.*

⁴⁵ *V. supra*, pp. 156 sqq.

⁴⁶ *Decretum Eugenii IV pro Jacobitis*. For a fuller explanation we must refer the reader to the dogmatic treatise on the Blessed Trinity.

⁴⁷ Cfr. S. Thom., *Comp. Theol.*, c. 13.

⁴⁸ Cfr. Clarke, *Logic*, p. 205.

but objectively composed of essence and existence, involves a contradiction.⁴⁹ For the same reason the Godhead does not even admit of a virtual distinction between essence and existence. The distinction between them is purely logical (*distinctio rationis ratiocinantis seu sine fundamento in re*).

READINGS:—Scheeben, *Dogmatik*, Vol. I, § 72 (summarized in Wilhelm-Scannell's *Manual*, Vol. I, pp. 182 sqq.).—Hurter, *Compendium Theol. Dogmat.*, t. II, thes. 82.—Franzelin, *De Deo Uno*, thes. 26 sq.—Petavius, *De Deo*, II, 1–7.—*St. Thom., *Contra Gent.*, I, 16–27 (Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures*, pp. 14 sqq.).—Lépicier, *De Deo Uno*, t. I, pp. 149 sqq., Parisiis 1902.—Boedder, *Natural Theology*, pp. 92 sqq.—See also the Readings on p. 158.

ARTICLE 3

GOD'S UNICITY, OR MONOTHEISM AND ITS ANTITHESES: POLYTHEISM AND DUALISM

1. MONOTHEISM AS A DOGMA.—Standing as it does at the head of all our creeds,⁵⁰ the belief in God's unicity (μοναρχία) forms one of the fundamental verities of the Christian faith. In matter of fact Monotheism is the only possible form of Theism. While the Fourth Council of the Lateran professes, in accord with all Christendom, "that there is but one true God,"⁵¹ the Vatican Council formally condemns Atheism, Polytheism, and Dualism, when it defines, "*Si quis unum verum Deum, visibilium et invisibilium creatorem et Dominum negaverit, anathema sit*—If any one shall deny the one true God, Creator and Lord of things visible and invisible; let him be anathema."⁵² We are bound to believe not only that there *is* but one God, but also that there *can* be no more than one God.

a) Monotheism was the principal, nay, strictly speaking, the only express dogma of the Jewish people under the Old Law, and it had the same fundamental importance for them that the baptismal formula has for us Christians. Organically connected with this fundamental dogma was the basic law of the love of God. The Israelites were to build their world-view theoretically on belief in, and practically on the love of, the one God. Both precepts appear to be dogmatically defined in the famous אֱלֹהֵינוּ: "*Audi Israel, Dominus Deus noster Dominus unus est; diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo.*"⁵³ The connection between these two commandments is a causal one: "*Because God is one, therefore shalt thou love Him with all thy heart.*" Monotheism runs like a golden strand through all the pages of the Old Testament and constitutes its specific mark of distinction, so much so that the Rationalist hypothesis that יהוה is the national God of the Jews, might appear debatable, did not Holy Scripture itself emphasize the fact that God's numerical unity must be conceived as absolute unicity (μοναρχία), subject to no limitations, either national or theocratic. Is. 44:6: "*Ego primus et ego novissimus et [propterea] absque me*

⁴⁹ Cfr. S. Thom., *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 3, art 4. "*Sicut illud quod habet ignem et non est ignis, est ignitum per participationem, ita illud quod habet esse et non est esse, est ens per participationem et non per essentiam. Deus autem est sua essentia. Si igitur non sit suum esse [=existere], erit ens per participationem et non per essentiam. Non ergo erit primum ens.*"

⁵⁰ Cfr. *Nicaen.*: "*Credo in unum Deum—πιστεύω εἰς ἕνα Θεόν.*"

⁵¹ *Conc. Lateran*, IV (A. D. 1215), *cap. "Firmiter"*: "*Quod unus solus est verus Deus.*"

⁵² *Conc. Vatican.*, *Sess. III, De Fide, can. 1.*

⁵³ Deut. 6:4.

non est Deus—I am the first and I am the last, and [therefore] there is no God besides me.”⁵⁴

The distinctive fundamental dogma of Christianity in the New Testament is the Trinity, while the basic law of love endures in a higher and transfigured form. But so far from being obscured or impaired by the dogma of the Trinity, Monotheism is confirmed and deepened thereby. The Athanasian Creed insists that the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity is impossible except on a Monotheistic basis. The Mosaic $\epsilon\kappa\theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ is not abrogated by Christianity; on the contrary, it has become the foundation stone of the Christian dispensation. Mark 12:29: “*Jesus autem respondit ei [scribae], quia primum omnium mandatum* (πρώτη πάντων ἐντολή) *est: Audi Israel, Dominus Deus tuus Deus unus est. Diliges etc.*—And Jesus answered him [one of the scribes]: The first commandment of all is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God,” etc. The real distinction between the three divine Persons does not destroy but postulates unity of divine Nature. Cfr. John 17:3: “*Haec est autem vita aeterna, ut cognoscant te solum verum Deum* (σε τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸν Θεόν) *et quem misisti Iesum Christum*—Now this is eternal life: that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

Among the Apostles St. Paul is pre-eminently the protagonist of strict Monotheism. The Lystrians in Lycaonia, who offered to sacrifice bulls to him and to his companion Barnabas, he instructs impressively concerning the one true God.⁵⁵ In Athens he preaches the “one unknown God” before the assembled Areopagus.⁵⁶ He proclaims Monotheism as a universal religion which transcends all national and local bounds. Rom. 3:23: “Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles (ἔθνῶν)? Yes, of the Gentiles also.” He forbids, finally, the eating of meat that had been sacrificed to idols, saying: “We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no God but one.”⁵⁷

b) In constructing the argument from Tradition, we note in the first place the apodictic form in which the Fathers teach Monotheism. Following the lead of Scripture, they deduce the intrinsic contradiction involved in Polytheism, and the absolute necessity of there being but one God, from various middle terms, especially that of aseity, and also that of infinite perfection.

Thus St. Irenæus⁵⁸ argues: “*Si extra illum est aliquid, iam non omnium est πλήρωμα neque continet omnia; deerit enim πληρώματι hoc, quod extra eum [esse] dicent*—But if there is anything beyond Him, He is not then the Pleroma of all, nor does He contain all. For that which they declare to be beyond Him will be wanting to the Pleroma.” Tertullian⁵⁹ appeals to the soul which is by nature Christian (“*anima naturaliter Christiana*”), to witness the truth of Monotheism, and he proves its intrinsic necessity from God’s absolute perfection: “*Duo ergo summa magna quomodo consistent, cum hoc sit summum magnum par non habere?*—How, therefore, can two great Supremes co-exist, when this is the attribute of the Supreme Being, to have no equal?”⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Is. 44:6. Cfr. J. König, *Theologie der Psalmen*, pp. 280 sqq., Freiburg 1857; Zuchokke, *Theologie der Propheten*, § 36, Freiburg 1877.

⁵⁵ Acts 14:14.

⁵⁶ Acts 17:23.

⁵⁷ Καὶ ὅτι οὐδεὶς Θεὸς εἰ μὴ εἷς. 1 Cor. 8:4.

⁵⁸ *Adv. Haer.*, II, 2.

⁵⁹ *Contr. Marcion.*, I, 3.

⁶⁰ Tertull., *l. c.*

Justly, therefore, do the Fathers, having in mind St. Paul's dictum: "Καὶ ἄθεοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ—You were ... without God in this world,"⁶¹ conclude that "Polytheism is at bottom sheer Atheism."⁶² And Tertullian summarily declares: "*Deus, si non unus est, non est*—God is not if He is not one."⁶³

In regard to the teaching of the Scholastics, it will suffice to note that St. Thomas Aquinas in his philosophical *Summa*⁶⁴ marshals no less than seventeen arguments to prove the necessity of Monotheism. The three chief ones among them, viz.: those based on the simplicity and perfection of God, and on the harmony existing in the created universe, he repeats in his *Summa Theologica*.⁶⁵ Another author worth reading on the subject is St. Anselm.⁶⁶

2. THE HERESY OF POLYTHEISM.—By Polytheism we understand the belief in two or more gods. Its wellspring is partly the weakness of the human intellect since the Fall, partly and principally the sinful bias of the human will. Some forms of Polytheism reduce the Absolute to the level of the finite, while others raise the finite to the rank of the divine. All of them flagrantly contradict both reason and Revelation.

a) If it be permissible to draw a distinction between the "pure" and the "applied" concept of God, we may say that the fundamental error of Polytheism consists in applying the concept of God to improper subjects, *i. e.*, to beings which are not and cannot be divine. Cfr. Wisdom 14:21: "*Incommunicabile nomen [i. e., הַיְהוָה] lapidibus et lignis imposuerunt*—Men ... gave the incommunicable name to stones and wood." It would be an exaggeration to say that Polytheism is identical with Atheism; for the atheist denies that there is a God, while the polytheist merely transfers the concept of Deity to some creature. But Polytheism involves an intrinsic contradiction and, pushed to its logical conclusions, necessarily leads to Atheism. Polytheism is a specific characteristic of Paganism, and hence the direct antithesis of all non-pagan, *i. e.*, monotheistic, forms of religion (Christianity, the Jewish religion, Mohammedanism).

b) The rapid spread of Polytheism, especially during the period stretching from Abraham to Christ, calls for an explanation. Since reason is able to produce the strongest arguments against the intrinsic possibility of Polytheism, the enormous propagation of this error can not be sufficiently explained by attributing it to the weakness of the human intellect after the Fall, or to forgetfulness, or to a disinclination to reasoning, or to an enslavement of the intellect by the material things of this world. Its chief source is doubtless the false bias which bends the will of man towards sin. Without the co-operation of sin it is hard to imagine how so many nations could have fallen into gross idolatry. St. Paul in his first Epistle to the Romans,⁶⁷ gives a graphic description of the powerful influence of sin, and the Book of Wisdom explains⁶⁸ how idolatry, once it finds lodgment in the human mind, can grow to enormous proportions and eventually plunge the race into dire misfortune and misery. "*Infandorum enim idolorum cultura omnis mali*

⁶¹ Eph. 2:12.

⁶² Cfr. Athanasius (*C. Gent.*, 40, 24): "Τὴν πολυθεότητα ἀθεότητα εἶναι λέγομεν ... καὶ πολυαρχία ἀναρχία."

⁶³ For further quotations from Patristic literature, see Petavius, *De Deo Uno*, I, 3–4; Thomassin, *De Deo*, II, 1–6.

⁶⁴ *Contr. Gent.*, I, 42 (Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures*, pp. 29 sq.).

⁶⁵ *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 11, art. 3.

⁶⁶ *Monol.*, c. 4.

⁶⁷ Rom. 1:18–32.

⁶⁸ Wisd. 12:15.

causa est, et initium et finis—For the worship of abominable idols is the cause, and the beginning and end of all evil.”⁶⁹

St. Thomas Aquinas⁷⁰ traces Polytheism and idolatry to two principal causes: first, sinful aberrations of the mind, such as image worship, the idolizing of creatures, etc.; and, secondly, the influence of evil spirits (*e. g.*, in the pagan oracles). This last-mentioned agency must not be underestimated, because the Devil and his imps doubtless do everything in their power to spread idolatry and to fasten it upon the minds of men. How often does not Holy Scripture designate idolatry as devil worship?⁷¹ Idolatry must indeed exercise a diabolic charm upon men who have become entangled in the snares of sin; else how could the Chosen People, in spite of continual castigations, indulge their terrible penchant for Polytheism and surrender themselves unreservedly to such an irrational cult, for instance, as that of the golden calf? “It was only in the fiery furnace of the Babylonian captivity that this impious tendency was extirpated root and branch; after that time we never again hear of the Jews practicing idolatry.”⁷²

c) The forms which Polytheism has assumed are manifold. It belongs to the science of comparative religion, and to the philosophy of religion, to distribute them into scientific categories. We will only observe, in a general way, that the classification depends chiefly on whether the Absolute is leveled down to the finite, or whether the finite is deified. The first-mentioned method was practiced in the East, where the Gnostic and Hindoo systems of religion, with their “emanations,” “eons,” and “incarnations,” flourished, although the original unity of God was in a manner still retained as the center of emanation. The second method is distinctively Western in origin and character, and exemplified mainly in the Polytheism of the Graeco-Roman world. Since the deification of the creature can give rise to as many divinities as there are classes of created things, Polytheism has had a wide and fertile field for its vagaries. On the lowest plane we find Fetishism,⁷³ which looks for help or punishment to inanimate objects, such as, *e. g.*, a stick of wood. Related to Fetishism is Idolatry (in the strict sense of the term), which actually worships inanimate objects (*e. g.*, images of stone, wood, or metal) as symbols of the Deity. Of somewhat higher rank is Sabaism, so-called, which adores the elements, especially the stars. From Sabaism it is but one step to Nature Worship, which pays divine honors to the powers of nature or the animal world (*e. g.*, Animism,⁷⁴ Totemism). The Deification of Man probably had its origin in ancestral and hero worship and developed into the formal apotheosis not only of particular men, but of general attributes of mankind, including vices, which were individualized, *e. g.*, Apollo = god of wisdom; Aphrodite = goddess of love, etc. Of this latter kind was the gay and motley Polytheism of the Greeks and Romans. The most horrid form of Polytheism, and the one most directly opposed to Christian Monotheism, is Devil Worship or the cult of evil spirits (Satanism).⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Cfr. Wisdom 14:27.

⁷⁰ *S. Theol.*, 2a 2ae, qu. 94, art. 4.

⁷¹ Cfr. Bar. 4:7: “*Immolantes daemoniis et non Deo*—Offering sacrifice to devils, and not to God.” Cfr. 1 Cor. 10:20.

⁷² Oswald, *Dogmat. Theol.*, Vol. I, p. 270.

⁷³ See the article “Fetishism,” by J. T. Driscoll in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. VI.

⁷⁴ On Animism, see J. T. Driscoll in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. I, pp. 526 sqq.; and the same author’s *The Soul*, New York, 1900.

⁷⁵ Cfr. W. H. Kent, art. “Devil “Worshippers” in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. IV. For a list of reference works on these subjects, consult M. Heimbucher, *Die Bibliothek des Priesters*, pp. 114 sqq. Ratisbon 1904, and the bibliographical notes appended to the respective articles in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*.

d) Monotheism and Polytheism are logical contraries; hence Polytheism in any guise whatever is not only a grave aberration of human reason, because the natural knowableness of God clearly postulates Monotheism; but also repugnant to Divine Revelation. If Monotheism is a dogma, Polytheism must *eo ipso* be a heresy. The Bible expressly tells us that it *is* a heresy. The Book of Wisdom devotes several chapters⁷⁶ to the refutation and condemnation of Polytheism and Idolatry. In fact, Holy Scripture never tires of denouncing Idolatry as foolish and impious, and the pagan deities as “not gods,”⁷⁷ “lies and vanity,”⁷⁸ “wind and vanity,”⁷⁹ airy nothings.⁸⁰

3. THE HERESY OF DUALISM.—Dualism is the theory that there are two absolute and eternal principles. It is traceable to a different psychological source than Polytheism. It originated in a mistaken conception of the problem of evil and is opposed to both reason and Revelation.

a) The Dualism of the Gnostics and Manichæans, which teaches that there are two divinities, one good and the other evil, is of very ancient origin. As early as the sixteenth century B.C., Zoroaster, the founder of the Perso-Iranian national religion, imagined two divine principles, Ormuzd, the god of light, and Ahriman, the god of darkness—the one the author of all good, the other the principle of all evil, physical and moral. In their never-ending struggle for supremacy now one is victorious, now the other. When in the third century after Christ, Manes (or Mani)⁸¹ introduced the Persian gnosis into the countries of the Western world, which was just then opening its doors to Christianity, even so brilliant a genius as St. Augustine was temporarily seduced by its “eclectic jumble of wild fancies, among which the soberest and strongest dogmas of the Christian creed were sometimes seen to be imbedded.”⁸² Later on, however, he became one of the most powerful opponents of Manichæism.⁸³

b) That Dualism is repugnant to sound reason appears from an analysis of the notion of “evil.” A principle of evil, taking it—not in the sense of Satanism or Anti-Christianism—but as an absolute being, is a contradiction in terms. “Evil” (*malum*) merely means privation of being (*privatio*, στέρησις) *i. e.*, non-being (μη ὄν), which, carried to its ultimate limits, must issue in pure nothingness (*nihilum*, οὐκ ὄν). Now nothingness is no being, least of all absolute being. The case against Dualism may also be argued thus: The good God and His evil anti-god are either equal or they are unequal in power. If they possess equal power, they are mutually destructive, because each is sufficiently potent to paralyze the other, and, therefore, to reduce him to inactivity. If their power is unequal, then the stronger of the two is sure to vanquish and paralyze the weaker. St. Athanasius says beautifully: “To speak of several equally *powerful* gods, is like speaking of several equally *powerless* gods.”⁸⁴

c) Dualism is opposed to the Catholic faith because it runs counter to the dogma of Monotheism. But it can also be expressly disproved from Scripture. So far as physical evil (death, pain, suffering) is concerned, we have it on God’s own authority that He is its fundamental principle, just as He is the fount of whatever is good in this world. In the farewell canticle chanted

⁷⁶ Wisd. 12:15.

⁷⁷ 2 Kings 19:18; Jer. 2:11.

⁷⁸ Jer. 16:19.

⁷⁹ Is. 41:24; Dan. 5:23.

⁸⁰ Ps. 95:5; not אֱלֹהִים, but אֵלִים, *i. e.*, *nihila*.

⁸¹ Cfr. T. Gilmartin, *Manual of Church History*, Vol. I, pp. 126 sqq., 3rd ed., Dublin 1909.

⁸² *Cyclop. Americana*, s. v. Manichæism.

⁸³ Cfr. Bardenhewer-Shahan, *Patrology*, pp. 474, 482, Freiburg and, St. Louis 1908.

⁸⁴ *Or. contr. Gent.*

by Moses in the hearing of the whole assembly of Israel, we read: "See ye that I alone am, and there is no other God besides me; I will kill and I will make to live: I will strike and I will heal, and there is none that can deliver out of my hand."⁸⁵ As if to refute Dualism in advance, God declared by the mouth of the prophet Isaias: "I am the Lord, and there is none else: I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil: I the Lord that do all these things."⁸⁶ With regard to moral evil (sin), we must, of course, hold that God, on account of His absolute sanctity, cannot be considered the author of sin; that, on the contrary, sin has its proximate cause in an abuse of man's liberty. It is interesting in this connection to note how God assumes the responsibility, *e. g.*, for the hard-heartedness of Pharaoh⁸⁷ in a manner which positively excludes the co-existence with Him of an absolutely evil principle. Of the Fathers of the Church Irenæus, Tertullian, Augustine, and John of Damascus have written special treatises against Dualism (Manichæism).⁸⁸

READINGS:—Heinrich, *Dogmat. Theologie*, Vol. I, §§ 151–154.—Franzelin, *De Deo Uno*, thes. 25.—Oswald, *Dogmat. Theologie*, Vol. I, Appendix, pp. 264 sqq.—* C. Krieg, *Der Monotheismus der Offenbarung und das Heidenthum*, Mainz 1880.—Chr. Pesch, S. J., *Gott und Götter*, Freiburg 1890.—J. Nikel, *Der Monotheismus Israels in der vorexilischen Zeit*, Paderborn 1893.—H. Formby, *Monotheism*, London, *s. a.*—Driscoll, *God*, pp. 30 sqq.—E. R. Hull, S. J., *Studies in Idolatry*, Bombay 1906.—W. McDonald, "Studies in Idolatry," in the *Irish Theological Quarterly*, Vol. I (1906), No. 4.

SECTION 3

GOD THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH

Truth being a "pure perfection," its formal concept must be applicable to God. Now, "truth" is threefold: ontological, logical, and moral.¹ Consequently, too, God is called "Absolute Truth" in a threefold sense: First, absolute ontological truth,² second, absolute logical truth,³ and third, absolute moral truth,⁴ or veracity (truthfulness).

ARTICLE 1

GOD AS ONTOLOGICAL TRUTH

⁸⁵ Deut 32:39.

⁸⁶ Is. 45:6, 7.

⁸⁷ Ex 4:21.

⁸⁸ On the mystery of evil, of which F. J. Hall (*The Being and Attributes of God*, p. 66, New York 1909), rightly observes, that it "sums up apparently all that can ever be urged as constituting anti-theistic evidence in the proper sense of that term," see A. B. Sharpe, *Evil: Its Nature and Cause*, London, 1907; IDEM, art. "Evil" in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. V; J. Rickaby, S. J., *Moral Philosophy*, ch. VI–VIII, new ed., London 1908; R. F. Clarke, S. J., *The Existence of God*, pp. 56 sqq., London 1867; T. J. Gerrard, *The Wayfarer's Vision*, pp. 244 sqq., London 1909; B. Boedder, S. J., *Natural Theology*, pp. 393 sqq., 2nd ed., London 1899.

¹ *Veritas in essendo, veritas in cognoscendo, veritas in dicendo.*

² *Veritas absoluta in essendo.*

³ *Veritas absoluta in cognoscendo.*

⁴ *Veritas absoluta in dicendo.*

1. PREFATORY OBSERVATIONS.—Truth is not only in the understanding, it is also in objects (e. g., true gold); and as such is called ontological truth. Ontological truth is conformity of being to its concept.⁵

Instead of “true,” we often say “genuine,” “right,” “correct.” Thus a true, genuine friend is one who has all the perfections which the concept of “friend” includes. Whence it follows that ontological truth is the thing itself in so far as it is knowable (*intelligibile*). Since, however, this intrinsic relation to (a real or possible) knowledge adds no new reality to the *ens*, the difference between *ens* and *verum* must be purely logical. Hence the philosophical axiom: “*Ens et verum convertuntur.*” If we compare the intelligibility of a thing with its being, we find that they are co-extensive, each being the measure of the other; the measure of intelligibility is being, and *vice versa*. St. Augustine adverts to this transcendental character of ontological truth when he says:⁶ “*Verum esse videtur id quod est*—That which is, seems to be true.”

If all being, as such, is knowable, and consequently true, an object of cognition can be called false or untrue only in an analogous sense, namely inasmuch as some feature of it is apt to produce logical falsity in our mind; as when, for instance, we mistake a “gold brick” for real gold. Even the things we call false possess ontological truth, because they are what they are; thus, for example, false hair is a true wig, false butter may be genuine margarine, a spurious Hector may be a true tragedian, etc.⁷

2. THE DOGMA.—Whenever the sources of Divine Revelation and the infallible teaching office of the Church employ the term “one true God” (*verus Deus*), they refer not to His logical, but to His ontological truth.⁸ While the “false gods” of the Gentiles are true and genuine idols, Yahweh alone is the true God, *i. e.*, He Who corresponds in every respect to the concept of Deity.⁹

a) If we would resolve God’s ontological truth into its constituent momenta, we must first conceive it, as it were, steeped in aseity; and consequently as essential, primeval, primordial truth (*veritas a se*). God is Pure Truth in virtue of His proper essence, not by any agency extraneous to Himself. Since ontological truth, or cognoscibility, increases in the same ratio with being, it follows that He who is יהוה, or ὁ ὢν, *par excellence*, must likewise be the “first and sovereign truth” (*veritas suprema*, ἡ ἀύταλήθεια). As St. Augustine puts it, “*Ubi magnitudo ipsa veritas est, quidquid plus habet magnitudinis, necesse est ut plus habeat veritatis*—Where greatness itself is truth, whatsoever has more of greatness, must needs have more of truth.”^{9a}

b) But God is also the All-Truth (ἡ παναλήθεια), *i. e.*, the creative cause of all truths derived from Him, and subject to Him, and their ideal (type, exemplary cause). In these two propositions all philosophy is contained as in a nutshell, and we shall have to discuss them a little more fully.

α) As the efficient cause, or Creator, of the universe, God endows all creatures with whatever they have both of being and of truth (intelligibility). All beings outside the Divine Essence owe their origin to that Essence, and are nothing but “embodiments of divine ideas.” The world in us and around us is merely a reflex of the world of divine ideas. The things that exist are true (*i. e.*, knowable) only in so far as there is perfect correspondence between them and their archetypes in the Mind of God, Who planned and created them. The “conformity of things to the divine idea,”

⁵ “*Veritas ontologica est adaequatio rei cum idea eius.*”

⁶ *Solil.*, II, 5.

⁷ Cfr. S. Thom., *De Verit.*, qu, 1, art. 10.

⁸ Cfr. *Conc. Lateran. IV, cap. “Firmiter”*; *Conc. Vatican., Sess. III, De Fide, can. 1.*

⁹ Cfr. Jer. 10:10; John 17:3.

^{9a} Cfr. St. Augustin., *De Trinit.*, VIII, I. (Haddan’s translation, p.202.)

therefore, constitutes their ontological truth. We know for certain that the world around us, which we perceive as real, is not a surd, unintelligible ἄλογον, but derived from an Intellect, and therefore intelligible. This certitude lays the foundation for all metaphysics and epistemology. It is only when viewed in the light of this overshadowing truth, that the universe appears to us as a rational whole, apt to be conceived and appraised by our finite understanding. Truly, therefore, does the Pseudo-Dionysius¹⁰ call the ideas existing in the Divine Mind “the creative *logoi of things*,”¹¹ and “the exemplars according to which God, the ὑπερούσιος, designed and created all existing substances.”¹² Aquinas with his customary acuteness develops this thought as follows: “*Res naturales mensurant intellectum nostrum, sed sunt mensuratae ab intellectu divino, in quo sunt omnia creata, sicut omnia artificata [sunt] in intellectu artificis: sic ergo intellectus divinus est mensurans, non mensuratus, res autem mensurans et mensurata; sed intellectus noster est mensuratus, non mensurans quidem res naturales, sed artificiales tantum.*”¹³

β) God can communicate ontological truth to created objects only in accordance with the “eternal world-ideas” existing within Himself; and here we have a second reason why He is “the All-Truth”: He is the exemplary cause of all things, and therefore the ideal of all derived truth. Nothing exists—sin alone excepted—which cannot be traced to the eternal ideas of God. But what about the domain of the merely possible, the supra-sensual sphere of “the purely intelligible,” the ideal world of “metaphysical essences,” in which the genius of Augustine delighted to soar? This, too, receives all its truth, *i. e.*, its intelligibility, from God as its exemplary (though not as its creative) cause. The archetype, basis, and measure of all (abstract) truths in logic, metaphysics, ethics, æsthetics, music, mathematics, etc., must be sought in God, the παναλήθεια, Who drew forth from His own immutable Essence, where they had existed from all eternity, the unchangeable norms of these sciences, and imposed them as inviolable laws on the minds of His creatures. Even the sciences that deal with contingent and accidental things (such as history) are but reflexes of the divine All-Truth, exponents of its imitability and its ability to project itself outward. As for the truth or untruth of moral actions, Scripture teaches that all morality is grounded in an eternal and unchangeable idea, the *lex aeterna*, with which our actions must conform in order to be ethically true, *i. e.*, morally good. Sin alone does not correspond to any exemplary idea or creative thought in the Divine Essence; sin, therefore, is “untruth,” sin is a “lie.” It is in this sense that we must understand Ps. 118: “All His [God’s] ways are truth (πᾶσι)”; and the prayer pronounced by Jesus as the High Priest of humanity: “Sanctify them in truth ... for them do I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.”¹⁴ According to the Apocalypse no one “that maketh a lie” can enter into the heavenly Jerusalem.¹⁵

c) As He is the Primordial Truth, and the All-Truth, so God is also the Super-Truth (ἡ ὑπεραλήθεια). For, if (ontological) truth consists in conformity of being to knowledge, it is quite plain that the concept to which the Divine Essence conforms, must have its root in this very Essence. In other words, the type of true Divinity is that infinite idea which God has of Himself from all eternity, and which He does not derive from anything outside Himself, but carries within His own Substance. With this infinite idea the divine being conforms to such a degree that there is substantial identity between God’s being and knowledge.¹⁶ While the Divine All-Truth determines

¹⁰ *De Divin. Nom.*, c. 5, § 8.

¹¹ οἱ τῶν ὄντων οὐσιόποιοι λόγοι

¹² τὰ ὄντα πάντα προώρισε καὶ παρήγαγεν

¹³ *De Verit.*, qu. 1, art. 2.

¹⁴ John 17:7 sqq.

¹⁵ Apoc. 21:27.

¹⁶ Cfr. *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 16, art. 5: “*Esse autem Dei non solum est conforme suo intellectui, sed etiam est ipsum suum intelligere.*”

all derived truths, as their canon and norm, it does not itself receive its measure and purpose from anything extraneous or superior to itself, but as “Super-Truth” finds these in its own essence, which infinitely surpasses everything that can be conceived in the domain of created truth.

READINGS:—Alex. Halens., *Summa*, 1a, qu. 15.—S. Thom., *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 16 (Bonjoannes-Lescher, *Compendium*, pp. 46 sqq.).—IDEM, *S. Contr. Gent.*, I, 42 (Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures*, pp. 44 sq.).—Ruiz, *De Scientia Dei*, disp. 88 sqq.—Lessius, *De Perfect. Divin.*, VI, 4.

ARTICLE 2

GOD AS LOGICAL TRUTH OR ABSOLUTE REASON

1. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.—By “logical truth” (*veritas in cognoscendo*), or truth in its formal sense, we understand conformity of the mind to its object.¹⁷ Knowledge is true in so far as it conforms to its object; that is to say, in so far as the object is conceived *as it is*.

As ontological truth belongs to metaphysics, so logical truth appertains to logic and epistemology. The opposite of logical truth is falsity or error, which must therefore be defined as a want of conformity between cognition and its object. It is the business of logic to show that error originates in judgments and ratiocinations.¹⁸ Since logical truth relates to cognition, its place is properly among the attributes of divine life or operation. We treat it here because it is inseparable from ontological truth, reserving a fuller discussion for a later article on the knowledge of God.

2. THE DOGMA.—By “absolute reason” we mean, not spirituality, or a mere faculty of cognition, but pure intelligence (*ipsum intelligere, intellectio subsistens*). In this sense the dogma that God is absolute reason is formally included in the dogma of His simplicity.¹⁹ A deeper analysis leads to the following conclusions:

a) The first truth that impresses itself upon us is that the Divine Knowledge is not a mere conformity or equation, but “identity” of being and thought. While in the case of creatures every act of cognition proceeds as a (vital) accident from its faculty, and is supported by that faculty, God’s knowledge is a substantial act, absolutely identical with the Divine Essence, life, and attributes. Therefore God is above all things the Substantial Truth.²⁰ It is but a step from this proposition to that other one, that “God is His own infinite comprehension.”²¹ The perfection of logical truth, be it remembered, depends on three factors: (1) a cognizable object; (2) a cognitive power, and (3) the union of both in the act of cognition. The richer, the clearer, the more intelligible an object is, the more powerful and penetrating is the faculty of cognition, the more intimate is the comprehension of the object by the faculty in the act of cognition, the higher and more perfect is the truth of the resulting knowledge. Now God as the Primal Truth, the All-Truth, and the Super-Truth, is the most intelligible of all beings. His cognitive power is commensurate with His infinity; and the union of both is the most intimate that can possibly be conceived, because it results in an absolute equation (identity) between being and cognition. Consequently

¹⁷ “*Veritas logica est adaequatio intellectus cum re.*”

¹⁸ St. Thomas, *Contr. Gent.*, I, 61: “The intellect does not err over first principles, but over reasoned conclusions from first principles.” (Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures*, p. 44).

¹⁹ *Supra*, pp. 200 sqq.

²⁰ Cfr. *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 14, art. 1: “*Scientia non est qualitas in Deo vel habitus, sed substantia et actus purus.*”

²¹ “*Deus est comprehensio sui.*”

God's knowledge of Himself must culminate in an infinite comprehension of His own Essence, in and by virtue of which He adequately and exhaustively understands Himself and all things external to Himself. Since this absolute divine self-comprehension is a vital operation, God must be the essentially subsisting, personal, living Truth (*intellectio subsistens, vitalis*). In all three of these respects God is "Absolute Reason." Sacred Scripture accordingly loves to personify the Divine Wisdom and Truth, and often speaks of it as a Personal Being (in the sense of absolute subsistence). This is the case especially in the Sapiential Books of the Old Testament. The Fathers imitate this practice. Jesus, in saying: "*Ego sum via et veritas (ἡ ἀλήθεια) et vita*—I am the way, the truth, and the life,"²² clearly means *logical* truth, because He is speaking of His mission as the "Teacher" of mankind.

b) In the foregoing paragraph we have treated of God as Absolute Reason *per se*. We now proceed to consider Him as the Absolute Truth in relation to His rational creatures. The fate of Ontologism and Theosophy warns us that we are treading on dangerous ground. St. Augustine²³ teaches that we may call God "the light of intelligent spirits" (*lumen mentium*). He means to say that the Divine All-Truth is not only in itself purest light, depending for its brilliancy on none other, but that this light somehow illuminates the created intellect, moving it intrinsically to perform the act of cognition. It is here we reach that half-obscure boundary line where truth easily becomes distorted, and incautious theologians are likely to go astray. Nowhere, therefore, is it more necessary than here to mark off the domain of natural cognition from the realm of supernatural truth.

α) In the natural order Absolute Reason is the Creator and Author of all intelligence—the surging and overflowing ocean of light from which all truth descends into created intellects. The Divine Truth rules all created intelligences by means of the (metaphysical) laws of being and the (logical) laws of thought, and bends them unconditionally under the iron law of evidence, which is the criterion of all truth. And in so far as the created intellect is an "image and likeness" of the Infinite Spirit—Who is the Prototype of all intelligences—it is subject to the sway of the divine light of truth, which renders all being intelligible, and endows every mind with intelligence. Consequently, every single act of truth-perception on the part of a finite intellect, and the created mind itself are but a weak reflex of the Divine Spirit and the Divine Knowledge. God thinks because He is thought itself; the creature merely re-thinks in its finite fashion the thoughts already spun out by the Divine Intellect. In this sense, and in this sense alone,²⁴ are we to understand the Scholastic formula of the participation of the finite intellect in Divine Knowledge, which St. Thomas Aquinas explains as follows: "*Sicut animae et res aliae verae quidem dicuntur in suis naturis, secundum quod similitudinem illius summae naturae habent, quae est ipsa veritas; ita id quod per animam cognitum est, verum est, in quantum illius divinae veritatis, quam Deus cognoscit, similitudo quaedam existit in ipsa. Unde et Glossa (in Ps. 11:2) dicit, quod sicut ab una facie resultant multae facies in speculo, ita ab una prima veritate resultant multae veritates in mentibus hominum*—As the soul and other beings are called 'true' in their natures, as bearing some likeness to the supreme nature of God,—which is truth itself, as being its own fulness of actual understanding,—so what is known by the soul is true for the reason that there exists in the soul a likeness of that divine truth which God knows. Hence on the text (Ps. 11:2), 'Truths are diminished from the sons of men,' the Gloss²⁵ says: 'The truth is one, whereby holy souls are illumined: but since there are many souls, there may be said to be in them many truths, as from

²² John 14:6.

²³ *Supra*, p. 129.

²⁴ Not in the Theosophic meaning given to it by Baader.

²⁵ Cfr. St. August., *Enarrationes in h. l.*

one face many images may appear in many mirrors.”²⁶ This excludes all Pantheistic and semi-Pantheistic interpretations.

β) It is in the supernatural order that the participation of the created intellect in the truth-life of the Godhead becomes most complete, most intimate, and most real; though here, again, we must guard against Theosophic and Pantheistic perversions. The supernatural light of truth, by which the germs of “conformity with God”²⁷ are implanted in the soul, first asserts itself in the act of faith. For, “the life was the light of men” ... and He [the Logos] “was the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world.”²⁸ In Heaven the dim light which faith imparts here below, becomes perfect vision, which, in virtue of the light of glory, immerses the intellects of the Just into the Divine Essence and elevates them to an immediate participation in the Trinitarian life of the Godhead.²⁹

Lessius³⁰ gives a graphic description of the manner in which truth flows forth from its heavenly Source and inundates the created universe. Gushing from its divine fount, it first flows through the channel of creation into the forms of created things, imparting to them their ontological truth (cognoscibility). Thence it forces its way into the intellect of those creatures who are endowed with reason (= logical truth), seeps through into the passions and moral actions of men, until finally, having lost much of its original impetus, it terminates in the truths that men speak and write. It finds a second channel in Supernatural Revelation, which originates in the infusion of faith and reaches its climax in the beatific vision of God. A third channel, the one we have pointed out above³¹ in treating of God as the *causa exemplaris* of created things, Lessius leaves unmentioned.

READINGS:—Scheeben, *Dogmatik*, Vol. I, § 95.—Franzelin, *De Deo Uno*, thes. 28, 36.—Lessius, *De Divin. Perfect.*, VI, 4.—*S. Thom., *De Verit.*, qu. 11.—W. Humphrey, S. J., “*His Divine Majesty*,” pp. 89 sqq., London 1897.

ARTICLE 3

GOD AS MORAL TRUTH, OR HIS VERACITY AND FAITHFULNESS

1. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.—The attribute of “moral truth” comprises two elements: veracity (*veracitas = veritas in dicendo*) and faithfulness (*fidelitas = veritas in agendo*).

a) Veracity means the firm purpose of telling the truth always and everywhere. It is opposed to mendaciousness, which disturbs the harmony between thought and language in order to deceive others, and thereby destroys confidence. Mendaciousness is habitual untruthfulness, and is a proper attribute of the Devil, whom Sacred Scripture calls “the father of lies.” Though veracity in so far as it is a virtue, and mendaciousness in so far as it is a vice, appertain formally to the will, they also bear an essential relation to the intellect, because veracity must always be conceived as an equation between the intellect and speech (*adaequatio intellectus cum sermone*) while mendaciousness is a difformity between the two (*difformitas intellectus et sermonis*).

²⁶ *Contr. Gent.*, III, 47 (Rickaby, *Of God and His creatures*, p. 127).

²⁷ Cfr. 2 Pet. 1:4: “*divinae consortes naturae*.”

²⁸ John 1:4 sqq.; cfr. 1 Pet. 2:9.

²⁹ Cfr. *supra*, Part I, Chapter 2, Section 2.

³⁰ *De Divin. Perfect.*, VI, 4.

³¹ Article 1, No. 2.

b) Akin to veracity, although not identical with it, is fidelity or faithfulness, which may be defined as “the firm purpose of keeping one’s promises or carrying out one’s threats.” Like veracity, faithfulness as a virtue appertains immediately to the will, though it too bears an obvious relation to the intellect, inasmuch as to keep one’s promises, and to carry out one’s threats, postulates veracity. He who breaks his promise is a liar. To bring out these momenta clearly, we may say that faithfulness is an equation between speech and conduct (*adaequatio sermonis cum actione*).³² Opposed to faithfulness as its contradictory is infidelity; its contrary is deceit. Both are vices, and as such inhere in the will. Yet, involving as they do a lack of harmony between speech and conduct, they can never deny their relationship with falsehood, lying, and error.

c) From all this it appears that veracity and faithfulness, considered as divine virtues, are not properly attributes of being, but rather qualities of the will. But inasmuch as both have truth for their taproot, it is meet that they be treated in connection with the ontological and logical truth of God. Theologically God’s veracity and faithfulness are very important attributes, because they constitute the foundation of two of the so-called theological virtues, veracity being the formal motive of faith, while faithfulness is the formal motive of hope.

2. THE DOGMA OF GOD’S VERACITY.—It is an article of faith that in the present Economy God neither lies nor can lie. But is lying *absolutely* repugnant to the Divine Essence? Can no other order of the universe be imagined in which it might be possible for God to lie? Some theologians, recalling the example of Jacob and Judith in the Old Testament, and the teaching of Gabriel Biel,³³ Pierre d’Ailly, and others, see no more than a theological conclusion in the proposition that lying is absolutely repugnant to the Divine Essence. We prefer to believe, with Suarez, that it is a dogma clearly contained in Divine Revelation.

a) The Bible again and again asserts the veracity of God, by declaring that in virtue of His very Essence it is impossible for Him to lie. “*Qui me misit, verax (ἀληθής) est*—He that sent me is true,”³⁴ or “*ἄψευδής*—God, who lieth not.”³⁵ “*Impossibile (ἀδύνατον) est mentiri Deum*—It is impossible for God to lie.”³⁶ The meaning of the well-known antithesis in St. Paul’s letter to the Romans:^{36a} “*Est autem Deus verax, omnis autem homo mendax*—God is true, but every man a liar,” is evidently this: Man is capable of lying, God is not.³⁷

b) While some of the Fathers (like Chrysostom and Jerome) appear to base the immorality of lying on its positive prohibition by God, rather than upon its intrinsic wrongfulness, the majority, under the leadership of St. Augustine, teach that mendaciousness is something so essentially immoral in itself that it would be sinful even if there were no specific divine commandment forbidding it. What is intrinsically and essentially sinful, God’s sanctity can never permit, either in the present or in any other

³² Cfr. St. Thomas, *In Epist. 1 Tim.*, c. 2, lect. 2: “*Fides (=fidelitas) nihil aliud est quam participatio sive adhaesio veritati.*”

³³ *Comment. in Quatuor Libros Sent.*, III, dist. 38, qu. 1.

³⁴ John 8:26.

³⁵ Tit. 1:2.

³⁶ Heb. 6:18.

^{36a} Rom. 3:4.

³⁷ Cfr. Numb. 23:19.

conceivable Economy. Even St. Chrysostom, notoriously so mild in condoning the little “white lies” of daily life, expressly declares that “there are certain things impossible to God, viz.: to be deceived, to deceive, and to lie.”³⁸

3. THE DOGMA OF GOD’S FIDELITY.—According to the consentient teaching of all theologians, it is *de fide* that infidelity or deceit is absolutely contrary to the Essence of God.

a) The Scriptural proof for this dogma is bottomed first upon those texts which teach God’s faithfulness,³⁹ and secondly upon the repeatedly asserted impossibility of God’s breaking the faith, because if He broke the faith He would contradict Himself.⁴⁰ Jesus Christ describes divine fidelity in these sublime terms:⁴¹ “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”⁴²

b) From the writings of the Fathers we shall content ourselves with citing this one passage of St. Augustine:⁴³ “*Spes nostra tam certa est, quasi iam res perfecta sit. Neque etiam timemus promittente veritate. Veritas nec falli potest nec fallere*—Our hope is as certain as if the promise were already fulfilled. Nor do we fear, seeing we have the promise of truth. Truth can neither be deceived nor deceive.” The theological argument rests upon God’s veracity. He would not be veracious if He failed to keep His promises or to carry out His just threats. All those circumstances and motives which at various times induce men to become faithless or to deceive others (such as forgetfulness, change of mind, impotence, malice, etc.) are formally excluded from God’s Essence by the divine attributes of omniscience, immutability, omnipotence, sanctity, etc.

READINGS:—*Kleutgen, *De Ipso Deo*, pp. 397 sqq.—Alb. a Busano, ed. ‘Graun, *Theol. Dogmat. Special.*, I, pp. 99 sqq., Oeniponte 1893.

SECTION 4

GOD AS ABSOLUTE GOODNESS

Goodness, too, is a pure perfection and therefore formally predicable of God. Like truth, goodness may be either ontological, ethical, or moral (*bonitas in essendo, in agendo, in communicando*). From the notion of *bonum*, therefore, we can develop three other divine attributes which correspond to the attributes of truth, viz.: ontological goodness, ethical goodness (sanctity), and moral goodness (benevolence).

³⁸ *Hom. in Symb.*, 1.

³⁹ Cfr. Ps. 144:13: “*Fidelis Deus in omnibus verbis suis.*”

⁴⁰ Cfr. 2 Tim. 2:13: “*Si non credimus, ille fidelis (πιστός) permanet [quia] negare seipsum non potest (ἀρνήσασθαι γὰρ ἑαυτὸν οὐ δύναται)*—If we believe not, he continueth faithful, he cannot deny Himself.”

⁴¹ Math. 24:35.

⁴² Cfr. Deut. 32:4; 7:9; 1 Thess. 5:24; 2 Thess. 3:3; etc.

⁴³ *Praef. in Ps.*, 123.

ARTICLE 1

GOD AS ONTOLOGICAL GOODNESS

1. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.—Aristotle defines ontological goodness thus: “*Bonum est, quod omnia appetunt*—The good is that which all desire.”¹ Ontological truth denotes objects inasmuch as they are intelligible; ontological goodness (*bonitas*) describes them as appetable, or desirable.

But this definition is incomplete, because it describes goodness merely in its effects, not in its essence. An object is good when it is appetable. But why is it appetable? It is not good because it is appetable, but it is appetable because it is good. In order to arrive at an essential definition of goodness, it is first of all necessary to distinguish between absolute goodness (*bonum in se s. bonum quod*), and relative goodness (*bonum alteri s. bonum cui*). Both of these notes combined will give us the adequate definition we are in search of.

a) Now, what is absolute goodness? A thing is called absolutely good (*bonum quod*) when it is exactly what its nature requires it to be, *i. e.*, when it has all the perfections due to, and demanded by, its essence. The notion of *bonum quod*, therefore, materially coincides with that of *perfectum*, with the sole difference that the former connotes a relation to some (conscious or unconscious) appetency, which the notion of “perfect” lacks. Hence we may say that what is perfect in its species is (absolutely) good. If a being lacks some perfection which it ought to possess (as, *e. g.*, a deaf person lacks the sense of hearing), we have the concept of “evil,” which may consequently be defined as the privation or absence of some perfection required by the nature of a thing.² If an object lacks even one of those perfections which its nature postulates, it is “bad” or “evil.”³

b) Relative goodness (*bonum cui*) consists in the communicability of that which is good (perfect) to some other being or beings. As (ontological) truth tends to reveal itself to the intellect, so (ontological) goodness tends to communicate itself to other beings, and thereby to produce more good.⁴ This communicability formally consists in the adaptability of one object to another, so that the other has a motive for desiring or striving after the *bonum* with an “appetite” (*appetitus*), and this may be either conscious or unconscious. It is easy to see how relative goodness, in virtue of its adaptability (*convenientia*), at once becomes *bonitas finis*, and how the latter spontaneously overflows, coloring with its own goodness all the means that lead to the end, and communicating to them the characteristic note of usefulness or utility (*bonum utile*). The opposite of relative goodness, which we obtain by a process of contrary conversion, is “inadaptability (harmfulness) of one thing to another,” irrespective of whether the harm is caused through the instrumentality of some positive perfection (*e. g.*, capital and labor), or by its absence (*e. g.*, drunkenness in parents and spoiled children).

c) By welding the essential marks of absolute and relative goodness into one concept, we obtain the following definition of goodness in general: “That is good which is perfect in itself and adapted to another.” Under either aspect goodness is evidently a transcendental attribute of being.⁵ For a thing is more or less good according to the measure of being which it contains, *e. g.*, “good” bread, a “good” poem. Even bad things are good under at least one aspect, *viz.*: in as much as they *are*. Whence the dictum of St. Augustine: “*In quantum sumus, boni sumus.*” Relatively speaking every being as such is good, *i. e.*, adapted to every other being, because all

¹ Ethics, 1. 1. This is not to be understood, says St. Thomas, as if every good were desired by all men, but in the sense that whatsoever is desired has in it the idea of good.

² “*Malum est privatio Perfectionis debitae.*”

³ Hence the axiom: “*Bonum ex integra causa, malum ex quocunque defectu.*”

⁴ “*Bonum est diffusivum sui.*”

⁵ “*Ens et bonum convertuntur.*”

things are related to one another either as substance to accident, or as a part to the whole, or as an effect to its cause; or *vice versa*. Hence all beings are constantly perfecting themselves and each other.⁶ To a superficial observer it might seem as if ontological goodness had a wider scope than the concept of being, inasmuch as it can be predicated, *e. g.*, of phantoms, “air-castles,” etc. But this is a delusion. In matter of fact the goodness of a thing is always and everywhere commensurate with the measure of its being, even if it were only an *ens rationis*.⁷

2. THE DOGMA.—God is ontologically good, both in the absolute and in the relative sense of the term. The dogma of His absolute goodness is clearly contained in that of His divine perfection.⁸ His relative goodness is implied partly in the condemnation of Dualism,⁹ partly in the goodness of the created universe.¹⁰

a) Considering God’s absolute ontological goodness we find that

α) It is, in the first place, closely bound up with aseity and primal goodness (*bonitas a se*).

While creatures have all their goodness (perfection), as they have their being, by participation (*bonum ab alio s. per participationem*), God, and He alone, is originally good in Himself; or, to express it substantively, He is goodness itself (*ipsa bonitas*, ἡ ἀτύταγαθότης). This can be proved from Holy Scripture. St. Paul teaches:¹¹ “*Omnis creatura Dei bona est*—Every creature of God is good.” Christ, on the other hand,¹² emphasizes that “*nemo bonus nisi solus Deus*—None is good but God alone.” These two statements can be harmonized only by attributing essential, aseitarian goodness to God alone, and conceiving the goodness predicated of His creatures as derived or participated goodness, which is as nothing in comparison to God’s. It is in this sense that we must interpret Tertullian’s dictum: “*Bonus natura Deus solus; qui enim quod est sine initio habet, non institutione [ab alio] habet, sed natura [a se]*—God alone is good by nature; for He, who has that which He is without beginning, has it not by creation, but by nature.”¹³ Clement of Alexandria testifies to the belief of the Greeks on this head when he writes: “The essential good is not said to be good on account of its being possessed of virtue, ... but on account of its being in itself and by itself good.”¹⁴

β) Since all goodness found in creatures is virtually and eminently contained in the Divine Essence, God is the universal good (*bonum universale*) or, more correctly, universal goodness (ἡ παναγαθότης).

While created goodness by its very nature can never be more than partial and particular, and is limited to certain definite stages of perfection, God’s goodness comprehends within itself and is infinitely superior to all particular goodness found elsewhere. Cfr. Ex. 33:19: “*Ostendam omne bonum tibi*—I will shew thee all good,” (*i. e.*, Him who contains within Himself everything that is

⁶ Cfr. *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 5, art. 1–3.

⁷ Cfr. A. H. Tombach, *Untersuchungen über das Wesen des Guten*. Bonn 1900.

⁸ Cfr. *Conc. Vatican.*, Sess. III, “*De Fide*,” cap. 1; cfr. *Propos. 28 Ekkardi damn. a Ioanne XXII a. 1329*: “*Deus non est bonus neque melior neque optimus; ita male dico, cum voco Deum bonum, ac si album vocarem nigrum.*”

⁹ *Supra*, pp. 221 sqq.

¹⁰ Cfr. *Conc. Vatican.*, l. c.; *Conc. Trident.*, Sess. VI, can. 6.

¹¹ 1 Tim. 4:4.

¹² Luke 18:19.

¹³ *Contr. Marcion.*, II, 6.

¹⁴ Ἀλλὰ τῷ αὐτὴν καθ’ αὐτὴν καὶ δι’ αὐτὴν ἀγαθὴν εἶναι.—*Paedag.*, I, 8.

good). St. Ambrose tersely declares: “*Deus universitate bonus, homo ex parte.*”¹⁵ St. Augustine develops the notion of God’s universal goodness trenchantly as follows: “*Bonum hoc et bonum illud, ... tolle ‘hoc’ et ‘illud’ et vide ipsum bonum, si potes. Ita Deum videbis non alio bono bonum, sed bonum omnis boni.... Quid hoc nisi Deus? Non bonus animus aut bonus angelus aut bonum coeli, sed bonum Bonum*—This thing is good and that good, but take away this and that, and regard good itself if thou canst; so wilt thou see God, not good by a good that is other than Himself, but the good of all good ... and what can this be except God? Not a good mind, or a good angel, or a good of heaven, but goodness itself.”¹⁶ It is impossible for the mind of man to conceive the universal good more profoundly than St. Augustine does in this luminous passage.

γ) Lastly, inasmuch as all created goodness has its measure and goal in God alone, while the Divine Good, on the other hand, has its measure and end not above but within itself, the concept of God’s universal goodness naturally expands into ἡ ὑπεραγαθότης, *i. e.*, His goodness transcends all other goodness. It is in this sense that the Church, without regard to the possible existence of rational creatures, refers to God as “the highest, the most beautiful, the best good” (*summum bonum in se*). Because God knows and loves Himself as the Supreme and Infinite Good, He is infinitely happy in the possession of His own Essence.¹⁷

The attribute of ὑπεραγαθότης implies that the Highest Good is not merely *primus inter pares*, but that It is transcendental, and, therefore, beyond comparison with other things that are good, and not related to them as a part to the whole, but as ὁ ὢν to μὴ ὄν.¹⁸

b) It remains for us to consider God’s relative goodness.

As the primordial, universal, and transcendental good, God possesses in a higher degree than any of His creatures the ability and desire to communicate Himself to others, and to enrich them with perfections drawn from the plenitude of His own essential goodness. Himself overflowing with goodness, He causes His creatures to share it by freely endowing them with being.¹⁹ This relative goodness (*i. e.*, communicability) of God, may be traced in a fourfold direction, according as we make the exemplary, the efficient, the final, or the formal cause our point of departure.

α) As exemplary cause, God is the ideal and the archetype of all created goodness. Created goodness, therefore, is merely a faint imitation of the abounding goodness of the Divine Essence.

Created things are consequently good only in so far as they resemble, and correspond to, the ideal good in God. If the mere possibles (*i. e.*, things which never come into being) can be said to possess a species of goodness distinct from their exemplary cause—which some theologians misdoubt—they can derive that ideal goodness, as they derive their ideal being, solely from God, Who is the plenitude of goodness.

β) As creative or efficient cause, God endows His creatures with all their (absolute and relative) goodness at the same time that He gives them being. It is plain that from the hand of the

¹⁵ *In Luc.*, I, 8.

¹⁶ *De Trinit.*, VIII, 3, 4 (Haddan’s translation, p. 205).

¹⁷ Cfr. 1 Tim. 6:15: “ὁ μακάριος—He who is the Blessed.”

¹⁸ Cfr. *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 6, art. 2: “*Cum bonum sit in Deo sicut in causa non univoca, oportet quod sit in eo excellentissimo modo et propter hoc dicitur summum bonum.*”

¹⁹ Cfr. *Conc. Vatican.*, Sess. III, “*De Deo*,” cap. 1; can. 5.

Lord there can come forth nothing but what is good.²⁰ Hence it is more than a mere phrase to say: “All creatures are an emanation of God’s goodness.”

γ) God is the *finis absolute ultimus* of the whole created universe. He is the end of all things, because He is for all, including His rational creatures, “the highest, the most beautiful, the best good—a good that is worthy of all love and honor for its own sake” (*summum bonum nobis*).

Lessius proves this as follows: “*Quod est summum bonum hominis, necessario est ultimus eius finis. Rursum quod est summum bonum hominis, in eo necesse est consistere eius beatitudinem, quae nihil est aliud quam summi boni possessio. Summum bonum et ultimus finis dicitur et res ipsa, cuius possessione et fruitione beati sumus, et ipsa huius rei possessio et fruitio. Simili modo et beatitudo accipitur et pro ipsa re, cuius unione beati efficitur, et pro ipsa unione: illa a doctoribus vocatur beatitudo objectiva, haec formalis*—That which is man’s highest good, must necessarily be also his last end. Again, man’s beatitude, which is nothing but possession of the supreme good, must be identical with the highest good attainable by him. We also call supreme good and last end that particular object by whose possession and fruition we are rendered happy, and the possession and fruition of that object itself. Similarly the word beatitude designates both the object by the possession of which we are made happy, and the state of possession or union itself; the former is called objective beatitude, the latter beatitude in the formal sense.”²¹ As veracity and faithfulness constitute the formal motive of theological faith and hope, so the *summum bonum* is the formal motive of theological love (charity), and at the same time the foundation and corner-stone of ethics, morality, and asceticism. The terms final end, highest good, and beatitude, are furthermore organically related to a fourth, the glory of God (*gloria, glorificatio*), because the attainment of the final end, by the creature that is to be endowed with beatific vision, necessarily tends to the glorification of the *summum bonum*. Rom. 11:36: “*Ex ipso per ipsum et in ipso* (εἰς αὐτόν = *in ipsum*) *sunt omnia: ipsi gloria in saecula*—For of him, and by him, and in him, are all things: to him be glory for ever.” The Schoolmen teach with St. Thomas that God’s creatures tend to their final end, *i. e.*, seek Him as their highest good, by the very fact that they labor at their own perfection. By seeking their own end they seek God, though not all in the same manner, some being endowed with life, others not; some being irrational, others enjoying the use of reason. Thus all creation tends, either consciously or unconsciously, towards God. While His irrational creatures objectively manifest His glory by their very existence, those that have the use of reason are bound to glorify Him formally by knowing Him, loving Him, and praising Him; and thus, by glorifying God, work out their final destiny.

δ) God is not the formal cause of creatural goodness in the strict sense of the term, because essential goodness, with respect to its formal content, is quite as incommunicable as Divine Being itself.

Only from the Pantheistic point of view is it possible to confound created goodness with the absolute goodness proper to the Creator, thereby merging the infinite essence in the finite, which reflects its splendor, though inadequately. But when we consider God’s *supernatural* manifestations and the graces with which He has whelmed mankind, we must conceive Him philosophically as their formal cause, because in the supernatural order God surrenders Himself so completely to His creatures that created goodness becomes merged as it were in His own absolute goodness. By exaggerating this truth Christian mysticism has more than once verged

²⁰ Cfr. Gen. 1:31: “And God saw all the things that he had made, and they were very good.”

²¹ *De Summo Bono*, I, 1.

dangerously near the abyss of Pantheism.²² Without in the least identifying the creature with God, St. Peter speaks of its formal participation in the divine nature,²³ and the Fathers speak of a “deification” (θείωσις, not ἀποθέωσις) of the creature. In this class belongs the threefold elevation of man through supernal grace: (1) The Hypostatic Union as the personal communication of the Divine Logos to the humanity of Christ; (2) the state of sanctifying grace as the supernatural transfiguration of the soul, and (3) the beatific vision as the immersion of the soul in the life of truth and love enjoyed by the Most Holy Trinity.²⁴

READINGS:—Scheeben, *Dogmatik*, Vol. I, § 84.—Franzelin, *De Deo Uno*, thes. 29.—Lessius, *De Summo Bono*, 1. 2; *De Perfect. Div.*, 1. 7.—S. Thom., *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 5–6 (Bonjoannes-Lescher, *Compendium*, pp. 15 sqq.).—L. Janssens, *De Deo Uno*, t. I, pp. 253 sqq., Friburgi 1900.—Lépicier, *De Deo Uno*, t. I, pp. 221 sqq., 242 sqq., Parisiis 1902.—Humphrey, “*His Divine Majesty*,” pp. 95 sqq.

ARTICLE 2

GOD’S ETHICAL GOODNESS, OR SANCTITY

1. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.—Men attribute sanctity (*sanctitas*) to those persons only who lead a life pleasing to God. The definition of sanctity varies according as we consider either its proximate or its more remote elements.

a) To begin with the most common and most palpable notion, sanctity is freedom from sin, coupled with purity of morals.²⁵ Both these notes, the positive and the negative, belong together; for a being that is merely free from sin, as, *e. g.*, a child that has not yet arrived at the use of reason, cannot be called holy, at least not in the full sense of the term, even after it has received the sacrament of Baptism. Akin to, and practically identical with, this definition is the classical one given by Pseudo-Dionysius: “*Sanctitas est ab omni scelere libera et perfecta et prorsus immaculata puritas* (ἀγιότης μὲν οὖν ἔστιν ἡ παντὸς ἄγους ἐλευθέρα καὶ παντελής καὶ πάντη ἄχραντος καθαρότης).”²⁶

b) If we enquire into the deeper reason for that immunity from sin and purity of the will which sanctity implies, we shall find that both are conditioned by conformity of the will to the moral, which is ultimately the eternal law (*lex aeterna*). Hence sanctity can be genetically defined as the ethical equation between the will and the divine law of morals.²⁷ Thus conceived, sanctity runs exactly parallel to logical truth, except in that it has an additional necessary element in *perseverance*. A merely temporary “equation,” *i. e.*, the occasional performance of acts conforming to the moral law, does not make a man holy; to rise to the level of sanctity, moral goodness must be continuous, lasting, and based on principle.²⁸

c) In its highest sense sanctity is charity or the love of God (*amor Dei, caritas*). For whoever loves God truly above all things, will live in accordance with His law and avoid sin. Obedience to

²² Cfr. *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 6, art. 4.

²³ Cfr. 2 Petr. 1:4: “*divinae consortes naturae*.”

²⁴ Cfr. 2 Cor. 3:18.—Damascene sums up the dogmatic teaching of the Church on the ontological goodness of God in this terse sentence: “Ο ἀγαθὸς καὶ πανάγαθος καὶ ὑπεράγαθος καὶ ὅλως ὦν ἀγαθός.” (*De Fide Orthodox.*, IV, 4).

²⁵ “*Immunitas a peccato cum puritate morum coniuncta*.”

²⁶ *De Divin. Nomin.*, c. 12.

²⁷ “*Adaequatio voluntatis cum lege aeterna*.”

²⁸ Cfr. *S. Theol.*, 2–2ae, qu. 81, art. 8: “*Nomen sanctitatis duo videtur importare: primo munditiam, secundo firmitatem*.”

the divine law here below has no other end than union with God in Heaven in inseparable love. Hence eternal beatitude, as the status in which man enjoys the love of God without danger of ever again losing it, represents the very highest degree of sanctity.²⁹

2. THE DOGMA.—The Church has condemned as heretical the teaching of Gottschalk, Scotus Eriugena, and Calvin, that God is the author of sin. “*Si quis dixerit, non esse in potestate hominis, vias suas malas facere, sed mala ita ut bona Deum operari, non permissione tantum, sed etiam proprie et per se, ... anathema sit*—If any one saith that it is not in man’s power to make his ways evil, but that the works that are evil God worketh as well as those that are good, not permissibly only, but properly, and of Himself, ... let him be anathema.”³⁰ The essential sanctity of the Most Holy Trinity, *i. e.*, the Godhead, is also implied in the dogma which defines the personal holiness of the Holy Ghost. Scientific theology develops the dogma of God’s sanctity in a twofold manner, considering it first by itself, and secondly in its relation to created sanctity.

a) According to the pseudo-Dionysian definition God’s sanctity is in the first place

α) “Absolute immunity from sin, and immaculate purity.” The first (negative) note not only implies that God *does* not sin (*impeccantia*), but also that He *cannot* sin (*impeccabilitas*). It is plain that there can be no dissonance in a Being Whose Will coincides with His Essence. Therefore God’s love of moral goodness is synonymous with infinite hatred of sin (*infinitum odium peccati*). There are many passages in Holy Writ which prove this. Deut. 32:4, we read: “*Deus fidelis et absque ulla iniquitate*—God is faithful and without any iniquity.”³¹ Ps. 5:5: “Thou art not a God that willest iniquity.... Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity; thou wilt destroy all that speak a lie.”³² The “mystery of iniquity” (μυστήριον ἀνομίας), of which St. Paul speaks in 2 Thess. 2:7, does not consist in this that God wills iniquity, either as an end or as a means to an end, but rather in that He permits it at all. But although He permits it, He hates sin; and the sole reason why He permits it is that it is objectively better to permit it than to prevent it absolutely, in order that the divine attributes of love, mercy, and justice may have their proper scope.—The other (positive) note of sanctity, *viz.*: immaculate purity, is frequently mentioned in Sacred Scripture. Thus Ps. 144:17: “*Iustus Dominus in omnibus viis suis et sanctus in omnibus operibus suis*—The Lord is just in all His ways, and holy in all His works.” Deserving of special mention is the famous “Trisagion,” Is. 6:3: “*Seraphim clamabant alter ad alterum et dicebant: Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, Dominus Deus exercituum*—The Seraphims ... cried one to another, and said: Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts.”³³ In the Primitive Church the Trisagion was seldom sung except at solemn Mass; since the sixth century it concludes the daily Preface. On Good Friday the choir sings in Greek: “Ἅγιος ὁ Θεός, ἅγιος ἰσχυρός, ἅγιος ἀθάνατος, ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς—O holy God, holy and strong, holy and immortal, have mercy on us.”

β) If sanctity in general is “the ethical equation between the will and the moral law,” the sanctity of God, being essential to Him and deeply rooted in His divine nature, must be

²⁹ Οἱ ἅγιοι = the Saints. Cfr. Lessius, *De Perf. Divin.*, VIII, 1.

³⁰ *Conc. Trident.*, Sees. VI, c. 6.

³¹ Cfr. Rom. 9:14.

³² Cfr, Ps 44:3: “*Dilexisti iustitiam et odisti iniquitatem.*”

³³ Cfr. Apoc. 4:8.

substantial. For as the will of God is absolutely one with His Essence, from which flows the *lex aeterna*, God cannot *acquire* sanctity;³⁴ He must be holy by His very nature and in His proper Essence.³⁵ Nor is sanctity an ethical perfection superadded to the Divine Essence;³⁶ it is absolutely identical with God's Substance.³⁷ Therefore God *is* Sanctity in the same way in which He is Absolute Reason. Holy Scripture adumbrates this aseitarian character of sanctity when it calls God "the alone holy." Job 15:15: "*Ecce inter sanctos eius nemo immutabilis, et coeli [angeli] non sunt mundi in conspectu eius*—Behold among his saints none is unchangeable, and the heavens [angels] are not pure in his sight." 1 Kings 2:2: "*Non est sanctus, ut est Dominus*—There is none holy as the Lord is." Consequently God alone is holy as He "alone is good."³⁸

γ) We penetrate even more deeply into the nature of divine sanctity when we define it as "the essential love that God has for His own goodness." As identity of being and thought, of cognoscibility and cognition in God entails the highest form of truth-life, *i. e.*, the most complete comprehension of His own Essence (*comprehensio sui*), so absolute identity of being and willing, His amiability and His love, involves the highest form of volitional life, *i. e.*, substantial, living, subsisting sanctity.³⁹ Hence it is that the intrinsic product of God's notional understanding is "Hypostatic Wisdom" (*i. e.*, the Son of God, or Logos) while the intrinsic product of His notional volition and love is "Hypostatic Love" (*i. e.*, the Holy Ghost). God's sanctity, conceived as charity, is the mainspring of His volitional life, just as wisdom is the mainspring of His living knowledge. In the light of these truths we understand the principle of moral theology, that "Charity is the fulfilment of the whole law," and that love of God (*caritas*) must be considered as the "soul" and "queen" of all virtues, and, consequently, as absolute sanctity. This deeper conception of the divine attribute of sanctity as an affective and effective transformation of the infinitely Loving One into the infinitely Lovable Good—rather than as a merely "ethical equation"—is of the highest importance in aiding us to understand the essence of sanctifying grace as well as the Third Person of the Most Holy Trinity.⁴⁰

b) In its relation to those creatures which are endowed with intellect (angels and men) the sanctity of God, like His relative (ontological) goodness, is fourfold. In the first place, God is the inaccessible ideal and exemplar (*causa exemplaris*) of all created sanctity, especially in the supernatural life of faith and glory.⁴¹ Secondly, He is the fount (*causa efficiens*) of natural justice and of supernatural sanctity through "sanctifying grace." The Sacraments also derive their sanctifying power *ex opere operato* from God's sanctity, or, by appropriation, from the Holy Ghost. Thirdly, divine sanctity is the *causa finalis* of creatural sanctity, inasmuch as the latter

³⁴ *Sanctitas participata s. ab alio.*

³⁵ *Sanctitas a se s. per essentiam.*

³⁶ *Sanctitas accidentalis.*

³⁷ *Sanctitas substantialis.*

³⁸ Luke 18:19: "None is good but God alone." Cfr. Ps. 38:6.

³⁹ Cfr. the profound dictum of the Pseudo-Dionysius (*De Divin. Nomin.*, c. 4): "*Est Deus amor bonus boni propter bonum* (Ἐστὶν ὁ Θεὸς ἔρωρ ἀγαθὸς ἀγαθοῦ διὰ τὸ ἀγαθόν)."

⁴⁰ Cfr. Scheeben, *Dogmatik*, Vol. I. p. 734.

⁴¹ Lev. 11:44: "For I am the Lord your God: be holy because I am holy." Cfr. 1 Pet 1:15 sq.

constitutes the aptest and most excellent medium of the glorification of God.⁴² Lastly, the divine sanctity must be called the quasi-formal cause (*causa quasi formalis, sed non informans*) of creatural sanctity, inasmuch as sanctifying grace inheres in the soul as a formal principle, as the Holy Ghost indwells personally in the just.⁴³

3. THE OBJECTIVE SANCTITY OF GOD.—The term sanctity is sometimes employed in a non-ethical sense, to denote the dignity, the inviolability, or the sacredness of a person or thing (*augustum, sacrum, ὅσιον*).

a) This objective sanctity, which is closely related to ontological goodness (*bonum quod*), may be attributed both to persons and things. But since it grows in proportion with dignity, it is in the very nature of things greater in persons than in objects (*objecta sacra, ὅσια*). Therefore the Schoolmen were wont to designate the angels as “*hypostases cum dignitate*.” Creatures endowed with intellect are persons, and therefore *sui iuris*, inviolable, venerable, and deserving of particular honor. It is for this reason that slavery is so damnable. It is in this sense, too, that the Pope is called “His Holiness”; that an asylum, or the last will of a dying man, is termed “sacred,” Palestine “the Holy Land,” and so forth. These persons or objects are sacred or holy in so far as they are honorable, and venerable, and altogether inviolable.

b) Manifestly God, Who is “the supreme Good” *sans phrase*, because of His infinite dignity must be absolutely honorable and venerable, and therefore objectively sacred or holy, both to Himself and to His creatures. In fact, He is the Absolute Majesty, any violation of which by blasphemy, sacrilege, or formal hatred, is an awful crime. As God, out of respect for Himself, must needs honor His own dignity and majesty (*i. e.*, objective sanctity), so the merest self-respect also compels Him to demand that every rational creature should honor and respect His absolute dignity and majesty by paying Him the highest possible form of worship, *viz.*: divine adoration (*adoratio, latría*). Under this aspect God’s objective sanctity may be regarded as the formal motive of the *virtus religionis*.⁴⁴ The Bible frequently alludes to this divine attribute, as when, *e. g.*, it refers to God as “the Holy One of Israel,” that is, He Whom the Israelites must venerate; or in those texts where the name of God is spoken of as “holy and terrible.”⁴⁵ Creatures derive their objective sanctity from God as their exemplary and efficient cause. The dignity of civil rulers is sacred and inviolable, because civil authority comes from God. The Bible sometimes refers to prophets and kings as “gods” on account of the dignity they had received from the Almighty. We often refer to churches, vestments, pictures, relics, rosaries, etc., as sacred (in the objective sense of the term), because, and in so far as, they are consecrated by God and to His use.⁴⁶ In the same manner among the Israelites the Ark of the Covenant was called “*Sanctum Sanctorum*,” the place where Moses beheld the burning bush, “holy land,” and so forth.

READINGS:—Heinrich, *Dogmat. Theologie*, Vol. I, § 201.—Scheeben, *Dogmatik*, Vol. I, §§ 99, 104 (summarized in Wilhelm-Scannell’s *Manual*, pp. 205 sq.).—Kleutgen, *De Ipso Deo*, pp. 348 sqq.—Lessius, *De Perfect. Div.*, 1. VIII.—J. Stufler, S. J., *Die Heiligkeit Gottes und der ewige Tod*, Innsbruck 1904.—Boedder, *Natural Theology*, pp. 304 sqq.—Humphrey, “*His Divine Majesty*,” pp. 98 sqq.

⁴² Compare Math. 6:9: “*Sanctificetur nomen tuum*—Hallowed be thy name,” with 1 Thess. 4:3: “*Haec est autem voluntas Dei, sanctificatio vestra*—For this is the will of God, your sanctification.”

⁴³ Cfr. Rom. 5:5: “*Caritas Dei diffusa est in cordibus nostris per Spiritum sanctum, qui datus est nobis*—The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us.”

⁴⁴ Mazzella (*De Virtutibus Infusis*, n. 45, 4th ed., Rome 1894), holds a different view. Cfr. S. Thom., *S. Theol.*, 2–2ae qu, 81, art. 4 sq.

⁴⁵ Cfr. Ps. 110:9: “*Sanctum et terribile nomen eius*.”

⁴⁶ *Consecrare = sacrum reddere*.

ARTICLE 3

GOD'S MORAL GOODNESS, OR BENEVOLENCE

1. DEFINITION OF MORAL GOODNESS.—As sanctity refers to the *bonum quod*, so moral goodness, or benevolence, is related to the *bonum cui*. The basic note of benevolence is a gratuitous love⁴⁷ which promotes the happiness of others out of sheer kindness. It follows that benevolence can be attributed only to intelligent, personal beings, whilst the simple *bonitas alteri s. relativa* is predicable also of irrational things (*e. g.*, the sun is good for terrestrial life). The contradictory of benevolence is malevolence (*malevolentia*), a disposition or inclination to injure others and to deprive them of their belongings.

As a moral attribute, *i. e.* a virtue inherent in the will, God's benevolence corresponds to His veracity and faithfulness. Like veracity and faithfulness, benevolence cannot be detached from its ontological basis.

2. THE DOGMA.—The Vatican Council has defined God's benevolence in these terms: "*Hic solus verus Deus bonitate sua ... ad manifestandam perfectionem suam per bona, quae creaturis impertitur, liberrimo consilio ... utramque de nihilo condidit creaturam.... Universa vero, quae condidit, Deus providentia sua tuetur atque gubernat, attingens a fine usque ad finem fortiter et disponens omnia suaviter*—This one only true God, of His own goodness ... to manifest His perfection by the blessings which He bestows on creatures, and with absolute freedom of counsel ... created out of nothing ... both the spiritual and corporal creature.... God protects and governs by His Providence all things which He hath made, 'reaching from end to end mightily, and ordering all things sweetly.' "⁴⁸

a) In extension and essence God's benevolence may be characterized as "the firm will which He has, out of pure but free love to confer natural as well as supernatural benefits upon His creatures, according to the nature and final destiny of each." Its root lies in His ontological goodness.⁴⁹ Its motive is God's generous love for His creatures; whatever contravenes this love, runs counter to His Divine Nature. Hence the Bible says simply: "*Deus caritas est* ('Ο Θεός ἀγάπη ἐστίν)—God is charity."⁵⁰ St. Ignatius of Antioch had a beautiful motto to this effect: "*Amor meus crucifixus est* ('Ερωσ ἐμὸς ἐσταύρωται)—My Love is crucified." Pseudo-Dionysius, in calling God benevolent and generous "not deliberately and by choice, but by His very nature,"⁵¹ did not mean to deny the freedom with which He dispenses His favors, but only to emphasize that it is not a matter of free choice with God either to be or not to be love. In virtue of this essential characteristic, Divine Love is creative; for, "*Amor Dei est infundens et creans bonitatem in rebus.*"⁵²

b) Considering the attribute of divine benevolence in respect of its comprehension, we must say that it comprises all created beings, rational and irrational. God is "the All-Good One," His benevolence is universal. To begin with, all irrational creatures constantly receive innumerable

⁴⁷ *Amor gratuitus, benevolentia.*

⁴⁸ *Conc. Vat.*, Sess. III, c. 1. (Denzinger-Bannwart, *Enchiridion*, n. 1783).

⁴⁹ "*Ex eo enim,*" says Lessius, "*quod res sit perfecta in sua entitate, propendet ad sui communionem, sicut vas perfecte plenum ad effusionem sui liquoris.*" (*De Perf. Divin.*, VIII, 1.)

⁵⁰ 1 John 4:16.

⁵¹ *De Div. Nomin.*, c. 4.

⁵² S. Thom., *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 20, art. 2.—On the "eight qualities" of benevolence, cfr. Scheeben, *Dogmatik*, Vol. III, § 202, and Lessius, *De Perf. Divin.*, IX, 3.

favors at His hands. For not only does He give food to the young ravens,⁵³ but He clothes the lilies of the field, and without His will not a sparrow falls from the roof.⁵⁴ Therefore there exists no more beautiful formula for saying grace at table than Ps. 144:15 sq.: “*Oculi omnium in te sperant, Domine, et tu das escam illorum in tempore opportuno; aperis tu manum tuam et implem omne animal benedictione*—The eyes of all hope in thee, O Lord, and thou givest them meat in due season. Thou openest thy hand, and fillest with blessing every living creature.” It is characteristic of Dante’s profundity of conception that he closes his *Paradiso* with the line: “*L’amor che muove il sole e l’altre stelle.*”⁵⁵

But nothing can equal God’s love for man, both as a species and as an individual. The free creation of the human race and its immediate elevation to the supernatural plane, was the first and fundamental proof of divine benevolence towards man. Cfr. Ps. 8:6: “*Minuisti eum paulo minus ab angelis, gloria et honore coronasti eum*—Thou hast made him a little less than the angels, thou hast crowned him with glory and honor.” Even after man had fallen, God’s benevolence did not fail him. The Lord “raineth upon the just and the unjust,”⁵⁶ and showers blessings upon the idolatrous gentiles, “*benefaciens de coelo, dans pluvias et tempora fructifera, implens cibo et laetitia corda nostra*—Doing good from heaven, giving rains and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”⁵⁷ The acme of His love for humankind is reached in the Incarnation, this mystery of love, in the light of which the “*mysterium iniquitatis*” literally pales into insignificance. John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son.” In His Son He gave us the most precious thing He had. Rom. 8:32: “He that spared not even his own Son ... hath he not also, with him, given us all things?” With kindly care He consults for each and every individual man. Cfr. Is. 49:15 sq.: “Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee in my hands.” The history of Divine Providence is an eloquent commentary on Wisdom 12:1: “*Quam bonus et suavis est, Domine, spiritus tuus in omnibus*—How good and sweet is thy spirit, O Lord, in all things.” Such boundless love should elicit a strong and ardent affection in return. “Let us therefore love God, because God hath first loved us.”⁵⁸

READINGS:—Heinrich, *Dogmat. Theologie*, Vol. III, § 202.—Scheeben, *Dogmatik*, Vol. I, § 98.—*Lessius, *De Perfect. Divin.*, 1. IX.—St. Thomas, *Contr. Gent.*, I, 91 (Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures*, pp. 67 sq.).—IDEM, *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 20.

SECTION 5

GOD AS ABSOLUTE BEAUTY

⁵³ Ps. 146:9.

⁵⁴ Math. 6:28, 10:29.

⁵⁵ “But yet the will roll’d onward, like a wheel
In even motion, by *the Love* impell’
That moves the sun in heav’n and all the stars.”

(Cary’s Translation.)

⁵⁶ Math. 5:45.

⁵⁷ Acts 14:16.

⁵⁸ 1 John 4:19.

1. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.—The nature of beauty has been the subject of much controversy. The safest thing for the theologian to do is to adopt the Patristic, which is also the Scholastic, view.

a) The “Angel of the Schools” describes the beautiful thus: “*Pulchra sunt, quae visa placent*—Those things are beautiful which please when seen.”¹ Hence, clearly, æsthetic pleasure or delectation is of the essence of beauty. But this definition is merely *ex effectu*, as was already observed by St. Augustine: “*Non ideo pulchra sunt quia delectant, sed ideo delectant, quia pulchra sunt*—Things are not beautiful because they please, but they please because they are beautiful.”² To determine the essence of beauty we must therefore seek out the cause of æsthetic pleasure. This cause, according to St. Augustine, is unity amid variety³—“*Unitas in multiplicitate*,” but so that unity is the determining element: “*Omnis pulchritudinis forma unitas*.”⁴—Now, if unity is to give pure pleasure to the mind of him who contemplates it, the beautiful object must needs be visible and evident. A hidden or imperceptible unity, could not be productive of æsthetic pleasure. St. Thomas⁵ resolves the Augustinian concept of beauty into the following three essential elements: completeness of the whole (*perfectio rei*), harmonious relation of its parts (*proportio debita partium*), and, shed over all, a certain definiteness, clearness, lustre or splendor (*claritas*). *Claritas* renders a beautiful object visible to the mind; the *proportio debita partium* is the basis of “unity in variety”; and the *perfectio rei* is the necessary foundation of both, because that which is imperfect lacks both proportion and clearness.⁶

b) From what we have said it follows that beauty is essentially related to the intellect and will, and also to truth and goodness. Truth and goodness are linked together by the notion of *ens*, with which they are both convertible; but they are still more closely bound up with the concept of beauty, because Beauty as it were draws with one hand from the well of truth, and with the other from the fountain of goodness. It holds the middle between truth and goodness. St. Augustine calls it “*splendor veri*—the brightness of reality,”⁷ while St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that between beauty and goodness there is only a logical distinction.⁸ A beautiful object must above all else be good (*i. e.*, perfect) in order to be able to elicit from the beholder pure love of complacency (*amor complacentiae*). But it must also be clear and evident, because if it lacked evidence, the mind could not easily perceive the conformity and grouping of the various parts around the central point of unity. Whence follows the important deduction, that the intellect, and the intellect alone, perceives beauty; while the will, and the will alone, is the seat of æsthetic pleasure. Beauty, therefore, is a supra-sensual quality; and this holds true not only with regard to spiritual beings, such as God, the angels, and the soul, but also in respect of material objects, such as painting, sculpture, music, etc. The irrational brute may perceive a beautiful object, but it can not perceive

¹ *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 5, art. 4, ad 1.

² *De Vera Relig.*, c. 32, n. 59.

³ “*Unitas in multiplicitate*.”

⁴ *S. August, Ep. 18 ad Coelestin.*

⁵ *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 39, art. 8.

⁶ Cfr. John Rickaby, S. J., *General Metaphysics* (Stonyhurst Series), pp. 147 sqq.

⁷ Cfr. Ch. Coppens, S. J., *English Rhetoric*, pp. 98 sq., 3rd ed., New York 1887.

⁸ Cfr. *S. Theol.*, 1–2ae, qu. 17, art. 1, ad 3: “*Pulchrum est idem bono, sola ratione differens. Quum enim bonum sit, quod omnia appetunt, de ratione boni est, quod in eo quietetur appetitus. Sed ad rationem pulchri pertinet, quod in eius aspectu seu cognitione quietetur appetitus.... Et sic patet, quod pulchrum addit supra bonum quendam ordinem ad vim cognoscitivam, ita quod bonum dicatur id quod simpliciter complacet appetitui, pulchrum autem id cuius ipsa apprehensio placet.*”

its (intelligible) beauty. We may therefore define beauty with Kleutgen⁹ as “*rei bonitas, quatenus haec mente cognita delectat*—The goodness of an object, in so far as this, perceived by the mind, affords pleasure.”

c) As beauty and goodness materially coincide, the former must be a transcendental attribute of being like the latter.¹⁰ In matter of fact the elements of beauty, *i. e.*, perfection, harmonious proportion, and clearness, or splendor, are proper to all objects in the same manner in which being is proper to them.¹¹

2. DOGMATIC APPLICATION OF THESE PRINCIPLES.—Though the Church has never defined it as of faith, yet Sacred Scripture and Tradition make it quite certain that beauty is an attribute of God. Perhaps no divine attribute has been so generally neglected by theologians as this, owing probably to the circumstance that in the unsettled state of the science of aesthetics it was not easy to determine whether beauty must be classed as a “pure” or as a “mixed” perfection of the Divine Essence. We claim that it is a pure perfection; that the notion of *pulchrum* is formally predicable of God; that beauty in its formal sense is proper to God; that He is primordial beauty, all-beauty, and beautiful in a higher sense than any creature, and that, precisely for this reason, He is the exemplar and the cause of all created beauty.

a) Reason tells us that God must be beautiful; for if He contains within His Essence the elements of beauty (perfection, harmonious proportion, and splendor), the attribute which necessarily results from these elements must also be His. Now, God is infinite perfection; His infinitely numerous good qualities (not parts) coalesce in His Divine Essence into a most intensive unity; and, finally, He is all light, and pure clarity, and consequently, He must be beautiful. The Book of Wisdom concludes from the beauty manifest in the physical universe that the Creator is transcendently beautiful. Wisdom 13:3 sq.: “*Quorum [i. e., ignis, coeli, solis, etc.] si specie [pulchritudine] delectati deos putaverunt, sciant quanto his dominator eorum speciosior [pulchrior] est; speciei enim generator (ὁ τοῦ κάλλους γενεσιάρχης) haec omnia constituit*—With whose beauty [*viz.*, that of fire, the sun, etc.], if they, being delighted, took them to be gods: let them know how much the Lord of them is more beautiful than they: for the first author of beauty made all those things.” Scripture frequently compares the beauty of God to a garment wrapped about the Divine Essence. Cfr. Prov. 31:25: “*Fortitudo et décor indumentum eius*—Strength and beauty are her clothing.” Ps. 103:1 sq.: “*Decorem induisti, amictus lumine sicut vestimento*—Thou ... art clothed with light as with a garment.” Ecclesiasticus compares “Eternal Wisdom” to the splendor of exquisite flowers, and calls it “mother of beautiful love.” In the Canticle of Canticles Divine Beauty appears in the guise of a charming bride-groom.¹² With the exception of St. Augustine, who has written on the subject with his usual profundity, the Fathers seldom descant on this divine attribute.

b) God is not only beautiful, He is the very essence of beauty (*pulchritudo a se*), just as He is essential truth and goodness. And in the same manner that He is true in virtue of being Himself

⁹ *De Ipso Deo*, p. 418.

¹⁰ Cfr. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Div. Nomin.*, c. 4: “*Eorum quae sunt, nullum est quin pulchri et boni particeps sit*—No thing exists but what partakes of beauty and goodness.”

¹¹ On the subdivisions of beauty, sublimity, elegance, charm, etc., see Jungmann, S. J., *Ästhetik*, 3rd ed., Vol. I, Freiburg 1886; G. Gietmann, S. J., *Allgemeine Ästhetik*, Freiburg 1899; John Rickaby, S. J., *General Metaphysics*, pp. 147 sqq.; Chas. Coppens, S. J., *English Rhetoric*, 3rd ed., pp. 98 sqq., New York 1887.

¹² Cfr. *Cant. Cantic.*, 1:15: “*Ecce tu pulcher es, dilecte mi, et decorus*—Behold thou art fair, my beloved, and comely.”

the Truth, He is beautiful in virtue of being Himself Beauty, because beauty is His own Essence. This proposition is demonstrable as a theological conclusion from the three elements of beauty: *perfectio, proportio partium, claritas*. God is infinite perfection itself.¹³ He is the subsisting *monas*, comprising within Himself all being,¹⁴ and He is light and splendor.¹⁵ Consequently, He is substantial, subsisting, aseitarian Beauty. This becomes still clearer if we apply to Him St. Augustine's definition of beauty, viz.: "Unity in variety." There can be no greater variety than that implied in God's infinite perfections; nor a more intensive unity than the identity of the Divine Essence with its attributes. Consequently the notion of beauty is realized in God absolutely; and all the more perfectly as the element of multiplicity is not confined to the virtually distinct properties of the Divine Essence, but applies in an even higher degree to the real distinction of the Divine Persons. Absolute unity in real trinity must culminate in absolute beauty.¹⁶

Because God is Primordial Beauty, therefore He is All-Beauty, and excels every species of created beauty, as Nazianzen intimates when he says: "Who is all beauty and far beyond all beauty."¹⁷ We will not rehearse the utterances of Pseudo-Dionysius, who has written so sublimely on the beauty of God, because we know now that this supposed "disciple of the Apostles," whom the Schoolmen held in such high esteem, was not the real Areopagite, but a Christian pupil of the Neo-Platonist philosopher Proclus (+ 485). The sooner theologians cease quoting Pseudo-Dionysius as an authority, the better. He can at most serve as a witness to Tradition such as it existed in the latter part of the fifth and in the early part of the sixth century.¹⁸

c) How is Divine Beauty related to created beauty? Divine Beauty is the ideal and source of all created beauty, both in the spiritual and the material order. With reference to Wisdom 13:3 sqq., St. Hilary teaches: "*De magnitudine enim operum et pulchritudine creaturarum consequenter generationum conditor conspicitur. Magnorum Creator in maximis est, et pulcherrimorum conditor in pulcherrimis.*" Augustine confesses: "*Nulla extra te pulchra essent, nisi essent abs te*—No beautiful objects would exist outside of Thee, had they not received being from Thee,"¹⁹ and deplores his own defection from the Source of Beauty thus: "*Sero te amavi, pulchritudo tam antiqua et tam nova.... Et ecce intus eras, et ego foris, et ibi te quaerebam et in ista formosa, quae fecisti, deformis irrueram*—Too late have I loved Thee, O Beauty so ancient, O Beauty so new, too late have I loved Thee! And behold Thou wast within, and I was abroad, and there I sought Thee, and deformed as I was, ran after those beauties which Thou hast made."²⁰ Unfortunately for himself, the great Bishop of Hippo had not followed the advice of St. Isidore of Seville,²¹ who urged that fallen man should use the beauties of creation as a ladder whereby to ascend to Primordial Beauty. God's beauty is most splendidly reflected, not by the mineral, or the vegetable, or the animal kingdom, nor yet by the fine arts, but by the immortal soul of man, which presents a

¹³ *Supra*, pp. 180 sqq.

¹⁴ *Supra*, pp. 196 sqq.

¹⁵ *Supra*, pp. 225 sqq.

¹⁶ Why beauty is especially appropriated to the Logos, is explained by St. Thomas, *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 30, art. 8.

¹⁷ *Or. Theol.*, 2. Cfr. IDEM, *De Virginit.*, cap. 11: "No one is so obtuse as to be unable to see that God alone is beauty κατ' ἐξοχήν, in the original and exclusive sense."

¹⁸ Cfr. H. Koch, *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita in seinen Beziehungen zum Neuplatonismus und Mysterienwesen*, Mainz 1900. Also the article "Dionysius, the Pseudo-Areopagite," in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. V, pp. 13 sqq. and Bardenhewer-Shahan, *Patrology*, pp. 535 sqq. Freiburg and St. Louis 1908.

¹⁹ *Confess.*, IV, 10.

²⁰ *Confess.*, X, 27.

²¹ *De Summo Bono*, I, 4.

likeness and an image of Divine Beauty. Origen says: “The human soul is most beautiful; in fact, it possesses a beauty that is truly marvelous; for the Artist Who created it said: Let Us make man according to Our image and likeness. What can be more beautiful than such beauty and similitude?”²² Let it be added, however, that the soul is capable of various degrees of beauty according as it is considered as the natural or the supernatural image of its Creator. The infusion of sanctifying grace, the formation in the soul of the image of Christ, the immersion of the spirit into the beatific light of the Divine Substance—produce in man a degree of beauty which no tongue can utter and no pen is able to describe.²³ Therefore ascetic writers justly claim that the attainment of moral perfection is the noblest of all arts, and that no masterpiece of art can be compared to a holy soul. The most beautiful product of Divine Art is the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in whose person innumerable privileges and perfections are harmoniously blended. Jesus Christ Himself (as λόγος ἔνσαρκος = the Word made Flesh) would have to be called the apex of creatural beauty, and therefore the most faithful image of Divine Beauty, were it not for the fact that we must admire in Him rather the Hypostatic Union of created with Uncreated Beauty. For in His Divine Nature Christ is Substantial Beauty, while created beauty shines forth in His human nature only.²⁴

Closely related to beauty is the divine attribute of sublimity (*sublimitas*, μεγαλοπρέπεια), which is rooted in God’s infinity, incomprehensibility, and omnipotence. Several of the Psalms describe this attribute in language of imposing grandeur, and the famous “Prayer of Habacuc” has rightly been reckoned among the most precious gems of the world’s literature.²⁵

READINGS:—Scheeben, *Dogmatik*, Vol. I, § 85 (Wilhelm Scannell’s *Manual*, Vol. I, pp. 206 sqq.).—*Kleutgen, *De Ipso Deo*, pp. 417 sqq.—Franzelin, *De Deo Uno*, thes. 30.—Nieremberg, *Della Bellezza di Dio*.—Petavius, *De Deo*, VI, 8.—Thomassin, *De Deo*, III, 19 sqq.—*Stentrup, *De Deo Uno*, cap. VII, Oeniponte 1895.—H. Krug, *De Pulchritudine Divina*, Friburgi 1902.—Humphrey, “*His Divine Majesty*,” pp. 113 sqq., London 1897.

CHAPTER II

GOD’S CATEGORICAL ATTRIBUTES OF BEING

The so-called categories (κατηγορίαί, *praedicamenta*) differ from the transcendental attributes of being in that they are not univocally predicable of all being, but of certain determined classes of being only. By reducing all concrete beings to their highest genera,

²² *Hom*, in *Ezech.*, 7. (See S. Thom., *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 3, art. 1 sqq.)

²³ Cfr. Scheeben, *Die Herrlichkeiten der göttlichen Gnade*, 6th ed. Freiburg 1897.

²⁴ Cfr. Ps. 44:3: “*Speciosus forma prae filiis hominum, diffusa est gratia in labiis tuis*—Thou art beautiful above the sons of men: grace it poured abroad in thy lips.” Cfr. Clem. Alex., *Strom.*, II, 5: “*Redemptor noster ... est vera pulchritudo, nam erat lux vera*—Our Saviour ... is the true Beauty, because He was the true Light.” On the whole subject, cfr. J. Souben, *Les Manifestations du Beau dans la Nature*, Paris 1901.

²⁵ Habacuc, Ch. 3.

Aristotle arrived at the ten so-called categories: substance (οὐσία) and the nine accidents (συμβεβηκότα): quality (ποιόν), quantity (ποσόν), relation (πρός τι), place (πού), time (ποτέ), position or attitude (*situs*, κείσθαι), habitus or external belongings (ἔχειν = potency and faculties), action (ποιεῖν), and passion (πάσχειν, *pati*).¹ In entering upon the discussion of the remaining attributes of God, we base the theological teaching concerning them upon these *summa genera essendi*, i. e., “the two all-embracing classes (substance and accident), to one or other of which all terrestrial things capable of being conceived in thought belong.” We do not, of course, mean to apply the predicaments to God in their strict sense—God is beyond and above all categories of being—but we employ them merely as points of departure and development. “Relation” (πρός τι) is omitted here, because it plays its part chiefly in the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, with which we are not specially concerned in this volume.² “Quality” and “habitus” we have already done with. Hence there remain to be considered only two groups of categories: (1) “Substance” and “action,” which by the method of affirmative differentiation give us the two positive attributes of absolute substantiality and omnipotence; (2) “Quantity,” “passion,” “time,” and “space,” (πού and κείσθαι), which by the method of negative differentiation give us the four negative attributes of incorporeity, unchangeableness, eternity, and omnipresence. Hence we shall divide this chapter into six sections.

SECTION 1

GOD’S ABSOLUTE SUBSTANTIALITY

1. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.—An accident by its very nature inheres in some other being as its subject (*esse in alio*); while substance, on the other hand, essentially connotes inseity (*esse in se*); i. e., it essentially excludes the notion of a subject in which to inhere. “Substance is being, inasmuch as this being is by itself (*per se*);¹ accident is that whose being is to be in something else.”²

Inseity must not be confounded with aseity, and a sharp distinction must be drawn between *ens a se* and *ens in se*. It was because he confused these two notions, after the example of

¹ Cfr. Clarke, *Logic*, pp. 187 sqq., and the article “Category” in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* III, 433 sqq.

² Pohle’s treatise on the Divine Trinity will, *D. v.*, appear in English as a separate volume in the near future.

¹ The Schoolmen, in order to leave *per se* applicable to both uncreated and created substance, have chosen *a se* to signify the special character of the former. A substance is that which exists *per se*, or which has its own proper being (“*id cui ratione sui convenit esse, cui competit esse non in alio*”); and thus it is opposed to accident, which exists *in alio*, or which at least naturally, whatever may happen preternaturally, has its being only by inherence in a subject Cfr. Rickaby, *General Metaphysics*, p. 253.

² S. Thom., *De Potentia*, a. 7

Descartes, that Spinoza fell into the error of teaching that there is but “one substance” with two attributes, viz., spirituality and extension.³ While it is quite true that the *ens in se*, like the *ens a se*, is “an independent being,” they differ essentially. For, while the *ens a se* is independent not only of any subject in which to inhere, but likewise of all extrinsic factors, the *ens in se*. (*i. e.*, substance) has the first-mentioned kind of independence, but not the latter, except when it possesses at the same time aseity. Hence the *ens in se*, like the *ens in alio* (*i. e.*, accident), may well be dependent upon an external cause; that is to say, there is nothing in its essence which would prevent it from being an *ens ab alio*, or a contingent being.

The foregoing explanation makes it clear that the quiddity of “substance” does not lie primarily in its function of being the subject (ὑποκείμενον) of accidents. On the contrary, substance is substance because it is formally *esse in se*, no matter whether there are accidents or not (though, of course, *de facto*, no created substance can exist without accidents). If we thus eliminate its accessory function of furnishing a subject for accidents, “substance” immediately becomes a simple perfection predicable of God; while “accident,” by its very nature, can connote only a mixed perfection, inasmuch as, in the words of St. Anselm, it is manifestly “better not to be an accident than to be an accident.”⁴

2. THE DOGMA.—It is an article of faith that God is a substance: “*Una essentia, substantia seu natura simplex omnino*—One essence, an absolutely simple substance or nature.”⁵ “*Una singularis ... substantia*—One sole ... substance.”⁶

a) The Scriptural proof for this dogma is based on God’s aseity, from which His substantiality must of necessity follow, because the *ens a se* must necessarily also be *ens in se*; for, if the *ens a se* (הַיְיָ) were a mere accident, it would be intrinsically dependent upon some other being as its subject, and consequently would not be *ens a se*. In virtue of its self-existence, therefore, the Divine Substance necessarily is *substantia a se*, and admits of no accidents. It is consequently pure inseity without depending upon accidents for any, even the slightest perfection. In this sense St. Augustine teaches: “*Alia quae dicuntur essentiae sive substantiae, capiunt accidentia, quibus in eis fiat vel magna vel quantacunque mutatio; Deo autem aliquid huiusmodi accidere non potest, ideo sola est incommunicabilis substantia*—But other things that are called essences or substances admit of accidents, whereby a change, whether great or small, is produced in them. But there can be no accident of this kind in respect of God; and therefore He is the only unchangeable substance or essence.”⁷ This is also the teaching of the Schoolmen.

b) Inasmuch, however, as God, being their exemplary and efficient cause, comprises within Himself virtually or eminently all finite substances, we might also designate Him as the universal substance (*substantia universalis*), were it not for the danger of a pantheistic misinterpretation of this term. To preclude any such misunderstanding, theology has recourse to a twofold method. On the one hand it proclaims God as ἀνούσιος (not-substance), while on the other it refers to Him as ὑπερούσιος (super-substance). God as *ens a se* is a substance in a different and higher sense than any creature. Hence οὐσία as a predicament cannot be applied to Him univocally, but only

³ Spinoza, *Ethic.*, p. I, def. 3. Cfr. Descartes, *De Princip.*, I, 5.

⁴ Cfr. John Rickaby, S. J., *General Metaphysics*, pp. 245 sqq.; K. Gutberlet, *Allg. Metaphysik*, 3rd ed., Chapter III, § 1 Münster 1897; K. Ludewig, *Die Substanztheorie bei Cartesius*, Fulda 1893.

⁵ *Conc. Lateran. IV, cap, “Firmiter.”*

⁶ *Conc. Vatican., Sess. III, cap. 1.*

⁷ *De Trinit.*, V, 2, 3.

analogically, and we may truly say that He is not a substance in the sense in which the term is applied to creatures. On the other hand, however, the concept of substance may be attributed to Him in a far deeper and truer meaning than to any creature, because *He* is ὁ ὢν, while *they* are μὴ ὢν; and from this point of view it is correct to call Him the Super-Substance, in the sense that He is indeed a true substance, but one which utterly transcends all categories. This is the express teaching of the Fathers and also of Boëthius.⁸

c) From the foregoing exposition flows an important corollary; namely, that the concepts of “super-substance” and “non-substance” preclude the possibility of any commingling or composition of God’s Essence with the essence of the created universe. The Church, therefore, dealt Pantheism a fatal blow when it defined, through the Council of Chalcedon, that “Christ is in both natures, the divine and the human, ἀσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπτως (*inconfuse, immutabiliter*),”⁹ and through the Vatican Council: [*Deus*] “*praedicandus est re et essentia a mundo distinctus ... et super omnia, quae praeter ipsum sunt et concipi possunt, ineffabiliter excelsus*—[God] is to be declared as really and essentially distinct from the world ... and ineffably exalted above all things which exist, or are conceivable, except Himself.”¹⁰ In the light of these definitions it is inconceivable that God should become part of some other substance, as the Pantheists allege, or that He should assume the rôle of “world-soul.”¹¹

SECTION 2

GOD’S ABSOLUTE CAUSALITY, OR OMNIPOTENCE

1. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.—a) Power or potency (*potentia activa*, δύναμις) in its active sense signifies “the ability to make something” (*facere*, ποιεῖν). Its contradictory is powerlessness or impotency (*impotentia*). Omnipotence or almightiness, therefore, denotes God’s ability to make all things.¹ But this is merely a nominal definition and does not reach the proper essence of Almightyness, because the term “all” is indefinite. Nor can this defect be cured by saying, as do several of the Fathers and not a few theologians, that “God can do whatever He wills”; because this proposition is liable to misinterpretation—namely, that God’s omnipotence does not extend beyond His actual will, while in reality

⁸ Cfr. *De Trinit.*, c. 4: “*Substantia in illo non est vere substantia, sed ultra substantiam.*” The teaching of the Schoolmen is most effectively set forth by St. Thomas in his *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 25 (summarized by Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures*, pp. 19 sq.).

⁹ Denzinger-Bannwarth, *Enchiridion*, n. 148.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, n. 1782.

¹¹ It belongs to Christology to how that the “Hypostatic Union” does not neutralize this dogma, but father postulates it For a more detailed explanation, consult Scheeben, *Dogmatik*, Vol. I, §76; Heinrich, *Dogm. Theol.*, Vol. III, §173; Schwetz, *Theol. Dogmat.*, Vol. I, §15. They all treat this attribute in connection with divine unity. On the teaching of St. Thomas, cfr. L. Janssens, *De Deo Uno*, t. I, pp. 214 sqq. Friburgi 1900.

¹ Cfr. S. Augustin., *De Trinit.* IV, 7: “*Omnipotens est, qui omnia potest.*”

the Divine almightiness embraces also such things as are *de facto* not willed by God, though He could will them if He would.² While God's omnipotence thus has a much wider extension than His actual will, inasmuch as He can do whatever He can will, it is limited, on the other hand, by an insuperable barrier, in that God can neither will nor do that which is intrinsically impossible. When the Calvinist Vorstius undertook to include the impossible within the concept of divine omnipotence, he failed to see that to exclude the impossible does not limit but rather perfects God's almightiness, as Hugh of St. Victor explains: "*Deus omnia potest quae posse potentia est, et ideo vere omnipotens est, quia impotens esse non potest.*"³

b) Theologians specify five classes of things which God cannot do because they are impossible. We have in the first place to exclude from the concept "all things" such contradictions as are involved in a square circle, a created *ens a se*, a dual God, and the like. All such notions embody mutually exclusive notes, and therefore can denote no other object than "pure nothing," and it is therefore plain that by their very nature they cannot be included in the concept of almightiness. This concept, consequently, includes only what is intrinsically possible. In the second place there is the impossibility of making past things undone, *e. g.*, to delete the events recorded by history, or to "turn back the wheel of time." "*Audenter loquar,*" says St. Jerome,⁴ "*cum omnia possit Deus, suscitare virginem post ruinam non potest*—I make bold to affirm that, though God is omnipotent, He cannot restore virginity once it has been destroyed." For, as Kleutgen poignantly argues, "*Facta infecta facere perinde est atque facere, ut eadem sint et non sint, quod repugnat*—To make a fact undone would be tantamount to making a thing to be and not to be, which is a contradiction."⁵ Nor, in the third place, can God commit sin, because to sin implies not "*facere*" but "*deficere*," that is, a lack of perfection in action, which would annul His omnipotence.⁶ Generally speaking, God can do nothing which would contradict His Essence or His attributes; *e. g.*, to change His substance, to die, or to move from place to place; for by any such action He would destroy Himself, and therefore also His omnipotence.⁷ Because of His unchangeableness God cannot revoke what He has once freely decreed,—such decisions, for instance, as to create a visible world, to redeem the human race, to permit Christ to die on the cross, etc.—though it is possible, of course, that some other Economy different from the present might be governed by entirely different divine decrees. The latter, therefore, in the language of the Schoolmen, are possible only *potentiâ absolutâ*, not *potentiâ ordinariâ s. ordinatâ*.⁸

² Cfr. S. Augustin., *Enchir.*, c. 95: "*Multa potest Deus et non vult, nihil autem vult, quod non potest*—God can do many things which He does not actually will; but He wills nothing that it is not in His power to do."

³ *De Sacram.*, I, 2, 22.

⁴ *Ep. 22 ad Eustock.*

⁵ *De Ipso Deo*, p. 384.

⁶ Cfr. S. Theol., 1a, qu. 25, art. 3: "*Peccare est posse deficere in agendo, quod repugnat omnipotentiae.*"

⁷ Cfr. S. Augustin., *Serm. de Symbol. ad Catech.*, I: "*Deus omnipotens, et cum sit omnipotens, mori non potest, falli non potest, mentiri non potest, et quod ait Apostolus, seipsum negare non potest. Et ideo omnipotens est, quia ista non potest*—God is omnipotent, and because He is omnipotent, He cannot die, or err, or lie, and, in the words of the Apostle (2 Tim. 2:13), He 'cannot deny Himself.' And He is omnipotent precisely for the reason that He cannot do these things."

⁸ Cfr. S. Theol., 1a, qu. 25, art. 5, ad 1.

c) Omnipotence may consequently be defined as God's power to do whatever He can will, in as far as it is not repugnant to His Essence. The moot question whether omnipotence as an attribute is distinct from the intellect and the will of God,⁹ or whether it coincides with the will (*i. e.*, the practical knowledge of God), is of no dogmatic importance. We follow Scheeben in conceiving omnipotence as an attribute of being, not of divine life; for it is *per se* a quiescent attribute.

2. THE DOGMA OF GOD'S OMNIPOTENCE.—That God is almighty is a dogma affirmed by all the creeds. "*Credo in Deum Patrem omnipotentem*—I believe in God, the Father almighty," says the Apostles' Creed. The Fourth Council of the Lateran defines: "*Deus ... omnipotens*—God ... is almighty."¹⁰ Abélard's proposition: "*Quod ea solummodo possit Deus facere vel dimittere, vel eo tantum modo vel eo tempore, quo facit et non alio,*" was condemned as heretical by Innocent II, A. D. 1141.¹¹

a) Omnipotence may be called a standing attribute of God; for the Bible employs the epithet "*omnipotens*" more than seventy times. The divine might is also the fundamental signification of such names as אֱלֹהִים, and especially אֱלֹהֵינוּ. The way in which Holy Scripture paraphrases this attribute shows how we are to conceive it. Job 42:2: "*Scio, quia omnia potes*—I know that thou canst do all things." Mark 14:36: "Father, to thee all things are possible." Luke 1:37: "No word shall be impossible with God." Matth. 19:26: "With men this is impossible: but with God all things are possible." Christ Himself tells us that the divine power is not limited to the things that actually exist. "God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham."¹² Again, "Thinkest thou that I cannot ask my Father, and he will give me presently more than twelve legions of angels?"¹³

According to the Scriptures God's omnipotence is self-existing power (*potentia a se*) which exceeds every other power. 1 Tim. 6:15 sq.: "*Solus potens ... qui solus habet immortalitatem.*" That is to say: as God "alone" has immortality, because He alone is self-existing, *i. e.*, has His existence *a se*; so, too, He alone is almighty, because His might is not derived from any other being, but *a se*. His power exceeds all other power because of the sublime manner in which it sets itself in motion and operates by a mere command of the Divine Will. God wills, and the thing is; He calls, and things are there.¹⁴ A power which, by merely commanding, is able to summon into existence beings both natural and supernatural, must be an infinite power. Therefore miracles, being the faithful exponents of an infinite potency, are called in Holy Scripture "*virtutes*" or "*magnalia Dei.*"¹⁵

b) The Tradition concerning this divine attribute dates back, as the "Apostles' Creed" bears witness, to the Primitive Church. Origen testifies to its Apostolic character when he writes: "We confess that God is incorporeal and almighty and invisible."¹⁶ St. Augustine

⁹ Cfr. S. Thom., 1. c: "*Intelligentia dirigit, voluntas imperat, potentia exequitur.*"

¹⁰ *Conc. Lateran. IV, c. 1.*

¹¹ Denzinger-Bannwarth, *Enchiridion*, n. 374.

¹² Matth. 3:9.

¹³ Matth. 26:53.

¹⁴ Cfr. Ps. 148:5: "*Ipse dixit et facta sunt, ipse mandavit et create sunt*—He spoke, and they were made: he commanded, and they were created."

¹⁵ Δύναμεις; Hebrew נְכוֹרֹת.

¹⁶ *Hom. in Gen.*, 3.

proves that the belief in God's omnipotence was universal in his day.¹⁷ St. Chrysostom characterizes this attribute as infinite power, exceeding every other power, when he says: "As a painter who has painted a picture is able to make an unlimited number of copies thereof, so it would have been easy for God to create innumerable worlds."¹⁸ It is for this reason that omnipotence ranks among the incommunicable attributes of God, in which, even by favor of divine grace, no creature can share.¹⁹

3. OMNIPOTENCE AS UNIVERSAL DOMINION.—Dominion, being "power over persons and things,"²⁰ is not identical with potency or might in the sense of "ability to do something." Similarly, God's universal dominion must be distinguished from His omnipotence, as an effect from its cause. God's universal dominion over His whole creation is based primarily upon His omnipotence as the Creator of all things. The Latin term "*omnipotens*"²¹ emphasizes His creative power, while the Greek term "παντοκράτωρ" chiefly brings out His universal dominion.²² To this distinction between the two notions corresponds a contradistinction between omnipotence and impotence (*impotentia*) on the one hand, and the two different species of dominion, viz.: subjection (*subiectio*) and passive ownership (*proprietas*) on the other. God's universal dominion comprises the two parallel elements of jurisdiction (*dominium iurisdictionis*) and divine proprietorship (*dominium proprietatis*). Both are important enough to warrant us to devote a page or two to their discussion.

a) Jurisdiction comprises five functions: (1) to command; (2) to prohibit; (3) to permit; (4) to punish, and (5) to reward. God is entitled to exercise all of these functions to their fullest extent by the very fact that He is the "Lord" (*Dominus*, ὁ κύριος, ἰϋδξ) and the "King of kings and Lord of lords" (*Rex regum et Dominus dominantium*). The Bible draws a well-defined distinction between absolute sovereignty and omnipotence proper. Ecclus. 1:8: "*Unus est altissimus, creator omnipotens et rex potens et metuendus nimis, sedens super thronum illius et dominans Deus*—There is one most high Creator Almighty, and a powerful king, and greatly to be feared, who sitteth upon his throne, and is the God of dominion." The extent of His sovereignty is brought out in the famous prayer of Esther:²³ "*Domine Rex omnipotens, in ditione enim tua cuncta sunt posita et non est, qui possit tuae resistere voluntati*—O Lord, Lord, almighty king, for all things are in thy power, and there is none that can resist thy will;" and still more pointedly in the Apocalypse of St. John: "*Omnem creaturam, quae in coelo est et super terram et sub terra et quae sunt in mari, omnes audivi dicentes: Sediti in throno et Agno [scil. Christo] benedictio et honor et gloria et potestas* (κράτος) *in saecula saeculorum*—And every creature, which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them: I heard all saying: To him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, benediction, and honor, and glory, and power, for ever and ever."²⁴ God's sovereign dominion is unlimited both with regard to place and time.

¹⁷ *Non dico, da mihi Christianum, da mihi Judaeum, sed da mihi idolorum cultorem, qui non dicat Deum esse omnipotentem*—Show me, I do not say a Christian or a Jew, but show me a pagan worshipper of idols who will not admit that God is omnipotent." *Serm. de Temp.*, 240, c. 2.

¹⁸ *In 1 Cor.*, Hom. 17.

¹⁹ Cfr. S. Thom., *Contr. Gent.*, II, 21.

²⁰ *Potentia = potestas*, κράτος,

²¹ Cfr. Wisd. 18:15: "παντοδύναμος."

²² Cfr. St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech.*, 8: "παντοκράτωρ ἐστὶν ὁ πάντων κρατῶν—He is the almighty sovereign of all sovereigns."

²³ Esth. 13:9.

²⁴ Apoc. 5:13.

Ps. 144:13: “*Regnum tuum regnum omnium saeculorum*—Thy kingdom is a kingdom of all ages.” St. Paul²⁵ refers to God as the “King of ages.”²⁶

Lessius²⁷ gives a vivid description of the “descent of all jurisdiction” (*descensus omnis iurisdictionis*) from Heaven to earth. All secular sovereignty, as well as all spiritual jurisdiction, descends from God, the universal Lord, to the various rational creatures whom He permits a share in His authority. So that a king in his kingdom, and a president in the republic over which he presides, exercise their powers only by virtue of a certain limited participation in the overlordship of God.²⁸ In the supernatural order the divine sovereignty descends from the Most Holy Trinity upon the sacred humanity of Christ, thence to His immediate representative, the Roman Pontiff, and from him to the bishops and priests.²⁹

b) The second note of universal dominion, the right of ownership (*dominium proprietatis*), belongs to God in a manner in which it cannot be claimed by even the most exalted earthly sovereign, because God is the absolute owner not only of the material universe, but also of the spiritual world and the entire human race. Strictly speaking there is no ownership in persons except that vested in God. All men are by nature “servants of God.”³⁰ Theologians distinguish a fourfold title of divine ownership: (1) that of creation;³¹ (2) that of preservation;³² (3) that of redemption, which is the most important of all, and may again be subdivided into the right which the victor in battle has over the vanquished,³³ the right of a buyer to that which he has bought,³⁴ the right to indemnification; (4) the title of the final end, which bends all creation under the yoke of the Creator.³⁵ The right by which man claims ownership in things movable and immovable, is a mere emanation from the divine superright, just as all earthly jurisdiction, civil and spiritual, derives from the universal jurisdiction of God. Whence it is plain that the idea of ownership developed in the law of the Germanic nations is far more in harmony with the spirit of Divine Revelation than that embodied in the Roman pandects.

READINGS:—*S. Thom., *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 25.—IDEM, *Contr. Gent.*, II, 7 sqq. (Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures*, pp. 80 sqq.).—Suarez, *De Deo*, III, 9.—Petavius, *De Deo*, V, 6–9.—Lessius, *De Perfect. Divin.*, 1. V.—Scheeben, *Dogmatik*, Vol. I, § 87 (Wilhelm-Scannell’s *Manual*, Vol. I, pp. 208 sqq.).—*Stentrup, *De Deo Uno*, thes. 52 sqq.—Boedder, *Natural Theology*, pp. 319 sqq.

²⁵ 1 Tim. 1:17.

²⁶ βασιλεὺς τῶν αἰώνων.—For the teaching of the Fathers on this topic, consult Petavius, l. c.

²⁷ *De Perfect. Div.*, X, 2.

²⁸ Cfr. Rom. 13:1: “Οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν ἐξουσία, εἰ μὴ ὑπὸ Θεοῦ—For there is no power but from God.”

²⁹ Cfr. Math. 28:18: “*Data est mihi omnis potestas in coelo et in terra*—All power is given to me in heaven and in earth.”

³⁰ Cfr. Ps. 23:1: “*Domini est terra et plenitudo eius, orbis terrarum et universi, qui habitant in eo*—The earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof: the world, and all they that dwell therein.”

³¹ Cfr. Esth. 13:10 sq.: “*Tu fecisti caelum et terram et quidquid coeli ambitu continetur: Dominus omnium es*—Thou hast made heaven and earth, and all things that are under the cope of heaven: Thou art the Lord of all.”

³² Cfr. Hebr. 1:3: “φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ—Upholding all things by the word of his power.”

³³ Cfr. Ps. 67:19.

³⁴ Cfr. 1 Cor. 6:20.

³⁵ Cfr. Prov. 16:4: “*Universa propter semetipsum operatus est Dominus, impium quoque ad diem malum*—The Lord hath made all things for himself: the wicked also for the evil day.” For the teaching of the Fathers, consult Lessius, l. c.

SECTION 3

GOD'S INCORPOREITY

Although incorporeity is already included in the divine attributes of invisibility and simplicity,¹ the sources of revelation and the history of dogma compel us to treat it separately. God's immateriality (conceived as the negation of *quantum*, ποσόν), can be traced through four stages, which we shall describe in the subjoined series of systematic theses.

Thesis I: God is not a body

This proposition embodies an article of faith.

Proof. None but adherents of the crudest form of Materialism would assert that God is corporeal. This teaching flatly contradicts the concept of absolute being (*ens a se*). For, as Gregory of Nazianzus argues,² the Absolute cannot possibly be conceived as something dissoluble into parts and, therefore, perishable like matter. Moreover, sense is superior to matter, and spirit is superior to sense. St. Thomas concludes that if God were corporeal, He would not be the first and greatest Being.³ Finally, the Absolute must be "*actus purus*," that is to say, immaterial, pure actuality, without any admixture of potentiality.⁴ Consequently God cannot be matter, nor of the nature of matter.⁵

Thesis II: God has no body

This is also of faith.

Proof. The heresy opposed to this dogma was championed by the pagan Epicureans,⁶ by the so-called Audians of the fourth century (adherents of the monastic founder Audius), and somewhat later by certain Egyptian monks called Anthropomorphites,⁷ who were involved in the Origenistic controversy and imagined that, like man, the Godhead was a compound of soul and body. The Church has always looked upon this error as heretical.

a) The Bible teaches that God is absolutely invisible after the manner of pure spirits. Cfr. Job 10:4: "Hast thou eyes of flesh; or shalt thou see as man seeth?" Upon this fact is

¹ *Supra*, pp. 82 sqq.

² *Or.*, 34.

³ "*Si igitur Deus est corpus, non erit primum et maximum ens.*" *Contr. Gent.* I, so. (Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures*, p.16).

⁴ The use of the word "potentiality" in this sense may sound harsh in English, but no other term is available. Fr. Rickaby translates Ch. XVI, No. 2 of the *Summa Contra Gentiles* thus: "Although in order of time that which is sometimes in potentiality, sometimes in actuality, is in potentiality before it is in actuality, yet, absolutely speaking, actuality is prior to potentiality, because potentiality does not bring itself into actuality but is brought into actuality by something which is already in actuality. Everything therefore that is any way in potentiality has something else prior to it But God is the First Being and the First Cause, and therefore has not in Himself any admixture of potentiality." "To be in actuality," as Fr. Rickaby points out in a note (*ibid.*), is something akin to the modern conception of "energy."—(See also the article "Actus Purus" in Vol. I of the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, pp. 125 sq.)

⁵ For the teaching of the Fathers on this point, see Petavius, *De Deo*, II, 1.

⁶ Cfr. Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, I, 17.

⁷ Cfr. J. J. Fox in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. I, p. 559.

based the impossibility of picturing God, so often insisted on in the Old Testament. It is only the material which can be pictured; hence that which cannot be pictured must be absolutely immaterial, and therefore incorporeal.

b) The argument from Tradition presents some difficulty. While there can be no doubt that the majority of the Fathers adhered strictly to this dogma, modern critics question the orthodoxy of such eminent writers as Melito of Sardes,⁸ Tertullian, and Epiphanius.

The accusation against Melito is based upon a passage in Theodoretus,⁹ in which the Bishop of Sardes is charged with writing an essay in defence of the corporeity of God. However, this seems to be a misunderstanding. Melito published a treatise, now lost, entitled “Περὶ τοῦ ἐνσωμάτου Θεοῦ,” but it is safe to assume that it dealt solely with the Incarnation of the Logos. St. Epiphanius was suspected of heresy on account of the excessive indulgence which he showed to the Anthropomorphites; but he expressly refuted their erroneous teaching.¹⁰ Here is St. Augustine’s account of the matter: “*Audianos, quos appellant, alii vocant Anthropomorphitas, quoniam Deum sibi fingunt cogitatione carnali in similitudinem imaginis corruptibilis hominis, quod rusticitati eorum tribuit Epiphanius, parcens eis ne dicantur haeretici.*”¹¹ Our greatest stumbling-block is Tertullian, whom modern writers on the history of philosophy class with such Materialists as Thales, Anaximenes, and Democritus. It is not an easy task to clear his skirts. On the one hand, Tertullian defends a crassly materialistic Traducianism,¹² and asserts the soul to be material;¹³ nay, he even lays down the principle: “*Quis enim negabit, Deum corpus esse, etsi Deus spiritus sit? Spiritus enim corpus sui generis in sua effigie*—For who will deny that God is a body, although God is a spirit? For spirit has a bodily substance of its own kind, in its own form.”¹⁴ On the other hand, we see him stoutly championing the orthodox doctrine, for he defends the indivisibility of God¹⁵ against Hermogenes, and rejects the suggestion of corporeal generation in God by retorting: “*Nam et Deus spiritus est*—For God, too, is a spirit.”¹⁶ Tertullian in this matter is a psychological enigma, a man seemingly with two souls, a bundle of irreconcilable contradictions. It is perhaps fair to assume that, in defending the reality of the substance of the soul and of the Divine Essence against the Stoics and the Gnostics,¹⁷ he employed the term “*corpus*” (as the Stoics employed σῶμα), in the sense of concrete, real, compact, substantial being, as opposed to formless air, or nothing. “*Potuit propterea putari corpus Deum dicere,*” in the words of St. Augustine,¹⁸ “*quia non est nihil, non est inanitas.*” At any rate, Tertullian’s indecision cannot reasonably be alleged as an argument either for or against the incorporeity of God. The dogma can be proved from Tradition without him.¹⁹

Thesis III: God is a pure Spirit

⁸ Died about 195. Cfr. Bardenhewer-Shahan, *Patrology*, pp. 62 sq. Freiburg and St. Louis 1908.

⁹ Cfr. Origen., *Quaest. 2 in Gen.*

¹⁰ Epiph., *Haer.*, 70.

¹¹ *Haeres.*, 50.

¹² Cfr. S. Augustin., *De Anima et eius Origine*, c. 4.

¹³ Cfr. Tertull., *De Carne Christi*, c. 11: “*Omne quod est, corpus est sui generis; nihil est incorporate nisi quod non est.*”

¹⁴ *Contra Prax.*, c. 7. Cfr. *De Resurrect. Carnis*, c. 17 and *De Anima*, c. 5.

¹⁵ *Adv. Hermogen.*, ad 2.

¹⁶ *Apol.*, 21.

¹⁷ *Adv. Hermogen.*, 35.

¹⁸ *De Haer.*, c. 86.

¹⁹ Cfr. G. Esser, *Die Seelenlehre Tertullians*, Paderborn 1893.

This is likewise *de fide*.

Proof. The Vatican Council defines: “*Deus ... una singularis, simplex omnino et incommutabilis substantia spiritualis*—God ... is one, sole, absolutely simple and immutable spiritual substance.”²⁰ This truth flows as a corollary from our two preceding theses; for if God neither *is* a body, nor *has* a body, He must be a pure spirit. It is furthermore clearly confirmed by the Saviour’s own words to the Samaritan woman, John 4:20 sqq. After explaining that the Samaritans will “neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, adore the Father,” He continues: “But the hour cometh, and now is,²¹ when the true adorers shall adore the Father in *spirit* and in *truth*.²² ... *God is a spirit*,²³ and they that adore him, must adore him in *spirit*, and in *truth*.”²⁴ It is plain from the context that Christ here does not mean to oppose internal to external worship (as if internal worship were alone sufficient); but that, replying to the query in the sense in which the woman had put it, He wishes to accentuate the spiritual character of the New Testament worship as opposed to the corporeal worship in the Old; for the internal, invisible, spiritual worship of the New, is the antithesis of the external, visible, ceremonial law of the Old Testament. Now this “spiritual” and “true” worship is due to (God) the Father, *because He is a spirit*. Surely, therefore, since the supernatural life by faith, hope, and charity is a purely immaterial and spiritual life, God Himself, being the object of such worship, must be a pure spirit, an immaterial being.²⁵

Thesis IV: God is the Absolute Spirit

This is also *de fide*.

Proof. By “absolute spirit” we understand an infinitely perfect, self-existing, metaphysically simple spiritual substance, in which cognition and truth, volition and goodness are identical. Now God, as we have shown, is “Absolute Intelligence,” that is, Subsisting Truth. He is furthermore Absolute Goodness and Sanctity—attributes which coincide with His love of Himself as the Supreme Good. Therefore, God is not only a spirit but the Absolute Spirit. He is moreover the Creator of Angels and spiritual souls; as such He must be infinite in power and consequently absolute also in His spirituality. Again, the existence of the Holy Ghost in the Godhead postulates Infinite Spirituality, in as far as the nature of the Holy Spirit is none other than the Divine Essence. Lastly, it is only in an infinitely spiritual Being that a real Trinity of Persons is possible.²⁶

READINGS:—Heinrich, *Dogmat. Theol.*, Vol. III, § 172.—Kleutgen, *De Ipso Deo*, pp. 135 sqq.—Franzelin, *De Deo Uno*, thes. 35.—Oswald, *Dogmatische Theologie*, I, 2, § 6.—Lépicier, *De Deo Uno*, pp. 152 sqq., Paris 1902.—Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures*, pp. 15–16.

²⁰ *Conc. Vatic.*, Sess. III, c. 1.

²¹ καὶ νῦν ἐστίν.

²² ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ.

²³ πνεῦμα ὁ θεός.

²⁴ John 4:23 sq.

²⁵ Cfr. especially Franzelin, *De Deo Uno*, thes. 35.—Cfr. 2 Cor. 3:17: “Ὁ δὲ κύριος τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν—The Lord is a Spirit.”

²⁶ Cfr. on the whole subject J. Uhlmann, *Die Persönlichkeit Gottes und ihre modernen Gegner*, pp. 34 sqq., Freiburg 1906.

SECTION 4

GOD'S IMMUTABILITY

1. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.—Change (*mutatio*) means, generally speaking, a transition from one state to another.

A change which affects the substance of a thing is called substantial; one which affects only its accidents, accidental. Substantial change is either a transition from potentiality to actuality (*generari, fieri*), or, vice versa, from actuality to potentiality (*corrumpi*). An accidental change is a transition from actuality to actuality (*e. g.*, in cognition, volition), except where it is limited to mere privation (*privatio, στέρησις*), as when one loses his eye-sight. Accidental change generally means alteration or variation. Underlying every change, especially if it be a substantial change, is *passio (pati, πάσχειν)*, taking the term in its widest bearing, *viz.*, as motion (*motus, κίνησις*), *i. e.*, a transition from a *terminus a quo* to a *terminus ad quem*.

The concept of unchangeableness, or immutability, excludes every mode of transition, and, in its absolute sense, even the possibility of transition. Such is the unchangeableness of God.

2. THE DOGMA.—The first General Council (Nicæa, A. D. 325) anathematized the Arian heresy that the Son of God is *variabilis (ἀλλοιωτός) aut mutabilis (τρεπτός)*. Later the dogma of divine immutability was expressly defined by the Fourth Lateran Council (A. D. 1215) and by the Council of the Vatican (A. D. 1870).

a) The Scriptural text chiefly relied upon in this matter is Ps. 101:27 sq.: “*Ipsi [coeli] peribunt, tu autem permanes. Et omnes sicut vestimentum veterascent et sicut opertorium mutabis eos et mutabuntur: tu autem idem ipse es (יהוה נצח) et anni tui non deficient*—The heavens ... shall perish but thou remainest: and all of them shall grow old like a garment: and as a vesture thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art always the self-same, and thy years shall not fail.” That the attribute here applies absolutely is plain from the fact that the Immutable is described as the cause of creatural changes without being Himself subject to change. The Godhead is incompatible with even the slightest shadow of alteration. Epistle of St. James, 1:17: “*Apud quem non est transmutatio (παραλλαγή) nec vicissitudinis obumbratio (τροπής ἀποσκίασμα)*—The Father of lights, with whom there is no change, nor shadow of alteration.” Holy Scripture points to aseity as the ontological cause of God’s immutability. Mal. 3:6: “*Ego enim Dominus (יהוה) et [propterea] non mutor*—I am the Lord, and I change not.” Nor is this immutability limited to the intrinsic essence of the Godhead; it extends to the free counsels of God, of which the Bible tells us: “*Consilium autem Domini in aeternum manet*—The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever;”¹ and St. Paul speaks of the “immutability of his counsel” (*immobilitas consilii Sui*—τὸ ἀμετάθετον τῆς βουλῆς αὐτοῦ).²

b) Tradition assures us that belief in the unchangeableness of God was part and parcel of the Christian faith from the earliest days.

¹ Ps. 32:11.

² Heb. 6:17.

We have the testimony of Origen,³ that it was believed by Jews and Christians alike,⁴ and Tertullian declares: “*Deum immutabilem et informabilem credi necesse est*—We must needs believe God to be unchangeable and incapable of being formed.”⁵ There are a few difficult Scriptural texts with an anthropopathic tinge; but the Fathers explain them in consonance with this dogma. Thus St. Jerome says: “*Furorem, oblivionem, iram, poenitudinem ita in Deo accipere debemus, quomodo pedes, manus, oculos, aures et cetera membra, quae habere dicitur incorporalis et invisibilis Deus.*”⁶ St. Augustine explains the profound expression of the “mobility of the Divine Wisdom,”⁷ by saying that κίνησις does not mean mutation, but purest activity,⁸ combined with unchangeable repose.⁹

c) By developing certain arguments excogitated by the Fathers and the Schoolmen, theologians demonstrate the immutability of God from unaided human reason. It has its roots, they say, in the divine aseity, or *autousia*, which *ex vi notionis* precludes not only potentiality, but also any and every degree of perfectibility, such as is involved in a transition from potentiality to actuality.¹⁰ Hence a mutable God, a God subject to change, would not be God, but a mere creature.¹¹ The Aristotelian argument of the Prime Mover has ever occupied a prominent place among the proofs for the existence of God, because, starting from the changes constantly taking place in the created universe, it leads directly to the *Motor immobilis* (τὸ κινουῦν ἀκίνητον), Who moves all things, without Himself suffering any mutation.¹² This is a notion rather difficult to grasp, but we meet it in the Book of Wisdom, 7:27: “*Et cum sit una [sapientia], omnia potest et in se permanens omnia innovat*—And being but one, she [Wisdom] can do all things, and remaining in herself the same, she reneweth all things.”¹³

The immutability of God, therefore, is an absolutely incommunicable attribute—which is quite obvious when we consider that mutability is the most salient characteristic of creatures, and, consequently, really identical with contingency. The fundamental cause of the incommunicability of this divine attribute lies in the essences of God and the creatures respectively; for creation which drew the universe from its original nothingness into the realm of existence, is the basis and fount of all other changes.¹⁴

³ *Contr. Cels.*, I.

⁴ “*Iudaeorum Christianorumque doctrina.*”

⁵ *Adv. Prax.*, 27.

⁶ Hieron., *In Ps.*, 45.

⁷ Cfr. Wisdom 7:24: “*Omnibus enim mobilibus mobilior* (πάσης κινήσεως κινητικώτερον) *est Sapientia*—Wisdom is more active than all active things.”

⁸ *Mobile = agile.*

⁹ *De Civ. Dei*, XII, 17. “*Novit quiescens agere et agens quiescere*—He can act while He reposes, and repose while He acts.”

¹⁰ Cfr. St. Bernard (*Serm. 80 in Cantic.*): “*Omnis mutatio quaedam mortis imitatio est*—Every change is in a sense an imitation of death.”

¹¹ Cfr. S. Ambros., *De Fide*, I, 9: “*Arius dicit mutabilem Dei Filium; quomodo ergo Deus, si mutabilis, cum ipse dixerit: Ego sum, ego sum et non mutor?*—Arius says that the Son of God is mutable; but how, if God were mutable, could He have spoken: I am, I am and change not?”

¹² On this argument, see Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures*, pp. 11–12, note.

¹³ Cfr. the beautiful verse of Boethius: “*Immotusque manens dat cuncta moveri.*” Cfr. also St. Augustine, *Confess.* I, 6; and *De Trinit.*, V, 2.

¹⁴ Cfr. St. Augustine, *De Natura Boni*, c. I: “*Omnia, quae fecit Deus, quia ex nihilo sunt, mutabilia sunt*—All things which the Creator has made are changeable, because made out of nothing.” Cfr. St. Thomas, *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 9, art. 2; Lessius, *De Perfect. Divin.*, III, 3.

If we attempt to define the immutability of God in its relation to His outward activity, and particularly to His absolute liberty, we are confronted by a natural mystery, which philosophy is able to elucidate to a certain extent, but cannot fully explain. There is in the first place this difficulty. If God performs some external act, such as, *e. g.*, the creation of the universe, does He not, by virtue of that very act, pass from the state of non-creator to that of creator, and consequently undergo a change? To solve this problem we have to distinguish between willing an effect to be produced in time, and willing an effect intended to exist from all eternity. It is quite plain that a temporal effect, calculated to occur at a certain specified time, can be willed by God from all eternity with the same immutable will with which He produces an effect destined to exist from all eternity (such as, *e. g.*, an eternal world, the possibility of which is defended by some theologians). God's operation *ad extra*, we must remember, in the words of the Schoolmen, is an "*actus immanens et virtualiter transiens*," which coincides with, and consequently is quite as immutable as, the divine Essence—although, of course, the effect itself is produced neither sooner nor later than the eternal will of God has decreed. This gives us the key for the solution of another objection, *viz.*, that the activity of God, being eternally immutable, must needs invest the effects which it produces with the color of eternity; so that the eternity of the world, so plainly denied in Holy Scripture, would really be but a logical deduction from the eternity of God. This is a sophism. God wills to posit either an eternal or a temporal effect. It is only in the first case that the external terminus of His action could be something eternal, as, *e. g.*, an eternal world. In the latter case, the effect, though decreed from eternity, is realized only at the precise moment fixed by the immutable will of God.¹⁵

It is considerably more difficult to demonstrate the compatibility of the attributes of divine unchangeableness and absolute liberty. We have shown that the created universe is not necessarily eternal because its Creator is immutable; but how shall we prove that God's immutability does not imply necessary existence on the part of His creatures? This is truly, in the phrase of Billuart, the most intricate knot of all theology ("*nodus totius theologiae intricatissimus*"), a veritable sacred puzzle ("*aenigma sacrum*").¹⁶ Let us first recapitulate the state of the question. It is an article of faith that God is absolutely free in His operation *ad extra*.¹⁷ Now, either we can conceive God without this free act, or we cannot so conceive Him. If we cannot, He is not free; if we can, He is mutable.—The kernel of this difficulty is to be found in the thoroughly anthropomorphic conception of divine freedom which man forms after the analogy of his own free will (*liberum arbitrium*), without considering that the liberty of God is something altogether different in kind. Human liberty consists in an active indifference by which the will is enabled either to act or not to act, or when it does act, to act either so or otherwise. The liberty of God, on the other hand, is not an active indifference with respect to several subjective acts. It is but the indifference peculiar to a single, absolutely simple, pure act, in relation to different objects. This divine act, being intrinsically necessary, immutable, and eternal, is extrinsically free, inasmuch as it implies a non-necessary, and therefore a free relation to the created universe. "*Voluntas Dei*," says St. Thomas, "*uno et eodem actu vult se et alia, sed habitudo eius ad se est necessaria et naturalis, sed habitudo eius ad alia est secundum convenientiam quandam, non quidem necessaria et naturalis, neque violenta aut innaturalis, sed voluntaria*—The will of God, by one and the same act, wills itself and other things, but its habitudo to itself is necessary and natural, while its habitudo to other things is after the manner of a certain fitness, which is not indeed necessary

¹⁵ Cfr. Billuart, *De Deo Uno*, diss. 3, art. 7.

¹⁶ Billuart, *l. c.*, diss. 7, art. 4.

¹⁷ *Vide infra*, Chapter IV, § 1.

and natural, nor yet violent or innatural, but voluntary.”¹⁸ Hence we can formulate our answer to the difficulty under consideration thus: The liberty of God is nothing else than the indifference of a most simple act towards different objects—an act which, despite its formal simplicity, is nevertheless virtually multiplex; that is to say, it is at the same time, though under different aspects, both necessary and free: necessary in itself, as a divine act, and free in its external relation to the created world. If this explanation is not wholly transparent, we must attribute it to the fact that the liberty of God is a mystery which transcends the categories of our mortal mind.¹⁹

READINGS:—St. Thomas, *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 9.—Thomassin, *De Deo*, V, 6–10.—Lessius, *De Perfect. Div.*, 1. III.—Scheeben, *Dogmatik*, Vol. I, § 75 (Wilhelm-Scannell, *Manual*, pp. 188 sqq.).—Kleutgen, *Theologie der Vorzeit*, Vol. I, nn. 382 sqq.—L. Janssens, *De Deo Uno*, t. I, pp. 339 sqq., Friburgi 1900.—Lépicier, *De Deo Uno*, t. I, pp. 313 sqq., Parisiis 1902.

SECTION 5

GOD’S ETERNITY

1. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.—Our concept of time (*tempus*, ποτὲ) is prior to our concept of eternity (*aeternitas*), and we acquire the latter by a negation of the former. As space signifies co-existence, so time signifies succession, or, in its widest sense, motion (*motus*).

a) Hence Aristotle¹ defines time as “the number of movement, estimated according to its *before* and *after*.”² It follows that the notion of time postulates mutability, nay, even mutation (change). Like space, time has three dimensions: past, present, and future. It is to be observed, however, that whatever actually exists, constitutes an “ever current now”; for the past exists no

¹⁸ *Contr. Gent.*, I, 82. The passage is unfortunately not translated by Father Rickaby in his excellent, though perhaps too much “abridged” translation of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, published under the title *Of God and His Creatures*, London 1905. But Fr. Rickaby brings out the point tersely in a foot-note on page 61: “The one necessary actuality is God. Though creatures are means to God’s end, they are not necessary means to any necessary end of His: therefore their existence is not necessarily willed by Him, albeit their possibility is necessarily discerned.”

¹⁹ For further information on this subject, consult Billuart, *l. c.*; Heinrich, *Dogmat. Theologie*, Vol. III, pp. 728 sqq., Mainz 1883; Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures*, pp. 56 sqq.—We may be permitted, because of the importance of the subject and the “arguments” based upon this difficulty by infidels, to quote a suggestion towards a solution from the last-mentioned work, p. 62, n.: “The difficulty has its foundation in this, that, within our experience, every new effect involves some antecedent change either in the agent or in the matter acted upon. The more powerful the agent, the less change is required, as when a strong man with little or no effort lifts a weight, which a weaker one would have to strain himself to raise from the ground. Hence we may faintly surmise how ‘in the limit’ an almighty agent would act without being in the least altered by his action from the being that he would have been, had he remained at rest. Not that I take this suggestion to remove the whole difficulty.”

¹ *Phys.* IV, 11: χρόνος ἐστὶν ἀριθμὸς κινήσεως κατὰ τὸ πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον.

² Cfr. J. Rickaby, *General Metaphysics*, pp. 376 sqq.

longer, and the future not yet. As this quality of being current, or flowing, as it were, inheres in and endures with an object, so constant duration (*perduratio*) constitutes an element of time as well as of eternity,—with this difference, that in the former it is successive, in the latter simultaneous. Whence it follows that successiveness is the essential characteristic of time.

b) Eternity, being the direct contradictory of time, must not be conceived as “endless time” or “absence of duration,”³ but as “limitless duration,” without beginning or end. Eternity, therefore, has its immediate and proximate principle in absolute immutability,⁴ and is consequently, like immutability, incommunicable. God alone is eternal.

If time be designated as “an ever current now” (*nunc fluens*), we must describe eternity as “a standing now” (*nunc stans*); that is, as pure presence without any admixture of past or future. Hence eternity and time are related to each other, not as species of the same genus, but precisely as contingency is related to self-existence, or the creature to its Creator. They are contradictories. It was to eliminate succession not only from the divine Essence but likewise from the operation of God, that Boëthius introduced the concept of “life” into his famous definition:⁵ “*Aeternitas est interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio*—Eternity is the possession, perfect and all at once, of life without beginning or end,”⁶ or “Eternity is a simultaneously full and perfect possession of interminable life.”⁷

As God is in eternity, or, more correctly, as He is His own eternity,⁸ so all created beings exist in time, in so far as, and because, they are subject to incessant and real changes. These changes constitute what is called “intrinsic time” (*tempus intrinsecum*). “Extrinsic time” (*tempus extrinsecum*) is the external standard or conventional unity of measurement (*e. g.*, the uniform motion of the heavens) for gauging successive duration (year, month, day, hour, minute, second). The real mutation to which all creatures are subject is not necessarily constant and uninterrupted. There are creatures which are relatively immutable, either in their essence (*e. g.*, angels, the spiritual soul), or in their operation (the act of beatific vision). Such a state, more or less exempt from the mutations of time, is by theologians called *aevum*,⁹ abstractly *aeviternitas*, in opposition and contradistinction to time as well as to eternity proper. *Aeviternitas*, therefore, stands midway between *tempus* and *aeternitas*. It shares with *aeternitas* the negation of constant fluctuation, with *tempus* the possibility of fluctuation, *i. e.*, real mutability. Hence *aevum* differs in principle from eternity just as much as it differs from time. Being a creature, the *ens aeviternum*, too, though it will have no end, must have had a beginning; while on the other hand, it always remains mutable and capable of being immersed as it were in the constantly flowing stream of time.¹⁰

c) Finally we have to distinguish in God eternity and sempiternity.

Eternity as such abstracts from actual time, just as immensity abstracts from actual space. God would be absolutely eternal and immense even if there were neither time nor space. However, just as, assuming that there is actual space, immensity becomes omnipresence; so, assuming that

³ Klee, Oswald, *et al.*

⁴ *Supra*, § 4.

⁵ *De Consol. Phil.*, V, 6.

⁶ Cfr. Wilhelm-Scannell, *Manual*, p. 195.

⁷ Hunter, *Outlines*, II, 78.

⁸ Cfr. W. Humphrey, “*His is Divine Majesty*,” pp. 120 sqq.

⁹ αἰών, from ἀεὶ ὤν.

¹⁰ Cfr. *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 10, art. 5.

there is real time, eternity must co-exist with every time or instant of time.¹¹ As a counterpart to omnipresence, this is a new (hypothetical or relative) attribute, for which unfortunately theology has not yet coined a distinct term. We may call it “sempiternity.”¹²

2. THE DOGMA OF GOD’S ETERNITY.—It is an article of faith that God alone is absolutely eternal. Already the first Council of Nicæa anathematized “those who say: There was a time when [the Son of God] was not (ἦν ὅτε οὐκ ἦν);” and the Athanasian Creed teaches: “*Aeternus Pater, aeternus Filius, aeternus Spiritus Sanctus, et tamen non tres aeterni, sed unus aeternus*—The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal, and yet they are not three Eternals but one Eternal.” Similarly the Fourth Lateran Council, and also that of the Vatican, enumerate “eternity” among the absolute attributes of God.

a) The Bible often employs the predicate “eternal” to signify “without end”;¹³ hence in constructing the Scriptural argument for the dogma under consideration, we shall have to be careful to adduce only such passages in which the term is strictly defined. However, it will not be difficult to show that Scripture expressly ascribes to God all three of the constitutive elements of eternity, *viz.*, no beginning, no end, no succession—together with their root, self-existence.

α) That eternity has neither beginning nor end is often emphasized in Holy Writ. Cfr. Ps. 89:2: “*Priusquam montes fierent, aut formaretur terra et orbis, a saeculo et usque in saeculum tu es Deus*—Before the mountains were made, or the earth and the world was formed; from eternity to eternity thou art God.” Ps. 92:2: “*Ex tunc a saeculo tu es*—Thou art from everlasting.”¹⁴ In this connection we can also adduce the expression “The Ancient of Days” (*antiquus dierum*) in Dan. 7:9, which is not meant to express old age, but eternity.

β) Secondly, the Bible does not conceive the attribute of having neither beginning nor end as infinite duration in time, but as a constant duration without any admixture of successiveness, *i. e.*, as “*nunc stans*.” Without insisting on the predilection which the Sacred Book, in referring to God, shows for the present tense, we merely observe that the texts we have already cited to prove the immutability of God also prove that time does not enter into His essence or operation. St. Augustine acutely observes: “*Qui sunt anni, qui non deficiunt, nisi qui stant? Si ergo ibi anni stant, et ipsi anni, qui stant, unus annus est; et*

¹¹ Cfr. St. Thomas, *Contra Gent.*, I, 66, (Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures*, p. 48): “Since the being of the eternal never fails, eternity is present to every time or instant of time. Some sort of example of this may be seen in a circle: for a point taken on the circumference does not coincide with every other point; but the centre, lying away from the circumference, is directly opposite to every point of the circumference. [As between any two points you can draw a straight line, every point in space is ‘directly opposite’ every other point. What St Thomas means is that the line drawn from the centre of the circle to any point in the circumference makes a right angle, with the tangent at that point.] Whatever therefore is in any portion of time, co-exists with the eternal, as present to it, although in respect to another portion of time, it be past or future. But nothing can co-exist in presence with the eternal otherwise than with the whole of it, because it has no successive duration. Whatever therefore is done in the whole course of time, the divine mind beholds it as present throughout the whole of its eternity; and yet it cannot be said that what is done in a definite portion of time has always been an existing fact.”

¹² Cfr. Alcuin, *De Differentia Aeterni et Sempiterni*; Oswald, *Dogmat. Theol.*, Vol. I, pp. 130 sqq.

¹³ *E. g.*, eternal fire, eternal hills; cfr. Gen. 21:33; Is. 40:28.

¹⁴ Compare this text with Deut. 32:40: “*Vivo ego in aeternum*.—I live forever.”

ipse unus annus, qui stat, unus dies est ... sed stat semper ille dies."¹⁵ Holy Scripture, in comparing time with eternity, repeatedly speaks of "one day," of "the eternal to-day."¹⁶

γ) Immutability is the proximate and self-existence the ultimate principle of eternity. In predicating aseity of God, therefore, we implicitly declare that He is without beginning and without end, and that there is in Him no succession of time. Holy Scripture leaves no doubt about this. Apoc. 1:8: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, saith the Lord God, who is and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." And still more pregnantly Apoc. 1:4: "Ὁ ὢν καὶ ὃ ἦν καὶ ὃ ἐρχόμενος—He that is, and that was, and that is to come." Is. 41:4: "*Ego Dominus יהוה, primus et novissimus ego sum—I the Lord, I am the first and the last.*"

Holy Scripture likewise attributes to God sempiternity, *i. e.*, eternity in contact with actual time (*i. e.*, with the created universe). It calls Him "the King of Ages,"¹⁷ and here and there even speaks of eternity as if it were subject to the categories of time. Cfr. Gen. 1:1: "*In principio creavit Deus coelum et terram—In the beginning God created heaven and earth.*" John 16:13: "*Quaecunq̄e audiet, loquetur—Whatsoever things he [the Holy Ghost] shall hear, he shall speak.*" St. Augustine appositely remarks: "*Fuit, quia numquam defuit; erit, quia nunquam deerit; est, quia semper est.*"¹⁸

b) For the argument from Tradition, see our thesis on Immutability. Compare also Petavius and Thomassin, *ll. cc.*

c) A theological controversy has arisen over the relation of divine eternity to creatural co-existence. Certain Thomists¹⁹ hold that, because duration without beginning or end implies absolute indivisibility, every creature must co-exist with, and consequently from, all eternity. Alvarez attempts to prove this thesis as follows: "*Illud quod aliquando coexistit aeternitati, semper illi coexistit.... Sed nato Antichristo verum erit dicere: Antichristus coexistit Deo in aeternitate secundum suum esse reale; ergo ab aeterno habet hanc coexistentiam in ipsa aeternitate.*" It is easy to discover the fallacy. To co-exist with *all* eternity is by no means the same as to co-exist *always* with eternity. During the time of its physical life a creature truly co-exists with *all* eternity, because it co-exists with eternity, and eternity cannot be divided into parts. But it is manifestly wrong to conclude from this that, because it co-exists with all eternity, a creature's physical co-existence is eternal. This would be tantamount to asserting that all existing creatures are formally eternal, thus contradicting the dogmatic teaching of the Church that no creature exists from eternity. Misunderstanding can easily be avoided by keeping in mind the Scholastic formula: "*Creaturae coexistunt quidem toti aeternitati, sed non totaliter,*"²⁰ that is to say, All things which

¹⁵ In Ps. 121, n. 6.

¹⁶ Cfr. 2 Petr. 3:8: "*Unus dies apud Dominum sicut mille anni, et mille anni sicut unus dies—One day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*" (Cfr. Ps. 89:4.) Ps. 2:7: "*Filius meus es tu, ego hodie genui te—Thou art my Son, this day I have begotten thee.*" John 8:58: "*Antequam Abraham fieret, ego sum—Before Abraham was made, I am.*"

¹⁷ Cfr. Jer. 10:10: עוֹלָם יְהוָה; Cfr. 1 Tim. 1:17: "βασιλεὺς τῶν αἰώνων."

¹⁸ *Tract. in loa.*, 99.

¹⁹ *E. g.*, Alvarez, *De Auxil. Grat.*, II, 8; Billuart, *De Deo*, diss. 6, art. 3; Gotti, *De Deo*, tr. 4, qu. 4, dub. 2.

²⁰ Cfr. Chr. Pesch, *Praelect. Dogm.*, tom. II, pp. 87 sqq. Friburgi 1899.

at any time exist, co-exist, so far as the actual being of them is concerned, with the whole of the divine eternity, although not from eternity.²¹

READINGS:—*S. Thom., *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 10 (Bonjoannes-Lescher, *Compendium*, pp. 26 sqq.).—Suarez, *De Deo*, II, 4.—Vasquez, t. 1, disp. 31.—Petavius, *De Deo*, III, 3–6.—Thomassin, *De Deo*, V, 11–15.—Lessius, *De Perfect. Divin.*, 1. IV.—Gillius, *De Essentia Dei*, tract. 10, c. 17.—Franzelin, *De Deo Uno*, thes. 31–32.—Tepe, *Instit. Theol.*, Vol. II, pp. 90 sqq., Paris 1895.—Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures*, pp. 14, 48.—Wilhelm-Scannell, *Manual*, pp. 195 sqq.—Humphrey, “*His Divine Majesty*,” pp. 119 sqq.

SECTION 6

GOD’S IMMENSITY AND OMNIPRESENCE

1. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.—We can conceive eternity only as the negation of time, and immensity only as the negation of space (spatium, πού). But what is space?¹ As time is a (successive) before and after, so space is (simultaneous) juxtaposition. Hence juxtaposition (*positio partium extra partes*) according to length, breadth, and thickness, forms the characteristic note of space, as well as of matter. The modern theory of an *n*th dimension is merely a metaphysico-mathematical gewgaw.²

a) Space and body differ in many particulars. For while space, as the “container” of bodies, is conceived as immovable, unlimited; uncreatable, and indestructible, bodies move about freely in space, are circumscribed by external surface, and susceptible both of being created and annihilated. Space as here described is usually called absolute or imaginary space. It must not be confounded with *real* space, which depends on the existence of a real material world. Though this kind of space is also immovable, it does not extend beyond the limits of the physical universe. Outside of this there is no real, but only absolute or imaginary space. Real space began to exist simultaneously with the bodies which it contains; and it would disappear if these bodies ceased to

²¹ “Successive co-existence is not to be understood as if it implied succession in the eternal duration, but only as there is succession in the co-existing time. The several parts of its duration co-exist in actual reality with the eternal duration, for that time only in which they actually exist. As regards actual reality, those things which now at this present exist, co-exist with the eternity of God. Those things which have passed away, and are now no more in existence, did co-exist with the same changeless eternity, at that time when they were in existence. Those things which are not yet in actual existence, but which will one day exist, will then co-exist with the same eternity; in that day when they shall begin to exist, and so long as they continue to exist in their actual being. It is not as if the past co-existed with one part, and as if the present co-existed with another part, while the future coexisted with yet another part of the eternal duration. The divine eternity does not consist of parts.”—Humphrey, “*His Diving Majesty*.” pp. 122 sq.

¹ “ ‘Space’ scarcely engaged St. Thomas’s attention. Nor does he discuss immensity as an attribute of God. He declares: ‘We say that there was no place or space before the world was’ (*Sum. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 46, art. 1, ad 4). This is tantamount to saying that God is everywhere where creatures are; but that, apart from creation, there is no meaning in speaking of God as being everywhere.”—Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures*, p. 239, n.

² Cfr. Gutberlet, *Die neue Raumtheorie*, Mainz 1882.

exist. Real space is consequently “real extension carried to the utmost limits of the universe, combined with the function of receiving and holding material bodies.” Similarly we may define absolute (*i. e.*, possible) space, as the extension of merely possible bodies with regard to their position.

b) Place (*locus, situs, κέῖσθαί*) differs from space as a part from its whole. It is as it were a section of space.³ A located or situated object, inasmuch as it occupies but a limited portion of space, can move or be moved from place to place. An object may exist in space in a threefold manner: (1) circumscriptively or by formal extension (*praesentia circumscriptiva*), when to each separate portion of its substance (atoms, molecules) there corresponds a separate part of space; (2) definitely (*praesentia definitiva*), if an object exists in its entirety throughout a given space (place) and in all its parts, as, *e. g.*, the soul in the body; (3) repletively (*praesentia repletiva*), if a being exists with the whole of its substance throughout a given space and in all of its parts, in such manner that it cannot be circumscribed by any real space, no matter how vast; this kind of presence is predicable of God alone.

c) Eternity, as we said before, must not be conceived as infinite duration in time. In like manner immensity must not be conceived as infinite extension, expansion, or diffusion of the Divine Essence in space, because the Divine Essence is absolutely simple.

St. Augustine confesses that he entertained this misconception in his youth.⁴ Newton committed a similar blunder when, in his controversy with Leibniz, he confounded the immensity of God with absolute (imaginary) space. The immensity of God cannot be measured with a yardstick in length, breadth, and depth. Lessius, it is true, refers to this divine attribute as “uncreated space.”⁵ But he merely wishes to assert that the immensity of God constitutes the foundation of space in the same way that eternity constitutes the foundation of time. In matter of fact immensity is the formal contradictory of space, and therefore can be conceived only by the negation of its essential characteristic, *i. e.*, juxtaposition. God is not subject to space; He is beyond space; He has no extension, either formal or virtual; He is in no wise bound by the limits of space. This relation can be best understood by picturing the analogous mode in which truth exists in space. It is everywhere and nowhere; it is present in every portion of space, and yet not subject to space, because it is above space. Now, God, being the subsisting, absolute, living Truth, can be immense and omnipresent only in the manner that truth is immense and omnipresent.

d) Immensity (*immensitas*) and omnipresence (*omnipraesentia*) are differentiated in the same manner as eternity and sempiternity.

Immensity is an absolute attribute, which belongs to God regardless of existing space. Omnipresence, on the other hand, is a relative and hypothetical attribute, contingent on real extension. Is God, by virtue of His immensity, also present in absolute space? The query is futile, inasmuch as absolute space has no actual existence, no reality. But we can and must say that God is present even in possible space *negative et fundamentaliter*, so that if new space came into existence, God would not begin to exist there, but, conversely, the newly created world would find the Immense Being already present when it came into existence. Since Divine Revelation itself

³ Father Rickaby calls it “the shell of space (χώρη) marking the outline of a body.” (*Of God and His Creatures*, p. 100, n.)

⁴ *Confess.* VIII, 5.

⁵ “*Spatium increatum.*” *De Perfect. Divin.*, II, 2.

discriminates between immensity and omnipresence, we shall consider them as two separate attributes.

2. THE DOGMA OF GOD'S IMMENSITY.—In reciting the Athanasian Creed we profess: "*Immensus Pater, immensus Filius, immensus Spiritus Sanctus*—The Father is immense, the Son is immense, the Holy Ghost is immense."⁶ The Fourth Lateran and the Vatican Councils distinctly enumerate immensity among the divine attributes.

a) Holy Scripture teaches the immensity of God in terms similar to those which it employs in asserting His eternity. As eternity, having neither beginning nor end, extends beyond all time, both before and after; so immensity exceeds all limits of space. Cfr. 3 Kings 8:27: "For if heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less this house [*i. e.*, temple] which I have built?" Job 11:8 sq.: "*Excelsior coelo est et quid facies?... longior terra mensura eius et latior mari*—He is higher than heaven, and what wilt thou?... The measure of him is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." Because He is beyond space, God, according to Holy Scripture, cannot be measured by the dimensions of space. He is without measure, immeasurable, immense. As eternity, which is duration without succession, combines the three measurements of time in one single "To-day," so with God the dimensions of space are reduced to one single point. Cfr. Jer. 23:23: "*Putasne, Deus e vicino ego sum ... et non [etiam] Deus de longe?*—Am I, think ye, a God at hand ... and not a God afar off?" Is. 66:1: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth my footstool." Like eternity, immensity is rooted in self-existence. Cfr. Deut. 4:39: "*Scito ergo hodie et cogitato in corde tuo, quod Dominus ipse sit Deus in coelo sursum et in terra deorsum, et non sit alius*—Know therefore this day, and think in thy heart that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and in the earth beneath, and there is no other."

b) The Fathers have developed this dogma scientifically, and their writings contain some exquisitely poetical passages in relation to it.

The incorporeity of God they explain thus: "Before the creation of the world God was His own place or site." "*Ante omnia erat Deus solus,*" says Tertullian, "*ipse sibi et mundus et locus et omnia*—Before all things God alone was; He is to Himself world, space, and everything."⁷ And Theophilus:⁸ "Θεὸς οὐ χωρεῖται ἀλλ' αὐτός ἐστι τόπος ὄλων, αὐτὸς δὲ ἑαυτοῦ τόπος—God cannot be contained by space, for He Himself is the place of everything and of Himself" [*i. e.*, He Himself is the place of all things, but with regard to Himself, He is His own place]. Augustine asks: "*Antequam faceret Deus coelum et terram, ubi habitabat? In se habitabat Deus, apud se*

⁶ In the English translation of the Athanasian Creed, transcribed by J. J. Sullivan, S. J., in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* (Vol. II, p. 33), this passage reads: "The Father Incomprehensible, the Son Incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost Incomprehensible." This is not a good rendition. Father Sullivan, by the way, ascribes this translation to the Marquess of Bute, but the Marquess of Bute merely took it, with a few slight alterations, from the Protestant *Book of Common Prayer*. We have before us the Oxford edition of 1834, where the "*Quicumque vult*" appears immediately before the "Litany, or General Supplication." The pages are not numbered. Cfr. also F. J. Hall, *The Being and Attributes of God*, p. 263 n., New York 1909. On *The Popular Use of the Athanasian Creed* in the Catholic Church in England—a subject about which many more than dubious notions are current among Protestants—cfr. J. W. Legg's pamphlet with the above title, London 1909.

⁷ *Adv. Prax.*

⁸ *Ad Autolyc.*, II, 1.

*habitabat, et apud se est Deus?*⁹ To explain that God is beyond space, the Fathers say we must conceive Him not as surrounded by, but as surrounding space.¹⁰

3. THE DOGMA OF GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE.—Omnipresence is included in the dogma of God's immensity as a part is included in the whole. Assuming the existence of real space, immensity involves omnipresence. God's ubiquity must not be conceived either *circumscriptive* or *definitive*, but strictly *repletive*. His *praesentia repletiva* in space is not merely intellectual (*per praesentiam scientiae*), or dynamic (*per potentiam*), but substantial (*per essentiam seu substantiam divinam*). The pagan philosophers of antiquity were in error when they limited the presence of God to this or that locality (*e. g.*, Mount Olympus, the Capitol). Equally erroneous was the belief of the Valentinian Gnostics, the Calvinist Vorstius, and the Greek Steuchus Eugubinus, who held that God is *substantially* present nowhere except in Heaven.¹¹

a) The Scriptural *locus classicus* is Ps. 138:7 sqq.: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy face? If I ascend into Heaven, thou art there: if I descend into hell, thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall thy hand lead me: and thy right hand shall hold me." Here we have both an accurate and a beautifully poetical description of the divine omnipresence.¹² It is to be observed that the Psalmist does not limit omnipresence to the

⁹ *In Ps.*, 122, n. 4.

¹⁰ Cfr. *Pastor Hermae*, II, 1: "Εἰς Θεὸς μόνος, ὁ πάντα χωρῶν, μόνος δὲ ἀχώρητος ὤν." S. Greg. M., *Moral.*, II, 12: "*Sursum regens, deorsum continens, extra circumdans, interius penetrans.*"

¹¹ Cfr. Petavius, *De Deo*, III, 7.

¹² Francis Thompson has elaborated it in his famous ode, "The Hound of Heaven":

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes, I sped;
And shot, precipitated
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmèd fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.

 But with unhurrying chase,
 And unperturbèd pace,
 Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
 They beat—and a Voice beat
 More instant than the Feet—

"All things betray thee, who betrayest Me."

.....

To all swift things for swiftness did I sue;
Clung to the whistling mane of every wind.
But whether they swept, smoothly fleet,
The long savannahs of the blue;
Or whether, Thunder-driven,
They clanged His chariot 'thwart a heaven,
Plashy with flying lightnings round the spurn o' their feet:—
Fear wist not to evade as Love wist to pursue.

 Still with unhurrying chase,

knowledge or power of God (which it, of course, includes); but expressly extends it to the divine Essence itself: “*Tu illic es, ades.*” Jer. 23:24, removes every vestige of a doubt: “*Numquid non coelum et terram ego impleo?*—Do not I fill heaven and earth?” It is only on this assumption that St. Paul could say:¹³ “*In ipso enim vivimus et movemur et sumus*—For in him we live, and move, and are.”¹⁴

b) Patristic theology not only re-echoed the teaching of Holy Scripture in regard to God’s omnipresence, but it engaged all the resources of science to explain the concept and to safeguard it against misinterpretation.

In this domain, as in so many others, the genius of Augustine shines with peculiar splendor. In his *Confessions* the Saint draws an impressive comparison between God’s omnipresence and the waters which surround and fill the sponges growing at the bottom of the sea (*i. e.*, the world). At the same time, in order to forestall a purely material conception of the “diffusion” of the Divine Essence, the great Bishop of Hippo endeavors, with keen analytical acumen, to determine the true notion of God’s omnipresence as accurately as is possible for the mind of man. “*Sic est Deus per cuncta diffusus,*” he says, “*ut non sit qualitas mundi, sed substantia creatrix mundi, sine labore regens et sine onere continens mundum. Non tamen per spatia locorum quasi mole diffusa, ita ut in dimidio mundi corpore sit dimidius et in alio dimidio dimidius, atque ita per totum totus; sed in solo coelo totus, et in sola terra totus, et in coelo et in terra totus, et nullo contentus loco, sed in se ipso ubique totus.*”¹⁵

c) Scholastic theology, following the lead of Peter the Lombard¹⁶ and St. Thomas Aquinas,¹⁷ goes a step farther and extends the substantial omnipresence of God to the world of spirits—angels, demons, and the souls of men. The Schoolmen distinguish a threefold presence of God in His creatures. He is present in them either (1) by essence (*per essentiam s. substantiam*); or (2) by power (*per potentiam*); or (3) by presence or inhabitation (*per inhabitationem s. praesentiam specialem*).

α) God is substantially present when he is in spiritual beings with His substance, *totus ubique*. Erasmus’s objection, that it is derogatory to the majesty of God to be present in demons, the souls of the damned, and other horrid creatures, had already been refuted long before his time by St. Augustine,¹⁸ who compared God’s presence in such beings to that of the sunlight, which penetrates filth without suffering contamination.

β) If God is present in all things substantially or “by essence,” it is evident that He must also be present in them dynamically or “by power”; for a substance can operate wherever it is. Is it

And unperturbèa pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
Came on the following Feet,
And a Voice above their beat—
“Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me.”

(and so forth)

¹³ Acts 17:28.

¹⁴ Cfr. Amos, 9:2 sq.

¹⁵ *Ep.* 187, c. 1, n. 14. St. Chrysostom expresses the same truth more succinctly in these words: “Πάντα πληροῖς, πᾶσι πάρει, οὐ κατὰ μέρος, ἀλλὰ πᾶσιν ὄλος—Thou fillest all, Thou art present to all, not in part, but whole [Thou art present] to all.” (*In Ps.* 138, n. 2.)

¹⁶ *Liber Sent.*, I, dist. 37.

¹⁷ *Summa Theol.*, 1a, qu. 8, art. 3.

¹⁸ *De Natura Boni*, c. 29.

equally logical, conversely, to infer that God is substantially present when we know Him to be present dynamically? His dynamic presence is admitted by all, not so the possibility of “*actio in distans*.” While the oft-quoted axiom that “*actio in distans*” is impossible is not fully evident, yet in respect of divine things its validity is undeniable; for as God’s power objectively coincides with His Essence, His Essence must be present wherever His power is operative. It follows that all the remaining attributes of God must likewise be present in every created being; and this is especially true of His omniscience,¹⁹ which sees all things.²⁰ We must not omit to point out, however, that an important distinction lies between God’s substantial and His dynamic presence. Substantial presence, being an emanation from the Absolute Essence, rests on metaphysical necessity, while dynamic presence, so far as it manifests itself actively, is subject to the free will of the Almighty. This explains why God manifests His power variously in His various creatures.

y) What we have said towards the end of the above paragraph is true in an even higher degree of God’s inhabitative presence, that is to say, His special mode of indwelling in His creatures. He indwells differently in the just, in sinners, in angels, in demons, in the Church and in the State;²¹ on earth and in Heaven; and so forth. Therefore we pray in the “Our Father”: “*Pater noster, qui es in coelis*—Our Father, Who art in Heaven.” St. Paul alludes to this truth when he says: “While we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord; ... but we are confident, and have a good will to be absent rather from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”²² St. Bernard appositely observes: “*Licet ubique esse Deus non dubitetur, sic tamen in coelo est, ut ... nec esse videatur in terris. Propter quod et orantes dicimus: Pater nosier, qui es in coelis. Sicut enim anima, cum in toto quoque sit corpore, excellentius tamen et singularius est in capite, in quo sunt omnes sensus, ... ita si praesentiam illam cogitamus, qua beati angeli perfruuntur, videmur vix aliquam Dei protectionem et nomen habere.*”²³ In Christ and in the Blessed Eucharist the Godhead, by virtue of the Hypostatic Union, indwells in an altogether singular manner, hence our churches are veritably and literally “houses of God.”²⁴

READINGS:—S. Thom., *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 8.—IDEM, *Contr. Gent.*, III, 68 (Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures*, pp. 238 sq.).—Lessius, *De Perfect. Divin.*, 1. II.—*Gillius, *De Essentia Dei*, tract. 9.—Franzelin, *De Deo Uno*, thes. 33–34.—Scheeben, *Dogmatik*, Vol. I, §§ 77, 88 (Wilhelm-Scannell, *Manual*, pp. 193 sqq., 211 sqq.).—Lépicier, *De Deo Uno*, t. I, pp. 286 sqq., Parisiis 1902.—Humphrey, “*His Divine Majesty*,” pp. 124 sqq.—Boedder, *Natural Theology*, pp. 249 sqq.

¹⁹ Cfr. Ps. 65:7: “*Oculi eius super gentes respiciunt*.—His eyes behold the nations.”

²⁰ This explains why artists love to represent the divine omnipresence by the symbol of a “seeing eye.”

²¹ Cfr. Math, 28:20.

²² 2 Cor. 5:6 sqq.

²³ *Serm.* in Ps. “*Qui habitat*,” 1, n. 4.

²⁴ For a refutation of the false teaching of Luther concerning God’s ubiquity we must refer the reader to Christology. The special indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the souls of the just belongs to the treatise on Grace. It will hardly be necessary to add anything to what we have said above, to explain such Scriptural phrases as the “coming” and “going of God,” the “descent of the Holy Ghost,” etc.

CHAPTER III

THE ATTRIBUTES OF DIVINE LIFE—DIVINE KNOWLEDGE

Considered dynamically, aseity, God's fundamental attribute, is purest activity; consequently the attributes of Divine Activity must be deducible in the same manner as the attributes of Divine Being; and, since immanent activity is synonymous with life, the attributes of Divine Activity must be identical with the attributes of Divine Life.¹

As God is a pure spirit, and spiritual life utters itself in knowing and willing, it is plain that God's vital activity can find expression only in cognition and volition. This furnishes a natural division of the attributes of divine life, *viz.*, attributes of the Understanding and attributes of the Will. In the words of the Vatican Council:² "*Ecclesia credit et confitetur, unum esse Deum verum et vivum ... intellect ac voluntate omnique perfectione infinitum*—The ... Church believes and confesses that there is one true and living God, ... infinite in intelligence, in will, and in all perfection."³

In respect of the divine understanding, we will discuss (1) the manner in which it is exercised, (2) its object, and (3) its medium. In treating of these three points we shall have to be very careful not to trench on the infinite perfection of the Divine Knowledge. Not only must we conceive it as self-existent, but likewise as blending with all the other attributes of Divine Being, especially the negative ones, sternly excluding from the Divine Understanding every imaginable imperfection of human cognition, such as supposition, doubt, discursive reasoning, and so forth. It is with a view to emphasizing the certainty and infallibility of Divine Cognition that theologians generally speak of it as *scientia divina*, for *scientia* (science) is the certain and evident knowledge of things by their causes.

SECTION 1

THE MODE OF DIVINE KNOWLEDGE

From what we have previously said about the manner in which created perfections are contained in God, it follows that every mixed perfection (such as, *e. g.*, the faculty of discursive reasoning), must be subjected to a process of logical refinement before it can be applied to the Deity; and further that when we undertake to transfer a simple perfection, *i. e.*, one formally capable of being predicated of the Divine Essence (*e. g.*, intellect), from the creature to the Creator, we must abstract from the mode in which that perfection exists in the creature. The following theses are calculated to show how divine differs from human knowledge in regard to its mode.

¹ Cfr. Deut. 32:40: "*Vivo ego in aeternum*—I live forever." John 14:6: "*Ego sum via et veritas et vita* (ἡ ζωή)—I am the way, and the truth, and the life."—On the Divine Life in general, consult Scheeben, *Dogmatik*, Vol. I, § 89; St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.*, 1a, qu. 8.

² *Conc. Vatic., Sess. III, De Fide, cap. 1.*

³ Cfr. Denzinger-Bannwart, *Enchiridion*, n. 1782.

Thesis I: Because of the identity of being and thought in God, the Divine Knowledge is a substantial act of cognition, in which consciousness and self-comprehension co-incide

This is *de fide*.

Proof. We have already shown, in treating of the Absolute Truth,¹ that in God being and thinking really co-incide; that a notion which adequately comprehends its object, must be conceived as a substance; and that this entire process must culminate in a most complete comprehension by God of His Essence, or of Himself. All three of these momenta are implicitly contained in the decree of the Vatican Council, according to which God is “infinite in intelligence, in will, and in all perfection,” and, at the same time, “one ... absolutely simple and immutable spiritual substance.”² The absolute identity of being and thinking in God is, indeed, an immediate consequence of His self-existence, which altogether excludes a transition from faculty to act. The substantiality of the divine act of understanding is a corollary flowing from that metaphysical simplicity of the Divine Essence which does not admit of parts and accidents; and, finally, resulting from both, the comprehension by God of His own Self or Essence, is a consequence of the infinite, absolute spirituality, by virtue of which, in God, truth must co-incide with knowledge, goodness with volition.³

The leading characteristic of God’s knowledge is doubtless His comprehension of Himself (*comprehensio sui*), which wholly governs and determines His intellectual life in itself as well as in its relations *ad extra*. From this comprehensive knowledge which God has of Himself, flows, as from a fruitful *idea matrix*, the knowledge of all truth and of all truths within and without the Divine Essence. The absolute incomprehensibility of the Divine Essence makes it impossible for any created or creatable intellect, either in this life or in the life beyond, to form a comprehensive notion of God. God, and God alone, is able to compass Himself and to exhaust His Essence as the Infinite Truth.

Sacred Scripture attributes this comprehensive knowledge to each of the three Divine Persons in particular. Cfr. Math. 11:27: “*Nemo novit (ἐπιγινώσκει) Filium nisi Pater, neque Patrem quis novit nisi Filius*—No one knoweth the Son, but the Father: neither doth any one know the Father but the Son.” 1 Cor. 2:10 sq.: “*Spiritus enim omnia scrutatur, etiam profunda Dei (τὰ βάθη τοῦ θεοῦ); ... quae Dei sunt, nemo cognovit (ἔγνωκεν) nisi Spiritus Dei*—The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God ... the things also that are of God no man knoweth, but the Spirit of God.”

Among the Fathers it is especially St. Augustine who regards the Logos, or Son, as the adequately comprehensive image of the Father. For God, he says, to speak (*dicere*) is the same as to comprehend Himself (*comprehendere*). “*Tanquam seipsum dicens Pater genuit Verbum sibi aequale per omnia; non enim seipsum integre perfecteque dixisset, si aliquid minus aut amplius esset in eius Verbo, quam in ipso*—As though uttering Himself, the Father begat the word equal to

¹ *Supra*, pp. 230 sqq.

² *Conc. Vatican., Sess. III, De Fide, c. 1: “Intellectu ac voluntate omnique perfectione infinitus ... (et simul) simplex omnino et incommutabilis substantia spiritualis.”*

³ Cfr. Isidor. Hispal., *Etymol.* VII, 1: “*Deus habet essentiam, habet et sapientiam; sed quod habet, hoc et est, et omnia unus est ac proinde simplex est, quia in eo non aliquid accidentis est.*” The reader is also referred to what we have said *supra*, on the divine attributes of substantiality and immutability.

Himself in all things; for He would not have uttered Himself wholly and perfectly, if there were in His word anything more or less than in Himself.”⁴

If God comprehends Himself, He must be self-conscious. Our inadequate human mode of conception distinguishes the two, by conceiving of God’s self-comprehension as directed to the Divine Essence (*cognitio directa*), and His self-consciousness as bearing on the operation of the Divine Intellect (*cognitio reflexa*). God knows Himself—His Substance, His Essence, His Nature, and everything that pertains to His knowledge or the exercise of His intellect; and this self-knowledge naturally implies consciousness of the *Ego*,—a truth which needs to be emphasized in view of the Pantheistic fallacy that the Divine self-consciousness is enkindled by God’s (immanent) production of the created universe. This absurd and heretical notion of “a gradual awakening of the divine consciousness” is incompatible with God’s most fundamental attribute, *i. e.*, self-existence, and was already refuted by Aristotle when he defined the Divinity as “νόησις νοήσεως.” God Himself has revealed the reality of His consciousness by His inimitable effatum: “*Ego sum qui sum*—I am who am.”⁵ Not only the Godhead in the oneness of Its nature, but likewise each of the three Divine Persons possesses self-consciousness and gives expression to it by the word “I.”⁶ However, we must beware of the gross error which the school of Günther at one time propagated among the theologians of Germany,—that consciousness formally constitutes personality. If this were so, then we should have to distinguish in Jesus Christ, who had both a divine and a human consciousness, two separate persons, and in the Godhead three distinct Natures, because of the trinity of the (relative) self-consciousness, and but one Person on account of the oneness of God’s (absolute) consciousness. This would spell, on the one hand, Nestorianism; on the other, Tritheism or Sabellianism. In matter of fact, as there is in God but one Nature, so He has only one consciousness, which belongs to all three Divine Persons *per modum identitatis*, and by virtue of which each separate Hypostasis, and all three Hypostases together, are aware of their existence and their infinite perfection. If, therefore, consciousness is multiplied according to natures, not according to persons, it follows inevitably that consciousness and self-comprehension in God coincide in the same manner as being and cognition.⁷ Hence in the Godhead: being = thought = *comprehensio sui* = consciousness.⁸

Thesis II: By virtue of His infinite comprehension of His own Essence, God in and through Himself also knows all extra-divine truths, in such manner that truth is dependent on Him, not He on truth

Proof. This thesis consists of two distinct parts. In the first, God’s self-comprehension is made to comprise within its radius the entire domain of truth external to His Essence; while in the second, the relation of the former to the latter is defined more clearly by excluding all real dependency of God on the objects of His knowledge.

The question here at issue, therefore, is not: How many and what classes of truths form the object of Divine Knowledge, but: How does God know the several truths, the possible and the real, the present and the future, etc? Our thesis answers this question in a twofold way. (1)

⁴ *De Trinit.*, XV, 14, 23 (Haddan’s translation, p. 407).

⁵ Ex. 3:14.

⁶ Thus the Father: Math. 3:17: “*Hic est filius meus dilectus, in quo mihi complacui*—This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” The Son: John 10:30: “*Ego et pater unum sumus*—I and the Father are one.” And the Holy Ghost: Acts 13:2: “*Segregate mihi Saulum et Barnabam*—Separate me Saul and Barnabas.”

⁷ Cfr. Franzelin, *De Verbo Incarnato*, 3rd ed., Rome 1881, pp. 249 sqq.

⁸ Cfr. Otten, *Apologie des göttlichen Bewusstseins*, Paderborn 1897.

Positively: God knows all truths in and through Himself, that is to say, by virtue of His own Essence and His self-comprehension; (2) negatively: the truths which He knows do not really affect His knowledge. Inasmuch as the Church has never defined the mode of divine cognition, and her *magisterium ordinarium* teaches nothing definite on this subject as of faith, we cannot assert our thesis to be *de fide*, though we can surely claim for it the value of a theological conclusion. All theological schools unanimously uphold God's absolute independence of the objects of His knowledge, as a corollary from the divine attributes of self-existence and infinite perfection.

1. It is not difficult to demonstrate that God must know all truths without exception by reason of His self-comprehension. According to the axiom: "*Ens et verum convertuntur,*" truth is co-extensive with being. Now, whatever is, is either God, or something external to God. The things external to God can be divided into two classes: the possible and the actually existing. We know from the preceding thesis that God has an adequate knowledge of all divine being by reason of His comprehension of His own Essence. As for the two classes of extra-divine beings, the possibles depend on the Divine Essence as their exemplary cause, while the actually existing things depend on the same not only as their exemplary but also as their efficient and final cause. As, therefore, God comprehends His own Essence, which is the exemplary, the efficient, and the final cause of all things outside of Himself, so by virtue of His *comprehensio sui* He must envisage these things one and all in His own Essence.

To prove this thesis from Revelation, we must fall back on the attribute of divine omnipotence. If God can do whatever does not imply an intrinsic contradiction, then His omnipotence is co-extensive with being, that is, with the sphere of possible being. Even the things that now actually exist, prior to the moment of their creation or realization were merely possible. Now, God envisages His omnipotence in His own Essence, of which it is an attribute; consequently he must also perceive in His Essence whatever comes within the scope of His omnipotence, *viz.*: all real and all possible things. Cfr. Eccus. 23:29: "*Domino Deo, antequam crearentur, omnia sunt agnita, sic et post perfectum respicit omnia* (πρὶν ἢ κτισθῆναι τὰ πάντα ἔγνωσται αὐτῷ, οὕτως καὶ μετὰ τὸ συντελεσθῆναι)—For all things were known to the Lord God, before they were created, so also after they were perfected he beholdeth all things."⁹ The following quotation from St. Augustine's treatise *De Genesi ad Lit.*, is often cited in this connection: "*Sicut vidit, ita fecit. Non praeter seipsum videns, sed in seipso, ita enumeravit omnia, quae fecit... Nota ergo fecit, non facta cognovit. Proinde antequam fierent, et erant et non erant: erant in Dei scientia, non erant in sua natura.*"¹⁰ The Schoolmen, under the leadership of St. Thomas, defended the thesis: "*Deus intellectu suo intelligit se principaliter, et in se intelligit omnia alia*—God with His understanding knows Himself in the first place, and in Himself perceives all other things."¹¹

2. If God, as we have just shown, by virtue of His self-comprehension, knows all extra-divine things (or truths) in His Essence, it follows as a matter of course that He is nowise dependent on the objects of His knowledge.

A created intellect cannot perceive an object without being influenced by it. The object, as the Scholastic phrase runs, determines the intellect. Not so the Divine Intellect, which, in perceiving Itself as well as the things outside Itself, is determined only by Itself. Therefore no extra-divine

⁹ Cfr. Wisdom 7:21 sqq.; Prov. 8:22 sqq.; John 1:3 sqq., and other similar passages.

¹⁰ *De Gen. ad Lit.*, V, 35 sq.

¹¹ Cfr. Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures*, p. 57.

truth in its relation to God can ever be a *causa determinans*, though it may be a *conditio sine qua non*. In other words: The things outside of God are merely the terminus, but in no sense the cause of Divine Knowledge. Or, as the Scholastics put it: “*Objecta alia a Deo terminant quidem intellectum divinum, sed non determinant*—The objects existing outside of God terminate, but they do not determine, the Divine Intellect.” To assume that the Divine Intellect could be influenced by truths existing outside of Itself, would be tantamount to asserting that God is essentially dependent on the created universe, which would be to deny His self-existence. There is nothing outside the Divine Essence which can determine God’s knowledge, just as there is nothing external to Him that can determine His being; for both His knowledge and His being are self-existing. It follows that the Divine Intellect can be determined only from within, that is to say, by the Divine Essence Itself. However, we must not conceive of this process as a real influence exerted by God’s Essence upon His Intellect, lest we fall into the mistake, already censured, of taking *aseitas* to mean self-realization in the strict sense of that term. God, being pure actuality (*actus purissimus*), cannot in any sense be conceived as potential. Cfr. 1 John 1:5: “*Deus lux est et tenebrae in eo non sunt ullae*—God is light, and in Him there is no darkness.” To say that God is determined from within, can, therefore, only mean that His knowledge is determined by His essence in the same way as His existence.¹² The doctrine we are here defending has found pointed, not to say drastic, expression in the writings of those Fathers of the Church who hold that God does not know the things outside Himself because they exist, but they exist because He knows them. “*Universas creaturas suas, et spirituales et corporales,*” says St. Augustine, “*non quia sunt ideo novit, sed ideo sunt quia novit; non enim nescivit quae fuerat creaturus*—And with respect to all His creatures, both spiritual and corporeal, He does not know them because they are, but they are because He knows them. For He was not ignorant of what He was about to create.”¹³ Similarly St. Gregory the Great: “*Quae sunt, non in aeternitate eius ideo videntur quia sunt; sed ideo sunt quia videntur*—The things that are, are not seen in His eternity because they are, but they are because He sees them.”¹⁴ These authorities do not mean to deny that the things outside of God are actually the terminus of Divine knowledge; for there can be no knowledge without an object; but they certainly do deny that the “*objecta alia a Deo*” exercise a causal influence upon the knowledge of God; in other words, that God’s knowledge is dependent upon its objects.

3. The proposition of the Schoolmen: “*Divina essentia est objectum formale et primum, omnia alia vera sunt objectum materiale et secundarium divinae cognitionis,*” is merely a different way of formulating our thesis.

The formal object of a vital faculty is that which determines the faculty to act and imparts to it its own specific perfection. Such is, for instance, color with respect to the eye. The material object is that which is viewed in the light of the formal object, and comes within the purview of a faculty only from that particular coign of vantage, as, *e. g.*, bodily substance and magnitude, which the eye can perceive only *ratione coloris*. Similarly the primary object is that which is apprehended by a faculty *primo et per se*, and to which whatever else is apprehended (*objectum secundarium*) must be referred as to its principle. Hence a formal object must always be primary; a material object, secondary. *Mutatis mutandis* the same terminology may be employed in defining the object of any other science, as, for instance, geometry or metaphysics.

Now, if God’s knowledge receives its peculiar form and perfection not from without, but from the Divine Essence itself, and if it is the Divine Essence alone which determines the Intellect of

¹² Cfr. Chr. Pesch, *Praelect. Dogm.*, Vol. II, p. 93.

¹³ S. Augustin., *De Trinit.*, XV, 13, 22. Haddan’s translation, p. 406.

¹⁴ Greg. M., *Moral.*, XX, 29, n. 63.

God and so renders His knowledge truly divine; then the truths outside of God cannot possibly constitute the formal object of His knowledge; hence they must be its material object, because, being truths, they cannot be unknown to Him Who is All-Truth. We say, material object, and nothing more; for, whether, *e. g.*, the world exists or no, cannot in any wise affect the perfection of God's knowledge, because in neither case would God's knowledge be increased or diminished, either materially or formally.¹⁵ For precisely the same reason God's Essence is the primary, and the things that exist outside of it are merely secondary objects of His knowledge.

Kleutgen¹⁶ points out a beautiful parallel. If we take theology as the subjective knowledge of things divine, he says, the most accomplished theologian can be none other than God Himself, whereas theological knowledge on earth grows in nobility and perfection according as a man learns to consider all things in the light of the Divine, and reaches its final culmination in the beatific vision vouchsafed only in Heaven.¹⁷

Thesis III: God knows the things external to Himself not only in His own Essence, but also as they are in themselves

Proof. The things outside of God have a twofold being, to wit: ideal or eminent being, in the Essence and Knowledge of God, and real or formal being, in their own reality and individual determination.

1. Purely possible being (*ens possibile*) has objective existence only in the first-mentioned sense. It is something ideal, *sans* actual existence, though capable of being conceived as existing; *e. g.*, a galloping centaur. Actual being, on the other hand, besides ideal also has real being, inasmuch as that which was merely possible has become actually existing. It is easy to see that the ideal being of the possibles objectively coincides with the Divine Essence itself. The infinitely variable imitability of that Essence furnishes the basis for an infinite number of prototypes, which the Divine Intellect conceives as archetypes of creatable things, and which the Divine Will by its creative power is able to posit outside of itself as so many ectypes. It must be noted, however, that the purely possible, even before its realization, does not merely possess an indistinct sort of being, but is as definitely stamped and as individually determined in its archetype as after it has become existent. Goethe was able with his eyes closed to summon before his imagination a full-blown rose and he derived as much pleasure from contemplating its various beauties as though he held a real flower in his hand.

The question next suggests itself, whether the knowledge of the omniscient God is limited to the ideal or eminent being of extra-divine things as reflected in His Essence, or whether His intellectual vision can penetrate to the real, formal or individually determined being which objects have, or can have, *in themselves*. In formulating the question thus, we do not, of course, mean to deny the independence of the Divine Knowledge, which we have proved in the preceding thesis. Like the individually determined being of the purely possible, the real or formal being of actually existing things can be the terminus, but never the cause of divine cognition. Hence we have formulated our present thesis in this wise: "God knows the things outside of Himself, not only in His own Essence, but also *as they are in themselves* (not: *but also in themselves*)."¹⁸ I know of but

¹⁵ Cfr. St. August., *De Trinit.* XV, 13: "*Non aliter ea scivit creata quam creanda; non enim eius sapientiae aliquid accessit ex eis, sed illis existentibus sicut oportebat et quando oportebat, illa permansit, ut erat*—Nor did He know them when created in any other way than He knew them when still to be created, for nothing accrued to His wisdom from them; but that wisdom remained as it was, while they came into existence as it was fitting and when it was fitting."

¹⁶ *De Ipso Deo*, p. 259.

¹⁷ Cfr. also Franzelin, *De Deo Uno*, thes. 38; Chr. Pesch, *Praelect. Dogmat.*, Vol. II, thes. 33.

one theologian who denies that God's knowledge extends to things as they are in themselves; viz.: Aureolus, who says:¹⁸ "*Si quaeratur, an Deus sic intelligat quod intuitum suum ferat super essentiam [suam] et ex hoc procedat ulterius usque ad creaturam, ita quod sint duo intuita: Deus et creatura, sic nullo modo concedi potest, quod Deus intelligat creatura?*"¹⁸ It is not difficult to refute this obviously false view.

2. If God knew the things outside Himself only in their ideal or eminent being, He would really know nothing beyond His *own Essence*; the real, formal being of existing things, and the concretely individualized being of the purely possibles, as they are or can be *in themselves*, would remain hidden from Him. Consequently, there would be something knowable which God did not know, and it would be precisely that which created intelligences are so well able to know, because they direct their mind's eye to the real, formal, and determinate being as it exists outside the Divine Essence. Now, the assumption that anything knowable eludes the knowledge of God, or that the created mind commands a wider range than the infinite intellect of the Creator, is preposterous as well as derogatory to the dignity of the Most High. There is this further consideration. God must needs know created things in the same manner in which He creates, or can create, them. Now, the object and end of God's creative activity is not the ideally-eminent, but the really-formal being of extra-divine objects. Consequently, God not only knows the former but also the latter. It is solely from this point of view that we can understand such revealed texts as these: "For he beholdeth the ends of the world, and looketh on all things that are under heaven, who made a weight for the winds, and weighed the waters by measure, when he gave a law for the rain, and a way for the sounding storms. Then he saw it, and declared, and prepared, and searched it."¹⁹ Again: "Who telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them by all their names ... and of his wisdom there is no number."²⁰

A question quite apart from the one just treated is whether God perceives the real and formal being of the things outside His Essence *immediately* in these things themselves, or *mediately* in and through His own Essence. We shall treat this point later, when we come to discuss the medium of divine cognition.²¹

Thesis IV: God's knowledge of the things outside Himself is an adequately comprehensive knowledge, and is invested with that absolute infallibility which flows from metaphysical certainty

This thesis enunciates an article of faith.

Proof. God has an adequately comprehensive knowledge not only of His own Essence, but of whatever exists or can exist. By an adequately comprehensive knowledge we mean one which exhausts its object so completely that the entire cognoscibility of that object becomes as it were absorbed by cognition. A knowledge that is not adequately comprehensive always includes some remnant of uncomprehended being.

¹⁸ *In Mag.* 1, dist. 35, p. 2, art. 2.

¹⁸ *In Mag.* 1, dist. 35, p. 2, art. 2.

¹⁹ Job 28:24 sqq.

²⁰ Ps. 146:4 sq. Cfr. Hebr. 4:3. For the teaching of St. Augustine, see the preceding thesis. Cfr. also S. Thom., *Contr. Gent.* I, c. 49 sqq.

²¹ § 3, *infra*.

Thus a mathematician has no adequately comprehensive knowledge of a triangle so long as he has not thoroughly mastered the geometrical propositions concerning triangles and their relations to parallel lines, the circle, the square, etc.,—a mastery which, needless to say, cannot be acquired in this life.

1. We call God's knowledge *scientia*, in order to indicate that it excludes, on the one hand, doubt, and on the other, mere opinion and suspicion. Doubt (*dubium*) is that state of the mind in which it hesitates between two contradictory members of a judgment, as, for instance, in trying to solve the question whether the number of existing stars is odd or even. Opinion (*opinio*) is a judgment which the mind accepts for weighty reasons, though unable to rid itself of the fear that its contrary may be true; as, for instance, in assenting to a proposition regarding space in the *n*th dimension. Suspicion (*suspicio*), like doubt, is no true judgment, but merely an inclination, based on weak grounds, to prefer one member of an alternative to the other, as, for instance, that this particular person has committed a certain specified crime. Certitude (*certitudo*) absolutely excludes the possibility of error, and hence spells the true ideal state of the intellect, as, for instance, the certainty a man has concerning his own existence. We cannot, consequently, conceive of real knowledge except as based on certainty. Be it remarked, however, that *subjective* certitude does not of itself engender knowledge, but must have a foundation in fact. A man who is moved by prejudice, or swayed by his passions, may be subjectively certain, and yet err. Subjective certitude must be based upon objective certainty, because it is the latter that furnishes the grounds for the former. It follows from what we have said that certainty may inhere not only in judgments and conclusions, but also in the very objects themselves, as when I say: "The fact is certain," "This proposition is sure." It is objective certainty that furnishes the basis for knowledge and thereby engenders true subjective certitude. Now, what is objective certainty? It is nothing else than the intestine necessity of a thing, or, in other words, the impossibility of its contradictory being true, as, *e. g.*, $2 \times 2 = 4$. When this necessity remains hidden, there can be no certitude or true knowledge. When perceived by the intellect, this necessity is called evidence, and the intellect must bow to it.

2. There are three kinds of certitude: *metaphysical*, *physical*, and *moral*. The first, which is the strongest, rests upon the *intrinsic* impossibility of the contradictory proposition, and is often called mathematical. Physical certitude is based upon the necessary operation of the contingent laws of nature (*e. g.*, the sun is hot). It is inferior to metaphysical certitude, because the momentary suspension of any law of nature (as, *e. g.*, in the case of the three children in the fiery furnace), diminishes the impossibility. The weakest of the three is moral certitude, which rests merely on the constancy and universality governing the conduct of free beings, who—despite occasional exceptions—as a rule follow their inborn inclinations (as, *e. g.*, mothers love their children). Though the necessity upon which moral certitude rests, and which may ultimately be traced to the watchfulness of Divine Providence, may at any moment be broken through by the free will of man, yet the propositions derived from it remain certain in their moral generality, as, *e. g.*, that the majority of mothers will always love their offspring. Verisimilitude, or probability (*verisimilitudo*, *probabilitas*) differs from certitude in all of its three stages, though we often refer to a particularly high degree of it as "moral certitude." It lacks necessity: there is no guaranty that the contradictory proposition may not be true. The mathematical formula for probability is $W = p/n$ (*p* designating favorable, *n* possible instances). With the number of favorable instances (the denominator remaining the same), probability increases until, *p* becoming equal to *n*, it changes into certitude: $W = p/n = n/n = 1$. The figure 1 is consequently termed "the symbol of certitude." Probability does not rest on necessity, and therefore does not *per se* engender certitude; but it is to be noted that a mathematical *judgment* concerning the *a priori* degree of probability of an event is always metaphysically certain, even though concrete predictions based upon a probable calculation frequently miss the mark. Inasmuch as God knows all things with *metaphysical*

certitude, it is not sufficient to attribute to His intellect the absolute certainty proper to mathematical judgments. He has and must have an absolutely infallible knowledge of each and every individual event; else His knowledge would be little more than a calculation based on probabilities.

3. An intelligence is infallible if it cannot err. From this definition it is evident that the formal characteristic of *infallibility* (*infallibilitas*) is not the mere fact of not-erring (*inerrantia*), just as the formal characteristic of impeccability (*impeccabilitas*) is not actual freedom from sin (*impeccantia*). Infallibility not only implies *posse non errare*, but *non posse errare*. It may be either absolute or relative, according as it is unlimited, comprising all truths without exception, or limited in extension and derivative in regard to its contents. *Absolute* infallibility postulates an infinite being, in whom truth and subsistent reason are identical. *Relative* infallibility is proper to the human intellect, which, created as it is for the truth, is infallible when guided by the general criterion of *evidence*. To deny this would plunge mankind into scepticism. Besides the *natural* infallibility, which we have been considering, there is a *supernatural* infallibility, which is a gift of Divine Grace. Such was the prophetic and charismatic infallibility of the Old Testament seers, and of the Apostles; such to-day is the infallibility of the ecclesiastical teaching office in matters of faith and morals, no matter whether it enunciates its decisions by the *magisterium ordinarium* of daily instruction, or in a solemn definition by an ecumenical council, or in an *ex cathedra* pronouncement on the part of the Roman Pontiff. This explains the practical importance of divine, as the foundation of derived, infallibility.

4. After the foregoing explanations it will not be difficult to prove our thesis, which not only avers that God knows all things outside Himself *in globo*,²² but that He has an adequate comprehension of each one of them individually. If He had no such adequate comprehension, some things would be unknown to Him, and He would either remain in eternal ignorance of them, or be compelled constantly to acquire new knowledge. The former assumption is repugnant to His infinite perfection, the latter to His absolute immutability. Cfr. Ecclus. 39:24, sqq.: “The works of all flesh [*i. e.*, all men] are before him, and there is *nothing hid* from his eyes; he seeth from eternity to eternity, and there is *nothing wonderful* before him.” In its innermost essence this comprehensive cognition is true knowledge—exempt from doubt, opinion, and suspicion. It is in consequence metaphysically certain; for metaphysical certitude alone can wholly eliminate the possibility of error. For the same reason the knowledge of God must ultimately culminate in absolute infallibility, which positively excludes all possibility of error. Cfr. Hebr. 4:13: “*Non est ulla creatura invisibilis in conspectu eius; omnia autem nuda et aperta sunt oculis eius*—Neither is there any creature invisible in his sight; but all things are naked and open to his eyes.” The possibility of erring would entail the possibility of correcting errors, and this could not be made to square with the immutability of God’s knowledge and Essence.²³

SECTION 2

²² Cfr. First Thesis, *supra*.

²³ Consult here the passages from Sacred Scripture and the Fathers cited in § 2. Cfr. also *Conc. Vatican., Sess. III, cap. 1, “De Deo.”*

THE OBJECTS OF DIVINE KNOWLEDGE—OMNISCIENCE

Being absolutely simple, and therefore indivisible, God's Knowledge can be distinguished only in respect of its objects. Inasmuch as, and because, God knows whatever is and can be, He is called the Omniscient (*omniscius*).

A common division of the Knowledge of God is that into *scientia necessaria* and *scientia libera*, according as its object is something absolutely necessary (e. g., God, or the purely possible), or exists by virtue of the free will of the Creator (e. g., the physical universe).

Of particular importance is the distinction between God's Knowledge of simple intelligence (*scientia simplicis intelligentiae*), which has for its object the purely possible (i. e., the metaphysical essences, abstract truths); and His knowledge of vision (*scientia visionis*), which, as a spiritual "seeing," terminates on every thing actually existing. Between these two, the Molinists have placed a third, the famous *scientia media*, which, holding the "middle" between the purely possible and the really actual, is supposed to comprehend the free acts of the future which intelligent beings *would* perform under certain conditions, though as a matter of fact many of them never *will* be performed, because the conditions will not be realized. The Thomists refuse to admit the *scientia media*; but by disputing among themselves whether the conditionally future free actions of rational creatures (*actus liberi futuribiles*) belong to the *scientia simplicis intelligentiae* or to the *scientia visionis*,¹ they seem virtually to admit that there is room for such a distinction.

A further distinction, between *scientia approbationis* and *scientia improbationis*, is based upon the *Will* of God rather than upon His Knowledge. God wills and approves all good things and deeds which He sees, while He disapproves—or, in the language of Holy Scripture, "knows not," "ignores"—the bad. Cfr. Math. 25:12: "*Amen dico vobis, nescio vos*—Amen I say to you, I know you not."

Abstracting from the Divine Substance, which, after what we have already said, we may leave out of consideration here, there are to be distinguished four groups of objects outside of God, viz.: (1) the purely possible; (2) those which actually exist, including the free actions of rational creatures past and present; (3) the free future acts of these creatures; and (4) the free acts conditionally future, which are held to form the object of the *scientia media*.

ARTICLE 1

OMNISCIENCE AS GOD'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE PURELY POSSIBLE

1. THE TEACHING OF DIVINE REVELATION.—Whatever has real existence was before its realization merely possible, and after its disparition will return to that state. Hence the possible is co-extensive with truth or being.

Intrinsic possibility is predicable of the Divine Essence, though, needless to insist, it necessarily coincides with the existence of God. From these considerations it is manifest that the possible constitutes the adequate and total object of the *scientia simplicis intelligentiae*. The assumption that any truth whatsoever can elude the Divine Omniscience, has been condemned as heretical. Consequently it is an article of faith that God knows whatever is possible. This dogma can be easily proved from Holy Scripture. Job

¹ Billuart, *De Deo*, diss. 6, art.5, obj. 3.

13:9: “*Deum celare nihil potest*—God ... from whom nothing can be concealed.” Ps. 138:5: “*Tu cognovisti omnia*—Thou hast known all things.” Or the prayer of Esther (Esth. 14:14): “*Domine, qui habes omnium scientiam*—O Lord, who hast the knowledge of all things.” If these passages left any doubt as to whether or not the knowledge of God includes the realm of the purely possible, such doubt would be dispelled by Ecclus. 23:29 “*Domino Deo, antequam crearentur, omnia sunt agnita*—For all things were known to the Lord God, before they were created,” and Rom. 4:17, “*Vocat ea quae non sunt, tamquam ea quae sunt*—God ... calleth those things that are not, as those that are.” Moreover, it is plain that God’s adequate conception of His own omnipotence must necessarily exhaust the fullness of that attribute, *i. e.*, comprise everything possible. Cfr. Matth. 19:26 “*Apud Deum omniaabilia sunt*—With God all things are possible.”²

2. THE INFINITE MULTITUDE OF POSSIBLE THINGS.—As there is a confusing multiplicity of possible things (species, individuals, series, actions, etc.), God’s knowledge actually extends to a multitude which is infinite.

a) Ruiz calls this deduction “*certissima et fidei proxima*.”³ It is obvious that the totality of possible objects, at the attempted contemplation of which the human intellect reels,⁴ cannot be expressed by any finite number, and that it must, therefore, be infinite. St. Thomas expressly teaches this: “*Deus scit non solum ea quae actu sunt, sed etiam quae sunt in potentia vel sua vel creaturae; haec autem constat esse infinita*.”⁵ Long before him St. Augustine had written: “*Infinitas itaque numeri, quamvis infinitorum numerorum nullus sit numerus, non est tamen incomprehensibilis ei, cuius intelligentiae non est numerus*.”⁶ Though it is impossible that there should actually exist an infinite number of substances and accidents, yet their possible qualities and mutations, nay, even their *real* variations and actions in the course of an infinitely prolonged existence—God destroys no essences—cannot be expressed in finite numbers.⁷

b) There is another question of a more philosophical character, which cannot be solved by theological arguments; namely, whether the multitude of objects comprised by the Knowledge of God is actually or merely potentially infinite.⁸ The older school of theologians, headed by Aquinas,⁹ and comprising the famous Jesuit writers Pallavicini, Suarez, De Lugo, etc., held that it is actually infinite. Of late years, however, it has become the fashion to deny that there can be such a thing as an actually infinite multitude, because “the very term involves an intrinsic contradiction.” Until lately Msgr. Gutberlet and the author of this volume were probably the only theological writers among moderns who defended the possibility of an actually infinite multitude.¹⁰ To my mind the following argument is absolutely irrefutable: The possible things of which God has knowledge are either finite, or potentially infinite, or actually infinite. That they are

² For further information, consult our chapter on the attribute of Omnipotence; also § 1, proposition 2, *supra*. Many pertinent quotations from the writings of the Fathers have been collected by Petavius (*De Deo*, IV, 3 sqq.) and Ruiz (*De Scientia Dei*, disp. 9, sect. 3).

³ *De Scientia Dei*, disp. 20, sect. 1.

⁴ Cfr. Lessius, *De Perfect. Div.*, VI, 2.

⁵ *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 14, art. 12.

⁶ *De Civitate Dei*, XII, 18.

⁷ Cfr. St Thom., *l. c.*: “*Deus scit etiam cogitationes et affectiones cordium, quae in infinitum multiplicabuntur, creaturis rationalibus permanentibus absque fine*.”

⁸ *Vide supra*, p. 190.

⁹ *Contr. Gent.*, I, 69; *De Verit.*, q. 11, art. 9.

¹⁰ Cfr. *Der Katholik*, Mainz 1880.

not finite, is self-evident. They cannot be potentially infinite, because God does not conceive an infinite multitude after the manner of creatures, *i. e.*, by a series of successive concepts, but simultaneously in *one* act. Consequently, they must be actually infinite.¹¹ Those who ascribe to the Divine Intellect a distributive, but deny it a collective, knowledge of all possibles, and who try to justify this subtle distinction by pointing to the impossibility of the whole collection co-existing, confuse the logical with the physical order. The possibility of co-existing in the intellect does not argue the possibility of co-existing *in rerum natura*. The fact that God perceives an infinite multitude of things, does not argue that all these things, with their various contradictory determinations, can actually exist as an infinite multitude. Though God might, for example, in His Divine Intellect combine into *one* infinite multitude the future acts of Judas the traitor, nevertheless these acts in reality constitute a series which is always actually finite and only potentially infinite. As Ruiz pointedly puts it: “*Actus illi constituunt unum totum infinitum potentiale successivum quantum ad realem essentiam et existentiam; sed hoc totum in scientia est simul infinitum actuale, quoniam simul totum cognoscitur.*”¹² All these acts can be gathered into a logical whole, because they coincide in the general note of being, and also in another note, which may be called “homogeneous psychic coincidence.”¹³

ARTICLE 2

OMNISCIENCE AS GOD’S KNOWLEDGE OF VISION OF ALL CONTINGENT BEINGS—CARDIOGNOSIS, OR SEARCHING OF HEARTS

1. STATE OF THE QUESTION.—In the innumerable multitude of possible things there are some which the creative will of God has (either immediately or mediately) endowed with actual being. In so far as these *exist*, they form the object of the *scientia visionis*.

a) Contingent actuality, that is to say, the created universe, consists of two large groups of beings, *viz.*: the free intelligences (angels, men), and the unfree creatures (plants, brute animals, inanimate matter). The latter are determined by intrinsic necessity, while the intelligent beings of the first-mentioned group generally speaking have free control over their actions. These actions cannot for this very reason be known *a priori*, as effects necessarily flowing from a cause. Despite this fact, however, the Omniscient God has just as clear and definite a knowledge of the acts of such free beings, as he has of those of His unfree creatures, no matter whether these acts are past, present, or future. To Him time is not. In virtue of His undivided eternity, which co-exists with all three modes of time, He contemplates the past and the future as though they were actually present. We, because of the imperfect character of our conception of divine things, are compelled to make a distinction between the after knowledge by which God knows the past, the knowledge whereby He contemplates the present (especially cardiognosis, so-called, whereby He knows the innermost secrets of the human mind and heart), and His knowledge of the future, in particular of the free acts of His rational creatures. The last-mentioned mode, on account of its importance and difficulty, we shall treat in a series of separate Articles.

b) To our creatural knowledge of contingent beings it is by no means immaterial whether an event belongs to past history, or happens before our eyes, or will take place in the future. God is by His very essence determined to the knowledge of all truths, including the future, but the

¹¹ Cfr. S. Thom., *S. Theol.*, *I. c.*, ad. 1: “*Deus autem non sic cognoscit infinitum vel infinita, quasi enumerando partem post partem, cum cognoscat omnia simul, non successive.*”

¹² *De Scientia Dei*, disp. 20, sect. 3.

¹³ Cfr. Gutberlet, *Das Unendliche, metaphysisch und mathematisch betrachtet*, Mainz 1878; E. Illigens, *Die unendliche Zahl und die Mathematik*, Münster 1893.

created intellect is causally dependent upon the things themselves. It is for this reason that, while historical research familiarizes us with many facts of the past, and daily experience unrolls to our gaze a great variety of contemporary events, our predictions of the future are perforce vague guesses and uncertain conjectures. There is but one extremely limited sphere in which men are able to forecast future events, *viz.*: that division of astronomy which deals with eclipses of the sun and moon, to which may be added meteorological forecasts of the weather for a few days ahead. Such predictions are sure only because, and in so far as, they are based upon laws of nature whose uniform and necessary action we are able to some extent to gauge. Laplace's fictitious magician, who by means of a magic "world formula" was able to control the course of events forward and backward, and to indicate the precise posture of all atoms at any given moment, was nothing but a fine product of his author's imagination;—unless indeed we identify him with the Creator of the universe, though even the Creator Himself would find the Laplacian "world formula" utterly inadequate to fathom the free decisions of intelligent beings. For where there is no necessary connexion between cause and effect, there can be no infallibly certain foreknowledge. The free will of man, even when strongly inclined to a certain decision, may yet, at the last moment, make a different choice, and thus belie the cleverest prognostication based on a knowledge of causes and motives. In considering the knowledge of God, therefore, it is absolutely necessary that we distinguish between free and necessary causes, since only the latter offer a sure basis of calculation. Nothing but the false theory of absolute determinism can disregard this essential distinction, which is rooted in the very Essence of God. True, from the well known bent of a person a good judge of human nature can predict his free-will actions with more or less certainty; but no such forecast is ever infallible, since even the most determined and obstinate person will sometimes suddenly and unaccountably "change his mind." Furthermore, while we may form a fairly correct opinion of a man's character and ethical leanings from his known utterances and deeds, yet no mortal can penetrate the recesses of the human heart and gain an *a priori* knowledge of its most intimate affections. Cardiognosis is a wonderful prerogative reserved to Almighty God alone.

2. THE TEACHING OF REVELATION.—a) Holy Scripture contains many and various passages which prove that the all-seeing eye of God pierces the whole universe, with all its attributes and relations, even the most hidden and minute. He "tellethe the number of the stars," He "covereth the Heaven with clouds," He "maketh grass to grow," He "giveth to beasts their food" (Ps. 146); He "beholdeth the ends of the world, and looketh on all things that are under heaven" (Job 28:24); "all things are naked and open to his eye" (Hebr. 4:13), etc., etc. Such providence, extending to the minutest details of workaday life, necessarily supposes a most comprehensive knowledge of all things. What is said Gen. 1:31, "And God saw all the things that he had made," is true of all time,—past, present, and future. Cfr. Wisdom 8:8, "And if a man desire much knowledge: she [*i. e.*, Uncreated Wisdom] knoweth things past, and judgeth of things to come: she knoweth the subtilties of speeches, and the solutions of arguments: she knoweth signs and wonders before they be done, and the events of times and ages."

3. THE ARGUMENT FROM TRADITION.—It is not difficult to prove this truth from Tradition. The reader will find the arguments well marshalled by Petavius, *De Deo*, IV, 3, and Ruiz, *De Scientia, de Ideis, de Veritate ac de Vita Deism*, disp. 9. A hermeneutic difficulty arises from a passage in St. Jerome, who would spare "God's majesty" the task of regulating the number of gnats, fishes, etc., and of watching over their individual antics.

“*Absurdum est,*” he says, “*ad hoc deducere Dei maiestatem, ut sciat per momenta singula, quot nascantur culices quotve moriantur; quae cimicum et pulicum et muscarum sit in terra multitudo, quanti pisces in aqua natent.*” (*In Hab.*, I, 14). This phrase had perhaps better have remained unwritten, though it cannot justly be cited to impugn the universally accepted Catholic teaching, which St. Jerome himself defends in his commentaries *In Ier.*, XXXII, 26, and *In Math.*, X, 28. No doubt he did not wish to deny that God is omniscient, but merely meant to say that He consults with the same paternal care for His irrational creatures as for those whom He has endowed with reason and redeemed by the Blood of His Son.¹⁴

3. CARDIOGNOSIS, OR SEARCHING OF HEARTS.—It is a separate and distinct part of the teaching of Divine Revelation that the knowledge of God extends to the most secret thoughts and affections, the most hidden impulses, inclinations, and decisions of the human heart. “The searcher of hearts and reins is God.”¹⁵ He is therefore called “ὁ καρδιογνώστης.”¹⁶ This knowledge of hearts is His exclusive privilege. Cfr. 3 Kings 8:39: “*Tu nosti solus cor omnium filiorum hominum*—Thou only knowest the heart of all the children of men.” Divine Revelation does not describe “cardiognosis” as *a posteriori* knowledge derived from external manifestations, such as speech, facial expression, conduct; but as an *a priori* intuition, which enables God to pierce the innermost recesses of the human heart and to know man even more intimately than he knows himself. Consequently it is preposterous to refer to modern thought-reading as an analogous phenomenon. Cfr. Ecclus. 23:27 sq.: “And he [the sinner] understandeth not that his [God’s] eye seeth all things ... that the eyes of the Lord are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men, and the bottom of the deep, and looking into the hearts of men, into the most hidden parts.” Cfr. also Jer. 17:10: “I am the Lord who search the heart and prove the reins.”

To illustrate the unanimous teaching of the Fathers it will suffice to quote the two oldest extant texts bearing on our subject. St. Ignatius of Antioch says: “Οὐδέν λανθάνει τὸν Κύριον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ κρυπτὰ ἡμῶν ἐγχυς αὐτῷ ἐστίν—Nothing is hidden from the Lord, but even that which is hidden in us [*i. e.*, our secret thoughts] are near to Him.”¹⁷ St. Polycarp expresses himself even more clearly: “Πάντα ἡμῶν σκοπεῖται καὶ λέληθεν αὐτὸν οὐδέν οὐδὲ λογισμῶν οὐδὲ ἐννοιῶν οὐδέ τι τῶν κρυπτῶν τῆς καρδίας—He clearly perceives all things, and nothing is hid from Him, neither reasonings, nor reflections, nor any one of the secret things of the heart.”¹⁸ The divine searching of the heart and reins is defined by some theologians as *supercomprehensio cordis*, that is, a full and “adequate knowledge of the nature and faculties of the free created being, and of all

¹⁴ Cfr. the question asked by St. Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians (9:9): “*Numquid de bobus cura est Deo?*—Doth God take care for oxen?” See also Suarez, *De Deo*, III, 3, 3.

¹⁵ Ps. 7:10.

¹⁶ Acts 15:8.

¹⁷ *Ad Eph.*, XV, 3 (ed. Funk).

¹⁸ *Ad Phil.*, 4.

the attracting and repelling impulses to which it will be subjected previously to its choice.”¹⁹

ARTICLE 3

OMNISCIENCE AS GOD’S FOREKNOWLEDGE OF THE FREE ACTIONS OF THE FUTURE

1. THE DOGMA.—The dogma that God foreknows the free future actions of His intelligent creatures comprises two momenta, both of which are *de fide, viz.*: (1) that His Knowledge is actual, and (2) that it is infallible. Cfr. *Conc. Vatic., Sess. III, cap. 1, De Deo: “Omnia nuda et aperta sunt oculis eius; etiam ea, quae libera creaturarum actione futura sunt—All things are naked and open to His eyes, even those which are yet to be by the free action of creatures.”*

We should deny this dogma were we to hold that God’s foreknowledge is merely a morally certain knowledge, or that it is purely presumptive. Sixtus IV condemned a proposition put forth by Peter of Rivo, to the effect that “*Deus non habet notitiam certam de significato, quod importat propositio fidei de futuro (e. g., Petrus negabit Christum.)*”²⁰ The Socinians and the followers of Günther trenched on this dogma by questioning the infallibility of God’s foreknowledge.

a) Holy Scripture not only ascribes to God a general foreknowledge of future things,²¹ but it expressly declares that His prescience extends to the free acts of the future.

The classical passage in Psalms 138 (139):3 sqq.: “*Intellexisti cogitationes meas de longe (מִרְחֹק) ... omnes vias meas praevidisti... Ecce Domine, tu cognovisti omnia, novissima [i. e., futura] et antiqua—Thou hast understood my thoughts from afar off, ... and thou hast foreseen all my ways.... Behold, O Lord, thou hast known all things, the last (i. e., future) and those of old.*” Firmly convinced of this truth, the chaste Susanna, asserting her innocence against the two wicked elders, cried out: “O eternal God, who knowest hidden things, who knowest *all things before they come to pass* (πρὶν γενήσεως αὐτῶν), thou knowest that they have borne false witness against me.”²² Cfr. John 6:65: “For Jesus *knew from the beginning* (ἤδει γὰρ ἐξ ἀρχῆς), who they were that did not believe, and who he was that would betray him.”

b) In confirmation of this dogma the Fathers began early to point to the fulfilled prophecies of the Old and New Testament. Prophecy manifestly supposes a knowledge of the future actions of free agents, so that we may say with Tertullian, that all the prophets are witnesses to God’s foreknowledge.²³ St. Justin Martyr²⁴ emphasizes the fact that Christ Himself had predicted the persecutions that came upon His Church: “*Dei opus est, res*

¹⁹ Boedder, *Natural Theology*, p. 282. For the philosophical arguments the reader may consult St. Thomas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 68 (summarized by Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures*, p. 51).

²⁰ On Peter a Rivo, cfr. H. Hurter, *Nomenclator Literarius Theologiae Catholicae*, t. II, ed. altera, col. 1034, Oeniponte 1906.

²¹ Cfr. Is. 46:9 sq.: “*Ego sum Deus ... annuntians ab exordio novissimum et ab initio quae necdum facta sunt—I am God, ... who shew from ancient times the things that as yet are not done.*”

²² Dan. 13:42 sq.

²³ *Contra Marcion.*, II, 5: “*De praescientia vero quid dicam? Quae tantos habet testes, quantos fecit prophetas.*”

²⁴ *Apol.*, I, n. 12.

antequam fierent praedicere easque, quemadmodum praedictae fuerunt, ita factas exhiberi—And this is the work of God, to foretell a thing before it happens, and as it was foretold so to show it happening.”²⁵ Other Fathers infer God’s foreknowledge from His providence, rightly holding that there could be no “*providenti?*” without “*praescientia.*” St. Jerome points out that “*Cui praescientiam tollis, tollis et divinitatem*—If you take away God’s foreknowledge, you deny His divinity,”²⁶ and St. Augustine further emphasizes this truth when he writes: “*Confiteri esse Deum et negare praescium futurorum, apertissima insania est.... Qui non est praescius omnium futurorum, non est utique Deus*—To confess that God exists, and at the same time to deny that He has foreknowledge of future things, is the most manifest folly.... He Who has no foreknowledge of all future things, can not be God.”²⁷ The future, according to Augustine, is present to the Divine Intellect in the same manner as is the *now*: “*Novit omnia ita, ut nec ea quae dicuntur praeterita, ibi praetereant, nec ea quae dicuntur futura, quasi desint, expectentur ut veniant, sed et praeterita et futura cum praesentibus sint cuncta praesentia*—God knows all things in such wise that neither what we call things past are past therein, nor what we call things future are therein waited for as coming, as though they were absent, but both past and future with things present are all present.”²⁸

2. GOD’S FOREKNOWLEDGE IN ITS RELATION TO FREE WILL.—That intelligent creatures are endowed with free will is as much a revealed dogma as that God foreknows their future conduct. Hence there devolves upon speculative theology the duty of reconciling these two dogmas. Does not an infallibly certain prescience on the part of the Almighty destroy, or at least diminish, the freedom of the created will with regard to its future actions? Future events must occur just as God foreknows them, else His knowledge would be fallible.

This objection was first raised by Celsus, who declared that Jesus was the author of His own betrayal at the hands of Judas.²⁹ But if the free actions of the future are subject to the law of necessity, they are no longer free. Let us first remark that even were human reason unable to solve this apparent antinomy, this would not be sufficient cause to relinquish either of these seemingly contradictory truths. “*Ignorantia modi non tollit certitudinem facti.*” In matter of fact, however, the objection can be solved.

a) In attempting a solution we must remember that God’s foreknowledge no more exercises a compulsory influence on the free acts of the future, than does the contemporaneous knowledge of any observer on an event happening at the present time. The future act is not the *effect*, but the *terminus* of the divine foreknowledge, which cannot therefore be regarded as the determining cause of such act, but is merely directed to it as a faculty to its object. The foreknowledge of a future act of the free will no more destroys its freedom than would the recollection of a past act or the witnessing of a present one.³⁰ Hence many of the Fathers, in attempting to solve the

²⁵ Cfr. S. Hilar., *De Trinit.*, IX, n. 59.

²⁶ *Adv. Pelag. Dial.*, 1. III.

²⁷ *De Civ. Dei*, V, 9, n. 1, 4.

²⁸ *De Trinit.*, XV, 7, 13. Oswald (*Dogmat. Theologie*, Vol. I, pp. 168 sqq., Paderborn 1887) presents an effective summary of the philosophical arguments in proof of this dogma.

²⁹ Cfr. Origen., *Contr. Celsum*, II, n. 20: “*Praedixit et omnino fieri debuit (πάντως ἔχρην γενέσθαι.)*”

³⁰ Cfr. St. Augustin., *De Lib. Arb.*, III, 4: “*Sicut tu memoria tua non cogit facta esse, quae praeterierunt, sic Deus praescientia sua non cogit facienda, quae futura sunt.*”

difficulty, proceed from this principle: “The future free acts of the will do not come to pass because God foreknows them; but, contrariwise, God foresees them because they will happen.” As Origen puts it: “Non enim quia cognitum est, idcirco fit; sed quia futurum est, est cognitum;”³¹ or St. Jerome: “Non enim ex eo, quod Deus scit futurum aliquid, idcirco futurum est; sed quia futurum est, Deus novit quasi praescius futurorum;”³² or St. John of Damascus: “[God’s] prescience is not the cause of future events; He merely foresees this or that act because we shall do it.”³³

b) The Schoolmen solved the problem by distinguishing between antecedent and consequent necessity. The *necessitas antecedens* annuls the freedom of the will, the *necessitas consequens* does not; it is merely that historical necessity which constitutes a free act once performed as performed and incapable of being undone. Future events and acts are also subject in advance to this same consequent and historical necessity, because, and in as much as it is infallibly certain that they will occur, either freely or of necessity. The Portuguese revolution of the year 1910 was as historically certain twenty years ago as now that it belongs to past history. Yet if some divinely inspired seer had predicted it, would any sane man have claimed that the psychological freedom of the anti-clerical Republicans had thereby been annulled? The same distinction, though somewhat differently worded, occurs in the writings of the older Schoolmen, when they speak of a *necessitas consequentis*, which necessitates, and a *necessitas consequentiae*, which does not. The latter belongs to the divine foreknowledge of free acts.³⁴ St. Thomas explains this point very luminously in his treatise *De Veritate*:³⁵ “Quamvis res in seipsa sit futura, tamen secundum modum [Dei] cognoscentis est praesens, et ideo magis est dicendum: si Deus scit aliquid, illud est—quam: hoc erit. Unde idem est iudicium de ista: si Deus scit aliquid, hoc erit—et de hac: si ego video Socratem currere, Socrates currit; quorum utrumque est necessarium, dum est.” Or, as Father Wm. Humphrey, S. J., puts it: “God’s foreknowledge stands to our acts, as our knowledge stands to objects which are present to us. His knowledge, therefore, is not antecedent but consequent. We see things because they are. They do not exist because we see them. God knows our acts of the future, because they will be. It is not because He knows them that they will be. They are *future* as

³¹ Quoted by Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.*, 1. VI, p. 287.

³² *In Ier.*, XXVI, 3.

³³ *Contr. Manich.*, n. 79. Similar passages might be quoted from Chrysostom (*In Matth.*, Hom. 60, n. 1), Epiphanius (*Haer.* I, 38, n. 6), Cyril of Alexandria (*In Ioa.*, XI, 9), and many others. Cfr. also St. Anselm, *De Concordia Lib. Arb.*, qu. 1, c. 2; Humphrey, “*His Divine Majesty*,” pp. 155 sqq.

³⁴ S. Thom., *Contr. Gent.*, I, 67 (Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures*, pp. 49 sq.).—“Since everything is known by God as seen by Him in the present, the necessity of that being true which God knows, is like the necessity of Socrates’s sitting from the fact of his being seated. This is not necessary absolutely, ‘by necessity of the consequent,’ as the phrase is, but conditionally, or ‘by necessity of the consequence.’ For this conditional proposition is necessary: ‘He is sitting, if he is seen seated.’ Change the conditional proposition into a categorical of this form: ‘What is seen sitting, is necessarily seated’: it is clear that the proposition is true as a phrase, when its elements are taken together (*compositam*), but false as a fact, when its elements are separated (*divisam*). All these objections against the divine knowledge of contingent facts are *fallaciae compositionis et divisionis*.” (Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures*, p. 50.) Fr. Rickaby adds this curious foot-note: “This distinction appears in modern logic books as *in sensu composito* and *in sensu diviso*. It has its value in the disputes on efficacious grace. There is a tradition of Father Gregory de Valentia, S. J., fainting away when it was administered to him by a Dominican disputant. Bolsover Castle in Derbyshire was built by ‘the building, countess,’ of whom it was said that she would never die, while she kept on building. True *in sensu composito* only. In point of fact the lady died in a great frost, which stopped her building and her breath together.”

³⁵ *De Verit.*, qu. 2, art. 12, ad 7.

regards passing time, but they are *present* to the divine eternity.”³⁶ From what we have so far said, the reader may infer how untenable is the opinion of Johannes Jahn, an otherwise praiseworthy writer, who says in his *Introductio in Libros Vet. Test.*,³⁷ that God was compelled to veil the Old Testament prophecies, lest they should be crossed by the free action of men. The pagan oracles (e. g., the answers of the Pythian priestess at Delphi) were couched in such indefinite, obscure, and ambiguous phraseology that they were sure to come true in one sense or another. This cannot be said of the divine prophecies recorded in the Old Testament, which contain so many well defined details.³⁸

3. THE CAUSALITY OF GOD’S KNOWLEDGE.—But do not the two Patristic axioms we have quoted (“God foresees future things because they will come to pass,” and: “Things are because God knows them”), involve a contradiction?

The apparent discrepancy is all the greater because both phrases occur in the writings of the same Father.³⁹ We have too much respect for the Fathers of the Church to follow certain Thomists, who reject the first-mentioned axiom as “false,” because it does not happen to fit into their system.⁴⁰ The axiom: “God foresees future things because they will happen,” does not square with the Thomist teaching on grace, which holds that the free actions of the future are subject to the divine foreknowledge only in so far as God, by an antecedent and absolute decree, has physically predetermined the will to perform this or that free act (*praedeterminatio physica*). We prefer to solve the apparent contradiction by distinguishing a speculative and a practical knowledge of God, applying the first-quoted Patristic axiom to the *scientia speculativa*, the second to the *scientia practica*. In regard of His speculative knowledge, God may be compared to a savant and is called “omniscient”; in regard to His practical knowledge, on the other hand, He rather resembles an artist who has knowledge of that which he is to produce before he makes it; and in respect of this knowledge God is called “all-wise.” Being omniscient, He knows whatever is knowable (*scibile*); being all-wise, He knows whatever is feasible (*operabile*). Having established this fundamental distinction, we proceed to lay down the following principles.⁴¹

a) In the first place we must firmly hold as an article of faith, that the practical knowledge of God, when it has the Divine Will with it, operates creatively and thus, as *sapientia creans*, is the cause of all things. Cfr. Wisdom 7:21: “*Omnium enim artifex docuit me sapientia*—Wisdom, which is the worker of all things, taught me.” Ps. 103:24: “*Omnia in sapientia fecisti*—Thou hast made all things in wisdom.” John 1:3: “Πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ [*i. e., Λόγου*] ἐγένετο—All things were made by him [*i. e., the Logos*].”

The Sapiential books of the Old Testament furnish a running commentary on this important truth.⁴² But it is also in its rôle of *sapientia disponens* that the practical knowledge of the Most

³⁶ “*His Divine Majesty*,” pp. 174 sq.

³⁷ L. II, sect. 2, § 80.

³⁸ Cfr. Matth, 27:35, and other well-known passages. On this whole subject the reader may profitably consult Franzelin, *De Deo Uno*, thes. 42 and thes. 44. Likewise Schwane, *Das göttliche Vorwissen*, Münster 1885. The best authority is Ruiz *De Scientia Dei*, disp. 22 sq.

³⁹ St. Augustine, *De Trinit.*, X, 6; *De Civit. Dei*, V, 10, n. 2; *De Lib. Arb.*, III, 4, et passim.

⁴⁰ Cfr. Alvarez, *De Aux.*, disp. XVI, n. 6: “*Causalis ista: quia res futurae sunt, ideo cognoscuntur a Deo, est falsa; haec autem est vera: quia Deus scientia libera scivit aliquid esse futurum, ideo futurum est.*”

⁴¹ Cfr. St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, 1a, qu. 14, art. 16.

⁴² Cfr. St. Thomas, *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 14, art. 8.

High exercises a causal influence upon the various contingent beings, imparting to them “intrinsic order, harmony, and a suitable organization,” and “uniting them all in one harmonious whole.” It is to this specific feature of God’s practical knowledge that Holy Scripture alludes when it speaks of Him as “ordering all things in measure, number, and weight.”⁴³ That legislative wisdom, on the other hand, which imposes upon irrational creatures the immanent laws of their being and operation, while it inscribes into the hearts of rational beings the natural law of right and wrong,⁴⁴ is merely a separate function of the *sapientia disponens*. The same is true of that educative wisdom which, as “*doctrix disciplinae Dei et electrix operum illius*,”⁴⁵ guides intelligent creatures (angels and men) to their supernatural end. Viewed from still another point of vantage, the practical knowledge of God exercises a truly causal influence, inasmuch as it acts as governing Wisdom (*sapientia gubernans*) and, objectively, as Divine Providence, rules the universe. Cfr. Wisd. 8:1: “*Attingit a fine usque ad finem fortiter et disponit (διοικεῖ) omnia suaviter*—She reacheth from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly.”⁴⁶ Supported as it were by holiness and benevolence, God’s wise Providence reaches the apex of its glory in the supernatural order of grace. But we cannot hope to penetrate its depths. “O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable his ways!”⁴⁷

In all three of the respects we have indicated above, God’s practical knowledge, considered more especially as creative wisdom, is in the fullest and truest sense the *cause of all things*. From this particular point of view, therefore, we may unconditionally assent to the proposition that God knows things not because they are, but, conversely, things are because God knows them. It was thus understood by St. Augustine⁴⁸ and St. Gregory the Great,⁴⁹ as is quite plain from the fact that whenever they quote this axiom these Fathers expressly treat of creation in general, not of the *freec* actions of rational beings.⁵⁰

b) The case is quite different when we consider the speculative knowledge of God, whether as *scientia simplicis intelligentiae* or as *scientia visionis*. In neither of these two relations can it be strictly designated as the cause of things. Being the intellectual expression of a perceived object it is reproductive rather than productive; it does not create, but presupposes its object.

Were this not so, God in creating would *eo ipso* sin, because He has a speculative knowledge of all creatable things including sin. “*Scienti?*” says Aquinas, “*significatur per hoc, quod est aliquid in sciente, et ideo a scientia nunquam procedit effectus nisi mediante voluntate.*”⁵¹ This principle—after being duly purged, of course, of all creatural imperfections—also applies to the Divine Intelligence. Although things outside the Divine Essence would be neither possible nor real without God’s *scientia simplicis intelligentiae*, they constitute a part of the divine knowledge only

⁴³ Wisdom 11:21: “*Omnia in mensura et numero et pondere disposuisti.*” Cfr. Job 28:20 sqq.

⁴⁴ Rom. 2:15.

⁴⁵ Wisd. 8:4.

⁴⁶ Cfr. *Conc. Vatic., Sess. III, cap. 1, De Deo* (Denzinger-Bannwart, *Enchiridion*, n. 1785).

⁴⁷ Rom. 11:33. On the attribute of wisdom, cf. Scheeben, *Dogmatik*, Vol. I, §§ 93 and 94; Heinrich, *Dogm. Theologie*, Vol. III, § 205; Vigener, *De Ideis Divinis*, Monast. 1869.

⁴⁸ *De Trinit.*, XV, 13.

⁴⁹ *Moral.*, XX, 32.

⁵⁰ Cfr. Greg. M., *Moral.*, XXXII, 6: “*Non existentia videndo creat, existentia videndo continet.*” Cfr. also St. Anselm, *Monol.*, c. 33 sqq.

⁵¹ *De Verit.*, qu. 2, art. 14.

for the reason that God has previously beheld their prototypes in His own Essence as the exemplary cause of all things. His knowledge does not create the possibles, but rather supposes them. Similarly, too, the *scientia visionis*, like the *scientia simplicis intelligentiae*, can see contingent beings only on the supposition that they exist *in rerum natura*. It does not follow that in this hypothesis God would derive His knowledge from existing objects rather than from His own Essence. The distinction, already noted, between *causa* and *terminus*,⁵² will preserve us from falling into this error. By way of illustration let us consider the creation of light as described in the first chapter of Genesis. In this act God's speculative co-operated with His practical knowledge. In virtue of His (speculative) *scientia simplicis intelligentiae*, He perceived in His own Essence the intrinsic possibility (creatability) of light; thereupon His creative Will united with His Wisdom in uttering the command: "Let there be light." As soon as light had sprung into being, it became the terminus⁵³ (not the cause) of the *scientia visionis*. "And God saw the light, that it was good."⁵⁴

Not a few of the Fathers, on the other hand, championed the principle that "Things do not exist because God knows them, but God knows them because they exist." In doing this they had in view solely His speculative knowledge. It cannot be too often nor too strongly insisted that, like the Molinists, these Fathers never meant to assert that the free acts of the future are the cause or the determinant of divine foreknowledge, but rather its terminus or indispensable condition.⁵⁵

ARTICLE 4

OMNISCIENCE AS GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE OF THE CONDITIONALLY FREE ACTS OF THE FUTURE; OR THE "SCIENTIA MEDIA"⁵⁶

1. STATE OF THE QUESTION.—The knowledge of God not only comprises those future free acts which rational creatures *will* some day actually perform, but likewise those which they *would* perform if certain circumstances would concur or certain conditions were fulfilled. Acts of the first-mentioned order are called free acts absolutely future (*actus liberi absolute futuri*). Such an act was Judas's betrayal of our Lord. Acts of the latter group we term free acts conditionally future (*actus liberi hypothetice futuri seu futuribiles*). Such an act was, *e. g.*, the conversion of Tyre and Sidon, which Jesus said would certainly have ensued if the inhabitants of those cities had witnessed His miracles.

a) The question here at issue may be concretely formulated thus: Does God foreknow every single free (or semi-free) act which some particular student would perform if he were to spend the present semester at the Catholic University of America rather than at Harvard? There can be

⁵² *Supra*, pp. 336 sqq.

⁵³ "The terminus of knowledge is that which is known.... The Divine Knowledge is changeless, as regards all things outside God which are knowable. All change is in the termination of the Divine Knowledge in the objects known." (Humphrey, "*His Divine Majesty*," 164 sq.)

⁵⁴ Gen. 1:3.

⁵⁵ Cfr. Ioan. Damasc., *l. c.*: "*Ac vis quidem Dei praescia a nobis causam haudquaquam habet; at vero, ut ea quae facturi sumus praesciat, id a nobis proficiscitur.*" On the Thomist view, according to which the knowledge of vision (*scientia visionis*) in union with the Divine Will is the cause of all things, see Billuart, *De Deo*, diss. 5, art. 3. Cfr. also Kleutgen, *De Ipso Deo*, pp. 290 sqq., Ratisbonae 1881; Chr. Pesch, *De Deo Uno*, 2nd ed., pp. 153 sqq., Friburgi 1899.

⁵⁶ "Middle knowledge" would be the English equivalent for "*scientia media*,"—"but it is not in use."—Cfr. Sylvester J. Hunter, S. J., *Outlines of Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. II (2nd ed.), p. 90.—Humphrey "*His Divine Majesty*" employs the term "mediate knowledge."

no foreseeing a conditioned future event⁵⁷ except on the basis of an actually existing relation between the condition and the conditioned (*ratio conditionis et conditionati*), so that from the positing of the one the positing of the other may somehow be inferred. Where there is no such relation, we have two incoherent events, ontologically independent and therefore also logically unconnected.

On the other hand, however, the connexion existing between the condition and the conditioned is not necessary (either metaphysically or physically); if it were necessary we should not be dealing with a free but with a predetermined process; e. g., "If a triangle would appear on this sheet, the sum of its three angles would be equal to two right angles;" or, "If it were to rain now, the ground would get wet." Hence there can be question only of a condition which in some manner (hypothetically) moves, without compelling the free will; as, for instance: "Had Jesus given to Judas the look He gave Peter, Judas too would have experienced a change of heart."

b) Special emphasis must be laid on the *infallibility* of God's foreknowledge. It would be manifestly unbecoming to ascribe to the Omniscient God a merely probable or presumptive knowledge of the conditionally future. True, some of the older Thomists taught: "*Potest quidem Deus iudicare, quid foret verisimilius vel probabilius in tali eventu, non tamen potest definitum indicium ferre: hoc esset aut erit, si illud fiat seu fieret.*"⁵⁸ This teaching is excusable only on the supposition made by the Thomist system, that God can know the contingent events of the future solely through His will (*decreta praedeterminantia*). The Thomists felt the ridiculousness of indefinitely multiplying the number of hypothetical determinations, and therefore were logically led to deny the truth, and hence also the knowableness, of conditional future events. For that which is not, God cannot know. And yet, rather than deny Him an infallible knowledge of all these things, one would prefer with the Salmanticenses⁵⁹ to have recourse to the "ridiculous" assumption of an infinite number of hypothetical decrees. If the Almighty Himself were questioned about these things, would He perhaps answer: "I do not know, for I have not made any decrees with respect thereto"? The later Thomists, be it remarked, are unanimous in holding with the Molinists that God knows all conditioned future actions (*futuribilia*) without exception, and with metaphysical certainty.⁶⁰ While the Church has not yet dogmatized this teaching, it must be regarded as *doctrina certa*, since it is clearly contained both in Sacred Scripture and Tradition.

2. THE TEACHING OF DIVINE REVELATION.—a) A thoroughly conclusive passage from Holy Writ seems to be 1 Kings 23:1–13.⁶¹ In escaping from Saul, David had fled to Ceila, whither his royal persecutor followed him, seeking his life. Thereupon David got Abiathar, the priest, to bring him the ephod; and he interrogated Jehovah: "Will the men of Ceila deliver me into his hands? And will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard?" And the Lord answered: "He will come down" (*descendet* = יֵרֵד), and: "They will deliver thee up" (*tradent* = יִסְדְּרֶיךָ). Then David arose and departed from Ceila with his six hundred men. In

⁵⁷ "Conditionated events of the future are those which will occur, given certain adjuncts. Those adjuncts are the circumstances of the thing or action—who?—what?—where?—with what aids?—why?—how?—and when? Under the circumstance *with what aids*, is to be included the divine co-operation or concurrence in order to the doing of the action as a physical act. This is a condition which is always required, and which is, therefore, always supposed, in every act of every creature." (Humphrey, "*His Divine Majesty*," p. 175, London 1897.)

⁵⁸ Ledesma, *De Div. Grat. Aux.*, pp. 574 sqq., Salmant. 1611.

⁵⁹ *De Deo*, Tr. III, disp. 9, dub. 5, § 4.

⁶⁰ Cfr. Billuart, *De Deo*, diss. 6, art. 5.

⁶¹ We say, "seems to be," because the passage is not free from certain difficulties as to the translation. See Hunter, *Outlines of Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. II (2nd ed.), p. 91.

consequence, of course, Saul did not come down to Ceila, nor did the Ceilaites deliver up David. The Lord's reply referred to a *conditionate futurum*, something which would have happened had David tarried in Ceila, instead of leaving that city. God must have had infallible knowledge of what the men of Ceila would have done had Saul remained; else He could not have declared so positively: "*descendet,*" "*tradent.*"

Another Scriptural proof for our thesis may be drawn from Matth. 11:21: "Woe to thee, Corozain, woe to thee, Bethsaida: for if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in you, they had long ago done penance in sackcloth and ashes." As a matter of fact, no such miracles *were* wrought in Tyre and Sidon,⁶² nor did these cities do penance in sackcloth and ashes. Hence we have here again a mere *futuribile*,—a contingent future event which Jesus foresaw as clearly and definitely as if it had really come to pass.⁶³ Other pertinent Scriptural texts are Wisd. 4:11: "He was taken away lest wickedness should alter his understanding, or deceit beguile his soul." Jer. 38:19: "And King Sedecias said to Jeremias: I am afraid because of the Jews that are fled over to the Chaldeans, lest I should be delivered into their hands, and they should abuse me. But Jeremias answered: They shall not deliver thee."⁶⁴

Vainly do the Socinians and Ledesma⁶⁵ pretend that the particles "*forte?*" and "*fortasse,*" which the Vulgate occasionally prefixes to the divine prediction of *futuribilia*, furnish a Scriptural basis for the theory that God's foreknowledge of conditioned free acts of the future is uncertain. The only passage that seems to support their claim is Jer. 26:3: "*si forte* [יִאֵלֶּיךָ = if not = perhaps] *audiant et convertantur.*" But this whole passage is manifestly anthropomorphic,⁶⁶ as the expression "I may repent me" (*ibid.*) shows. St. Jerome commentates this verse as follows: "*Verbum ambiguum 'forsitan' maiestati Domini non potest convenire; sed nostro loquitur affectu, ut liberum homini servetur arbitrium, ne ex praescientia eius quasi necessitate vel facere quid vel non facere cogatur.*" In all the other texts which Ledesma and the Socinians allege, the "*ne forte?*" of the Vulgate is a somewhat too free rendition of the Hebrew יִדְּ = *ne*, "in order that not," while where the Vulgate has "*si forte,*" the Hebrew text reads יִאֵלֶּיךָ = *si*, "if." In neither case does the Hebrew particle connote doubt.⁶⁷ Where the Vulgate version of the New Testament in such instances has "*forte,*" the Greek nearly always has ἄν, indicating an impossible condition, as, e. g., Matth. 11:23; "*forte mansissent* (ἔμεινεν ἄν) *usque in hanc diem.*" Elsewhere the Vulgate employs the word "*utique?*" instead of "*forte,*"⁶⁸ or, where the conditional clause is negative, "*nunquam,*" equivalent to the Greek "οὐκ ἄν."⁶⁹ Cfr. also Luke 7:39: "*Hic si esset propheta, sciret utique* (ἐγίνωσκεν ἄν)." From all of which it is quite obvious that Holy Scripture does not countenance any doubt as to the infallibility of God's foreknowledge of the *futuribilia*.

⁶² Cfr. Luke 10:13.

⁶³ The commentaries of the Fathers on these various passages are reproduced by Ruiz, *op. cit.*, disp. 62, sect. 1.

⁶⁴ Cfr. also Gen. 11:6; Acts 22:17 sq.

⁶⁵ *De Div. Grat. Aux.*, pp. 590 sqq.

⁶⁶ This and similar expressions in the Bible are called anthropomorphic, because they represent God under the form of a man (ἄνθρωπος, πορφή). Cfr. Hunter, *Outlines of Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. II (2nd ed.), pp. 63 sqq. Petavius, *De Deo*, II, 1.

⁶⁷ Cfr. Gesenius's Hebrew Lexicon, s. h. v.

⁶⁸ Compare John 14:7: "*Utique cognovissetis* = ἐγνώκετε ἄν," with John 8:19: "*Forsitan sciretis* = ἄν ἦδειτε."

⁶⁹ 1 Cor. 2:8.

b) The Fathers, in their controversies with heretics, expressly recognize the *scientia futuribilium* and treat it as an undoubted ingredient of the revealed faith.

α) To establish their heretical theory of the creation of the universe through the instrumentality of a Demiurge, the Manicheans, the Gnostics, and the Marcionites argued thus: "Either God foresaw that angels and men would sin, or He did not foresee it; if He foresaw it, He is not good; if He did not foresee it, He is not omniscient." In solving this difficulty not one of the Fathers, from Irenæus down to St. John Damascene, dreamed of denying that God foresaw the sin of angels and men in the event of their creation. Their argument is that, although God clearly foresaw that millions of angels would become devils, and that Adam by transgressing the divine command would involve his entire posterity in original sin, He nevertheless created those particular angels and this particular human race. For, as St. Isidore says: "*Sicut praescivit Deus lapsum, ita praescivit, quomodo posset illi subvenire.*"⁷⁰ That the sin of angels and men was a mere *futuribile*, which did not become a *futurum* until God had decreed the creation of the universe, is made evident by a consideration of the eternal plan of creation. If God would create *these* angels and *those* men, then many of the former would fall away, and all of the latter would sin.⁷¹

β) Thomassin claimed that the *scientia futuribilium* was an invention of the Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians, and that it was on this account that St. Augustine fought it so bitterly. But this is an altogether gratuitous assertion. Replying to the question, "Why does God not take from this life the just before they fall into sin (which He foresees)?" the "Doctor of Grace" expressly declares that this omission is not due to nescience. "*Respondeant, si possunt, cur illos Deus, cum fideliter et pie viverent, non tunc de vitae huius periculis rapuit, ne malitia mutaret intellectum eorum.... Utrum hoc in potestate non habuit, an eorum mala futura nescivit?... Nempe nihil horum nisi perversissime et insanissime dicitur*—Let them answer, if they can, why God did not, when these were living faithfully and piously, snatch them from the perils of this life, lest wickedness should change their minds.... Had He not this in His power or was He ignorant of their future sins?... To assert either the one or the other would be most wicked and foolish."⁷² And still more clearly in another work: "*Certe poterat illos Deus, praesciens esse lapsuros, antequam id fieret, auferre de hac vita*—Assuredly God, foreknowing that they would fall, was able to take them away from this life before that fall occurred."⁷³ Thomassin mistook the point at issue in St. Augustine's controversy with the Semi-Pelagians. Semi-Pelagianism taught that infants who die unbaptized are held responsible by God for the sins they would have committed had they reached maturity; so much so that their dying without the grace of Baptism is really a punishment for these hypothetical sins which in reality they had never committed; while on the other hand the salvation of those who were baptized is attributable to the good deeds which God foresaw they would have performed in after life had they continued in this world. Augustine rightly protested against this absurdity. "*Unde hoc talibus viris in mentem venerit, nescio, ut futura, quae non sunt futura, puniantur aut honorentur merita parvulorum.*"⁷⁴ He did not deny God's *scientia futuribilium* as such, but protested against its being put on the same level with His *scientia futurorum*. Cfr. *De Anima et eius Orig.*, I, 12, n. 15: "*Ipsa exinanitur omnino praescientia, si, quod praescitur, non erit. Quomodo enim recte dicitur praesciri futurum, quod non est futurum?*" From

⁷⁰ Quoted by Suarez, *Opusc. De Scientia Div.*, II, 2.

⁷¹ Ruiz gives numerous Patristic quotations bearing on this topic in his famous work *De Scientia, de Ideis, de Veritate ac de Vita Dei*, disp. 65–67. See also Petavius, *De Deo*, IV, 8.

⁷² *De Corrept. et Grat.*, cap. 9, n. 19.

⁷³ *De Dono Perseverantiae*, c. 9, n. 22.

⁷⁴ *De Praedest. SS.*, c. 12, n. 24.

Augustine's point of view, therefore, there is, besides the *scientia futurorum* (= *visionis*) and the *scientia mere possibilium* (= *simplicis intelligentiae*), another intermediate species of Divine Knowledge, namely, the *scientia futuribilium*, which was later called *scientia media* by the Molinists.

c) The theological argument for our thesis is partly based on the intrinsic perfection of the Divine Knowledge, partly on the indispensableness of the *scientia futuribilium* for the purposes of providence.

To know precisely what circumstances, conditions, and situations the created will can encounter, and how it would conduct itself in each and every possible juncture, is doubtless a wonderful prerogative of the Divine Intellect, which it could not relinquish without ceasing to be divine. As St. Jerome says: "*Cui praescientiam tollis, auferes et divinitatem.*" In matter of fact nescience of conditionally future acts would entail a woful ignorance of many important truths that are essential to that infinite knowledge which evolves harmony out of confusion. Even a mere doubt as to how free creatures as yet uncreated would deport themselves under all possible combinations of circumstances, would be utterly incompatible with God's Knowledge and destructive of His Providence. If such a doubt were possible, the Creator could not consistently carry out any fixed plan of governing the universe. He would simply have to trust to "good luck," because His creatures, by reason of their free will, would be in a position to disturb all His calculations. Like "the best laid plans of mice and men," His most wise counsels would "gang aft a-glee." Unable to provide against unforeseen surprises, Divine Providence would be fated to grope in the dark and to steer an ever-changing zigzag course. The Lord of the universe would be dependent on the moods of mortal men, and oftentimes could not set the machinery of His omnipotence in motion until it was too late to accomplish His designs. What an utterly unworthy conception of God all this implies! Cicero⁷⁵ denied God's foreknowledge, because he saw no other way of preserving the liberty of man. A convinced theist would, on the contrary, sacrifice the doctrine of free-will rather than attenuate the divine omniscience. The Christian Church has always clung to the conviction, so beautifully voiced in her liturgical prayers, that Divine Providence (*providere* = *praevidere*) not only knows what will actually happen in the future, but also what would happen if individuals were placed in different circumstances. Imbued with this persuasion we pray God to ward off injury from our souls and to afford us opportunities for doing good. We console the Christian mother who has buried a beloved child, by telling her that Providence disposes all things wisely, that her child is spared much suffering and would perhaps, had God permitted him to live, have wrought his own destruction and broken the hearts of his parents.⁷⁶ The Jesuit theologian Ferdinand Bastida very eloquently set forth these and similar considerations in the presence of Pope Clement VIII, at one of the meetings of the famous "Congregatio de Auxiliis."⁷⁷ Molina has unfolded the divine plan of governing the universe in the light of the *scientia media*, in language which may truly be called sublime.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ *De Divinat.*, II, 7.

⁷⁶ Thus St. Gregory of Nyssa says (*De Morte Praemat. Infant., circa finem* [Migne, P. G. 46, 184]): "It belongs to the perfection of Divine Providence, not merely to heal diseases, but also to prevent them. It is fitting that He, to whom the future is no less known than the past, should stay the child's advance to his full age, lest the evil which the prescient Intellect foresees should come about in him, should his life be prolonged." Cfr. also St. Aug., *De Corrept. et Gratia*, c. 8, n. 19.

⁷⁷ Cfr. Livinus Meyer, *Historia Congr. de Aux.*, V, 43 sqq.

⁷⁸ *Concordia, etc.*, qu. 23, art. 4–5, disp. 1.

3) THE MOLINIST THEORY OF THE SCIENTIA MEDIA.—The historic controversy between Thomism and Molinism, which is latterly showing signs of a revival, has its proper place in the treatise on Grace rather than in that part of dogmatic theology which deals with God and His attributes. Nevertheless, the contending parties rightly feel that the roots of their respective systems reach deep down into the dogma of the divine omniscience. As a matter of fact the doctrine of the *scientia media* marks the very heart of Molinism, just as the Thomistic system centres in the theory of the *praemotio physica*.

a) *Scientia media*, as the very term indicates, has reference solely to the *Knowledge* of God, while *praemotio physica* primarily regards the *Divine Will*; though, of course, ultimately there can be no physical premotion without the action of the Divine Intellect. This explains the transparent endeavor of both parties in the very vestibule of dogmatic theology so to adjust the teaching of the causal influence of God's knowledge, as to make it fit into, and furnish a basis for, their respective systems of grace, and so to interpret the Patristic sayings about God's knowledge, as to support those systems. Both parties, it is true, are on common ground in accepting it as a revealed dogma that the omniscient God from all eternity definitely foresaw whether His free creatures would co-operate or refuse to co-operate with His grace, and that He disposed His eternal scheme of grace, salvation, and reprobation in accordance with this foreknowledge. They have also come to an agreement on the proposition that God foresees the conditionally future acts of His free creatures as infallibly as He foreknows their absolutely future acts (*actus absolute futuri*), and both schools consequently employ the term *scientia conditionate futurorum seu futuribilium* in precisely the same sense.

This being so, how is it that the Thomists so hotly reject the term *scientia media*, which the Molinists have coined for the purpose of designating that *scientia futuribilium* which both schools admit?⁷⁹ Is the whole controversy a mere war of words? The character and ability of the theologians engaged on both sides compels us to reject this assumption. Or is the Thomist opposition to the *scientia media* perhaps due to the novelty of the term? It is true, *scientia media*, as a technical term for God's *scientia futuribilium*, was unknown before Molina, whose teacher, Peter Fonseca, S. J., still employed in its stead the expression *scientia mixta*.⁸⁰ But is not the Thomistic term *praemotio physica*, or *praedeterminatio physica*, likewise a coin of comparatively recent mintage? Who ever heard of it before Bañez? And does not the gradual development of dogma, which results from the action of the ecclesiastical magisterium and the discussions of the theological schools, necessitate the adoption every now and then of some new dogmatic term to give accurate and precise expression to a more clearly defined concept?⁸¹ Nor are there wanting instances in the history of dogma where a middle term was invented to bridge a chasm between two extremes. While the ancient creeds, for example, divide all created beings into *visibilia* and *invisibilia*, the Fourth Lateran Council saw fit to insert between these two a third category, which it designates as *humana creatura quasi communis ex spiritu et corpore*. Now, the division into things visible and invisible is fully as adequate as the division of the divine Knowledge into *scientia simplicis intelligentiae* and *scientia*

⁷⁹ Cfr. Billuart, *De Deo*, diss. 6, art. 6.

⁸⁰ *Metaph.*, 1. VI, c. 2, qu. 4, sect. 8. Ed. Colon. 1615, Vol. III, pp. 119 sqq.

⁸¹ E. g., ὁμοούσιον," "transsubstantiatio," "ex opere operato," etc.

visionis. If, therefore, it was possible to find middle ground between the two first-mentioned extremes, there is no reason why middle ground should not be found between God's knowledge of simple intelligence and His knowledge of vision.⁸² The sharp rejection of the *scientia media* by the Thomists, therefore, must be due to some strong objective motive. This motive is that the Molinists have loaded the term *scientia media* with a number of connotations which extend its meaning far beyond that of simple knowledge.

b) If we review the history of the long and acrimonious dispute, we find that both parties, in attacking the problem under consideration, forthwith went to the root of the matter by searching for the medium in which God perceives the infallible connexion of the efficacy of His grace with the free consent of the created will. According to the Thomists, this medium is found in the eternal decrees of His Divine Will, or in His natural or supernatural predeterminations, which in time, as *praemotiones physicae*, physically predetermine the created will freely to perform the action willed (or, in case of sin: permitted) by God. Therefore God knows the rational creature's free decisions, which He has predetermined, as infallibly as He knows His own will and its decrees. Molinism, on the other hand, regarding physical premotion, or predetermination, as a grave peril to free will, nay as its absolute negation, rejects the Thomist hypothesis and seeks to explain God's infallible foreknowledge of creatural concurrence with His grace by the *scientia media*, in virtue of which God, before He utters His decrees, and altogether independently of them, foresees how each (actual or possible) rational creature would freely conduct itself in any conceivable juncture of circumstances, were He to offer this or that grace to the supernaturally equipped will. Hence concurrence or refusal, virtuous or sinful conduct, are known to His omniscience, not only before the creature's free will has begun to exist, but even before He Himself has formed any decree (be it positive or merely permissive) with regard to it. According to this theory, therefore, the proper object of the *scientia media* are the conditionally future free actions of all rational creatures in so far as they are still absolutely free and uninfluenced by any antecedent decrees of the Divine Will. These explanations will enable the reader to grasp the full significance of Tournely's definition: "*Scientia media est scientia conditionatorum independens ab omni decreto absoluto et efficaci eoque anterior.*"⁸³ This peculiar concept of the *scientia conditionatorum* contains the very quintessence of Molinism, and also its antithesis to Thomism. This fundamental divergence at the outset widens into an abysmal chasm when theological speculation arrives at the doctrine of divine concurrence and the efficacy of grace. While Thomism admits merely a *concursum praevium* and a *gratia ab intrinseco efficax*, Molinism insists on a *concursum simultaneum* and a *gratia ab extrinseco efficax*.

c) It will be helpful to illustrate the difference between the two systems by a concrete example. We choose for this purpose the conversion of St. Paul. According to the Thomist view, God (supposing for a moment that He reasoned humanwise), would put the case thus: I will absolutely, from all eternity, that at a certain time Saul shall be physically predetermined by the efficaciousness of my grace to become converted of his own free will; and in this predetermination I foresee his actual conversion as infallibly certain. According to the Molinist theory, God would argue in this wise: Independently of any decree of my will, I know with infallible certitude from all eternity that, *if* I give Saul this

⁸² Cfr. Kleutgen, *De Ipso Deo*, pp. 284 sqq.

⁸³ *De Deo*, qu. 16, art. 5.

particular grace of conversion, he will freely co-operate with it, and thus become transformed into Paul; on the basis of this previous knowledge (= *scientia media*) I now *decree* to give him this particular grace, and no other, and by means of creation, preservation, concurrence, and providence, in course of time to posit all those conditions which are requisite to bring about that end. Thus the *scientia media* becomes *scientia visionis, i. e.*, infallible knowledge of an *actual* event, only after God's consequent decree has supervened. Whereas Thomism, therefore, under the leadership of Bañez, posits the knowability (= truth) of both the absolutely future and the conditionally future free acts of rational creatures in the Essence, or, more proximately, in *the Will of God*; Molinism holds that it does not lie proximately and primarily in the Divine Will, but in the historical *truth* of the absolute or conditioned future, for the certain cognition of which truth God's Intellect is eternally determined by His own Essence, as the faithful mirror of all truths. Others give still other explanations.⁸⁴ From what we have so far said it is plain that both systems aim at *a scientific conciliation of the seemingly contradictory dogmas of grace and free will*. It is a sublime aim, though perhaps beyond the reach of human ingenuity! It is as important that the dogma of grace be kept intact as that the dogma of free-will be safeguarded and defended to its fullest extent. While Thomism, with due regard to the absolute sovereignty, causality, and omnipotence of God, erects a mighty bulwark for the defense of grace, Molinism is busily at work throwing a stiff rampart around the equally important dogma of the free will of man. It was for this reason that Molina entitled his epochal work *Concordantia Liberi Arbitrii cum Gratiae Donis, Divina Praescientia, Providentia, Praedestinatione et Reprobatione*.⁸⁵

d) Molina (+ 1600) had cherished the hope that his scheme of harmonizing the two dogmas in question (grace and free-will, providence and predestination), would deal a death blow to all heresies and put an end to controversy. History shows this expectation to have been unfounded. Molinism did not succeed in overthrowing Bajanism, nor did it avail against Jansenism, which arose soon after, and joined forces with the heretical determinism of the Protestant Reformers in a terrible onslaught on the dogma of free-will; nor was it able to bridge the deep chasm which separated the adherents of Bañez from those of Molina, the Dominicans from the Jesuits. The battle is still on, though fortunately the combatants engaged in it at present evince far more humility and moderation than their protagonists. This gratifying development we are inclined to attribute largely to the conviction, which is steadily growing on both sides, that if pushed to its extreme logical conclusions, either system is certain to arrive at a point where human reason is confronted by an unfathomable mystery. Several eminent champions of the newer Molinism,⁸⁶ while strenuously upholding the *scientia media*, admit that it is a hopeless undertaking to try to explain its "How" and "Why." In this they follow Billuart, who replied to the question: How are we to conceive the harmony between *praemotio* and free-will? by saying: "*Respondeo, mysterium esse.*"⁸⁷ Under these circumstances the paternal admonition which was uttered by Paul V in 1607, when he closed the sessions of the

⁸⁴ Cfr. *supra*, § 3.

⁸⁵ Olyssipone 1588; Parisiis 1876.

⁸⁶ Notably Kleutgen (*De Ipso Deo*, p. 319), Cornoldi (*Della Libertà Umana*, Roma 1884), Régnon (*Bañez et Molina*, pp. 113 sqq., Paris 1883.)

⁸⁷ *De Deo*, diss. 8, art. 4, § 2, ad 6.

“Congregatio de Auxiliis” (1598–1607), before that famous body had arrived at a final conclusion, may be said to be doubly important to-day. He counselled the defenders of both systems “*Ut verbis asperioribus, amaritiam animi significantibus, invicem abstineant.*”⁸⁸

SECTION 3

THE MEDIUM OF DIVINE KNOWLEDGE

1. According to St. Thomas Aquinas,¹ there are three different media of higher cognition. “*Unum, sub quo intellectus videt, quod disponit eum ad videndum, et hoc est nobis lumen intellectus agentis.... Aliud medium est, quo videt, et hoc est species intelligibilis.... Tertium medium est, in quo aliquid videtur, et hoc est res aliqua, per quam in cognitionem alterius devenimus, sicut in effectu videmus causam.*” Applying this theory to bodily vision, we have as *medium sub quo* light, which renders a body proximately visible; as *medium quo* the *species sensibilis* through which the eye sees; and, lastly, as *medium in quo* the mirror which reflects material objects to the eye. The *medium quo* is also called *medium incognitum*, because the impression or concept received into the eye or the intellect is not perceived *qua* species, but merely conveys a knowledge of that which it represents. The *medium in quo*, on the other hand, is invariably also *medium cognitum*, because in this case the medium (*e. g.*, a mirror, a cause), must first be perceived before the mind can apprehend that which it reflects (*e. g.*, a tree, an effect)’. Such a cognition is by its very nature not immediate but mediate.

In turning our attention to the Divine Understanding we must first recall² that none of its three media can lie outside the Divine Essence. God, in the first place, is His own *medium sub quo*, that is to say, He is in Himself the clearest and purest light of truth and understanding, the infinite *lumen intellectuale* for Himself as for others. “Ὁ Θεὸς φῶς ἐστὶ καὶ σκοτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεμία—God is light, and in him there is no darkness.”³ Eccus. 23:28: “*Oculi Domini multo plus lucidiores sunt super solem*—The eyes

⁸⁸ The following bibliographical references may prove useful to those who wish to go into the subject more deeply: Platel, *Auctoritas contra Praedeterminationem Physicam pro Scientia Media*, Duaci 1669.—Henao, *Scientia Media Historice Propugnata*, Lugd. 1655.—Id., *Scientia Media Theologice Defensa*, I and II, Lugd. 1674–76.—De Aranda, *De Deo Sciente, Praedestinate et Auxiliante, seu Schola Scientiae Mediae*, Caesaraug. 1693.—Of modern authors we mention: Schneemann, S. J., *Controv. de Divinae Gratiae Liberique Arbitrii Concordia Initia et Progressus*, Frib. 1881; Dummermuth, O. P., *S. Thomas et Doctrina Praemotionis Physicae*, Parisiis 1886; Gayraud, *Thomisme et Molinisme*, Paris 1890,—Cfr. also Ude, *Doctrina Capreoli de Influxu Dei in Actus Voluntatis Humanae secundum Principia Thomismi et Molinismi Collata*, Graecii 1905.—On the “Congregatio de Auxiliis,” see A. Astrain, S. J., in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. IV, pp. 238 sq.

¹ *Quodlib.*, VII, art. 1.

² See *supra*, § 1.

³ 1 John 1:5.

of the Lord are far brighter than the sun.”—“*Lumen de lumine.*” (Creed).—God is likewise His own *medium quo*, in so far as only by His own Essence can His Intellect be determined to the intellectual expression (*verbum, species intelligibilis*) of Himself and of all other truths.⁴ Chr. Pesch⁵ rightly insists that the technical phrase: “*Divina essentia ipsa est species intelligibilis intellectus divini seu medium quo Deus cognoscit.*”—a phrase which has been adopted by all theological schools without exception—be not sacrificed without stringent reasons. Up to now no such stringent reasons have been produced.—Lastly, God is also His own *medium in quo*, because He perceives all extra-divine truths, including the *actus liberi futuri et futuribiles*, in Himself alone as the faithful mirror reflecting all things possible and actual. The created intellect, in acquiring its mediate knowledge of things, proceeds from truth to truth, either by a mere transition, as in the case of antitheses, or by the aid of a middle term, as in the case of syllogistic reasoning. But Almighty God, in the words of St. John of Damascus, “knows all things with a simple and inscrutable knowledge—“*simplici et inscrutabili cognitione cognoscit omnia.*”⁶ His cognition, therefore, is immediate or intuitive, not mediate or discursive,⁷ except perhaps in this sense that it has for its sole and necessary medium the Divine Essence, *i. e.*, God’s knowledge of Himself. Considered in itself, God’s knowledge is a calm, simple, immediate intuition of things.

2. There is no noteworthy difference of opinion among theologians as to the *medium sub quo* and the *medium quo* of divine cognition. With regard, however, to the *medium in quo* of God’s understanding of the truths external to Himself, there are decided divergencies. Here we have to deal with a most complicated, difficult, and obscure problem. Leaving aside all useless subtleties, and adhering to the familiar classification of extra-divine things which we have adopted in § 2, we will confine ourselves to the subjoined theses:

Thesis I: Although God perceives the purely possibles exactly as they are in themselves, He does not know them immediately in themselves, but mediately in His own Essence as medium in quo

This teaching is common to all theological schools.

Proofs. Our thesis is a development of proposition 3, § 1, *supra*, where it was shown that God perceives the extra-divine things—including those that have actual existence—not only in His own Essence, that is to say, merely according to their *ideal- eminent* being, but likewise as they are *in themselves*, *i. e.*, according to their real and formal being. We have now to consider the question whether God perceives this real and formal being,—a being in which the possibles, too, participate as soon as they become actual—*immediately* in the things themselves, or *mediately* in and through His own Essence. Either view has its defenders. In the 17th century still another solution was suggested which aims at combining both modes of cognition.

⁴ *Supra*, § 1, prop, 1–3.

⁵ *Praelect. Dogmat.*, II (2nd ed.), pp. 111 sqq.

⁶ *De Fide Orth.*, I, 19.

⁷ Cfr. Hebr. 4:13.

a) Becanus, Vasquez, and others hold that, as there is no ontological, so there can be no logical nexus between the Divine Essence and purely possible beings, for the reason that God must be conceived as *“res plane absoluta, sine ulla connexione cum creaturis possibilibus.”* and that, consequently, He knows all things outside of Himself *immediately* and without the agency of any *medium in quo (prius cognitum)*. It will appear from our subsequent explanation that this view is untenable.⁸

b) A second view, which is defended by all Thomists and leading Molinists, regards the Divine Essence as the *sole* medium of God’s cognition, and holds that so far as this cognition comprises the purely possible (and also the actually existing) beings, it is not immediate, but mediate. St. Thomas formulates the main argument for this thesis succinctly as follows: *“Deus seipsum videt in seipso, sed seipsum videt per essentiam suam; alia autem a se videt non in ipsis, sed in seipso, in quantum essentia sua continet similitudinem aliorum ab ipso.”*⁹ The Divine Essence being the exemplary cause of all possibles, and likewise the efficient and final cause of whatever actually exists, it is impossible to assume that God, in directing His vision to the things outside His Essence, should so to speak overlook His Essence and apprehend those extraneous objects directly and immediately. Only in His own Essence, which most clearly reflects all beings possible and actual, does He understand all that is not Himself. The position of most of the later Molinists¹⁰ was outlined by Molina, when he wrote: *“Deus cognoscit alia a se non in rebus ipsis, sed in seipso, h. e. intuitus divini intellectus non fertur aequae primo in suam essentiam ut in rem cognitam et in naturas, quas aliae res seipsis habent; sed primo fertur in suam essentiam ut in obiectum primum, in quo virtute continentur naturae aliarum rerum, et mediante essentia ita cognita illo eodem intuitu cognoscit ac intuetur ulterius ut obiectum secundarium naturam cuiusque aliarum rerum propriam. Itaque cum dicimus Deum non cognoscere alia a se in ipsismet rebus, non negamus Deum cognoscere illud esse quod res habent in seipsis, sed negamus cognoscere illud immediate atque ut obiectum primum.”*¹¹ This argument gains strength from the consideration that the divine Intellect must needs possess the most perfect knowledge which it is possible to have. Now, the most perfect knowledge is that which is drawn from the deepest depths and ascends to the highest cause, which is God Himself. Consequently the Divine Intellect cannot possibly draw its knowledge from any other source than the Divine Essence, which is *de facto* the supreme and ultimate cause of all things. Wherefore, as St. Augustine beautifully remarks, *“In comparatione lucis illius, quae in Verbo Dei conspicitur, omnis cognitio qua creaturarum quamlibet in seipsa [sc. cognitione vespertina] novimus, non immerito nox dici potest—*In comparison with that light which is seen in the Word of God, all knowledge by which we know any whatever creature in itself, may rightly be called ‘night.’”¹² The Holy Doctor is careful not to posit in the Divine Cognition, besides the

⁸ Cfr. also Billuart, *De Deo Uno*, diss. 5, art. 4.

⁹ *S. Theol.* 1a, qu. 14, art. 5.

¹⁰ *E. g.*, Suarez, Lessius, Ruiz, Petavius, Franzelin.

¹¹ *Com. in S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 14, art. 5–6, concl. 2, Lugd. 1593, p. 165.

¹² *De Gen. ad Lit.*, IV, 23.

cognitio matutina (sc. “*in Verbo*”), that *cognitio vespertina* (“*in rebus*”), which he ascribes to the angels.¹³

c) What we have said above is sufficient to disprove the opinion of certain Scotists¹⁴ and Molinists¹⁵ who hold that God’s understanding of the possible and the actual is both *mediate and immediate*. Is this not equivalent to saying that He simultaneously possesses both *the most perfect* and *a less perfect* knowledge of things? No wonder St. Thomas rejects such teaching.¹⁶ In view of the fact that Molinist theologians are among the most ardent defenders of the mediateness of divine cognition, Billuart must have been ill-advised when he wrote: “*Si Deus non cognoscat alia a se nisi in se ut causa, corrui scientia media: e contra si Deus cognoscat alia a se immediate in seipsis, locus erit scientiae mediae.*” No Molinist would dream of denying the principle that there is, and that there can be, no truth independently of God.

Thesis II: God perceives the actually existing things, including free actions, present and past, in His own Essence as medium in quo

This thesis also embodies a teaching common to all theological schools.

Proof. The argument by which we have established the preceding thesis applies with equal force to this one, so far as it embraces actually existing beings that are not free (such as inanimate matter and brute animals) and likewise free intellectual creatures (men and angels) so far forth as their actions are determined by intrinsic necessity, as, *e. g.*, in their tendency towards happiness. The threefold division of time makes no essential difference, because the free will of the Creator univocally determines all operations of the past, present, and future in the necessary causes that depend on God alone, and is consequently knowable in God.

The only real difficulty in connection with our thesis arises from *free* actions,—not so much from those which are past, as from those which occur *hic et nunc* in the present. (The free actions of the future we shall consider separately farther on). Free and necessary actions manifestly stand in an altogether different relation respectively to the Divine Essence regarded as a medium of cognition. For while necessary causes have a sufficient *medium in quo* in the decree of the Creator by which they are determined *ad unum*, and all their effects are minutely predefined; free-will actions are neither necessarily contained in, nor *a priori* cognoscible by, their causes. “*Quia voluntas est activum principium non determinatum ad unum, sed indifferenter se habens ad multa,*” says St. Thomas, “*sic Deus ipsam movet, quod non ex necessitate ad unum determinat, sed remanet motus eius contingens et non necessarius, nisi in his ad quae naturaliter movetur.*”¹⁷ Whence it follows that “*quicumque cognoscit effectum contingentem in causa sua tantum, non habet de eo nisi coniecturalem cognitionem; Deus autem cognoscit omnia contingentia, non solum prout sunt in suis causis, sed etiam prout unumquodque eorum est*

¹³ For other arguments in support of this view the reader is referred to * Kleutgen, *De Ipso Deo*, pp. 300 sqq.

¹⁴ *E. g.*, Henno, Poncius.

¹⁵ *E. g.*, Arriga, Viva, Carleton, Platel, Mayr.

¹⁶ *Contr. Gent.*, I, 48.

¹⁷ *S. Theol.*, 1a 2ae, qu. 10, art. 4.

actu in seipso."¹⁸ Now, if free acts cannot be known from their cause (*i. e.*, the will of the free agent), whence does God derive His infallible knowledge of them? Must He wait till the free will has made a decision, and is He compelled like mortal men to learn by observation?

a) The Thomist solution appears simple enough. God in His physically predetermining decrees, that is to say, in His absolute Will, knows the actions of free agents with the same mathematical certitude with which He knows those of necessary agents. Bound and directed by the decrees of His Will, His Essence becomes the sure *medium in quo* of His cognition. However, this solution is not altogether satisfactory. For does not such absolute predetermination derogate from, not to say destroy, the self-determining power of free will? Again, several passages from the writings of St. Thomas are distinctly unfavorable to this theory.¹⁹

Cardinal Bellarmine tried to solve the difficulty by cardiognosis: "*Deus, quia cognoscit omnes propensiones et totum ingenium animi nostri ... infallibiliter colligit, quam in partem sit animus inclinaturus.*"²⁰ But the real crux is not whether God, by means of His *supercomprehensio cordis*, can calculate with *moral* certitude at what free decisions the creature will arrive; but whether He can foreknow these decisions with that *metaphysical* certainty which they possess after they have once been made. Now, to know an effect with metaphysical certainty from its cause, is to know a necessary effect. In this case, therefore, the will would no longer be free,—a flaw which has led theologians to relinquish this hypothesis, though it had the support of such authorities as Molina and Becanus.²¹

b) To the Molinist, on account of the peculiar character of the free-will actions of rational creatures, God's understanding of these actions appears not as causally antecedent, but as consequent. It is here that the famous axiom of the Fathers is brought into play: "*Actus liberi non sunt vel erunt quia Deus videt, sed e contra videt, quia sunt vel erunt.*" However, God perceives the free actions of creatures in His own Essence, not only because, as *obiectum materiale et secundarium*, they are merely the terminus and not the cause of the divine cognition; but especially because, (presupposing the *scientia media*), they are contained in, and hence knowable through, the divine decrees of creation, preservation, and concurrence. If this explanation is not as clear as it might be, this is due to the concept of the *scientia media*, or, which comes to the same thing, to the knotty problem of the knowability of the *futuribilia*, which we defer to a future chapter.

¹⁸ *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 14, art. 13.

¹⁹ To quote but one: "*Ipsa potentia voluntatis, quantum in se est, indifferens est ad plura; sed quod determinate exeat in hunc actum vel illum, non est ab alio determinante, sed ab ipsa voluntate. Sed in naturalibus [sc. non liberis] actus progreditur ab agente, sed tamen determinate ad hunc actum non est ab agente, sed ab eo [sc. Deo], qui agenti talem naturam dedit, per quam ad hunc actum determinatum est: et ideo propriissime actus voluntatis a voluntate esse dicitur. Unde si aliquis defectus sit in actu eius, ipsi voluntati in culpam et Peccatum imputatur.*" (*In 1 Dist. 39, qu. 1, art. 1.*) Cfr. Frins's observations on this important passage in *De Actibus Humanis*, nn. 93 sqq., Friburgi 1897.

²⁰ *De Grat, et Lib. Arbit.*, IV, 15.

²¹ For further details, consult Kleutgen, *De Ipso Deo*, pp. 322 sqq.

Thesis III: The free actions of the future God foresees not in His physical predeterminations, but in His concurring will, which is directed by the scientia media

Proof. This thesis, which is defended by numerous Molinist theologians, consists of two parts; one polemical, directed against the Thomist view; the other positive, in support of Molinism. Both schools agree that the will of God is the medium of His foreknowledge of the free acts of the future. They differ in this that Molinism assumes a “decreaseless” *scientia media* as a sort of torch preceding the decree of the divine Will; while Thomism vigorously rejects the theory of a *scientia media* or middle knowledge, and bases the reality and cognoscibility of the free actions of the future solely and entirely on the absolute Will of God.

a) We prescind from a detailed refutation of the Thomistic position in this volume, because the matter belongs properly to the treatise on Grace. Let us merely observe that the logic of the Thomistic system—we do not impugn the intentions of its thoroughly honorable and orthodox defenders—is sure to lead to the destruction of free-will and to a conception of the origin of sin which it would be difficult to harmonize with the sanctity of the Most High. Compare these two utterances. Alvarez, one of the ablest among the Thomist theologians, says: “*Deus certo et infallibiliter cognoscit omnia peccata futura in decreto [absoluto, antecedente], quo statuit praedeterminare voluntatem creatam ad entitatem actus peccati, in quantum actio et ens est, et permittere malitiam moralem peccati ut peccatum est, non dando auxilium efficax ad illud vitandum.*”²² Bañez: “*Voluntas creata infallibiliter deficiet circa quamcunque materiam virtutis, nisi efficaciter determinetur a divina voluntate ad bene operandum.*”²³ Between these two determinations the will finds itself in a quandary from which there is no escape. Assuming that it is absolutely predetermined to the entity of the sinful act,—how can the will escape formal sin, if to resist temptation it needs a new predetermination, over whose existence or non-existence it has no more control than over its promotion to the positive entity of sin? It is because they dread this logical consequence of their theory, that several of the followers of Bañez²⁴ restrict the *praedeterminatio voluntatis creatae ad entitatem actus* to such actions as are morally good. Before Bañez’s time, by the way, Thomists generally did not explain God’s foreknowledge of the free actions of the future on the theory of *decreta praedeterminantia*.²⁵ Among modern Thomists Cardinal Zigliara deviates from the beaten track of what is called pure Thomism.²⁶ If these and other grave objections (to be treated in the volume on Grace), could be satisfactorily solved, the *praemotio physica* would afford a sure and infallible medium of divine knowledge, and we could confidently say with Billuart: “*Deus cognoscit futura absoluta contingentia et libera in suo decreto eorum futuritionem determinate, sive in essentia sua huiusmodi decreto determinata.*”²⁷

²² *De Aux. Grat*, disp. XI, n. 3.

²³ *Com. in S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 14, art. 13, concl. 2, ad 2.

²⁴ *E. g.*, Mendoza and Zumel.

²⁵ Cfr. Schneemann, *Controv.*, pp. 98 sqq.; V. Frins, *De Cooperatione Dei cum Omni Natura, praesertim Libera*, pp. 344 sqq., Parisiis 1892.

²⁶ *Theol. Nat.*, 1. III, c. 4, art. 3.

²⁷ *Op. cit.*, diss. 6, art. 4. For a refutation of the theory, see G. B. Tepe, S. J., *Instit. Theol.*, t. II, pp. 177 sqq., Parisiis 1895; and Chr. Pesch, S. J., *Praelect. Dogmat.*, II (ed. 2a), pp. 125 sqq.

b) One might be tempted to seek a way out of the difficulty by regarding eternity, *i. e.*, that attribute in virtue of which God coexists with the past, present, and future, as the medium of His cognition of the free actions of the future, and to say that to the Eternal God the future as well as the past is present. As God truly intues the present, with all events occurring therein, so by virtue of His eternity or, more correctly, sempiternity, He sees the past and the future as clearly and distinctly as if they were present. St. Thomas employs a beautiful simile to illustrate this truth.²⁸ Take an army corps marching past a given point. Those who are in line see each only a few individuals ahead. But an observer stationed on a high coign of vantage outside, would be able to take in the whole corps at a glance. Similarly, God is not carried away by the current of time. He exists outside of, and above time, because He is eternal. Whatever has occurred or will occur in the course of time, past and future, He views from His sempiternal coign of vantage as if it were happening *hic et nunc*. In the more accurate language of theology, therefore, we ought not to speak of God's *fore-knowledge* or *after-knowledge*, but rather of His unchanging *co-knowledge*, based on an immutable and immediate intuition of actuality.

The explanation just suggested, however, fails to solve the question as to the *medium* of God's foreknowledge of the future free actions of His rational creatures. All it enables us to say is that, because He is eternal, it cannot be more difficult for Him to have an infallible knowledge of the past and future, than of the present. But beyond this many questions remain open and unsolved. Eternity (sempiternity) can no more be the proper medium of God's knowledge of the free acts of the future, than can His omnipresence, which is often emblemed by an all-seeing eye. Both sempiternity and omnipresence presuppose the physical world with its temporal succession and local juxtaposition, just as the *scientia visionis* has for its necessary condition actual existence in time and space. That which actually exists God can see as actually existing only on condition *that* it exists. Speculative knowledge is necessarily a *scientia consequens, i. e.*, a knowledge which follows things actually existing in the various divisions of time; not a *scientia antecedens*, which precedes them, either by nature or causally. Sin in particular, as St. Augustine insists, must be conceived as an object of consequent knowledge: "*Neque enim ideo peccat homo, quia Deus illum peccatum praescivit, ... qui si nolit, utique non peccat, sed si peccare noluerit, etiam hoc ille praescivit*—For a man does not therefore sin, because God foreknew that he would sin, ... man, if he wills not, sins not; but if he shall not will to sin, even this did God foreknow."²⁹ It is furthermore easy to see that if God's (speculative) *scientia visionis* has from all eternity a real object in space and time, this can only be for the reason that God had determined from all eternity to create such an object. Consequently the speculative knowledge of God, which assumes things as existing, has for its necessary antecedent His practical knowledge, which is the *cause* of all being, *i. e.*, the free Will of God, determining that at such and such a time there shall come into being such and such an intelligent creature, privileged to shape its own conduct freely with the concurrence of the Prime Cause. Hence it is manifest that God foreknows the future free actions of His intelligent creatures not in His quiescent eternity, but in His operative knowledge, *i. e.*, in an act of His divine Will decreeing to create beings endowed with free

²⁸ *De Verit.*, qu. 2, art. 12.

²⁹ *De Civ. Dei*, V, 10, n. 2.

will, to preserve their free will, and at all times to co-operate with it, either positively or permissively.³⁰

c) It is on the conclusion just set forth that Molinism bases its contention that the medium of God's knowledge of the free actions of the future must be sought for, *remotely* in His creative and preservative Will, *proximately* in His will of co-operating or concurring with His rational creatures. The whole question at issue is thereby transferred to the domain of the *concursum divinum*, into which we cannot at present enter.³¹ According to the Molinist theory, the *concursum divinum* does not cause the free determination of the will *promovendo*, but rather includes it *per modum conditionis*—else the will would not be free—and hence, in order to safeguard the infallibility of the knowledge which God draws from His *concursum*, Molinism finds itself constrained to supply the latter with the *scientia media* as with a torch, in the light of which the Almighty, even before He offers and confers His cooperation is enabled to know how under existing circumstances the free will of the creature will receive it, and also how it would receive it under all conceivable circumstances. "*Deus ex vi suae essentiae,*" says Lessius, "*ante omne decretum liberum ... omnia ex hypothesi futura cognoscit [= scientia media], qua cognitione posita accedente decreto libero quo vult creare causas liberas et permittere eas suis motibus in talibus circumstantiis, statim in suo illo decreto effectivo et permissivo videt, quid absolute sit futurum.*"³² This hypothesis, which manifestly owes its existence to a desire to safeguard the freedom of the will, is tenable only on the assumption that the free actions of rational creatures are from everlasting univocally true, or knowable in themselves objectively and independently of any decree of the Divine Will. Hence the eager efforts of the Molinists to establish the *determinata veritas* of the free acts of the future (absolutely and conditionally), and hence also the equally transparent endeavor of the Thomists to deny the existence of such a *determinata veritas*, except on the assumption of absolute and hypothetical predeterminations. Later Molinists argue something like this:

d) When Christ said to Peter in the night of His sacred Passion: "*In hac nocte ter me negabis,*" and Peter obstinately insisted: "*Non te negabo,*"³³ it is quite plain that one of these contradictory propositions was certainly and eternally true, while the other was equally false. The outcome might have been logically formulated thus: (1) Peter will either deny Jesus, or he will not deny him; (2) Peter will not deny Jesus; (3) Peter will deny Jesus. Of these three propositions the first, being merely a concrete application of the principle of contradiction, while evidently true, is so *indefinite* as to be valueless. As the Molinist Martinez told Gonet: "*Si hoc esset, spiritus propheticus esset omnibus innatus.*"³⁴ The second proposition, on the other hand, is as certainly false as the third is true. For if Christ had prophesied: "*Non me negabis,*" He would have uttered a definite untruth, just as He

³⁰ The terms creation, preservation, and co-operation, or concurrence, are more fully explained in the dogmatic treatise on God the Creator.

³¹ On the important distinction between the (Thomistic) *concursum praeivum* and the (Molinistic) *concursum simultaneum*, and likewise on the distinction between *concursum oblatus* and *concursum collatus*, the student will find it profitable to consult Jos. Hontheim, S. J., *Instit. Theodicaeae*, pp. 621 sqq., 731 sqq., Friburgi 1893.

³² *De Perf. Div.*, VI, 1, n. 7.

³³ Math. 26:34 sq.

³⁴ *De Scientia Dei Controv.*, 3, disp. 3, sect 5.

uttered a definite truth when He said: “*Ter me negabis.*” To assert, therefore, that before its actual occurrence, Peter’s denial of the Saviour was neither definitely true, nor definitely untrue, but at best *indefinitely true*, after the manner of a disjunctive proposition, would be tantamount to giving the lie to divine Revelation, which foretells definite truths, and to denying the eternal co-existence of God with His free creatures in the past, present, and future. Nor could this condition of affairs be altered by a decree of the Divine Will, because even omnipotence cannot reconcile contradictories. When Peter was called upon to declare himself either for or against His Divine Master, the circumstances of the case (which God had foreseen from all eternity) were such that he had either to take His part or deny Him. To do both indefinitely, or to do neither definitely, would have been as contradictory as it would be for a material body to exist without definite quantity or color. This contradiction not only reaches back into the past, but it also reaches forward into the future, for time—especially in relation to the Eternal God—cannot alter an objective truth. The indefiniteness which attaches to the free actions of the future, therefore, is not inherent in these actions themselves, but only in our knowledge of them, which must await the fact in order to have a determinant. Consequently, all absolute future events are just as definitely determined from all eternity as if they were present or past, and therefore belong to the category of definite truths, which must be *knowable* as such. And even though God in some other Economy could have preserved Peter from his fall by giving him an efficacious grace, nevertheless, in this last-mentioned hypothesis his loyalty would not have been less definitely true than his disloyalty and sin are now; and God would have foreknown the former as definitely from all eternity as He foreknew the latter. While God’s decision to create the present Economy, in preference to any other which He might have chosen, simply resulted in Peter’s denial of Christ becoming an historical fact, in some other Economy this crime would have been just as much a definite objective truth, though, of course, only as a *futuribile* or *futurum sub hypothesis*.

e) In matter of fact conditionally future actions (*liberum futuribile*) are in the same category with absolutely future actions (*liberum vere futurum*), inasmuch as God has revealed truths of either class in the most definite manner, *e. g.*, the conversion of Tyre and Sidon, the surrender of David to Saul by the inhabitants of Ceila,³⁵ etc. For God foresees the future free actions of His rational creatures precisely in the same *signum rationis* by which they assume the shape of definite truths, namely, through the self-determination of the free will. Before the existence of St. Peter, nay even before the making of the divine decree to which He owed his existence, it was definitely true that he would betray Christ *if*, furnished with no more than sufficient grace, he would be exposed to this definite temptation under the particular circumstances with which we are acquainted from the Gospel; for even in the merely imaginary order of the *futuribilitas* it would be impossible to conceive Peter as acting under the indefinite disjunction *either—or*. Consequently, God’s free decree to create and preserve Peter, and to allow him to fall into sin, presupposes on the Creator’s part an infallible foreknowledge of the conditional future (*i. e.*, *scientia media*). What is true of this typical example, applies likewise to all others.

³⁵ *Supra*, p. 376.

There remains the question: What is the *medium* of that cognition by which God infallibly foreknows the *conditionally future free actions of His creatures*? Are these actions themselves, as the Thomists assert, true and cognoscible only in consequence and by virtue of the hypothetical decrees of the Divine Will which precede and determine them? Or does God know them *without* the agency of such *decreta praedeterminantia*, and quite independently of His determining Will, as the Molinists allege? These are questions which lead us into the innermost sanctuary of His Divine Majesty, and no matter how we may answer them, we shall find ourselves in the long run enveloped by a mystic darkness such as that which obtains in the mighty vestibule of some great cathedral, into which only a little window shaped like a “mystic rose” admits a few subdued rays of light. Human theology seems doomed to disappointment in its efforts to glimpse the mystery of the divine knowledge of Him Who dwells in inaccessible light.³⁶

Thesis IV: God does not foresee the conditionally free actions of the future in any hypothetical decrees of His divine Will, but in their own objective truth, univocally determined from all eternity

Proof. For a better understanding of the Thomistic doctrine expressed in the first part of this thesis we will premise the following explanations. There are two kinds of decrees of the will, absolute and hypothetical.

a) An absolute decree is one which is unconditional, both on the part of its subject and on the part of its object, as *e. g.*, “I will create.” A hypothetical decree, on the other hand, is dependent upon some previous condition, either on the part of the determining subject, or on the part of the determined object. We have to do with a conditional decree of the first kind if the law-giver has no real will (*voluntas*) to act, but would have it (*velleitas*) in case some condition were fulfilled; for example, “I would fly, if I had wings.” We should have a conditional decree of the second kind, if the lawgiver had a real will to act, but was determined to await the fulfilment of some objective condition; for instance, “I will spare Sodom, if ten just men can be found therein.” The fulfilment of such a condition may lie in the power either of the one making the decree, or of some other independent will. God’s will that all men should be saved is of the last-mentioned species: “I will that all men be saved, if they will co-operate with my grace.” According to the Thomists a conditional decree of the first-mentioned order is that regarding the conversion of Tyre: “I decree to predetermine the inhabitants of Tyre to do penance, if I send them the Messias.” Thomism holds that the decrees of the Divine Will in which God infallibly foresees the conditionally free actions of the future, are subjectively absolute, in so far as God makes a real decision; but objectively conditioned, in so far as they depend on a condition the fulfilment of which lies solely in God’s power. Moreover of themselves they have a predetermining power, which, however, cannot produce its effect because the requisite condition is wanting. Inasmuch as the *determinatio ad unum* is not dependent on the free self-determination of the conditionally future will of the creature, but solely on the predetermining will of the Creator, the latter must be the sure and infallible medium of divine cognition for which we are seeking. This solution of a much mooted difficulty was unknown to the older Thomists, such as Ledesma, Curiel, etc.; it was excogitated and developed by such later Thomists as Alvarez, Gonet, Joannes a S. Thoma, Gotti, Billuart, etc.

³⁶ 1 Tim. 6:16.

The theory just developed has one weak point, however. It seems to involve the inevitable, though altogether unintentional and expressly disavowed inference that the freedom of both the conditional and the absolutely future actions of rational creatures is destroyed by the Thomistic assumption of subjectively absolute and objectively conditioned predeterminations on the part of God. Another, even more serious consequence is that according to this theory all conditionally future sins seem to fall back upon God as their author. Both these conclusions appear to flow with irresistible logic from the very notion of *praemotio physica*, which Molinism therefore sharply combats, in order to preserve the freedom of the will. If we admit them as logically flowing from the Thomistic premises, we must reject these premises. Then such predetermining decrees do not, nay cannot, exist in God, and consequently cannot serve Him as the medium for knowing the conditionally future free actions of His creatures.

Even aside from the two capital objections just indicated, there are other serious difficulties that can be urged against these hypothetical decrees. What could be their purpose? Their only conceivable purpose could be to insure to the omniscient Creator an infallible knowledge of the conditionally free acts of the future, for the ends and purposes of His wise Providence. For, as we have already pointed out, without a knowledge of the *futuribilia* God could not rule and govern the actual world which He has created. But besides the present universe and Economy, there are conceivable innumerable others, which eternally remain in a state of pure possibility and in the contemplation of which there can be question solely of hypothetical acts performed by hypothetical creatures. The dilemma arises: Either God has uttered subjectively absolute and objectively conditional decrees with respect to all possible rational creatures in all possible Economies; or He has not. If He has not, then His omniscience is limited proportionately to the absence of such decrees; for without decrees He can have no foreknowledge. If we choose the other horn of the dilemma, then we must assume that there exists in God an actually infinite number of decrees of His Divine Will, which have no other purpose than to enlarge and to safeguard His knowledge. This assumption seemed *indecent et superfluum* even to some Thomist theologians,³⁷ who preferred to hold with John a S. Thoma: "*Deum statuisset nihil de illis [combinationibus possibilibus] decernere, sed sub sola possibilitate concludere, utramque contingentiae partem aestimans probabilem.*"³⁸ Thus Thomism pendulates to and fro between an altogether incongruous conception of God and a very serious limitation of His omniscience.

There is furthermore something unbecoming and unintelligible in the Thomistic system, because, according to its tenets, most, if not all, decrees of the Divine Will seem to lack a rational and wise motive. Once God had determined absolutely not to send the Messiah to Tyre and Sidon, the matter must have been at an end, so far as the Divine Will was concerned. Why, then, shall we assume the existence of a *second* decree to this effect: "Had I not decreed not to send the Messiah to Tyre and Sidon, then I would decree to send Him thither (but I will not send Him thither), and to predetermine the inhabitants of these cities to do penance"?

Perhaps a Thomist theologian will answer: Without some such decree God would lack that knowledge which is absolutely requisite to govern the universe under the present

³⁷ Cfr. Gonet, *De Aux. Grat.*, disp. 5, art. 2, § 8.

³⁸ *De Scientia Dei*, disp. 20, art. 2. Cfr. Billuart, *De Deo*, diss. 6, art. 5, *sub finem*.

Economy. But this only proves that the Thomistic theory, which derives God's *scientia futuribilia* entirely from the decrees of His Will, moves in a vicious circle, something like this: "I decree in order that I may know what I decree." Nor can Thomism be spared the reproach of innovation; for nowhere in the writings of the Fathers or of St. Thomas do we find mention made of such hypothetical decrees. Had they believed in their existence, these authors would surely have adverted to them in their writings on the sanctity of God and on sin.

b) We do not mean to convey the idea that the Molinist position is quite satisfactory. On the contrary, when its defenders proceed from criticism to positive construction, the difficulties of their system grow apace. Strictly speaking the Molinists are fully agreed only on two cardinal points: (1) In opposing the theory of *praemotio physica*, and (2) in unalterably upholding the doctrine of *scientia media*. Both aim solely at preserving free-will. As soon as the question arises: Whence does the *scientia media* derive its infallibility? or, in other words, What is the objective medium in which God infallibly foreknows the conditionally free acts of the future?—the theologians of this school forthwith part company. The inherent difficulties of their position are such that some later Molinists, notably P. Kleutgen, prefer to plead ignorance as to the medium of God's knowledge of the *futuribilia*. They draw a sharp line of demarcation between the actuality of the *scientia media* on the one side, and its origin and mode of operation on the other, insisting solely on the first and leaving the second an open question. This is tantamount to admitting that Molinism, too, in its last deductions arrives at the door of that great temple of mystery to which God alone holds the key. In view of these facts we need hardly say that the explanation contained in the following paragraphs cannot claim to be more than a diffident attempt at groping a way.

To reconcile the manifold and apparently contradictory explanations given by different Molinist theologians, it will be useful to follow the example of Hontheim,³⁹ who shows their objective agreement by treating them as different stages in the development of the same fundamental idea. From this point of view we may distinguish four stages of Molinism, each of which attempts a deeper explanation than the preceding.

First Stage. It is certain beyond a doubt, first, that the divine Intellect is infinite, and, secondly, that all the absolute or conditional future actions of free creatures are univocally determined from all eternity, and are consequently cognoscible. An infinite intellect must needs know all truth. Hence God knows all absolutely or conditionally future actions of His free creatures. But how? Surely not through the mediation of absolute or hypothetical decrees of predetermining effect. Such decrees would destroy the freedom of the will; for the *determinatio ad unum* must rest on the self-determination of the free will. It follows that God must know the absolutely and conditionally future actions of His free creatures in these actions themselves; or, in other words, in their *objective truth*. If those Molinists who halt here be asked: How, then, can God know all free actions in His own Essence as *medium in quo*? they will return the unsatisfactory answer: That is a mystery.

Second Stage. To clear up this mystery other Molinist theologians go a little farther. They begin by laying down two principles: First, God perceives all the truths which He knows immediately in *His own Essence* as the medium of cognition; second, His Essence is

³⁹ *Institutiones Theodicaeae*, pp. 640 sqq.

the absolutely faithful mirror of all truth (*“Deus est speculum absolutum omnis veritati?”*). Now, inasmuch as the absolutely and conditionally future actions of free creatures are objectively true, and therefore knowable, they must be vitally represented in the divine Essence, and consequently form part of the knowledge of God. Accordingly, while God perceives the free acts of the future terminatively *in themselves*, determinatively He perceives them *in His own Essence as medium in quo*. *“Divinus intellectus ab aeterno cognoscit res, non solum secundum esse quod habent in causis suis, sed etiam secundum esse quod habent in seipsis. Nihil igitur prohibet ipsum habere aeternam cognitionem de contingentibus infallibilem.”*⁴⁰ But the manner in which those free actions of the future are represented in the divine Essence is wrapt in mysterious darkness; except that we may not assume a *praemotio physica*.

Third Stage. We can best realize the difficulty of explaining this “mode of reflection,” if we turn our attention to the relation of the *futura* and *futurabilia* to the divine Essence as the “mirror of all truth.” The future actions of free creatures can become an object of cognition only if, like all truth, they have a foundation in reality. Where are we to find this foundation if we reject the Thomistic hypothesis of *decreta praedeterminantia*? Are we to find it in the actuality of the free *act* itself? But this free act does not yet exist; indeed, in the case of most *futurabilia*, it never will exist. Or are we to find it in the creatural *cause* of the future act? But not even the will as cause exists as yet; it will not exist till later; and even if it did already exist, it would not necessarily contain the free effect. (*“Deficiente fundamento deficit veritas.”*) From all of which it would appear that the divine Essence is an inadequate mirror of the free actions of the future. St. Thomas helps us to solve this difficulty. He teaches that God’s *eternity* reflects the future as clearly and distinctly as it reflects the present. The free self-determination of the will, even if it still lies (absolutely or conditionally) in the future, is continually present to the eternal Essence of God. He does not foresee, He sees always. The fact of His co-existence with His creatures—not their coexistence with Him—raises Him above and beyond all divisions of time. *“Futurum dupliciter potest cognosci,”* says St. Thomas. *“Uno modo in causa sua, et sic futura quae ex necessitate ex causis suis proveniunt, per certam scientiam cognoscuntur, ut solem oriri cras.... Alio modo cognoscuntur futura in seipsis. Et sic solius Dei est futura cognoscere, non solum quae ex necessitate proveniunt, ... sed etiam casualia et fortuita, quia Deus videt omnia in sua aeternitate, quae cum sit simplex toti tempori adest et ipsum concludit. Et ideo unius Dei intuitus fertur in omnia quae aguntur per totum tempus, sicut in praesentia, et videt omnia, ut in seipsis sunt.”*⁴¹ This agrees perfectly with the teaching of St. Augustine: *“Deo, qui omnia supergreditur tempora, nihil est futurum—To God, Who transcends all time, nothing is future.”*⁴² Or, as St. Bernard beautifully expresses the same thought: *“Futura non expectat, praeterita non recogitat, praesentia non experttur—[God] does not expect the future, He does not remember the past, He does not experience the present.”*⁴³ From this important truth it follows that the absolutely and conditionally future actions of free creatures are a *determinata veritas* from all eternity, not indeed by any divine predetermination, but in virtue of the free-will decisions of the creatures

⁴⁰ S. Thom., *Contr. Gent.*, I, 67.

⁴¹ Cfr. S. Thomas, *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 57, art. 3.

⁴² *Ad Simplic.*, I, 2, qu. 2.

⁴³ *Serm. in Cant.*, 80.

themselves. Let us again quote St. Thomas: *“Deus est omnino extra ordinem temporis, quasi in arce aeternitatis constitutus, quae est tota simul, cui subiacet totius temporis decursus secundum unum et simplicem eius intuitum; et ideo uno intuitu videt omnia quae aguntur, secundum quod (unumquodque) est in seipso existens, non quasi sibi futurum, ... sed omnino aeternaliter sic videt unumquodque eorum quae sunt in quocumque tempore, sicut oculus humanus videt Socratem sedere in seipso, non in causa sua, ... quia unumquodque, prout est in seipso, iam determinatum est. Sic igitur relinquitur, quod Deus certissime et infallibiliter cognoscat omnia, quae fiunt in tempore; et tamen ... non sunt vel fiunt ex necessitate, sed contingenter.”*⁴⁴ It is the eternal power of reflexion inherent in the Divine Essence, which in conjunction with the *self-determination* of the creatures’ free will—a self-determination in itself temporal but always present to the eternal God—constitutes the truth-reality of the absolutely and conditionally future acts of free creatures. Thus the Molinist theologians, at this third stage, by calling to their aid the mystery of eternity, succeed in securing a real basis for the truth of the free acts of the future. But there remains an unexplained residuum, *viz.*: the concept of *vis repraesentativa aeterna*.

Fourth Stage. To resolve this residuum other theologians of the same school have shaped a still subtler argument. They proceed from the principle that without the active co-operation of God as the prime mover of all things, no free act of any sort is possible; nor consequently true and knowable. According to this theory God foreknows the absolutely future actions of His free creatures in His Essence (Will) as the *medium in quo*, in so far as, by virtue of His co-operation, He is the cause of every free act. As to the conditionally future acts of His free creatures, which chiefly concern us here, their knowability, or truth, must consequently depend on God’s hypothetical will of concurrence, and it is the latter which constitutes the medium of His cognition of the *futuribilia*.⁴⁵ This brings us to the final terminus of the Molinist system, where we again find ourselves on the brink of an impassable abyss. For as the hypothetical *concursum divinum*, like the real *concursum*, according to Molinist teaching does not causally produce but merely presupposes the hypothetical self-determination of the will; so at bottom it also presupposes that God has an infallible knowledge of this hypothetically free act by virtue of the *scientia media*, without basing the explanation of the latter on the *concursum hypotheticum*. Hence the *scientia media* in the Molinistic sense is a valuable and, if you will, indispensable postulate, though it defies every attempt to prove it by strictly scientific argumentation. Thus the famous controversy, which was at one time carried on with so much acrimony, lands us in an impenetrable mystery. *“Mirabilis facta est scientia tua ex me; confortata est, et non potero ad eam.”*⁴⁶

Having reviewed both systems at some length, we are now prepared to give a brief characterization of Thomism and Molinism. Thomism is undeniably a grand and strictly logical system, which conveys an imposing conception of the omnipotence, the omni-causality, and the sovereignty of God. But in ruthlessly driving its fundamental principles to their ultimate conclusions, it is led to enunciate some harsh propositions which unpleasantly disturb the harmony of the Thomist system. Its psychological effects are

⁴⁴ *Comment, in Aristot. de Interpret.*, lib. I, lect. 14.

⁴⁵ Cfr. Chr. Pesch, *l. c.*, pp. 118 sqq.

⁴⁶ Ps. 138:6.

great moral earnestness and a fearsome conception of God, which, while it deeply impresses persons of strong faith, easily drives weak natures into a slough of despair. Hence Thomism as a theological system is adapted to the professor's chair rather than to purposes of popular exhortation. Molinism, on the other hand, is characterized by its mild and gentle features,—an exalted conception of the loving Providence of God, His merciful will to save all men, His encompassing grace, His condescension to the weaknesses of human nature. Psychologically it produces trust in God, strengthens man's confidence in his own power of co-operation, spurs him on to work out his salvation, engenders peace of mind and joy of heart. These qualities make it the natural language of the preacher and the unconscious idiom of the catechetical instructor in addressing little children. There are ample indications in his writings that the holy Bishop Francis de Sales, one of the most amiable Saints in the Church's calendar, was a Molinist. Irreconcilable in their leading principles, far-reaching in their practical consequences, yet based equally on the orthodox teaching of the Church, the two systems are likely to retain their recruiting power. They will continue to have their adherents and defenders among theologians, and to exercise a benign influence each within its own circle so long as blind passion and a spirit of disastrous partisanship do not disturb the good relations existing between their respective champions.⁴⁷

READINGS:—S. Thom., *Summa Theol.*, 1a, qu. 14 sq. (Bonjoannes-Lescher, *Compendium*, pp. 39 sqq.)—In elucidation thereof especially Didacus Ruiz, *De Scientia, de Ideis, de Veritate ac de Vita Dei*, Parisiis 1629.—*Summa Contr. Gent.*, I, 66, 70 (Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures*, pp. 36 n., 48 sqq.).—Suarez, *Opusc. II De Scientia Dei*, Matr. 1599.—Ramirez, *De Scientia Dei*, Matr. 1708.—Of later authors: *Kleutgen, *De Ipso Deo*, pp. 251 sqq., Ratisbon 1881.—Chr. Pesch, *Praelect. Dogmat.*, Vol. II, pp. 91 sqq., 2nd ed., Friburgi 1899.—Franzelin, *De Deo Uno*, pp. 375 sqq., 3rd ed., Romae 1883.—L. Janssens, *De Deo Uno*, t. II, Friburgi 1900.—Ceslaus Schneider, *Das Wissen Gottes nach der Lehre des heiligen Thomas von Aquin*, 4 vols., Ratisbon 1884–1886.—Wilhelm-Scannell, *Manual*, I, pp. 214 sqq.—Boedder, *Natural Theology*, pp. 262 sqq.—Hunter, *Outlines*, II, pp. 81 sqq.—Humphrey, "*His Divine Majesty*," pp. 130 sqq.—Jos. Rickaby, S. J., *Free Will and Four English Philosophers*, pp. 166 sqq., London 1906. Also Billuart, *De Deo*, dissert. 5 sq.—For the literature on Thomism and Molinism, we must refer the student to the treatise on Grace. Other references in the text.

CHAPTER IV

THE ATTRIBUTES OF DIVINE LIFE—THE DIVINE WILL

That there is a Divine Will is a logical deduction from God's pure spirituality, the concept of which, besides cognition, includes also volition. It can furthermore be proved

⁴⁷ On the position of St. Thomas, consult A. M. Dummermuth, O. P., *S. Thomas et Doctrina Praemotionis Physicae, Responsio ad R. P. Schneemann Aliosque Doctrinae Thomisticae Impugnatores*, Paris 1886; Vict. Frins, S. J., *S. Thomae Doctrina de Cooperatione Dei cum Omni Natura Creatura, Praesertim Libera; seu S. Thomas Praedeterminationis Physicae Adversarius*, Paris 1892; against him: Dummermuth, *Defensio Doctrinae S. Thomae de Praemotione Physica*, Paris 1896.

from a number of Scriptural passages, such as Matth. 26:39: “*Non sicut ego volo, sed sicut tu*—Not as I will, but as thou wilt,” and Matth. 26:42 (6:10): “*Fiat voluntas tua* (τὸ θέλημά σου)—Thy will be done.” The dogma was formally defined by the Vatican Council.¹

The objective parallelism existing between the Divine Understanding and the Divine Will justifies a division of the subject-matter of the present chapter into three sections, of which the first inquires into the mode of divine volition, the second into its objects, and the third into its attributes (*virtutes*). As in connection with the knowledge of God, so here the chief point to be emphasized is the infinite perfection of the Divine Will, at which we arrive partly by the threefold way of affirmative differentiation, negative differentiation, and intensification;² partly by a consideration of the divine attributes of being, more particularly self-existence, simplicity, and immutability.

SECTION 1

THE MODE OF DIVINE VOLITION—NECESSITY AND LIBERTY OF THE DIVINE WILL

Analogously to the mode of divine cognition, the mode of divine volition can be established by the aid of certain fundamental or leading principles. Our most important task will be to prove the freedom of the Divine Will, whose basic act is Charity.

Thesis I: Like God’s conception of Himself, the love He has for Himself is really identical with His Essence

This thesis embodies an article of faith.

I. Proof. As with mortal men, so too with Almighty God, all volition culminates in love. Therefore the basic act of the Divine Will is God’s Love of Himself. Being the supreme and infinite good, God is infinitely lovable. This lovability must be adequately exhausted by an equally infinite act of love. Consequently, God is pure substantial Love. Cfr. 1 John 4:8: “God is charity.” Now, since the Supreme Good is nothing but the Divine Essence considered *sub ratione bonitatis*, Substantial Charity must co-incide with the Divine Essence.¹ Following the analogy of Aristotle’s famous axiom: “Θεός ἐστι νόησις νοήσεως,” some of the Schoolmen have justly called God *dilectio dilectionis*. We need hardly point out that the relation between God’s self-comprehension and His self-love is a relation of absolute identity: *Infinitum nosse = infinitum velle = infinitum esse*.²

2. Several important conclusions flow spontaneously from the truths above stated. Inasmuch as the divine volition is identical with all other divine attributes, and consequently admits of neither composition nor potentiality, the Will of God cannot be conceived as a faculty; it must be purest act. This one substantial act, by virtue of which

¹ *Conc. Vatican., Sess. III, cap. 1, De Deo*; quoted by Denzinger-Bannwart, *Enchiridion*, n. 1782.

² *Supra*, pp. 67 sqq.

¹ Cfr. S. Thom., *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 19, art. 1: “*Oportet in Deo esse voluntatem, cum in eo sit intellectus. Et sicut suum intelligere est suum esse, ita et suum esse est suum velle.*”

² Cfr. our remarks on the simplicity of God, *supra*, pp. 200 sqq.

the loving subject (*i. e.*, God), adequately encompasses and apprehends the loved object (*i. e.*, God) is both immutable and eternal,—not only as considered in itself, but likewise in relation to creatures. A transition from love to hatred, therefore, can not take place in God, but solely in the creature, in so far as it sometimes renders itself deserving of God’s love, and sometimes of His hatred. Ps. 32:11: “*Consilium Domini in aeternum manet*—The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever.” Furthermore, the Divine Will, being absolutely independent because self-existent, does not strive for, or aspire after, any object whatsoever. Hence there exists in God neither desire in the strict sense of that term, nor love of concupiscence. In other words, He is pure Love reposing in Himself, without any admixture of desire. Only in so far as He desires the well-being of His creatures, can we metaphorically ascribe to Him an *amor quasi concupiscentiae*.³ Lastly, the Divine Will, being infinitely perfect, is susceptible only of such determinations as do not essentially involve an imperfection, such as is implied in some affections (*e. g.*, sadness), and in some virtues (*e. g.*, obedience, contrition). Holy Scripture sometimes attributes such predicates to the Divine Will, but they must be understood as tropes or metaphors, or taken anthropomorphically.⁴ Our guiding principle must be: Only pure perfections of the will exist in God *formaliter*; mixed perfections exist in Him merely *virtualiter et eminenter*.

3. This important axiom affords us a sure criterion for valuing rightly the so-called affections of the divine Will.

a) After the analogy of the so-called passions (*passiones*) of the sensitive appetency, we may distinguish in intelligent creatures (angels and men) eleven affections of the will, *viz.*: love and hatred, joy (or delight) and sadness, desire and aversion (or abhorrence), hope and despair, courage and fear, and lastly anger.⁵ In their last analysis they are all reducible to love. Of these eleven affections those only can be formally applied to God which contain no admixture of imperfection. Even the pure perfections must be purged of their “creatural mode” by the process of negative differentiation before they can be formally predicated of the Creator. There is some divergency among theologians with regard to the application of certain of these affections to God; but this is due solely to a difference of opinion as to whether or not they are to be regarded as *perfectiones simplices*. The following principles are pretty generally accepted:

b) The affections proper before all others to the divine Will are love (*amor*) and joy (*gaudium*), for the reason that love really constitutes Its essence,⁶ and joy is nothing but complacency in the possession of what is good. Of the contrary emotions, hatred (*odium*) and sadness (*tristitia*), the last-mentioned being the involuntary sufferance of present evil, are mixed perfections (*perfectiones mixtae*) and must therefore be formally excluded from the Divine Will, to which we may attribute “displeasure,” but not sadness in the strict

³ Cfr. S. Thomas, *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 20, art. 2, ad 3: “*Deus proprie loquendo non amat creaturas irracionales amore amicitiae, sed amore quasi concupiscentiae, inquantum ordinat eas ad rationales creaturas et etiam ad seipsum, non quasi eis indigeat, sed propter suam bonitatem et nostram utilitatem. Concupiscimus enim aliquid et nobis et aliis.*”

⁴ Cfr. the note on p. 378.

⁵ Cfr. Maher, *Psychology: Empirical and Rational*, 4th ed., pp. 426 sqq. London and New York 1900.

⁶ Cfr. 1 John 4:8.

sense of the term. The moral emotion of hatred is either a hatred of abomination (*odium abominationis*) or a hatred of enmity (*odium inimicitiae*), according as it is directed against evil as such, or against persons. It is certain that the Divine Will bears an infinite hatred against the evil of sin, first, because the concept of such hatred implies a pure perfection, and, secondly, because it constitutes an essential element of God's sanctity. As to whether God hates the person of the sinner, theologians are not agreed. Some take Wisd. 11:25: "*Diligis omnia, quae sunt, et nihil odisti eorum quae fecisti*—Thou lovest all things that are, and hatest none of the things which thou hast made," literally, while others point to such texts as Ps. 5:7: "*Odisti omnes, qui operantur iniquitatem*—Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity," as opposed to this view. The correct interpretation of these apparently contradictory texts probably is, that God loves the sinner in so far as he is His creature, and hates Him in so far as he transgresses His commands. "*Nihil prohibet*," says St. Thomas, "*unum et idem secundum aliquid amari, et secundum aliquid odio haberi. Deus autem peccatores, in quantum sunt naturae quaedam, amat; sic enim et sunt et ab ipso sunt. In quantum vero peccatores sunt, non sunt et ab esse deficiunt, et hoc in eis a Deo non est; unde secundum hoc ab ipso odio habentur.*"⁷ The affections of desire (*desiderium*) and aversion (*fuga*) may be ranged in the same class with concupiscible love (*amor concupiscentiae*), because God cannot desire any created good for Himself, nor flee from approaching evil. There is nothing to prevent us from assuming, however, that, (without of course experiencing anything like human emotion), He ardently desires the happiness of His creatures, and has an aversion to that which is apt to hurt or destroy them. Cfr. Ez. 33:11: "I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." On account of the imperfections they imply, the four affections known as hope (*spes*), courage (*audacia*), desperation (*desperatio*), and fear (*timor*), must likewise be excluded from the Divine Will. Neither the notion of difficulty implied in the first-mentioned two, nor that of danger connoted by the others, is compatible with God's omnipotence. As for anger (*ira*), if we define it as "the determination to avenge wrong from which one has suffered," there is no room for it in the Divine Will, and the Fathers and theologians are perfectly right in interpreting the respective passages of Holy Scripture anthropomorphically, *i. e.*, as expressing merely God's will to punish evil.⁸

Thesis II: By virtue of His infinite love God loves whatever is good; Himself as the supreme good He loves with absolute necessity, whatever is good in His creatures He loves with a free will

This is also *de fide*.

Proof. Both parts of this thesis have been formally defined by the Vatican Council:⁹ "*Deus ... liberrimo consilio utramque de nihilo condidit creaturam*—God ... with absolute freedom of counsel, created out of nothing both [the spiritual and the corporeal] creature." "*Si quis Deum dixerit non voluntate ab omni necessitate libera, sed tam necessario creasse, quam necessario amat seipsum ... anathema sit*—If any one shall say that God created, not by His will, free from all necessity, but by a necessity equal to the

⁷ S. Theol., 1a, qu. 20, art. 2, ad 2.

⁸ For a more detailed treatment of this subject, see Suarez, *De Deo*, tract. 1, lib. III, c. 7; Gonet, *Clyp. Thomist.*, tract. 4, disp. 6; Kleutgen, *De Ipso Deo*, pp. 343 sqq.

⁹ *Sees. III, cap. 1, De Deo*; quoted by Denzinger-Bannwart, n. 1783.

necessity whereby He loves Himself ... let him be anathema.” Freedom here means not merely freedom from restraint (*libertas a coactione*), but more particularly freedom from intrinsic necessity (*libertas a necessitate*), which is also called freedom of indifference (*libertas indifferentiae*).¹⁰

1. God is Substantial Love, and love by its very nature tends to that which is good, in so far as it is good. Hence God must love Himself as the Infinite Good, and must do so from the intrinsic necessity of His nature, not as a matter of moral duty. But what is the relation of the Divine Will to created good? To find the answer to this question we must first draw a distinction. Whatever there is of good besides God, may be considered either as actually existing, or as merely possible, that is, as not yet existing, or as something that will never exist. Once God by an act of His free will has called creatures into being, He cannot but love whatever is good in them with the same love with which He loves Himself as the highest good; for whatever is good besides Himself is so by participation in His Divine Essence. Cfr. Wisd. 11:25: “*Diligis omnia, quae sunt, et nihil odisti eorum, quae fecisti*—Thou lovest all things that are and hatest none of the things which thou hast made.” Prov. 8:31: “*Deliciae meae esse cum filiis hominum*—And my delights were to be with the children of men.” St. Thomas offers this beautiful argument drawn from unaided human reason: “*Quicumque enim amat aliquid secundum se et propter ipsum, amat per consequens omnia, in quibus illud invenitur: ut qui amat dulcedinem propter ipsam; oportet omnia dulcia amet. Quum igitur Deus amet bonitatem suam propter ipsam, omnia autem quae sunt hanc aliqua ratione participant, ex hoc ipso quod vult et amat se, vult et amat alia*—Whoever loves anything in itself and for itself, wills consequently all things in which that thing is found: as he who loves sweetness in itself must love all sweet things. But God wills and loves His own goodness in itself and for itself; and all other being is a sort of participation by likeness of His being.”¹¹

2. In the actual outpouring of Its goodness *ad extra* (as in the processes of Creation, Redemption, and Sanctification), the Divine Will is absolutely free. Such is the unmistakable teaching of Holy Scripture. Cfr. Ps. 134:6: “*Omnia quaecumque voluit Dominus fecit in coelo, in terra, in mari et in omnibus abyssis*—Whatsoever the Lord pleased he hath done, in heaven, in earth, in the sea, and in all the depths.” St. Paul teaches that redemption, too, and the call of the human race to salvation, are effects of God’s absolutely free will. Cfr. Eph. 1:5–11: “*Qui praedestinavit nos in adoptionem filiorum per Iesum Christum in ipsum secundum propositum voluntatis suae* (κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ), ... *ut notum faceret nobis sacramentum voluntatis suae secundum beneplacitum tum eius quod proposuit in eo, ... in quo etiam et nos sorte vocati sumus, praedestinati secundum propositum eius, qui operatur omnia secundum consilium voluntatis suae* (κατὰ πρόθεσιν τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐνεργοῦντος κατὰ τὴν βουλήν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ)—Who hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ unto himself: according to the purpose of his will: ... That he might make known unto us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he had purposed in him, ... in whom we also are called by lot, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his will.” In the

¹⁰ On the liberty of the Divine Will in creating the universe, see the dogmatic treatise on God as the Author of Nature and the Supernatural.

¹¹ *Contr. Gent.*, I, 75 (Rickaby’s translation).

same manner is the outpouring of the charismata, which is ascribed to the Holy Ghost, due to the free will of God. Cfr. 1 Cor. 12:11: “*Haec autem omnia operatur unus atque idem Spiritus, dividens singulis, prout vult* (καθὼς βούλεται)—But all these things one and the same Spirit worketh, dividing to every one according as he will.” Adhering closely to these and similar passages from Holy Scripture, the Fathers unanimously defended the liberty of the Divine Will in its external operations. St. Ambrose, *e. g.*, says: “*Apostolus quoque dicit, quia omnia operatur unus atque idem Spiritus, dividens singulis, prout vult, i. e., pro libero voluntatis arbitrio, non pro necessitatis obsequio.*”¹² St. John of Damascus voices the belief of the Greek Fathers when he writes: “The Divine Nature is endowed with will and freedom, upon which there falls neither sin nor change.”¹³ Hippolytus expresses himself tersely and accurately as follows: “Πάντα ποιῶν ὡς θέλει, καθὼς θέλει, ὅτε θέλει.”¹⁴

3. The revealed doctrine set forth above was condensed by the Scholastics into this axiom: “*Divina bonitas [= essentia] est obiectum formale et primum, bonitas rerum autem obiectum materiale et secundarium voluntatis divinae.*” Indeed, as none but an infinite object (*i. e.*, the Divine Essence itself) can be proportionate to the Divine Will, the formal and primary object of God’s love can be none other than the Divine Essence itself. But God’s love of Himself is no cold, calculating egoism; it is an intestine vital law, in virtue of which God must love the Infinite Good, that is Himself. As regards the nature of this divine Self-love, being a truly divine love it cannot be *amor concupiscentiae* in the strict sense, but must be *amor complacentiae*, and, in its relation to the three Divine Persons, also *amor amicitiae*. This can be proved *a posteriori* from the character of love as a theological virtue. For if Christian charity loves the highest, best, and most beautiful Good *for His own sake*, it does so for the sole reason that it is in its very essence a supernatural participation in God’s divine Self-love. Consequently, *a fortiori*, God must love Himself as the Infinite Good for His own sake. This conclusion runs counter to the assertion of Durandus, that the formal object of divine Love is not the *bonum infinitum* taken concretely, but an abstract *bonum in communi*,—a teaching which is analogous to another error, *viz.*: that the formal object of God’s knowledge is not His Essence, or infinite Truth, but being in its abstract sense.¹⁵ The second part of the above-quoted axiom (“*bonitas rerum autem obiectum materiale et secundarium voluntatis divinae.*”) flows as a corollary from the first. If God’s own Goodness constitutes the determining and specific formal object of the Divine Will, then He cannot love His creatures for *their* sake, but must love them for *His own* sake. Hence creatural goodness can be neither the motive nor the final goal of the Divine Will, because in either case the latter would be indigent and perfectible. The final end of the created universe consists solely in the glorification of the Infinite Good. Cfr. Apoc. 21:6: “*Ego sum α et ω, initium et finis*—I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.” 1 Cor. 8:6: “*Ex quo omnia et nos in illum* (εἰς αὐτόν)—[The Father], of whom are all things, and we unto him.” Prov. 16:4: “*Universa propter semetipsum operatus est Dominus*—The Lord hath made all things for himself.” Cfr. *Conc.*

¹² *De Fide*, II, 6, n. 48.

¹³ *De Duab. Christ. Volunt.*, n. 28.

¹⁴ *Contr. Noet.*, c. 8.—For a fuller treatment, consult Kleutgen, *De Ipso Deo*. pp. 333 sqq., and Simar, *Dogmatik*, Vol. I, pp. 181 sqq., Freiburg 1899.

¹⁵ Cfr. Gonet, *Clyp. Thomist.*, tract. 4, disp. 2, art. 1, § 4.

Vatican., Sess. 3: De Deo, can. 5: "Si quis mundum ad Dei gloriam esse conditam negaverit, anathema sit—If any one shall deny that the world was made for the glory of God, let him be anathema." From these considerations it also follows that the Divine Will is free, as St. Thomas shows briefly but convincingly thus: "*Quum divina bonitas sine aliis esse possit, quinimo nec per alia ei aliquid accrescat, nulla inest ei necessitas, ut alia velit ex hoc, quod vult suam bonitatem*—Since the divine Goodness can be without other beings,—nay, other beings make no addition to it,—God is under no necessity of willing other things from the fact of His willing His own Goodness."¹⁶ Consequently, whatever good exists external to God, can be only a secondary and material object of His Divine Will.

Thesis III: Although God loves His creatures unequally, each according to the measure of its goodness, He does not love them for their sake, but solely because of His own goodness

Proof. This thesis, which embodies the common teaching of theologians, is a pendant to the one regarding the mode of God's cognition. God knows all extra-divine things in themselves, but only through the medium of His own Essence. In like manner, though He loves His creatures unequally, according to the degree of their intrinsic goodness, yet His love for them is such that His own goodness (= Essence) is the sole formal motive of His Will.

1. In saying that God loves different creatures unequally, we do not wish to imply that there are degrees in the operation of divine Love. This is impossible, because the act of divine Love is immutable, eternal, intensively infinite, and uniform. The expression has reference solely to the *objects* of divine Love. God cannot but love His creatures unequally, that is according to the degree of goodness which each contains, because it was He as Creator who imparted to them varying degrees of goodness by endowing them with varying degrees of being.¹⁷ Therefore, to deny that God loves one creature more than another, would be tantamount to asserting that all creatures are equally good, which is repugnant to both right reason and experience. It plainly appears from various texts of the Bible that God makes a distinction in loving His creatures: that He loves those endowed with reason more than those which are destitute of intelligence;¹⁸ that He prefers the goods of the supernatural to those of the natural order; that He prefers the just to the sinner; that He looks with particular favor upon the Blessed Virgin Mary "full of grace," and so forth.

2. In spite of all this, however, even the best beloved and most favored of God's creatures are no more than material objects and mere termini of divine Love, inasmuch as they do not incite or determine the divine Will to love, but merely constitute its aim or object. The controverted question whether God could love His creatures on account of the excellencies they bear within themselves, must therefore be answered in the negative. Assuming that God could love a creature (even one so magnificently endowed by Him as

¹⁶ *Contr. Gent.*, I, 81.

¹⁷ Cfr. St. Thomas, *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 20, art. 2: "*Amor noster, quo bonum alicui volumus, non est causa bonitatis ipsius, sed e con-verso bonitas eius vet vera vel aestimata provocat amorem.... Sed amor Dei est infundens et creans bonitatem in rebus.*"

¹⁸ Cfr. 1 Cor. 11:9: "*Numquid de bobus cura est Deo?*—Doth God take care for oxen?" Cfr. St. Thomas, *I. c.*, art 4.

was the Blessed Virgin Mary), because of its immanent creatural beauty, sanctity, or benevolence,—this creatural goodness would *eo ipso* be absorbed into the formal object of the divine Will, and the latter would in consequence become at least partly dependent in its operation upon something existing outside Itself, which is repugnant to the divine Essence. Therefore, while God loves His creatures in precisely the measure in which each deserves to be loved, according to the degree of its intrinsic amiability, He loves them not for their sake, but for His own sake.¹⁹

Thesis IV: As infallibility is the fundamental and distinguishing characteristic of God’s knowledge, so the operation of His Will is governed by sanctity

Proof. To infallibility in the sphere of knowledge corresponds impeccability in the domain of the will. Impeccability is the negative element of holiness. The infallibility of that cognition which is based upon the ultimate causes of things, culminates in divine Wisdom (in the larger sense of the term), which rules and dominates the entire domain of divine knowledge. The impeccability of the will culminates in that sanctity which gives to the life of the divine Will its peculiar stamp. Hence the intrinsic product of God’s notional cognition (*i. e.*, the “Word of God” or “Logos”), is also called *sapientia genita*, while the intrinsic product of His notional volition (*i. e.*, the Holy Ghost), is described as *amor personalis* and *sanctitas hypostatica*.²⁰ It follows that infallibility and impeccability, considered as modes of the divine Understanding and the divine Will, stand in the same relation to each other as wisdom and holiness. Holiness is the fundamental virtue of God and love is His fundamental affection. But the two are not only related, they are identical in concept, in so far as holiness in its last analysis coincides with the Love which God has for Himself. From this peculiar concatenation of love and holiness in God we must conclude that all the so-called moral attributes or virtues of God spring from His holy Love as their common root, and are completely dominated by it.²¹

SECTION 2

THE OBJECTS OF THE DIVINE WILL

1. We have shown that God’s Will is a most simple, immutable, eternal act, which cannot be split up or divided. It is manifest, then, that any division we may make must be based upon the objects to which the Will is directed.

¹⁹ Cfr. St. Thomas, *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 19, art. 2: “*Sic igitur vult Deus et se et alia; sed se ut finem, alia vero ut ad finem,*” *Idem, ibid.*, ad 2: “*Sicut alia a se intelligit intelligendo essentiam suam, ita alia a se vult volendo bonitatem suam.*” This teaching does not exclude either the possibility or the actual existence on the part of God of a love of benevolence and friendship towards His rational creatures; on which point consult Lessius, *De Perfect. Div.*, XIV, 3.

²⁰ For further information on this subject the reader is referred to the dogmatic treatise on the Divine Trinity.

²¹ Cfr. *supra*, § 3.

Aside from God's necessary will (*voluntas necessaria*), His free will (*voluntas libera*) can be conceived either as *voluntas beneplaciti* or *voluntas signi*, according as it remains an intrinsic act or is by some sign manifested externally. There are five such signs, which are enumerated in the Scholastic hexameter:

Praecipit et prohibet, permittit, consulit, implet.

It is possible, by misunderstanding one of these signs, to mistake the will of God, as Abraham did when he proceeded to sacrifice his son Isaac, or Jonas in view of the presumptive destruction of Nineveh.

An almost equipollent division is that into *voluntas arcana* and *voluntas revelata*, both of which Calvin so shamefully distorted by declaring the former to be God's secret will to condemn men, while the latter signified His false and hypocritical determination that they be saved.¹

The most common division of the divine Will is that into *voluntas conditionata* and *voluntas absoluta*, according as It appears bound to the fulfilment of a condition, or not.

Closely related to this division is that into *voluntas antecedens seu prima* and *voluntas consequens seu secunda*, which has been the provocative of some sharp controversies in regard to predestination. According to Molinism the "antecedent or first will" originates immediately in the love of God (*e. g.*, the will to save);² while the "consequent or second will" accommodates itself entirely to the behavior of the creatures themselves, and consequently coincides with God's determination to reward the just and punish the wicked.³ This was no doubt the meaning of St. John Damascene, who first introduced the division of the divine Will into θέλημα προηγούμενον ἢ πρῶτον and θέλημα ἐπόμενον ἢ ὕστερον. He was followed by St. Thomas Aquinas, who writes in his little work *De Veritate*: "*Aliquem hominem vult Deus salvari voluntate antecedente ratione humanae naturae, quam ad salutem fecit; sed vult eum damnari voluntate consequente propter peccata quae in eo inveniuntur.*"⁴ It is to be noted, however, that the Thomists, under the leadership of Alvarez,⁵ interpret this passage in a manner which leads to the theological doctrine of absolute predestination and negative reprobation.⁶

Lastly, we may divide the divine Will into *voluntas efficiens* and *voluntas permittens*, a distinction important for clearing up God's relation to sin. The will of God is "efficient" only in regard to the naturally or supernaturally good or indifferent actions of His creatures, Sin He merely "permits" by shielding the freedom of the will, without which there could be neither sin nor virtue. It is for this reason that some theologians⁷ correlate the *voluntas permittens* with divine justice (*justitia permissiva*), which not only renders to every one his own, but also leaves every one in possession of his liberty.

2. As regards the special objects of the divine Will, we can distinguish as many decrees of the Will as there are external operations of God, *e. g.*, the will to create, the will to save, etc. They will all be duly considered in their proper places. Here we must confine ourselves

¹ Cfr. *Calvini Instit.*, I, 18, 4.

² 1 Tim. 2:4.

³ Cfr. Math. 25:34 sqq.

⁴ *De Verit.*, qu. 23, art. 2, ad 2.

⁵ *De Aux. Gratiae*, disp. 24.

⁶ This point will receive a more detailed treatment in the treatise on Grace.

⁷ *E. g.*, Scheeben.

to the exposition of certain general principles which govern the divine Will and shadow forth its intrinsic perfection. These principles all appertain to the material and secondary object of divine volition.

Thesis I: It is highly probable that God loves the merely possible good with the love of simple complacency

Proof. While some theologians, like Suarez⁸ and Cardinal Gotti, willingly admit that God loves the merely possible good, others, like Gonet⁹ and Oswald,¹⁰ deny this on the ground that the possibles, coinciding as they do with the divine Essence, can have no independent goodness or amiability of their own. This last-mentioned reason, however, is not well chosen. For, as the divine Intellect perceives the pure possibles in their ideal-eminent being as extradivine truths,¹¹ so the divine Will can love these possibles in the same way, provided only that they possess a certain degree of goodness—which they undoubtedly do; else how should we explain the fact of Creation had not the Creator previously taken delight in contemplating a universe which was merely possible? To this must be added the consideration that the pure possibles, holding as they do middle ground between nothing and that which has actual existence, possess true, even though only ideal, being,—which being as such is not only true, *i. e.*, cognoscible, but likewise good, *i. e.*, lovable. (“*Ens et bonum convertuntur.*”) Now, God loves whatever is good; therefore He also loves the purely possible. It is indeed inconceivable that God should take no delight in the infinite number of possible things which He comprehensively understands,¹² seeing that even the created intellect takes profound pleasure in contemplating the purely ideal order of metaphysical, æsthetic, and mathematical truths. To this not a few Thomists object that Aquinas, following the example of his master Aristotle, seems to deny the existence of goodness in the domain of mathematics.¹³ Explain this as we will, it is certain that St. Thomas nowhere denies the principle that goodness is a transcendental attribute of being, which, *qua* being, includes the realm of the purely possible.¹⁴ As for purely possible evil, it is most difficult to decide whether the divine Will remains absolutely motionless in the presence of it, or is affected by displeasure.¹⁵

Thesis II: God loves all existing creatures with the love of simple complacency; those endowed with intelligence He also loves with the love of benevolence

This thesis embodies a certain truth. The arguments for it will be found in the chapter which treats of the divine attribute of moral goodness or benevolence.¹⁶

⁸ *De Attrib. Posit.*, III, 6.

⁹ *Clyp. Thomist.*, disp. 2, art. 4.

¹⁰ *Dogmat. Theol.*, Vol. I, p. 213.

¹¹ *Supra*, p. 340.

¹² *Supra*, pp. 351 sqq.

¹³ Cfr. *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 5, art. 3, ad 4.

¹⁴ Cfr. *De Verit.*, qu. 21, art. 2.

¹⁵ Regarding God's attitude towards *actually existing evil*, see *infra*, third thesis.

¹⁶ *Supra*, pp. 260 sqq. Cfr. also § 1, thesis 2.

Thesis III: Regarding God's relation to evil, we must hold that He can will natural evil, and evil inflicted as a punishment, only per accidens; and that He can never will sin, but merely permits it

Proof. Evil is twofold: the moral evil of sin (*malum culpae*) and physical evil, which latter can be subdivided into natural evil (*malum naturae*) and the evil of punishment (*malum poenae*).¹⁷ The will may take one of three attitudes towards evil. It may either will evil as an end in itself (*velle malum per se, seu ut finem*); or it may will evil as a means to an end (*velle malum per accidens*); or it may will evil not at all, but merely permit it (*mere permittere malum*). Applying this distinction to the divine Will, we can infer the following propositions, which embody both revealed truths and deductions of human reason.

1. The divine Will cannot will evil, either physical or moral, *per se* for its own sake, or as an end in itself. For God is the Substantial Love of goodness, and His volition is dominated by the attribute of sanctity. But can He will evil as a means to an end, or *per accidens*? In answering this question we must first eliminate sin, because it is quite manifest that with God no end, no matter how noble or sublime, can possibly justify sin as a means. For the holiness of God involves an infinite hatred of sin, no matter whether it be considered as an end or as a means to an end. Cfr. Eccus. 15:21: "He hath commanded no man to do wickedly, and he hath given no man license to sin: for he desireth not a multitude of faithless and unprofitable children." Epistle of St. James 1:13: "*Ipse autem neminem tentat*—For God ... tempteth no man." The Church has indignantly repudiated the contrary teaching of Calvin as heretical and blasphemous.

Now as to physical evil. God can will physical evil only as a means to an end, and only in so far as it can be subordinated to a higher purpose, the attainment of which completely outweighs the evil means. Physical evil, as we have already pointed out, is twofold, penal (punishment for sin) and natural (*e. g.*, pain, illness, death). God owes it to His punitive justice to inflict physical evil upon sinners, for the reason that justice is a greater good than the happiness of the sinner, which punishment destroys. Eccus. 39:35: "*Ignis, grando, fames et mors, omnia haec ad vindictam creata sunt*—Fire, hail, famine, and death, all these were created for vengeance." As for natural evil, the general order of nature is a higher good than, *e. g.*, the life of an individual transgressor, which is sometimes sacrificed to it. It is in this light that the so-called cruelties of nature must be viewed. Cfr. Eccus. 11:14: "Good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches are from God." Wisd. 1:13: "God made not death, neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the living."

God, therefore, cannot will sin (*malum culpae*), either as an end in itself or as a means to an end. He merely permits it with a view of deriving good therefrom.¹⁸ Cfr. Gen. 50:20: "You thought evil against me: but God turned it into good, that he might exalt me, as at present you see, and might save many people." It is an article of faith that sin can happen only with the permission of God.¹⁹

¹⁷ Cfr. A. B. Sharpe in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. V, art. "Evil."

¹⁸ Cfr. Eccus. 39:35.

¹⁹ *Supra*, pp. 251 sqq. Cfr. St. Thomas, *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 19, art. 9. Also St. Augustine, *Enchir.*, c. 46: "*Nec dubitandum est, Deum facere bene etiam sinendo fieri, quaecunque fiunt male. Non enim hoc nisi iusto iudicio sinit; et profecto bonum est omne quod iustum est*—Nor can we doubt that God does well even in the permission of what is evil. For He permits it only in the justice of His

2. These considerations on the relation of God to evil could easily be spun out into a brilliant apology for divine Providence against Deism. They also furnish the outlines for an effective refutation of Pessimism, which exaggerates evil beyond all reasonable bounds.²⁰

a) The existence of physical evil in the universe would be repugnant to the Christian idea of God if it could be shown, first, that the ills in question are absolute, and not merely relative, and, secondly, that God wills them as an end rather than as a means to an end, or merely the sequel of a higher good, by which they are more than counterbalanced. But it is impossible to establish either of these propositions. All physical evils are intrinsically so constituted that they do not disfigure the heart of creation, but only certain portions thereof along its outer fringe; they have their seat not in the nobler parts, but in a lower and subordinate realm, where they serve the higher purposes of Creation. Consequently they are not absolute, but merely relative defects. Thus corporeal pain and disease are a necessary concomitant of the sensitive faculties, whose purpose it is as a minor good to serve the higher good of intellectual knowledge; at the same time they are useful signals of warning, since suffering and disease frequently herald death. Conflagrations and inundations, with all their disastrous consequences, are merely accidental concomitants of essentially benign forces of nature—such as specific gravity and chemical combustion—which, as such, are indispensable to the structure and existence of the physical universe. Nor do malformations, deformities, and abortions in the realm of organic living beings disprove this argument, because they are intended neither by Nature nor by the Author of Nature, but have their origin in accidental obstacles in the way of the formative and constructive powers of Nature, which ever aims at its proper end, but is sometimes disturbed in its course by extrinsic vicissitudes. The so-called cruelties of nature appear to offer a serious difficulty. Especially do the bloody encounters of predatory animals seem incompatible with God's goodness. Yet Nature with all her cruelties aims at higher ends, viz., the stability of the universe and the harmonious equilibrium of all its parts. The bloodthirsty disposition of certain wild beasts presupposes cunning, artifice, rapacity, and to eliminate it from nature would mean the destruction of many of the finest and most useful species of our fauna. There is ample justification for enquiring how the impertinent critics of His Divine Majesty would reconstruct the physical universe, had they the power to carry out their crude notions. Would they make all beasts herbivorous, in order to preserve animal life? This would compel men to practice vegetarianism, and perhaps even something more extreme; for do not some of these smart criticules assert that plants, too, have a sentient soul which must not be injured? Thus ultimately both men and beasts would develop into "geophagi," drawing their nourishment solely from the mineral kingdom. Meanwhile, what would be the lot of animals? Would they not multiply beyond all bounds, destroy vegetation, and poison the atmosphere with the stench of their carcasses? No sane observer can fail to perceive that the existing order of the cosmos is the product of a marvellous wisdom, which automatically sustains its equilibrium and subordinates the lower forces of nature to the higher ones, which center in man, the king of the physical universe. For the rest it may be well to call attention to the fact that the

judgment. And surely all that is just is good." Cfr. Jos. Nirschl, *Ursprung und Wesen des Bösen nach der Lehre des hl. Augustinus*, Ratisbon 1854.

²⁰ Respecting Deism and Pessimism, consult the dogmatical treatise on "God, the Author of Nature and the Supernatural," which will form the third volume of this series.

“wasteful cruelty of nature” is exaggerated by many modern writers, who overlook the circumstance that carnivorous and other brute animals almost invariably, either by the fright they inspire, or by stinging or biting, stupefy or hypnotize their intended victims, thus rendering them incapable of suffering protracted pain.²¹

But what of human ignorance and poverty? Are they not absolute evils, even though the Creator employ them as means to a higher end? We do not think so. Lack of knowledge spurs humanity on to diligent study, prompts the erection of schools and other institutions of learning, and brings about a general improvement of social conditions; while poverty is one of the strongest incentives to work and self-help, to the cultural development of the slumbering energies of the masses, entailing the progress of industry, craftsmanship, and art, inspiring charitable undertakings of every kind. If these factors remained latent, the human race would soon decay. Imagine a world into which all men were born as millionaires or savants! The blessings of hard labor and the law of progressive development would be unknown. Ethnologists point out that the belt of civilization which girdles the globe coincides with the snow zone, and claim that this is due to the circumstance that the ever-recurring combat with severe cold compels men to exert themselves to the utmost, thereby keeping the human mind inventive, active, buoyant, and elastic. Nor must we overlook another important consideration. The existence of physical evil is designed to remind man constantly that his final aim and happiness lie beyond this terrestrial sphere, and that he must labor and suffer, battle and endure like one who may not snatch the palm of victory unearned. It is his divinely-appointed lot, amid manifold hindrances, to attain to eternal felicity by dint of his own efforts, journeying through a vale of tears, where all the hardships of a laborious pilgrimage weigh upon him. Imagine for a moment that men enjoyed pure happiness here below and lived beyond the reach of physical evil; would they not, even the best of them, lose sight of their true destiny and miss their highest end? Such a universe, forsooth, though free from poverty, disease, ignorance, and misfortune, could not justly be considered a masterpiece of divine Wisdom, unless indeed men were permanently constituted in a state of paradisaical innocence. In the light of these reflexions we must admit that it would not be

²¹ The wasteful cruelty of nature is thus described by Tennyson:

Are God and Nature then at strife,
That Nature lends such evil dreams?
So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life.
“So careful of the type”? but no,
From scarpèd cliff and quarried stone
She cries, “A thousand types are gone,
I care for nothing, all shall go.”

The obvious reply is that this process, of struggle and survival of the few, in fact works for the perfecting of things; and this is a higher end than the momentary happiness of individual beings.—See Butler’s *Analogy*, Pt. 1, ch. V.—“There is abundant reason,” says Hall, “for doubting the possibility of constituting a world which shall at once be suited for free and progressive creatures and be perfect in itself. Infinite power is after all limited by the nature of power, which is meaningless when applied to the impossible.” (F. J. Hall, *The Being and Attributes of God*, pp. 163 sq., New York 1909.)

incompatible with either the infinite wisdom or the holiness of God, purposely to create a world in which physical evils (which are always relative, never absolute) would either serve as means to higher ends, or occurred accidentally as concomitants of higher goods. In matter of fact, we know from Revelation that God in creating the world intended it to be free from suffering and merely permitted physical evil to supervene as a punishment for sin. It is characteristic of His infinite goodness that He turns into good even those evils which man has incurred through his own fault.²²

b) It is more difficult to explain God's relation to *moral evil*, in comparison with which physical evil is as nothing, because sin alone is evil in the absolute sense of the term. The mystery of sin lies in this that God *permits* it despite the fact that it is absolute evil; for it is self-evident that He who is All-Holy cannot will sin either as an end or as a means to an end. In permitting sin God wills that His intelligent creatures, while in the wayfaring state, should be free to decide either for or against Him. The sins they commit He subsequently, by the external governance of His Providence, converts into a source of good which amply compensates for, nay, exceeds the evil that sin necessarily entails.²³ There are goods of which, on the one hand, sin is an indispensable condition (such as contrition, penance, redemption, martyrdom), and which, on the other hand, in their *tout ensemble* outweigh the evil existing in the world to such a degree that some theologians assert that a world full of sins permitted by God is more perfect than would be a world without sin.²⁴ St. Thomas teaches: "*Si enim omnia mala impedirentur, multa bona deessent universo; non enim esset vita leonis, si non esset occisio animalium, nec esset patientia martyrum, si non esset persecutio tyrannorum*".²⁵ Hold what we will on the controverted point just mentioned, it is certain that in permitting sin God does not contradict His wisdom, or His goodness, or His sanctity. He does not contradict His wisdom and His goodness; for it would, on the contrary, be most unwise for Him to offer violence to His rational creatures by obstructing the exercise of their free will, especially since He has given them the voice of conscience, which loudly protests against sin. He does not contradict His goodness, but rather proves it by strengthening and testing the virtues of the just by the misdeeds of the wicked. As St. Augustine says: "*Prosunt ista mala, quae fideles pie perferunt, vel ad emendanda peccata vel ad exercendam probandamque iustitiam vel ad demonstrandam vitae huius miseriam, ut ilia, ubi erit beatitudo vera atque perpetua, et desideretur ardentius et instantius inquiratur*"—Those evils which the faithful endure piously, are profitable either for the correction of sin, or for the exercising and proving of righteousness, or to manifest the misery of this life, in order that the life of perpetual blessedness may be desired more ardently, and sought more earnestly."²⁶ Lastly, in permitting sin God does not contradict His sanctity. He never ceases to forbid sin, to

²² Cfr. St. Aug., *Enchir.*, c. 11: "*Deus omnipotens ... nullo modo sineret malum aliquod esse in operibus suis, nisi usque adeo esset omnipotens et bonus, ut bona faceret etiam de malo*." Cfr. P. Keppler, *Das Problem des Leidens in der Moral*, Freiburg 1904; B. Boedder, *Natural Theology*, pp. 398 sqq.; Th. J. Gerrard, *The Wayfarer's Vision*, pp. 44 sqq., London 1909.

²³ Cfr. Toletus, *Comment, in S. Theol.*, I, p. 264 (ed. Romae, 1869): "*Deus non dicitur velle peccata fieri nec velle non fieri, sed permittere fieri*."

²⁴ Cfr. Ruiz, *De Provid.*, disp. 2, sect. 2.

²⁵ *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 22, art. 2, ad 2.

²⁶ *De Trinit.*, XIII, 16, 20.

detest it with an infinite hatred, and to punish it with the full severity of His punitive justice. It may be objected: If God has such a hatred of sin, and is constrained to punish it so severely, why did He not leave the present sinful world deep down in the abyss of its original nothingness and in its place create one of which He foresaw that it would never deviate from the path of rectitude and virtue? By refraining from the creation of sinful beings He could have prevented sin. This objection is as temerarious as it is silly. To carry out the implied suggestion would mean to limit God's omnipotence by making the Creator dependent upon His creatures, because in that hypothesis He could not create the universe, and would simply cease to be God. Furthermore, those who urge it forget that God is not for the sake of the world, but the world exists for the sake of God. No matter how we poor creatures employ the free will which God has given us, to glorify Him or to dishonor Him, we cannot possibly rob Him of His extrinsic glory. For whoever obstinately rejects God's mercy and love, will sooner or later be compelled to proclaim His justice. We are like clay in the hands of a divine artist.²⁷ It is not for the Sovereign Lord; Who is the Supreme Good, to inquire into our preferences. The creature is bound to do the will of the Creator, not the Creator the will of the creature. A human superior, it is true, must prevent sin on the part of his subordinates. He has no right to permit it, because a superior exists for the good of the community which he is called to govern, not *vice versa*. The case is different with God. He can permit sin without detriment to His holiness, in order that good may come therefrom, because He is Himself the ultimate end of all Creation, and all things have their final goal in Him. It cannot, however, be said that with God the end justifies the means, because in permitting sin God does not choose a bad means to attain a good end, but with the power of an absolute sovereign disposes of the universe for His own glory. Consequently sin is no argument against Theism, but, on the contrary, a proof for the existence of a supreme and infinitely good God, Who rules the universe wisely and disposes all things so that they ultimately converge in Him.

Thesis IV: God has no will with regard to what is intrinsically impossible

This thesis voices the common teaching of theologians of all schools.

Proof. Every act of the will tends either to a good end or to a bad. Now, what is impossible (*e. g.*, a man-ape or a wooden steel-pen), is neither good nor bad. It is not good, because the impossible, being pure nothing, has no being and therefore cannot possess goodness, which is a transcendental attribute of being. It is not bad, because badness or evil, being a negation, can inhere only in a positive entity as in a subject which lacks some perfection it ought to possess. Pure nothingness cannot be the subject of a privation.²⁸

READINGS—Cfr. S. Thomas, *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 19 sqq., and the Commentators.—Id., *Contr. Gent.*, I, cc. 72–96.—The most complete treatment of the subject will be found in *Ruiz, *De Voluntate Divina*.—Of the later dogmatists the student is advised to consult especially Scheeben, *Dogmatik*, Vol. I, §§ 96–104 (Wilhelm-Scannell's *Manual*, I, pp. 227 sqq.); Kleutgen, *De Ipso Deo*, pp. 326 sqq., Ratisbonae 1881; L.

²⁷ Cfr. Rom. 9:20 sqq.

²⁸ Cfr. S. Thomas, *Contr. Gent.* I, 84: "*Secundum quod unumquodque se habet ad esse, ita se habet ad bonitatem. Sed impossibilia sunt quae non possunt esse; ergo non possunt esse bona, ergo nec volita a Deo, qui non vult nisi ea, quae sunt vel possunt esse bona.*" Cfr. also what has been said above in connection with divine Omnipotence, pp. 281 sqq.

Janssens, *De Deo Uno*, t. II, pp. 228 sqq., Friburgi 1900.—For the philosophical questions involved, see *Jos. Hontheim, *Instit. Theodicaeae*, pp. 661 sqq., Friburgi 1893.

SECTION 3

THE VIRTUES OF THE DIVINE WILL, AND IN PARTICULAR, JUSTICE AND MERCY

Virtue (*virtus*, ἀρετή) is defined as “a habit that a man has got of doing moral good, or doing that which it befits his rational nature to do.”¹ It is quite clear that those virtues only can be predicated of God which contain no admixture of imperfection; all others can be applied to Him merely in a metaphorical or figurative sense.

The various virtues can be reduced, on the one hand, to the three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity; and, on the other, to the four cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude. Of these seven there must be excluded from the Divine Will in the first place those virtues which connote either subordination to a higher principle, as, *e. g.*, faith and hope (humility, obedience); or composition of soul and body, as *e. g.*, temperance (chastity, sobriety); or some passion, as, *e. g.*, bravery (ambition, lust of power). Prudence, being primarily an intellectual virtue,² is more nearly related to wisdom and providence, of which we will not treat in this chapter. There remain as the proper virtues of God those which, in the words of Scheeben, “do not tend to increase the inner perfection of the virtuous subject, but manifest and bring into action His dignity.” Now, the dignity and majesty of God are one with His objective holiness, which is the basis of ethical holiness. Consequently, holiness (or, what is the same, God’s infinite love for Himself) is the fundamental virtue of the divine Will. Cfr. 1 John 4:8: “*Deus caritas est*—God is charity.” This holy love, when directed towards the universe, engenders goodness, of which the chief offshoot is mercy. Divine justice, too, has its root and foundation in God’s Sanctity. Under it St. Thomas³ subsumes chiefly truth (veracity) and fidelity. Since we have already dealt with the virtues of sanctity, goodness, truth (veracity), and fidelity in previous chapters, there remain to be considered justice and mercy, the mutual relations of which St. Jerome tersely characterizes as follows: “*Misericordia iustitiam temperat, iustitia misericordiam.*”⁴ St. Thomas, too, treats both these virtues as organically related to each other.

ARTICLE 1

GOD’S JUSTICE

1. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.—Both in profane and in sacred usage the term justice (*iustitia* δικαιοσύνη) has many meanings. In its widest sense it is synonymous with rectitude, or moral perfection, which is the same as sanctity. Here we take justice in its narrowest sense, as that cardinal virtue which the famous Roman legist Ulpian defines as

¹ Jos. Rickaby, S. J., *Moral Philosophy*. New Impression, London 1908, p. 69.

² On the difference between intellectual and moral virtues, cfr. St. Thomas, *S. Theol.*, 1a 2ae, qu. 56, art. 3, *in corp.* (Rickaby, *Moral Philosophy*, pp. 73 sqq.)

³ *S. Theol.*, 2a. 2ae, qu. 109, art. 3.

⁴ *In Malach.*, III, 1.

*“constans et perpetua voluntas ius suum cuique tribuendi—A constant and abiding will to give every one his due.”*⁵ In this sense the concept of justice has four essential notes, *viz.*: (1) debt or obligation (*debitum*); (2) a certain proportion or equality between what is rendered and what is received; (3) a plurality of persons, or the existence of one who metes out and another who receives right treatment; (4) the firm will of the former to perform his obligations towards the latter.

a) The chief function of justice is to equalize a performance and its *quid pro quo*. It is this note which formally constitutes the concept of justice. Hence the Sacred Writers frequently designate justice as “truth.” Now, there are two kinds of equality, and consequently, also two kinds of justice. If the equality aimed at implies geometrical proportion, we have distributive, if it implies arithmetical proportion, commutative justice. Distributive justice by its very nature “is the virtue of the king and of the statesman, of the commander-in-chief, of the judge, and of the public functionary generally”; the matters it distributes are public emoluments and honors, public burdens, rewards, and also punishments.⁶ Its contrary is not injustice, which entails the duty of restitution, but rather personal favoritism (*acceptio personarum*), which has no regard for “the eternal fitness of things.” Commutative justice, on the other hand, which alone is justice strictly so called, requires a rigorous equality, and its violation imposes the duty of restitution.

b) Retributive justice may be treated as a species of distributive justice. It is called remunerative when it rewards, and vindictive when it takes the form of punishing. As judge a superior is bound to reward merit and to punish crime; in other words, to treat each subject according to his deserts. As arithmetical proportion can hardly ever be attained, it is sufficient to observe geometrical proportion.

2. DIVINE JUSTICE.—Though strictly speaking there can be no commutative justice in God, yet His distributive justice is bound by His veracity and fidelity to such a degree that we may consider the retribution He metes out by rewarding good and punishing evil as an analogue of commutative justice.

a) Right reason tells us that God, as the Creator, Preserver, and Sovereign Proprietor of the universe, can have towards His creatures no obligation which would correspond to a mathematically equivalent right. Whatever a creature is and has, it possesses as a free gift from God. There was not on His part any obligation to create, just as little as there existed on the part of any creature a right to be created. Hence there is no common basis on which to establish a strict parity between obligation and service rendered. *“Quis prior dedit illi et retribuetur ei?—Who hath first given to him, and recompense shall be made him?”*⁷ *“Quaecunque sunt bona opera mea, abs te mihi sunt et ideo tua magis quam mea sunt—Whatever are my good works, I have them from Thee [God], and therefore they are Thine rather than mine,”* says St. Augustine.⁸ We have absolutely nothing that we can call our own, except sin. Hence there can be no obligation of strictly commutative justice on the part of God.

b) The virtue of distributive justice, on the other hand, may doubtless be ascribed to God, though not, of course, in its creatural sense. As the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the world God owes it, not indeed to His creatures, but to His own attributes, to give to

⁵ *L. X de iust. et iure.*

⁶ Cfr. Rickaby, *l. c.*, p. 104.

⁷ Rom. 11:35.

⁸ *In Ps.*, 37

each created being whatever is due to it, according to the measure of its being and its final destiny. "*Suum cuique.*" It follows that, since God has of His own free will assigned to rational man a supernatural destiny in the beatific vision of the Most Blessed Trinity, He is obliged to grant him the means (graces) that are absolutely necessary for the attainment of this end; that is to say, at the very least sufficient grace (*gratia sufficiens*). God likewise owes it to His veracity and fidelity to give His creatures the *promised* reward and to inflict on them the *threatened* punishment in just proportion to their deserts.⁹ When God made Himself the debtor of men, He can have acted from no other motive than that it so pleased Him. The duty of justice which springs from such a relation rests entirely upon a free basis. The creature did not bind the Creator; He bound Himself.

c) Given this free juridical relation between God and the creature, it is easy to see why Holy Scripture conceives retributive justice in a manner analogous to commutative justice. There exists a sort of contract between the Creator and His creatures, by virtue of which the creature has a legal claim (taking this term in an analogous sense) to be rewarded for his merits, and must expect to be punished for his crimes.

α) Not only is God frequently termed "the Just One,"¹⁰ but the Bible expressly enforces His retributive justice, both remunerative and vindictive. In respect of the former it will suffice to quote 2 Tim. 4:8: "*In reliquo reposita est mihi corona iustitiae, quam reddet mihi Dominus in illa die iustus index*—As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice which the Lord the just judge will render to me in that day."¹¹ His punitive or vindictive justice clearly appears from Rom. 2:5: "Thou treasurest up to thyself wrath, against the day of wrath, and revelation of the just judgment of God." Cfr. Deut. 32:35: "Revenge is mine, and I will repay them in due time."¹² As historical proofs for the vindictive justice of God we may mention: the expulsion of our First Parents from Paradise; the Deluge; the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha; the destruction of Jerusalem; and, most terrible of all, the Passion and death of our Saviour, in Whom all the sins of the human race were vicariously punished.

β) The argument from Tradition is equally clear and stringent. We can trace the dogma back to the most ancient creeds. Thus already the Apostles' Creed says of Jesus: "*Qui venturus est iudicare vivos et mortuos.*"¹³ St. Augustine faithfully interprets the belief of Primitive Christianity when he says: "*Deum iustum negare sacrilegum est, et de eius iustitia dubitare amentia.*"¹⁴

3. THEOLOGICAL CONTROVERSIES REGARDING THE DOCTRINE OF GOD'S VINDICTIVE JUSTICE.—In defining the nature of God's vindictive justice we must avoid the two extremes of attenuation and exaggeration. It would be an attenuation to claim that God aimed only at correcting and deterring, and not at punishing the sinner; and an exaggeration to assert that God is obliged to punish even the contrite sinner according to the full measure of His

⁹ Cfr. S. Thom., *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 21, art. 4.

¹⁰ Cfr. Ps. 118:137: "*Iustus es Domine, et rectum iudicium tuum.*"

¹¹ Cfr. also Hebr. 6:10.

¹² Cfr. also Rom. 12:19.

¹³ For other passages see Eschatology.

¹⁴ *De Lib. Arbit.*, I, 1.

justice. Both the attenuation and the exaggeration of divine justice are repugnant to the teaching of the Church.

a) Certain philosophers and rationalist theologians, holding God's vindictive justice to be incompatible with His Divine Love, reduce it to the level of a mere corrective and deterrent. Those who adopt this wrong attitude are forced to explain all the Scriptural texts that assert God's vindictive justice in a purely figurative sense. By an elimination of the notion of atonement and restitution of the disturbed moral order, God's vindictive justice would lose its proper character and sink to the level of a mere make-believe. This theory furthermore squarely contradicts the clear teaching of Scripture, that virtue will be definitively rewarded, and vice punished, on the day of the last judgment, "the day of wrath,"—a teaching which is enforced particularly in the Epistles of St. Paul. Cfr. Rom., 13:4: "*Dei enim minister est, vindex in iram ei, qui malum agit*—For he is God's minister: an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil."¹⁵ The so-called Psalms of Malediction directly appeal to the vindictive and avenging arm of divine justice.

Hermes asserts that the justice of God is not vindictive, but merely "*medicinalis et emendatrix*." He supports this assertion by a tissue of utterly futile arguments. God, he says, is pure Love, which seeks nothing for itself. Hence, if He threatens and inflicts punishment, it can only be to correct the sinner and to deter others from committing sin. We reply: God's Love is in the first place and above all a Love of Himself, of His own dignity and majesty, which has the right, and eventually the duty, to avenge the *crimen maiestatis* of mortal sin. Besides, how could the eternal pains of Hell serve as a corrective, or as a means of deterring sinners, *after* the "day of wrath"? Who will remain on earth after the Last Judgment to be corrected or deterred? But, says Hermes, wrath is an imperfection, because it delights in punishing others, while God, according to His own assurance, does "not delight in our being lost"—"*non enim delectaris in perditionibus nostris*."¹⁶ Hermes's objection was refuted many centuries ago by St. Prosper of Aquitaine: "*Non concupiscit Deus poenam reorum, tamquam saturari desiderans ultione, sed quod iustum est, cum tranquillitate decernit et recta voluntate disponit, ut etiam mali non sint inordinati*."¹⁷ St. Gregory the Great remarks in a similar vein: "*Omnipotens Deus, quia pius est, miserorum [i. e., damnatorum] cruciatu non pascitur; quia autem iustus est, ab iniquorum ultione in perpetuum non sedatur*."¹⁸

b) Certain other theologians have fallen into the opposite error of pushing the notion of *iustitia vindicativa* beyond its proper limits. Thus, following St. Anselm,¹⁹ Tournely²⁰ and Liebermann²¹ teach that God is in duty bound to punish all sins, even those for which the sinner is sincerely sorry, without grace or mercy and according to the strictest measure of His divine Justice; and that He can forgive them only on condition that they be fully atoned. Hence the absolute necessity of Christ's vicarious atonement, without which forgiveness of sins would be absolutely impossible. Now, while it is a divinely revealed truth that God *de facto* insisted on adequate atonement as an indispensable condition of forgiveness;—to assert that he could have forgiven sin on *no other condition* whatsoever runs counter to the common opinion of theologians, with the solitary exception of St. Anselm, who perhaps should be interpreted more

¹⁵ Cfr. Ps. 73:22.

¹⁶ Tob. 3:22.

¹⁷ *Sent. August.*, 12.

¹⁸ *Dial.*, IV, 44.

¹⁹ *Cur Deus Homo?*

²⁰ *De Deo*, qu. 19, art. 1.

²¹ *Instit. Theol.*, III, lib. 1, cap. 3, §5.

mildly than was customary until a short time ago.²² Of the Fathers of the Church not one can be quoted in support of this strange theory. The common opinion of the Schoolmen (with the possible exception, already noted, of St. Anselm, and perhaps also Richard of St. Victor), is thus voiced by St. Bernard: "*Quis negat, omnipotenti ad manum fuisse alios et alios modos nostrae redemptionis?*—Who will deny that there were ready for the Almighty, other and yet other ways to redeem us?"²³ All other theologians, with St. Thomas at their head, oppose this view of St. Anselm.²⁴ They argue thus: Every sovereign has the right of pardon, by virtue of which he can annul or commute the sentences of criminals, at least of such as evince sorrow for their misdeeds. Surely this right cannot be denied to God, Who is infinite mercy as well as infinite justice. Now, whoever makes use of a right commits no injustice.

Tournely, by the way, entangles himself in a manifest contradiction when, on the one hand, he insists on the necessity of an infinite atonement even for such sins as have been properly expiated by penance and sorrow; while, on the other hand, he admits vicarious as a full equivalent for personal atonement. If God's vindictive justice were so inexorable that it could not be appeased by anything short of adequate satisfaction, He would surely insist that the guilty criminal himself, not a stranger or a substitute, should atone for his crime. This would not argue the necessity but, on the contrary, the impossibility of Christ's vicarious atonement; for no mere creature can give adequate satisfaction to an offended and wrathful God.

ARTICLE 2

GOD'S MERCY

1. DEFINITION OF MERCY.—Without entering into the altogether unimportant question whether mercy (*miser cordia*, ἔλεος) is an independent virtue, with a formal motive of its own, or merely a special form of goodness,²⁵ we will begin this final subdivision of our treatise by pointing out that the Latin term *miser cordia* contains its own definition. *Miser cordia* is that virtue which moves the heart (*cor*) to compassion for the misery (*miseria*) of others. Inasmuch as it involves suffering and sadness, mercy is, of course, a mixed perfection, which cannot be predicated of God;—though it is no doubt a touching reflection that the Divine Logos, moved by infinite love for humankind, created for Himself in His most Sacred Heart an organ by which He was enabled to feel as we do and to share in our sufferings. Cfr. Hebr. 2:17: "*Debit per omnia fratribus similari, ut misericors fieret et fidelis pontifex ad Deum*—It behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest before God." Taking mercy as "the effective will to remove or relieve the misery of others" (and we can employ it in this sense without destroying its essence), it is a pure perfection which must be attributed to God in an infinitely exalted degree. "*De misericordia si auferas compassionem,*" beautifully says St. Augustine, "*ita ut remaneat tranquilla bonitas subveniendi et a miseria liberandi, insinuat divinae misericordiae qualiscunque cognitio.*"²⁶ In this sense God is truly merciful.

²² Cfr. B. Funke, *Grundlagen und Voraussetzungen der Satisfaktionstheorie des hl. Anselm*, Münster 1903.

²³ *Ep. 194, sive Tract. de Error. Abelardi, c. 8.*

²⁴ Cfr. *S. Theol.*, 3a, qu. 1, art. 2; qu. 46, art. 2.

²⁵ Cfr. Lessius, *De Perfect. Moribusque Divin.*, l. XII, 1.

²⁶ *Ad Simpl.*, l. 2, qu. 2.

2. GOD'S MERCY AS A REVEALED DOGMA.—The principal forms of God's Goodness converge towards His Mercy as their pivot. They are: magnanimity (*magnificentia*), graciousness (*pietas, gratia*), kindness (*humanitas*), and especially that indulgence towards the misery of sin which Holy Scripture sometimes calls clemency (*clementia*) or meekness (*mansuetudo*), sometimes patience (*patientia*) or long-suffering (*longanimitas*). Cfr. Ps. 102:8: "*Miserator et misericors Dominus, longanimis et multum misericors*—The Lord is compassionate and merciful: long-suffering and plenteous in mercy." 2 Pet. 3:9: "The Lord delayeth not his promise, as some imagine, but dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance." Holy Scripture gives a most sublime description of divine mercy, both as to its essence and its comprehension, in the Book of Wisdom.²⁷ The full import of this divine virtue will impress the student when he comes to consider God's will to save humankind (*voluntas salvifica*), which belongs to the treatise on Grace.

In lieu of an extended argument from Tradition, which is unnecessary, we will only quote St. Augustine's beautiful dictum: "*Maiores est Dei misericordia, quam omnium misericordia.*"

3. THE RELATION OF GOD'S MERCY TO HIS JUSTICE.—How can justice and mercy, conceived as infinite attributes, co-exist in the Divine Will?

The simultaneous exercise of infinite justice and infinite mercy seems indeed to involve a contradiction. For a solution of the difficulty we must recur to the proposition, which we demonstrated on a previous page, that both these divine virtues have their measure, end, and corrective in God's sanctity, borne by His Divine Love, from which they spring as a germ from the mother seed. Being "a jealous God," the All-Holy can neither allow His mercy to degenerate into undue leniency or unmanly weakness, nor His justice into excessive harshness or inconsiderate cruelty. Thus both extremes repose in God's Holy Love as their immovable centre, balanced in the calm security of an eternal equilibrium.

But the difficulty is only half solved. The subjoined brief hints will help the student to clear it up fully. Whenever God allows His justice to hold sway, He simultaneously exercises mercy, in so far as He rewards the just beyond their deserts, and punishes the wicked more leniently than they would have a right to expect.²⁸ Conversely, God's mercy is always allied with His justice, inasmuch as God forgives sin only on condition that the sinner do penance.²⁹ We have a living example of the simultaneous exercise of both these attributes to the full extent of their infinity in the agonizing death of our Saviour on the Cross. This reveals God's infinite mercy. "For God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him, may not perish, but may have life everlasting."³⁰ But it also exemplifies His truly infinite justice; for our sins were terribly avenged upon the Son of God made Flesh, Who had to make adequate atonement for them before they were forgiven. Both features are emphasized in Ps. 84:11: "*Misericordia et*

²⁷ Wisd. 11:24 sqq.

²⁸ Cfr. S. Thom., *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 21, art 4, ad 1: "*Et tamen in damnatione reprobatorum apparet, [etiam] misericordia, non quidem totaliter relaxans, sed aliquantulum allevians, dum punit citra condignum.*"

²⁹ Cfr. St Thomas, *I. c.*: "*In iustificatione impii apparet [etiam] iustitia, dum culpas relaxat propter dilectionem, quam tamen ipse misericorditer infundit, sicut de Magdalena legitur: Dimissa sunt ei peccata, quia dilexit multum.*"

³⁰ John 3:16.

veritas [i. e., iustitia] obviaverunt sibi, iustitia et pax [i. e., misericordia] osculatae sunt—Mercy and truth [i. e., justice] have met each other: justice and peace [i. e., mercy] have kissed.”

READINGS:—*St. Thomas, *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 21; *Id.*, *Contr. Gent.*, I, 92–94, and the Commentators.—Scheeben, *Dogmatik*, Vol. I, §§ 100–101 (*Wilhelm-Scannell’s Manual*, I, pp. 241 sqq.).—*Lessius, *De Perfect. Moribusque Div.*, lib. 12–13, Antwerpiae 1626.—Heinrich, *Dogmat. Theol.*, Vol. III, §§ 202–204.—*Ruiz, *De Voluntate Div.*, disp. 55 sqq.—*Kleutgen, *De Ipso Deo*, pp. 352 sqq.—L. Janssens, *De Deo Uno*, t.II, pp. 323 sqq., Friburgi 1900.—J. Hontheim, *Instit. Theodicaeae*, pp. 717 sqq., Friburgi 1893.—B. Boedder, *Natural Theology*, pp. 308 sqq., 402 sqq.

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